

Position Paper: Ending Corporal Punishment

2nd Global Ministerial on Ending Violence Against Children
Manila, Philippines | 18–19 November 2026

ChildFund believes every child should be healthy, educated, skilled and safe in all settings, without experiencing or being exposed to violence.

Overview

Corporal or physical punishment is defined as "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light" (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). This can include hitting, smacking, slapping or spanking children with a hand or implement, but also kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair, boxing ears or forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions. This preventable form of violence violates children's dignity and rights, harms their physical and mental health, well-being and development, and undermines the safe, supportive relationships children need to learn and thrive.

1.2 BILLION children aged 0–18 are estimated to **experience corporal punishment** at home each year.
WHO, 2026

1.6 BILLION children **experience violent discipline at home.** Including physical punishment and/or psychological aggression.
UNICEF, 2025

Violent discipline at home in the past month:
77% in sub-Saharan Africa
73% in Central/Southern Asia
62% in East/South-East Asia
51% in Latin America/the Caribbean.
UNICEF, 2025

Corporal punishment has lasting impacts on children's brain development, as well as cognitive and social growth. Corporal punishment not only causes physical injury but is also associated with impaired cognitive and socio-emotional development, including increased aggression, negative mental health impacts and lower educational outcomes that contribute to decreased economic potential over the long term. Legal prohibition is essential, but laws alone are insufficient. They must be accompanied by locally-led education, behavior and norm change efforts with the support of government, civil society and local leadership. Families, schools, communities and institutions need the skills, resources and shared accountability to support the adoption of non-violent and effective approaches.

A successful commitment is not only a law passed. It is a child who can learn without fear and a school, family and community that respond when a child raises a concern. A caregiver or teacher who has practical, effective alternatives to physical punishment. It is a coordinated public system that prevents and responds to harm consistently and equitably. It is a community that rejects violence and supports families.

ChildFund's integated approach to prevent corporal punishment

Law, coalitions, communities and practical skills

ChildFund works across and connects efforts at all levels – from the individual to the community to the national level. We work directly with policymakers, institutions and civil society coalitions to push for national-level action, while supporting children, young people, caregivers, teachers and communities to lead change. Children and youth, local organizations and community actors are essential allies who are able to effectively translate and implement policy commitments to local realities and everyday practice.

ChildFund's country programs apply these principles in different legal and cultural contexts. The examples below illustrate these complementary strands of work.

SRI LANKA **POLICY ADVOCACY** ChildFund Sri Lanka advocates for legal reform on corporal punishment and psychological aggression, leading public campaigns and implementing positive parenting and social-emotional learning (SEL) initiatives.	**BOLIVIA** **SAFER SCHOOL CLIMATES** ChildFund Bolivia develops school-based participatory peaceful-coexistence plans that engage students, teachers, families and protection actors to promote school environments free from physical punishment and humiliating treatment.
INDONESIA **COMMUNITY PROTECTION** ChildFund Indonesia community-based child protection efforts combine positive norms, parenting and social-emotional learning across homes, communities and institutions with child/youth participation and help-seeking pathways.	**ETHIOPIA** **SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION** ChildFund Ethiopia supports teacher and student learning on child protection, gender-based violence prevention and life skills, which they complement by enabling community dialogue on gender and harmful practices.
SIERRA LEONE **POSITIVE DISCIPLINE** ChildFund Sierra Leone held focus group discussions in 2023, with participants reporting perceived reductions in corporal punishment at school and home, greater use of alternatives and improved adult–child relationships.	**THE GAMBIA** **SAFETY & WELL-BEING** ChildFund The Gambia's Education for Protection and Well-being combines child safety, supportive relationships and non-violent approaches; reporting shows improved school climate and progress towards positive parenting.



ChildFund's position and call to action

ChildFund International calls on governments and partners to combine clear legal prohibition of corporal punishment with sustained investment in programs that eliminate the practice, such as positive parenting, positive discipline, safe and enabling schools, social-emotional learning for children and caregivers, child and youth participation, and accessible protection and response systems.

At the First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC) in Bogotá in November 2024, governments made more than 100 national commitments, including pledges from Burundi, Czechia, The Gambia, Kyrgyzstan, Panama, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Tajikistan to legislate against corporal punishment in all settings, and 55 states signed the Bogotá Call to Action by January 2025. For the Second Global Ministerial Conference on EVAC, ChildFund urges governments to move from commitments to implementation by setting timebound milestones for legal reform, funding prevention and response, supporting parents, caregivers and teachers, strengthening school safeguarding, engaging communities and children, and publishing progress transparently.

ENACT AND ENFORCE

Enact explicit, comprehensive legal prohibitions of corporal punishment in every setting, including the home and in schools, alternative care, daycare and justice settings, and equal protections for all children.

IMPLEMENT TOGETHER

Translate laws into funded national and local action plans outlining clear responsibilities across education, health, social welfare and justice. Strengthen safeguarding, provide child-friendly reporting and referral pathways, and facilitate coordinated action between public/private sectors and civil society.

PREVENT THROUGH POSITIVE PRACTICE

Scale up evidence informed programs, such as positive parenting, caregiver support, positive discipline, safe-school approaches and teacher development. Promote social emotional learning skills among children and caregivers, making non-violent discipline practical, effective and culturally responsive.

MAKE COMMUNITIES CO-OWNERS

Invest in sustained community engagement and locally led prevention. Support civil society, community organizations, children and young people, families, faith and cultural leaders, service providers and private sector actors to shift norms, strengthen protective environments and support families.

PARTICIPATE, MEASURE AND RESOURCE

Meaningfully involve children and young people in design, implementation and monitoring. Track implementation and children's experiences using disaggregated data where appropriate. Evaluate and adapt programmes in response to children and young people's feedback. Allocate sustained domestic and international resources to support ongoing, meaningful child and youth participation.

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