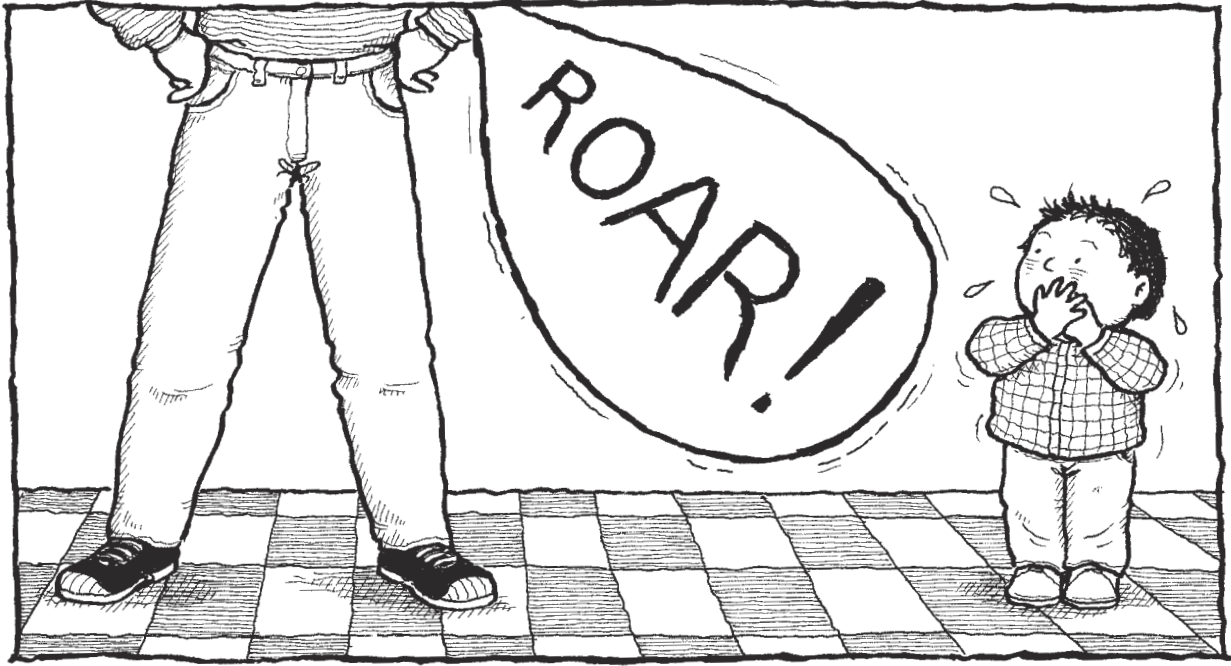


# What Save the Children thinks about physical and humiliating punishment

*Information for children and young people*



**Save the Children**



## What Save the Children thinks about physical and humiliating punishment

### What is the problem?

Physical and humiliating punishment is violence against children that is done with the aim of controlling or educating children. In most countries physical and humiliating punishment is seen as a legal and acceptable form of disciplining children. Yet it violates children's rights in very serious ways. It can take a number of forms:

**physical punishment** includes hitting the child with the hand or with an object (such as a cane, belt, whip, shoe, etc): kicking, shaking, or throwing the child, pinching or pulling their hair; forcing a child to stay in an uncomfortable or embarrassing position, or to take too much physical exercise;

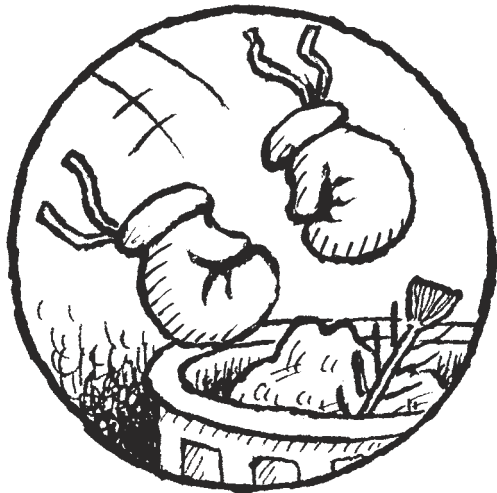
**humiliating punishment** includes verbal abuse (name-calling), making children feel bad, mocking them, or isolating the child.

### How widespread is it?

In consultations all over the world, girls and boys 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. Physical and humiliating punishment is used at home, in schools, in institutions, in prisons, in work places and in the streets. Many people see it as the best way to control and educate children.

So far, only 15 countries have banned all forms of physical and humiliating punishment. But even in those countries where it is against the law, it can be difficult to make sure that physical and humiliating punishment doesn't happen.

The International Save the Children Alliance believes that it is essential not just to listen to girls and boys, but also to act on what they say. The International Save the Children Alliance has therefore taken the lead internationally in working for the recognition of the fact that physical and humiliating punishment is a serious breach of children's rights.



## What are the effects of physical and humiliating punishment on children?

Physical and humiliating punishment teaches children that violence is OK, that it is acceptable for a stronger person to use force against one that is weaker.

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

GIRL, SCOTLAND, AGED 10

Children can suffer injuries from physical and humiliating punishment that might need treatment by a doctor. It might even leave permanent damage or cause death.

*“You could damage their brain or even kill them with all the aggression.”*

BOY, BRAZIL, AGED 10.

Physical and humiliating punishment causes anger, fear and anxiety in children.

It can lead to depression, low self esteem and violent behavior. Often children drop-out of school because they are scared that the teacher will punish them in a violent way.

*“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.”*

GIRL, ZIMBABWE, AGED 10.

## What does Save the Children want to happen?

Save the Children thinks that the UN Study on Violence against Children is a good opportunity to draw attention to the problem of physical and humiliating punishment and to call for action against it.

The goal of Save the Children is that **the UN Study clearly says that physical and humiliating punishment is violence against children. It is unacceptable and violates children’s rights.**

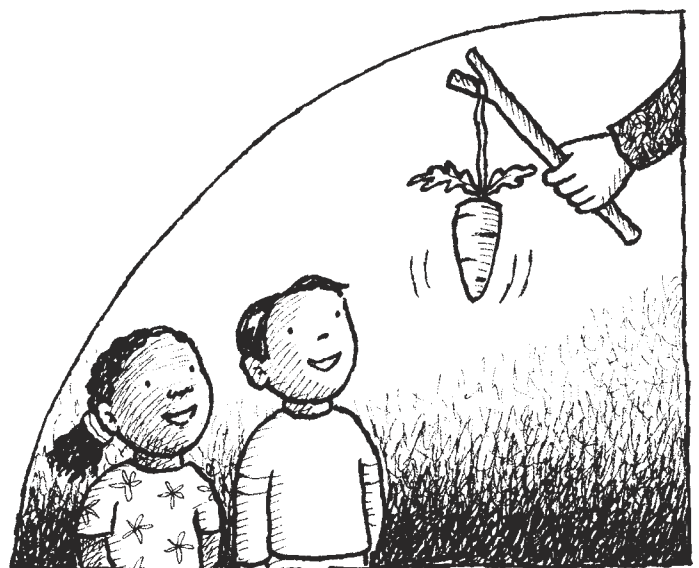
*“A big person should not hit a small person”*,

GIRL, ROMANIA, AGED 12

Most people do not see physical and humiliating punishment as violence against children because they think it is an acceptable way to discipline or educate girls and boys. This means that no action is taken to stop it.

Making sure that people know about the real effects of physical and humiliating punishment on girls and boys as well as making the true extent of violence against children visible, are the first steps towards getting the public and politicians to support efforts to stop the practice of physical and humiliating punishment.

There should be research to show how widespread it is. Such research can be used in campaigns to stop physical and humiliating punishment. There are already examples of how





such research can be done, using confidential interviews with parents and children, and making sure the research is done properly, keeping the children safe from harm. Save the Children have done such studies with children, in many regions.

Save the Children wants **the UN Study to call for an end to the use of all physical and humiliating punishment and that all countries make it clear that physical and humiliating punishment is forbidden by law.**

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

GIRL, SCOTLAND, AGED 17

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

GIRL, PAKISTAN, AGED 13

Save the Children is working to make sure that the UN Study recommends, to all countries, that it is urgent to ban all violence against children, including physical and humiliating punishment, in the family, in the school, but also everywhere else.

This means that countries need to make sure that adults cannot use any excuse to justify physical and/or other humiliating forms of punishment. Laws will have to be changed if they give anyone the right to use such punishment,

especially laws that give rights to the family, to institutions that care for children, to schools, and prisons.

As well as making such changes to the law, countries should also make sure that there are child friendly ways to protect children. Save the Children is calling for changes to laws in many countries.

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

BOY, WALES, AGED 9

Save the Children wants **the UN Study to also make it clear that changes to laws alone are not enough. Countries need to educate parents, teachers and other caregivers that children have a right to be protected from all forms of violence and that there are other, non-violent ways of disciplining children.**

Adults, especially parents, future parents and other caregivers need to learn that children have a right to protection from violence. It is also necessary to teach these adults about the non-violent ways of raising children and of dealing with conflicts. Politicians, community leaders, religious leaders and educators should be asked to support this awareness raising and public education.

Save the Children believes that working to prevent physical and humiliating punishment will help to prevent all forms of violence, in



childhood and later in life. Save the Children has set up programmes and produced materials that can be used in all countries and cultures.

*“When master hits me with a stick, I feel like snatching the stick from his hand and hitting him back”*,

GIRL, DOMESTIC WORKER, BANGLADESH, AGED 9

Save the Children wants **the UN Study to make it clear that it is important to involve children in finding ways to end physical and humiliating punishment and other forms of violence against children.**

*“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!”*

BOY, SYRIA, AGED 11

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says that children have the right to be consulted on decisions that affect them – and that includes discipline at home and school. Research by Save the Children clearly shows that continuing to allow physical and humiliating punishment means that it is harder for children to be heard.

If children are fearful they will not dare to say what they think. It is essential to listen to what children have to say about violence and to act on what they say.

Save the Children’s work shows how children can participate – in research, in getting the message across and teaching about children’s rights. There are many good examples from Save the Children’s work where children have taken action against violence.



*“I have to admit that in the initial stage I was not convinced that physical and humiliating punishment didn’t work. But when I was taught the alternatives during a training course, I started to change bit by bit when managing my children. They told me that they much more preferred this more qualitative way of explaining to them why I got mad at them. I realised that this new way works better in the long run!”*

ADULT WHO ATTENDED A WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY SAVE THE CHILDREN.

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