

ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND LEGAL
REMEDIES FOR CHILDREN SUBJECTED
TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN

KAZAKHSTAN



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1

Why is access to justice and legal remedies important for children who have been subjected to sexual exploitation?



Children who have been subjected to sexual exploitation are entitled to rebuild their lives and find a path towards healing. Access to justice and effective remedies is a critical step in that process. Under international law, children have a fundamental right to live free from abuse and exploitation,¹ and when this or any other right is violated, States must provide access to effective remedies and reparations.^{2,3,4} Access to justice implies the legal empowerment of survivors and access to fair, timely, and child-sensitive justice mechanisms and remedies, including compensation and support services to aid their recovery and reintegration.^{5,6,7} This is all the more important because, in practice, seeking redress through criminal proceedings is often the only feasible way for survivors to secure damage compensation, as alternative avenues—such as separate civil lawsuits or State-funded compensation schemes—tend to be unavailable, costly, impractical, or exist only on paper.⁸

- 1 UN General Assembly (UNGA). (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Art 34.
- 2 UNGA. (1965). *International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*. Art 6; UNGA. (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. Art 2(3); UNGA. (1984). *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. Art 13; UNGA. (2006). *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*. Art 12, 17(2)(f), 20.
- 3 UNGA. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Art 8; UNGA. (2005). *UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law*; UNGA. (1992). *Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances*. Art 9, 13; UN Economic and Social Council. (1989). *Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions*. Principles 4 and 16; UNGA. (1985). *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power*. Principles 4 to 7; World Conference on Human Rights. (1993). *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. Art 27; World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. (2001). *Durban Declaration and Programme of Action*. Art 13, 160-162 and 165; UNGA. (1998). *Declaration on Human Rights Defenders*. Art 9.
- 4 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2003). *General Comment No. 5 on 'General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child'*. CRC/GC/2003/5. Paragraph 24.
- 5 UNGA. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Art 39.
- 6 Liefwaard, T. (2019). *Access to Justice for Children: Towards a Specific Research and Implementation Agenda*. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol. 27(2). 198.
- 7 ECPAT International. (2017). *Through the Eyes of a Child: Barriers to Access to Justice and Remedies for Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation*.
- 8 Ibid. 17.

2

Methodology



The information presented in this paper has been gathered through documentary legal research aimed at determining the extent to which Kazakh laws provide access to child-centric justice and protection for children who have been subjected to sexual exploitation. The paper further integrates insights from qualitative semi-structured interviews with ten key informants. These included an independent expert in the field of human trafficking, social workers, members of the commission on juvenile affairs, executive directors of private institutions providing social services, supervisors from public foundations, and representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The purpose of these interviews was to explore informants' perceptions of the practical realities of children's access to justice.

The findings from this research were presented to a group of 23 participants during a national consultation, which took place on 25 April 2025 in Astana. Participants provided feedback on the findings and discussed the way forward to enhance access to justice and effective remedies for children subjected to sexual exploitation in Kazakhstan.

3

Reporting child sexual exploitation and starting legal action



National complaint mechanisms

Procedural law allows individuals to report criminal offences orally, in writing, or electronically using an online platform.⁹ Reports need to be signed by the person submitting them. If a report lacks sufficient information to suggest a crime has occurred, the relevant authorities are required to assess it within three days.¹⁰ While the Criminal Procedure Code allows anyone to file a report, most interviewed professionals noted that there are no reporting mechanisms specifically tailored for children.

A Head of Department at the Academy of Law Enforcement Agencies explained that children can contact the police or the Ombudsman and file complaints in the presence of a parent, teacher, psychologist, member of the juvenile police department, or by using dedicated hotlines (150 for children and young people, 111 for family and children's rights protection, and 102 for the police).

While these mechanisms theoretically allow children to report offences or rights violations, practical challenges persist. Existing systems are not child-centric, lacking age-appropriate language, support, and safeguards to ensure confidentiality and safety when reporting abuse, rights violations, or well-being concerns. Several key informants noted that confidentiality is not always respected, and not all teachers and psychologists are aware of the proper procedures.

In addition, children typically cannot report crimes independently. For instance, even when using online platforms, a child must rely on an adult's electronic signature and, in many cases, authorities still require the presence of caregivers to process the report.¹¹

⁹ Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). *Criminal Procedure Code*. Art 181. Qamqor (qamqor.gov.kz) is a separate portal of information services of the Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Accounts of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan (CLS&SA). It is intended for filing appeals to state bodies, statements to the police and monitoring their status. In addition, it contains simple services for obtaining information from databases of criminals, defaulters of alimony, missing people, including and children.

¹⁰ Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). *Criminal Procedure Code*. Art 181(5).

¹¹ Sana Sezim. (2024, March). Personal Communication.

Social and contextual factors impacting reporting

Key informants interviewed noted that children are not always aware of their right to report crimes, often do not recognise certain acts as criminal, and may avoid seeking help due to fear of exposure and retaliation. Although two interviewees highlighted that law enforcement agencies run awareness campaigns through meetings and social media, most agreed that such efforts may remain limited in reach, with persistent challenges around accessibility and a lack of public interest. Two key informants also emphasised that children often distrust authorities and fear prosecution. A Head of Department at the Academy of Law Enforcement Agencies echoed this view, citing distrust, fear, and prejudice as major barriers preventing children from reporting abuse or other offences. Opinions were divided on the role of cultural norms and gender biases in shaping reporting behaviours. While half of the key informants emphasised the law's impartiality toward all citizens, others, including a civil society representative, highlighted that social stigma and gendered expectations do influence whether and how children, especially girls, approach the police.

Initiating legal proceedings and collecting evidence

Crimes like child sexual exploitation and abuse¹² can be prosecuted at a prosecutor's initiative when they uncover evidence of the offence, learn of it shortly after it occurs, or receive a report.¹³ Despite the existence of

¹² Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). *Criminal Procedure Code*. Art 32.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Republic of Kazakhstan. (2024). *Law on amendments and additions to certain legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on issues of ensuring women's rights and child safety*.

¹⁵ Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). *Code on Marriage (Matrimony) and Family*. Art 67(3).

special police units for protecting women from violence and handling cases involving child victims,¹⁴ a Head of Department at the Academy of Law Enforcement Agencies noted that public awareness of these units remains low, undermining the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms, particularly in the regions.

A representative from the Ministry of Internal Affairs cited school psychologists, crisis centres, and the juvenile police as key entry points for initiating investigations into child abuse. However, both this representative and a former police colonel interviewed highlighted serious challenges in gathering data and securing evidence. A civil society representative noted that investigators lack the skills to conduct child-sensitive investigations and properly collect evidence. They added that if a child is under 10 years old, the case is often dismissed, as courts tend not consider their testimony credible. According to this informant, investigators do not engage psychologists as expert witnesses, nor are psychologists allowed to serve in that role. Moreover, Kazakhstan has very few qualified sexopathologists who can provide expert testimony in court.

Mandatory reporting

Under Kazakhstan's legislation, state officials, organisations, and citizens are legally obliged to report any known threat to a child's life or health, or any violation of their rights and interests to the relevant guardianship or trusteeship authority.¹⁵ Once notified, the responsible authority is required to take the necessary measures

to protect the child.¹⁶ Failure to report a particularly serious crime, such as those against the sexual integrity of a child, is a criminal offence. Penalties include a fine of up to 6,000 monthly calculation indices (23,592,000 KZT, approx. 46,000 USD as of June 2025), correctional labour of an equivalent value, restriction of freedom for up to six years, or imprisonment for the same duration.¹⁷ However, the law exempts certain individuals from mandatory reporting obligations including the perpetrator’s partners and close relatives, as well as priests who learn of the offence during confession.¹⁸ Public officials who conceal child sexual abuse by deceiving or coercing those who reported it may face a fine or up to five years in prison.¹⁹

Time limits for prosecution

The Criminal Code of Kazakhstan establishes statutes of limitations²⁰ for prosecuting offences based on the severity of the punishment.²¹ However, these limitations do not apply to crimes against the sexual inviolability of children.²² Exempted offences include sexual violence against children, sexual acts with children under 16, procurement of sexual services from a child and the involvement of children in prostitution, production of “erotic” or “pornographic” materials, or participation in “entertainment events of a pornographic nature”.²³ However, this exemption does not extend to the crime of trafficking of children,²⁴ which remains subject to statutes of limitations of 10 to 15 years from the date of the offence, depending on the specifics of each case.²⁵ Similarly, in the absence of aggravating circumstances, offences involving the production, possession, distribution, or cross-border transportation of child sexual abuse material intended for public display or advertisement²⁶ are subjected to a 10-year limitation period.²⁷ These loopholes create a potential avenue for impunity, undermining the broader objective of ensuring justice for all children who have been subjected to sexual exploitation.

16 Ibid.
17 Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). [Criminal Code](#). Art 434.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid. Art 433(3).
20 It is important to recall that statutes of limitations is a time period set by law during which the victim can report the offence suffered, and, once that period has expired, not only will this no longer be possible, but if the court has not issued a final judgement on the matter within this period, the alleged offender cannot be punished anymore for that offence.
21 Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). [Criminal Code](#). Art 71.
22 Ibid. Art 71-6.
23 Ibid. Art 3-42.
24 Ibid. Art 135.
25 Ibid. Art 11, 71.
26 Ibid. Art 312.
27 Ibid. Art 11, 71.

4

Child-centric justice



Legal aid and interpretation

People involved in criminal cases, including children subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse, have the right to free translation services if necessary.²⁸ To protect the legitimate interests of children, their legal representatives must also represent them throughout the process.²⁹ In cases where the child does not have a lawyer, the body overseeing the proceedings may appoint one for them, and the State will cover the cost if the child cannot afford it.³⁰

A supervisor at a support centre for children in conflict with the law confirmed that all services for victims of crime are provided free of charge, promptly, and competently. A Head of Department at the Academy of Law Enforcement Agencies also highlighted that non-governmental organisations often provide free legal services. However, two interviewees noted that the quality of free legal assistance could be poor because some lawyers are reluctant to work without pay. A municipal social worker also pointed out that many survivors come from struggling families, often resulting in inadequate legal representation.

Interview protocols

Procedural law sets clear rules for questioning child victims or witnesses. Specifically, for children under 14, a teacher and/or psychologist must be involved in the interrogation, and for older children their presence is optional.³¹ The 2024 Law on Countering Human Trafficking gives child victims the right to have a teacher or psychologist present but does not make it strictly mandatory.³² Legal representatives have also the right to be present, and witnesses under 16 are not warned about refusal to testify or perjury but are instead instructed to speak only the truth.³³

28 Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 30.
29 Ibid. Art 76(2).
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid. Art 215(1).
32 Republic of Kazakhstan. (2024). [Law on Countering Human Trafficking](#). Art 17-2(8).
33 Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 215(2).

When participating in proceedings, teachers or psychologists can provide comments on potential human rights violations and, with permission, ask questions during the interrogation.³⁴ If the interrogation poses a potential harm to the child, the prosecutor, investigator, defence counsel, or victim’s representative can petition the investigating judge to prevent subsequent interrogations and alleviate psychologically traumatic effects on the child.³⁵ When asked about interview methods specifically designed to deal with children who have been subjected to sexual exploitation, such as closed hearings and the presence of a child psychologist during interviews, professionals unanimously agreed that these practices are respected in Kazakhstan. Most experts confirmed that a psychologist is present during hearings, though not all had direct experience.

Interrogations of children must happen during daylight hours and be limited to two consecutive hours, up to four hours in a day. If a child appears tired, the interrogation should be terminated earlier.³⁶ Remote interrogation involving technological tools is compulsory when dealing with children.³⁷ However, these rules are not always followed because of limited resources and inconsistent procedures across regions.³⁸ One of the key informants interviewed recommended creating special rooms for interviewing children and recording sessions to avoid repeated questioning.

It is, however, important to recognise that children who have experienced technology-facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse may be particularly sensitive to being recorded by an adult. For some, the presence of a camera can trigger feelings of vulnerability, shame, or fear of further exposure. Further research is therefore needed to ensure that video recording of interviews adheres to trauma-informed principles, carefully balancing the need for reliable evidence with the psychological well-being of each survivor on a case-by-case basis.

The court may conduct the interrogation of a child without the defendant present. The defendant can then ask questions afterwards.³⁹ Legal representatives and teachers may be present in the courtroom, and with the presiding judge’s permission, they can ask questions.⁴⁰ Children under 18 are typically excused after testifying unless their presence is still necessary. Court sessions and interrogations for children may be skipped if pre-trial testimony is already documented by the investigating judge.⁴¹

Right to privacy and protection

Courts can order closed hearings for criminal offences involving children or sexual offences to protect the privacy of those involved. Trials can also be closed to ensure the safety of the victims, witnesses,

and their families.⁴² A municipal social worker interviewed confirmed that closed proceedings are respected in cases of child sexual abuse.

The Criminal Procedure Code provides for measures to ensure the safety and privacy of those involved in legal proceedings, especially children and their families.⁴³ These measures include specific actions such as restricting access to information and offering state protection.⁴⁴

Most of the professionals interviewed were unaware of any specific protection measures for children who are witnesses or victims of crimes. However, some mentioned that during investigations, victims may receive state protection measures, including housing, food, and clothing. Key informants also noted that the Ministry of Internal Affairs has units focused on combatting trafficking in persons and protecting participants in criminal proceedings.

Inclusivity and non-discrimination

Children from national minorities are guaranteed equal rights under the 1995 Constitution,⁴⁵ and the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan is tasked with protecting the rights and interests of ethnic minorities.⁴⁶ However, evaluating how these protections are applied in practice is crucial, especially for children subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse. Supporting child survivors from migrant backgrounds can be challenging,

as parents may refuse to cooperate with law enforcement due to fear of lengthy trials, public exposure, or retaliation from the perpetrator. Additionally, some may lack legal knowledge or feel ashamed and worried they will be blamed for not protecting their child.⁴⁷

Most experts stated that justice procedures treat all children equally, including non-nationals, minorities, and boys who have been subjected to sexual exploitation. However, a supervisor from a fund assisting migrants, as well as trafficking and domestic violence victims, reported observing discriminatory attitudes in a case involving seven boys subjected to sexual abuse, suggesting possible disparities in the treatment of boy and girl survivors.

Training and capacity enhancement opportunities for professionals working with children

A representative from the Ministry of Internal Affairs said that, since 2017, the Academy of Law Enforcement Agencies has offered training sessions that include how to support children. In 2023, a civil society representative shared that the Training Centre for specialists in combating illegal migration and trafficking in persons of the Ministry of Internal Affairs’ Karaganda Academy held seven advanced training courses for 206 officers. Topics included countering illegal migration, preventing

34 Ibid. Art 215(3), 371(1).
35 Ibid. Art 217(1).
36 Ibid. Art 209(4).
37 Ibid.
38 Sana Sezim. (2024, March). Personal Communication.
39 Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). Criminal Procedure Code. Art 371(3).
40 Ibid. Art 371(1).
41 Ibid. Art 371(4).

42 Ibid. Art 29.
43 Ibid. Art 96-97.
44 Ibid.
45 Republic of Kazakhstan. (1995). Constitution. Art 14.
46 Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. (n.d.). General Information: Activity.
47 Sana Sezim. (2025). Personal Communication.

trafficking of children and sexual exploitation, and refugee issues. Despite these examples, civil society reported a lack of specialised training directed towards police and justice professionals in dealing with children subjected to abuse and exploitation.⁴⁸ A representative from the Centre for Alternative Justice for Minors in Conflict with the Law noted the need to enhance the knowledge and skills of everyone working with children and to consider psychological aspects in their approach.

This interviewee added that much of the existing trainings depends on international support. Similarly, the executive director of a private institution emphasised the need to train law enforcement in child-sensitive justice procedures. He recommended to extend such training to investigators and to include psychological insights from international experts, and suggested implementing similar programmes across the country to address issues like domestic violence and changing outdated stereotypes in law enforcement.

48 Ibid.

5

Access to recovery and reintegration



Kazakhstan lacks clear rules on recovery and reintegration services for children who were subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse, and existing legislation does not directly address this issue. In 2016, the Ministry of Health and Social Development approved the “Standard for the Provision of Special Social Services to Victims of Trafficking in Persons”,⁴⁹ setting conditions for their referral, reception, and rehabilitation within organisations specialising in social services.⁵⁰ Trafficking victims, including children, are entitled to medical, psychosocial, educational, and vocational support, even if no criminal case has been opened. They also qualify for fiscal relief, vocational guidance, job-based assistance for livelihood creation, and legal aid.⁵¹ Despite this framework, these services are not always effective in practice. Moreover, in some regions, special social services for victims of human trafficking and domestic violence are provided by the same institution, despite the differing needs of these groups.⁵²

In 2022, the Migration and Special Social Services Laws were amended to extend protections for foreign trafficking victims,⁵³ granting them benefits such as temporary residency with work permission and access to government-funded shelters and services.⁵⁴ Under these amendments, foreign child victims are entitled to the same rights and services as nationals. However, foreigners often do not receive medical services free of charge, raising concerns about potential funding gaps.⁵⁵ In addition, a civil society representative noted that public awareness of these programmes varies, and that civil society is often not well-informed about the existence of reporting and protection mechanisms.

49 Republic of Kazakhstan. (2016). *Standard for the provision of special social services to victims of trafficking in persons*.

50 Ibid. Art 1-6.

51 Ibid.

52 Sana Sezim. (2024, March). Personal Communication.

53 See Republic of Kazakhstan. (2011). *Law on Migration*. Art 60-1; US Department of State. (2023). *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Kazakhstan*.

54 See Republic of Kazakhstan. (2011). *Law on Migration*. Art 60-1; US Department of State. (2023). *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Kazakhstan*.

55 US Department of State. (2023). *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Kazakhstan*.

Most interviewees shared that the availability of recovery and reintegration services for children subjected to sexual exploitation is limited and primarily driven by non-governmental and international organisations. According to a civil society representative, there are no dedicated government programmes for survivors. Others stressed the need for more funding, better training for psychologists and social workers, and dedicated rehabilitation centres that focus on children's unique needs.

A civil society representative outlined that current evaluation criteria and standards guide the rehabilitation of trafficking victims but noted similar needs for improved training and skills among professionals. A supervisor at the Centre for Alternative Justice for Minors in Conflict with the Law mentioned that their centre supports trafficking victims, but children are typically sent to general adaptation centres⁵⁶ where staff may not be fully equipped to help. A law enforcement academy official highlighted the important role of non-governmental organisations in providing recovery and support services, often at no cost, and advocated for the government to step in to offer more support and training. They highlighted the absence of state-level reintegration programs and the challenges faced by children over 14 who do not trust adults or have no parental support. A social worker at a state shelter for victims of human trafficking and domestic violence noted that short-term projects and pilot programmes, such as those by UNICEF, have shown potential but lack comprehensive implementation.

⁵⁶ Facilities that provide social and medical services, designed for permanent residence of children in need of care, providing domestic and medical services.

When asked about recommendations to improve children's access to recovery and rehabilitation, key informants provided valuable insights. Interviewees emphasised that reintegration for children subjected to child sexual abuse requires careful consideration, as their recovery is a lifelong process. Informants suggested long-term support, involving specialists like psychologists to help rehabilitate and reintegrate survivors into society. Positively, a municipal social worker noted that some juvenile judges do refer families to appropriate support services. For instance, in certain projects, juvenile judges have involved specialists and psychologists to provide psychological evaluations and free services. These judges often guide parents and teachers on where to seek further help, providing contact information for relevant support services.

6

Access to compensation



In Kazakhstan, crime victims must be informed of their right to file a civil claim during criminal proceedings for property damage, including legal fees and other costs related to their participation in the process.⁵⁷ They can also claim for moral damage during criminal proceedings. If this is not done during the criminal case, victims of crime can still pursue them in civil court.⁵⁸ A former police colonel confirmed the possibility of claiming compensation in court, including for moral and psychological damage, albeit with complexities in the process.

If the convicted person lacks sufficient assets to cover damages from a particularly serious crime, and the victim has died, the victim's family is entitled to monetary compensation from a state budget called "Budget of Monetary Compensation for Property Damage". In such cases, the court that issued the sentence determines the allocation of state-funded compensation, based on an application submitted by the complainant or their next of kin. This compensation is capped at 150 monthly calculation indices (589,800 KZT, approx. 1,150 USD as of June 2025).⁵⁹

Victims of criminal offences are also entitled to compensation through the Victims Compensation Fund,⁶⁰ with the court assigning reimbursement responsibility to the perpetrator or the legally liable entity.⁶¹ Eligible applicants to this fund include children subjected to sexual violence, victims of human trafficking and torture, individuals suffering severe health consequences or HIV/AIDS, and those entitled to victim rights in case of death. Foreigners and stateless persons are also entitled to compensation from the moment they are recognised as victims, unless otherwise provided by laws and international treaties ratified by Kazakhstan.⁶²

⁵⁷ Republic of Kazakhstan. (2014). *Criminal Procedure Code*. Art 71(4).

⁵⁸ Ibid. Art 71(5).

⁵⁹ Ibid. Art 71(7).

⁶⁰ Ibid. Art 173.

⁶¹ Ibid. Art 173(3).

⁶² Republic of Kazakhstan. (2018). *Law on the Victims Compensation Fund*. Art 6.

Compensation through the fund is capped at thirty monthly calculation indices (117,960 KZT, approx. 230 USD as of June 2025) for children subjected to sexual violence or human trafficking, but this may increase to forty indices if the child also suffered grievous bodily harm or was infected with the human immunodeficiency virus.⁶³ Two interviewees noted that all survivors, no matter their background or the type of exploitation they were subjected to, have the right to seek compensation through state-managed funds. Despite the existence of provisions on compensation and the existence of the Victims Compensation Fund, an interviewed social worker noted that securing compensation can be difficult if the perpetrator has no financial assets, often leading to long delays. Similarly, civil society shared that in practice, there have been limited cases where victims of human trafficking, including children, received compensation.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid. Art 6, 7.
⁶⁴ Sana Sezim. (2024, March). Personal Communication.

ADVOCACY ROADMAP

1

Summary of main gaps identified/ conclusions



Lack of child-centric reporting mechanisms:

Kazakhstan’s current reporting mechanisms are not designed with children in mind. Existing portals and procedures often require adult involvement, such as electronic signatures or in-person presence, effectively barring children from reporting abuse independently. The language and structure of reporting tools is not adapted to children’s age or level of understanding, making them difficult to navigate without adult support. In addition, critical safeguards like confidentiality and protection from retaliation are inconsistently applied. As a result, children face significant structural barriers when trying to report rights violations, exploitation, or abuse.

Lack of rights awareness, stigma, and distrust of authorities:

Children often lack the knowledge needed to recognise sexual exploitation and abuse or access support services in such cases. This gap is compounded by fear of exposure, retaliation, and distrust of authorities, particularly among marginalised groups. Gendered social norms and stigma can further inhibit disclosure. Children are not systematically taught about their rights or legal protections, and many do not see the police as a safe or approachable resource. These factors combine to create a culture of silence, where abuse goes unreported and unaddressed.

Shortcomings in judicial proceedings:

Although legal safeguards exist to protect children during judicial proceedings, including time limits and the use of remote technology for interrogations, these standards are not consistently implemented due to limited resources and regional disparities. Participants in the national consultation also noted that children are often subjected to repeated interrogations, which can result in retraumatisation. Civil society actors highlighted the lack of specialised training for police, prosecutors, and judges handling cases of child sexual exploitation

and abuse. As a result, many justice professionals are not adequately equipped to interact with survivors in a trauma-informed manner, further increasing the risk of secondary victimisation.

Lack of tailored recovery and reintegration services:

Recovery and reintegration services for survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse remain limited and largely dependent on non-governmental and international organisations due to the absence of dedicated government programmes. Despite existing interagency coordination frameworks, restrictive licensing regulations continue to prevent many NGOs from supporting survivors or accessing external funding. During the national consultation, participants noted that 63 crisis centres have been established across the country to support women and child victims of domestic violence. However, civil society representatives reported that only six are operational and that most staff are primarily trained to work with adults. In addition, children often cannot access services without a guardian’s permission, creating further barriers to support. Stakeholders highlighted the need for increased public investment and improved training for psychologists and social workers.

Challenges in accessing compensation:

A key barrier to compensation for children subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse is the challenge of accessing quality legal representation, which makes it difficult to pursue claims through criminal proceedings. While a Victims’ Compensation Fund exists and survivors are entitled to access it, a critical gap remains: most survivors, their families, and even professionals are unaware of the fund, the procedures, and the support available to claim compensation under that scheme. As a result of insufficient public outreach, weak institutional promotion, and a lack of clear, accessible information on how the Fund works, survivors are often unable to exercise their right to compensation in practice.



ADVOCACY ROADMAP

2

Advocacy Roadmap Objectives

This advocacy roadmap aims to:

Objective

1

Promote awareness of legal rights and available support services to help survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse access justice and remedies.

Objective

2

Improve institutional capacity to support survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse in accessing compensation and support services.

Objective

3

Strengthen the availability, quality, and survivor-centred nature of recovery and reintegration services.

Objective

1

Promote awareness of legal rights and available support services to help survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse access justice and remedies

Brief Rationale

Children, caregivers, and communities in Kazakhstan often lack access to clear, age-appropriate information on child sexual exploitation and abuse, including how to recognise it, report it, and access support services or compensation. This lack of awareness significantly hinders early identification and timely access to justice and remedies for survivors. It stems in part from the absence of educational content on these issues in school curricula, as well as limited and inconsistent awareness-raising efforts by professionals and institutions. Strengthening school-based education and public campaigns, supported by sustained engagement from relevant professionals, is essential to ensure that children, families, and communities are informed, supported, and empowered to take appropriate action to uphold their rights when abuse occurs.

Outcome 1.1:

Children, families, and communities have increased awareness of child sexual exploitation and abuse and available support services, resulting in better access to justice and remedies.

TARGETS



TARGET 1.1.1

(Short term)

By the end of 2025, develop and distribute child- and caregiver-friendly materials on the right to compensation and available support services for survivors in schools, healthcare facilities, public service centres, and through online platforms.

TARGET 1.1.2

(Short term)

By the end of 2025, conduct interactive awareness sessions for 100 school and college students aged 14-18, focusing on the right to protection from child sexual exploitation and abuse, reporting mechanisms, and access to compensation

TARGET 1.1.3

(Medium term)

Collaborate with the Ministry of Education to integrate age-appropriate content on child sexual exploitation and abuse, including pathways to justice, support services, and remedies into civic education and extracurricular programmes.

TARGET 1.1.4

(Medium term)

Launch a nationwide media and community campaign in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to publicly spotlight the issue of child sexual exploitation and abuse, and to raise awareness of survivors' rights among the general public.

TARGET 1.1.5

(Long term)

Incorporate systematic education on child sexual exploitation and abuse for children, families, and communities into the national child protection policy, with clearly assigned responsibilities and budget for implementation.

Objective

2

Improve institutional capacity to support survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse in accessing compensation and support services

Brief Rationale

Frontline professionals such as police officers and social workers are often the first point of contact for survivors. However, many lack the training, tools, and institutional support needed to clearly inform children of their right to compensation and connect them with available support services. As a result, survivors and their families are frequently unaware of the remedies available to them and receive little or no guidance on how to access them. At the same time, referral procedures between law enforcement, legal aid, and psychosocial services are either lacking or inconsistently applied. Strengthening institutional capacity requires equipping frontline professionals to provide accurate information and direct referrals, while embedding formal coordination protocols into child protection systems to ensure survivors receive timely and appropriate support.

Outcome 2.1:

Frontline professionals have the tools and training to effectively inform survivors about their rights and connect them with compensation and support services.

TARGETS

TARGET 2.1.1

(Short term)

By the end of 2025, develop and distribute guidance materials on the Victims' Compensation Fund for frontline professionals, enabling them to effectively inform survivors and their families about their right to compensation and how to access it.

TARGET 2.1.3

(Medium term)

Integrate mandatory training on child-sensitive procedures and pathways to compensation and support services into both pre-service and in-service training curricula for police and social service professionals handling cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

TARGET 2.1.2

(Short term)

By the end of 2025, train at least 20 police officers in rural areas to provide accurate information to survivors about their right to compensation, the procedures to access it, and how to access support services.

Outcome 2.2:

Institutional frameworks are in place to ensure consistent, coordinated access to support and remedies for survivors.

TARGETS

TARGET 2.2.1

(Medium term)

Launch a joint advocacy campaign calling for increased government investment in specialised legal aid, recovery, and reintegration services, as well as improved interagency coordination to support improved access to support and remedies.

TARGET 2.2.2

(Medium to long term)

Develop formal referral protocols to guarantee systematic access to compensation and support services, and integrate these protocols into national and local child protection policies and the standard operating procedures of law enforcement, legal aid, and psychosocial service providers.

Objective

3

Strengthen the availability, quality, and survivor-centred nature of recovery and reintegration services

Brief Rationale

Recovery and reintegration services for survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse are insufficient and not always responsive to their specific needs. Service provision remains fragmented, with limited funding and no nationally defined benchmarks to guide quality and consistency. Many professionals lack specialised training to work with child survivors, and opportunities for survivor input in service design are minimal. In the absence of unified national standards, coordinated implementation, and sustainable investment, access to recovery support depends largely on location and individual circumstances. Strengthening these services requires the development of national standards, integration into child protection policy, improved coordination, dedicated public funding, and formal mechanisms to incorporate survivors' perspectives into service design and delivery.

Outcome 3.1:

National minimum standards for recovery and reintegration services for survivors of child sexual exploitation are adopted.

TARGETS

TARGET 3.1.1

(Short term)

By the end of 2025, complete a national mapping of available psychosocial, legal, and social reintegration services for survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse, including identification of geographic, service delivery, and coordination gaps.

TARGET 3.1.2

(Medium term)

Convene a multi-stakeholder process to review service mapping findings, define joint priorities, and develop national minimum standards—including interagency coordination protocols—for survivor-centred recovery and reintegration services.

Outcome 3.2:

Recovery and reintegration services are sustainably funded, embedded in national child protection frameworks, and informed by the voices of survivors.

TARGETS

TARGET 3.2.1

(Long term)

Integrate comprehensive recovery and reintegration services for survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse into Kazakhstan's national child protection policy and budget planning frameworks.

TARGET 3.2.2

(Long term)

Establish a formal mechanism for regularly consulting child survivors to inform and update the design and delivery of recovery and reintegration services at both national and local levels.



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