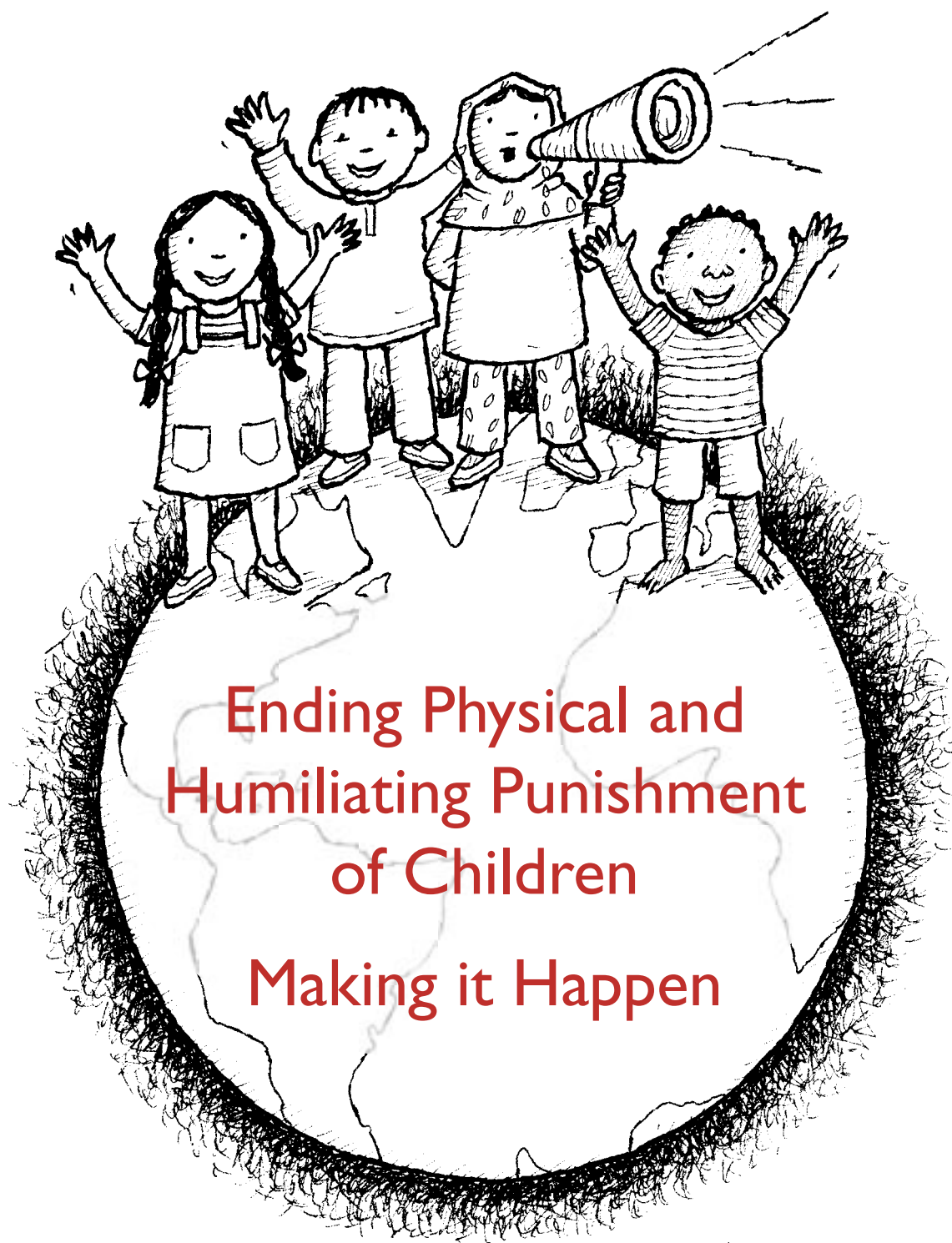


Global Submission with Recommendations, Prevalence and Attitudes, and  
Good Practice examples by The International Save the Children Alliance

# UN Study on Violence against Children

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**Ending Physical and  
Humiliating Punishment  
of Children  
Making it Happen**

**PART I**

Published by The International Save the Children Alliance

## **VISION**

Save the Children fights for children's rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

## **MISSION**

Save the Children works for:

- a world which respects and values each child
- a world which listens to children and learns
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity

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Project manager: Mali Nilsson

Authors: Gabriela Alexandrecu (Romania), Y G Bhavani (South Asia), Alebel Derib (East and Central Africa), Rima Habasch (Yemen), Pepa Horno (Spain), Mali Nilsson (Sweden), Rana Noueri (Lebanon), Dominique Pierre-Plateau et al, (South East Asia and the Pacific), Luz-Maria Sequeira (Central America), Ulrika Soneson (Southern Africa), Denise Stuckenbruck (South America)

Production management: Ola Höiden

Copy editing / proof-reading: Paula McDiarmid, Sharon Rustemier

Graphic design: Petra Handin

Cartoonist: Jessica Stockham

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For further copies of this report, please contact

Save the Children Sweden

Information Service

SE – 107 88 Stockholm

Telephone: +46 8 698 90 00

Fax: +46 8 698 90 12

e-mail: [info@rb.se](mailto:info@rb.se)

[www.rb.se](http://www.rb.se)

Electronic version available for download at: <http://www.rb.se/eng/Programme/Exploitationandabuse/Corporalpunishment/1415+Publications.htm>

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*“I cannot understand why my teacher and my parents abuse me. My father has asked my teacher to punish me hard if I do not behave. He says it is part of a good education. I do not think so!”*

Syrian boy, aged 11

## Foreword

*“The teacher says I am a slow learner, therefore he hits me. It hurts inside.”*

Brazilian girl, aged 12

Physical and humiliating punishment is still tolerated to a high degree in all regions of the world as a way in which adults instil discipline in and exercise control over children. As a result, this infringement of child rights often passes by unchallenged as a common everyday occurrence needing little discussion or public attention.

Physical and humiliating punishment is a form of violence against children and a violation of their right to physical integrity and dignity. In many countries, it remains the one form of assault against a human being that is condoned by law.

In consultations all over the world, children are giving evidence that physical and humiliating punishment is the most common and the most widespread form of violence experienced by them in the world today. The International Save the Children Alliance believes that it is essential not just to listen to children, but also to act on what they say.

Save the Children has therefore taken the lead internationally in building a momentum towards recognition that physical and humiliating punishment is a serious breach of children’s rights.

The International Save the Children Alliance works towards eliminating, through education, legal reform and other measures, all forms of control and punishment of children in the home, schools and all other settings which breach children’s fundamental rights to respect for their physical integrity and human dignity.

There are many forms of control and punishment of children that breach their fundamental rights, and they can entail both physical and humiliating punishment. Physical and humiliating punishment is defined by Save the Children in the following way:

- **Physical punishment** includes hitting a child with the hand or with an object (such as a cane, belt, whip, shoe, and so on); kicking, shaking, or throwing a child, pinching or pulling their hair; forcing a child to stay in an uncomfortable or undignified position, or to take excessive physical exercise; burning or scarring a child (and the threat of any of these actions).
- **Humiliating punishment** takes various forms such as verbal abuse, ridicule, isolation, or ignoring a child.

Challenging all physical and humiliating punishment of children, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has called on States in all regions to prohibit and eliminate these forms of violence through awareness raising and public education.

Save the Children is among the first international NGOs to take up the challenge, seeking to accelerate the process with a variety of programmes at regional and national levels. This submission will draw on prevalence and work in progress in all the regions, including research into children's own views and experiences, situation analyses on the laws allowing physical and humiliating punishment, advocacy of law reform and public and parent education.

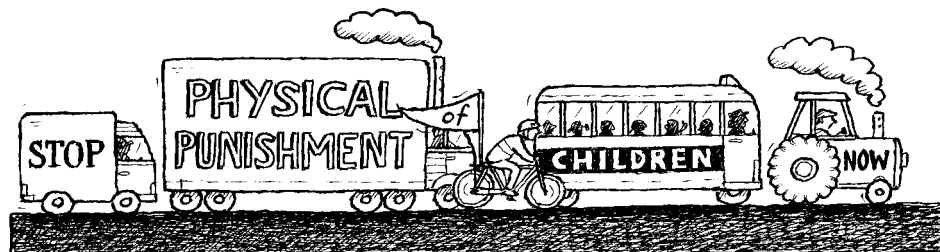
Save the Children has made it a high priority to engage with the UN Study, as we believe that it is an opportunity for bringing about change in the lives of boys and girls.

*Mali Nilsson*

*Chair*

*International Save the Children Alliance*

*Task Group on Physical and Humiliating Punishment*



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Denise Stuckenbruck (South America),

Luz Maria Sequeira (Central America),

Gabriella Alexandrescu, Pepa Horno,

Mali Nilsson (Europe),

Ulrika Sonesson (Southern Africa),

Alebel Derib (East/Central Africa),

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Y G Bhavani, Ravi Karkara (South/Central Asia),

Dominique Pierre Plateau (South East Asia and the Pacific).

*“Children have to learn many things during their childhood and no one has the right to hit the child for making a mistake ... we all do.”*

Young woman, aged 17

# *I. Save the Children's Advocacy and Submissions in relation to the UN Study on Violence against Children*

## **The Vision**

The right of every girl and boy to a life free from violence will be realised.

## **The Aim**

All parts of societies recognise and take action to eliminate all forms of violence against girls and boys, with the result that people's behavior; attitudes and practices are changed with respect for children's rights.

## **Save the Children Advocacy**

All Save the Children's advocacy will be based on the principles of Child Rights Programming (CRP) including strengthening and promoting: children's participation, accountability and non-discrimination including gender equality.

Working from a CRP perspective means addressing the root causes of rights violations related to violence against children, including patriarchal power structures, and unequal power-relations between children and adults. It means that Save the Children is recognising children as rights holders and social actors, creating child-friendly environments and providing child-friendly information on abuse and violence. Governments should be recognised as primary duty-bearers accountable for addressing and taking action against violence. It also means recognising parents and family as the primary caregivers and protecting and supporting them in this role. It implies using participatory and empowering approaches, working in partnerships and alliances for promoting the rights of the child and for addressing violence against girls and boys.

## **Overall priority**

- Save the Children will focus on participation of girls and boys (from various background: age, disability, ethnicity, religion, region, status, language, HIV/AIDS status, sexual preference, etc.) as an overall and specific contribution in addressing violence affecting them. The core purpose of their participation is to empower them as individuals and as members of civil society and will involve giving children a genuine opportunity to express their views, be involved in decisions or take action.

The International Save the Children Alliance's priorities reflect those identified and prioritised by girls and boys in many consultations/processes around the world. They also take into account Save the Children members' present experiences and capacities as well as the need for complementarily vis-à-vis other organisations involved.

The following three specific themes are given priority:

- Children in conflict with the law
- Physical and humiliating punishment
- Sexual abuse of girls and boys

Save the Children recognises that gender-based violence is relevant to all the above themes and needs special consideration.

### **Settings**

Violence against girls and boys must be addressed in homes, schools, communities, workplaces, streets, institutions, etc.

*“Even light physical and humiliating punishment does not help children learn. Teachers tell students that beating will make them learn and do well in exams. With me, I just wait with fear in the classroom – so I cannot even communicate. I just have fear when the teacher is teaching. I am worrying that he will beat me.*

*I cannot learn that way.”*

Kenyan boy, aged 17

## 2. Save the Children's rationale for working against the use of physical and humiliating punishment of children

- It reflects Save the Children's own responsibility, both institutionally and at an individual staff level, to work towards the fulfilment of children's rights and to protect children from abuse in line with the International Save the Children Alliance **Child Protection Policy**.
- The Organisational Action Plan and Alliance work on physical and humiliating punishment has brought to the surface the **widespread recognition** by regions and country programmes of the **extent and seriousness of the problem** in schools, the family and society (working places, streets, etc).
- Physical and humiliating punishment is a **cross-cutting issue** which has links with and an impact on most of our programme areas (education, protection from other forms of violence and abuse, health, disability, children's participation, and the status of children as equal rights' holders within the family, school and local/wider society).
- There is a growing **international momentum** in recognising physical and humiliating punishment as a **serious breach of children's rights** (ie. UN Study on Violence against Children, High Courts' judgments, development in a few countries of national legislation banning physical/corporal and humiliating punishment, increased attention by different UN bodies).



### 3. Introduction

The UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children will make a highly significant contribution to the realisation of children's human rights if it leads a sustainable global challenge to the current legality and near universal social acceptance of physical punishment and other humiliating forms of punishment and treatment of children.

Already, the Regional Consultations held in connection with the Study between March and July 2005 have given this issue a new visibility in many states in every region. There has been little denial and a new openness in debating the issue. The recommendations arising from the Consultations have demonstrated that there is already much political and civil society commitment to reforming laws to prohibit all physical and humiliating punishment and thus ensuring that children have the same protection as adults from assault, in their homes and everywhere else. Children and young people have underlined at the consultations how hurtful they find being hit and humiliated by those who profess to love, care for and teach them.

International Save the Children Alliance, the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, UN agencies and a range of national NGOs and human rights institutions have individually and collectively demonstrated how laws, attitudes and practice can be changed quickly.

Nevertheless, the issue remains controversial. Perhaps most sadly, adults in some states still cling to the idea that their particular culture (and in some cases certain interpretations of religious texts) "owns" physical punishment. But the Committee on the Rights of the Child, other UN human rights treaty bodies, regional human rights mechanisms and high level courts in many states have highlighted that it is every state's obligation to disown physical punishment and thus move on through legal reform and other measures to give equal and long-overdue respect to children's human dignity and physical integrity.

Some persist in arguing that children are different; that children's special, dependent status justifies physical discipline. But what are children's differences? It is the youngest children who are victims of the most physical punishment in their homes. Their differences are their smallness and their fragility. Their developmental state makes them particularly prone to both physical and psychological injury. Children and young people find particular difficulties in seeking help when they are suffering harm. How can these differences possibly justify affording children less legal protection from being hit and deliberately humiliated than adults enjoy?

Others argue that the time is not right; that parents and teachers need support and education before we can think of law reform to fulfil children's rights. But why should children wait for the same protection that we as adults enjoy?

***“If it is against the law, they are going to think twice BEFORE hitting a child.”***

Girl, age 17, Scotland

Professor Paulo Pinheiro, in introductory speeches to the Regional Consultations, has echoed children’s sense of urgency; that now that the scale of physical punishment and deliberate humiliation of children is becoming visible in so many places, challenging and eliminating it should be perceived as an emergency. Would we seriously argue that any other sector of society – women or elderly people for example – should wait before we reform the law to respect their right not to be hit?

Of course parents and teachers need support. There needs to be comprehensive awareness-raising to highlight children’s equal right to protection and promotion of positive, non-violent forms of childrearing and discipline. But while the law in the vast majority of states still authorises violence against children, attempts at changing attitudes through education are undermined.

The law can be a potent educational tool and it needs to be applied to respect children’s rights, not to authorise and excuse violence against them. The law needs to send an absolutely clear message – that it is no more lawful to hit a child than to hit anyone else. But the law also needs to be sensitively implemented. Prosecuting parents is seldom in their children’s interests and decisions to challenge parental physical punishment by formal interventions and criminal proceedings should always be considered in the light of the best interests of the child.

This submission includes reports summarising region-by-region recent work by Save the Children and its partners in many countries, and is supported by a remarkable volume of reports and materials. There are many aspects to this work – advocacy for law reform, research into children’s experiences of physical punishment and other forms of humiliation, prevalence research with children, parents and others, innovative awareness-raising and training programmes for parents and teachers. All of these activities have been informed by a commitment to children’s meaningful participation. Many of the submissions include recommendations for regional and national action.

Above all, we believe that Save the Children’s work with our partners demonstrates the possibility of making very quick progress to move societies on – from endorsing and administering an horrendous global assault on children, to a new respect for children as equal holders of human rights, working alongside adults to create peaceful and non-violent societies.

The International Save the Children Alliance commits itself to supporting the work of the Independent Expert through the Study process and its follow-up, to ensure a real and hugely significant advance with and for children.

## 4. Recommendations

In the light of universal human rights obligations and of our experience in pursuing this issue, we commend the following recommendations to the UN Secretary General's (UNSG's) Study:

### **Eliminating all physical punishment and all other humiliating punishment of children**

The International Save the Children Alliance sees the UNSG's Study as a unique opportunity to challenge and change attitudes which have allowed the legality and social approval of hitting and deliberately humiliating children to persist across the globe – in conflict with children's fundamental human rights.

1. The UN Secretary General's Study is human rights-based and follows the jurisprudence of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which has consistently stated that all **physical punishment is violence against children, and a serious breach of children's fundamental human rights.**

The International Save the Children Alliance proposes that the UNSG's Study recommends that States should with urgency explicitly prohibit all violence against children, including all physical punishment, in the family and in all other settings. This requires repeal of any existing defences that can be used to justify physical punishment and other humiliating forms of punishment and reform of any laws authorising this violence in any setting. Explicit prohibition in sectoral laws applying within the family and to alternative care, schools and the penal system is required. Save the Children has actively advocated for law reform in many states.

2. To achieve elimination of physical punishment and all other humiliating forms of punishment, **law reform should be combined with awareness-raising on children's right to protection and promotion of positive forms of discipline, working with parents, teachers and other carers.**

Awareness-raising on children's right to protection and promotion of non-violent child-rearing and education and the principles of non-violent conflict resolution need to be built into education for future parents and parents and into the training of all those working with or for children and families. Political, community and faith leaders and educators need to be urged to support this awareness-raising and public education. Working to end physical punishment and deliberate humiliation of children is contributing to the prevention of all forms of violence, in childhood and later life. Save the Children has pioneered programmes and materials which can be adapted for all states and cultures.

3. In the vast majority of states, physical punishment and deliberate humiliation of children are not yet widely recognised as breaching human rights, remaining socially accepted and legal to varying degrees. **Research is therefore needed to make children’s experiences of this violence visible and to fuel campaigns to eliminate it.**

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has stated that children’s own experiences and views should inform all activities to prevent violence. Making the true extent of violence against children visible is an essential step towards gaining public support and political priority for its elimination. The methodology exists for such studies, involving confidential interviews with parents and with children, with appropriate ethical safeguards. Save the Children has pioneered studies, including with children, in many regions.

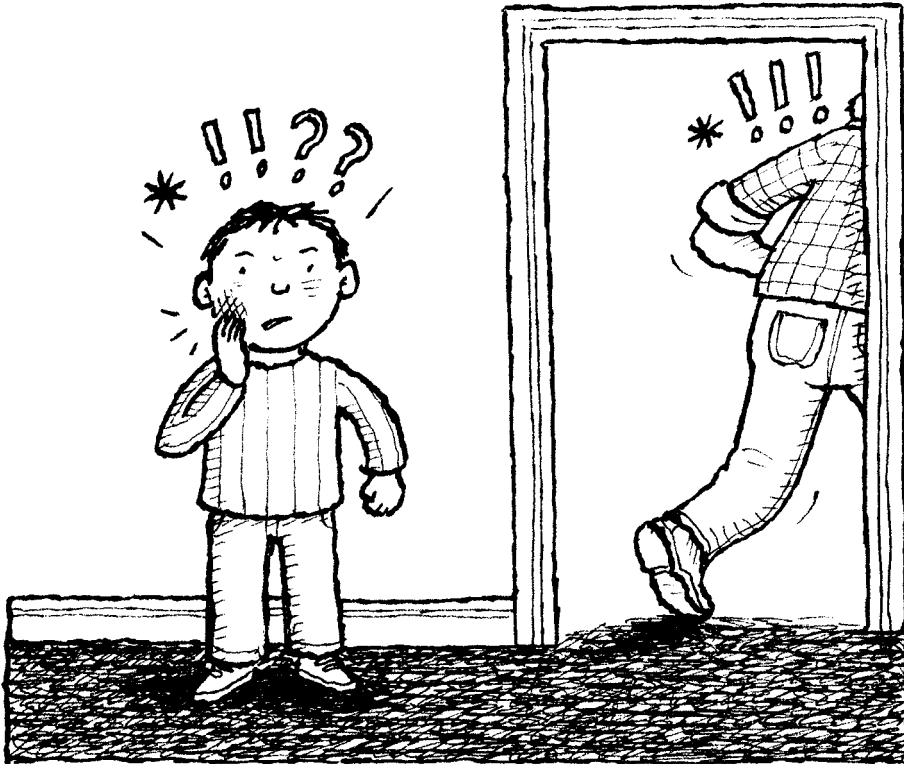
4. The work of the International Save the Children Alliance consistently promotes children’s meaningful participation – ensuring that children’s views and experiences are heard and taken seriously. The UNSG’s Study needs to **demonstrate the importance of involving children in the development of effective and appropriate actions to end all forms of physical punishment and deliberate humiliation.**

Children’s right to meaningful participation is upheld in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Save the Children’s research demonstrates that promoting children’s participation rights is incompatible with tolerating physical and humiliating punishment. Save the Children’s programmes demonstrate participation in practice – in advocacy, research and public education.

*“There are other ways to solve problems other than hitting and it doesn’t do parents or children any good.”*

Scottish girl, aged 10

## 5. Children's views on physical and humiliating punishment



### 5.1 Children's comments on how they feel after being physically punished

The effect on children's self-esteem:

*"It makes you not like the way you are."*

Spanish girl

*"I hate being kicked. I don't mind pain but feel humiliated."*

Pakistani boy

*"You feel anger and feel as though you have no self-worth."*

Scottish girl

### Children's feelings of sadness and helplessness:

*"When master (teacher) hits me with a stick I feel like snatching the stick from his hand and hitting him back."*

Girl, aged 9, domestic worker, Pakistan

*"I never tell my mother that I get hit by my employers because then she will feel miserable. So I just cry and keep the sadness within me."*

Girl, aged 7, domestic worker, Bangladesh

*"When I get beaten or verbally abused in front of guests I feel very ashamed... It is still OK if they (employers) are abusing me when no one is around, but why in front of everyone?"*

Girl, aged 9, domestic worker, India

*"It was not the pain that hurt me, but the feeling of humiliation I underwent when my classmates laughed at me. That was the last day for me to be at the gate of that school."*

Ethiopian boy, aged 8

*"I know some teachers who beat children to make them work harder, but beating is not right. Children will not come to school if they are beaten."*

Zimbabwean girl, aged 10

*"It hurts you inside... because it breaks your heart."*

English boy, aged 6

Save the Children UK consulted children in Scotland about physical punishment and recorded over 40 adjectives to describe what physical punishment felt like. This list underlines the ineffectiveness of physical and humiliating punishment. None of these Scottish children used adjectives like 'wiser' or even 'sorry' to describe how they felt after being hit.

### Children said they felt:

*'Hurt, sore, scared, upset, unloved, terrified, worried, lonely, sad, angry, alone, abandoned, afraid, cross, frightened, sick, stunned, threatened, annoyed, bad, physically abused, hateful, emotionally hurt, unhappy, terrible, ashamed, disliked, confused, embarrassed, resentful, neglected, overpowered, humiliated, grumpy, disappointed, painful, miserable, intimidated, uncared-for, unwelcome, heartbroken, bullied, depressed, worried, shocked.'*

## 5.2 Outcome of children's consultations

The Children and Young People's consultations in conjunction with the regional consultations for the UN Study on Violence against Children have provided children a platform and encouraged dialogue and discussion amongst girls and boys on the various forms of violence against children in the regions.

Children have given evidence, at each of the regional consultations, that physical and humiliating punishment is the most common form of violence, and that it happens in different degrees in all countries in all the regions.

Violence not only has physical consequences, but also psychological/emotional consequences, which might even affect children more severely. Adults seldom listen to children when they talk about abuse.

In most cases adults think that punishment is good for children and do not see it as abuse. Since many adults themselves were beaten or psychologically punished as children they may believe it is necessary for adults to punish children for the children's own good. Also, parents may not know different ways of bringing up children.

Children may comply with adults' wishes immediately after being hit, but young children frequently do not remember why they are hit, and children will only refrain from the misbehaviour if they face an imminent threat of being hit. This sort of punishment frightens children into certain behaviours: it does not help children to want to behave, or teach them self-discipline or promote any alternative behaviour.

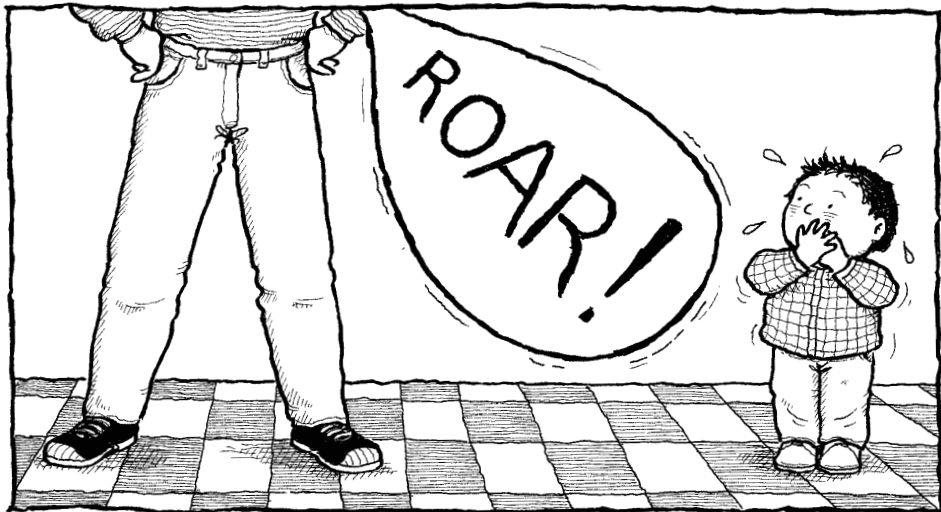
Positive discipline assumes that children want to behave well, but need help in understanding how to do so. It works on the principle that children learn more through co-operation and rewards than through conflict and punishment. It also builds on the idea that when children feel good, they tend to behave well and when they feel bad they are likely to behave badly. This approach means:

- acceptable behaviour is modelled by parents, and when children behave well they are rewarded with attention and praise
- it is always the behaviour that is criticised and defined as wrong, not the child
- bad behaviour is given as little attention as possible, and it is not rewarded
- parents have realistic expectations of what their children are capable of at different ages and do not ask more than their children can achieve
- limits or rules are clearly stated and consistently enforced in a non-violent way, so that the child understands what is expected of him or her. Requests are framed positively – ie, there are more do's than don'ts
- setting clear limits on important things but being prepared to negotiate on matters of less importance
- parents get to know their own flashpoints and develop strategies for dealing with them that avoid hitting children
- children are listened to, their views are given proper consideration and they are treated fairly and with respect
- discipline has a clear and proportional relationship to the behaviour that requires changing

- sanctions which are neither physical or humiliating can be used.

### **5.3 Summary of Recommendations on how to end physical and humiliating punishment and promote love and affection, by children and young people's at the regional consultations:**

1. Governments should create national laws against all forms of physical and humiliating punishment and make systems to implement and properly monitor these
2. Governments should ensure that laws are widely known by everybody
3. Adults (parents, teachers, law enforcement professionals etc, should behave lovingly and affectionately towards children by practising positive discipline and not physical and humiliating punishment
4. Teachers should be given proper teacher's training and training on alternatives to corporal punishment
5. There should be mechanisms in school and out of school where children can complain about unfair punishments



## 6. Summary of Save the Children's regional submissions

This summary draws together results of research into prevalence of and attitudes to physical and humiliating punishment and details some of the programmes and projects initiated across eight major regions. Summary of findings and full submissions from the regions to the UN Secretary General's Study follow.

### 6.1 Prevalence of and attitudes to corporal punishment

#### South America

Interviews with 7–15 year olds in **Brazil** found only a minority were never spanked, although physical punishment of boys and girls generally stopped at age 9 or 10. Boys suffered more intense and extensive punishment than girls. Instances were found of very violent and cruel forms of punishment, including burns, attacks with a knife, use of a revolver, flushing head down toilet, buttocks plunged into boiling water.

#### Effects of physical and humiliating punishment

##### On children

- 1) children learn fear and submission;
- 2) development of children's initiative and problem solving capabilities is stifled;
- 3) fear of being punished hinders children's risk taking and the development of their creativity and intelligence;
- 4) children's autonomy and elaboration of their own moral rules and criteria is prevented;
- 5) attention from parents is focussed on infringement of rules rather than positive interactions;
- 6) violence is taught as a valid way to solve conflicts;
- 7) development of values of peace, democracy, cooperation, equality, tolerance, participation and justice is hindered;
- 8) abuse of power in family relations is legitimised;
- 9) emotional punishment is also experienced;
- 10) child's self-esteem is decreased;
- 11) feelings of disapproval, solitude, sadness, abandonment, anger and the desire to flee from home are experienced;
- 12) negative view of society and individuals is perpetuated, making social integration difficult;

- 13) communication between parents and children is hindered, affecting emotional bonds;
- 14) cooperation with authorities is made difficult;
- 15) children are exposed to accidents;
- 16) greater punishment of boys than girls in order to “become men” leads to greater vulnerability to future use of drugs and alcohol;
- 17) internalisation of pain in girls may lead to depression, insecurity, guilt and submission.

#### **On parents**

- 1) leads to anxiety and guilt;
- 2) hinders communication with children, making present and future family relations difficult;
- 3) increases the likelihood of parents/guardians acting violently in other situations with more frequency and intensity.

#### **On society**

- 1) victimised children and adolescents tend to reproduce the practice of punishment in adult life;
- 2) stimulates new generations to use punishment as a way to solve conflicts;
- 3) leads to the belief that there are two kinds of citizens, the children that obey and get spanked and the adults that are in charge and can be violent;
- 4) the inequity of generations divided between the ones that are violent and the victims of this violence makes hinders understanding of the importance of equity among people, the foundation of a democratic society;
- 5) hinders the protection of children and adolescents, since, from the moment punishment is legitimised, society does not act as a space for the protection of childhood and adolescence;
- 6) makes citizens submissive, because they have learnt that to be a victim is a natural condition of individuals.

**Summary of research by Promundo Institute and CIESPI in Brazil (2003); for full reference see regional report.**

A summary of research in South America shows that physical and humiliating punishment is widespread and takes many forms with varying degrees of severity. When children are interviewed, they tend to report a harsher reality than adults.

In **Colombia**, interviews in 2004 with parents and with children found children reporting very much higher incidence of physical and emotional punishments than their parents. 63% of parents reported that they seldom used physical punishment. But 83% of the children reported having been punishment by smacking, 60% by yelling, and 32% by yelling and humiliation. Of those who reported being hit, 70% reported use of a belt on occasions; other implements used were slipper, whip, shoe, paddle, switch, electric wire, broom.

## **Central America**

Social approval of corporal punishment of children as a necessary form of discipline and education is probably shared by most adults in the region. Some studies and consultation processes involving children also reflect the fact that this form of violence is often internalised and accepted by the children themselves (“I was beaten because I am stupid and don’t do what I am told,” they explain). Children prefer to blame themselves rather than their parents and accept the adult justification of physical punishment. Cultural approval of corporal punishment is reflected in the region’s legal systems.

## **Southern Africa**

In Southern Africa, detailed surveys with 5,865 children from three countries show that it is possible to perform national, representative studies including both quantitative and qualitative components involving children as young as six (up to 18).

In **South Africa**, a nationwide opinion poll conducted with a representative sample of 1,200 children in 2002 identified the lack of protection from violence including corporal punishment as one of the most important violations of children’s rights. A household survey of parents in 2003 found that 57% admitted using corporal punishment, 33% using a belt or stick. A 2004 survey explored the experiences, views and feelings of boys and girls aged 6–18. This found that school corporal punishment, although abolished in legislation, was still common. A detailed study of the role of the public administration in implementing the ban on school corporal punishment was undertaken in 2004, identifying factors contributing to the persistence of corporal punishment in South African schools.

### **Why school corporal punishment persists after abolition in South Africa**

The report points to a number of factors contributing to the persistence of corporal punishment in South African schools, of possible relevance to other countries:

- Although the manual for teachers on alternatives to corporal punishment has been distributed widely, a large number of teachers have not been reached by the training. The majority of teachers are not in a position to digest the information in the manual for teachers on alternatives to corporal punishment without proper training.
- A lack of human and financial resources hampers proper training and awareness raising of teachers and members of school governing bodies.
- There is no coherent training module on children’s rights and how to manage classroom discipline without corporal and humiliating punishment at teacher training institutions.

- The main responsibility for the implementation of the ban rests with the provincial Departments of Education. It is recommended that this is changed and that the national department take the main responsibility for this campaign in order to create improved coherence and impact.
- The campaign to ban corporal punishment in schools lacks a senior voice that clearly speaks out against corporal punishment in schools.
- Humiliating and degrading punishment of children falls outside the definition of corporal punishment in South African schools, which might encourage teachers to revert to this form of punishment.
- Another obstacle to the successful implementation of the ban on corporal punishment at school is that parents are still allowed to use corporal punishment on their children. In addition to prohibiting corporal punishment in the home, parents and the wider community need to be educated on children's rights in general and the reasons why corporal punishment of children is wrong in order to support the teachers to manage the classroom in a positive, non-violent manner.
- Religious and cultural beliefs justifying the use of corporal punishment of children are still common among adults.

In **Swaziland**, a 2005 survey of more than 2,000 children aged 6–18 year olds in the country's four regions found that 18% of children reported being hit with the hand in the previous two weeks and 28% of children had experienced corporal punishment in the form of being beaten with objects including sticks, belts, sjamboks and whips during the same period. Corporal punishment was used more frequently on younger than older children. Older children tended to experience more humiliating and degrading punishment. Children expressed a range of feelings and behavioural responses to corporal punishment and other forms of degrading punishment. Across all age groups the primary feelings were sadness, regret, remorse or guilt. At school, anger and resentment about corporal punishment were more commonly reported across all age groups, but particularly by older children. Young children also expressed sadness and "feeling bad", often coupled with a desire to run away from school.

In **Zambia**, a similar 2005 survey involving over 2,300 children in all nine provinces found 24% of children reporting being subjected to corporal punishment in the previous two weeks; during the same period, 32% of children reported being hit with a hand and 38% reported being beaten with an object at school (despite prohibition).

In both Swaziland and Zambia, 70% or more of the children surveyed found corporal punishment and other humiliating punishments unacceptable in both home and school. The overwhelming majority of children wanted parents and teachers to talk to them and explain what they did wrong instead of using corporal punishment or other forms of humiliation.

### *South East Asia/Pacific*

Information on prevalence of corporal punishment remains scarce, but from small-scale in-depth surveys undertaken in some countries, it is clear that it remains culturally accepted and widely practiced. The regional submission highlights the need for more research covering children in the home and in all other settings including situations of domestic child labour. A rights-based research project in at least nine countries will produce results early in 2006.

### *South Asia*

Voices of children in this region identify physical and psychological punishment as the most prevalent form of violence against children, impeding their development and overall well-being.

A small-scale “mini-survey” in **Afghanistan** found 82% reporting slapping, kicking or beating with a stick.

A survey of 2,500 child domestic workers in **Bangladesh** (Dhaka) revealed 60% of employers indicating they were prepared to beat their young servants.

In **India**, a 2001 survey of university students found 91% of males and 86% of females reported being physically punished as children. A 1999 survey in primary schools found that children were physically punished in 78% of schools; all children said they had been physically punished at home.

In **Pakistan**, a 2004 survey of punishment in primary schools found that children were physically punished in 100 per cent of schools.

*“My father tied me to a tree and beat me in front of everyone in my neighbourhood because I was playing cards with my cousin. Now everyone in the neighbourhood teases me about this and this makes me feel worse than the actual beating.”*

Afghani boy

### *Middle East*

A summary of research findings in this region emphasises that the same children often experience physical and humiliating punishment in multiple settings and at the hands of adults playing a variety of roles in their lives.

In the **Yemen**, almost 90% of children reported that physical and humiliating punishment is the main form of discipline. The most common method is beating; others include tying feet, pinching and biting, pulling hair or ear, hitting on the head and forcing children to stand in the midday sun. The frequency appears to be higher in rural than in urban areas.

While overall girls appear to be more exposed to physical punishment than boys, especially in rural areas, boys are exposed to more severe physical punishment.

Punishment in rural areas starts as early as one and may continue to 15. More than 90% of the children reported that physical punishment is the most common form of discipline in schools; more than half of the children interviewed reported having been hit with a stick. In addition to beatings with the hand or an object, forms of punishment reported in schools include verbal abuse, throwing pieces of chalk, burning and cauterising, and putting a ruler between a child's fingers and pressing the fingers against it.

As in other regions, more than half the children exposed to violence in the home expressed feeling anger and to a lesser extent frustration., with girls more likely to feel a desire to withdraw at home or run away to a relative. At school, children reported feeling frustration, and to a lesser extent sadness and anger. A significant number of children reported depression.

Also in **Lebanon**, a field study found physical punishment to be the most common form of discipline at home, and a study of a kindergarten population of Palestinian refugee children residing in Lebanon found that 68% of the children were subject to beatings at home. There is a lack of research on physical punishment in Lebanese schools.

*“It should not be allowed, FULL STOP. Maybe if folk realised it was against the law they would not do it. Then they would have to find another way.”*

Palestinian girl, aged 13

### *East and Central Africa*

The regional submission describes physical and psychological punishment of children as very common and rampant in **Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda** and **Kenya**, enjoying social acceptance as a way of disciplining children and being sanctioned by various cultures and institutions as well. But available information is inadequate.

A 2004 study in **Uganda** found that more than 90% of the children reporting having experienced physical violence including caning, slapping, pinching and deprivation of food. 16% of the children who experienced physical violence said it occurred at least once a week, while 15.0% said it happened every day. And although corporal punishment is prohibited in schools, almost two thirds of those questioned reported experiencing it.

In **Ethiopia**, the low status accorded to children and lack of awareness of children's rights and the harm of corporal punishment was frequently mentioned by

children and adults as the major cause for the continued practice of corporal and other humiliating punishment.

## *Europe*

In the UK, prevalence research in the 1990s found that two thirds of mothers admitted to “smacking” their baby before the age of one; up to a third of children under seven were hit by their parents more than once a week; a fifth of children had been hit with an implement and more than a third had experienced “severe” punishment, defined as punishment which caused or had the potential to cause injury, including psychological injury. Over 90% of the parents interviewed admitted to physically punishing their child at some time, and the vast majority admitted doing so in the previous year.

Save the Children has supported innovative research into children’s views on corporal punishment in the four countries of the UK. Among key messages from the 1,661 children who took part in these studies are that “smacking” is hitting. Children describe a smack as a hard or very hard hit, and use many different adjectives to describe how distressed they feel after a parent or other adult has hit them.

Children react badly to being smacked: it really hurts their feelings, humiliates them and does not always stop bad behaviour. Smacking is wrong – the vast majority of children disapproved of smacking and said they would not smack their children when they become parents. Children associate smacking with angry parents and note that many of the adults regret smacking after the event.

*“By putting a law in action, children can tell their teacher, who can then tell the police.”*

9-year-old boy from Wales

Studies carried out in 1997 and in 2004 in **Spain** suggest that the rate of approval of physical punishment has reduced, but is still strong among a minority of the population. A 1997 governmental study found that 47% of Spanish adults living with their children believed that is essential to hit children “sometimes”. This study was partially replicated by the National Social Research Centre in 2004, which found that only a quarter of adults thought that it was necessary to smack their children to impose discipline, while three quarters of adults thought it was not necessary.

In **Romania**, beating children remains a common parental practice. One of the most prevalent ways for “educating” or disciplining a child is slapping, smacking and spanking with a hand leaving no traces of harm, which two-thirds of parents claimed as a method. Indeed, 84% of the children declared they receive physical

punishment. However, only 18% of adolescents stated that it happened often, with 65% stating it occurred rarely.

Nearly a quarter (24%) of the adolescents said that they were beaten with objects (e.g. belt, cane, hose, wooden rod or stick). Most of the time this was a punishment for doing wrong, but sometimes it was just because the parent was upset.

A significant proportion of the adolescents (16%) reported that they were afraid of going home on occasions for fear of being beaten by parents.

Threatening physical punishment could also be regarded as part of traditional parenting in Romania because parents often warn their children that they will be smacked if they continue in their bad behaviour (reported by 36% of respondents). After physical threats from parents, the most common form of emotional abuse was verbal aggression from parents, with 21% of adolescents reporting that they had been cursed and/or sworn at. The next most frequent adverse emotional experience was witnessing parents' verbal and physical fights (reported by 17% of respondents).

In 2000 in **Sweden**, a parliamentary committee commissioned by the government to investigate child abuse and related matters, and to evaluate the impact of the ban on physical punishment (introduced in 1979), carried out a study which included interviews with 1,000 parents from across the country, concerning their use of corporal punishment in bringing up their children, and a nationwide classroom questionnaire completed by 2,000 children aged 11–13 years, about their experiences of and attitudes towards corporal punishment.

Available data on corporal punishment of children shows that during the 1960s it was commonplace that parents spanked their children, especially during the pre-school years. The data from 2000 indicates that the use of corporal punishment has decreased dramatically in the past 40 years, particularly in relation to beating children with fists or with an implement, or spanking them. In national parental studies in 1980, 51% of parents said that they had used corporal punishment during the previous year; 20 years later in 2000 this figure had decreased to 8%.

In national children's studies in 1994, 65% of children said they had never experienced child abuse; this figure had increased to 86% in 2000.

Another study from the National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ) on family violence against pre-school children revealed an increased tendency to report cases to the police, but the number of serious injuries had decreased in proportion to milder cases and cases without any established injury. The vast majority of reported assaults were for petty or common offences, suggesting that the majority of children were being identified before serious injury occurs.

The conclusion is that child abuse in Sweden has decreased. The Committee also concluded that the increase in cases of child abuse reported to the police was the result of increased awareness and support to parents and not an increased tendency to beat children.

A comparison of all studies shows that about 4% of schoolchildren (aged 11–15 years) state that they have been subjected to severe corporal punishment with some sort of instrument on at least one occasion in their lives.

The proportion of Swedish adults having a positive attitude to corporal punishment of children was 53% in 1965 and 10% in 2000, indicating a sharp and decrease in positive attitudes to spanking over a 35-year period.

Schoolchildren attitudes towards corporal punishment became considerably more negative during the 1990s. The proportion of pupils who accept being hit by a parent has decreased from 20% in 1990 to 5% in 2000.

## **6.2 Good practice – initiatives to challenge physical and other forms of humiliating punishment**

*Ending physical and humiliating punishment is actually more about managing adults' behaviour – ie, how adults respond to children's behaviour, rather than the children's behaviour itself.*

### *South America*

In **Argentina**, awareness-raising sessions including workshops for parents and non-formal educators have been held, as well as awareness-raising workshops for 13–21 year-olds, exploring non-violent ways to engage in social relationships and the importance of creating affectionate ties.

In **Bolivia**, a large-scale campaign promoting a “culture of kindness” was launched in 2002. This included: general sensitisation of the population through the mass media to alternatives to violence in families and communities, including a commitment to promote the culture of kindness signed up to by over 30 civil and governmental bodies; identification and training of adult promoters – parents and teachers – responsible for spreading the culture of kindness; identification and training of teenagers and youth responsible for spreading the culture of kindness among peers and in schools. In 2003 the campaign was re-launched with a particular focus on eliminating physical and psychological punishment and a methodology developed to enable adults, teenagers and children to work together. Workshops were co-facilitated by adults and youth.

In another project in Bolivia, a three-year programme for teachers in 10 schools in semi-rural settings has promoted interpersonal conflict resolution, providing teachers with tools to manage their classrooms without resorting to physical violence and an overall improvement in social skills among both teachers and students.

In **Brazil**, Save the Children Sweden's partner LACRI has led long-term campaigns since 1994, including a “National Campaign for a Non-Violent Pedagogy

– Spanking Miseducates” and “Growing up without Spanking in Brazil”. The overall objectives are to raise awareness and promote alternatives to domestic corporal punishment; promote law reform to prohibit all corporal punishment; and to establish mechanisms to ensure the appropriate implementation of legislation once enacted.

*“One of the most successful initiatives in our anti-spanking campaign in Brazil, was when we got a private telecom company to sponsor and produce public phone cards with messages saying things like:*

*‘End Physical Punishment of children NOW!’ ”*

Lacri

The Promundo Institute has undertaken other long-term projects to promote non-violence and strengthen the roles of families and communities; guides have been published, a continuous training programme has trained multipliers. Most recently a project “Children: subjects of rights” has been initiated to develop, test and validate an intervention programme at both interpersonal and community levels aimed at valuing the child as a subject of rights, preventing violence in the family and promoting non-violent disciplinary measures. The overall aim is to engage parents/guardians and communities, with the active participation of children and young people, in the abolition of physical punishment as a disciplinary measure.

In **Colombia**, a “Project for Education and Training” has been developed to design a methodology for training those working with parents and families on positive childrearing and the elimination of physical punishment, based on manuals designed for professionals (psychologists, social workers, paediatricians and others) and for institutional caregivers – early childhood education instructors, primary school teachers, daycare and health care workers and members of the community who work on family issues.

In **Peru**, NGOs formed a “Pact for Good Treatment” Consortium and organised a “Vaccination Campaign for Good Treatment” with the slogan *“Good treatment: say it, give it”*. Children were informed and trained; they then organised brigades and stands in markets, parks, commercial buildings and public institutions where they offered information to the public about the importance of communication and respect in adult-child relations. They handed over a certificate and a candy to symbolise a vaccination “dose” of communication and respect. Almost 3,000 children were trained and organised in brigades over 2003–4, over 400 information stands installed in public places, involving more than 220,000 people. There have also been training programmes with pre-school educators

## Central America

Several organisations in **Mexico** and Central America, have launched awareness-raising campaigns with a positive message, ie, 'Education with Tenderness', aimed at promoting a relationship based on affection, equity and respect toward children rather than emphasising acts of violence. A media campaign has been promoted in Mexico using the slogan *'It is better to love them'*. This campaign aims at eradicating all forms of violence in child-raising. The same TV spots have been used in Nicaragua, where the campaign has been kept on the radio,

A regional workshop was held in Nicaragua in 2003 with members of Save the Children technical teams and key actors in civil society and the state. These workshops gave increasing visibility to the specific problem of corporal punishment and helped the various organisations involved to start recognising that it is a particular form of child maltreatment.

In **Nicaragua**, the Ministry of Education sponsors 'schools for parents' at 40 schools. These have addressed the issue of punishment as part of child-raising practices that need to be changed. Moreover, the Ministry of Education has provided training on the importance of eliminating the use of violent methods of education (ie, striking students with rulers) for school principals and teachers. The Ministry incorporated this issue as a result of its participation in the second regional workshop on the subject for Save the Children Norway's partners.

Two supplementary initiatives to eradicate physical punishment were undertaken in **Costa Rica** by Save the Children Sweden's partner *Fundación Paniamor*, 759 officials who work in health and education institutions were trained to act as replicators of awareness-raising activities aimed at mothers and fathers. Workshops were held in all of Costa Rica's seven provinces. The activities undertaken by trained officials as part of their institutional work are the best success indicators of these workshops. A total of 128 workshops for fathers and mothers were held in 2004 in several communities, thus reaching over 2,000 individuals. This reflects the commitment generated by these training workshops among replicators.

Another strength of the project is that the participants' assessment of the usefulness of these workshops was documented by means of evaluation surveys. Results were encouraging, as most participants held the view that the workshops have helped them to reflect on the use of physical punishment of children, in addition to providing them with new information. Furthermore, they consider that these workshops have been useful in their personal lives and reflect the felt needs of parents. The overall balance is positive, as health and education sector institutions have gained enough strength to play a key role in eradicating physical punishment as a means of education in Costa Rican society.

Another partner in Costa Rica called the *Dirección de Niñez y Adolescencia de la Defensoría de los Habitantes* has been working on political advocacy and social communication efforts since 2004. These efforts have been geared toward legislative reform to explicitly prohibit physical punishment of children. It promoted the project 'Child and Adolescent Physical Punishment Abolition Act',

and provided follow-up to the required legislative steps leading to passage by the Legislative Assembly. In addition to intensive advocacy efforts directed at the Legislative Assembly, the campaign has undertaken an awareness-raising plan and promoted support to the abolition of physical punishment among the various social sectors (enterprises, churches, universities, organisations, coalitions in favour of children, journalists, etc).

In **Belize**, the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN) is implementing a project that addresses the problem of corporal punishment against children in Belize, supported by Save the Children Sweden. The project is called 'Positive and Healthy Child Discipline – Alternative to Corporal Punishment'. Parents in many communities have received parenting training. An evaluation of NOPCAN's programmes confirmed that they have had a very positive and strong impact on the way parents cared for their children. The two areas of noteworthy changes are in legislation and advocacy. In co-ordination with relevant partners, NOPCAN succeeded in having corporal punishment removed from daycare and preschool institutions.

### *Southern Africa*

As the regional report from Southern Africa highlights: "Legislation prohibiting corporal punishment and other forms of humiliating and degrading punishment in all settings is fundamental in reversing the culture of corporal punishment in a specific country". A report was commissioned on the legal status of corporal punishment in **South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia**.

Among other lessons, the research has demonstrated that prohibition of school corporal punishment must be followed by rigorous awareness-raising and training of teachers on alternative methods of discipline in the classroom.

In **South Africa** there have been various initiatives by government and NGOs to train/re-train teachers. A short (four hour session) training programme used in Western Cape has involved about 800 teachers and 200 community members. Lessons drawn from it include:

- It is important to ensure that the attitudes of principals and senior teachers are changed, since they act as important role models and agents of change in schools. Without the support of principals and senior teachers it is almost impossible for individual teachers to implement alternatives to corporal punishment.
- Alternatives to corporal punishment cannot be implemented successfully in an environment without an understanding of and respect for children's rights.
- A four hour workshop is not enough to change behaviour in the long-term. RAPCAN is now negotiating with governmental bodies to ensure that the organisation can provide ongoing support to teachers involved in the project and also to be able to monitor behavioural change among the teachers.
- The facilitator of the workshop on alternatives to corporal punishment needs to have a wealth of classroom-based experiences and he/she needs to have

implemented positive methods of classroom discipline himself/herself in order to gain respect and credibility from the participants of the workshop and to provide practical examples of positive discipline that works.

- There is a risk that teachers begin using humiliating and degrading forms of punishment instead of corporal punishment if they are not trained in a holistic approach to positive methods of discipline in the classroom.

*“My parents are both gone, I am the head of my four siblings now. I could, unfortunately, not cope with my domestic responsibilities as well as all my homework. Therefore my school performance got worse. My teacher started to beat me really hard for not knowing the right answers. In the end I decided to drop out of school, as the beating was too much to handle. I miss going to school a lot!”*

South African girl, aged 14

### *South East Asia/Pacific*

Across the region, eight Save the Children Alliance members together with several partner organisations in 10 countries were mobilised in 2003. The aim in the long-term is to involve as many influential actors, including governments, as possible. A rights-based strategy was collectively defined that emphasises that eliminating corporal punishment needs to be mainstreamed within Save the Children programmes, rather than being treated as a separate programming theme. The strategy identifies objectives in seven areas: regional support mechanisms, organisational change, children’s participation, research, public education, education and training and law reform.

Training and information-sharing workshops have been held in various countries, involving a variety of partners. The participation of children is central to activities.

Rights-based research involving children is being implemented in at least nine countries, utilising the Save the Children toolkit “So you want to involve children in research?” and the regional resource handbook, “How to research the physical and emotional punishment of children” (2004). A research protocol sets out an ethical strategy together with a set of detailed research tools which can be used in the same way in different places, with different groups and by different researchers, making the data valid for scientific analysis and comparison.

To address corporal punishment in schools, Save the Children Alliance members have been working with other partners in a range of countries to conduct training on positive discipline.

Initiatives to support law reform to prohibit corporal punishment, including in the family, have been supported by Save the Children Alliance members in **New Zealand, Indonesia, the Philippines and China**.

Another dimension of work in the region has been support for public education and awareness-raising. These have included a forum to “Shape the national future with children and young people” and a Child Rights Week to promote abolition of corporal punishment in **South Korea**; a “One week without violence” advocacy campaign involving schools, communities and government in Maluku, **Indonesia**; training of police on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and child protection in Anhui, **China**; a “SpankOut Day: Raising good kids without violence” in Hong Kong (the SpankOut Day Declaration received endorsement on behalf of the Hong Kong SAR Government and personal endorsement from the Secretary for Justice); a media campaign in **Mongolia** – “Break the silence and stop the violence” – which together with other media activities supported the development of a network with journalists; also in Viet Nam a partner organisation cooperated with Voice of **Viet Nam** in a series of programmes on corporal punishment, its negative effects and alternative methods of child-rearing.

### **South Asia**

For the moment, initiatives in this region have focused mainly on the prevention/discouragement of physical punishment in schools.

In **Afghanistan**, a “mini-survey on corporal punishment” has been undertaken to collect basic information on the use of corporal punishment in schools and homes and to develop a training package to promote alternatives. Working with UNICEF, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Education, a training module on ending physical and humiliating punishment against children have been developed. The manual is designed to guide parents, teachers, law enforcement professionals, religious leaders and health professionals to challenge physical and humiliating punishment and instead promote positive discipline of children.

In **Bangladesh and India**, activities have focused primarily on educational institutions, incorporating work to end the use of corporal punishment in broader campaigns to promote child-friendly teaching and learning processes. The work has included the development of training materials and teacher training modules, and in Bangladesh, developing rights-based approaches to children’s early learning which includes awareness-raising on the need to abstain from physical or other humiliating forms of punishment and discipline. A qualitative study exploring children’s perspectives on abuse has been carried out in Bangladesh during 2003–2005. The main objective of the study is to enhance present understanding of child abuse from the perspective of children. It will also help to design future policies and interventions aimed at reducing incidences of child abuse.

In Orissa Province of **India**, Save the Children in collaboration with local NGOs facilitated a meeting with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to discuss the ill-effects of physical and psychological punishment. MLAs conceded

there was a need to ban such treatment, and the Government of Orissa issued a directive to the Education Department, asking them to draft a Government Order banning corporal punishment in schools.

*“Children have motivated their parents and villagers, they have made lots of positive changes... Children’s committees for village development can enable children to participate with adults in making the education system function without using physical and humiliating punishment.”*

Executive Education Councillor, Local government official, Ladakh, India

In **Nepal** too, Save the Children members are working with the Department of Education to improve the quality of education and make prohibition of school corporal punishment part of Nepal’s education policy.

In **Pakistan**, a training module has been used with the staff of partner organisations, teachers, parents and child rights activists. A review of teaching practice has been carried out in Pakistan, aimed to identify the concept of a good teacher from the perspectives of children, parents, heads and teachers themselves. The ideal teacher is seen by almost all the stakeholders as “a soft, loving and courteous person who is neat, clean and well-dressed, regular, punctual and upholds high ethical values. The ideal teacher supports the students, explains well, uses activities to teach children and avoids physical punishments and abusive, harsh or threatening language”. Also, Save the Children, together with UNICEF and the Government of the North West Frontier Province has carried out a study on the causes and forms of corporal punishment and its impact on children in schools and homes. This research is part of the initiative to understand the situation in schools, run by the government, private institutions and the religious faculty. It will provide a baseline for the government and civil society initiatives to make schools child-friendly, which is a pre-requisite for attaining the goal of Education for All.

A situation analysis on violence in schools was undertaken in **Sri Lanka** in 2004, collecting inputs from children, teachers, parents, social workers, the police, NGOs and INGOs, governmental agencies and the general public. Several successful advocacy campaigns have been carried out in newspapers, with posters showing the negative effects of physical and humiliating punishment on children, as well as television commercials with alternatives to corporal punishment.

The region has developed a film on “Children’s Voices against violence against children”, a detailed paper on “Corporal/physical and humiliating/degrading punishment of girls and boys in South Asia” for submission to the UNSG’s Study and a “Toolkit on Positive Discipline”, currently (June 2005) being finalised.

The region reports that the struggle against physical and psychological punishment is ongoing and registering successes, but it identifies many remaining challenges, “the biggest being the attitude that parents, schools and communities still retain on the issue”.

### *Middle East and North Africa*

Working for abolition of school corporal punishment in **Lebanon** has involved a four-pronged approach of awareness-raising and mobilisation; analysing legislation and administrative practice; extensive child participation; and advocacy through a series of planned activities to persuade key actors to make changes. Save the Children is working with the Higher Council for Childhood (a national framework for cooperation between government, international agencies and NGOs to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child) and the Training Centre for Community Development (a Lebanese cooperative working on implementation of social development programmes).

A key project is “Ambassadors of Peace, Lebanon”, adapting a project originally developed in Canada, to implement peaceful conflict resolution in schools with the eventual aim of abolishing corporal punishment in schools and ultimately in homes. It promotes a curriculum including six main themes: non-violence; human rights; democratic practice; respect (for environment, self and others); anti-discrimination; and participation. The project includes five phases: training of teachers and supervisors; raising awareness among teachers and supervisors about violence and peace; training students; training certain students to become ambassadors of peace in elementary schools; programme evaluation. Evaluations with students and others shows high appreciation for the programme and a belief that violence was reduced.

In the **Yemen**, a multi-year programme to eliminate violence against children, including corporal and psychological punishment, has been initiated by Save the Children working with government, UN agencies and others. Other projects have included highlighting the effects of school corporal punishment on children, and highlighting children’s voices on corporal punishment in their homes and schools. Following a Save the Children supported workshop in Parliament in February 2004, a committee was formed to work on legal reforms.

### *East and Central Africa*

Governmental and non-governmental institutions are involved in significant programme interventions to address the problem of physical and psychological punishment of children in this region. Most of the activities towards ending corporal punishment target schools. The interventions, described in detail in the submission, include awareness raising, conducting research, initiating and supporting clubs in schools, advocacy and lobbying and providing support to victims of corporal punishment.

## Europe

In the UK, physical punishment is now prohibited in all schools and all other institutions and alternative care. But parents can still justify physical punishment as “reasonable” under the law. So the campaign is focused entirely on ending parental corporal punishment. Save the Children is a key partner within the “Children are unbeatable!” campaign, an alliance of more than 400 organisations and many individuals which is campaigning for law reform to give children equal protection under the law on assault. It has pioneered training courses and materials promoting positive, non-violent forms of discipline.

While the UK Government has acknowledged that law reform is needed to give children better protection, it has not yet been prepared to support clear prohibition. The ancient English common law defence of “reasonable chastisement” has been modified (in England and Wales and in Scotland, where it has been replaced by the new and disrespectful concept of “justifiable assault” of children).

In **Spain**, the campaign to end physical punishment and other forms of humiliating punishment has been titled “Educate, do not punish” and was promoted between 1999 and 2001 by Save the Children Spain in association with UNICEF and two parents’ associations in Spain, one led by Catholic parents and the other by non-religious parents.

The Spanish campaign was based on three main strategies:

- Education and awareness-raising among children, parents and the public on the negative consequences of physical and humiliating punishment. 9500 parents, as well as 5000 professionals were included in the training.
- The campaign built a network promoting positive and non-violent forms of discipline; consisting of more than 80 NGOs, associations, and institutions.
- The campaign strongly encouraged child participation, and involved awareness raising among more than 7000 children.

Save the Children Spain is currently co-operating with the Ministry for Justice, as well as the Ministry for Social Affairs, to improve the current law to include an explicit ban of all forms of physical and humiliating punishment, including the setting of the family.

Save the Children **Romania** decided in 2003 to take the initiative and start campaigning for prohibition of all corporal punishment in the home. First, Save the Children surveyed 1,200 children between 8 and 13 years old. The children reported that the most used method of “education” in families is corporal punishment. Three quarters of the children considered that authorities should punish adults who hit children and 82% considered that corporal punishment should be prohibited by law.

The message of the campaign – “*Beating is not from heaven*” – derived from a well-known Romanian proverb which suggests that beating is from heaven. The aim

of the campaign was to achieve legislative prohibition of corporal punishment and to change attitudes to accept non-violent child-rearing.

It included preparing and disseminating two brochures for parents, “Understand your child” and “Promoting positive discipline – it is possible without hitting”, and organising training sessions.

A campaign brochure “For the ones who still believe that beating is from heaven” was distributed to MPs, government departments, local authorities, UN agencies, NGOs and INGOs. There was also intensive letter-writing, a round table in Parliament, street campaigns, media campaigns including advertising and posters.

In August 2004, a new Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child was adopted. Article 28 states: “The child has the right to be shown respect for his or her personality and individuality and may not be made subject to physical punishments or to other humiliating or degrading treatment ...”

In July 1979, **Sweden** became the first country to explicitly ban all forms of physical punishment of children, including in the home, when it prohibited corporal punishment in the Children and Parental Code, which states in chapter 6, Custody and Access, Introductory Provisions, Section 1:

*“Children are entitled to care, security and a good upbringing. Children are to be treated with respect for their person and individuality and may not be subjected to corporal punishment or any other humiliating treatment.”*

This explicit prohibition was the end of a long process begun over 50 years earlier. The purpose of prohibiting all corporal punishment was not to punish or criminalise parents: the Children and Parental Code does not contain any penalty; milder forms are not punished and more severe forms are punished according to the Penal Code. Rather, the purpose was to ensure that children’s human rights were realised by protecting in law their physical integrity and human dignity. The law gives a clear message that hitting children is wrong.

The prohibition of corporal punishment or any other humiliating treatment against children in Sweden had three objectives:

1. It was intended to alter attitudes towards the use of physical force against children. It was expected that the law would produce a shift in social norms so that a “good” parent would be seen as one who does not use physical punishment. This was viewed as the first step in eliminating physical punishment from Swedish society.
2. The ban was intended to set clear guidelines for parents and professionals, ending debates about “acceptable” and “unacceptable” physical punishment. Nurses, social workers, teachers and other professionals could now state clearly that physical force was not permitted.
3. Earlier identification was expected to result in earlier intervention. Professionals could now feel comfortable in recommending alternative disciplinary strategies, providing supportive and educational materials to families, and acting quickly when identifying families at risk.

The law includes an obligation on professionals and authorities (such as child-care, school, health, and social services professionals) to *report suspected violations*. The change in the law made it clear that violence is never a private matter. No Swedish law gives adults the right to use any forms of violence against children and no law allows parents’ needs and interests to take precedence above children’s. All legal loopholes have now been closed and no longer can any person justify the use of violence by claiming that it was necessary or reasonable.

In 1991, Save the Children Sweden started a project called Parents Anonymous. The aim of the project is to give parents support and help with problems and difficulties in their parental role. A telephone service receives calls from parents, mostly concerning childrearing. Promoting non-violent, positive forms of discipline empowers parents and reduces family stress. To continue to inform new generations of parent about non-violent alternatives in childrearing is an ongoing process that supports both children and parents.

Also, another non-governmental organisation called Children’s Rights in Society (BRIS) was founded in the early 1970s with the aim of influencing decision makers and public authorities and drawing attention to the physical abuse of children. BRIS has two telephone help lines, one for children and one to support adults. The Children’s Help Line offers support to children in vulnerable positions and is intended to help them come into contact with dependable adults in their immediate surroundings, both professional and private, who can help them deal with problems, e.g. school guidance counsellors, a social worker or other authorities. This is always done at the request of and together with the child caller. In 60% of the cases in 2000, children were helped to make further contacts.

BRIS usually provides adults with the opportunity of seeking help in the community, e.g. the social services or family counselling services. In this way, BRIS acts as a link between children, adults and the community.

Public support for physical punishment has declined markedly in recent decades. This decline has been accompanied by a reduction in the use of physical punishment, and its forms have become increasingly mild. This suggests that the legislation and ongoing public education campaigns have been effective in altering the social climate with regard to physical punishment. To strike a child for the purpose of childrearing in Sweden today is socially unacceptable. Legislation reflects the current social position.

The number of callers to the BRIS telephone help lines has increased since the 1990s. This is interpreted by BRIS as an increase in awareness among children and young people that they can call, rather than an increase in violence. The number of reports to social services and the police show a similar trend. After the prohibition of physical punishment, and the education of professionals working with children on their obligation to report suspected cases of child abuse, there was an increase in such reports. Most of these concerned minor abuse, supporting the interpretation that violence has not increased, in which case severe types of violence would also have increased.

As discussed above, there is no evidence that children have become unruly or undisciplined as a result of the prohibition of corporal punishment. Neither is there any evidence that parents have lost their authority. Rather, they use other, non-violent forms of childrearing which do not induce fear in the child, such as withdrawing privileges or calming the child so that they can talk, or positive rewards when the child does something good, encouraging the child to behave well. This indicates that information campaigns have been successful, as parents find other forms of childrearing when they realise that violence is harmful to their children.

In summary, parents have not been criminalised, and there has been no flood of trivial court cases, as prosecution rates have remained steady. Social service intervention has become increasingly supportive and preventive, and the number of placements in foster homes has declined. Swedish young people have not become undisciplined, since the trends in youth crime have shown declining rates since the 1970s.



## 7. Summary of findings

This global submission to the UN Study on violence against Children by Save the Children highlights the fact that physical and humiliating punishment occurs in all regions across the world.

It is clear that physical and humiliating punishment is not a product of particular cultures, societies, or religions. Rather it is a consequence of the way in which power is understood and managed within personal relationships.

The fact of there being common dimensions of emotional relationships also serves to strengthen the argument that the rights embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should be recognised and understood to be universal principles necessary for optimum development.

Evaluation and impact assessment based on Save the Children's various projects relating to the explicit ban of all forms of physical and humiliating punishment provides indicative evidence of common aspects to the incidence of physical and humiliating punishment across all the countries and regions involved:

- Physical and humiliating punishment is a cross-cultural form of violence. Most of the participants involved in Save the Children projects, and workshops and trainings carried out in the regions can relate to experiences of physical and humiliating punishment.
- In addition to the fact that participants in all regions have experienced some form of violence as part of their education process, it is important to note that it was such a familiar part of their everyday lives that they did not perceive it as violence until they stopped and analysed it. This highlights the extent of its social acceptance, and stresses the importance that a law reform should be combined with awareness-raising on children's right to protection and promotion of positive forms of discipline.

Neither physical or humiliating punishment are culturally exclusive. Both their consequences and their form are cross-cultural problems which arise from the way in which people manage power within personal relationships. The experience of violence appears, from this global report, to be universal. Acknowledgement of cultural perspectives is essential when designing intervention programmes, but it is not possible to defend the use of violence as a cultural phenomenon against the universal right to protection from all forms of violence.

This report reveals the following patterns of physical and humiliating punishment.

- Many forms and practises of physical and humiliating punishment are common and found in all regions. These include hitting, smacking on the bottom, hitting with a ruler or a belt, insulting, shouting, public humiliation, negative

comparison with other people, degrading/humiliating treatment, rejecting or ignoring.

Among those countries involved in this report, there emerged a common conceptualisation of violence. This conceptualisation reflects the view that:

- Abuse of power causes harm to children's development
- Harm and power are central to understanding violence

Physical and humiliating punishments transmit educational messages which can be harmful to the development of the child. These educational messages are that love and authority are linked with violence.

Although the physical consequences are more immediate and obvious, it is the longer-term psycho-social aspects which give rise to most concern. No matter what their age, children's developing minds are damaged by violent treatment. There is a relationship between physical and humiliating punishment and depression, low self-esteem, negative psychological adjustment and poor relationships with parents.

Based on findings from research carried out in the regions, the following list provides an indication of some of the better understood psycho-social effects of physical and/or humiliating punishment on children.

- It lowers children's self-esteem, teaching them poor self-control and promoting negative expectations of themselves.
- It interferes with the learning process and with their cognitive, sensory and emotional development. Research indicates that children who are physically and humiliatingly punished perform poorly on school tasks compared to other children. Children frequently cite physical and humiliating punishment as a reason for dropping out of school, alongside factors such as poverty and gender discrimination.
- It discourages the use of reasoning. By precluding dialogue and reflection, it hampers the capacity to understand the relationship between behaviour and its consequences.
- It makes children feel lonely, sad and abandoned, diminishing their confidence in society as a protective environment. It promotes a negative view of other people and of society as a threatening place.
- It creates barriers that impede parent-child communication and damages the emotional links established between them. Physical and humiliating punishment erodes the trust between a parent and a child, and increases the risk of child abuse

Awareness raising workshops and trainings carried out by Save the Children with partners in all regions on the negative effects of physical and humiliating punishment of children, providing alternatives to positive discipline has turned out to be very successful. One can see great results from those education projects

which now have a Code of Conduct banning all forms of corporal punishment. Evaluations and impact assessments carried out with students and others shows high appreciation for these programmes and a belief that violence has been / is being reduced. The greatest reason for this change is, according to the students, that they can now focus on their studies, knowing that there will be no punishment by their teachers.

The conclusions drawn from this global report can not be seen as definitive. Nevertheless, the data does offer evidence to support some of the key assumptions on which Save the Children bases its work for the protection and promotion on children's rights and, in particular, for the eradication of physical and humiliating punishment as a form of socially and legally accepted form of violence.



## 8. Concluding remarks

Wherever you are in this world you will be told by policy makers, politicians, parliamentarians, the parents and randomly picked citizens that children are our future and that they deserve the best we have.

The widespread and chronic violence against children, including physical punishment, does not fit in this picture.

There are various reasons that can serve as an explanation for this violence but never as a justification for this morally unacceptable reality.

Overall, physical and humiliating punishment increases the use of violence in society and legitimizes it in the eyes of succeeding generations. It promotes a double standard: there are two categories of citizens – children and adults. It is viewed as acceptable to hit children, the smallest and most vulnerable members of society, but not adults.

Save the Children believes that a commitment to ending all forms of physical and humiliating punishment is a priority because:

- It is a violation of children's human rights to physical integrity, human dignity and equal protection under the law. In many cases, it can also threaten their rights to education, development, health and even survival.
- It can cause serious physical and psychological harm to the child.
- It teaches the child that violence is an acceptable and appropriate strategy for resolving conflict or getting people to do what you want.
- The legitimacy of physical and humiliating punishment makes protection of children difficult, by implying there are some forms or levels of violence against children which are legitimate.

And finally

- It is ineffective as a means of discipline. There are positive ways to teach, correct or discipline children which are better for the child's development and relationships with parents and community and which do not include physical and humiliating punishment.

## 9. Further references and resources

As part of the global campaign against all forms of corporal punishment and humiliating treatment of children, Save the Children members and their partners in all regions are undertaking various campaigns against physical and humiliating punishment in the home, schools, and other settings.

Many different publications and advocacy leaflets have been produced to provide added knowledge about physical and humiliating punishment and to support programme implementation.

Recently a *Manual for Action* has been produced. This practical Manual for Action is designed to guide Save the Children country programmes, staff, partners and other organisations in the development of strategies to challenge physical and humiliating punishment. It incorporates examples of good practice from different country programmes, including current knowledge and experience of Save the Children Alliance staff and partners working on this issue across the world. It also highlights key issues to consider; describes strategies that should be included in planning and implementing programmes; and provides lists of useful resources and contacts. It will be useful at planning, implementation and evaluation stages, and is designed to be used flexibly and adapted to suit local needs.

The Manual uses the principles of children's human rights to assess, plan, manage, implement and monitor programmes, with the overall goal of achieving greater recognition and realisation of those rights.

For a free copy of the *Manual for Action*, code no. 3184, please write to: [rbpublishing@rb.se](mailto:rbpublishing@rb.se)

Save the Children has also produced a publication called *Love, power and violence*. This study has been undertaken to further seek to provide added knowledge and to enhance understanding of attitudes towards and prevalence and patterns of physical and humiliating punishment, drawing on a comparative analysis of findings from a series of training workshops conducted during 2003–4 in Central America, South America, Spain, South Asia, and South East Asia and the Pacific. Because the training programmes were held in a number of regions, it was possible to observe and compare patterns in the experience of physical and humiliating punishment across those regions. The study has drawn together and analysed findings from all the workshops to begin to build a picture of the similarities and differences in the use of physical and humiliating punishment experienced by the participants in different parts of the world.

For a free copy of *Love, power and violence*, please see: [www.savethechildren.es](http://www.savethechildren.es)

Save the Children has been in the forefront for a long time of finding rights-based approaches to research with children, including their meaningful participation in research processes. The publication *How to research the physical and emotional punishment of children* continues the efforts of Save the Children to research the physical and emotional punishment of children, using verifiable processes and methods, so that data can be used by project and programme staff to develop campaigns and actions based on reliable information. This publication provides programme managers and researchers with the guidance and tools for scientific, ethical research on this topic.

For a free copy of *How to research the physical and emotional punishment of children*, please see: [www.seapa.net](http://www.seapa.net)

For further Save the Children publications and resources on physical and humiliating punishment in English please see:  
<http://www.rb.se/eng/Programme/Exploitationandabuse/Corporalpunishment/1415+Publications.htm>

For further Save the Children publications and resources on physical and humiliating punishment in Spanish please see:  
[www.savethechildren.es](http://www.savethechildren.es)  
[www.scslat.org](http://www.scslat.org)







