



BRAZIL: CSEC

Annual report 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Brazil CSEC hotspot program addresses the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (CSEC) in the Recife Metropolitan Region through the Com.Direitos (“With Rights”) program, where one in four girls are estimated to be sexually exploited. Through a network of eight local civil society partners, it combines direct support for survivors and children at risk with efforts to strengthen public systems, influence policy and shift the social norms that allow the exploitation of children to persist.

In 2025, the program continued to scale direct impact and to lay the groundwork to influence long-term systemic change. Frontline partners provided comprehensive support to survivors and children at risk, including psychosocial assistance, life skills development and pathways to education and employment. Prevention initiatives reached nearly 20,000 children and adolescents through school-based and community activities designed to increase awareness of exploitation risks and strengthen protective behaviours. The program also trained professionals across the child protection system – including educators, health workers, social workers and justice officials – to

improve the identification, referral and support of children affected by sexual exploitation.

There was also significant progress in strengthening institutional responses to violence against children. In Pernambuco, civil society partners played a key role in securing approval and advancing the implementation of the Ten-Year State Plan to Address Sexual Violence Against Children. Through coordinated advocacy led by the State Network to Address Child Sexual Violence, partners are now working to secure public budget allocations to ensure the plan’s commitments translate into concrete action. Collaboration between government and civil society also contributed to the consolidation of the state’s anti-trafficking framework, including the establishment of a dedicated government office responsible for implementing prevention and response measures.

The program also supported improvements in the child protection system through the implementation of the protected listening law, which regulates care for child survivors and witnesses of violence. Municipalities in the Recife Metropolitan Region advanced the development of referral pathways and institutional protocols designed to ensure comprehensive and non-revictimising services for affected children and adolescents. The first protocol was launched in Recife.

Public mobilisation efforts remained central to challenging the norms that enable sexual exploitation. The May 18 Campaign – National Day to Combat the Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents – served as a key platform to engage civil society, public authorities and young people in collective action, while contributing to national discussions on the review of Brazil’s policy framework to address sexual violence against children. More than 30,000 people were mobilised in the campaign.

As the hotspot entered its fourth year of implementation, four partners received Elevate Grants – flexible, unrestricted funding provided by the Freedom Fund to trusted organisations to support their leadership and institutional resilience as they continue their efforts to protect children from exploitation.

Together, these efforts are contributing to a strong comprehensive model for children in Brazil to live free from exploitation.



OPERATING CONTEXT

Socioeconomic context

In 2025, Brazil's economy showed moderate growth, supported by stable employment levels and gradual recovery in household consumption. Despite this relative macroeconomic stability, structural inequalities and regional disparities continued to shape the country's social landscape. In urban peripheries and vulnerable communities in the Recife Metropolitan Region, many families continued to face economic insecurity, limited access to quality education and gaps in social protection services. These structural challenges remained closely linked to risk factors associated with child vulnerability, including school dropout, family instability and exposure to situations that may increase the likelihood of exploitation.

Public debate on violence and child protection

During the year, several high-profile cases of violence against women and online sexual exploitation of children generated widespread national debate and intense media attention in Brazil. These cases reignited discussions about the persistence of gender-based violence and the growing risks faced by children and adolescents in digital environments, including grooming, sexual extortion and the circulation of abusive images online. The strong public reaction increased pressure on authorities to strengthen investigative capacity, improve digital safety policies and reinforce protection mechanisms for survivors, while civil society organisations intensified advocacy and awareness-raising efforts.



PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Headline results for 2025

The Brazil CSEC hotspot combines a portfolio of eight civil society partners working across the Recife Metropolitan Region of Pernambuco. These organisations play complementary roles within the program, combining direct services for children affected by or at risk of commercial sexual exploitation with advocacy and capacity building to strengthen institutional responses within the child protection system. In 2025, the program focused on scaling direct impact and advancing changes in key policies.

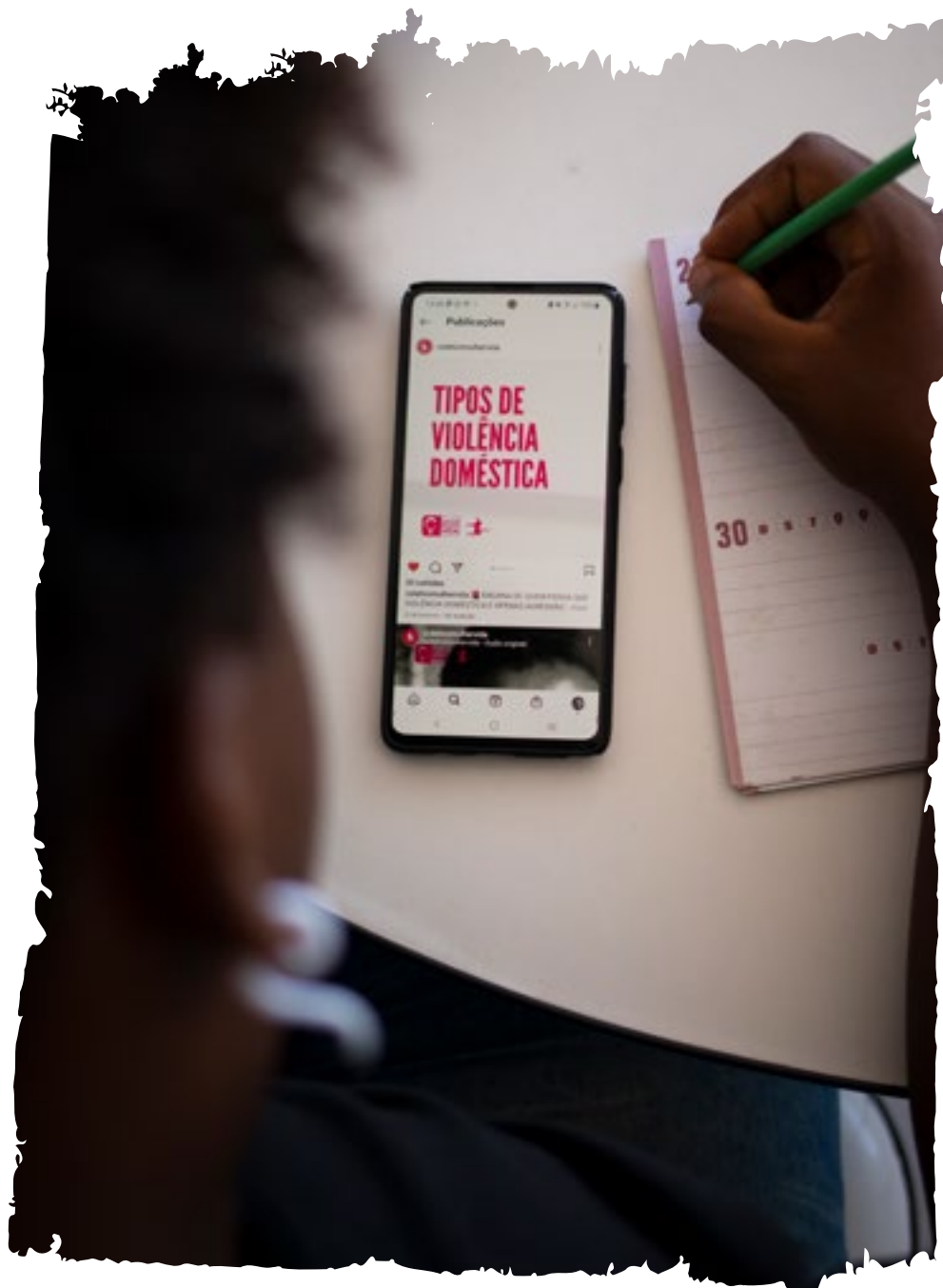
Frontline partners provided comprehensive support to survivors and children at risk, including psychosocial assistance, life skills development and pathways to education and employment. Prevention activities also reached thousands of children and adolescents through school-based and community initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of risks and strengthening protective behaviours.

At the same time, the program continued to support training and capacity building for professionals across the child protection system, including educators, health workers, social workers and justice sector actors. These efforts contribute to improving the identification, referral and support of children affected by sexual exploitation.

Key results achieved during the year include:

- 298 survivors and at-risk children supported through comprehensive services.
- 19,631 children and adolescents reached through prevention and awareness-raising activities.
- 1,337 family and community members engaged in initiatives to strengthen protective environments for children.
- 769 frontline professionals trained across education, health, social assistance and the judicial system.
- 4 policy and institutional changes contributing to stronger responses to CSEC in the Recife Metropolitan Region.
- More than 30,000 people mobilised to reduce social acceptance of CSEC.

Over the past several years, partners have strengthened their capacities, deepened collaboration with public institutions and advanced key policy and advocacy efforts to address CSEC in the Recife Metropolitan Region. As the hotspot entered its fourth year of implementation, the Freedom Fund awarded four frontline partners with Elevate Grants – flexible, unrestricted funding that it provides to trusted organisations. These grants recognise the leadership of partners and aim to strengthen their institutional resilience, enabling them to consolidate achievements and continue advancing efforts to protect children and adolescents beyond the current phase of the hotspot program.



Freedom Fund partner, Coletivo Mulher Vida, program participant.
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High level reporting against strategic objectives

Direct impact on children, families and communities

The hotspot program has two objectives focusing on direct impact in communities. The first objective aims that vulnerable children and survivors have more support, information and skills to protect themselves from and safely exit from CSEC. This objective combines training staff of frontline services, supporting protective families and communities, peer education and direct comprehensive support to survivors. The second objective focuses on public awareness to decrease social acceptance of CSEC through national and community-based campaigns.

Almost 20,000 children now better protected through prevention and comprehensive support

In 2025, the program strengthened both prevention and protection mechanisms for children by combining direct support services, community engagement and capacity building of professionals working across the child protection system.

Survivors and children at risk of CSEC were provided direct psychosocial assistance, therapeutic support, life skills training and pathways to education and employment. In total, **254 survivors and children at risk** received comprehensive care and **71 adolescents** received professional training and socio-educational support to improve social and economic inclusion opportunities.

Children also received improved care thanks to training of frontline professionals. During the year, **759 professionals across education, health, social assistance and the judicial system** improved their ability to detect and prevent risks, support survivors, and report and coordinate referrals within the protection system. These efforts contribute to improving institutional responses and ensuring that children affected by violence receive timely and specialised, trauma-informed care. Teachers educated **16,323 children** in protection skills using play-based, age-appropriate methodologies in schools. Additionally, **272 child leaders** were trained as peer educators, who subsequently multiplied information to more than **3,000 children** in schools and communities.

30,000 mobilised to reduce social acceptance of child commercial sexual exploitation

In 2025, awareness-raising and public mobilisation efforts continued to play a key role in challenging the social norms that enable CSEC. This year marked the **25th anniversary of the May 18 Campaign - National Day to Combat the Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents**, a major platform to engage civil society, public institutions and young people in collective action to prevent and address sexual violence against children.

At the state level, the campaign mobilised young people, child protection professionals and civil society organisations through seminars, public events and awareness-raising activities coordinated by the State Network to Combat Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents. These initiatives increased public dialogue around child sexual exploitation while strengthening collaboration between institutions working within the child protection system.

At the national level, hotspot partner Childhood collaborated with the National Committee to Combat Sexual Violence Against Children and the federal government to organise high-visibility events in Brasília. A highlight was the presentation of a short version of the *Freedom of Expression* exhibit, which included art from girl beneficiaries of the program and was showcased as part of the national events. Two girls who created artwork shared their stories and the importance of the exhibit during the event. Brazil's First Lady, Janja Lula da Silva, received a brochure on the exhibit directly from the girls. The First Lady's engagement demonstrated high-level attention to the issue and created opportunities to amplify survivor-centred perspectives in public debate and policy discussions.

Through those activities, the campaign mobilised more than 30,000 people and contributed to strengthening public awareness by reinforcing the message that sexual exploitation of children is unacceptable violence. By creating spaces for dialogue, mobilisation and institutional engagement, the campaign continues to play an important role in shifting social attitudes and fostering collective responsibility for protecting children and adolescents.

1,337 family and community members engaged on protective practices

In addition to national and state-level mobilisation, hotspot partners also led community-based initiatives engaging **1,337 family and community members**, raising awareness about vulnerability factors and promoting

protective practices. These efforts have helped strengthen community vigilance, increase knowledge about risk factors and reporting mechanisms, and reinforce the message that protecting children is a shared responsibility.

System changes to shift power

One of the hotspot program's objectives is to strengthen coordination among stakeholders to tackle CSEC and hold the government accountable for the protection of children, addressing systemic barriers that prevent effective CSEC prevention and response efforts. By fostering collaboration, supporting collective advocacy and strengthening institutional responses, the program has been contributing to the creation and enforcement of protective policies and greater accountability of public authorities for the protection of children.



Participants on a march to parliament. ©Natália Corrêa/The Freedom Fund

Review process of Brazil's National Plan to Address Sexual Violence Against Children

Through collective advocacy, an important policy milestone was achieved this year: the federal government officially launched the process to review Brazil's National Plan to Address Sexual Violence Against Children. The review process will be carried out through regional consultations across the country and federal funds were secured to ensure broad civil society participation. Six of the program's partner organisations participated in the launch, contributing to early discussions on the plan.

Pernambuco's Ten-Year State Plan to Combat Sexual Violence Against Children

After several years of advocacy by the State Network to Combat Sexual Violence Against Children in Pernambuco, **Pernambuco's Ten-Year State Plan to Combat Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents** was officially approved in 2025, following a participatory process in which the Network played a key role in coordinating civil society input. Since then, the Network has been focusing its advocacy on ensuring the plan's effective implementation. It initiated a public budget analysis focused on policies for children, and launched advocacy with state authorities to secure funds for the plan's implementation in upcoming budget cycles. The Network also continued to advocate with state authorities and a State Representative for specialised police units dedicated to protecting children in the countryside.

Strengthening institutional responses to trafficking in persons (TIP) at the state level

Coordinated efforts between government institutions and civil society led to the consolidation of Pernambuco's anti-TIP policy reform. Following the creation of the State Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2024, the **Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons (NETP/PE) was set up** in 2025 as a dedicated unit responsible for implementing prevention and response actions through a multidisciplinary team of public servants, including a psychologist, a lawyer and a social worker. This development represents an important step toward institutionalising coordinated actions to prevent and respond to trafficking and related forms of exploitation in the state.



Freedom Fund partner, Instituto Aliança, program participants.
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Trauma-informed protocol launched in Recife and referral pathways for survivors developed

The program also continued to support improvements in the functioning of the child protection system through the implementation of **Law 13.431/2017**, which establishes protocols for the protection and care of child survivors and witnesses of violence. With technical assistance from hotspot partner Childhood, the municipalities of Recife, Olinda and Cabo de Santo Agostinho advanced implementation of the law. In Cabo de Santo Agostinho, a management committee was created and eight sectoral referral pathways were developed across education, social assistance and the public defender's office. In Olinda, referral pathways and a draft protocol were completed and are moving toward formal approval. In Recife, the protocol was approved and launched. These efforts contribute to strengthening coordinated responses among institutions and improving access to comprehensive and non-revictimising services for children and adolescents affected by violence.

Strengthening civil society organisations and movements

A quarterly **community of practice** (CoP) has matured into an important platform for coordination and collective learning among the program's eight civil society partners. These meetings have evolved beyond information-sharing into a trusted forum for strategic exchange, where partners jointly reflect on emerging challenges in the field, including the rise of online CSEC and the ways climate-related shocks are increasing vulnerabilities for women and children. In line with the Freedom Fund's revised strategy to strengthen locally led approaches, the meetings are co-designed and co-facilitated by the Freedom Fund together with partner representatives. This has increased partner ownership of the space and reinforced their leadership in shaping priorities and collective advocacy efforts. In response to partners' requests, the program has also brought in external experts to strengthen technical capacities in priority areas, including public budget advocacy to the implementation of the State Plan to Address Sexual Violence against Children.

Meanwhile, the **State Network to Combat Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents in Pernambuco** continued to play a central role in coordinating advocacy and mobilising stakeholders to strengthen policies addressing CSEC. Bringing together more than 30 governmental and civil

society organisations, the Network has consolidated its role as a key coalition for civil society engagement and government accountability. The Network continued to lead the mobilisation of the May 18 Campaign in Pernambuco, bringing together public institutions, civil society and communities to strengthen collective action against child sexual abuse and exploitation. The program continued to support the network in many ways: supporting partners to participate and coordinate the Network, directly funding activities of the Network and providing technical assistance on public budget analysis and advocacy.

Child participation in the movement was strongly promoted by our partners, with a total of **72** young leaders engaged in advocacy and awareness efforts during the year.



Freedom Fund partner, Instituto Aliança, program participant. ©Natália Corrêa/The Freedom Fund

CASE STUDY

At age 16, Ilana¹ was a survivor of sexual exploitation living in institutional care, facing additional emotional and social challenges due to fragile family relationships. Like many survivors and girls at risk, her chances of continuing her education and securing a future job opportunity were very low. However, this changed when a service of the child rights protection system referred her to hotspot partner Instituto Aliança, and she enrolled in their program.

During the early stages of the educational program, her attendance was irregular as she navigated the difficulties of that period in her life. However, through her own determination and with support from the program team, she remained engaged in the training and successfully completed the course at the end of 2022. This experience marked an important turning point, strengthening her confidence and opening new opportunities.

Following the training, with help from Escola Dom Bosco, Ilana entered the labour market as administrative assistance through Brazil's Apprenticeship Law program. Along with other graduates, she was selected for an apprentice position, a life-changing step for her. Over the following two years, Ilana received a monthly salary through the apprenticeship program while also completing her formal education.

In 2025, at the age of 19, when program evaluators connected with her, they found a young woman whose life path had significantly changed. Now a mother, she is determined to build a stable future for herself and her daughter. Together with her husband, she has managed to secure housing and generate additional income, reflecting the stability she has been able to achieve.

Her story illustrates how access to opportunities, institutional support and skills development can help young people overcome adversity and build pathways toward autonomy and dignity. Her journey reflects the broader impact of the program in supporting survivors and girls at risk to envision and pursue new life possibilities.

¹ Not her real name.



VISION

Our vision is a world
free of slavery.

MISSION

We invest in frontline organisations
and movements to drive a measurable
reduction of modern slavery in high-
prevalence countries and industries.

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