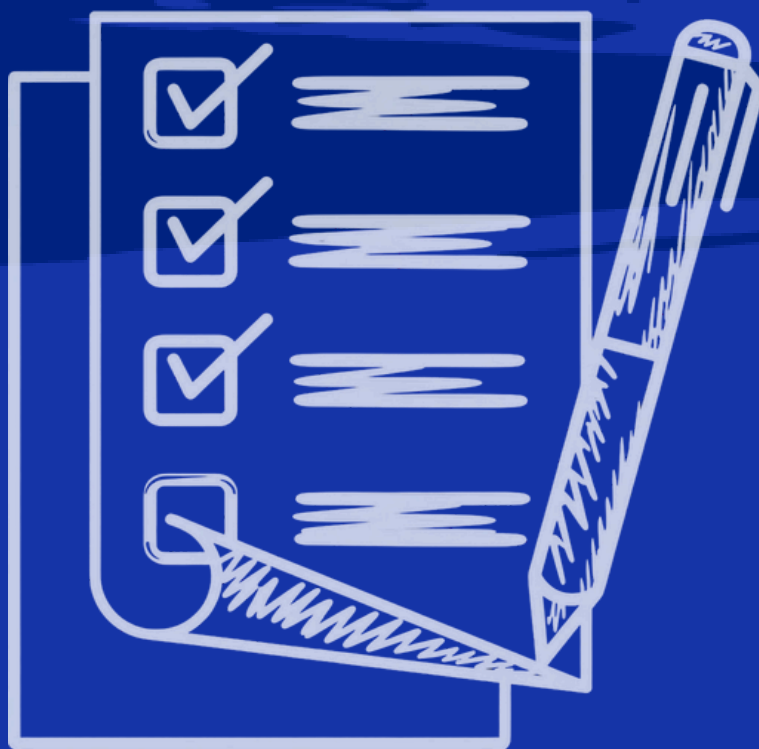


Policy brief

Financing & localized public accountability

Strengthening sustainable financing for child protection systems

June 2026



POLICY BRIEF

FINANCING & LOCALIZED PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

June 2026

Strengthening Sustainable Financing for Child Protection Systems

Target Audience: Ministries of Finance, National Treasuries, Development Partners, Institutional Donors, and Multilateral Financial Institutions

Scope: Sustainable Child Protection Financing and Localized Accountability Systems

CONTEXT

Persistent underinvestment in child protection reflects broader structural inequalities within national financing systems. Prevention programmes, survivor services, and community-led responses continue to rely heavily on short-term donor funding, limiting sustainability and weakening national ownership of violence prevention systems.

Despite growing global recognition of violence against children as a major public health, human rights, and development concern, child protection financing remains fragmented, inconsistent, and chronically underprioritized within national budgets. In many contexts, violence prevention systems operate without predictable domestic financing, leaving frontline services vulnerable to political shifts, donor transitions, and economic instability.

Findings from national pledge mapping and OOSI analysis reveal significant disparities between high-level political commitments and actual budgetary investment in child protection systems. While governments increasingly adopt national action plans and policy frameworks addressing violence against children, these commitments frequently fail to translate into sustained financing at national and sub-national levels.

This financing gap undermines prevention, delays survivor support, weakens justice systems, and limits the ability of local communities and survivor-led organizations to participate meaningfully in accountability processes.

This brief aligns with:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Sustainable Development Goals 1, 5, 10, 16, and 17
- INSPIRE Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children
- The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development
- Public Finance for Children (PF4C) principles
- African Union commitments on child protection and social investment

KEY FINDINGS

National pledge mapping and child protection financing analysis across priority countries reveal:

- Persistent reliance on short-term and externally driven donor financing
- Limited domestic budget allocations for violence prevention and survivor support systems
- Weak public financial tracking mechanisms for child protection expenditure
- Significant financing disparities between national commitments and local implementation
- Limited direct funding access for grassroots and survivor-led organizations
- Insufficient investment in prevention, workforce development, and community-based services

Across many contexts, child protection systems remain among the least funded social protection sectors despite rising rates of violence against children and increasing demand for survivor-centered services.

THE CHALLENGE

Global financing systems for child protection remain fragmented, donor-dependent, and insufficiently localized.

While governments frequently adopt high-level policy commitments addressing violence against children, these commitments often lack sustainable domestic financing structures capable of supporting implementation at municipal, district, ward, and community levels.

At the same time, international financing architectures continue to concentrate resources within multilayered intermediary systems that create significant administrative and compliance barriers for grassroots, community-led, and survivor-led organizations seeking direct access to funding.

Unequal Access to Child Protection Services

Many child protection and survivor support services remain concentrated in urban areas, leaving children and families in rural, remote, and underserved communities with limited access to trauma-informed care, legal support, psychosocial services, and safe reporting mechanisms. Chronic understaffing, workforce burnout, and inadequate investment in child-friendly infrastructure continue to weaken the quality and accessibility of protection systems.

Key structural barriers continue to undermine sustainable child protection financing:

Chronic Underinvestment

Child protection services remain consistently underfunded within national budgets compared to other public sectors.

Donor Dependency

Many prevention and survivor support programmes remain heavily reliant on unpredictable short-term external financing.

Limited Localized Financing

Sub-national child protection systems frequently lack dedicated budget allocations for implementation and service delivery.

Weak Financial Accountability Systems

Public expenditure tracking for violence prevention and child protection remains limited, reducing transparency and oversight.

Barriers to Grassroots Funding Access

Complex donor compliance requirements continue to restrict direct financing access for local survivor-led and community-based organizations.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS**For Governments, Ministries of Finance, and National Treasuries**

1. Establish dedicated and ring-fenced domestic budget allocations for child protection systems and violence prevention programmes.
2. Integrate child protection financing within national development plans, social protection strategies, and medium-term expenditure frameworks.
3. Strengthen public financial tracking systems to improve transparency, monitoring, and accountability for child protection expenditure.
4. Increase direct financing for community-based prevention systems, survivor services, and localized response mechanisms.
5. Invest in workforce development, data systems, and long-term institutional capacity for child protection implementation.

For Development Partners and Institutional Donors

6. Increase flexible, long-term, and locally accessible financing for violence prevention and survivor-centered services.
7. Simplify funding compliance structures to improve direct access for grassroots, survivor-led, and community-based organizations.
8. Support localized accountability systems that enable communities and survivors to monitor implementation of national commitments.
9. Invest in comparative financing research, child protection expenditure tracking, and evidence generation.

For Multilateral Financial Institutions and Global Financing Actors

10. Recognize child protection systems as essential public infrastructure requiring sustained structural investment.
11. Integrate child protection indicators within broader governance, development, and public financing assessments.
12. Support innovative financing approaches that strengthen prevention, accountability, and survivor-centered systems.
13. Invest in adequately staffed, trauma-informed, and child-friendly protection facilities across both urban and rural communities.
14. Strengthen recruitment, training, retention, and wellbeing support for frontline child protection workers, social workers, healthcare professionals, law enforcement officers, and psychosocial service providers.
15. Ensure equitable financing models that extend survivor-centered services beyond major urban centers to underserved rural and marginalized communities.

THE MOMENT TO ACT

As governments prepare commitments ahead of the 2nd Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, financing child protection systems must become a central political and economic priority.

Key priorities for immediate action include:

- Child protection systems cannot continue operating on unstable and short-term financing cycles.
- Violence prevention must be recognized as a core public investment, not a secondary social expenditure.
- National commitments must be matched by transparent and sustainable domestic budget allocations.
- Grassroots and survivor-led organizations should have direct access to financing and accountability mechanisms.

- Localized implementation requires localized investment.
- Financial accountability systems must track whether resources are reaching children, survivors, and frontline services.
- Governments and donors must move beyond symbolic commitments toward fully financed implementation systems.

Children's safety cannot depend on temporary funding cycles.

Protection systems cannot survive on political goodwill alone.

Financing prevention and survivor protection is a governance responsibility and a long-term investment in justice, stability, and human dignity

Source: Out of the Shadows Index (OOSI), National Pledge Mapping, and EVAC Ministerial Preparatory Consultations (2026)