

Teaching without violence: prohibiting corporal punishment

Why prohibit corporal punishment?

Children have a right to learn without violence in school, whether in a public, private, government-subsidised or faith based institution. As well as violating children’s rights, overwhelming evidence shows that the use of corporal punishment in schools can impede learning and contribute to school drop-out. A school culture that ensures a safe, respectful environment for students and teaching staff and promotes learning benefits students, teachers and the wider community and is shown to rely less on violence as a means to discipline or educate.

Transforming school culture to protect children from corporal punishment starts with law reform. While much progress has been made, the law in many countries still authorises violent punishment of children in schools, often even specifying how it must be inflicted, and efforts to prohibit it are often met with strong opposition from teachers and parents. Thirty years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this is completely unacceptable.

As states work towards the Sustainable Development Goals – particularly those related to peace, health and education – prohibiting and eliminating corporal punishment in all schools is an urgent priority. This briefing charts progress and delay. It is both a call to action and a tool for advocacy to end violent punishment of children in all places of learning through law reform and the creation of a positive non-violent culture.

732 million (1 in 2) school-age children between 6 and 17 years live in countries where corporal punishment at school is not fully prohibited.

A FAMILIAR FACE: VIOLENCE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS, UNICEF, 2017



Progress towards prohibition

Lawful in schools

67

STATES

Among the **67 states** where corporal punishment is currently lawful in schools:

34

34 have policies, ministerial circulars/directives and/or codes of discipline against its use in some or all schools, but legislation is either silent on the issue or undermines policy by expressly authorising corporal punishment. In these states, the Government has acknowledged that corporal punishment is wrong and ineffective, and simply needs to confirm that policy in legislation for all educational institutions.

6

Six are Pathfinding countries under the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children – this means the Government has committed to accelerated action to end violence against children, including implementation of the INSPIRE strategies at scale.

2

Two have endorsed the #SafetoLearn Call to Action, which aims to end violence in all schools by 2024, including through prohibition of corporal punishment in all schools and promote positive discipline.

56

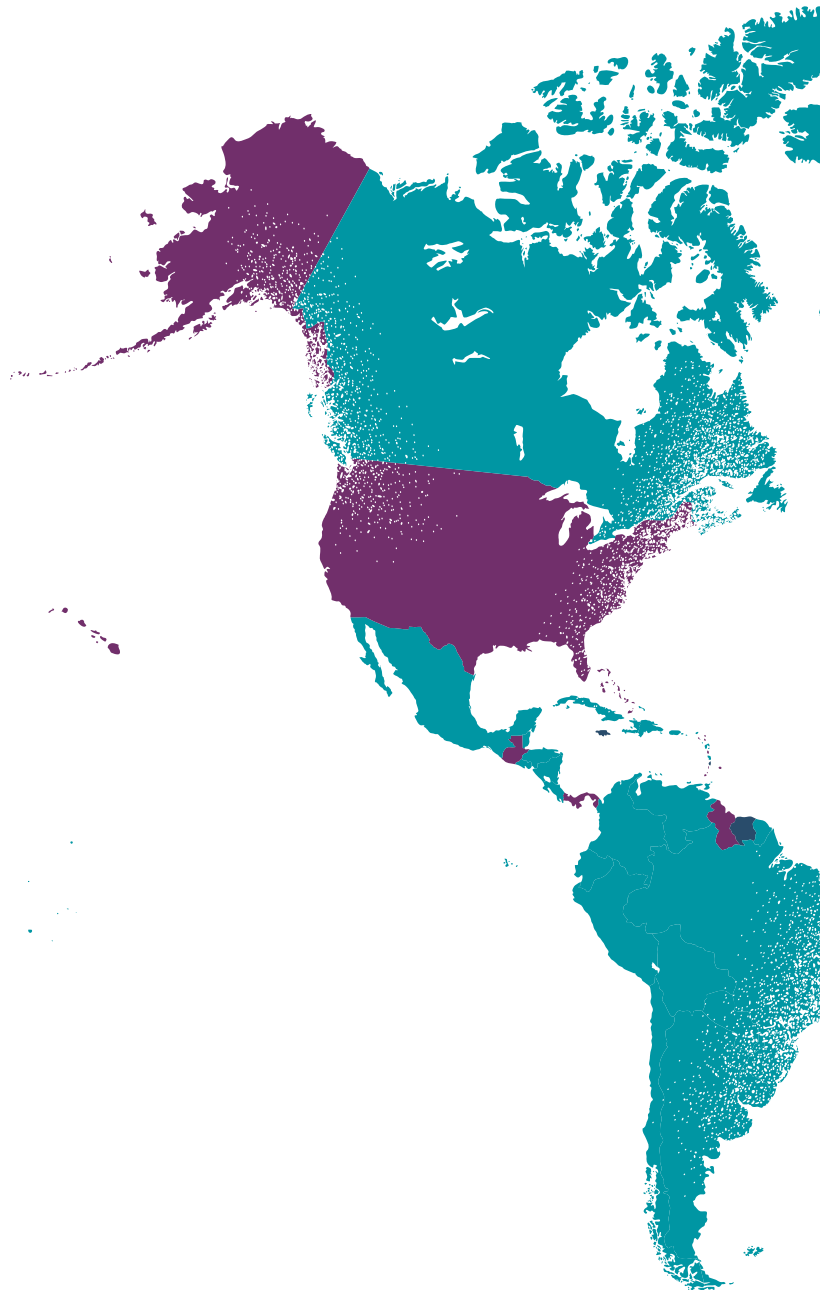
At least 56 are undergoing processes of law reform which provide immediate opportunities for enacting prohibiting legislation (see p.4). This includes drafting or reviewing constitutions, criminal/civil codes, education laws and laws relating to child protection or child rights. Domestic violence and family laws can be used to prohibit all corporal punishment and, in this way, can also achieve prohibition in schools.

Prohibited in all schools

132

STATES

Corporal punishment is prohibited in law for all children in all schools in **132 states**. In three of these (Bangladesh, Canada and Fiji) high level court rulings have condemned corporal punishment in schools, but this is yet to be confirmed in legislation.

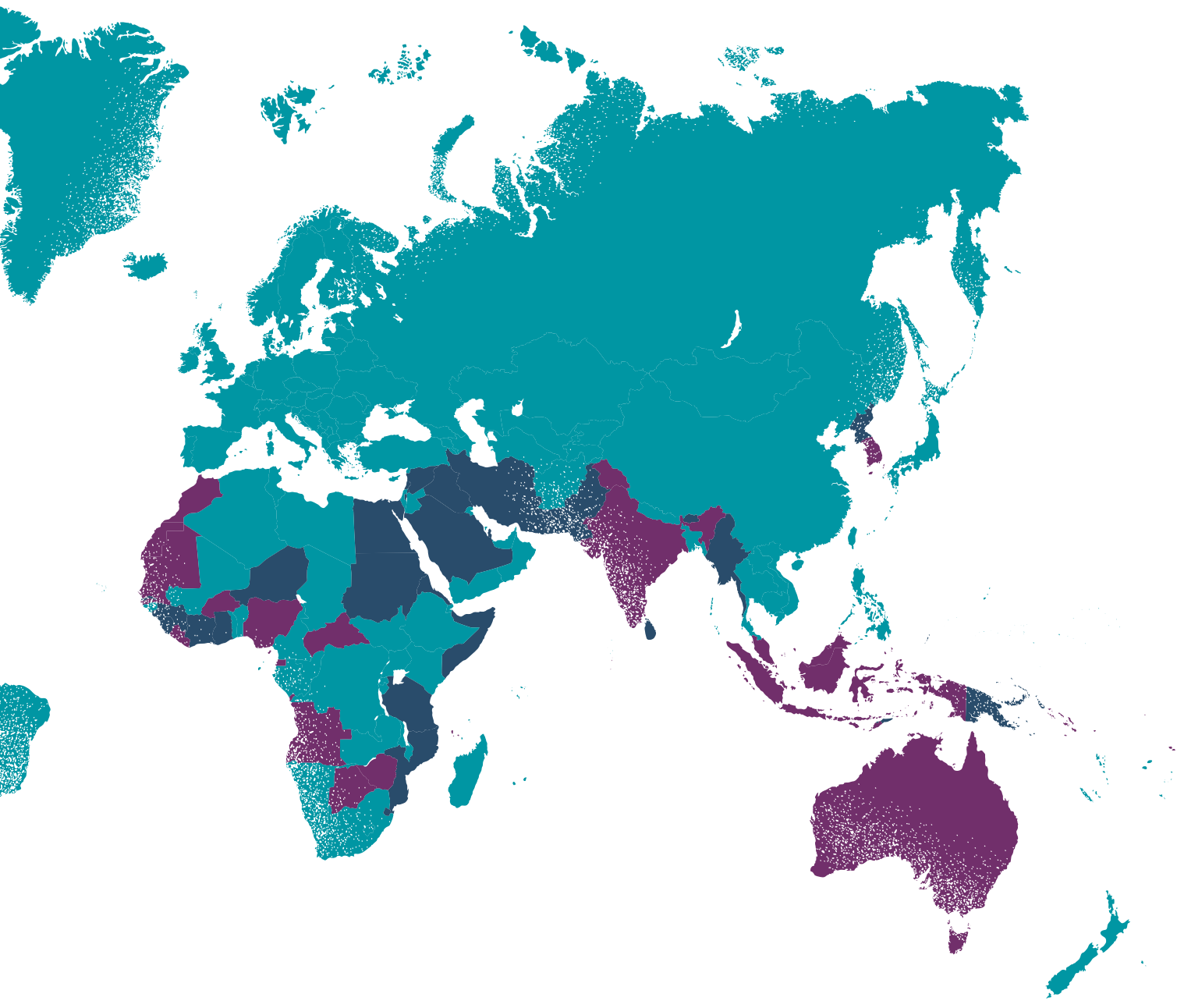


- Prohibited in all schools
- Lawful despite policy against its use in some or all schools
- Lawful in some or all schools

See full details of the law on corporal punishment in every state and territory, and provide updates or corrections, at endcorporalpunishment.org.

Can anything be more anti-educational than deliberately using violence to discipline children?

PROFESSOR PAULO SÉRGIO PINHEIRO, INDEPENDENT EXPERT WHO LED THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL'S STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN, 2015



States where corporal punishment remains lawful in some or all schools

1 Policy against its use 2 Pathfinding country of the GPEVAC 3 #SafetoLearn Call to Action endorsed

State	1	2	3	Immediate opportunity to achieve prohibition
Angola				Relevant legislation under review
Antigua and Barbuda				No known opportunities
Australia				Relevant legislation under review
Bahamas				Education Act and other laws under review
Barbados				Education Act and other laws under review
Bhutan	YES			No known opportunities
Botswana				Proposals to prohibit in schools in Education Act review
Brunei Darussalam				No known opportunities
Burkina Faso				Draft Child Protection Code would prohibit in all settings
Central African Republic				Draft Family Code would reportedly prohibit in all settings
Comoros				No known opportunities
Côte d'Ivoire	YES	YES		Relevant legislation under review
Dominica				Relevant legislation under review
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				Education Act and other laws under review
Guatemala				Draft Law against corporal punishment would prohibit in all settings
Guinea	YES			Children's Code amendments 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 ¹	YES		Amendments to the Education Act being drafted to prohibit in schools
Lebanon	YES ¹			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

YES¹ Public schools only. YES² In Puntland only. YES³ Government schools in Gaza and West strip. YES⁴ In Zanzibar only.

1 Policy against its use 2 Pathfinding country of the GPEVAC 3 #SafetoLearn Call to Action endorsed

State	1	2	3	Immediate opportunity to achieve prohibition
Mauritania	YES			Relevant legislation under review
Morocco	YES			Relevant legislation under review
Mozambique	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		Relevant legislation under review
Niue				Family Law Bill would reportedly prohibit in all settings
Pakistan	YES			Bills under discussion in several provinces and territories to prohibit in schools
Palau	YES ¹			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
Republic of Korea				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
Sierra Leone	YES		YES	Relevant legislation under review
Singapore				Relevant legislation under review
Solomon Islands				Education Act review would reportedly prohibit in schools
Somalia	YES ²			Relevant legislation under review
Sri Lanka	YES	YES		Relevant legislation under review
St Kitts and Nevis				No known opportunities
St Lucia	YES ¹			Relevant legislation under review
St Vincent and the Grenadines				Relevant legislation under review
State of Palestine	YES ³			Relevant legislation under review
Sudan	YES			Domestic legislation under review
Suriname	YES			Domestic legislation under review
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 ⁴	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				Education Act and other laws under review

See full details of the law on corporal punishment in every state and territory, and provide updates or corrections, at endcorporalpunishment.org.

Implementing prohibition in schools

To be effective, prohibition of corporal punishment in schools requires a comprehensive range of measures to create a culture of teaching and learning that does not rely on violence.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Conduct **widespread and sustained public education** and accessible awareness raising campaigns which clearly communicate the intent of the law – to prevent corporal punishment and promote non-violent alternatives. Ensure educators, parents, policy makers and children themselves understand the change in the law, the reasons for it,

PROVIDER TRAINING

Ensure **clear direction and training** for all providers of education at all levels (school heads/ principals, teachers, assistants, volunteers and other adults who come into contact with children) through initial and in-service training on the law and to equip them with alternative, positive and non-violent disciplinary strategies.

RESPONSES AND SANCTIONS

Establish **a range of appropriate responses** and sanctions to address any continued use of corporal punishment – e.g. make compliance a condition of employment and breaching prohibition punishable as misconduct, and place responsibility on school administrations and head teachers for ensuring corporal punishment is not used.

Our educational institutions should be sanctuaries of peace and creative enrichment, not places for fear, ill-treatment and tampering with the human dignity of students.

FIJI HIGH COURT, 2002



When corporal punishment is prohibited, children in schools will be protected by the criminal laws on assault. This should mean teachers and other adults involved in education can be prosecuted for assault if they inflict corporal punishment on learners: they and school students and their parents need to know the law and its implications. But prevention of corporal punishment is better than prosecution after a child has suffered.

The overall aim is to stop corporal punishment being inflicted on children to create a less stressful, more peaceful, rights-respecting and productive environment for children and adults in schools and wherever else they may be. Prohibition in schools will have a greater impact (and be easier to enforce) when prohibition is achieved or actively promoted in the home, giving a clear and consistent message to all adults that hitting children is wrong.

COMPLIANCE MONITORING

Monitor the effectiveness of the law, and compliance with prohibition through regular public opinion surveys, focus groups and use education, health and child protection inspection mechanisms. To fully understand children’s experience of prohibition, include confidential interviews with staff and children with all necessary safeguards.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Establish **independent reporting procedures** for children, staff and other adults, ensuring protection for those who report the use of corporal punishment. Children focused helplines with trained staff mean that children can easily get help if they need it, and should be promoted widely, using child-friendly communication tools.

Children on the move and in conflict

More than half of those forcibly displaced in the world are under age 18. Migration and displacement can profoundly affect education. It is an essential right, and it is even more essential for displaced children as it can restore their sense of normalcy, structure and hope.¹

We must not forget the impact that so-called ‘everyday violence’ such as corporal punishment has on children who have already experienced so much violence and stress. Growing evidence shows the elevated risk of experiencing corporal punishment faced by displaced children:

- **Human Rights Watch** recently reported on corporal punishment of children in schools in Lebanon, which found that Syrian refugee children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse

in schools. In addition to beatings, other humiliating treatment included several examples of children prohibited from using the bathroom. Some refugee communities have stopped sending their children school in an effort to prevent abuse.²

- **International Rescue Committee and the Behaviour Insights Unit** have conducted an in-depth study on the use of corporal punishment by teachers in Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in Tanzania—the third largest refugee camp in the world and home to nearly 140,000 refugees from neighbouring Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Evidence is emerging that teachers here view physical punishment as a way to prepare students for adulthood, teach them to respect their elders, and guide them to a better future.³

1. Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, not Walls (UNESCO, 2018)
 2. www.hrw.org/report/2019/05/13/i-dont-want-my-child-be-beaten/corporal-punishment-lebanons-schools
 3. www.bi.team/blogs/encouraging-empathy-sharing-science-or-raising-awareness-of-rights

Eliminating corporal punishment in schools

It is not enough to simply prevent teachers from using corporal punishment – many still feel it is an essential and acceptable tool for education, so need to be provided with clear and effective positive, non-violent strategies.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE IN EVERYDAY TEACHING

Positive discipline in everyday teaching (PDET), developed by Joan E. Durrant (University of Manitoba) in collaboration with Save the Children, equips educators to understand how students learn, and how they can build students' skills and foster the self-regulation they need in order to be successful learners. It is aimed at teachers of students at all levels, as well as principals, school managers, student teachers, teaching assistants, and other professionals involved in the education system. The program has been piloted in several countries and is under development.

EMPATEACH

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) are currently evaluating **EmpaTeach**, a low-intensity programme aimed at preventing violence in schools in Tanzanian refugee camps. Teachers take part in a 10-week intervention led by their peers to learn positive discipline strategies for the classroom, identify their triggers and change destructive thought patterns, and work through a series of empathy-building exercises which proved effective at reducing support for corporal punishment in a previous evaluation with the same teachers.

SCHOOLS WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Education for Purpose Initiative (E4P) has launched a **Schools without Violence** campaign in Nigeria, as part of its Safe School Initiative, to raise awareness of effective positive discipline through radio and social media discussion, opening a community dialogue to challenge the acceptance of corporal punishment. Working with secondary school students and teachers to eliminate corporal punishment and promote effective school discipline, the campaign aims to reduce bullying and change social norms around violence in schools.

SCHOOL WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT

The **School Wide Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (SW-PBIS)** framework moves away from a more punitive approach, getting students to define, aspire to and live by a set of positive values and behaviour that are routinely rewarded. UNICEF Jamaica is currently supporting an evaluation of the pilot to inform a national scale up by Jamaica's Ministry of Education, following positive feedback from pilot schools which found improved attendance at school and reduced violence towards and among students.

For more information on any of these, visit endcorporalpunishment.org/schools.

A whole school approach is essential in order to create a school culture based on principles of peace, mutual respect and non-violent conflict resolution that respect children’s human rights, as some of the examples here show, and numerous resources are available to support this shift in culture.

Schools do not operate in isolation, so achieving real and lasting change requires a strong coalition of partners, working together with clear, common goals, with many interventions involving parents and the wider community.

EMPOWERING CHILDREN

Right to Play and Aga Khan University worked together to evaluate **empowering children** in Hyderabad, Pakistan, to change social norms on violence and gender equality through sport and play. As a result, corporal punishment in schools decreased by 45% for boys and 66% for girls. Physical punishment at home also reduced by more than half, showing the extended reach of school-based interventions to help create safer, non-violent homes.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

EducAid Sierra Leone’s **Quality Enhancement Programme** has equipped teachers in 100 partner schools with strategies to abandon corporal punishment through mutually respectful relationships. Schools reported a positive impact on children’s attendance and performance, and improved relationships between schools and parents.

There cannot be any doubt that corporal punishment is detrimental to children’s well-being and has serious physical, psychological and emotional effects, as well as causing truancy and dropping out of school. This in turn exacerbates the cycle of illiteracy and poverty.

BANGLADESH SUPREME COURT, 2011



Safe to Learn

#SafetoLearn is a new initiative dedicated to ending violence in schools so children are free to learn, thrive and pursue their dreams.

It was initially conceived by the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (UNESCO, UNICEF, UK Department for International Development (DFID) and UNICEF), who are now joined by the Global Partnership for Education, the Global Business Coalition for Education, Education Cannot Wait, the Global Coalition to Prevent Education from Attack and the World Bank.

Safe to Learn was inspired by the voices of young people around the world. They know violence in schools stands as a huge obstacle to a better future. We owe it to children to make safer schools.

HOWARD TAYLOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP TO END
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



Join the movement

We couldn't carry out the work we do without the help of our committed partners around the world. Join our network of over 600 organisations worldwide that support prohibition of corporal punishment.

Our aims are supported by UNICEF, UNESCO, the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and more.

Visit our website to see all supporters and find out how you can help to **#EndCorporalPunishment**:

endcorporalpunishment.org/get-involved

Donate today!



The **Safe to Learn Call to Action** asks governments to:

- Implement policy and legislation: National, regional and local governments develop and enforce laws and policies that protect children from all forms of violence in and around schools, including corporal punishment.
- Strengthen prevention and response at the school level: School staff, students, and management committees provide safe and gender-sensitive learning environments for all children that promote positive discipline and child-centered teaching.
- Shift harmful social and gender norms and change behaviours: Parents, teachers, children, local government and community leaders recognize

the devastating impact of violence in and beyond schools and take action to promote positive social norms to ensure schools are safe spaces for learning.

- Invest resources effectively: Increased and better use of investments targeted at ending violence in schools.
- Generate and use evidence: Countries and the international community generate and use evidence on how to effectively end violence in and through schools.

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 NO.1, 2001





GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO
**End All Corporal
Punishment of Children**

Providing support for law reform to prohibit and eliminate all corporal punishment of children worldwide.
Join the movement today.

www.endcorporalpunishment.org



**End Violence
Against Children**

MEMBER of the Global Partnership

Supporting the global **#SafetoLearn** campaign aiming to end all violence in every school by 2024 so children are free to learn, thrive and pursue their dreams.

end-violence.org/safetolearn