

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



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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 Uzbek 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 two psychologists, two attorneys, two lawyers working for non-governmental organisations and four prosecutors at the Prosecutor's Office. 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 28 stakeholders during a national consultation, which took place on 23 April 2025 in Tashkent. 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 Uzbekistan.



3

Reporting child sexual exploitation and starting legal action



Uzbekistan's laws do not provide for a national complaint mechanism specifically designed to handle child sexual exploitation reports. General crime reporting procedures are set out in the Criminal Procedure Code.⁹

National complaint mechanisms

In 2024, Uzbekistan established a Children's Ombudsman to oversee the protection of children's rights, including child exploitation and abuse survivors, through parliamentary oversight. Steps were also taken to address the lack of adequate reporting mechanisms. In November 2024, the newly-adopted Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence required the State to enable reporting of violence against children, including sexual abuse and exploitation.¹⁰ The Law, which took effect in May 2025, mandates the creation of a toll-free, 24-hour national helpline to report cases and support victims, with strict confidentiality protections.¹¹ While promising, the helpline must be sufficiently resourced and staffed by adequately trained professionals to ensure it meets the specific needs of children who have been subjected to sexual exploitation, especially given its broad mandate. Shifting from earlier frameworks, which mainly addressed sexual exploitation in the context of human trafficking, the new Law broadened the definition of exploitation to include the use of a child for economic, sexual, and other purposes—such as trafficking, sexual exploitation, and coercion into marriage or cohabitation.¹²

⁹ Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). *Criminal Procedure Code*.

¹⁰ Republic of Uzbekistan. (2024). *Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence*. Art 3.

¹¹ Ibid. Art 25.

¹² Ibid. Art 3.

In every region of Uzbekistan, the National Social Protection Agency—under the Office of the President—has established *Inson* Social Service Centres. Staffed by 4,600 social workers, these Centres provide social, legal, and psychological support, identify individuals in need of protection (including victims of violence), and refer them to the relevant authorities for further assistance. Victims of violence can seek help through these Centres or by contacting social workers, the internal affairs duty unit via the ‘102’ hotline, prevention inspectors, the unified emergency service ‘112’, or the helpline ‘1146’. However, according to a representative of the Agency, children subjected to sexual violence often feel shame, guilt, and mistrust of the system, which may deter them from seeking help.¹³ Several interviewees echoed this and also pointed to a lack of awareness about where to report. A prosecutor stressed the need to inform neighbourhood leaders and elders about how to report child sexual exploitation, so they can pass this knowledge on to residents. The prosecutor also recommended using television programmes to raise public awareness about reporting venues.

Most key informants agreed that general reporting channels are not child-centric. The prosecutors interviewed, while acknowledging these challenges, noted that the Law on Appeals of Individuals and Legal Entities allows children to independently contact state bodies or officials regarding their rights and interests, with legal representatives or

guardianship authorities involved in the process.¹⁴ Children can file complaints orally, in writing, or electronically, but no child-specific reporting venue exists. The prosecutors also noted that judicial institutions handling child sexual exploitation reports lack separate spaces for receiving such complaints and do not have measures in place to protect children’s identities. According to them, the absence of a unified reporting system complicates registration and processing, discouraging survivors from reporting. As solutions, the prosecutors proposed simplifying reporting procedures using child-friendly visuals, conducting awareness-raising actions targeting children, and creating 24/7 hotlines so that children can receive immediate response and support.

Initiating legal proceedings and collecting evidence

Criminal proceedings cannot be initiated solely on the basis of an anonymous report,¹⁵ though authorities may still use such reports to launch an investigation at their discretion.¹⁶ If elements of a crime are discovered, the prosecutor, investigator, or inquiry officer must open a criminal case, within their jurisdiction.¹⁷

Investigators can initiate proceedings based on information from any source.¹⁸ In child sexual exploitation and abuse cases, internal affairs investigators conduct the preliminary investigation.¹⁹

¹³ Istiqbolli Avlod. (2025, September). Personal Communication.

¹⁴ Republic of Uzbekistan. (2017). [Law On Appeals of Individuals and Legal Entities](#). Art 241.

¹⁵ Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 323.

¹⁶ Republic of Uzbekistan. (2012). [Law on Operative Search Activities](#).

¹⁷ Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 15.

¹⁸ Ibid. Art 36.

¹⁹ Ibid. Art 345.

Prosecutors interviewed noted that although investigating crimes against children is a key law enforcement duty, no specialised unit exists for this purpose. They pointed out that standard interrogation methods often fail to yield results with survivors, which is especially problematic since their testimony is often the only available evidence in such cases. Delays in seeking help also lead to untimely expert examinations, making it harder to establish the facts. A lawyer from Istiqbolli Avlod cited additional obstacles to investigations, including the survivor's exposure to violence by their relatives or the perpetrators, as well as the child's psychological vulnerability, lack of rights awareness, fear of the consequences, and concerns for their reputation. A psychologist from the organisation added that survivors' severe psychological state, inconsistent testimonies, lack of evidence, and not knowing where to get qualified help further hinder investigations.

Mandatory reporting

Under the Criminal Code, failing to report a serious or especially serious crime, such as child sexual exploitation and abuse,²⁰ can lead to fines of up to 50 Basic Calculation Units (approx. 1,450 USD as of June 2025), correctional labour for up to two years, detention up to six months, or imprisonment up to three years.²¹ Concealing such a crime is punishable by fines of up to 75 Basic Calculation Units (approx. 2,000 USD as of June 2025), correctional labour for up to three years,

or imprisonment for up to five years.²² If the concealment is carried out by officials responsible for handling crime reports, the penalty may increase to up to seven years, along with the loss of certain rights.²³

Time limits for prosecution

For offences like child sexual exploitation and abuse, classified as serious or especially serious crimes, statutes of limitations range from eight to fourteen years, depending on severity.²⁴ Statutes of limitations are periods during which a person can report a criminal offence it was subjected to; once it expires, prosecution is no longer possible. Children subjected to sexual exploitation are often reluctant to disclose it or only come forward years later due to fear, shame or guilt. Thus, abolishing statutes of limitations would help to prevent impunity and to strengthen their right to access justice.

Psychological and other support upon disclosure

An attorney specialised in juvenile justice, interviewed for this report, noted that while psychological support is generally provided when reporting, this is not always consistent. According to a psychologist and director of Istiqbolli Avlod's Kashkadarya branch, most reports of child sexual exploitation and abuse are received through the organisation's hotline, from parents of survivors, or through law enforcement referrals. When a report is received, a psychologist from the organisation first meets with the parents to gather initial

20 Republic of Uzbekistan (1994). [Criminal Code](#). Art 118-119.

21 Republic of Uzbekistan. (1994). [Criminal Code](#). Art 241.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2018). [Law No. 485 on the introduction of amendments and additions to the Criminal, Criminal Procedure Codes of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Administrative Liability](#).

information. The child is then interviewed to collect additional details and evidence. Primary psychological support is also provided at this stage. If further support is required, parents can submit a written request to the head of Istiqbolli Avlod for continued psychological support and legal representation during criminal proceedings. To improve confidentiality in reporting, the director of Istiqbolli Avlod's Kashkadarya branch suggested establishing a dedicated interview room at the branch for child sexual exploitation survivors, where trained psychologists, social workers and lawyers could conduct sensitive interviews. The director also proposed strengthening cooperation with law enforcement, medical, educational and other institutions to ensure survivors receive coordinated and comprehensive care. Despite ongoing challenges, the director noted that public awareness of legal rights has improved, making it easier for citizens to understand how to protect their rights and where to seek help.

Protection from intimidation and retaliation

When credible threats are made against the safety or property of victims, witnesses, family members, or others involved in legal proceedings, authorities are required to act immediately to protect their life, health, honour, and property.²⁵ This may include issuing written orders to law enforcement to implement protection measures and notifying the regional Departments of Internal Affairs to take appropriate action.²⁶

The Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence also provides for protection orders, which can include prohibiting contact between the child and the suspect. These orders must be issued by the relevant internal affairs agency within 24 hours of confirming the violence, based on an individual risk assessment. The order is valid for up to 30 days and can be extended by a court for up to one year at the request of the child or their legal representative. Protection orders remain in effect until the child turns 18.²⁷

²⁵ Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 270.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Republic of Uzbekistan. (2024). [Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence](#). Art 32, 33.

4

Child-centric justice



In Uzbekistan, there is a need to develop procedures and protocols for child-centric justice. This includes using appropriate interview methods, holding closed hearings, and introducing tools such as one-way mirrors. The State is also required to provide training on victim-centred approaches for judges, prosecutors, law enforcement, medical staff, social workers, and others working with survivors and perpetrators.²⁸ Due to a lack of widespread public training for these professionals, lawyers from Istiqbolli Avlod, in collaboration with UNICEF, held a series of seminars in 2022 for students at the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Institute for Advanced Studies. These sessions aimed to improve their understanding of child-centric approaches when handling cases of child sexual exploitation.²⁹

When asked how to make the justice system more child-centric and prevent revictimisation, key informants offered several suggestions. A lawyer from Istiqbolli Avlod stressed the need for support mechanisms for survivors during court proceedings, such as access to housing, guardianship, education, and employment. Another lawyer specialised in child sexual exploitation and abuse emphasised the importance of strengthening professional capacity and knowledge to prevent harm to children within the justice system. A public prosecutor added that making justice fairer for children also involves promoting gender equality, including through better education in schools.

Although the law guarantees equal treatment in legal proceedings regardless of nationality or other characteristics,³⁰ a lawyer from Istiqbolli

28 Equality Now. (2023). [Uzbekistan introduced and strengthened protections for violence against women, though further changes are needed](#). See also - Equality Now. (2021). [A Culture of Shame: Sexual Violence and Access to justice in Uzbekistan](#).

29 Istiqbolli Avlod. (2024, June). Personal Communication.

30 Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 3.

Avlod reported cases in which defence attorneys pressured or discriminated against child survivors, including through stigmatising behaviours. Most other professionals interviewed, however, said they had not observed discriminatory practices against survivors—including non-nationals or children from ethnic or religious minorities.

Legal aid and interpretation

Under the Criminal Procedure Code, the State is required to appoint and cover the cost of legal representation for individuals involved in legal proceedings, including children, when they do not have their own lawyer or their lawyer is unavailable in time.³¹ However, the Law on Obtaining Free Legal Assistance from the State limits free legal aid to children accused of crimes, not to child victims,³² highlighting a lack of harmonised protections. A 2023 report on domestic violence noted that the absence of free legal aid for victims and the absence of clear permissions for lawyers from non-governmental organisations to represent them,³³ combined with the lack of child-centric mechanisms to report sexual exploitation, could significantly hinder access to justice.³⁴

If requested by a participant in legal proceedings, a defence lawyer can be appointed by the investigator, prosecutor, or court.³⁵ In practice, investigators often

contact lawyers on duty or, if none are available, they request support from the Chamber of Advocates.³⁶ If the chosen lawyer is unavailable within 24 hours, authorities must offer alternatives such as referring the participant to an advocates' bureau, legal association, or law firm.³⁷ The cost of legal assistance should be covered by the State.³⁸ Most key informants interviewed agreed that free legal aid is guaranteed in Uzbekistan and reported no major issues with its delivery.

Criminal proceedings can be conducted in Uzbek, Karakalpak, or the language spoken by the majority of the population in a given area.³⁹ Participants who do not speak the language used can submit oral or written statements in a language they are comfortable with and have access to interpreter support.⁴⁰ Investigation and court documents must also be translated into the language spoken by the participants.⁴¹ These regulations aim to ensure access to justice for children from national minorities by helping them overcome language barriers and navigating the system effectively.

Interview protocols

Positively, the Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence requires investigative bodies and courts to have separate waiting areas for children subjected to violence, including sexual

31 Ibid. Art 50.

32 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2023). [Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on provision of legal assistance at the expense of the state](#).

33 Equality Now. (2023). [Uzbekistan introduced and strengthened protections for violence against women, though further changes are needed](#).

34 Ibid.

35 Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 50.

36 Istiqbolli Avlod. (2024, June). Personal Communication.

37 Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 50.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid. Art 20.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

abuse and exploitation. It also requires the creation of specialised interrogation rooms equipped with video surveillance and audio/video recording systems; and mandates the preliminary recording of the victims' testimonies.⁴² Previously, preliminary recordings were allowed only if a second interrogation could not take place due to valid reasons, such as the person travelling abroad or having a serious illness.⁴³

It is important to recognise that children who were subjected to 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 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.

At the initiative of the investigator, prosecutor, or court—or upon request of a child's legal representative or adult relative—a teacher or psychologist may attend the interrogation of a child subjected to, or witness of, a criminal offence. These interrogations must not exceed four hours per day, with at least a one-hour break for rest and meals.⁴⁴ Civil society representatives noted that psychologists involved in these cases often lack child-sensitive communication skills, impacting the quality of the support provided.⁴⁵ The Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence has strengthened legal

safeguards by requiring the systematic involvement of specialists trained to work with children, prohibiting direct contact between survivors and suspects, and ensuring confidentiality throughout the criminal proceedings.⁴⁶

A legal assistant and social worker from Istiqbolli Avlod's Khorezm branch confirmed that legal procedures are generally followed, with school psychologists or teachers often participating in investigative actions. However, they emphasised a significant need for qualified specialists with the necessary expertise to work with children. Despite formal participation, a psychologist from Istiqbolli Avlod observed that many school psychologists involved in investigative actions remain disengaged, failing to interact meaningfully with the child or to keep proper records during counselling. Some also overlook the evidentiary value of the child's account in investigations and court proceedings. Additionally, a lawyer from a private law firm pointed out that financial constraints leading to the inability to afford food and transport often prevent children from fully participating in the legal process.

Right to privacy

Under the Criminal Procedure Code, criminal hearings are generally open to the public, except in cases involving sexual offences, including those against children.⁴⁷ Hearings may also be closed when they involve children or sensitive information that could harm a person's dignity or

42 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2024). [Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence](#). Art 39.

43 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2020). [Law on Amendments and Additions to the Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes of the Republic of Uzbekistan](#).

44 Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 121.

45 Istiqbolli Avlod. (2024, May). Personal Communication.

46 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2024). [Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence](#). Art 39.

47 Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 19.

reputation.⁴⁸ Closed hearings must still follow general procedural rules.⁴⁹ The court may allow close relatives of the defendant and victim, as well as other persons to attend closed sessions.⁵⁰ The court also has the authority to exclude certain individuals from public hearings, although the law does not specify who can be excluded.⁵¹

Despite these provisions, a lawyer from Istiqbolli Avlod reported instances where the court failed to close hearings involving children, which undermines the sensitivity such proceedings require. Another attorney interviewed also observed that closed hearings sometimes occur only after repeated requests by the survivors' family, rather than as a standard protective measure.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

5

Access to recovery and reintegration



Under the Law on the Guarantee of Child Rights, socially vulnerable children, including those subjected to violence, are entitled to social support.⁵² Moreover, the 2024 Law on the Protection of Women from Oppression and Violence allows child victims of violence to request to stay in special centres for up to 30 days, with possible extensions based on the centre's assessment. These centres provide free legal advice, as well as economic, social, psychological, medical, and other forms of assistance.⁵³

For adults and children who were subjected to human trafficking, specialised institutions—such as the Republican Rehabilitation Centre for Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings—provide essential support, including accommodation, hygiene products, food, medicine, and emergency medical, psychological, social, and legal assistance.⁵⁴ The Centre prioritises victims' safety, helps them reconnect with relatives, informs them of their rights, and supports their social rehabilitation and reintegration.⁵⁵

A resolution by the Cabinet of Ministers (No. 60) outlines two stages of identification procedures—primary and final—for victims and suspected victims of trafficking, including children, and establishes national referral systems so they can access government assistance.⁵⁶

Interviewed prosecutors had differing opinions about the existence of recovery, reintegration, and support services for survivors. Most were unaware of such mechanisms, though one

52 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2008). *Law on the Guarantee of Child Rights*. Art 24-29.

53 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2019). *Law on the protection of women from oppression and violence*. Art 28.

54 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2020). *Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons*. Art 25.

55 Ibid. Art 26, 11.

56 Istiqbolli Avlod. (2025, April). Personal Communication.

stated that services—such as medical and psychological assistance—are available after judicial proceedings, and that Child Protection Commissions are responsible for supporting survivors' reintegration.

An attorney confirmed that centres offering social and legal assistance to children, as well as shelters for women victims of violence do exist, but observed that no recovery services are provided after court proceedings. A legal assistant and social worker from Istiqbolli Avlod's Khorezm branch highlighted that, despite the absence of State-managed programmes, foreign-funded projects offer comprehensive social support to trafficking victims during and after the criminal process. An example is the "Expansion of reintegration services to vulnerable victims of trafficking in persons in Uzbekistan" project, which was implemented by Istiqbolli Avlod between November 2020 and October 2022, with support from the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.⁵⁷

The Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence requires that children who were subjected to violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, receive necessary economic, social, psychological, medical, and other support—including measures to restore their health, reduce the negative impact of mental and physical trauma, and facilitate their rehabilitation.⁵⁸ It further mandates the development of individual protection plans detailing the type, scope, frequency, and conditions of assistance, the persons responsible for implementing the measures, and target indicators. These plans are to be prepared with input from relevant specialists from government agencies and child protection organisations, with the participation of the child.⁵⁹ The Cabinet of Ministers is tasked with establishing the procedure for developing, implementing, and monitoring protection plans.⁶⁰

57 For more information, see Istiqbolli Avlod. (accessed on 23 September 2025). [Our projects](#).

58 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2024). [Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence](#). Art 36.

59 Ibid. Art 30.

60 Ibid.

6

Access to compensation

Child victims of crime or their representatives can file a civil suit for compensation, which is determined by the court alongside the criminal case.⁶¹ They can claim pecuniary damages resulting from the offence, including in-patient treatment. While both pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages can be claimed through civil proceedings,⁶² non-pecuniary damages such as pain and suffering, and the costs associated with social and educational reintegration, comprehensive medical treatment, mental health care, and legal services, are not covered.⁶³ Assets obtained through the offence can be seized from the defendant to compensate for any pecuniary damage caused.⁶⁴ Furthermore, under trafficking laws, individuals found guilty of trafficking must fully reimburse rehabilitation costs.⁶⁵ Negatively, the State does not allocate dedicated funds for victim compensation.⁶⁶

The Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence addresses some of the gaps identified above regarding what can be subject to compensation. It unequivocally states that children subjected to violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, have the right to compensation for the material damage and moral harm resulting from the violence. They are also exempt from state fees when filing compensation claims in court.⁶⁷ Additionally, the Law stipulates that protection orders can require the perpetrator to cover the costs of treatment, consultations, placement in a specialised assistance centre, and material damages, or to pay compensation for the moral harm suffered.⁶⁸

The prosecutors interviewed agreed that survivors have the right to compensation, even in the absence of state-managed funds for that purpose. One prosecutor noted that they can claim compensation from convicted criminals in the presence of their legal representative or guardianship authority, adding that the legislation does not set a maximum limit for such claims.

61 Republic of Uzbekistan. (1995). [Criminal Procedure Code](#). Art 276.

62 Ibid. Art 280-282.

63 Ibid. Art 281.

64 Ibid. Art 284.

65 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2008). [Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons](#). Art 11.

66 Istiqbolli Avlod. (2024, June). Personal Communication.

67 Republic of Uzbekistan. (2024). [Law on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence](#). Art 5.

68 Ibid. Art 35.



ADVOCACY ROADMAP

1

Summary of main gaps identified/ conclusions



Lack of child-centric reporting mechanisms and social barriers to disclosure:

Uzbekistan lacks specialised reporting channels designed for children subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse. Existing complaint mechanisms are general in nature, not child-centric, and fail to ensure privacy or psychological safety. While some reporting options exist, such as a toll-free national helpline for cases of violence against children, barriers like shame, guilt, and mistrust of authorities often prevent survivors from coming forward. Limited awareness of available reporting venues further reduces their use, leaving many cases unaddressed and survivors without access to timely protection and support.

Statutes of limitations risk enabling impunity:

Uzbekistan still applies statutes of limitations ranging from eight to fourteen years for offences of child sexual exploitation and abuse. The existence of these limits creates a significant risk of impunity, particularly given the barriers that often delay disclosure of such crimes. As a result, cases may come to light only after the statutory period has expired, leaving perpetrators beyond the reach of justice and denying survivors the opportunity to seek redress.

Structural gaps hinder child-sensitive justice:

The justice system in Uzbekistan continues to be affected by discriminatory practices and gender-based stereotypes. Survivors frequently face disbelief, stigmatisation, and re-victimisation during investigative and judicial procedures, causing further trauma.

Investigative and judicial practices lack consistent child-centred protocols, such as specialised interview rooms or the use of video testimonies, and closed hearings are not systematically conducted in cases involving children. Although procedural legislation includes child-centred provisions, gaps in implementation, inadequate training of judicial and investigative personnel, a shortage of qualified specialists with the necessary expertise to work with children, and weak accountability measures leave children exposed to re-victimisation throughout the justice process.

Limited access to free and qualified legal representation:

While legislation provides for free legal aid, in practice it is predominantly available only to children in conflict with the law, not to child victims of crime. During the national consultation, participants confirmed the limited access to qualified legal representation for survivors and expressed concern that there is currently no legal provision allowing NGO lawyers, who often have the necessary expertise to handle such sensitive cases, to represent children in court proceedings. Such representation currently occurs only at the discretion of individual judges.

Limited psychological, recovery, and reintegration services:

Mechanisms for the recovery, reintegration, and support of child survivors are seemingly underdeveloped and largely unknown to stakeholders. Psychological assistance, while provided for in theory, is delivered inconsistently and lacks the necessary specialisation to address the complex needs of children who were subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse. A severe shortage of trained professionals further undermines the availability of child-centred, trauma-informed support during investigative and judicial processes, leaving survivors without adequate care at critical stages.

Compensation mechanisms are ineffective in practice:

While the law provides victims of crime with the right to seek compensation, significant structural and practical barriers hinder its realisation. In the absence of a state-managed compensation fund, existing mechanisms rely entirely on perpetrators' ability to pay, which creates uncertainty and limits their effectiveness. Participants in the national consultation highlighted a widespread lack of awareness about the right to compensation among both the public and professionals, meaning that filing a claim depends entirely on lawyers' initiative. Strikingly, all participating lawyers reported that they had never pursued compensation on behalf of their clients, underscoring that available remedies are seldom pursued.

ADVOCACY ROADMAP

2

Advocacy Roadmap Objectives

This advocacy roadmap aims to:

Objective

1

Promote fair and equitable treatment of survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse in the justice system.

Objective

2

Strengthen access to free legal and psychological assistance for survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Objective

3

Ensure that survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse have access to compensation.



Objective

1

Promote fair and equitable treatment of survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse in the justice system.

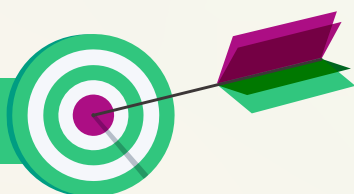
Brief Rationale

Strengthening fair and equitable treatment of survivors within the justice system is essential to building trust and ensuring meaningful access to justice. Without the skills and structures to engage with children in sensitive and unbiased ways, even strong legal protections risk being ineffective in practice. This objective aims to shift professional norms and institutional culture by embedding gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory practices into both training and operational procedures, while also countering harmful stereotypes through targeted awareness campaigns and strengthened media standards. Together, these efforts will lay the foundation for a justice system where all survivors, regardless of their background, are treated with dignity.

Outcome 1.1:

Justice and law enforcement professionals are trained in handling child sexual exploitation and abuse cases using gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory approaches.

TARGETS



TARGET 1.1.1

(Short term)

By the end of 2025, train at least 200 students of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory approaches to handling cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

TARGET 1.1.2

(Short term)

By the end of 2025, disseminate the collected insights on discriminatory practices affecting survivors and engage justice and law enforcement professionals in consultative processes to identify ways to implement gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory practices.

TARGET 1.1.3

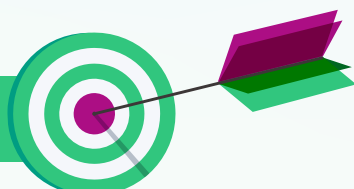
(Long term)

Develop and integrate mandatory training modules on gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory approaches to working with survivors into both pre-service and in-service curricula for relevant law enforcement and justice professionals.

Outcome 1.2:

Improved public and professional recognition of the harm caused to survivors by gender-based bias, discrimination, and harmful stereotypes.

TARGETS



TARGET 1.2.1

(Medium term)

Conduct, in collaboration with key media outlets and civil partner society organisations, online awareness campaigns featuring survivor stories to highlight the harm caused by gender-based bias or other forms of discrimination and challenge harmful stereotypes about survivors.

TARGET 1.2.2

(Long term)

Collaborate with media councils and journalism associations to develop and institutionalise codes of conduct and practical guidance on using rights-based, non-stigmatising language when reporting on cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Objective

2

Strengthen access to free legal and psychological assistance for survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

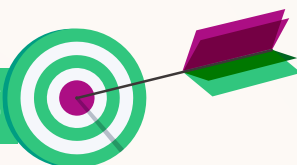
Brief Rationale

Timely legal and psychological assistance is crucial for survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse to understand their rights, navigate complex justice procedures, and begin the process of healing from trauma. In Uzbekistan, however, these services are fragmented and poorly coordinated, leaving many children without essential support at critical stages. This objective seeks to establish clear referral pathways between state institutions and civil society, allowing frontline professionals to connect survivors to appropriate services quickly and consistently. It also aims to raise awareness among children about their rights and the support services available to them, empowering them to proactively seek legal and psychological help. Strengthening both referral mechanisms and awareness will foster a more responsive and accessible system, enabling survivors to obtain the support they need when it matters most.

Outcome 2.1:

Referral mechanisms between state bodies and civil society are established to ensure survivors receive timely legal and psychological assistance.

TARGETS



TARGET 2.1.1

(Short to medium term)

Engage state authorities, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organisations in consultative processes to identify practical gaps in survivors' access to legal and psychological assistance, and collaboratively initiate the development of referral protocols to strengthen interinstitutional cooperation in delivering these services.

TARGET 2.1.2

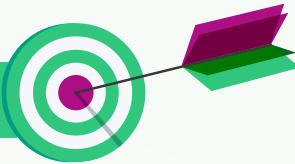
(Long term)

Streamline the referral protocols into the standard operating procedures of relevant frontline professionals, including police, prosecutors, social workers, and service providers, to ensure consistent survivor access to assistance.

Outcome 2.2:

Children have increased awareness of their rights and available free legal and psychological support services.

TARGETS



TARGET 2.1.1

(Short term)

By the end of 2025, conduct interactive sessions in five schools with 200 students to strengthen their understanding of child sexual exploitation and raise their awareness of the rights of survivors to justice and the support services available to them.

Objective

3

Ensure that survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse have access to compensation.

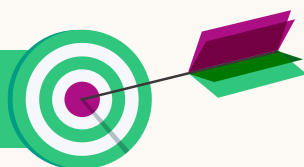
Brief Rationale

Access to compensation is a critical component of justice and recovery for survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse, playing a vital role in recognising the harm suffered and supporting long-term rehabilitation. In Uzbekistan, however, compensation procedures are poorly understood by the public and rarely pursued in practice. This objective focuses on removing these barriers through two interconnected approaches: driving legal reforms to simplify and strengthen compensation frameworks, including through the creation of a state-run compensation fund, and building awareness among survivors, families, and professionals about the right to compensation and how to claim it. Together, these efforts will establish both the structural and informational foundations needed for survivors to exercise their rights and obtain meaningful redress.

Outcome 3.1:

Legal reforms are initiated to streamline existing compensation frameworks.

TARGETS



TARGET 3.1.1

(Short term)

By the end of 2025, produce a technical note identifying barriers to compensation, and convene a consultation with representatives from the Ministry of Justice, Children's Ombudsman, Chamber of Advocates, and General Prosecutor's Office to present the findings and jointly identify priorities for reform.

TARGET 3.1.2

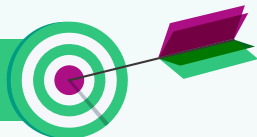
(Medium to long term)

Launch a nationwide advocacy campaign calling for streamlined compensation procedures and the creation of a state-run fund to ensure timely compensation for survivors, with the goal of securing commitment from relevant institutions (e.g. the Children's Ombudsman or Ministry of Justice) to champion legislative proposals to that effect.

Outcome 3.2:

Survivors, their families, and relevant professionals have increased awareness about the right to compensation and how to access it.

TARGETS



TARGET 3.2.1

(Short term)

Launch a nationwide public awareness campaign to inform children, families, and communities about survivors' right to compensation, including the dissemination of case studies on successful compensation outcomes.

TARGET 3.2.2

(Medium term)

Develop practical guidance materials on the right to compensation and disseminate them among frontline professionals handling cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse, enabling them to effectively inform survivors and their families about the process and available support services to obtain it.

TARGET 3.2.3

(Medium term)

Collaborate with the Chamber of Advocates to deliver targeted training sessions for lawyers on effectively and systematically pursuing compensation for survivors.

TARGET 3.2.4

(Long term)

Develop and integrate mandatory modules on pathways to compensation for survivors into both pre-service and in-service training curricula for relevant law enforcement, justice, and social service professionals.



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