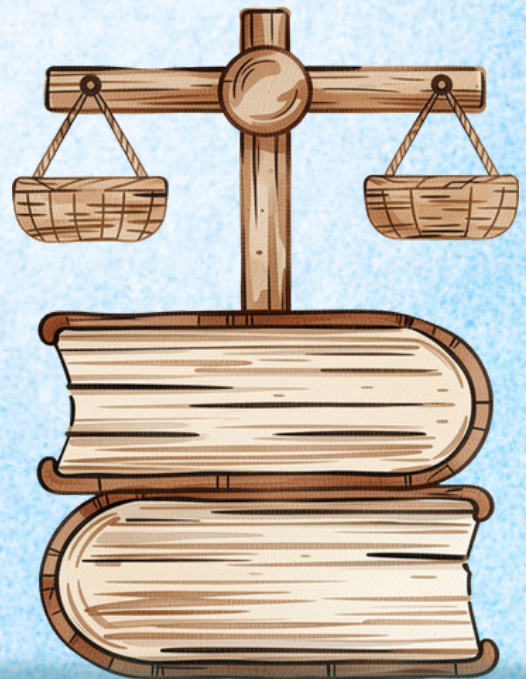


OUT OF THE SHADOWS INDEX ADVOCACY TOOLS | Fact sheet

Using the Out of the Shadows Index scores to advocate Justice pillar



Researched and developed by

**ECONOMIST
IMPACT**



**Together
for girls**
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

**brave
movement.**

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Using the Out of the Shadows Index scores to advocate

Justice 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 Justice pillar tracks—including both offline and online dimensions—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 policymakers and the government on laws, enforcement, and child-friendly justice procedures related to sexual violence against children and adolescents.

What justice looks like when systems work

Children and adolescents are protected by law from all forms of violence. Corporal punishment is prohibited in every setting, including the home. The law sets the minimum age of marriage at 18, with no exceptions. Sexual violence against children and adolescents is clearly defined and criminalized.

When a child does experience sexual violence, they walk into a system that was built for them. A specialized officer interviews the child in a private room, using language they can understand. The interview is recorded so the child does not have to say it again in court. A trusted adult stays with them. There is no time limit pressuring the child — the law recognizes that disclosure can take years.

If the perpetrator is in another country, cross-border cooperation means they cannot escape accountability. When the case reaches court, the child or adolescent is protected from contact with the accused. Rather than requiring bravery from a child, the system is built to receive them with care.

If they are approached online, for example by an adult who manipulates them into sharing sexual images, the law recognizes it as grooming and has established grooming as a crime. The child's images are treated as evidence of violence. A trusted adult can report quickly. Platforms and internet service providers have a duty to report suspected child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Trained investigators can preserve digital evidence before it disappears. If the offender is in another country, law enforcement can work across borders. The child or adolescent is protected from blame and re-exposure.

This is what strong justice systems make possible.

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

What the justice pillar covers

The Justice pillar measures 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 when it happens. It covers both offline and online justice, from the legal foundations that prevent violence to the systems that respond when a child needs them.

Its 17 indicators and subindicators cover key laws, policies, programs, and services that governments should have in place. Read more below to find out what each indicator measures, and how each plays a role in justice.

Indicator	What it measures	Why it matters	Score range
4.1 Laws against corporal punishment	Whether the country has prohibited corporal punishment of children in all settings, including the home.	Corporal punishment normalizes violence against children and adolescents. Prohibition in all settings, including the home, is a foundational legal protection.	0-3
4.2 Legal minimum marriage age	Whether the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 with no exceptions.	Child marriage exposes children to sexual violence and exploitation – exceptions undermine protection.	0-2
4.3 Laws against childhood sexual violence	Seven sub-indicators covering age of consent; contact/non-contact violence; intrafamilial sexual abuse; abuse of power; trafficking; and sexual exploitation.	Clear definitions close legal gaps and strengthen prosecution.	0-2
4.4 Laws against online sexual violence			
4.4.1 Online grooming	Whether legislation criminalizes online grooming of children and adolescents for sexual purposes.	Grooming is often the precursor to contact sexual violence – it must be clearly defined and considered a crime even if there is no intention to meet.	0-3
4.4.2 Child sexual abuse material (CSAM)	Whether legislation defines and criminalizes technology-facilitated child sexual abuse material (CSAM) offenses, including possession.	Every image is a real child who has been harmed – comprehensive CSAM legislation is foundational to online safety.	0-4
4.4.3 Internet service provider (ISP) duty to report	Whether internet service providers are required to report suspected child sexual abuse material to authorities.	Reporting duties make detection possible and enable rapid action to protect children and adolescents.	0-1
4.5 Extraterritoriality and extradition	Whether cross-border provisions apply to sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.	Perpetrators must not escape accountability by traveling.	0-2

Indicator	What it measures	Why it matters	Score range
4.6 Statute of limitations reform	Whether time limits have been eliminated for childhood sexual violence.	Victims and survivors often disclose years later – time limits deny justice.	0-5
4.7 Dedicated law enforcement	Two sub-indicators covering specialized sexual violence against children units and connection to INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database.	Specialized capacity and cross-border cooperation improve investigations and outcomes.	0-3
4.8 Special procedures for child victims in the criminal justice system	Whether child-friendly procedures are legally provided (e.g., recorded interviews, testimony protections).	Without protections, the justice process itself can re-traumatize the child.	0-2

How to interpret each score

A higher score means stronger legal protections and enforcement capacity are in place. A lower score signals that there are gaps which leave children and adolescents without legal protection or access to child-friendly justice.

4.1 Laws against corporal punishment (0–3)

0	Corporal punishment is not fully prohibited in any setting.
1	Prohibited in some settings but not all (for example, in schools but not in the home).
2	Government has committed to full prohibition but has not enacted it.
3	Prohibited in all settings, including the home.

4.2 Legal minimum marriage age (0–2)

0	No minimum legal age of marriage, taking into account all exceptions.
1	Minimum legal age is below 18, or exceptions allow marriage below 18.
2	Legal age of marriage is 18 or above, with no exceptions.

4.3 Laws against childhood sexual violence (sub-indicators)

This indicator is composed of seven sub-indicators (4.3.1–4.3.7). Use your country’s score on these to pinpoint the exact legal gaps to close.

4.3.1 Age of sexual consent (0-2)

0	Legislation establishes an age of consent for only one sex, or the age is set below 16.
1	The age of consent is 18 for both sexes but without a close-in-age exemption, or the age is between 16 and 17 for both sexes.
2	The age of consent is 18 for both sexes, with a close-in-age exemption for consensual acts between peers.

4.3.2 Contact sexual violence (0-2)

0	National legislation does not criminalize contact sexual violence against children and adolescents, or no information is publicly available.
1	National legislation criminalizes contact sexual violence only against girls and female adolescents.
2	National legislation criminalizes contact sexual violence against all children and adolescents.

4.3.3 Non-contact sexual violence (0-2)

0	National legislation does not criminalize non-contact sexual violence against children and adolescents, or no information is publicly available.
1	National legislation criminalizes contact sexual violence only against girls and female adolescents.
2	National legislation criminalizes non-contact sexual violence against children and adolescents.

4.3.4 Intrafamilial sexual violence (0-2)

0	National legislation does not explicitly criminalize intrafamilial sexual violence against children and adolescents, or no information is publicly available.
1	The law criminalizes intrafamilial sexual violence but is limited in scope (for example, covering only biological parents).
2	The law covers a broad range of family members and people in a parental role, including step-parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, and extended family.

4.3.5 Positions of authority or trust (0-2)

0	National legislation does not explicitly criminalize sexual acts against children by people in positions of trust or authority, or no information is publicly available.
1	Legislation exists but is insufficient. It may not cover children up to the age of 18 (for example, only up to 16), does not apply to all sexual acts, applies only to people in certain settings or roles, or does not apply to both boys and girls.
2	Legislation criminalizes all sexual acts against both boys and girls up to age 18 by people in positions of trust, authority, or influence across roles and settings.

4.3.6 Trafficking for sexual exploitation (0-2)

0	National legislation does not criminalize child trafficking for sexual exploitation, or no information is publicly available.
1	Legislation criminalizes some but not all elements (recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, and receipt).
2	Legislation criminalizes all elements of child trafficking for sexual exploitation.

4.3.7 Sexual exploitation (0-2)

0	No standalone provisions criminalizing forcing a child into sexual exploitation or purchasing sexual acts with a child, or no information is publicly available.
1	Legislation includes standalone provisions criminalizing both forcing a child into sexual exploitation and purchasing sexual acts with a child.

4.4.1 Online indicators

This indicator is composed of three sub-indicators (4.4.1–4.4.3). Use your country's score on these to pinpoint the exact legal gaps to close.

4.4.1 Online grooming (0-3)

0	Legislation does not explicitly criminalize online grooming.
+1	Legislation criminalizes online grooming with the intent to meet the child or adolescent.
+1	Legislation criminalizes online grooming regardless of intent to meet the child.
+1	Legislation provides a clear definition or description of online grooming (or an equivalent term).

4.4.2 Child sexual abuse material (CSAM) Suggested table (0-4)

0	No legislation specific to child sexual abuse material.
+1	Legislation exists and criminalizes CSAM.
+1	Legislation provides a definition of CSAM.
+1	Legislation criminalizes technology-facilitated CSAM offenses.
+1	Legislation criminalizes knowing possession of CSAM, regardless of intent to distribute.

4.4.3 Internet Service Provider (ISP) duty to report (0–1)

0	No legal requirement for ISPs to report suspected child sexual abuse material (CSAM), or no information is publicly available.
1	National legislation requires ISPs to report suspected CSAM to law enforcement or a mandated agency.

4.5 Extraterritoriality and extradition (0–2)

0	Provisions do not apply to sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, or double criminality is required.
1	Provisions exist but are limited in scope (for example, covering only some offenses or applying conditions).
2	Comprehensive provisions: active and passive extraterritoriality for all offenses, extradition is possible, and double criminality does not apply.

4.6 Statute of limitations reform (0–5)

0	Statute of limitations for statutory rape is less than five years.
1	Statute of limitations is between 5 and 10 years.
2	Statute of limitations is between 11 and 15 years.
3	Statute of limitations is 16 years or longer.
5	Statutes of limitations for childhood sexual violence have been fully eliminated.
+1	Limitations period does not begin to run/accrue until the victim or survivor attains the age of majority (or a later date specified by law that is at least the age of majority), rather than beginning at the time of the offense.

4.7 Dedicated law enforcement (sub-indicators)

This indicator is composed of two sub-indicators (4.7.1–4.7.2). Use these to identify whether your country has the specialized capacity needed to investigate sexual violence against children (SVAC) and adolescents effectively.

4.7.1 Specialized law enforcement unit/officers for investigating sexual violence against children and adolescents

0	No specialized law enforcement unit or designated officers for investigating sexual violence against children and adolescents, or no information is publicly available.
1	The country has a specialized law enforcement unit or designated specialized officers responsible for investigating SVAC.

4.7.2 Country is connected to INTERPOL’s International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database

0	The country is not connected to INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database, or no information is publicly available.
1	The country is connected to the INTERPOL’s ICSE database.

4.8 Special procedures for child victims in the criminal justice system (0–2)

0	No special procedures exist for child and adolescent victims in the criminal justice system.
+1	Some child-friendly provisions exist (for example, trained officers, preferred-gender interviewer, guardian present).
+1	In addition, testimony can be video-recorded and used in court and/or the child can testify with protections (e.g., video link, shielding).

How to use this fact sheet in your advocacy

In a meeting with government representatives

Share the country's Justice score and use it to anchor a specific, time-bound ask (for example: "Your country scored [X] on intrafamilial sexual violence laws. We are asking you to explicitly criminalize sexual violence against children and adolescents by family members, including guardians and extended family, by [year].").

In a campaign or public statement

Lead with a human-centered framing that links legal gaps to a child's lived experience, then name the reform you want (for example: "Close the legal gap. Fund the unit. Protect children in court.").

At a budget advocacy moment

Pair the legal ask with the capacity ask: specialized investigators, forensic capability, trained prosecutors, and child-friendly court infrastructure.

Humanizing justice

This vignette spans the entire Justice pillar and allows you to humanize what good justice 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 personal disclosure.

WHAT IT IS

A 15-year-old discloses to a teacher that they have been sexually abused by a family member for years. The teacher doesn't know who to call. Eventually, a report reaches the police but there is no specialized unit. The officer who takes the statement has no training in interviewing children. The child or adolescent is asked to describe what happened in an open office, in adult language, with no support person present.

The family is told that the law does not explicitly criminalize sexual violence by a family member. The case stalls. Months pass. The child or adolescent is called back to give the same account again — and again. When a court date is finally set, the child must face the accused in the same room. There is no option to testify by video or behind a screen.

Then the family learns there is a deadline. The statute of limitations is running out. The system did not fail because the child waited too long to speak but because it was not built to listen.

WHAT COULD BE

A 15-year-old discloses to a teacher that they have been sexually abused by a family member for years. The teacher follows a clear reporting pathway.

A specialized unit trained in sexual violence against children and adolescents takes the case. An officer interviews the child in a private setting, using age-appropriate language. The interview is video-recorded so the child gives their account once — not five times.

The law is clear: sexual violence by a family member is explicitly criminalized, including by guardians, stepparents, and extended family. There is no statute of limitations — the law recognizes that children often disclose years after their experience. If the perpetrator has crossed a border, extraterritorial provisions and extradition cooperation mean geography is not an escape route.

In court, the child testifies by video link and is shielded from the accused. The system does not ask the child to carry the case, rather it carries the child.

“WHAT IS / WHAT COULD BE” – Online Justice Journey

WHAT IT IS

A 12-year-old is contacted by an adult through a gaming platform. It starts with compliments and small gifts and then escalates to requests for images, threats, and coercion. By the time a parent finds out, the images have already been shared.

The parent tries to report. The police say it is "a platform issue." The law does not criminalize grooming unless a physical meeting was planned, so the months of manipulation are treated as legally irrelevant. There is no requirement for the platform or internet provider to report suspected child sexual abuse material. The images stay online. The digital evidence degrades.

The adult is based in another country. There is no mechanism to investigate across borders. The child or adolescent is left feeling that what happened to them online was somehow less real and the system confirms it.

WHAT COULD BE

A 12-year-old is contacted by an adult through a gaming platform who grooms and coerces them into sharing sexual images. The law names grooming as a crime — regardless of whether the adult ever intended to meet the child. The coercion and the images are evidence.

The platform and internet service provider are legally required to report suspected child sexual abuse material to a mandated authority. Reporting triggers rapid preservation of digital evidence and action to protect the child. Specialized investigators secure the data before it disappears.

The adult is in another country — but cross-border cooperation is activated. The child receives a trauma-informed response and is never blamed. Online harm is treated as real harm, and the justice system responds quickly, the perpetrator is held accountable, and no other child is harmed.

Where to go next

This document gives you the evidence. The companion toolkit resources help you turn it into action:

Document	What it gives you
Budget template	Practical guidance on turning Justice 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.