

Finance advocacy: Justice

Can perpetrators be held accountable without a funded justice system?

Engage with your government on financing justice systems that respond to child sexual violence.

Researched and developed by

ECONOMIST
ENTERPRISE

 Together
for girls

brave
movement.

Table of contents

What this tool covers.....	1
How to use this tool	2
Why finance advocacy matters	3
Prioritize safeguarding	3
From indicators to budget lines	4
When to make budget ‘asks’	7
How to put a number on your ask	8
Making the investment case	10
Economic argument	11
Rights and obligations argument	14
Public health argument	16
Your budget submission paragraph	20
Where to go next	21



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Finance advocacy

Justice pillar

What this tool covers

This document helps you turn Index findings into a concrete investment case and budget 'ask'. It walks you through what governments need to budget to improve scores for different indicators, how to time your 'ask' to the right moment in the budget cycle, how to estimate a credible figure, and how to argue for the investment.

1 in 3 countries

countries has banned corporal punishment in all settings

Index Indicator 4.1

Only 1 country

Rwanda has set the age of sexual consent at 18

Index indicator 4.3.1

2 in 3 countries

do not require internet service providers to report suspected child sexual abuse material

Index indicator 4.4.2

6 countries

have not eliminated statutes of limitations for statutory rape and ½ have only partially done so

Index Indicator 4.6

**65% of
countries**

are not yet connected to
INTERPOL's International Child
Sexual Exploitation database

Index indicator 4.7.2

Half of countries

received a score of
0 out of 100
for child- friendly
justice procedures

Index indicator 4.8

How to use this tool

Start with the section that matches where you are:

- **Building your case?** Start with Why budget advocacy matters and Making the investment case.
- **Preparing for a meeting or submission?** Go to From indicators to budget lines for ready-made 'asks', then use Your submission paragraph to draft your written request.
- **Not sure about timing?** Check When to make budget 'asks' to find the right moment in the budget cycle.
- **Need a number?** Go to How to put a number on your 'ask' for five practical costing approaches.

Use this alongside the Fact Sheet for background, the [Meeting Guide](#) when presenting your ask, and the [Email Templates](#) to follow up in writing.

Why finance advocacy matters

Laws and policies without budgets are promises without plans. The Out of the Shadows Index Justice pillar's eight indicators track whether governments have the laws, enforcement capacity, and child-friendly procedures needed to hold perpetrators of childhood sexual violence accountable and protect children and adolescents through the justice process — including against online sexual violence.

Even when these frameworks exist, they only work if they are funded. Every law, policy, program, and service depends on sustained, dedicated financing. Too often, however, government offices struggle to allocate budget for new initiatives. This financing gap is one of the biggest barriers to progress — and your advocacy can help close it.

Prioritize safeguarding

Review the Brave Movement's tools for [Safe advocacy](#), [Safe advocacy events](#), and [Trauma-informed meeting tips](#) to ensure you are ready and you are fully supporting any survivor advocates accompanying you on our journey.

Consult our full [Risk-assessment toolkit](#) and consider implementing recommended mitigation strategies.

From indicators to budget lines

The Justice indicators cover key laws, policies, programs, and services that governments should have in place to strengthen their legal systems for deterrence and accountability. The Justice pillar has the largest number of indicators in the Index, reflecting the breadth of legal reform and enforcement capacity needed.

Use this guide to strengthen your advocacy requests. The tables below can help you to create targeted ‘asks’ to decision-makers within the right Ministry (for example: Justice, Social Welfare, or Gender), at the right moment. You do not need to address all areas at once — identify where your country scored the lowest and start there.

Indicator	What it tracks	Budget-line-to target	Template language
4.1 Laws against corporal punishment	Whether corporal punishment is prohibited in all settings including the home.	Ministry of Justice / Social Welfare: legislative drafting, enforcement mechanisms, public awareness campaigns.	“Allocate [amount] for drafting and implementing legislation to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, including enforcement mechanisms and public education on positive discipline.”
4.2 Legal minimum marriage age	Whether the minimum marriage age is 18 with no exceptions.	Ministry of Justice / Gender: legislative reform, enforcement, community education, registration systems.	“Allocate [amount] for legislative reform to establish 18 as the minimum marriage age with no exceptions, supported by community engagement and enforcement capacity.”

Indicator	What it tracks	Budget-line-to target	Template language
4.3 Laws against childhood sexual violence (4.3.1–4.3.7)	Whether legislation comprehensively criminalizes all forms of sexual violence against children: contact, non-contact, intrafamilial, by persons in authority, trafficking, and exploitation.	Ministry of Justice: legislative review and reform, legal drafting, parliamentary process, training for judiciary and prosecutors on new provisions.	“Allocate [amount] for a comprehensive legislative review to ensure all forms of sexual violence against children are explicitly criminalized, including intrafamilial abuse, abuse by persons in positions of trust, and all elements of trafficking for sexual exploitation.”
4.4 Laws against online sexual violence (4.4.1–4.4.3)	Whether legislation addresses online grooming, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), and Internet Service Provider (ISP) reporting obligations.	Ministry of Justice / Digital Affairs / Interior: online safety legislation, law enforcement cyber capacity, ISP compliance frameworks, technology tools.	“Allocate [amount] for enacting and enforcing comprehensive online child safety legislation, including criminalization of online grooming, CSAM offenses, and mandatory ISP reporting, supported by [number] trained cyber investigators.”
4.5 Extraterritoriality and extradition	Whether the country has comprehensive provisions for cross-border prosecution of child sexual exploitation.	Ministry of Justice / Foreign Affairs: legislative reform, mutual legal assistance, international cooperation mechanisms.	“Allocate [amount] for legislative reform to ensure full extraterritoriality and extradition provisions for sexual exploitation of children, with removal of double criminality requirements.”

Indicator	What it tracks	Budget-line-to target	Template language
4.6 Statute of limitations reform	Whether criminal statutes of limitations for childhood sexual violence have been eliminated or meaningfully extended.	Ministry of Justice: legislative reform, judicial training, capacity to manage older cases.	“Allocate [amount] to enact legislation eliminating criminal statutes of limitations for sexual violence against children, supported by judicial training and investigative capacity for historical cases.”
4.7 Dedicated law enforcement (4.7.1–4.7.2)	Whether the country has specialized units and INTERPOL database connectivity for investigating sexual violence against children.	Ministry of Interior / Police: specialized unit staffing, training, equipment, INTERPOL database access and connectivity.	“Allocate [amount] to establish and deploy specialized law enforcement units for investigating sexual violence against children across [number] regions, including INTERPOL database connectivity and specialized training.”
4.8 Special procedures for child victims	Whether legislation provides child-friendly interviewing and testimony protections.	Ministry of Justice / Interior: child-friendly interview suites, video recording equipment, trained interviewers, courtroom video-link technology.	“Allocate [amount] to establish child-friendly interview facilities in [number] locations, equip courts with video testimony technology, and train [number] specialized interviewers in child-friendly techniques.”

When to make budget asks

Finance advocacy is most effective when timed to your government's fiscal cycle. This means making 'asks' during key moments when governments invite input on the budget or are actively making funding decisions. The table below outlines these key moments and what to do at each stage.

Budget cycle stage	What happens	Your action
Pre-budget consultations	The government invites input from stakeholders on spending priorities. Often happens 3–6 months before the budget is presented to parliament for deliberation.	Submit a written brief using the budget language above. Request a meeting with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior. Use your Meeting toolkit .
Budget formulation	Ministries prepare their budget proposals. This is when line items (specific types of expenditures or initiatives) are decided.	Work with allied parliamentarians or ministry contacts to ensure Justice-related budget lines are included in the draft. Provide the specific costing language from the table above.
Parliamentary review	Parliament debates and approves the budget. Committees may hold hearings.	Request to present at committee hearings. Coordinate with coalition partners to amplify the 'ask'. For online safety legislation, consider joint submissions with technology sector partners.
Budget execution and monitoring	Funds are (or are not) released and spent as allocated.	Track whether allocated funds are actually disbursed. Use Index data as a benchmark. If funds are not flowing, raise this in follow-up meetings and public statements.
Audit and evaluation	Government reports on spending. Audit bodies review.	Request access to spending reports. Compare actual spending to commitments. Use findings in your next budget cycle advocacy.

How to put a number on your ask

A costed request is harder to ignore. While you do not need to develop a perfect figure, a well-reasoned estimate with a source is always stronger than a vague ‘ask’. Here are five ways to arrive at a credible number for healing services.

- 1. Benchmark against a peer country.** Use the Index to identify a peer country that scores higher on your target Justice indicator. Research what it budgets for specialized units, child-friendly court procedures, or legislative reform. Frame it as: **“If [peer country] funds specialized child exploitation investigation units at [amount], [your country] should aim for comparable investment.”**
- 2. Build up from cost components.** Break your ask into building blocks a Finance or Justice Ministry would recognise. Even a rough component-based estimate signals seriousness.

Indicator	Examples of components to estimate
4.1–4.2 Legal reform (corporal punishment, marriage age)	Legislative drafting and parliamentary process; enforcement mechanisms; public education campaigns.
4.3 Laws against childhood sexual violence	Comprehensive legislative review; legal drafting consultancy; judiciary and prosecutor training on new provisions; community legal awareness.
4.4 Laws against online sexual violence	Online safety legislation drafting; cyber investigation unit staffing and equipment; Internet Service Provider (ISP) compliance frameworks; digital forensic tools.
4.7 Dedicated law enforcement	Specialized unit staffing and recruitment; INTERPOL database connectivity; investigator training; equipment and vehicles for regional deployment.
4.8 Child-friendly procedures	Child-friendly interview suites (Barnahus model); video testimony equipment for courts; trained forensic interviewers; the presence of a support person; courtroom adaptations.

3. Use published costings and reference tools:

- Safe Digital Futures authored [Digital futures, safe childhoods: Prioritizing child protection in Africa's budgets](#).
- The European [Barnahus model](#) has published implementation and operational costing for child-friendly justice centers that consolidate investigation, testimony, and support services.
- The [WeProtect Global Alliance Model National Response](#) provides a framework for costing online child safety systems, including law enforcement capacity and Internet Service Provider (ISP) reporting obligations.
- The [World Bank has published costings on child marriage](#) that quantify the return on legal reform (indicator 4.2). The World Health Organization (WHO) [INSPIRE technical package](#) includes guidance on costing laws and enforcement.

4. Ask the government for a figure: Ask the Ministry of Health or Justice: **“What would it cost to provide special child-friendly procedures in the criminal justice system for children who experience sexual violence in every district?”** This shifts the burden of costing to the actor with access to justice system data, creates a paper trail, and — if the ministry cannot answer, especially if they have made a commitment — becomes its own advocacy point: the government has not costed its own promise.

5. Use a percentage or benchmark framing: When exact figures are unavailable, proportional asks still give specificity: **“Allocate at least [X]% of the justice budget for specialized law enforcement units or officers”** or **“Ensure prosecution of sexual violence against children crimes receives at least [X]% of overall justice spending.”**

REMEMBER:

Governments use rough estimates at the early stages of budget formulation. Your role is to ensure the ‘ask’ is **specific enough to be actionable and grounded enough to be taken seriously.**

Making the investment case

Policymakers respond to different types of arguments. You do not need to use all three — pick the one that will land best in the room, and find the data that makes it real for your context.

WHICH ARGUMENT FOR WHICH AUDIENCE?

- **Finance ministries, treasury, budget committees, donors** → Lead with the Economic Argument
- **Parliamentarians, human rights bodies, regional mechanisms** → Lead with the Rights Argument
- **Health ministries and delegations, public health agencies** → Lead with the Public Health Argument
- **Mixed audiences** → Combine two: “This is both a legal obligation and a smart investment.”

Below each argument we show examples of real data from different regions. Your job: find the equivalent for your country. National data is always more persuasive than global averages.

ECONOMIC ARGUMENT

The core message: When justice systems fail children, governments pay more. Every case that collapses because the law is unclear, every child who drops out because the process is too traumatic, every perpetrator who re-offends because they were never prosecuted — these are costs the state absorbs across health, welfare, education, and policing budgets for years to come. Investing in legal reform, specialized investigators, and child-friendly court procedures is cheaper than paying for the consequences of impunity.

Examples of real data — find the equivalent for your context:

The cost of legal gaps:

- **Child marriage:** The World Bank estimates that child marriage could cost low- and middle-income countries trillions of dollars by 2030 through its impact on population growth, education, and earnings. Women who marry as children have, on average, earnings that are 9% lower than if they had married later. In Nigeria alone, this equals \$7.6 billion annually in lost earnings and productivity World Bank. Eliminating child marriage would save countries 5% or more of their education budget by 2030.¹ Setting the legal minimum age of marriage at 18 with no exceptions (indicator 4.2) is one of the most cost-effective legal reforms available.

¹ Quentin Wodon et al., Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: Global Synthesis Report, conference ed. (Washington, DC: World Bank and International Center for Research on Women, June 27, 2017)

- **Online childhood sexual violence:** The WeProtect Global Alliance estimates that online child sexual violence affects over 300 million children globally each year.² The enforcement costs, platform liability, victim services, and lost productivity associated with online offending are substantial — and growing as digital access expands. Legal coverage of grooming, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), and Internet Service Provider (ISP) reporting duties (indicator 4.4) is the foundation for any effective response.
- **Case attrition:** When cases collapse due to unclear laws, untrained investigators, or procedures that re-traumatize children, the state loses its investment in policing, prosecution, and court time — and the child re-enters the service system without resolution. Each failed prosecution represents a cost borne twice: once for the attempt, and again for the ongoing consequences of impunity.

The return on justice investment:

- The European Barnahus (Children's House) model — which provides child-friendly investigation and testimony in a single location — has been shown to reduce the number of interviews a child undergoes, increase prosecution rates, and lower costs by consolidating services that would otherwise be spread across police, health, and social welfare (indicator 4.8).

2 Childlight, “Executive Summary,” in [Into the Light Index](#) (2024)

- Countries that have established specialized law enforcement units for sexual violence against children (indicator 4.7) report higher case completion rates and more effective use of digital forensic evidence — reducing overall cost per case while improving outcomes.³
- Eliminating statutes of limitations for childhood sexual violence (indicator 4.6) removes an arbitrary barrier that wastes the investment already made when a case was first reported.

FIND YOUR OWN DATA

- Has your country conducted a Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS)? Check the [VACS data dashboard | Together for Girls](#) for your data.
- What are the policing and court costs of prosecuting sexual violence cases? Compare this amount to the cost of specialized units that have been shown to improve conviction rates.
- Has a national study estimated the economic cost of child marriage, online sexual violence, or trafficking? These strengthen the case for legal reform investment.
- If no national data exists, that is itself a powerful advocacy point: “We cannot prosecute what we have not legislated against, and we cannot enforce what we have not funded.”

³ See, e.g., U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program: in FY 2024, 61 specialized ICAC task forces conducted approximately 203,467 investigations, leading to more than 12,600 arrests [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#). See also INTERPOL, International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database.

RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS ARGUMENT

The core message: Children and adolescents have the right to justice. Beyond the right to protection from violence, the government is obliged to provide access to a legal system that recognizes what happened, holds perpetrators accountable, and treats children with dignity throughout the process. Governments that have ratified international instruments have already agreed to this. Budget lines are how agreement becomes reality.

Obligations your government has likely signed up to:

- **Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) article 34:** States must protect children from all forms of sexual violence.
- **CRC article 35:** States must take measures to prevent the abduction, sale, or trafficking of children.
- **CRC article 12:** Children have the right to be heard in judicial proceedings — which requires investment in child-friendly procedures (indicator 4.8).
- **Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC):** Requires comprehensive criminal legislation covering contact and non-contact offences, including online exploitation (indicators 4.3, 4.4, 4.5).
- **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.2:** End all forms of violence against children.
- **SDG 16.3:** Promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all — the most directly relevant SDG target for this pillar.

Regional instruments — find the ones your country has signed:

- **Africa:** African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) Articles 16 & 27; Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development; East African Community (EAC) Child Policy.
- **Asia-pacific:** Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Declaration on Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC); South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Child Welfare.
- **Americas:** Belém do Pará Convention; Organization of American States (OAS) Resolution on the Rights of the Child.
- **Europe and all:** Lanzarote Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse; Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.
- **United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)** and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol).

FIND YOUR OWN DATA

- When did your country ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OPSC)? What did the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommend on justice and legal reform in the most recent Periodic Report?
- Has your country ratified the Lanzarote Convention or Budapest Convention? If
- not, ratification itself is a concrete advocacy ‘ask’.

- Has your country signed on to the WeProtect Global Alliance Model National Response? This framework maps directly to the online justice indicators.
- Has your country made pledges at the [Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children \(EVAC\)](#) or World Health Assembly (WHA)? Pledges on justice reform without corresponding budget lines are a strong accountability lever.

PUBLIC HEALTH ARGUMENT

The core message: Justice is a health intervention. When children are re-traumatized by the justice process, their health outcomes worsen. When perpetrators are not held accountable, re-offending continues and more children are harmed, impacting their mental and physical wellbeing. Investing in child-friendly justice procedures, specialized investigators, and clear legal frameworks is an investment in prevention and recovery.

Justice as a determinant of health:

- **Re-traumatization:** Research consistently shows that children and adolescents who are required to give repeated testimony, face their abuser in court, or undergo adult-oriented investigation procedures experience worse mental health outcomes — including higher rates of post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety.⁴ Child- and adolescent-friendly procedures (indicator 4.8) are a clinical necessity.

4 Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, [Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services](#), Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, no. 57 (Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014), sec. 1, “A Review of the Literature,”

- **Child marriage and health:** Child marriage is associated with higher rates of pregnancy complications, maternal mortality, intimate partner violence, depression, and suicide^{5 6}. The legal minimum age of marriage (indicator 4.2) is a public health lever as well as a rights standard.
- **Impunity and re-offending:** When perpetrators are not prosecuted — because laws are unclear, investigators are not trained, or cases collapse — re-offending rates remain high. Each additional offense produces new victims and survivors who require health, psychosocial, child protection, legal, and justice services. Investment in specialized law enforcement (indicator 4.7) and clear legal definitions (indicator 4.3) reduces the ongoing public health and social burden.
- **Corporal punishment:** The evidence linking corporal punishment to adverse mental health outcomes in children is well-established, and children who experience physical violence are significantly more likely to experience other forms of violence, including sexual violence. Prohibition in all settings (indicator 4.1) is recognized by the World Health Organization as a public health measure — and a protective factor against the clustering of violence that drives demand for crisis services.⁷

5 Girls Not Brides, [Child Marriage and Maternal Health: We Must Address Child Marriage and Support Child Brides if We Are to Improve Maternal Health](#) (London: Girls Not Brides, November 2019)

6 A. J. Gage, “[Association of Child Marriage with Suicidal Thoughts and Attempts among Adolescent Girls in Ethiopia](#),” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 52, no. 5 (May 2013): 654–56

7 World Health Organization. [Corporal punishment of children: the public health impact](#) (2025). See also Finkelhor, D., et.al, OJJDP [Polyvictimization: Children's exposure to multiple types of violence, crime, and abuse](#). *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, NCJ 235504. (2011).

Why justice reform is a health investment:

- The Barnahus model demonstrates that when the justice process is designed around the child or adolescent — a single location, trained interviewers, recorded testimony, integrated health and psychosocial support — they recover faster and require fewer follow-up interventions. This reduces demand on health services over time.
- When statute of limitations reform allows adult victims and survivors to pursue cases (indicator 4.6), it also enables them to access services and recognition that support long-term recovery — reducing the chronic health costs associated with unresolved trauma.
- Cross-border cooperation on online sexual violence (indicators 4.4, 4.5) supports the rapid removal of child sexual abuse material — which is itself a public health measure, as continued circulation of images has been shown to compound the trauma experienced by the child depicted.

FIND YOUR OWN DATA

- Does your country have [VACS data dashboard | Together for Girls](#), which includes mental health outcomes for children who experience sexual violence? This data connects the justice gap directly to health service demand.
- Does your country have data on conviction rates for perpetration of sexual violence against children? Low rates signal both a justice and a health gap.

- Does your country provide integrated victim and survivor services across sectors? (e.g., health, psychosocial, child protection, legal, justice), such as a one-stop or Barnahus model? [see Index indicator 3.2] If not, this is a concrete investment ‘ask’ with strong evidence behind it.
- If no data exists, use the Index score: "[Country] scores [X] on special procedures for child survivors. This tells us the justice system may be adding to the harm rather than supporting recovery."

Your budget submission paragraph

Fill in the blanks below to create a paragraph you can include in a written submission, letter, or policy brief.

The Out of the Shadows Index shows that **[country]** scores **[score]** on the Justice pillar, which tracks whether a country has the laws, enforcement capacity, and child-friendly procedures to protect children and adolescents from sexual violence and to hold perpetrators accountable.

The key gap identified is **[describe the lowest-scoring indicator and what it means in practice — for example: "the law does not criminalize online grooming unless a physical meeting was planned, leaving children without legal protection from the most common form of online manipulation"]**. To close this gap, we request that the **[upcoming budget / supplementary estimates / sector plan]** include a dedicated allocation of **[amount or description]** for **[specific budget line from the table above — for example: legislative drafting and parliamentary review of online grooming provisions, or establishment of a specialized child exploitation investigation unit]**.

This investment would bring **[country]** in line with **[peer country or regional average / international standard / Lanzarote Convention requirements / Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) obligations]** and strengthen both the legal framework and the operational capacity needed to deliver justice for children.

Where to go next

This budget tool helps you translate your country's scores into specific, costed funding requests your government can act on. The other toolkit components help you turn evidence into action:

Component	What it does
Meeting guide	10-minute meeting script, 2-minute intervention, accountability questions.
Email templates	Ready-to-adapt outreach and follow-up emails.
Fact sheet	Background on what the Healing pillar tracks and how scores are calculated. It can prepare you to use this budget tool.