



Global Initiative to
**End All Corporal Punishment
of Children**

International development aid: a key context for speeding universal prohibition of violent punishment of children

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Ending violent punishment – the most common form of violence against children – is fundamental to creating the peaceful, non-violent and rights-respecting societies envisioned in the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. Prohibition of all violent punishment is a well-established human rights imperative which raises the status of children and is a key strategy in reducing violence in society; it is a fundamental element in fulfilling target 16.2 of Agenda 2030, recognised by the prevalence indicator adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016, and is highly relevant to other targets, particularly around health and education. The process of negotiating and granting development aid – in particular regarding school and health systems – is one context in which prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment should be legitimately and urgently pursued.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Target 16.2

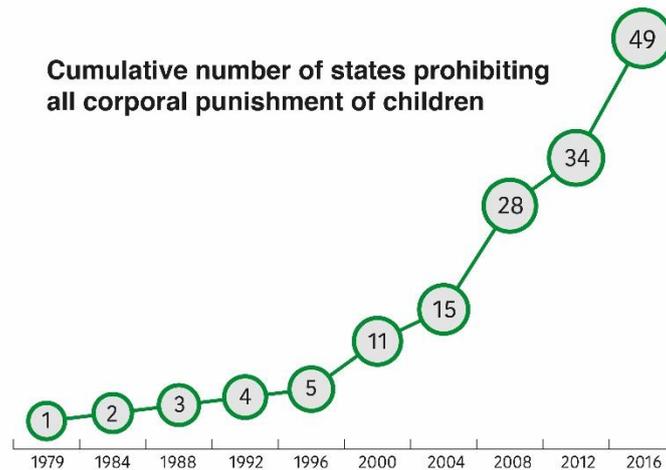
“End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children”

Indicator 16.2.1

“Percentage of children aged 1-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month”

Progress towards universal prohibition of violent punishment: more than half of all UN member states have achieved or have committed to achieving a complete ban

Worldwide, 49 states have prohibited violent punishment of children in all settings including the family home and a further 54 have committed to do so. Nearly two-thirds of states have prohibited corporal punishment in schools and even more have prohibited it in penal institutions. Since Sweden became the first state to prohibit all corporal punishment in 1979, progress has accelerated rapidly (see graph). Universal prohibition by 2030 is a realistic and achievable aim.



The human rights imperative to prohibit all violent punishment

Violent punishment is a breach of children’s rights to respect for their human dignity and physical integrity, and to health and education; its legality in many states worldwide breaches their right to equal protection. In its General Comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child highlights that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires states to prohibit and eliminate all violent punishment of children, in the family home and all other settings of their lives. The Committee consistently recommends prohibition and elimination of all violent punishment in its concluding observations to states. The Human Rights Committee, the Committee Against Torture, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women have all recommended prohibition of all corporal punishment of children, and the issue is frequently raised in the Universal Periodic Review of states’ overall human rights records. Prohibition is supported by UNICEF, UNESCO and many international and national NGOs.¹

Prohibition and elimination of violent punishment: a vital foundation for development in children’s health and education

Violent punishment not only breaches a child’s rights to respect for dignity and physical integrity, but also their health and education rights; its legality in many states worldwide violates their right to equal protection. UNICEF data published in 2014, found violent “discipline” to be the most common form of violence experienced by children in all regions: on average, six in ten (almost a billion) 2-14 year olds had been physically punished at home in the past month.²

States that have achieved prohibition of all corporal punishment are well placed to lead by example, share their experience and support universal prohibition. Those that negotiate and grant development aid – in particular for school and health systems – should legitimately and urgently use their position of support and influence to pursue prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment.

Promoting prohibition of all corporal punishment is a logical pursuit for donor states which have achieved a full ban, in order to address the incompatibility with a rights-based approach

¹ A full list of supporters of prohibition is available at www.endcorporalpunishment.org

² UNICEF (2014), *Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children*, NY: UNICEF

of financially supporting, for example, health systems in countries in which corporal punishment in the home and other settings has not been challenged. The same principle applies to states that have prohibited school corporal punishment and financially support school systems in states where children are still subjected to lawful violence under the guise of “discipline”. The negative impact of corporal punishment on children’s engagement with schooling and capacity to learn is associated with poorer academic performance and can have long lasting implications for their life chances.³ It is wrong and inefficient to facilitate the perpetuation of a legal bias that puts the health and safety of children in danger.

Violent punishment in childhood is associated with a variety of negative health and behavioural outcomes. As well as causing physical harm, corporal punishment has been linked to poor mental health and cognitive development, increased aggression and antisocial behaviour. These effects can persist into adulthood, in particular intimate partner violence and other violent and criminal behaviour.⁴ Prohibition of corporal punishment, accompanied by national education and awareness-raising campaigns, has the potential to significantly reduce the prevalence of corporal punishment and in turn reduce its negative impact on society.⁵

While the effects of violence in families and society are felt by all, violence has been seen to disproportionately affect the development of low- and middle-income countries. In poorer countries, the economic and social impact of violence can be severe in terms of slowing economic growth, undermining personal and collective security, and impeding social development. Donors, therefore have an additional major stake in preventing violence – including this most common form of violence against children – so as to ensure that their investments are not undermined by the economic and social costs of violence.

To encourage discussion and action on the issue in the international development aid context, the Global Initiative has prepared tables setting out the states which have achieved prohibition and are significantly engaged in development aid, identifying which of their partner countries have still to achieve prohibition; the table includes states that have prohibited school corporal punishment and are supporting school systems where corporal punishment of children is lawful.

“... human rights are not subservient to other concerns, and are not something to be addressed only once other development benchmarks have been attained.”

Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations
Statement at the University of Cambridge, UK, 3 February 2016

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³ Ogando Portela, M.J. & Pells, K. (2015), *Corporal Punishment in Schools: Longitudinal Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam*, Innocenti Discussion Paper No. 2015-02, Florence: UNICEF Office of Research

⁴ For details of the negative effects of corporal punishment, see “Corporal punishment of children: review of research on its impact and associations”, available at www.endcorporalpunishment.org

⁵ For details and references, see “The positive impact of prohibition of corporal punishment on children’s lives: messages from research”, available at www.endcorporalpunishment.org