

Gauging the Maturity of an Administrative Data System on Justice for Children:

Three stages of development

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Introduction

Children come into contact with the justice system in a host of ways – as victims, witnesses, because they are in conflict with the law, or as parties to civil or administrative processes, such as alternative care arrangements or asylum hearings, respectively. Children's encounters with the justice system, along with information on the surrounding circumstances, are usually recorded by the authorities and service providers that form part of the justice sector. Such information is essential to monitoring and evaluating the performance of the justice system and to understanding the profile of children who come into contact with it. Yet these data are often overlooked, especially in low- and middle-income countries, since they may be incomplete in terms of coverage and information. Moreover, they often lack reliability due to an absence of quality controls and may not be up to date.

A mature administrative data system on justice for children generates high-quality information on a core set of indicators at regular intervals and possesses the following characteristics:

- A comprehensive and coherent legal and normative framework for data and statistics on justice for children
- Effective governance and the ability to plan in the area of administrative data on justice for children
- A well-equipped data infrastructure – that is, stable access to information and communication technologies (ICT) and database software – along with adequate human resources (sufficient personnel with the necessary training without a high turnover rate) and financing to support data collection, analysis and reporting
- Strong coordination of data on justice for children
- Completeness of data on justice for children
- Effective and secure data transmission
- Standardized data and practices in relation to justice for children
- Administrative data quality assurance
- Relevant use, robust demand and regular dissemination of such data.

This publication describes how these components function in administrative data systems that have varying levels of maturity. The aim is to facilitate the identification of general areas that would benefit from targeted intervention and investment. This said, since countries develop their administrative data systems differently, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to strengthening these systems. Each country will have different requirements to improve its system. It is also important to note that there are no specific stages through which an administrative data system must develop, since emerging technology could, for instance, 'leapfrog' a low-income country from a paper-based system to a state-of-the-art electronic database.





Legal and normative framework for data and statistics on justice for children

System strengthening needed

The country lacks protective legislation for children, including laws providing special provisions for children in criminal procedures, court processes and in relation to privacy and confidentiality.

Legislation is incomplete in terms of child rights and protections, juvenile justice, data privacy and access restrictions or, if already developed, has not been consistently implemented or enforced.

Obligatory data capture and reporting on children in contact with the law are weak and need to be developed and enforced through legislation, policies and regulations.

There is no central reporting facility or national statistics office with a clear mandate, including roles and responsibilities to ensure regular collating, reviewing and publishing of data on the achievement of justice for children.

Data privacy and data protection are weak and require that a regulatory framework be adopted and implemented among justice actors.

System moving towards maturity

Some legislation exists to protect children involved in criminal procedures, court processes and in relation to privacy and confidentiality, but comprehensive laws are required or existing laws need updating.

Legislation covers some aspects of child rights and protections, juvenile justice, data privacy and access restrictions, and it is enforced, but not consistently.

Some legislation, policies and regulations for data capture and reporting on children in contact with the law exist, but they require updating or amendments to make them more comprehensive. Enforcement is inconsistent.

Some legislation, policies and regulations exist that compel a central reporting facility or national statistics office to regularly report on the achievement of justice for children, but they require amendments/updates or must be implemented/enforced.

There is a comprehensive data privacy and regulatory framework that is not well known or enforced at some subnational levels or among some justice for children sectors.

System is mature

The country has adequate protective legislation for children (such as a Children's Act, Juvenile Justice Law) and special provisions exist for children in criminal procedures, court processes and in relation to privacy and confidentiality.

Legislation related to child rights and protections, juvenile justice, data privacy and access restrictions is fully implemented and enforced.

National legislation, policies and regulations for data capture and reporting on children in contact with the law exist and are enforced.

A national statistics office or central reporting facility, with a clear mandate and role, is responsible for collating, reviewing and publishing data on the achievement of justice for children.

Data privacy and access to information are strictly regulated through legislation and all justice actors comply, with strict penalties for noncompliance.



Governance and planning

Current status of country in relation to the component

System strengthening needed

A data governance framework does not exist and must be developed for justice for children data among stakeholder institutions. Alternatively, an existing data governance framework, such as that used in criminal justice, for example, may be used to guide data collection and reporting on justice for children.

Reporting is weak to non-existent in the area of justice for children. Regulations/policies should be established to specify which institutions are responsible for capturing and reporting on data and the frequency and form of such reporting.

There is no emergency or natural disaster response plan in place in relation to specific data requirements on justice for children.

System moving towards maturity

Either a formal or informal data governance framework exists to guide data responsibilities, definitions, coding instructions, data storage and security, data collection, management and reporting, but it does not cover the entire justice for children sector (for example, it is limited to violence against children and does not cover juvenile justice).

Legislation and/or regulations and policies delineating which institutions must capture and report on data, including frequency and form, exist and may be adequate, but not all responsible institutions report as expected.

No formal planning mechanism exists. In this case, either a child justice working group or one of the institutions in the justice sector could coordinate a response in an emergency or natural disaster situation.

System is mature

A formal data governance framework on justice for children exists, including well-defined institutional responsibilities, definitions, coding instructions, data storage and security, data collection, management and reporting.

Legislation and/or regulations and policies delineate which institutions are responsible for capturing which data, as well as the frequency and form of reporting on those data.

In emergency or natural disaster response, there is a planning mechanism under the data governance framework on justice for children to capture specific and/or additional data required.

Current status of country in relation to the component



Data infrastructure and resources

System strengthening needed

Stationery supplies are not always available and phones, computers, printers and copiers are very limited. Institutions responsible for administrative data on justice for children require adequate supplies and equipment at national and subnational levels.

ICT infrastructure is only found at national levels, if at all. Subnational levels are not reliably connected to an ICT infrastructure, and intranet or web-/cloud-based platforms have not been established.

There is either no connection to an intranet or web-/cloud-based platform anywhere or this is only available at the national level. The result is that the central reporting facility must go through a process of data input, coding and organization before reporting, a time-consuming endeavour that makes it untenable to report more frequently than annually.

Staff may receive only on-the-job training, if at all, and the lack of training is an impediment to the quality of administrative data on justice for children.

Staff turnover is higher than 30% and it is difficult to retain skilled and experienced data workers.

Currently, no national budget line exists for ICT in the area of justice for children, either at subnational or national levels.

System moving towards maturity

Stationery supplies are generally available everywhere, but there are widespread shortages of phones, computers, printers and copiers outside of urban areas.

ICT infrastructure may be available at subnational and national levels (or only in urban areas), but data are not transferred through intranet or web-/cloud-based platforms. Data are transmitted through email or manually.

No business intelligence tool is used to generate automatic summaries, although there may be intranet or web-/cloud-based platforms used to connect database systems, either in urban capitals or throughout the country.

Training is either provided outside or on the job, but it is frequently not enough.

Staff turnover rate is between 11% and 30%. Improvements could be made to retain skilled staff.

While a national budget may be provided for ICT, it is not adequate to provide a functioning system at subnational and national levels.

System is mature

Necessary supplies such as forms, paper and pens are adequate, and equipment such as phones, computers, printers and copiers are widely available.

All stakeholder institutions have ICT infrastructure at subnational and national levels and use electronic databases to collect and compile data that are connected via intranet or web-/cloud-based platforms.

With an intranet or web-/cloud-based platform, all subnational data can be retrieved at a central reporting facility. The use of business intelligence software enabling automated summaries of key performance indicators is commonplace.

All staff are provided with adequate training to carry out their jobs in relation to administrative data on justice for children.

Staff turnover rate is 10% or below, resulting in the retention of experienced data workers.

National budgets provide for a functioning information system as well as ICT upgrades and maintenance as needed, both at national and subnational levels.



Coordination of data on justice for children

System strengthening needed

There is no formal inter-agency committee and little cooperation exists among stakeholder institutions, resulting in duplication of data collection and reporting, inconsistencies in statistical reports and incomplete analysis.

Information-sharing protocols do not currently exist and data are not exchanged across institutions. Protocols need to be developed, and stable electronic systems for data exchange should be established.

None of the ICT systems are linked and data may be exchanged manually, but not electronically. Electronic data linkages need to be established among stakeholder institutions.

System moving towards maturity

No formal inter-agency committee exists, but personal relationships are used to share and exchange information and resolve problems, although these are not always effective.

While there are information-sharing protocols among some or even all justice institutions, data are not easily exchanged due to inadequate ICT systems.

Among justice institutions, ICT systems were developed independently of one another, making integration impossible. Data are exchanged either manually or by programmed software interface to recognize different codes.

System is mature

A formal inter-agency committee exists to ensure that there are protocols in place for sharing and exchanging information among stakeholder institutions. Information systems can interact, and committee members are comfortable contacting one another when in need of data.

Information-sharing protocols among involved institutions exist, and data are shared securely and electronically across these institutions.

ICT systems were developed to ensure the full integration of the police, prosecution, court and social welfare database systems.



Completeness of data on justice for children

System strengthening needed

Statistics for none to some of the key indicators can be reported on annually, but there is no consistent reporting of disaggregated data and there is no supporting ICT infrastructure to allow for both subnational- and national-level figures.

Reporting forms/registers are not standardized and significant narrative reporting exists. Forced data fields and skip logic (not allowing for blank responses) will need to be incorporated into electronic registers for recording data.

Neither common definitions nor record identifiers exist across stakeholder institutions, and records cannot be easily shared or exchanged.

System moving towards maturity

The database systems can generate reports on some of the indicators, but not all, and reports may be generated nationally or only at local levels.

Standardized forms exist at national and subnational levels, and use of forced data fields and skip logic to ensure data collection completeness is limited.

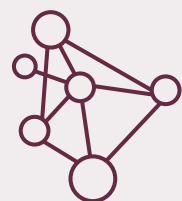
There is limited use of common record identifiers in databases, and improvement can be made in common definitions of variables and codes to enable seamless data transfers.

System is mature

Disaggregated statistics on all the recommended indicators on justice for children can be reported on annually at national and subnational levels.

A mandatory, single standardized form/register is completed online, at the national and subnational levels, to capture data. It relies on forced choice data fields and does not allow for skipping of data.

Data are compatible among all stakeholders through the use of common record identifiers in databases and common definitions of variables and codes used by each institution, making data transfer to the central reporting facility seamless.



Data transmission

Current status of country in relation to the component

System strengthening needed

A paper-based system requires manual collation of data from local to regional to national offices and does not permit real-time data availability.

Reporting from subnational levels is intermittent, and little effort is made by the national offices to encourage more timely, regular reporting.

None of the national offices of each institutional sector can evaluate and respond to external requests for information in a timely manner that respects the confidentiality and privacy of children.

System moving towards maturity

Local systems still use paper copies of records that need to be scanned or electronically input at regional or national levels. Regions may or may not have intranet or web-/cloud-based systems.

A schedule for reporting exists and delays may occur in timely report submission. These may or may not be communicated to the central reporting facility.

While the ability to critically evaluate requests for information exists, as does the capacity to provide anonymized data, a timely response to external requests is unlikely.

System is mature

All data are collected through an intranet or web-/cloud-based system that allows for centralized database updates each time a record is entered, with real-time viewing of local data from the national offices. Local records can be accessed from regional and national offices easily.

There is an agreed schedule for when statistics and reports are due, and reporting deadlines are taken seriously and closely monitored.

Each institutional sector has the capacity, at national levels, to critically evaluate requests for information in line with legislation/policies/procedures and to provide anonymized data in a timely fashion.



Standardized data and practices in relation to justice for children

System strengthening needed

Not all of the key indicators are collected by stakeholder institutions, requiring that these be incorporated into data collection forms/registers at national and subnational levels.

There is no systematic or complete disaggregation of data possible for children who come into contact with the justice system.

Written or informal procedures/guidelines do not exist and must be developed for managing data collection, storage, cleaning, coding, quality control and security for data on justice for children in all institutions and at subnational and national levels.

If written codebooks do exist, they are not in use.

System moving towards maturity

Some of the key indicators are collected by stakeholder institutions at the national level, but this varies at subnational levels.

Some, but not all, stratifiers are found in administrative databases. However, it may be very difficult to extract and report on disaggregated data when records are paper-based at local levels, for example.

Either written procedures or informal guidelines exist for collection, storage, cleaning, coding, quality control and security, but they are not consistently implemented and adhered to.

Written codebooks exist, although they may be out of date, and they may not be found at all subnational levels. Adherence is inconsistent.

System is mature

All stakeholder institutions collect data on the key indicators and have the capacity to do so at national and subnational levels.

All data are disaggregated as proposed in each institution's administrative database at all levels of data capture. Since they are electronically input, stratified data reports can be easily extracted and produced.

There is a set of written procedures for managing administrative data on justice for children, including guidelines for collection, storage, cleaning, coding, quality control and security, in all institutions and at subnational and national levels. These procedures are strictly adhered to.

Written codebooks exist to provide a single definition for each data variable and specifications for data collection methods, transmission and use, which are aligned with national legislation and international standards. All institutions at subnational and national levels strictly adhere to these codebooks.



Administrative data quality assurance

Current status of country in relation to the component

System strengthening needed

Staff training and guidance are not sufficient for data quality assurance, nor are there system measures in place, such as drop-down menus/forced choice data fields and skip logic to prevent data omissions. Data recording and extraction errors need to be systematically addressed.

System moving towards maturity

On-the-job as well as external training in data recording and extraction are in place. System quality assurance, such as through drop-down menus/forced choice data fields and skip logic, are not in standard use. Random sampling of data may take place at the central reporting facility, but it is not systematic. Local supervisors may provide oversight of staff inputting data.

System is mature

Staff working in data recording and extraction are trained and formally tested on their knowledge. There is a written guide for quality control and system measures, such as drop-down menus/forced choice data fields and skip logic, requiring that a field be entered before moving on. These are in place to ensure consistency and prevent errors. Managers provide regular oversight.



Data use, demand and dissemination

System strengthening needed

Administrative data on justice for children are not seen as having strategic value and their use is limited. Awareness-raising as to the benefit of administrative data for monitoring, evaluating, budgeting, planning, policymaking and research may yield improvement, as could a champion in this area.

There is no training of staff to analyse data on children's involvement in the justice system.

Reports from the central reporting facility that use administrative data on justice for children are rarely or never produced.

System moving towards maturity

Administrative data are used to compile crime statistics on juvenile offenders and child victims annually. They may be used to monitor programming and track trends in child victimization and juvenile offending, but not for other purposes. Anonymized data are shared with researchers upon request.

Staff have been trained to analyse data on children's involvement in the justice system, but only at the central reporting facility.

At a minimum, annual reports are produced from the central reporting facility and reports may also come out biannually and quarterly.

System is mature

Administrative data on justice for children provide citizens with information on government accountability to deliver justice for children. Government demands administrative data for programme monitoring, development of policies and programming to respond to identified issues, budgeting and strategic planning. Managers demand these data to measure whether targets and goals have been achieved. Researchers request anonymized data to carry out different analyses on justice trends and to evaluate programming in this area. Demand is regular and continuous.

Staff at both national and subnational levels who analyse data on children's involvement in the justice system have been adequately trained.

Weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual reports are produced from administrative data on justice for children by the central reporting facility.



Data use, demand and dissemination (continued)

System strengthening needed

Governments may use administrative data on justice for children to produce crime statistics involving children, but there is limited use otherwise. The data are not considered to be of good quality.

Data are not used nationally or subnationally by government to inform planning or strategic decision-making. Reporting on justice for children needs to add value to government activities.

Little awareness-raising and limited reporting have resulted in an absence of knowledge about key indicators on justice for children.

System moving towards maturity

Administrative data on justice for children are used by governments to inform planning and decision-making at national and regional levels, but not locally. They are used to produce annual crime statistics involving children. Data quality is considered average.

Reports generated from the central reporting facility on justice for children are used for national planning and strategic decision-making, but not at subnational levels.

Key indicators are not generally well known except among specialists, such as judicial educators, researchers/academics and juvenile police.

System is mature

Governments use administrative data on justice for children to evaluate department performance, plan and allocate resources, respond to periodic monitoring requests from international and regional intergovernmental organizations, and to set policies in order to improve the experience of children involved in the justice system. Data are perceived to be of high quality by these users.

The reports coming from the central reporting facility on justice for children are used by all levels of government (subnational and national) to inform planning and strategic decision-making.

Key indicators on justice for children are well known among political leaders, government ministers, senior managers, researchers/academics and the media.



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