

Promoting Safe Environments: Corporal punishment in the home and school

Workshop leads

Chair: Ministry of Social Development Montenegro

Research practitioners: Chandré Gould, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Security Studies South Africa, Steven Lucas, Professor University of Uppsala, Anna Wechberg, Director Policy Division DFID, United Kingdom

CEO/CSO reporting back: Olavfykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches

CSO rapporteur: Emma Green, End Violence against Children Secretariat

Workshop objectives

The aim of the workshop is to discuss how countries can accelerate action to meet SDG target 16.2 and other violence related targets. Participants will:

- Review aspects of good legislation as an important first step towards ending corporal punishment, while recognizing that laws on their own are not sufficient;
- Identify why bans are not always implemented and learn the steps to change this;
- Exchange experiences with interventions that support positive teaching and parenting practices using alternatives to physical punishment.

Using participatory methods we will break into small working groups to collectively decide on key actions moving forward. Within your small group work and during the larger conversation, please consider the following questions:

- ✓ What is the current national situation for each participant – legislative status, prevalence, attitudes, existing programmes?
- ✓ How can we accelerate action and build on existing evidence-based efforts?
- ✓ What partners can be leveraged in this work?
- ✓ Given the different political, economic and social realities how does the work need to be adapted?

Background

Corporal punishment¹ of children in the home and school is a violation of children's right to dignity and bodily integrity, as well as their rights to health, development, education and freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child protects children from all forms of violence in all settings, including physical violence at home and school; SDGs 16.2 and 4 call for ending all forms of violence against children, and for safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

Corporal punishment is associated with a variety of negative health and behavioural outcomes.² Implications can be long-lasting: research has found adults who experienced corporal punishment in childhood are more likely to accept or use violence, including intimate partner violence, and to be involved in other violent and criminal behaviour.³

Key facts

Corporal punishment is the most common form of violence experienced by children:⁴

- Close to 300 million (3 in 4) children aged 2 to 4 experience violent discipline⁵ by their caregivers on a regular basis; 250 million (around 6 in 10) are punished by physical means.⁶
- 6 in 10 children aged 12 to 23 months are subjected to violent disciplinary methods. Among children this age, almost half experience physical punishment.⁷
- Children from wealthier households are equally likely to experience violent discipline as those from poorer households.⁸

Gaps

Despite growing recognition of the negative consequences of corporal punishment, and legislative and programmatic action to end corporal punishment in homes and schools, it remains a hidden problem in many countries.

- Around 1.1 billion (just over 1 in 4) caregivers say physical punishment is a necessary form of discipline.⁹
- Only 60 countries¹⁰ have adopted legislation that fully prohibits the use of corporal punishment at home, leaving more than 600 million children under 5 without full legal protection.¹¹
- Half of the population of school-aged children between 6 and 17 years – 732 million – live in countries where corporal punishment at school is not fully prohibited.¹²

Action

INSPIRE identifies seven strategies to end violence against children, including corporal punishment of children at home and schools:

- Implementation and enforcement of laws: highlights the need for laws banning corporal punishment of children by parents, teachers and other caregivers. Effective law reform must be accompanied by public and professional education programmes, as well complaints procedures to report cases and seek assistance;
- Parent and caregiver support: positive parenting and caregiver support programmes can improve child-parent relationships, and prevent violent discipline;¹³
- Norms and values: it is critical to challenge norms and values that support the practice of corporal punishment or enable it to continue unchallenged;
- Monitoring progress via SDG indicator 16.2.1 is also essential for tracking progress, and a way to identify barriers to implementation: “Percentage of children aged 1-17 who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month”.

Notes

¹ Corporal punishment is any physical act intended to cause pain or discomfort, however light. Includes acts such as shaking, hitting, or slapping on the hand/arm/leg, hitting on the bottom or elsewhere on the body with a hard object, spanking or hitting on the bottom with a bare hand, hitting or slapping on the face, head or ears, and hitting or beating hard and repeatedly.

² This include poorer mental health, cognitive development and educational outcomes, increased aggression and antisocial behavior. Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, Corporal punishment of children: review of research on its impact and associations. Working paper, June 2016 & Know Violence in Childhood. 2017. *Ending Violence in Childhood. Global Report 2017*. Know Violence in Childhood. New Delhi, India.

³ Know Violence in Childhood. 2017. *Ending Violence in Childhood. Global Report 2017*. Know Violence in Childhood. New Delhi, India.

⁴ Pinheiro, P. S (2006), World Report on Violence against Children, Geneva: United Nations

⁵ Violent discipline includes any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression.

⁶ United Nations Children's Fund, A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents, UNICEF, New York, 2017.

^{7,8,9} Ibid.

¹⁰ <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/progress/countdown.html>

¹¹ United Nations Children's Fund, A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents, UNICEF, New York, 2017.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/implementation/positive-discipline-resources/>

