

Factsheet: Prevention

Does your country actually prevent harm?

Engage with your government to protect
children and adolescents from sexual violence
before it happens.

Researched and developed by

ECONOMIST
ENTERPRISE

 Together
for girls

brave
movement.

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Using the Out of the Shadows Index scores to advocate

Prevention pillar

About this fact sheet

This fact sheet is one of the Out of the Shadows Index ('the Index') advocacy tools. It explains what the Prevention pillar tracks, what the scores mean, and how to use the findings in your advocacy. It is designed for civil society organizations (CSOs), survivor advocates, youth advocates, and anyone engaging with government on policies, programs, services, and safeguards that protect children and adolescents from sexual violence before it happens.

What prevention looks like when systems work

A child learns at school how to recognize when something is wrong. They know the difference between safe and unsafe touch, and they have practiced saying no and telling a trusted adult. At home, their parents have received support and guidance on how to talk about safety and boundaries. Every adult working in their school has been checked for a criminal record. If something does go wrong, the child knows there is a free helpline they can call at any time — day or night — and a health worker at their local clinic who has been trained to recognize and respond to sexual violence against children and adolescents.

This is what strong prevention systems make possible.

The Out of the Shadows Index Prevention pillar tracks whether countries have built the safeguards to deliver it.

What the prevention pillar covers

The Prevention pillar assesses whether a country has put in place the programs, safeguards, and trained professionals needed to stop sexual violence against children and adolescents before it happens and facilitate healing and justice if it does. Its five indicators cover key laws, policies, programs, and services that governments should have in place. Read more below to find out what each indicator tracks, and how each plays a role in prevention.

Indicator	What it measures	Why it matters	Score range
2.1 Education for students	Whether the national curriculum includes life skills-based sexuality and reproductive health education for lower-secondary students, including awareness of sexual violence against children and adolescents, online safety, and help-seeking.	A child or adolescent who has never been taught what sexual violence looks like may not recognize it when it happens to them — or know how to seek help.	0-3
2.2 Parenting and caregiver support	Whether home visiting programs and/or center-based parenting support are available in the country.	Parenting support programs reduce risk factors for violence in the home and strengthen the protective relationships that help children feel safe to speak up.	0-2
2.3 Background checks	Whether the country requires criminal background checks for all individuals working with children and adolescents.	Children and adolescents interact with many adults in positions of trust — background checks are a basic safeguard against known offenders.	0-2
2.4 Training for health care providers	Whether national legislation requires pre-service or recurring training on sexual violence against children and adolescents for general medical doctors providing primary care to children.	Health workers see children and adolescents routinely — with training, they can identify early warning signs, respond appropriately, and connect children and families to support before harm escalates.	0-1

Indicator	What it measures	Why it matters	Score range
2.5 Availability of helpline	Whether the country has a nationwide, toll-free helpline accessible to all children and adolescents, available 24/7, with voice and text options, counseling, and referrals.	A child or adolescent in crisis needs a safe, immediate, and confidential way to reach someone who can help — at any hour.	0-2

How to interpret each score

A higher score means more prevention safeguards are in place. A lower score signals that there are gaps which leave children and adolescents without the protection they need before harm occurs.

2.1 Education for students (0–3)

0	No mandatory life skills-based sexuality and reproductive health education in the national curriculum, just abstinence-only education is covered or information is not publicly available.
+1	Life skills-based sexuality and reproductive health education is included in the national curriculum. Abstinence may be emphasized, but additional information (eg, about contraception and condom use) must also be included.
+1	The curriculum also includes awareness of childhood sexual violence, including how to identify it and seek help.
+1	The curriculum covers online safety and the risks of sexual violence through digital technologies.

2.2 Parenting and caregiver support (0–2)

0	No home visiting or center-based parenting support programs are available.
1	Either home visiting or center-based parenting support is available, but not both.
2	Both home visiting programs and center-based parenting support are available.

2.3 Background checks (0–2)

0	National legislation does not include provisions requiring criminal background checks for people working with children and adolescents. Convicted sex offenders are not prohibited from holding positions involving direct contact with children.
1	Legislation includes non-mandatory provisions or provisions limited in scope — for example, covering only nationals or non-nationals, only staff (not volunteers), or only public settings. Convicted sex offenders may also be prohibited from holding positions in settings involving direct contact with children and adolescents.
2	Legislation mandates criminal background checks for every national or non-national working with children and adolescents, including staff, consultants, and volunteers. Convicted sex offenders may also be prohibited from holding positions in settings involving direct contact with children and adolescents.

2.4 Pre-service training for health care providers (0–1)

0	National legislation does not require pre-service or recurring training on sexual violence against children and adolescents for general medical doctors providing primary care to children, or no information is publicly available.
1	National legislation requires pre-service or recurring training on sexual violence against children and adolescents for general medical doctors who provide primary care to children.

2.5 Availability of helpline (0–2)

0	No nationwide, toll-free helpline exists for children and adolescents, or it is not available country-wide, or no information is publicly available.
1	A nationwide helpline is available but with limitations: it may not operate 24/7, may lack text or messaging options, or may not provide referral mechanisms.
2	A nationwide helpline is available 24/7, with voice, messaging, and text options, offering counseling and referral to appropriate services.

How to use this fact sheet in your advocacy

In a meeting with government representatives

Share the country's Prevention score and use it to anchor your 'ask'.
For example: **"Your country scored [X] on education for students. This means children and adolescents are not being taught how to recognize sexual violence or seek help. We are asking you to include mandatory, age-appropriate content on sexual violence awareness and online safety in the national curriculum by [year]."**

In a campaign or public statement

Lead with a human-centered framing: **"Right now, a child in [country] who is being groomed online may have no idea what is happening to them — because no one has ever taught them what sexual violence looks like. The Out of the Shadows Index shows that prevention systems are failing. We're calling on [government] to act."**

At a budget advocacy moment

Pair the Prevention score with a costed proposal: **"Investing [amount] in [specific program] would address [specific gap identified by the Index]. Here is the evidence and here is the 'ask'."**

How prevention connects to other pillars

The Prevention pillar does not work in isolation. A child's safety depends on multiple pillars working together:

- **Governance and accountability:** Does a national survivor council exist, and is it consulted on prevention efforts? Does the national action plan include prevention strategies? Is the budget funding school-based programs and helplines?
- **Healing:** Are health workers trained to recognize sexual violence (2.4) and refer children and adolescents to the mental health and medical services measured by the Healing pillar?
- **Justice:** Do background check requirements (2.3) connect to the laws against sexual violence measured by the Justice pillar? Does the curriculum include online safety (2.1) alongside legal protections against online grooming (4.4)?

Advocacy tip

If you find a gap in the Prevention pillar, check the related indicators in other pillars. A weak score on education for students (2.1) may connect to the absence of a national action plan that includes prevention (1.2.1). Building a cross-pillar 'ask' strengthens your advocacy.

Humanizing prevention

This vignette spans the entire Prevention pillar and allows you to humanize what good prevention means for the lives of children and adolescents. Use it when you want to tell the full story of what happens when the systems fail and what it looks like when they work, in a way that does not require any survivor's personal disclosure.

WHAT IT IS

A 14-year-old is contacted online by an adult who asks them to share images. The child does not recognize what is happening — their school has never taught them about online safety, grooming, or what sexual violence looks like. They have no language for it.

At home, their parents are struggling. They have never received support or guidance on how to talk to their children about safety and boundaries. The child searches for someone to call but cannot find a helpline that is free, available at night, or reachable by text. They try to speak to a nurse at school, but the nurse has no training in recognizing or responding to sexual violence against children and adolescents. No adult at the school has been subject to a criminal background check.

The child stays silent — not because they do not want help, but because every layer of prevention that should have been in place was missing.

WHAT COULD BE

A 14-year-old is contacted online by an adult who asks them to share images. This child has had lessons at school about online safety, healthy relationships, and how to recognize grooming. They know something is wrong.

They text a free, 24-hour national helpline and speak to a trained counselor who listens, believes them, and explains what will happen next. A nurse at school — trained to recognize signs of distress in children — notices the child seems withdrawn and gently checks in. Every adult working at the school has passed a criminal background check.

The child's parents, who received support through a home visiting program, know how to have an open conversation about safety. The child does not carry this alone — because prevention was built into every layer of their life before the harm reached them.

Bridge to action

This is the gap the Index helps us close. Each step in this journey maps to a scored Prevention indicator: education for students (2.1), parenting and caregiver support (2.2), background checks (2.3), training for health care providers (2.4), and availability of a helpline (2.5). [Country] scores [X] across these indicators. We are asking [Ministry] to [specificaction] by [year] — so that no child or adolescent is left unprotected because the system is not prepared to keep them safe.

Where to go next

This fact sheet gives you the evidence. The other toolkit components help you turn evidence into action:

Document	What it gives you
Budget template	Practical guidance on turning Prevention findings into budget ‘asks’, with costing entry points and sample language.
Meeting guide	A ready-to-use meeting script, intervention format, accountability questions, and follow-up prompts for government engagements.
Email templates	Pre-drafted outreach, follow-up, and escalation emails for policymaker engagement, with customizable placeholders.