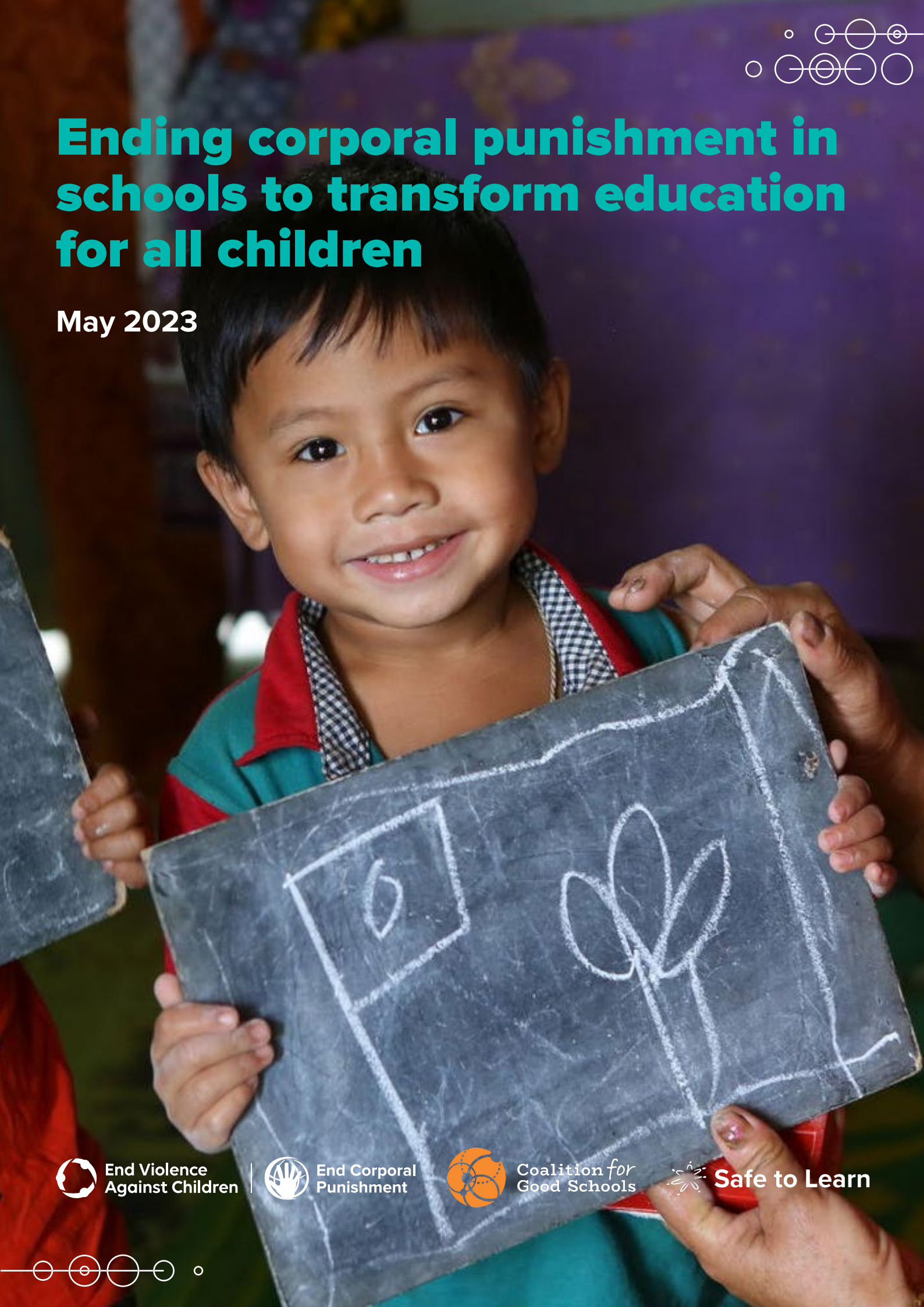




# Ending corporal punishment in schools to transform education for all children

May 2023



End Violence  
Against Children



End Corporal  
Punishment

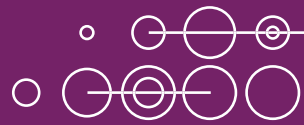


Coalition for  
Good Schools



Safe to Learn





Corporal  
punishment is  
fully prohibited  
in **all settings** of  
children's lives in  
**65 states**

Corporal  
punishment is  
fully prohibited  
in **schools** in  
**136 states**

**BUT...**

Corporal  
punishment is  
still lawful in **some**  
**or all education**  
settings in  
**63 states**

**793**  
**million**  
school-age  
children live  
in countries  
where corporal  
punishment in  
**school is not fully**  
prohibited<sup>5</sup>

**40%**  
of surveyed  
children in  
**Africa and**  
**Southeast Asia**  
had experienced  
school corporal  
punishment **in the**  
**previous week**

**\$11 trillion**  
is lost globally  
in lifetime  
earnings due **to**  
**school violence**  
including corporal  
punishment





# Contents

<b>Ending corporal punishment in schools: an overdue priority</b>	1
The criticality of safe education	1
Prohibition of school corporal punishment: an essential foundation for ending its use in practice	1
Laws banning corporal punishment must be supported with ongoing, practical measures to end violence and build non-violent school cultures	1
What is corporal punishment?	2
Children's rights to non-violent education	3
<b>The Problem</b>	4
How common is corporal punishment in schools?	4
What are children's experiences of corporal punishment in schools?	4
The harms and costs of school corporal punishment	6
Corporal punishment in schools entrenches inequality	10
<b>Global Progress</b>	12
Global progress towards universal prohibition in schools	12
<b>The Solution</b>	14
Prohibiting all corporal punishment of children in schools	14
Effectively ending the use of corporal punishment in schools: seven key steps	16
School violence needs 'whole school' interventions	20
<b>Resources</b>	21
<b>Annex: States where corporal punishment is still lawful in education settings</b>	22





## Ending corporal punishment in schools: an overdue priority

Can you learn when you are afraid? Can you experience the transformative power of education when your teacher beats you? How can you learn the skills for later employment if school is a dangerous place?

The evidence tells us over and over again that violence - and the fear, anger and humiliation it creates - stops children from learning. As well as causing physical and psychological harm, it affects children's brain and cognitive development, leads to lower educational achievement, prevents them from building healthy relationships, and causes school drop-out.

Despite the long list of negative effects, violent punishment of children in schools and elsewhere remains incredibly common, and is still regarded by far too many educators, caregivers and policymakers as an effective way of educating a child and controlling a classroom. Its prevalence combined with its harmful impacts mean that the vital benefits of education for children and societies are wasted.

### The criticality of safe education

Safe education is critical for children in providing access not just to schooling, but more broadly to opportunities for development, health, equality, knowledge and participation in society. Schools can also act as a protective barrier from violence in the home and community, and play a vital role in promoting positive, non-violent norms and behaviour that help to create peaceful and just societies.

Safe education is particularly important for children in overcoming disadvantage and difficulty, for example by helping to maintain stability and continued learning for children in humanitarian settings, protecting girls from child marriage, and giving children more flexibility and options for making a living in adulthood. Access to a good education can transform a child's entire life.

So it is deeply concerning that the benefits of education for vast numbers of children in every region of the world are undermined by violent punishment in schools, that is often socially and state-approved. And it is particularly worrying that disadvantaged children are especially likely to be subject to this violent punishment, putting yet another obstacle in their way and diminishing their critical educational opportunities. Read more about how **corporal punishment in schools entrenches inequality** on page 10.

### Prohibition of school corporal punishment: an essential foundation for ending its use in practice

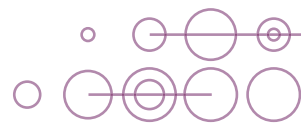
A school culture that ensures a safe, respectful environment and promotes learning is of benefit to students, teachers, and the wider community. Clarity in law that corporal punishment is not permitted is fundamental to eliminating violent punishment. And yet, in 63 states worldwide – comprising around half of the global school-age population - the law still authorises corporal punishment of children in schools, sometimes even specifying how it must be inflicted. More than thirty years on from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and halfway through the Sustainable Development Goals implementation period, it is shocking that violence by school staff continues to be accepted and lawful in so many places.

### Laws banning corporal punishment must be supported with ongoing, practical measures to end violence and build non-violent school cultures

We also know that on their own laws will not eliminate violent punishment in schools. Governments and education sectors are responsible for taking ongoing and comprehensive action to implement evidence-based strategies to create non-violent education settings for all children. Experience shows that when this happens school violence declines over time. Read about interventions that support the elimination of corporal punishment from page 14 onwards.







**We know that change is possible!** 136 states have enacted prohibition of corporal punishment in schools - up from 125 in 2015 - and our understanding of how to eliminate it in practice is growing all the time. In many countries violent punishment was common in schools just a few decades ago but is now a thing of the past.

Professor Pat Dolan, chair of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at University of Galway, describes violent punishment of children in Irish schools prior to 1982 as a “pandemic”.<sup>1</sup> Corporal punishment was explicitly permitted by the Department of Education until 1982. The rules stated that physical punishment “should be administered only for grave transgression” and never “for mere failure at lessons. Only a light cane or rod may be used ... which should be inflicted only on the open hand.” However, the guidance, which already gave plenty of room for interpretation, was often ignored and many children were subjected or witness to severe violence for reasons that were often incomprehensible. Corporal punishment was fully prohibited in Irish schools from 1 February 1982, and has now been consigned to history. Several child protection requirements and procedures in schools have been introduced and strengthened since 1982, including the 2015 Children First Act which led to the publication of revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools in 2017, with an extensive programme of training for teachers and school principals. There are regular school inspections, including 100 Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections carried out in 2022.

In this report we describe the problem: children’s experiences of corporal punishment, and its prevalence, harms and costs. We also chart global progress and outline the solution: the steps required to effectively prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment in schools, building non-violent education for all children.

**Global efforts to get every child into school are vital and urgent, however they are wasted if children are not safe there. We have all the information and evidence needed to end corporal punishment in schools. Therefore, we call on governments and partners across the education sector to accelerate action to eliminate violent punishment in schools as an essential measure for upholding children’s rights to education, protection and development, and for maximising our collective investment in education.**

### What is corporal punishment?

Corporal punishment is the most common form of violence experienced by children. Enormous numbers of children are subject to corporal punishment in their homes, schools, care and work settings and the penal system in all world regions. It is widely accepted as normal and not even regarded as violence in many places. The Know Violence in Childhood 2017 study estimated that 1.3 billion children aged 1-14 years experienced corporal punishment at home in the previous year.<sup>2</sup> UNICEF statistics collected between 2005 and 2013 in 62 countries found that about four in five children aged 2-14 had experienced violent “discipline” (physical punishment and/or psychological aggression) at home in the past month.<sup>3</sup>

The Committee on the Rights of the Child defines corporal punishment as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. As physical punishment (physical violence) is often accompanied by cruel and degrading non-physical forms of punishment (emotional violence), such as that which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child, both forms are typically addressed together.<sup>4</sup>

In this report the terms ‘corporal punishment’ and ‘violent punishment’ refer to all physical and emotional violent punishment of children. Corporal punishment should be prohibited and comprehensive steps taken to eliminate it in all settings of children’s lives, including their homes. This report focuses on corporal punishment in education settings.

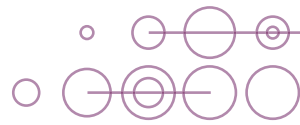
<sup>1</sup>[www.irishtimes.com/life-style/people/2022/12/17/abuse-in-girls-schools-she-beat-the-crap-out-of-me-for-being-cheeky-i-was-eight/](http://www.irishtimes.com/life-style/people/2022/12/17/abuse-in-girls-schools-she-beat-the-crap-out-of-me-for-being-cheeky-i-was-eight/)

<sup>2</sup> Know Violence in Childhood. 2017, Ending Violence in Childhood, Global Report 2017

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF (2014), Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children, NY: UNICEF

<sup>4</sup> The Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006. General Comment Number 8.





## Children's rights to non-violent education

Children have a right to learn without violence in school. Corporal punishment is a violation of children's rights to respect for their physical integrity and human dignity, health, development, education, and freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In their ratification of international human rights laws and Sustainable Development Goal commitments, states are already obligated and committed to prohibiting and eliminating corporal punishment in all settings, including schools.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child commits states to the prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings and requires that States Parties 'take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity' (Article 28).

***"Children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates. Education must also be provided in a way that respects the strict limits on discipline reflected in article 28 (2) and promotes non-violence in school."***

- Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 1, 2001



**Corporal punishment** is fully prohibited in **all settings** of children's lives in **65 states**

Corporal punishment is fully prohibited in **schools** in **136 states**

**BUT...**

Corporal punishment is **still lawful** in some or all education settings in **63 states**

**793 million school-age children** live in countries where corporal punishment in school is **not fully prohibited**<sup>5</sup>

**40% of surveyed children in Africa and Southeast Asia** had experienced school corporal punishment in the previous week<sup>6</sup>

School violence including corporal punishment costs around **\$11 trillion globally** in lost lifetime earnings<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Calculated using UNICEF 2020 child population figures for 63 states where corporal punishment is still lawful in schools

<sup>6</sup> Heekes, S.L., Kruger, C.B., Lester, S.N. and Ward, C.L., 2022. A systematic review of corporal punishment in schools: Global prevalence and correlates. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 23(1), pp.52-72.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank, 2021. Ending Violence in Schools: An Investment Case. Available at: [openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35969](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35969)





# Corporal Punishment in Schools: The Problem

## How common is corporal punishment in schools?

Corporal punishment in schools remains extremely common in many countries. A recent meta-analysis of studies carried out between 1980 and 2017 found a lifetime prevalence of school corporal punishment of 70% in Africa and Central America, and a past-week prevalence of more than 40% in Africa and Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup>

A 2015 survey of 8-year-olds in India, Ethiopia, Vietnam and Peru found that an average of 40% of children had experienced school corporal punishment in the past week, rising to 80% of children in India.<sup>9</sup> In the 2017-2018 school year more than 69,000 American children were struck at school, many of them multiple times.<sup>10</sup>

Evidence reviews identify at least twenty countries with lifetime prevalence rates of over 70%, and nine countries showing rates over 90%.<sup>11</sup> However, even these figures are likely to be an underestimate since children are often reluctant to report because of concern about repercussions and retribution. And, it is important to remember that many children will also be subjected to violent punishment in other settings of their lives. Taken together, prevalence data suggests that huge numbers of children worldwide experience frequent corporal punishment in school, including some countries where it is a near-universal, weekly or daily experience.<sup>12</sup>

## What are children's experiences of violent punishment in schools?

*"Every day there are severe punishments by teachers, so we remain very afraid in class. The teacher often makes a student stand up in class, scolds him with ugly words and teases him for being naughty or for not learning the lessons. It is very shameful as well as painful."*

Boy, 17, South and Central Asia, 2005

In practice, school corporal punishment often involves hitting children with an object or implement.<sup>13</sup> Many schools or teachers have a specific cane, stick, strap, or paddle to be used for hitting children, which may be kept in visible sight as a threat. Some countries have laws that require children to be hit a number of times with a particular object. Children in some contexts are tasked with beating others for disobedience thus normalising and entrenching patterns of violence in society. Children have reported being hit on virtually every part of their body, although the hands, arms, head, and buttocks are common targets. Teachers will sometimes specifically hit children on the most sensitive areas of the body such as calves or knuckles, or in humiliating ways such as on girls' thighs or buttocks, often constituting sexual violence in addition to physical and psychological violence. Children are also pinched, have their hair or ears pulled, their face slapped, or have objects thrown at them. Many children also describe experiencing or witnessing very brutal forms of corporal punishment, such as prolonged beatings, banging children's heads against walls, and punching in the face.<sup>14</sup> There are periodic news reports of children dying as a result of teacher violence.

*"I don't like getting punished at school because it is very shameful and humiliating and sometimes very hard to forget."*

Girl, 4th standard year, India, 2019

<sup>8</sup> Heekes, S.L., Kruger, C.B., Lester, S.N. and Ward, C.L., 2022 (n6)

<sup>9</sup> Ogando Portela MJ, Pells K. *Innocenti Discussion Paper No 2015-02*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research; 2015. [Corporal Punishment in Schools - Longitudinal Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam \(unicef-irc.org\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [ocrdata.ed.gov/estimations/2017-2018](https://ocrdata.ed.gov/estimations/2017-2018)

<sup>11</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017. School corporal punishment in global perspective: prevalence, outcomes, and efforts at intervention. *Psychology, health & medicine*, 22(sup1), pp.224-239.

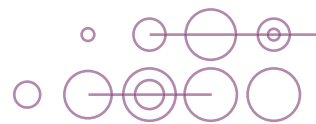
<sup>12</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017 (n11)

<sup>13</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017. School corporal punishment in global perspective: prevalence, outcomes, and efforts at intervention. *Psychology, health & medicine*, 22(n11), pp.224-239.

<sup>14</sup> Agrasar, 2018. Choking Childhood School Corporal Punishment: Everyday Violence Faced by Disadvantaged Children in India. Available at: [agrasar.org/choking-childhood/](https://agrasar.org/choking-childhood/)







Other punishments include forcing children to stand in uncomfortable or humiliating positions for long periods.<sup>15</sup> They may be exposed to hot or cold weather, made to do prolonged exercise without rest or water, carry or hold heavy objects, run long distances, dig holes, kneel on small objects, or swallow unpleasant or noxious substances.

As well as the fear and shame children experience when being subject to physical violence, they also report that it is usually accompanied by psychological cruelty and humiliation, such as taunting and public shaming, verbal insults or tearing up children's books.<sup>16</sup> Sometimes children are prevented from having their own basic needs met as punishment, for example being forbidden to use the bathroom, eat or drink.

Evidence suggests that while school administrators tend to say corporal punishment is kept for serious misdemeanours, children commonly report it is used for a wide range of behaviours including not doing homework, failing tests, arriving late, not having the correct uniform, sleeping in class, getting an answer wrong, failing to pay school fees and being absent.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes whole classes are subject to corporal punishment for the misbehaviour of one student, or in response to perceived underperformance by the whole class.

*"I like the teachers who teach well and who understand us instead of just punishing, scolding or humiliating us"*

Girl, 4th standard year, India, 2019



<sup>15</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017 (n11)

<sup>16</sup> Agrasar, 2018 (n13)

<sup>17</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017 (n11)







# Corporal Punishment in Schools: The Problem

## The harms and costs of school corporal punishment

### Corporal punishment negatively impacts children's cognitive and brain development

A major 2016 meta-analysis of 75 studies published over 50 years found an association between experience of corporal punishment (in any setting) and impaired cognitive ability.<sup>18</sup> Many other studies have found a similar connection, linking corporal punishment with lower IQ scores, smaller vocabularies, poorer cognitive abilities, less ability to pay attention, hyperactivity, and slower cognitive development.<sup>19</sup> Research also connects corporal punishment at school with lower spelling, reading, and mathematics scores, smaller vocabularies, lower executive functioning, and lower motivation.<sup>20</sup> A longitudinal study of children in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam found that in none of these countries did school corporal punishment at age 8 predict better school performance at age 12.<sup>21</sup> Evidence suggests that the greater the frequency or degree of corporal punishment, the more substantial the impact on cognitive development.<sup>22</sup>

Neuroimaging research suggests that experiencing harsh physical punishment may reduce the volume of the brain's grey matter in areas associated with cognitive performance,<sup>23</sup> and a recent study shows that even so-called 'moderate' corporal punishment such as 'spanking' alters brain development in children.<sup>24</sup>

### Causes physical harm

Studies in a range of countries including Tanzania and the United States have documented high rates of injury related to school corporal punishment.<sup>25</sup> In 2003 The Society for Adolescent Medicine estimated that between 10,000 to 20,000 students required medical attention each year as a result of school corporal punishment in the United States.<sup>26</sup> Research in Egypt found that 26% of boys and 18% of girls had been injured by school corporal punishment, with 7% of boys and 6% of girls reporting a bone fracture.<sup>27</sup> Cases of children dying as a result of school corporal punishment have been documented in many countries.<sup>28</sup>

### Negative impact on children's behaviour and mental health

School corporal punishment is associated with anxiety, decreased empathic behaviour, hostility, pessimism, depression, greater disobedience, stubbornness, verbal aggression, and likelihood of lying.<sup>29</sup> This is consistent with considerable evidence linking corporal punishment in any setting with increased mental health problems and more problematic behaviour.<sup>30</sup>

The public nature of corporal punishment in schools makes it especially humiliating for children.<sup>31</sup> A study in Hungary found that among 68 "life events", school corporal punishment was the strongest predictor of depression in children.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Gershoff, E. T. & Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2016), "Spanking and Child Outcomes: Old Controversies and New Meta-Analyses", *Journal of Family Psychology*, advance online publication 7 April 2016

<sup>19</sup> Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021. Corporal punishment of children: summary of research on its impact and associations. Available at: [endcorporalpunishment.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Research-effects-summary-2021.pdf](https://endcorporalpunishment.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Research-effects-summary-2021.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017 (n11)

<sup>21</sup> Ogando Portela MJ, Pells K. *Innocenti Discussion Paper No 2015-02*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research; 2015 (n19)

<sup>22</sup> Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021 (n18)

<sup>23</sup> Tomoda A. et al (2009), "Reduced prefrontal cortical gray matter volume in young adults exposed to harsh corporal punishment", *Neuroimage*, 47, 66-71

<sup>24</sup> Cuartas, J., Weissman, D.G., Sheridan, M.A., Lengua, L. and McLaughlin, K.A., 2021. Corporal punishment and elevated neural response to threat in children. *Child development*, 92(3), pp.821-832.

<sup>25</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017 (n11)

<sup>26</sup> Society for Adolescent Medicine. Corporal punishment in schools: Position paper of the Society for Adolescent Medicine. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2003;32(03):385-393. 00042-9. doi: 10.1016/S1054-139X

<sup>27</sup> Youssef, R. M. et al (1998), "Children experiencing violence II: Prevalence and determinants of corporal punishment in schools", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 22, 975-985

<sup>28</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017 (n11)

<sup>29</sup> Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021 (n19)

<sup>30</sup> Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021 (n19)

<sup>31</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017 (n11)

<sup>32</sup> Csorba, J. et al (2001), "Family- and school-related stresses in depressed Hungarian children", *European Psychiatry*, 16, 18-26





## Contributes to school avoidance and drop-out

Violent punishment by teachers can make school a place where children are in constant fear and is a common reason for disliking school.<sup>33</sup> Students report that it is painful, worsens their concentration, makes them hate their teachers and want to avoid or even drop out of school for fear of being beaten.<sup>34</sup> In a study of 1,700 parents, teachers and students in Pakistan, nearly 93% of respondents identified corporal punishment as a major cause of school drop-out.<sup>35</sup>



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## Associated with sexual violence

School corporal punishment can be part of a context of normalised violence that enables and supports sexual violence. Research addressing the high prevalence and acceptance of physical assault and rape or coercive sex in young people's dating relationships in Ngangelizwe, South Africa found that corporal punishment by teachers was part of the critical wider context of normalised violence within which youth dating violence takes place.<sup>36</sup> There are also reports that male teachers may use corporal punishment and other forms of retribution such as lowering the marks of female students who reject sexual relations with them.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ogando Portela MJ, Pells K. Innocenti Discussion Paper No 2015-02. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research; 2015 (n13)

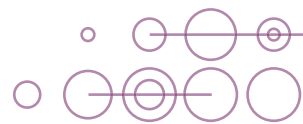
<sup>34</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017 (n11)

<sup>35</sup> Hussein, A. et al (2011), "Causes of Students' Dropout at Primary Level in Pakistan: An Empirical Study", International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 1(12), 143-151

<sup>36</sup> Woods, K. & Jewkes, R. (1998), Love is a dangerous thing: micro-dynamics of violence in sexual relationships of young people in Umtata, CERSA Women's Health Medical Research Council

<sup>37</sup> Mamolibeli Vitalina Ngakane, Nithi Muthukrishna & Jabulani Edward Ngcobo, Experiencing Violence in Schools: Voices of Learners in the Lesotho Context, The Anthropologist, Volume 14, 2012 - Issue 1





## Negatively impacts the quality of education in schools

Corporal punishment in schools can contribute to an institutional culture that accepts and normalises violence, bullying and abusive behaviour. Witnessing violence from adult staff increases the likelihood of students repeating similar behaviour among their fellow students and more widely. Children rarely learn anything useful from corporal punishment: information about their mistakes and ways to correct them are often not communicated, and their emotional response such as fear, anger or resentment tends to overshadow any “lesson” that the teacher might be trying to convey. Evidence from the United States suggests that school corporal punishment has negative effects on the quality and outcomes of education as a whole.<sup>38</sup>

A new meta-analysis published in March 2022 reviewed 29 studies which included nearly one million children. It found further confirmation that school corporal punishment is associated with children’s externalizing behaviour such as bullying, verbal and physical aggression, hyperactivity, and hostility; with internalizing behaviour including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and social inhibition; and with worse school performance, such as lower spelling, mathematics and reading scores.<sup>39</sup>

## Impacts last into adulthood

Violence is highly traumatic. The trauma that corporal punishment inflicts on children can be severe, with effects on their physical and emotional health often persisting throughout their lives. The negative repercussions of corporal punishment on children’s cognitive development and education can also last into adulthood, and evidence suggests that adults who experienced violent punishment as children were less likely to graduate from college or to have high status and highly paid jobs. They are also more likely to suffer from poor physical and mental health and substance abuse.<sup>40</sup>

Research also associates experience of violent punishment in childhood with aggression, anti-social behaviour, perpetration of physical assault and criminality in adulthood. Children subject to corporal punishment in childhood are more likely to use it on their children when they become parents.<sup>41</sup>

Being subject to corporal punishment in childhood also increases the likelihood of being a victim and perpetrator of intimate partner and gender-based violence as an adult. Men experiencing corporal punishment as children are more likely to perpetrate dating violence, coerced and forced sex and hold inequitable gender attitudes.<sup>42</sup> Ending corporal punishment in schools is a gender transformative strategy that can help to break intergenerational cycles of gender-based violence.

## High economic costs

In addition to the very high human cost of school corporal punishment, it also carries a high economic cost. In 2010 Plan International estimated that the lost benefits to Indian society in terms of lower achievement, lower earnings, higher physical and mental health needs, and higher reliance on social services caused by school corporal punishment amounted to between 1.5-7.4 billion US dollars each year.<sup>43</sup>

A 2021 World Bank and Safe to Learn (STL) investment case reported that the cost of inaction on school violence including corporal punishment amounts to around \$11 trillion globally in lost lifetime earnings. **The study found that effective interventions for reducing violence in schools typically have high benefit-to-cost ratios, which means that every dollar invested generates multiples in terms of future benefits for children, particularly when the interventions are scaled up nationally.**

*‘The benefits of preventing violence in and through schools is likely to far outweigh the costs’<sup>44</sup>*

<sup>38</sup> Center for Effective Discipline (2010), Paddling Versus ACT Scores - A Retrospective Analysis, Ohio: Center for Effective Discipline

<sup>39</sup> Visser, L.N., van der Put, C.E. and Assink, M., 2022. The Association between School Corporal Punishment and Child Developmental Outcomes: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Children*, 9(3), p.383. [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8946887/?report=classic](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8946887/?report=classic)

<sup>40</sup> Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021 (n19)

<sup>41</sup> Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021 (n19)

<sup>42</sup> Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2021 (n19)

<sup>43</sup> Perezniето P, Harper C, Clench B, Coarasa J. London: Plan International & Overseas Development Institute; 2010. The Economic Impact of School Violence. Available at: [plan-international.org/learnwithoutfear](https://plan-international.org/learnwithoutfear).

<sup>44</sup> Wodon, Quentin; Fèvre, Chloé; Malé, Chata; Nayihouba, Ada; Nguyen, Hoa. 2021. Ending Violence in Schools : An Investment Case. World Bank, Washington, DC Available at: [openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/be641349-d30c-5624-81df-9eacb753daea](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/be641349-d30c-5624-81df-9eacb753daea)







### Why is there still support for violent punishment in schools? And how can this be addressed?

In many places there is a continued belief in the effectiveness of corporal punishment as a disciplinary method, often expressed in sayings like “Spare the rod, spoil the child”. This often draws on adults’ personal upbringing and experience of schools, lack of knowledge of and ability to implement non-violent alternatives, and the wider normalisation of violence in society. They may believe that ‘tough love’ enabled them to succeed, and that ‘going soft’ on discipline will fail children and lead to out of control students. It can also appear that corporal punishment is effective because children may immediately comply out of fear.

However, fifty years of evidence from all regions of the world overwhelmingly finds that corporal punishment in schools has no benefits at all. It does not help children to learn about their mistakes, leads them to be more aggressive and less cooperative in the longer term, impairs relationships with teachers, and severely undermines children’s ability to learn and succeed.

Analysis of the factors underpinning the use of school corporal punishment in each context, combined with dialogue and communication of this information, and state-sponsored training and support for teachers and other education personnel at scale can help to gain support for non-violent approaches in schools.

See more on this topic in ‘Prohibiting corporal punishment in schools: answers to frequently asked questions’.<sup>45</sup>



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<sup>45</sup> [endcorporalpunishment.org/schools/faqs/](https://endcorporalpunishment.org/schools/faqs/)





# Corporal Punishment in Schools: The Problem

## Corporal punishment in schools entrenches inequality

Violent punishment in school can affect children regardless of their gender, age, ability, race or economic background. However, research suggests that children who are already disadvantaged and marginalised are particularly likely to be subjected to it, and sometimes experience multiple, intersecting vulnerabilities, suffering greater effects as a result.

### Sex and gender

Sex and gender are driving factors behind many experiences of violence in childhood, and a gender lens is critical in developing policies as well as interventions for prevention and response. Corporal punishment in schools can reinforce gender stereotypes, and students' experiences of violent punishment by teachers vary based on the sex of both the teacher and the student.<sup>46</sup> Most studies find that boys are more likely to be subjected to school corporal punishment,<sup>47</sup> with male teachers tending to be more violent toward male students, reinforcing society-wide gendered dynamics of violence and masculinity. However, some data, such as national statistics from South Africa, find girls report higher levels of teacher corporal punishment.<sup>48</sup> In both Singapore<sup>49</sup> and Zimbabwe,<sup>50</sup> gender discrimination is written into law—where only boys can be subject to school corporal punishment.

For girls, violent punishment can be used to control behaviour that is seen as undesirable, encourage submission and timidity, and to reinforce traditional gender roles. Girls may be subject to humiliating physical punishment focused on their thighs, buttocks or breasts,<sup>51</sup> and some studies find reports that girls who reject sexual relations with male teachers are subjected to violent punishment.<sup>52</sup>

LGBTQI students consistently report a higher prevalence of violence and bullying in schools compared to their non-LGBTQI peers.<sup>53</sup> There are documented examples of students being subject to punishment because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>54</sup> However there is a lack of monitoring and reporting of prevalence of corporal punishment of LGBTQI students and more research is needed in this area.

### Refugee and migrant children, race and ethnicity

Marginalised children can be subjected to higher levels of corporal punishment. Syrian refugee children in Lebanese schools experienced higher levels of beatings and other humiliating treatment such as being forbidden from using the bathroom, resulting in some refugee communities refusing to send their children to school.<sup>55</sup> A study of school corporal punishment in Gurugram, India found that children from migrant backgrounds suffered double the rate of corporal punishment as other children. They were regularly beaten and subjected to humiliating verbal abuse and derogatory or racial slurs.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Together for Girls (2021). Policy Brief: Gender & Corporal Punishment. Available at: [Understanding the gendered nature of corporal punishment in schools - Together For Girls](#)

<sup>47</sup> Gershoff, E.T., 2017 (n11)

<sup>48</sup> Child Series Volume 1 Children exposed to maltreatment, 2021 (Report No. 92-02-01). Department of Statistics, Government of South Africa. Available at: [statssa.gov.za/publications/92-02-01/92-02-012021.pdf](#)

<sup>49</sup> Article 88 of the Education (Schools) Regulations under the Education Act 1957.

<sup>50</sup> Article 241(2)(b) and 242(4) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2015. Prohibiting violent punishment of girls and boys – a key element in ending family violence. Available at: [endcorporalpunishment.org/wp-content/uploads/thematic/Family-violence-briefing-2015.pdf](#)

<sup>52</sup> Mamolibeli Vitalina Ngakane, Nithi Muthukrishna & Jabulani Edward Ngcobo (n36)

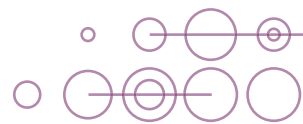
<sup>53</sup> Bullying and Violence in Schools, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner and UNESCO. Available at: [C:\Users\User\Downloads\Bullying-and-Violence-in-School.pdf](#)

<sup>54</sup> E/CN.4/2006/45, para. 113

<sup>55</sup> [hrw.org/report/2019/05/13/i-dont-want-my-child-to-be-beaten/corporal-punishment-lebanons-schools](#)

<sup>56</sup> Agrasar, 2018 (n13)





In South African schools black African children are three times more likely than their white counterparts to report having experienced some form of violence, of which 84% is corporal punishment by a teacher.<sup>57</sup> In US schools where corporal punishment is practiced, black boys are more than twice as likely to be subject to violent punishment than white boys, while black girls are three times as likely to be struck as their white counterparts.<sup>58</sup> Researchers have concluded that racial discrimination in the use of corporal punishment in US schools is widespread.<sup>59</sup>

## Disability

There is substantial evidence that children with disabilities are more likely to be subjected to violent punishment. In Uganda, 99% of learners with a disability reported being subjected to violent punishment.<sup>60</sup> In Mississippi in the United States, over 10% of children with disabilities were subject to corporal punishment, more than double the rate for children without disabilities.<sup>61</sup> Research shows children are often punished for behaviour caused by their disability.<sup>62</sup>

## Low-income communities

Corporal punishment is often more prevalent in low resource settings and schools. For example, following prohibition in South African schools, the practice disappeared fairly quickly from schools serving affluent communities, but remained common although more regulated in township schools.<sup>63</sup> Schools in these settings may have less resources, and families may not have the means to move a child to a less violent school, or feel confident to complain about school practices. Children from low-income backgrounds also report being punished physically or psychologically for not having the materials or payment needed for school, for wearing dirty clothes or incomplete uniform, or lacking the resources or support to complete homework.<sup>64</sup>

## Corporal punishment harms the educational chances of the children who need it most

Education is of even greater importance to marginalised and disadvantaged children. Safe schools can provide a protective barrier for continued learning and enable a sense of normalcy, despite a child's context, giving access to the skills and information that can enable them to participate in and adapt to a changing world, take action on their own behalf, and to diversify their income generation options.

***'Punishment discourages children's intellectual curiosity, their creativity and explorative spirit to try new things.'***

'Choking Childhood', Agrasar, 2018<sup>65</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Child Series Volume 1 Children exposed to maltreatment, 2021 (n47)

<sup>58</sup> Whitaker, A. and Losen, D.J., 2019. The striking outlier: The persistent, painful and problematic practice of corporal punishment in schools. Southern Poverty Law Centre. Available at: [splcenter.org/sites/default/files/com\\_corporal\\_punishment\\_final\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://splcenter.org/sites/default/files/com_corporal_punishment_final_web_0.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., & Peterson, R. L. (2002). "The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment." The Urban Review.

<sup>60</sup> Devries, K et al. 2014: Violence against primary school children with disabilities in Uganda: a cross-sectional study. BMC Public Health 2014, 14:1017. [biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/14/1017](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-014-0101-7)

<sup>61</sup> Whitaker, A. and Losen, D.J., 2019 (n58)

<sup>62</sup> Farmer, Alice. "Impairing education: Corporal Punishment of students with disabilities in US public schools." Human Rights Watch, 2009, [bit.ly/2GSxFGN](https://www.hrw.org/bit.ly/2GSxFGN)

<sup>63</sup> Morrell, R. (2001). Corporal punishment in South African schools: A neglected explanation for its persistence. *South African Journal of Education*, 21(4), 292–299.

<sup>64</sup> Agrasar, 2018 (n13)

<sup>65</sup> Agrasar, 2018 (n13)









## Corporal punishment is fully prohibited in schools in 136 states

BUT...

Corporal punishment is **still lawful** in some or all education settings in **63 states**.

Among them:

33

states have policies, directives or circulars against the use of corporal punishment in schools, but **legislation is either silent on the issue or contradicts the policy** by expressly authorising corporal punishment (see annex on pages 22-24). Government policy acknowledges corporal punishment is wrong and this simply needs to be confirmed in legislation applying to all education institutions.

9

**states are Pathfinder countries.**<sup>66</sup> This means the Government has committed to accelerated action to end violence against children, including implementation of the INSPIRE strategies at scale. Legislative prohibition should be enacted without delay.

4

**states have endorsed the #SafetoLearn Call to Action,**<sup>67</sup> which aims to end violence in all schools, through implementation of policy and legislation (including the prohibition of corporal punishment), strengthened prevention and response at the school level, promotion of behaviour change (including positive discipline in schools), effective investment of resources and generation and use of evidence. Legislative prohibition should be enacted without delay.



<sup>66</sup> [end-violence.org/pathfinding-countries](https://end-violence.org/pathfinding-countries)

<sup>67</sup> [end-violence.org/safetolearn/call](https://end-violence.org/safetolearn/call)





# Corporal Punishment in Schools: The Solution

## Prohibiting all corporal punishment of children in schools

Prohibiting corporal punishment in law provides the clarity and legal basis for eliminating it in practice. It is almost impossible to persuade people to abandon violent punishment if the law still supports it.

Law should prohibit corporal punishment in all settings of children's lives including the home, and schools. Full prohibition sends the clearest message that violent punishment of children is no longer acceptable in society.

Prohibition of corporal punishment is achieved when:

- All defences and authorisations of corporal punishment are repealed (removed) so that the criminal law on assault applies equally to assaults on children, whether or not it is described as discipline or punishment.
- Legislation explicitly prohibits – or is interpreted as prohibiting – all corporal punishment and other cruel and degrading punishment of all children in all settings of their lives. For schools, this must include all public, private, government-subsidised and faith-based institutions.
- The language used is clear and not open to misinterpretation – the law must leave no doubt that students should not be physically punished or suffer humiliating or degrading punishment; and
- There are no legal loopholes which could be used by those seeking to justify or defend some level of violent punishment of students.

Prohibition of corporal punishment is not achieved by:

- Laws which prohibit “all forms of violence” or “child abuse”, or that confirm children's rights to “respect for human dignity and physical integrity” – this is not clear enough to be perceived and interpreted as prohibiting all corporal punishment in societies where it is widely socially accepted, and often not even regarded as violence.
- Laws which prohibit “corporal punishment that causes harm” – these may be construed as not prohibiting corporal punishment by those who believe that only physical punishment reaching a certain level of severity is harmful, and that so called “light” physical punishment is acceptable or even in the child's best interests.
- So-called “compromise laws” that limit rather than fully prohibit the use of corporal punishment of children. For example, making corporal punishment of older children unlawful but allowing it for younger children, or banning the use of an implement but by implication allowing slaps with a hand. These laws continue to allow corporal punishment, do not achieve protection for children under the law, and send a confusing message about acceptable treatment of children.

**You can find out more about how to successfully enact laws that prohibit corporal punishment in our Short Guide to Effective Law Reform.**<sup>68</sup> The guide sets out the key stages of law reform and directs you to further information on each topic.

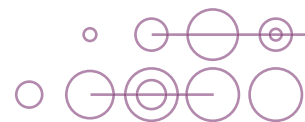
***‘Children are entitled to their own sense of self and dignity being separate beings. It is unacceptable to consider that a child assaulted may not be entitled to remedy while an adult in the same circumstances would be entitled to such relief, for the reason of being a minor. In any case, minors as impressionable and vulnerable members of society must be entitled to a higher degree of protection.’***

Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, judgement condemning the corporal punishment of children in schools, February 2021

<sup>68</sup> Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2019. Ending corporal punishment of children: A short guide to effective law reform. Available at: [endcorporalpunishment.org/resources/resources-on-law-reform](https://endcorporalpunishment.org/resources/resources-on-law-reform)







Ending violence in schools, including a ban of corporal punishment, requires coordinated efforts at multiple levels. The first pillar of the **Safe to Learn Call to Action**<sup>69</sup> calls on countries to implement laws and policies that protect children from all forms of violence in and through schools. The **STL Programmatic Framework** further highlights the need for explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools and recommends putting *policies in place* to support positive discipline and classroom management. A comprehensive range of measures are needed to achieve effective implementation, including raising awareness about the law, equipping teachers with the necessary positive, non-violent disciplinary techniques and responding appropriately when prohibition is breached. Legislation should be complemented by efforts to expose and challenge the harmful norms that underpin violence and prevent children from realising their rights.



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<sup>69</sup> [end-violence.org/safetolearn/call](https://end-violence.org/safetolearn/call)





# Corporal Punishment in Schools: The Solution

## Effectively ending the use of corporal punishment in schools: seven key steps

Enacting prohibition of corporal punishment in education is an essential foundation for stopping its use in practice. Violent punishment of children is widely accepted in most societies, and therefore legislation must be clear that it is not lawful and must not be used in schools (and ideally in all other settings of children's lives).

Education policies, ministerial circulars or codes that forbid or urge against corporal punishment may represent progress, but unless they are underpinned by legislation, they do not have the strength or clarity of law, and staff who use violent punishment may successfully argue that they were acting lawfully.

**However, passing a law that prohibits corporal punishment in education is not usually enough to eliminate it in practice.** School environments need to be enabling, supportive, inclusive, and safe spaces in which children can learn and flourish. Corporal punishment is often just one part of a school culture that also enables other forms of violence such as peer bullying and gender-based violence, and may be characterised by negative power dynamics, policies and harmful social norms. Successful strategies address the wider school culture and the social norms that underpin violence rather than focusing on corporal punishment alone.<sup>70</sup> A comprehensive range of measures should be put in place to implement the law; address structures, norms and practices that condone violent behaviour; and work towards a culture of non-violent, respectful teaching and learning. Education Ministries have responsibility for ensuring that prevention and response measures to address corporal punishment are included within ministerial policies and budgets.

### 1. Communicate what the law says

Ensure all sections of society know that corporal punishment in schools is against the law by carrying out widespread public engagement, education and communication campaigns. Explain why violent and humiliating punishment has been banned, how the law will be translated into practice at a local level, and what measures are being put in place to support a change in school practice and culture to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence in and around schools. Sharing information about the harms of violent punishment can be effective in changing public opinion and behaviour. Communicate procedures for reporting breaches of the law.

Consider specific communication to teachers and education staff, parents and carers, children, community, cultural and religious leaders and law enforcement officials. Engage with school leaders to ensure they understand the law, including the penalties and consequences if the law is breached, and know they will be held responsible for upholding it in their schools.

Where evidence suggests that there may be misconceptions about what others believe, do and expect others to do with respect to disciplining children, mass media campaigns can be helpful in exposing this in an effort to challenge norms and shift behaviours.

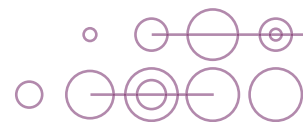
### 2. Engage the whole school to challenge harmful norms

Engage the whole school and surrounding communities in positive initiatives to create non-violent cultures. Effective interventions often have a wider positive aim – for example, making progress towards being a 'good school', rather than simply trying to eliminate teacher violence.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Naker, D (2017). Operational Culture at Schools: An Overarching Entry Point for Preventing Violence against Children at School: [Preventing violence against children at schools in resource-poor environments: Operational culture as an overarching entry point | Request PDF \(researchgate.net\)](#)

<sup>71</sup> Violence in Schools Is Pervasive and Teachers Are Often the Perpetrators. Here Are Five Ways to Prevent It . CGD, 2021. [cgdev.org/blog/violence-schools-pervasive-and-teachers-are-often-perpetrators-here-are-five-ways-prevent-it](https://cgdev.org/blog/violence-schools-pervasive-and-teachers-are-often-perpetrators-here-are-five-ways-prevent-it)





Find ways to engage school communities, for example hold meetings to explain and discuss why violent and humiliating punishment will no longer be used in the school. Allow questions and concerns to be raised, and support discussion of social and gender norms and beliefs related to child raising and discipline. Community led initiatives to prevent violence in all areas of children's lives, including the home can increase the impact of efforts to end violent punishment in school. Offer families information and support to adopt non-violent parenting and positive discipline at home and create space for reflexive discussion to expose the norms that underpin violent behaviour in all settings. Ensure that all sections of the school community are engaged, for example including low income and working parents and those who speak different languages. Encourage, celebrate, promote and share the establishment of new norms that promote non-violent behaviour. Consider ways to share new approaches with other schools and communities.

**Children should be involved and empowered as a critical and highly motivated part of the school community.** For example, children's committees and clubs can help review school rules and standards, report on progress and develop strategies for reducing violence and increasing support among students. Find more information in the resources section.

### Preventing violence in Ugandan schools with the Good School Toolkit

The Good School Toolkit is an example of an effective programme to prevent violence in schools developed in Uganda and now being implemented at scale across 23 districts. The toolkit aims to foster equal relationships and a safer psychological environment within which students are likely to invest in their school, form attachments to their teachers, identify with their peers, and develop a sense of belonging. School leaders are enabled to create a school-wide culture where violence is not tolerated and opportunities are generated for students to participate in decision-making processes.

The school-wide intervention is led by two teachers, two students and two school-affiliated community members who aim to influence the operational culture of their school through four entry points: teacher-to-student relationships, peer-to-peer relationships, student & teacher relationships to their school, and parent and community relationships to school governance. The methodology engages the entire school and the surrounding community in a process reflecting on what a 'good school' is, what a good teacher is, and how students learn to participate. Through colourful and accessible learning materials, the toolkit offers a range of activities that facilitate learning about positive discipline, gender, disability, and creating violence-free classrooms.

A randomised controlled evaluation found that the toolkit reduced the risk of physical violence from teachers to students by 42% within 18 months of the intervention,<sup>72</sup> increased attachment of students to their school, reduced peer violence,<sup>73</sup> and is effective for all students including those who are marginalized such as children with disabilities.<sup>74</sup>

### 3. Provide training and support for staff

Ensure that education providers at all levels receive clear direction and training on the law prohibiting corporal punishment, and the adoption of positive discipline methods. Teacher's lack of knowledge and skills in implementing non-violent discipline strategies is a common obstacle in eliminating violent punishment - ensure they understand and are supported in developing non-violent approaches that foster children's development and learning by building their self-confidence and self-discipline, based on the principles of respect and dignity.

<sup>72</sup> Devries, K. M., Knight, L., Mirembe, A., Child, J. C., Nakuti, J., Jones, R., et al. (2015a). The Good School Toolkit for reducing physical violence from school staff to primary school students: A cluster randomised controlled trial in Uganda. *Lancet Global Health*, 3(7), E378–E386.

<sup>73</sup> Devries, K.M., Knight, L., Allen, E., Parkes, J., Kyegombe, N., Naker, D. (2017a). Does the Good Schools Toolkit Reduce Physical, Sexual and Emotional Violence, and Injuries, in Girls and Boys equally? A Cluster-Randomised Controlled Trial. *Prev Sci.*, 2017 Apr 10. doi: 10.1007/s11121-017-0775-3.

<sup>74</sup> Devries, K et al. 2014 (n60)







Training should also include reflection on social norms, values, and beliefs about violence against children – many teachers live in societies where corporal punishment of children is accepted and normalised. Repeated opportunities for staff to learn, practice and discuss non-violent methods may be needed to overcome engrained acceptance and use of violent punishment of children.

Teaching is challenging, and teachers often work in overcrowded, under resourced classrooms. They may be poorly paid and receive little training or support. The children they work with may face many challenges and experience violence in many settings of their life. Teachers can't be solely responsible for transforming discipline methods and classroom culture. Effective interventions must support and engage teachers and listen to their concerns and ideas. Education Ministries, in cooperation with other relevant agencies, have overall responsibility for supporting and enabling teachers to adopt non-violent methods.

### **What is positive discipline?**

Positive discipline is an approach that teaches children and guides their behaviour, while respecting their rights to healthy development, protection from violence and participation in their learning and care.

It features relationships based on cooperation, respect, empathy, and recognition of the child's innate abilities. It is not permissive and is not about punishment. It is about long-term solutions that develop children's own self-discipline and life-long skills, fostering non-violence, empathy, self-respect, human rights, and respect for others. Positive discipline is based on the most current research on children's healthy development and effective parenting or teaching and is founded on child rights principles.

You can find further information about positive discipline in the 'resources' section.

## **4. Reporting procedures**

Establish confidential and independent reporting procedures to allow children, staff, and other adults to report ongoing instances of violent punishment. Ensure children and families will not be subject to retribution for making reports. Free child helplines and anonymous complaint boxes staffed by specially trained adults can ensure children can access support and report concerns. They should be widely promoted in schools and communities in child-friendly formats and all complaints and reports should be dealt with appropriately and to the fullest extent. Referral systems should be in place to support student's physical and mental health needs.

## **5. Responses and sanctions**

Establish and communicate a range of clear, appropriate and standardised responses and sanctions to ongoing use of violent punishment by school staff. For example, make compliance with the law a condition of employment with breaches punishable as misconduct. Appropriate sanctions may include suspension or dismissal. Depending on the severity of the case criminal sanctions including fines and imprisonment may be required. Ensure school leaders understand their responsibilities to implement the responses and sanctions. Hold school leaders and administrations accountable if corporal punishment continues to be used in their school.

## **6. Monitoring compliance**

Independent school inspections should assess compliance with the law, including confidential opportunities for child, parent, and staff feedback. Monitor the effectiveness of the law using surveys of child, staff, parent, and public opinion. Ensure complaints of corporal punishment are carefully recorded and followed up. Make information about the numbers of complaints and the responses to them publicly available. Conducting a baseline assessment can help assess progress and better understand areas for improvement.





## 7. Celebrate progress and excellence

Create opportunities to recognise and celebrate progress and excellence in developing good schools and non-violent teaching. Establish peer learning networks to share positive examples, stories of good practice and learning between schools and across contexts. Encourage and provide opportunities for professional development that nurtures educators' journeys towards healthier, non-violent relationships with their learners.

*'All children in our interview sample said that they like best the teachers "who never beat but explain and teach well.'*

'Choking Childhood', Agrasar, 2018<sup>75</sup>

The **Safe to Learn Global Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool** provides guidance on translating the Call to Action into practical actions and offers a suggested framework for monitoring and tracking results. Pages 6-7 discuss key interventions and technical resources focusing on explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in schools and the setting up of policies to support positive discipline and classroom management. The **Safe to Learn Diagnostic Tool** provides a series of benchmarks and checkpoints at national, local and school level, to support countries measure the degree and quality of national efforts to prevent and respond to violence in and around schools and prioritise investments. Benchmark 1.2 and its checkpoints focus on prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, positive discipline and classroom management. Both of these tools can be found in the 'resources' section.



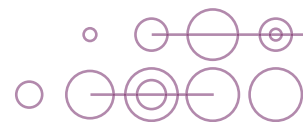
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### Education funders have a critical role to play

Funders of education can play a critical role in ending corporal punishment and other forms of violence in education by requiring education sectors and partners to take responsibility for implementing evidence-based steps towards non-violent approaches as a component of the investment. Funding schools where violent punishment is lawful or condoned not only enables violence against children, but a significant portion of that investment will be wasted in lower quality education and outcomes. Funders can also help to build the evidence base of effective solutions, particularly focused on the Global South. Children cannot afford for education funding to remain silent on violence.

<sup>75</sup> Agrasar, 2018 (n13)





# Corporal Punishment in Schools: The Solution

## School violence needs ‘whole school’ interventions

A recent systematic review by the Coalition for Good Schools of evidence of successful violence prevention interventions in schools in the Global South highlighted the various approaches that have been found effective or promising.<sup>76</sup> The review analysed data from 89 peer reviewed and published articles, 62 programme reports and 151 publications, identifying lessons from 93 distinct programme interventions. Whole school approaches were found to be highly effective as they engage the entire school ecosystem, develop capacity of teachers and education stakeholders as well as children, and involve the school-surrounding community in each stage of the process of change.

Key characteristics of successful interventions:

- Programmes with multiple components that engage multiple stakeholders such as school staff, parents, learners and local leaders, are core investments in structural change that increase sustainability of an intervention.
- Interventions that address values, policies and practice that affect the whole school environment – including governance, parental concerns and student well-being - are found to be more effective in reducing violence.
- Group-based interventions that recognise the intersecting experiences of violence affecting girls and boys differently and promote positive gender norms can help develop shared values and shape young people’s attitudes towards gender roles that have potential to reduce violence against women throughout life.
- Leadership opportunities for teachers, school staff and children promote ownership and sustainability; teachers can be trained and empowered to improve learner behaviour.
- The development of successful interventions is an iterative and learning process that must incorporate formal evidence alongside practitioner learning and experience to ensure interventions are as strong as possible.

The review found that school-wide, multi-component interventions are critical in addressing the complexity of the problem of violence in schools. Further research is emerging – and needed – to demonstrate impacts at scale.

The review also highlighted the difficulty of eliminating one form of violence such as corporal punishment in isolation, without addressing the acceptance and prevalence of violence in the community, in children’s families and homes, or in wider school culture. Authors emphasised the importance of bringing parents, communities, and school staff on the journey of creating non-violent schools to have a sustainable impact. Education sectors must, however, support the introduction and scaling of interventions to translate policy into action.

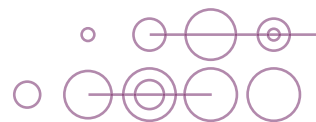
***“Violence is such a complex area. When I talk about multicomponent interventions, I mean strategies that address the whole system: the child, the parents, the school, the community. You have to think of it as an ecosystem. And strategies must therefore address the child at individual level, and how they’re embedded within the community as well as the school.”***

Professor Shanaaz Mathews, Director of the Children’s Institute (CI) at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Co-founder of the Coalition for Good Schools and study co-author

<sup>76</sup> Mathews S, Achyut P, October L & Makola L. (2021). Evidence Review: Prevention of violence against children through schools in the Global South. Raising Voices, Uganda and University of Cape Town, South Africa. Available at: [coalitionforgoodschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Coalition\\_for\\_Good\\_Schools\\_Evidence\\_Review\\_R6.pdf](https://coalitionforgoodschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Coalition_for_Good_Schools_Evidence_Review_R6.pdf)







## Resources

### Law reform to prohibit corporal punishment

Prohibiting corporal punishment in schools: Answers to frequently asked questions – available in 11 languages: [endcorporalpunishment.org/schools/faqs/](https://endcorporalpunishment.org/schools/faqs/)

Ending corporal punishment of children: A short guide to effective law reform – available in Arabic, English and French: [endcorporalpunishment.org/resources/resources-on-law-reform/](https://endcorporalpunishment.org/resources/resources-on-law-reform/)

### Whole school approaches

The Good School Toolkit, Raising Voices: [raisingvoices.org/children/the-good-school-toolkit/](https://raisingvoices.org/children/the-good-school-toolkit/)

School-Based Violence Prevention: A practical handbook, World Health Organisation, 2019: [unicef.org/media/58081/file/UNICEF-WHO-UNESCO-handbook-school-based-violence.pdf](https://unicef.org/media/58081/file/UNICEF-WHO-UNESCO-handbook-school-based-violence.pdf)

A Whole School Approach to Prevent School-Related Gender-Based Violence: Minimum Standards and Monitoring Framework, 2018. United Nations Girls Education Initiative: [ungei.org/sites/default/files/A-whole-school-approach-to-prevent-school-related-gender-based-violence-Minimum-Standards-and-Monitoring-Framework-2019-eng.pdf](https://ungei.org/sites/default/files/A-whole-school-approach-to-prevent-school-related-gender-based-violence-Minimum-Standards-and-Monitoring-Framework-2019-eng.pdf)

Safe to Learn Global Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool: [end-violence.org/sites/default/files/paragraphs/download/STL%20Global%20Programmatic%20Framework.pdf](https://end-violence.org/sites/default/files/paragraphs/download/STL%20Global%20Programmatic%20Framework.pdf) (Also available in French and Spanish)

### Positive discipline and non-violent teaching

The Irie Classroom Toolbox: a school-based, violence prevention programme for early childhood teachers: [irietoolbox.com/](https://irietoolbox.com/)

Positive Discipline in Everyday Teaching: [resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/what-is-positive-discipline-in-everyday-teaching-2010.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/what-is-positive-discipline-in-everyday-teaching-2010.pdf)

Positive Discipline: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment, Raising Voices, 2009: [raisingvoices.org/resources/positive-discipline-creating-a-good-school-without-corporal-punishment/](https://raisingvoices.org/resources/positive-discipline-creating-a-good-school-without-corporal-punishment/)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Bangkok Office and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific, 'Positive Discipline in the Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Classroom: [unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000149284](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000149284)

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### Monitoring and evaluation

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### Child participation and empowerment

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Mobilising Children's Agency for Eliminating Corporal Punishment Blog by Prerit Rana, Chief Executive of Agrasar: [endcorporalpunishment.org/childrens-agency-eliminating-corporal-punishment/](https://endcorporalpunishment.org/childrens-agency-eliminating-corporal-punishment/)

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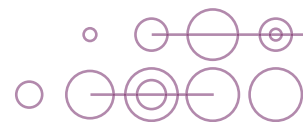




## Annex: States where corporal punishment is still lawful in education settings

State	Policy against its use	Pathfinding country	#SafetoLearn Call to Action signatory	Immediate opportunity to achieve prohibition
Angola				No known opportunities related to education
Antigua and Barbuda				No known opportunities
Australia				Regulated in some states but no known opportunities at national level
Bahamas				Education Act and other laws under review
Barbados				No known opportunities related to education
Bhutan	YES			No known opportunities
Botswana		YES		Proposals to prohibit in schools in Education Act review
Brunei Darussalam				No known opportunities
Burkina Faso		YES		Draft Child Protection Code would prohibit in all settings
Central African Republic				No known opportunities related to education
Côte d'Ivoire	YES	YES		Relevant legislation under review
Cuba	YES			relevant legislation under review
Dominica	YES	YES		No known opportunities related to education
DPR Korea	YES			No known opportunities
Egypt	YES			No known opportunities
Equatorial Guinea				Relevant legislation under review
Eritrea	YES			Relevant legislation under review
Eswatini	YES			Education Act under review
Gambia	YES			Relevant legislation under review
Ghana	YES		YES	Relevant legislation under review
Grenada				No known opportunities related to education
Guatemala				Draft Law against corporal punishment would prohibit in all settings
Guyana				Education Act under review





India				No known opportunities related to education
Indonesia		YES		Relevant legislation under review
Iran	YES			Relevant legislation under review
Iraq	YES			Relevant legislation under review
Jamaica	YES <sup>78</sup>	YES	YES	Law reform is underway to prohibit in all settings
Lebanon	YES <sup>78</sup>		YES	Relevant legislation under review
Liberia				Relevant legislation under review
Malaysia				No known opportunities related to education
Maldives	YES			Education Bill would reportedly prohibit in schools, Protection of the Rights of the Child Bill would reportedly prohibit in all settings
Mauritania	YES			Relevant legislation under review
Morocco	YES			Relevant legislation under review
Mozambique	YES		YES	Relevant legislation under review
Myanmar	YES			Child Law amendments would prohibit in homes, care settings and schools
Niger	YES			Draft Children's Code would prohibit in all settings
Nigeria	YES <sup>79</sup>	YES		No known opportunities at federal level
Niue				No known opportunities
Pakistan				Prohibited in some provinces and territories
Palau	YES <sup>78</sup>			No known opportunities
Panama				Relevant legislation under review
Papua New Guinea	YES			Education Act and other laws under review
Qatar	YES			Relevant legislation under review
Samoa				Relevant legislation under review
Saudi Arabia	YES			No known opportunities related to education
Senegal				Draft Children's Code would prohibit in all settings
Singapore				Relevant legislation under review

<sup>78</sup> Public schools only

<sup>79</sup> In selected states only







Solomon Islands				Education Act review would reportedly prohibit in schools
Somalia	YES <sup>80</sup>			Relevant legislation under review
Sri Lanka	YES	YES		Relevant legislation under review
St Kitts and Nevis				No known opportunities related to education
St Lucia	YES <sup>78</sup>			Relevant legislation under review
St Vincent and the Grenadines				Relevant legislation under review
State of Palestine	YES <sup>81</sup>			Relevant legislation under review
Suriname	YES			No known opportunities related to education
Syrian Arab Republic	YES			Domestic legislation under review
Timor-Leste	YES			Draft Child Code would reportedly prohibit in schools
Tuvalu				Domestic legislation under review
UR Tanzania	YES <sup>82</sup>	YES		Education Act and other laws under review
USA				Ending Corporal Punishment in Schools Bill would prohibit in public schools
Western Sahara				No known opportunities
Zimbabwe		YES		No known opportunities related to education

See full details of the law on corporal punishment in every state and territory, and provide updates or corrections, at [endcorporalpunishment.org](https://endcorporalpunishment.org)

*‘When interventions to prevent corporal punishment are implemented at scale, their cost tends to be much lower. As an example, simulations for the cost of the Good School Toolkit of Raising Voices suggest much lower costs for a national program than for the pilot, with most of the costs after a few years being opportunity costs (the cost of teachers’ and administrators’ time) as opposed to out-of-pocket costs for Ministries. This suggests that the programs are fiscally affordable.’<sup>83</sup>*

<sup>80</sup> In Puntland only

<sup>81</sup> Government schools in Gaza and West strip

<sup>82</sup> In Zanzibar only

<sup>83</sup> Wodon, Q. 2023. Africa: Cost of implementing programs for the prevention of violence in schools. IICBA Knowledge Brief. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: UNESCO IICBA.





**The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children** was launched in July 2016 by the UN Secretary General. Today, the Partnership is the only global entity and largest Fund focused solely on Sustainable Development Goal 16.2: ending all forms of violence against children. The Partnership is made up of over 750 partners, including governments, UN agencies, research institutions, international NGOs, civil society organisations, private sector groups and more. Though different in many ways, we are united in the belief that every child deserves to grow up free from violence.

Find out more at: [end-violence.org](https://end-violence.org)

**End Corporal Punishment** is a critical initiative of the End Violence Partnership. We carry out a wide range of activities specifically designed to catalyse progress towards universal prohibition and elimination of all corporal punishment of children.

We work to end corporal punishment by:

1. Conducting and supporting national, regional and international advocacy with accurate information and tailored technical resources, guidance and assistance.
2. Providing an up-to-date and comprehensive knowledge hub with evidence on the legal status of corporal punishment, its prevalence and effects.
3. Providing technical assistance to governments and civil society to support progress towards prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment.
4. Supporting a global movement of partners and supporters across all continents.

Find out more at: [endcorporalpunishment.org](https://endcorporalpunishment.org)

**Safe to Learn** is a global initiative to catalyse commitments and evidence-based action to end violence in and through schools. STL envisions a world where all girls and boys, in all their diversity, can learn safely, no matter how or where that learning may take place. It brings together a powerful coalition of 14 partners, representing the education, child protection, violence prevention and health communities. STL's work is rooted in the Call to Action, which sets out in high level terms, based on global evidence, what needs to happen to end violence in and through schools. To address the multidimensional impacts of violence and accelerate action, Safe to Learn partners developed a 3-year Strategy (2021-2024) to develop an ecosystem for at-scale change and embed violence prevention in education systems, globally.<sup>83</sup>

Find out more at: [end-violence.org/safe-to-learn](https://end-violence.org/safe-to-learn)

**The Coalition for Good Schools** is a collection of Global South practitioners committed to preventing violence against children in and through schools across Latin America, Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. As the majority of children go to school in the Global South, we know schools offer a unique entry point for this work. We furthermore believe that the voices of practitioners and researchers from the Global South are missing from the global debate on how to prevent violence in and through schools.

Through synthesizing knowledge, convening practitioners and thought leaders, and advocating for collective action to use schools as an entry point for violence prevention, we work to elevate insights and evidence-based interventions and provide critical tools, data, and best practices for sustainable and impactful local solutions. Our aim is to facilitate connection and learning between those working in similar contexts.

Find out more and join us at: [coalitionforgoodschools.org](https://coalitionforgoodschools.org)

**A note on facts and figures:** End Corporal Punishment bases its analysis on a total of 199 states: all state parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child except The Holy See, plus Kosovo, Taiwan, the United States and Western Sahara. Child population figures are from UNICEF 2020.

<sup>83</sup> As of 1 April 2023, the Safe to Learn Global Initiative is now part of UNICEF, with thanks to the End Violence Partnership for significant contributions and successful incubation.





End Violence  
Against Children



End Corporal  
Punishment



Coalition *for*  
Good Schools



Safe to Learn



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