

How People-Centered Justice Matters for Children

Jennifer Davidson, Sophie Shields, Andrew Goudie

Abstract

This paper reviews the application of people-centered justice principles to children, focusing on what we know—and still need to know—about how justice systems can better respond to children’s distinct needs and experiences. Based on existing research, we know that children under 18, constituting approximately 30% of the global population, face justice problems that are both similar to and qualitatively different from those of adults, including exclusion, barriers to establishing legal identity, exposure to violence, restrictions on association, and unlawful detention. We also know that children’s evolving capacities, developmental stages, and interdependencies with families and communities require specialized, ecosystemic responses that integrate across the portfolios of government ministries and civil society. Promising interventions—including prevention measures, systemic inclusion efforts, multi-sectoral service models, child-friendly professionals, and procedural safeguards—demonstrate transformative potential, with preliminary evidence from Sierra Leone, for example, suggesting child maintenance agreements yield benefit-cost ratios as high as 50:1. However, important questions remain around the effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability of these interventions across diverse contexts, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Significant data gaps also persist: children are largely absent from legal needs surveys, age-disaggregated data are scarce, and current methodologies often fail to capture children’s lived experiences or the structural determinants of their justice needs.

Drawing on global frameworks, expert consultations, and emerging evidence, this paper argues that an expansive, child-centered approach to justice is essential for achieving justice for all, and concludes with proposed steps for ethical, child-specific data collection, participatory research methodologies, and economic analyses to build compelling investment cases for reform.

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How People-Centered Justice Matters for Children

Jennifer Davidson,* Sophie Shields,† Andrew Goudie‡

1. Overview

People under the age of eighteen account for approximately 30% of the world’s population, and in numerous countries children make up more than half of all residents.¹ Given children’s demographic significance, this paper places a distinctive focus on children under age 18. It draws on a growing global movement driving people-centered justice, which designs justice systems based on people’s ordinary experiences and seeks proportionate, accessible justice systems focused on people’s outcomes and applies this approach to children. In doing so, it shifts the focus from justice systems, to children’s agency and own experiences of their justice needs, and seeks to understand the distinctiveness of these needs in policy and practice responses. It advances an expansive definition of child-centered justice, rooted in the recognition of children’s distinct characteristics and experiences. It uses an ecosystemic lens—which views children’s lives as situated within a network of interrelated relationships, institutions, and structural conditions—to understand child-centered justice and apply this in practice and policy. It does so by reviewing existing knowledge on children’s justice needs established through the consolidated expertise of the Global Working Group on SDG 16+ Justice for Children,² and identifies promising evidence-based strategies and innovations for child-centered justice. This paper pays particular attention to the common justice problems children face, and to the evidence of service-level interventions that respond to these needs while driving systems toward greater child-centeredness. The analysis identifies critical gaps, including the underrepresentation of children in global data, limitations in legal needs surveys, and the lack of evidence on interventions necessary to address the justice needs of children facing adversities. It concludes with proposed next steps for research and action.

2. An Expansive Definition for Child-centered Justice

An opening reference point for this paper is drawn from the *2025 Global Declaration on Advancing Child-Centred Justice* which positions child-centered justice within the people-centered justice movement. It calls for inclusive, participatory, and accountable justice systems that uphold children’s rights under international law, respond to their specific needs as victims, witnesses, or alleged offenders, ensure their protection and participation, and advance reform through data, intersectoral cooperation, and meaningful child involvement.³ Specifically, it offers an expansive understanding of child-centered justice through its “Child-Centred Justice Conceptual Framework” as follows:

A broad interpretation of the meaning of child-centred justice is required to address the wide range of challenges children face and to remove barriers to their accessing justice. Such challenges may include instances of violence and armed conflict in particular, exclusion, barriers to identity, discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, and deprivation of children’s liberty.⁴

In this light, the scope of child-centered justice in this paper follows that set out in the Declaration, including administrative, civil, criminal, economic, environmental, political, and social justice. It operates through both judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, spanning courts as well as customary, religious, indigenous, community-based, and other justice systems. It recognizes that children may engage with these systems in multiple capacities—as victims or survivors, witnesses, accused of an offence, interested parties, or individuals requiring intervention for their care, protection, health,

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or wellbeing. It incorporates justice processes initiated by children themselves or on their behalf to seek remedies for violations or denials of rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other relevant international child rights instruments including preventive measures and complaints mechanisms, delivered by public authorities and other providers responsible for children, such as education, healthcare, childcare, child protection, social services, and other essential services. Where domestic systems fail to provide appropriate remedies, children have recourse to review or appeal procedures at regional or international levels. It emphasizes the need for states and stakeholders to establish strong, accessible pathways to justice that begin where children experience injustice.

3. Policy Distinctions for Children

The distinctive nature of children reinforces the need for an expansive and people-centered approach to advancing access to justice for children; the complexity of delivering child-centered justice can differ from other complex challenges in several ways.⁵ Because a range of both individual,⁶ familial⁷ and environmental⁸ factors profoundly affect children, supporting children's rights and addressing their justice needs can have particularly complex and multifaceted challenges. This is by nature of the distinct needs, rights and evolving capacities of children, and the immense mediating role that adults, communities and public services play in children's lives.

Responding differently in the light of this distinctiveness requires an intricacy of solutions, and a structure and nature of government and civil society integration that matches the task. Effective child-centered justice responses integrate the following distinctions:

Children have evolving agency and capacities; the impact of policies and programs on children at various stages of their development requires careful consideration and specialized knowledge so the impact of policy decisions are tailored to children's development.

Children are at the most formative point in their lives, with deep-seated and long-lasting impacts from policy successes and failures.

Lived experience offers crucial insights into understanding the lives and experiences of children, especially those children who are less "visible."

The nature of the challenge of child-centered justice demands the integration of a full understanding of the nature of children's wellbeing, the determinants of adversity and of their future wellbeing, and the understanding of what programs and policies will most likely address their rights and needs.

Children's interdependencies mean their wellbeing is inextricably linked to the wellbeing of the family, and supporting their families is critical for supporting children themselves. Local and community experiences in turn support families and their children, and so insights and expertise at the local and community level are key contributors to responding effectively in children's lives.

Children play a pivotal role in the success of a very wide range of national economic and social objectives that are often seen as quite distinct from the child *per se*, for example, gender equality; inclusive growth; and climate change. Children's wellbeing is inherently interconnected with adults' wellbeing, and to the adults' contribution to society and the economy in the immediate- and medium-term. As such, child wellbeing needs to be positioned as both a priority outcome to which society aspires, and as a fundamental determinant of many other high priority national outcomes.

The time horizon for children requires both urgency, due to the speed of their changing developmental stages, and sustained, high levels of commitment over time. Persistent efforts are needed to prevent lapses in coherence and consistency of programs.⁹

Child-centered justice thus cannot be achieved through agencies' efforts within singular mandates. An effective response requires actions that unite across government portfolios with civil society, driven by an unclouded vision for the outcomes, sustained over a long time horizon.¹⁰ The distinct nature of children, and an expansive definition of child-centered justice in response, together shape the parameters of this paper.

4. What We Know

Responding with a child-centered justice approach begins with an understanding of children's justice needs; these are interrelated but not exclusively the same as the justice needs adults face. Following from the people-centered justice movement flagship report *Justice for All: Report of the Task Force on Justice*,¹¹ which outlines "the most Common Justice Problem,"¹² the following section outlines a range of recognized and pressing justice problems facing children. This is followed by an overview of "gamechanging" approaches to children's justice problems which have the potential to shift whole systems towards better meeting children's justice needs. These are both outlined below.

5. Common Justice Problems Children Face

Fundamentally, as with adults a child—or the person supporting them—must recognise a justice need and know that a right exists before they can exercise it. Following on from this, 10 common justice problems children face were drawn from a review of recent international justice reports, led by international academic and technical experts, augmented by expert interviews and group consultations.¹³ Children's justice needs were found to be driven primarily by: Exclusion, Lack of access to justice, Lack of prevention, Barriers to identity, Violence, Limits to their association, and Detention. These problems manifest in both individual experiences and structural impacts, unjustly shaping children's outcomes as well as their interactions with justice systems. These common justice problems, with examples for both individual and structural levels, are briefly described below (see Appendix 1 for summary table).¹⁴

Children experience exclusion. For example, at the individual level, this is evident amongst children who grow up in poverty, and those who experience marginalization, isolation, and discrimination. These experiences are reinforced structurally—for example, through intergenerational economic inequality and systemic discrimination—perpetuating cycles of exclusion.

Children struggle to access justice when their rights are violated. For example, this occurs when children are unable to participate in decisions that directly affect their lives during justice proceedings; and when encounters with justice systems often (re)harm, ignore, or traumatize them. Structurally, this is mirrored in the lack of institutional accountability to children, and in the inaccessibility of justice systems that fail to respond to the distinct nature and needs of children.

Inadequate prevention compounds children's experiences of injustice and harm. A child may be unable to access essential public services such as mental health services due to barriers in accessibility for the child, or affordability for the family, for example, and in turn may be criminalized for running away from home. On a systemic level, this is reflected in justice systems that fail to integrate with broader efforts to strengthen access and affordability of education, health, and family or community support, leaving children without preventive safety nets.

Children's barriers to their right to identity present another justice obstacle. For instance, when a child without legal identity is excluded from national protections and services, or when children face severe risks in cross-border contexts when their legal identity is not recognized by another country. Structurally, these barriers are evident in situations such as when child migrants and refugees—who are made especially vulnerable in these circumstances—are systematically blocked from securing legal identity, creating the risk of generational statelessness.

Exposure to violence is a pervasive justice problem children face. At the individual level, children experience violence in multiple forms within and outside of the family —gender-based violence, abuse, bullying, and exploitation. They may also witness violence or, in some cases, commit violent acts themselves. Children also experience structural violence, such as when weak rule of law fosters corruption resulting in those who commit violence against children not being held accountable; or when frontline service providers lack child-sensitive approaches to violence, failing to protect children effectively.

Restrictions on children’s associations is a further justice need. This includes when children are held accountable for their associations rather than for their actions—for example, where a child is exploited and recruited into criminal gangs, or into violent extremism and accused of national security related offences, and not treated as a victim; children can be treated primarily as victims while still being held accountable for their actions rather than their associations. At a systemic level, their justice needs are then perpetuated when justice systems fail to differentiate between adults and children in national security-related offences, treating them with equal severity, made worse where military courts—lacking transparency and unprepared for cases involving children—permit hearing such cases.

Finally, **a further common justice need arises when children are detained in custody** rather than safely in communities, such as when children are arbitrarily and unlawfully deprived of their liberty, held in prolonged pre-trial detention, or placed in harmful large-scale institutions for “care” purposes, far removed from their families and communities.¹⁵ This is also evident structurally when justice systems are costly, unimaginative, and limited in their diversion and community-based options, and where detention facilities permit harmful practices, such as solitary confinement, violent punishment severe neglect, which exacerbate profound harms rather than promote rehabilitation.

6. Child-Centered Justice Interventions

Responding to children’s justice problems requires evidence-based interventions at individual, community, and systems levels, which together are essential to delivering child-centered justice. Applying innovations which are based on a clear foundation of understanding children’s justice needs can accelerate child-centered, rights-focused, and inclusive justice in particular. Still, further evidence is needed to sharpen knowledge, especially at scale and in a variety of differing contexts. Evidence supports the following range of interventions.

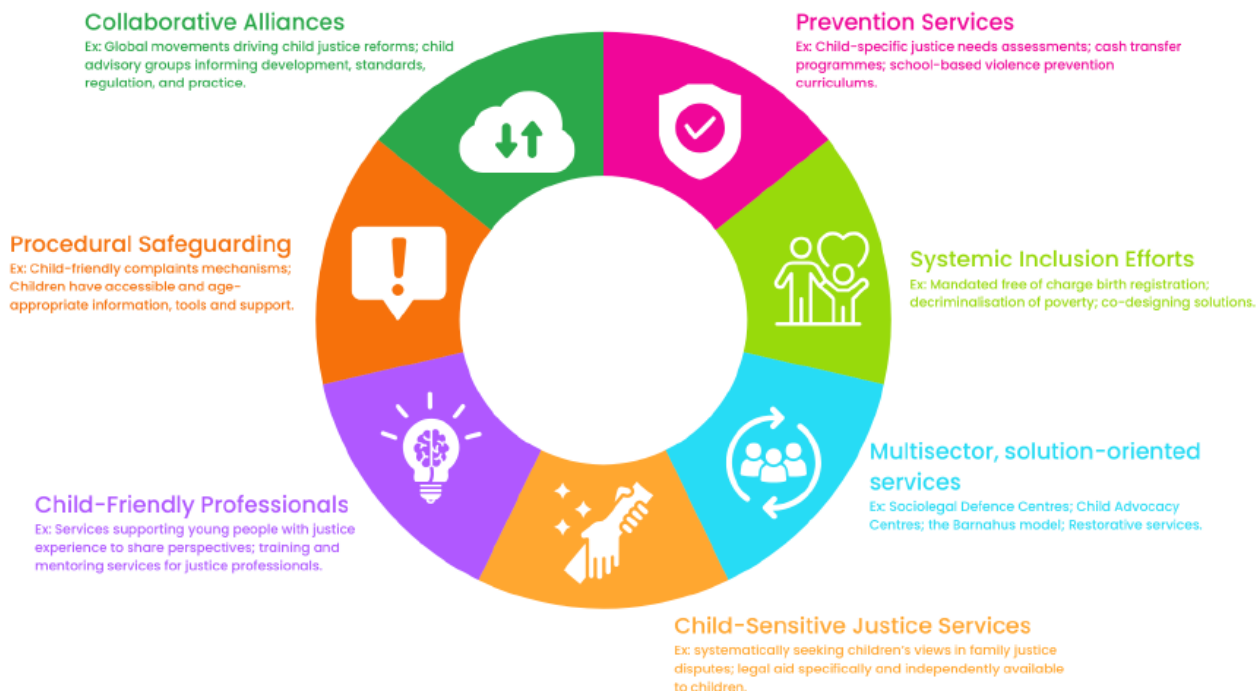
“Gamechangers” to advance child-centered justice

Innovative approaches can shift whole systems towards improved and holistic child-centered justice. The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiIL) defines *people-centered justice* “Gamechangers” as having “strong potential to solve legal problems fairly and deliver effective treatments consistently.”¹⁶ Less is documented about the full range of *child-centered justice* innovations that may warrant Gamechanger status.

However, evidence of Justice for Children Gamechangers is emerging.¹⁷ These are child-centered, rights-focused, and inclusive approaches which are, or show promise to be, “effective, scalable, and sustainable solutions.”¹⁸ These components create the legal and social environment that enables children to thrive, receive fair treatment, and actively participate in their own development and the society in which they live. They reinforce children’s rights, wellbeing, and, where relevant, promote rehabilitative over punitive measures.

Emerging from a review of promising practices around the world,¹⁹ and supported by international expert interviews, the following seven Justice for Children “Gamechangers” are drawn from children’s experiences as well as research and insights from professionals. These seven types of services, active across multiple ecosystemic levels, emerged from this review; these are presented in Figure 1 and outlined below, identified as core to addressing children’s justice needs:

Figure 1. Seven “Gamechanging Innovations to Achieve Justice for Children” (2024)



Prevention services are designed to avoid escalation into formal system interactions by meeting children’s justice needs and addressing underlying causes within their homes, families, and communities. These can include child-specific justice needs assessments; community services and programs, including law-related education bringing accessible, practical, and rights-focused legal education into high schools; cash transfer programs; school-based violence prevention curricula; and mechanisms for resolving family justice disputes.

Systemic inclusion efforts target structural changes that address the disproportionate representation of marginalized children, families, and communities with unmet justice needs. Examples include mandated free-of-charge birth registration, ensuring access to social security by removing barriers for those without legal identification, enforced child maintenance agreements (see below), strengthening democratization and the rule of law, the decriminalization of poverty, and systematic consultation processes that include co-designing solutions with affected communities.

Multi-sectoral, solution-oriented services shift siloed justice interventions to instead provide integrated responses that resolve justice issues as close as possible to the child’s daily life. Such services include community-based Sociolegal Defense Centers,²⁰ which provide children with direct access to justice and socio-legal support to uphold their rights; Child Advocacy Centers²¹ and Barnahus²² models, which offer multi-sector, interdisciplinary responses for child victims and witnesses of violence; and restorative justice services, which focus on repairing relationships through mediation, conflict resolution, counselling, and support.

Child-centered justice services intentionally design, implement, and operate procedures across formal, informal, and customary systems with children’s needs in mind, whether they are witnesses, offenders, or victims.

Interventions can include policy guidelines and practices that systematically and effectively seek children’s views in family justice disputes such as divorce, custody, or maintenance; community-based non-custodial sentences for children and their primary caregiver; the establishment of special children’s tribunals as alternatives to formal courts; and legal aid made directly accessible to children, independent of parental income levels or permissions.

Child-friendly professionals are central to delivering effective child-centered justice services. Adults working within the justice sector, such as lawyers, paralegals, judges, and police, as well as essential providers of health, education, and social work services, are recruited and equipped to communicate with children meaningfully and ensure their rights are met. Examples include services that support young people with lived experience of the justice system to share their perspectives, as well as training and mentoring programs for justice professionals to build child-sensitive skills and knowledge, particularly in relation to children’s rights.

Procedural safeguarding ensures robust protections throughout all legal proceedings, making justice processes child-inclusive and consistent with international human rights standards. Relevant interventions include child-friendly complaints mechanisms; approaches that enable children to express their views at all stages of their justice interactions and proceedings; provision of clear, accessible, and age-appropriate information, tools, and support; and the option for children to choose whether proceedings take place in person or digitally.

Finally, **collaborative alliances** involve leadership at multiple levels to build transformative partnerships between government and non-governmental actors, legal professionals, child advocates, donors, and children themselves. Such alliances secure shared commitments to child-centered justice by shaping policy with the involvement of children, pooling resources, and promoting children’s rights and wellbeing. Ambitious donors with long-term vision are seen as essential partners, as investment in justice for children is vital to accelerate the pace of change required to meet Agenda 2030.²³ Practical examples include global movements driving child justice reforms, national whole-of-government and whole-of-society mainstreaming initiatives, and the establishment of child advisory groups to meaningfully inform professional development, standards, regulation, policies and practices.

7. What Are the Gaps

Gaps in evidence and data on child-centered justice vary in nature and substance. Missing are data collection efforts that go well beyond descriptive data to include baseline, comparative, and trend data to properly equip justice leaders, policymakers, and funders to drive change and track progress nationally, internationally, and globally. Data collection gaps also include a lack of age disaggregation; a scarcity of applied child-specific methodologies beyond the children’s nongovernmental sector; and a lack of investment into research that asks relevant questions of children to better reflect the nature of children’s justice needs (which, due to the distinct nature of children, can be hidden within children’s wider circumstances). Data that captures the ecosystemic aspects of children’s lives would enable more effective and targeted responses.

In this high-level review, gaps in evidence include clear definitions of replicable interventions and, relatedly, evaluation data on the effectiveness of specific child-centered interventions related to the common justice problems children face outlined above. These gaps are particularly pronounced in relation to culturally situated child-centered justice interventions in low and middle-income countries. These gaps in turn contribute to a lack of effective and compelling investment cases for child-centered justice interventions, which then undermines progress to deliver and scale evidence-based innovations for justice for children. An overview of gaps and considerations related to specifically legal needs surveys and investment cases are explored below.

7.1. Data Collection Gaps

7.1.1. Legal Needs Surveys and children

Current quantitative tools (e.g., legal needs surveys, victim surveys) often fail to capture children's justice needs. High-quality, statistically robust data (both quantitative and qualitative) is essential. Children (under 18) are not commonly included within legal needs survey samples, and when they are, these will be older adolescents (ages 15 and older).²⁴ Based on an unpublished and European-based rapid review of the literature to identify child-relevant Legal Needs Surveys (LNS),²⁵ the following insights are offered:

In attempting to understand why children are not included in LNS, Balmer et al. offer three reasons for why their own LNS methodology was restricted to those over 18 years old.²⁶ They explain that the distinct nature of children (as discussed above) means that children may not know their rights; LNS do not set out to define justice problems in a way that would capture children's justice needs; and the responsibility for children's judicable problems often lies with others rather than children.²⁷ These reasons are echoed elsewhere in the literature.²⁸

7.1.2. Child-friendly methodologies

Children have been effectively included in some justice needs analyses by adapting research methods in order to be responsive to children's distinct needs. In doing so, important insights from and about children are offered. Key messages from research include concerns that "in general, many children lack knowledge of their rights."²⁹ Children expressed experiences that their "needs and concerns are not prioritised by the adults working for them."³⁰ Researchers in contexts of displacement conclude that qualitative research methods such as focus groups and observation are an essential part of data collection on the basis of the rich, nuanced and applicable insights elicited by the research:

From a methodological point of view, one of the main conclusions that can be drawn from this work is that qualitative research methods such as focus groups and observation are an essential part of data collection. Creating a space for researchers to record their observations of the social dynamics in which an interview or focus group takes place is essential to be able to interpret the results, including to read silences and identify areas of self-censorship.³¹

7.1.3. Economic Investment Evidence Gaps

Relatedly, in a context of highly constrained public resources, intense competition within all governments for scarce resources, and heightened demand for services, sustained political and civil society commitment to child-centered justice is critical. A case for investment into child-centered justice offers would offer immense value as a crucial complement to the fundamental arguments to implement programs which enhance children's access to justice.

Investing in children generates benefits through two main channels: immediate improvements in childhood experiences, and long-term reductions in adults who have endured prolonged adversity. These investments create both direct value for the child and broader economic value for families, communities, and society. The benefits emerge in both the short term and the long term — including enhanced well-being for children and reduced social costs for society as well as increased contributions of adults to economic, social and cultural national life. The investments themselves span preventative efforts that reduce the onset of adversity and restorative efforts that mitigate or repair harms already experienced.^{32,33}

Some evidence is emerging. For example, unpublished preliminary evidence from Sierra Leone³⁴ suggests that child maintenance agreements are highly cost-effective, with a conservative benefit-cost ratio of 50:1—exceeding other known justice interventions³⁵ and comparable to global returns from leading health measures such as immunization and reducing child malnutrition.³⁶ This intervention also disproportionately benefits girls, and families living in poverty, as transfers predominantly reach female-headed households, which are typically poorer.³⁷ However, evidence on the return on investment in child-centered justice remains limited.

Insights may nonetheless be drawn from wider people-centered justice initiatives and lessons borrowed from wider child-focused public policy evaluations. For example, in the adult criminal justice system, an economic analysis of a

UK restorative justice program demonstrated returns of £4 GBP (≈\$5 USD) for every £1 GBP (≈\$1 USD) invested, and £14 GBP (≈\$19 USD) per £1 GBP for society overall, highlighting the potential of such “gamechanger” interventions to reduce detention and strengthen social cohesion.³⁸ Broader evidence on children’s *wellbeing* underscores the long-term economic benefits of early investment³⁹ particularly in education, and with research on COVID-19 school closures showing significant lifelong earning losses from disrupted learning.⁴⁰ Similarly, a Danish longitudinal study links childhood adversity with higher use of health, welfare, and justice systems, reinforcing the case for equitable early preventive investment.⁴¹ Building on these insights, with further effort, the potential exists for child-centered justice to be framed not as a *cost* but as an *investment* that generates immediate benefits in child wellbeing and long-term societal gains.

While the arguments in support of greater investment are compelling in principle, and informed by powerful lines of thinking and deep understanding, the hard evidence is still limited. Understanding the effectiveness and impact of investing in child-centered justice programs to enhance children’s wellbeing is a crucial element in the promotion of child-centered justice. The data needed to build this case for the economic and social returns on investment into child-centered justice reforms, however, are complex, difficult to identify, and as yet under-researched—or unpublished and lacking peer-reviewed, where research has been undertaken. Refining and validating estimated benefit-cost ratios may be an important next step, where preliminary evidence exists. It is proposed that drawing on successful models in related fields, and applying robust methodologies to measure these outcomes, would contribute to sustaining political will and advancing systemic reform.

7.2. Closing these Gaps

Reviews exploring actions to close data gaps⁴² and steps to implement smarter financing strategies⁴³ were undertaken by the Global Working Group on SDG 16+ Justice for Children⁴⁴ identified the following:

On the gap of age disaggregation in data collection: Where current data systems lack sufficient attention to the distinct experiences of children, an evidence and data framework that specifically includes children’s justice needs sharpens the focus on data collection from the start. While engaging with families and other adults about children provides useful insights, this is not sufficient on its own, and children must be directly and meaningfully included in data processes.

On ethical and inclusive data collection: Involving children in data collection requires specific ethical safeguards, given their vulnerability and the sensitivity of justice-related information. Partnering with expert organizations that have built trust with children facing marginalization, and using such processes to inform both prevention and response strategies are useful investments to close these gaps. Following the Agenda 2030 principle of addressing those “furthest behind, first,”⁴⁵ priority placed on the needs of the most disadvantaged and least visible children will close the largest gaps.

On methodologies: Integrate both quantitative and qualitative evidence; expanding specialist surveys to cover the justice needs of children in vulnerable populations to ensure more comprehensive understanding of children’s justice needs. Develop methods that support the development of interventions investment cases. Collate illustrative examples of how specific approaches can be applied to achieve child-centered justice which are applicable to a range of country contexts. Establish demonstration projects with a specific focus on interventions to accelerate learning.

On evidence initiatives that view children holistically: Where data collection focus exclusively on individual-level problems, design initiatives to also examine the structural elements driving children’s justice needs. This includes incorporating children’s perspectives on factors such as family income, family separation, race and ethnicity, gender, disability, and rurality. A broad understanding informs more effective interventions, policies, and programs.

On safe and inclusive partnerships in data gathering: Although safeguarding efforts are crucial, the evidence suggests that these can inadvertently lead to children being invisible within datasets. To avoid this, new

methodologies developed and deployed to accurately capture children’s justice needs require collaboration with experts in participatory research with children, data protection specialists, civil society, policymakers, adult allies, and trained professionals.

On creative and participatory approaches: To help ensure children’s views and experiences are authentically represented in justice data, methods include for example strength-based, art-based, and play-based strategies, which can facilitate meaningful engagement. While such methods may require greater investment of time and resources, they can generate nuanced, relevant, and ethical insights, and contribute to high-impact solutions. They also provide valuable guidance for the implementation and improvement of justice policies and programs.

On prioritizing efforts: Focus on child-centered justice interventions that are multipliers, that are underpin and benefit wider aspirations.

On capacity-building: Develop learning resources that support policymakers to assess the cost benefit value of interventions. Ensure these assess the benefits and savings to wider society of investing in justice for children, as well as the direct benefits to the child well into adulthood, for the breadth of national prosperity.

Conclusion

Given that children constitute a substantial share of the global population, *child-centered* justice forms an important focus in achieving people-centered justice. This paper draws on the growing global movement driving people-centered justice, offering a perspective on how people-centered justice matters to children. It examines the distinct characteristics of children’s justice needs, the common justice problems they encounter, and the systemic and methodological barriers which impede a full, actionable understanding and means of intervention. The expansive definition of child-centered justice proposed forms a necessary basis from which to address the wide range of justice challenges *children* face, for an effective *people-centered* response.

This high-level review of growing international evidence to date underscores several key findings. Children experience justice problems that are both similar to and qualitatively different from those faced by adults, including exclusion, barriers to identity, exposure to violence, and unlawful detention. These, and the responses in turn, are mediated by the adults around them. Promising service-level interventions, or “gamechangers”, demonstrate potential to transform systems, yet evidence on their effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability remains limited. Critically, gaps in data and research are ongoing: children are largely absent from legal needs surveys, age-disaggregated data is scarce, and methodologies often fail to capture children’s lived experiences. These deficits constrain the ability to design responsive policies and to build a compelling investment case for child-centered justice.

These findings point to clear priorities for future action. Advancing child-centered justice requires robust, ethical, and child-specific data frameworks that integrate quantitative and qualitative approaches and adopt intersectional methodologies to reflect the structural determinants of children’s justice needs. Research that focuses on co-design with children, rigorous evaluation of interventions, and economic analyses to demonstrate the longer-term benefits of investment are important to this effort. These steps will require further research and evidence efforts, founded on inclusive, multi-sector partnerships and sustained leadership across government, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

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Sophie is also a PhD Candidate at the University of Strathclyde, researching children's human rights and public sector decision-making in the era of artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision-making, with a particular focus on justice and welfare systems.

¹ 29.6% of the global population is estimated to be under age 18. U.N. Dep't of Econ. & Soc. Affairs, Population Div. & UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2025: Statistical Tables*, UNICEF Data, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/dataset/the-state-of-the-worlds-children-2025-statistical-tables>.

² The international, multi-agency Global Working Group on SDG16+ Justice for Children brings together leading international partners to place children and young people, and their human rights, at the heart of the global movement for justice for all within Agenda 2030, with a focus on SDG 16.3, a target under the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), focusing on promoting the rule of law at national and international levels and ensuring equal access to justice for all. The Working Group is convened by the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures at the University of Strathclyde, with support from the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. It includes Child Friendly Justice European Network, Defence for Children International, ECPAT International, International Legal Foundation, the Legal Empowerment Fund, OECD, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children, Terre des hommes Lausanne Foundation, and UNICEF. The Working Group collaborates closely with the Justice Action Coalition. Shining a spotlight on children's access to justice within the people-centered justice movement, the Working Group on SDG 16+ Justice for Children was first convened in 2018 to inform the inaugural Task Force on Justice and its Flagship Report. This Task Force aimed to accelerate access to justice for all, by placing justice at the heart of sustainable development, and putting people—including children—at the center of justice systems. This launched a movement from justice for the few, to justice for all. The Working Group actively advances people-centered justice, and collaborates closely with the Justice Action Coalition (JAC), a high-ambition coalition, and multi-stakeholder alliance of countries and organizations working to achieve measurable progress in justice outcomes for people and communities. The JAC mobilizes political leadership, advances data and evidence, and builds momentum for financing and scaling frontline justice services. Its members are united by a simple principle: justice must be people-centered, designed around the needs and realities of citizens, not institutions alone. *Justice for Children*, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just & Inclusive Soc'ys, <https://www.sdg16.plus/justice-in-action/justice-for-children/> (last visited Feb. 20, 2026).

³ See V World Congress on Justice with Children, *Global Declaration on Advancing Child-Centred Justice* (June 4, 2025), <https://justicewithchildren.org/en/resource/2025-global-declaration-advancing-child-centred-justice-f>. This Declaration sets out a Child-Centred Justice Framework, beginning with the following people-centered position: "1. A growing global movement towards people-centred justice is proving to be wide-reaching and socially transformative: This approach prioritises people and their experiences as the starting point for justice systems, institutions, and reforms. Placing children at the core of this people-centred justice movement and involving them meaningfully in the process is essential to securing the Sustainable Development Goal 16 ambition of equal access to justice for all by 2030. Ensuring justice for children is crucial to achieving justice for all. 2. Child-centred justice ensures children are empowered and supported in order to prevent the emergence of challenges and to resolve them in an age-appropriate, inclusive, and accessible environment: Effective practices of judicial and non-judicial avenues can support children in meaningfully participating in justice systems, claiming their rights, making complaints about violations of their rights, and seeking appropriate redress and remedies. While non-judicial avenues may be more accessible to or preferable for children, it is critical that states must be reminded of their fundamental responsibility to respect children's rights and facilitate their access to justice. 3. Child-centred justice systems are essential to preventing harm and ensuring children's access to justice: A child-centred justice system

recognises children as rights-holders who are entitled to a range of judicial and non-judicial mechanisms. It entails transitioning from justice systems and services that merely involve or accommodate children to those inherently designed with their rights and wellbeing as a core focus[.]”

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ See JENNIFER DAVIDSON, ANDREW GOUDIE, FABRIZIO DE FRANCESCO, & SOPHIE SHIELDS, USING A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO ADVANCE CHILD WELLBEING (Univ. of Strathclyde, Inspiring Children's Futures, Final Report, 2022) (summary of report commissioned by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (“OECD”)).

⁶ Individual factors contributing to children's vulnerability stem from cognitive, emotional and physical capabilities or personal circumstances, for instance age, disability, a child's own disposition or mental health difficulties. They can be invariable, such as belonging to an ethnic minority or having an immigrant background, or situational, such as experiencing maltreatment, being an unaccompanied minor or placed in out-of-home care. See OECD, CHANGING THE ODDS FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN: BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES AND RESILIENCE (2019), https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2019/11/changing-the-odds-for-vulnerable-children_12452b6c/a2e8796c-en.pdf.

⁷ Familial circumstances contributing to children's vulnerability include for example, poverty and education, in particular parental status including income, employment and skills.

⁸ Environmental factors contributing to child vulnerability operate at both family and community levels. Family factors include income poverty and material deprivation, parents' health and health behaviors, parents' education level, family stress, and exposure to intimate partner violence. Community factors are associated with school and neighborhood environments. Environmental factors illustrate the intergenerational aspect of child vulnerability and the concentration of vulnerable children within certain families and communities. See OECD, *supra* n. 6.

⁹ This point is picked up in the context of conflict. See OECD, WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACHES TO FRAGILE STATES (2006), <https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/37826256.pdf>.

¹⁰ See JENNIFER DAVIDSON, ANDREW GOUDIE, FABRIZIO DE FRANCESCO & SOPHIE SHIELDS, USING A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO ADVANCE CHILD WELLBEING (Univ. of Strathclyde, Inspiring Children's Futures, Learning Report 3, 2022), <https://inspiringchildrensfutures.org/blog/learning-report-wga-child-wellbeing>.

¹¹ PATHFINDERS, JUSTICE FOR ALL: THE REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON JUSTICE (2019), <https://www.sdg16.plus/resources/justice-for-all-report-of-the-task-force-on-justice/>.

¹² *Id.* at 66.

¹³ JENNIFER DAVIDSON, MARIAMA DIALLO, SUSAN ELSLEY, CEDRIC FOUSSARD, ANDREW GOUDIE, KRISTEN HOPE, SOPHIE SHIELDS, JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN: APPLYING LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC 10-11 (Univ. of Strathclyde, 2022), https://cic.nyu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/6c192f_5c90474d29574ce6bf07eb631729a5d9-1.pdf.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ JENNIFER DAVIDSON, *Institutions: Accountability as a Key to Reforming Children's Alternative Care*, in ROADMAP FOR ACTION ON CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY 2025–2030, at 34 (Alex Kamarotos, Sasha Richards, Margaret Tuite, Manfred Nowak, Manu Krishan, Luísa V. Barbosa, Rana Refahi, Carolina Cottard o, Jennifer Davidson, Sophie Shields & Leo Ratledge eds., Defence for Children International 2025), <https://defenceforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025-07-04-Draft-Roadmap-2025-2030-EN-final.pdf>.

¹⁶ Hiil Justice Dashboard, The Gamechangers, <https://dashboard.hiil.org/the-gamechangers/> (last visited Nov. 24, 2025).

¹⁷ See CEDRIC FOUSSARD, SOPHIE SHIELDS, & JENNIFER DAVIDSON, EVIDENCE & DATA: CHILD-CENTRED METHODOLOGIES AND GAMECHANGERS TO ACHIEVE JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN (Univ. of Strathclyde, Justice for Children Policy Brief Series Report 3, 2024), <https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/90713/1/Davidson-et-al-Justice-for-Children-Policy-Brief-on-Evidence-and-Data.pdf>.

¹⁸ See Hiil Justice Dashboard, the Gamechangers, <https://dashboard.hiil.org/the-gamechangers/> (last visited Nov. 24, 2025).

¹⁹ See FOUSSARD, SHIELDS, & DAVIDSON, *supra* n. 17.

²⁰ See Defence for Children International, <https://defenceforchildren.org/socio-legal-defence-centres/>.

²¹ See Child Advocacy Centers in Canada: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fund-fina/cj-jp/fund-fond/cac-cae.html>, and in USA: <https://www.nationalcac.org/>.

²² See Barnahus, <https://barnahus.eu/barnahus/about-barnahus/>.

²³ The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. These 17 Goals were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>. In setting out the ambitious vision for Sustainable Development, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges not only to leave no one behind, but to also address the furthest behind first: “As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.” (Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>) and “We reaffirm our commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda in its entirety. We will undertake every effort to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first.” (Ministerial Declaration of the 2020 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (June 2020), https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26339HLPF_MD_Revised.pdf).

²⁴ Note: A number of legal needs surveys have encompassed children within their samples, although these did not include children below 15 years old—for example, English and Welsh Civil and Social Justice Panel Survey (16 years old upwards); Legal Australia-Wide Survey Legal Need in Australia (15 years old upwards); Justice Made to Measure - New South Wales Legal Needs Survey in Disadvantaged Areas (15 years old upwards). In the former survey, face to face questionnaires in participants homes were employed, and in the latter two, telephone interviews were utilized.

²⁵ See Aaron Brown, Children in Legal Needs Surveys: A Rapid Review of the Literature (2023) (unpublished research briefing commissioned by the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures) (on file with author).

²⁶ See NIGEL J. BALMER, PASCOE PLEASANCE, HUGH M. McDONALD & REBECCA L. SANDEFUR, THE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF LAW SURVEY (PULS) ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE 9 (Victoria Law Found. 2022).

²⁷ See LESLEY EMERSON, KATRINA LLOYD, LAURA LUNDY, KAREN ORR & ELLEN WEAVER, THE LEGAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND: THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT STAKEHOLDERS (QUEEN'S UNIV. Belfast 2014) (“The first concerns sample efficiency. People can only experience justiciable problems if exposed to the circumstances that can give rise to them. Surveys have routinely found that problems are reported least often by those in the youngest and oldest age groups. The second concerns problem specification. The nature of justiciable problems faced by the youngest (and oldest) respondents can be qualitatively different to those faced by the general population. As the problem descriptions in the questionnaire are optimized for inquiry into the general population, this limits utility in the case of young people. The third concerns responsibility. Responsibility for many problems faced by young people is shared or rests with parents. We consider that young people under the age of 18 are better studied through targeted and tailored surveys or other methods. However, it should be noted that the youngest PULS respondents will report some problems they experienced while under the age of 18, so providing some coverage of earlier years.”).

²⁸ Note: Research studies exploring legal needs have focused “on engaging with young people who had experience of care and justice when they were children, rather than children who were currently facing these issues.” It is explained within the research that the decision not to undertake research with children under 18 years old was made on ethical grounds. See, e.g., CLAIRE LIGHTOWER, IMPROVING LEGAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW: A SCOPING STUDY 11 (Clan Childlaw, 2022).

²⁹ See, e.g., Dawn Watkins, Effie Lai-Chong Law, Joanna Barwick & Elee Kirk, *Exploring Children's Understanding of Law in Their Everyday Lives*, 38 LEGAL STUD. 59 (2018).

³⁰ Emerson et al., *supra* n. 27, at 5-6.

³¹ Translated from French. Original: « D'un point de vue méthodologique, l'une des principales conclusions que l'on peut tirer de ces travaux est que les méthodes qualitatives de recherche telles que les focus groupes et l'observation sont une partie essentielle de la collecte de données. Créer un espace pour que les chercheurs puissent enregistrer leurs observations de la dynamique sociale dans laquelle se déroule un entretien ou un groupe de discussion est essentiel pour pouvoir interpréter les résultats, y compris pour lire dans les silences et identifier les zones d'autocensure. » See Pierre Fichter et al., Terre des hommes, *Etude sur les Besoins et la Satisfaction en matière de Justice dans les zones d'accueil des Populations Déplacées Internes au Burkina Faso: Présentation des résultats des groupes de discussion avec les enfants âgés de 12 à 15 ans* (2022), <https://tdh.rokka.io/dynamic/noop/81133db1834b0c0e77e5ebbab2c53b5c52a8f94a/etude-sur-les-besoins-et-la-satisfaction-en-matiere-de-justi.pdf>.

³² See ANDREW GOUDIE, ACHIEVING THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN IN THE COVID-19 ERA: THE CENTRALITY OF THE ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES INSPIRING CHILDREN'S FUTURES (Univ. of Strathclyde, Learning Report Two – April 2021), <https://inspiringchildrensfutures.org/blog/learning-report-economy-and-childrens-well-being>.

³³ Olivier Thevenon, Graine Dirwan, Jennifer Davidson, & Andrew Goudie, *Securing the Recovery, Ambition, and Resilience for the Well-Being of Children in the Post-COVID Decade*, OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1787/0f02237a-en>.

³⁴ See Marcus Manuel, Sierra Leone Legal Aid Board (2024) (unpublished research proposal on impact of child maintenance grants) (on file with author).

³⁵ See MARCUS MANUEL & CLARE MANUEL, PEOPLE-CENTERED JUSTICE FOR ALL – A ROUTE TO SCALING UP ACCESS TO JUSTICE ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES 21, ODI (2021), https://media.odi.org/documents/FINAL_-_DPF-PoGo_Justice_Finance_-_120421.pdf (review which included a 2020 literature review for the Justice Taskforce (maximum of 10:1)); see also OECD, BUILDING A BUSINESS CASE FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE (2020), <https://web.archive-storage.oecd.org/aemint-web-archive-prod/web-archive/28/28cee315d44a1883fedd3d035cccc2011442f1daadd82b0c43985f2baf2e260.pdf>.

³⁶ See Copenhagen Consensus Center, *The Nobel Laureates' Guide to the Smartest Targets for the World 2016-2030* (Post-2015 Consensus), https://copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/documents/post2015brochure_m.pdf (immunization ratio is 60:1; child malnutrition 45:1 and malaria 36:1).

³⁷ See Clare Manuel, Marcus Manuel, & Paul Prettitore, Discussion Input at the Justice Data Observatory Research Workshop on People-Centered Justice, World Justice Forum, Warsaw, Poland (June 23, 2025).

³⁸ FRANK GRIMSEY JONES & LUCY HARRIS, AN ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE (Why Me? 2022), <https://why-me.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Why-Me-RJ-Economic-Evaluation-Technical-report-2022-v3.pdf>.

³⁹ See, e.g., OECD, INVESTING IN HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC) (2011); Jorge Luis Garcia, James J. Heckman, Ermini Leaf Duncan, & Maria Jose Prados, *The Life-cycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 10456 (December 2015), <https://docs.iza.org/dp10456.pdf>; JAMES J. HECKMAN, THE HECKMAN EQUATION: THERE'S MORE TO GAIN BY TAKING A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (2017), https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2017/01/F_Heckman_CBAOnePager_120516.pdf; THE HECKMAN EQUATION, JAMES HECKMAN CHANGES THE EQUATION FOR AMERICAN PROSPERITY (2013), https://heckmanequation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/F_Heckman_Brochure_041515.pdf.

⁴⁰ See The DELVE Initiative, *Balancing the Risks of Pupils Returning to Schools*, DELVE Report No. 4., Royal Society (July 2020), <https://rs-delve.github.io/reports/2020/07/24/balancing-the-risk-of-pupils-returning-to-schools.html>.

⁴¹ See Bertina Kreshpaj et al., *Association between childhood adversity and use of the health, social, and justice systems in Denmark (DANLIFE): a nationwide cohort study*, 10 THE LANCET PUBLIC HEALTH, Issue 1, January 2025, at e29-e35, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(24\)00242-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(24)00242-1/fulltext).

⁴² See FOUSSARD, SHIELDS, & DAVIDSON, *supra* n. 17.













⁴³ Jennifer Davidson, Andrew Goudie & Hannah Randolph, *Justice for Children Policy Brief: Focussing Investment to Secure Justice for Children*, Just. for Child. Pol'y Brief Series 2/2023 (Univ. of Strathclyde Dec. 2023), <https://cic.nyu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Smarter-Financing-The-Investment-Case-to-Secure-Justice-for-Children-2023.pdf>.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ See G.A. Res. A/RES/70/1, at 3 (Sept. 25, 2015) (“As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach *the furthest behind first*.”). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. See *id.* The 17 Goals were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals. See *id.*

Appendix 1. Common Justice Problems Children Face¹

COMMON JUSTICE PROBLEMS CHILDREN FACE

<<<< INDIVIDUAL		STRUCTURAL >>>>		<<<< INDIVIDUAL		STRUCTURAL >>>>
<p>Growing up in poverty⁽²²⁾ A family cannot provide for their child, who stops attending school and spends time on the street, sometimes engaging in illegal ways to generate income to support his/her family. A child is separated from their family and taken into alternative care because their family is deemed unfit due to poverty.</p> <p>Growing up excluded and discriminated against⁽²³⁾ A girl stays at home to carry out household tasks, childcare and to care for her grandmother while her brother plays outside.²⁴ A child with disabilities is excluded from education.²⁵</p>	 EXCLUSION	<p>Economic inequality Under-budgeted social and family support services result in families not able to receive support. Children lack equal opportunities to education, and inequalities are perpetuated across generations.</p> <p>Systemic discrimination⁽²⁶⁾ 1 In 3 adolescent girls from the poorest households has never been to school across the globe.²⁷ Children from indigenous, ethnic and other minority groups are disproportionately criminalized due to policing and court decisions that are systematically reinforced based on racially discriminatory beliefs.²⁸</p>	 BARRIERS TO IDENTITY	<p>Children lack a legal identity A child without a birth certificate is unable to enrol in school.²⁹ A child lacks a nationality and is excluded from protections afforded to nationals.</p> <p>Children's legal identity is not recognized by another country An unaccompanied child seeking asylum is unable to benefit from the protections they are entitled to. A child's nationality is not recognised when they cross borders.³⁰</p>	 BARRIERS TO IDENTITY	<p>Children are not prioritized in administrative justice processes Children cannot access services or benefit from the policies, programmes and protections that are intended for them by law.</p> <p>Child migrants and refugees experience barriers to access legal identity Immigration services default to treating unaccompanied children without age identity as adults. Inherited statelessness locks in exclusion and discrimination throughout generations.³¹</p>
<p>No opportunity to participate in decisions A child who committed an offense is either not heard, or given less than 2 minutes to express themselves during the judicial proceeding. A judge does not consult a child in their parents' custody dispute and determines that they must live with their violent father.³²</p>	 LACK OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE	<p>Lack of accountability of institutions to children No specialised learning is required of justice professionals working with children. Children are not informed about the rationale behind a judicial decision and are given no right to appeal.</p>	 VIOLENCE	<p>Children experience violence (abuse, bullying and exploitation) A child is victim of cyberbullying and does not know who to talk with to make it stop and receive support. A girl is sexually assaulted, the police accept a bribe from the perpetrator, and the family is unable to bring the perpetrator to justice.³³</p>	 VIOLENCE	<p>Weak rule of law does not bring perpetrators to justice Systematically unchallenged corruption leads to children's abusers not being prosecuted by the police, resulting in perpetrator impunity and further trauma to this and other children. Cases are dismissed due to a lack of investigation means.</p>
<p>Being harmed, ignored, traumatised by encounters with the justice system A child victim is repeatedly re-traumatised because they have to repeat their experience multiple times during the criminal proceeding. A child suspect sits at the police station awaiting an interview in the same room as adult suspects.³⁴</p>	 LACK OF PREVENTION	<p>Inaccessible justice systems that are blind to the distinctive nature of children Children are not treated any differently from adults in contact with justice systems. Excessive pressures on court caseloads leads a judge to cancel the child's hearing due to time constraints and in view of speedy proceedings.</p>	 LIMITS TO ASSOCIATION	<p>Children are held accountable for their associations, rather than for their actions A child is recruited and used by an armed group, then accused of national security-related offenses, and not treated as a victim.</p>	 LIMITS TO ASSOCIATION	<p>Justice systems do not differentiate between children and adults in national security-related offences Military courts – which lack transparency, are unprepared for and unsuitable for cases involving children – nevertheless permit hearing cases where a child is accused of national security-related offences.</p>
<p>Limited access to public services A family is unable to find support for their child's mental health, and the child is then criminalised for running away from their family home.</p>	 LACK OF PREVENTION	<p>A lack of integration of justice systems with efforts to strengthen access and affordability of education, health, etc. and family & community strengthening efforts The challenges that children face are not resolved early by public services; instead these escalate until they are unnecessary in contact with the law.</p>	 DETENTION	<p>Children are arbitrarily and unlawfully deprived of their liberty A child is held in prolonged pre-trial detention with no guarantee of a lawyer, no trial date set, and no indication of an end to their detention. A child is moved into a large scale institution isolated from family and community.</p>	 DETENTION	<p>Justice options are blunt, costly, unimaginative, and limited The lack of community-based services, options for non-custodial measures, or restorative justice programmes results in detention by default. Detention facilities (including alternative care and mental health institutions) permit harmful practices to children such as solitary confinement.³⁵</p>

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Justice for Children, Justice for All: Applying Lessons from the Pandemic

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Justice for Children, Justice for All: Applying Lessons from the Pandemic

¹ JENNIFER DAVIDSON ET AL., JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN: APPLYING LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC 10-11 (Univ. of Strathclyde, 2022), https://cic.nyu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/6c192f_5c90474d29574ce6bf07eb631729a5d9-1.pdf.