

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT – PREVALENCE AND ATTITUDINAL RESEARCH IN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



Global Initiative to
**End All Corporal Punishment
of Children**

Summaries prepared by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (www.endcorporalpunishment.org), March 2008

Note: No prevalence research identified for Angola, Comoros, Eritrea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles

BOTSWANA

In June 2007, the Education Secretary for Ngami region reported a Baseline Study which found that 92% of students had been beaten by school, and this was supported by 67% of parents.

(Reported in *Daily News*, 13 June 2007)

In research by DITSHWANELO, a survey concerning corporal punishment in schools found that about 90% of respondents said they used corporal punishment on children.

(Reported in correspondence with the Global Initiative, February 2006)

BURUNDI

Interviews with children in conflict with the law and with parents and law enforcement officials, carried out by Human Rights Watch in 2006-2007, found that many children have been beaten and have suffered other ill treatment while in detention.

(Human Rights Watch, 2007, *Paying the price: Violations of the rights of children in detention in Burundi*)

ETHIOPIA

A survey of 485 young women in Ethiopia aged 18-24 concerning their childhood experiences of violence, undertaken by the Africa Child Policy Forum and published in 2006, found that 84% had suffered one or more types of violence. Beating with an object was found to be the most prevalent form of physical violence (71.1%). Prevalence figures for other forms of physical abuse were 59.5% for punching, 43.3% kicking, 28.6% being forced to carry out hard work, 12.4% being choked/burned/stabbed, 10.9% having spicy/bitter food put into mouth, 9.7% being locked up, and 8.3% being denied food. Girls were found to be most vulnerable to beating with an object when aged 10-13 years (59.4%) and to being hit/punched when aged 14-17 years (58.4%). Experiencing the violence more than ten times was more likely in the case of beating than other types of physical violence except for hard work. Most beating with an object and hitting/punching was carried out by mothers (45.2% and 27.2% respectively), followed by fathers (39.1% and 21.5%) and brothers (23.9% and 24%). In 55.5% of cases, the hitting/punching resulted in “bruises or scratches, broken bones or teeth, or bleeding”; the corresponding figure for beating with an object was 32.2%. The most frequent reasons given to the girls by the perpetrators of the violence were reported as doing something wrong,

disrupting the home/class, going out without permission or coming in late, failing to complete an assignment, refusing to accept a proposal for love or sex, giving a confrontational reply, and going out with men.

(Stavropoulos, J., 2006, *Violence Against Girls in Africa: A Retrospective Survey in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*, Addis Ababa, The African Child Policy Forum)

In a study in which 1,223 children from five regions were interviewed, only 17 children (1.4%) stated that they had never experienced corporal punishment in the home.

(African Child Policy Forum on Violence Against Children & Save the Children Sweden, 2005, *Report on Violence against Children*, cited in Government response to UN Study on Violence Against Children Questionnaire, 2005)

In a survey of 1,000 street children interviewed in government sponsored research in 1992, 28% reported being on the streets because of family problems at home, and one third of the boys experienced being beaten at least once a week on the streets.

(Lalor, K. J., 1999, "Street children: a comparative perspective", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol.23, no.8)

Research undertaken by Radda Barnen Ethiopia indicated that more than 90% of students were punished by their teachers, although 70% of teachers were aware of the negative effects of corporal punishment. Of teachers surveyed, 50% did not believe in the effectiveness of corporal punishment and 80% indicated their willingness to attend programmes on alternative disciplinary methods.

(Tsegaye, C., 1995-6, "Pilot study on Ethiopian attitudes towards the physical punishment of children and its prevalence in schools", Radda Barnen Ethiopia; Radda Barnen, 1998, "Spare the rod and spoil the child – a survey on attitudes towards physical punishment among Ethiopian students, parents and teachers", Addis Ababa)

In light of the previously mentioned study and the Constitutional prohibition of corporal punishment in schools in effect from 1995, workshops were organised over a period of three years, and a follow-up study was undertaken to assess their impact. This study involved 907 teachers and 510 students from 40 government, public and private religious primary schools across Addis Ababa completing questionnaires, and interviews with people working in the education bureau. The information gathered on the frequency of corporal punishment over a period of one week showed a decline in comparison with the earlier study, from 90% three years ago to less than 20%. The types of punishments reported were hitting with a stick (27% teachers, 28% students), slapping (7% teachers, 25% students), pinching the ear (21% teachers, 13% students), punching (3% teachers, 8% students), kneeling down (54% teachers, 57% students), hitting on the head (19% teachers, 31% students), belting (5% teachers, 13% students) and whipping (14% teachers, 21% students).

(Radda Barnen, 2002, *Spare the Rod – Raise a Healthy Child*, Addis Ababa)

In other research, reported in 1997, 21% of urban schoolchildren and 64% of rural schoolchildren reported bruises or swellings on their bodies resulting from parental punishment.

(Ketsela, T. & Kedebe, D., 1997, "Physical punishment of elementary school children in urban and rural communities in Ethiopia", *Ethiopian Medical Journal*, vol.35, pp.23-33, cited in Krug, E. G. et al., eds, 2002, *World report on violence and health*, Geneva: World Health Organisation)

KENYA

A survey of 500 young women in Kenya aged 18-24 concerning their childhood experiences of violence, undertaken by the Africa Child Policy Forum and published in 2006, found that 99% reported experiencing physical violence. Beating with an object was found to be the most prevalent

form of physical violence (80.8%), though the research does not investigate the degree to which this and other physical violence was explicitly in the name of “discipline”. Prevalence figures for other forms of physical violence were 59.5% for punching, 39.6% kicking, 43.8% hard work, 20.5% being choked/burned/stabbed, 12.3% having spicy/bitter substances put in mouth, 14.3% being locked or tied up, and 35% being denied food. Girls were found to be most vulnerable when aged 10-13 years. Experiencing the violence more than ten times was more likely in the case of beating than other types of physical violence. Most beating with an object was carried out by mothers (23.5%), followed by female teachers (15.3%) and fathers (13.3%). Most hitting/punching was carried out by female teachers (16.1%), followed by mothers (14.2%) and male teachers (11.3%), with medical attention necessary in 20% of cases. In 52.3% of cases, the hitting/punching resulted in “bruises or scratches, broken bones or teeth, or bleeding”; the figure for beating with an object was 64.6%.

(Stavropoulos, J., 2006, *Violence Against Girls in Africa: A Retrospective Survey in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*, Addis Ababa, The African Child Policy Forum)

A survey of 267 adults and children and interviews with parents, teachers and children, reported in 2005, found that the most frequent forms of physical discipline used on children were smacking (78.8%), pulling ears (68.8%) and cuffing (61.5%). Other corporal punishments included forcing a child to kneel on a hard floor (45.9%), tapping (43.3%), forcing a child to stand in the sun (33.2%) and burning fingers (19.7%). Almost two thirds of children (62.2%) said they wanted the use of corporal punishment to be stopped. Over half of parents (54%) said that physical punishment should not be stopped.

(ANPPCAN Kenya Chapter, 2005, *From Physical Punishment to Positive Discipline: Alternatives to Physical/Corporal Punishment in Kenya*, second draft)

A 2004 survey by Population Communication Africa reported that over 60% of children believed that they had been or were being physically abused at school, including being slapped in the face, being hit on the body with a cane or stick, and being beaten, kicked or punched or otherwise physically bullied.

(Johnston, T., 2004, *Gender Series: The Abuse of Nairobi School Children*, Population Communication Africa: Nairobi. Cited in O’Sullivan, M., 2005, “Corporal Punishment in Kenya”, *Juvenile Justice Quarterly*, vol.2, no.1)

NAMIBIA

Unpublished research reported in 1996 involving focus group discussions in the Windhoek, Mariental and Owambo regions found that corporal punishment was a daily occurrence in most families and was the most common method of discipline, with many participants admitting that they were unaware of any other disciplinary methods.

(Cited in Becker, H. & Classen, P., 1996, *Violence Against Women and Children: Community Attitudes and Practices*, available from the Legal Assistance Centre in Namibia)

A study on childrearing among the Nama of Karas and Hardap regions, published in 1995, found that 89% of Nama parents surveyed believed it is acceptable for parents to “beat up their misbehaving children”, and 86% believed it acceptable for teachers to “beat up” children who misbehave. When asked for the reasons underlying this belief, 34% of parents felt it was an effective way of teaching the difference between right and wrong; 27% stated that it is the only way to elicit respect, honesty and good behaviour. Teachers felt that such punishment promotes discipline, respect, honesty and order (32%) and that it is acceptable if applied fairly and justifiably (28%).

(Zimba, R. F. & Otaala, B., 1995, “The Family in Transition: A Study of Childrearing Practices and Beliefs Among the Nama of Karas and Hardap Regions of Namibia”, UNICEF/UNAM)

SOMALIA

Figures provided by the NGO Somalia Child Protection and Development (SOCPD) state that in one study 30% of adults and 40% of children reported some form of beating being administered.

(Reported by Somalia Child Protection and Development, August 2004)

SOUTH AFRICA

The National Youth Victimization Study released in May 2006 by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention reported on a survey of 4,409 young people aged between 12 and 22 years which found that nationally 51.4% of children continue to be subjected to corporal punishment in schools, with the lowest prevalence being 17% in the Western Cape. The survey also found that around a quarter of the youth live in a home where domestic violence between caregivers or parents is common.

(Reported in "Corporal punishment still rife in classrooms despite being banned", *Cape Times*, 11 May 2006)

In 2004, Save the Children undertook qualitative research involving 410 boys and girls aged 6-18 years from four provinces in South Africa. The study found that children of all ages and income categories experienced corporal punishment at home and in school, although very few cases were reported by children in high income environments and children from Indian communities. The most common form of corporal punishment was beating with a belt; in schools it was most often inflicted using a ruler, stick or board duster on the hands. The most severe forms were experienced by children from low income environments, in both the home and school. Schools from high income areas were generally not using corporal punishment.

(Clacherty, G., Donald, D. & Clacherty, A., 2005, *South African Children's Experiences of Corporal Punishment*, Pretoria: Save the Children Sweden)

The first national survey of attitudes to child rearing and the use of corporal punishment by caregivers was undertaken in 2003, as part of the South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS). Out of a representative sample of 2,497 men and women over 16 years of age from all provinces, population groups and economic backgrounds, 952 parents with children were surveyed specifically on corporal punishment. 57% of parents reported using corporal punishment, most commonly on children aged 3 years, with 33% using severe corporal punishment (beating with a belt or stick), most commonly on 4-year-olds. Of those who had smacked their children in the past year, 30% were men and 70% were women, with fewer younger than older parents using corporal punishment. The study concluded that the strongest predictor of severe corporal punishment was an attitude supportive of the use of physical punishment.

(Dawes, A. et al., 2004, *Partner violence, attitudes to child discipline & the use of corporal punishment: A South African national survey*, Cape Town: Child Youth & Family Development, Human Sciences Research Council)

SWAZILAND

A large scale survey by Save the Children in 2005 looked at the experience over a two week period of corporal punishment of 2,366 children aged 6-18 years from all of Swaziland's four regions. Children revealed being subjected to high levels of corporal punishment in the home and at school: 18% reported being hit with the hand in the home during the period; 28% reported being beaten with objects such as sticks, belts, sjamboks and whips. Boys were punished for such behaviour as breaking or stealing things, not tending livestock properly, playing instead of working, or playing out too late. Young children, particularly girls, were punished in connection with household chores. In school during the two weeks, 28% of children reported being hit with a hand, and 59% reported being beaten with an object, most often sticks, canes, sjamboks and blackboard dusters. Other punishments included

physical labour or physical (and often humiliating) activities causing pain and discomfort. Children reported experiencing humiliating punishment, 35% in the home, 28% in school, in addition to experiencing corporal punishment itself as humiliating. Generally, corporal punishment was more commonly used in low income environments and on younger children. 77% of children considered corporal punishment to be unacceptable in the home and in school; 81% felt humiliating punishment to be unacceptable. The study also involved qualitative research with 384 children from the regions.

(Clacherty, G., Donald, D. & Clacherty, A., 2005, *Children's Experiences of Corporal Punishment in Swaziland*, Pretoria: Save the Children Sweden)

UGANDA

A survey of 500 young women in Uganda aged 18-24 years concerning their childhood experiences of violence, undertaken by the Africa Child Policy Forum and published in 2006, found that 94.2% had been subjected to physical violence. Beating with an object was found to be the most prevalent form of physical violence (85.8%). Prevalence figures for other forms of physical violence were 55% for punching, 26.8% kicking, 47.8% hard work, 20.4% being choked/burned/stabbed, 9% having spicy/bitter food put in mouth, 18.2% being locked or tied up, and 52.8% being denied food. Girls were found to be most vulnerable to beating with an object when aged 10-13 years (57.1%), and to being hit/punched when aged 14-17 years (44%). Experiencing the violence more than ten times was more likely in the case of beating than other types of physical violence. Most beating with an object was carried out by male teachers (48.5%), followed by fathers (43.4%) and mothers (42.9%), and in 57.3% of cases medical attention was required. Most hitting/punching was carried out by fathers (22.9%), followed by mothers (17.1%) and brothers (15.6%), with medical attention required in 21.1% of cases. At school, girls were told they were beaten for being late, for misbehaving, or for being disrespectful. At home, the reasons given for beating or hitting included for breaking/losing something, for being disrespectful to their elders, or for not doing housework.

(Stavropoulos, J., 2006, *Violence Against Girls in Africa: A Retrospective Survey in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda*, Addis Ababa, The African Child Policy Forum)

In-depth research into children's experiences of violence against them was carried out in 2005 using a range of methods to look at the stories and opinions of 1,406 children aged 8-18 years (719 girls, 687 boys) and 1,093 adults (520 women, 573 men), including parents, teachers and community leaders, from five diverse districts. This included the administration of 1,000 questionnaires to children (in and out of school), of which 777 were valid returns, and 900 questionnaires to adults, of which 755 were valid returns. Other methods were focus groups, narrative role play, journal writing and interviews. Almost all children (98.3%) reported experiencing physical violence at home and/or school. The most common forms were caning, slapping and pinching, followed by burning, locking up, tying up and other (e.g. kneeling, slashing grass, cleaning latrines), all more common for boys than girls except slapping, pinching and other. Older boys were more likely to experience severe physical violence. Almost one third (31.3%) said they experienced physical violence at least once per week and 15% said it happened "every day"; 38.8% said it occurred mainly at home, 28.6% said mainly at school and 31.8% said both at school and home. Most adults (90%) agreed that in their communities children were deliberately beaten, with 37% saying children in their communities were "frequently mistreated"; 55.1% said "sometimes mistreated". Most (91.3%) described using a combination of physical and emotional punishment, most commonly caning (78.3%), slapping (45.7%), pinching (42.8%), assigning excessive work (19.3%), and locking children up (11.4%), tying them up (3.4%) and burning them (2.9%). Apart from caning, these figures are significantly lower than those given by the children. Only 1.2% said they themselves never punished children. While 87.9% said they punished children to guide their behaviour, only 32.6% believed the punishment would change the behaviour. 81.7% said they punished their own children and 57.9% said they felt comfortable punishing other children in the community. Of teachers, 80.1% reported punishing their own children and 60.4% their students. Of

community leaders, 89.4% punished their own children compared with 22.4% punishing others' children.

(Naker, D., 2005, *Violence Against Children – The Voices of Ugandan Children and Adults*, Raising Voices/Save the Children in Uganda)

Research reported in 2004 looked at the problem of violence against children in Uganda and found that physical abuse was the most common form. More than nine out of ten children (93.3%) reported having experienced physical violence including caning, slapping and pinching. Of those who experienced physical violence, 16.1% said it occurred at least once a week, 15% said it occurred daily.

(Dipak, 2004, "Raising Voices Uganda", cited in Derib, A., 2005, *Regional Report on Physical and Humiliating Punishment Against Children*, Save the Children)

In research by Save the Children UK focusing on deprivation and criminal behaviour, carried out in 2002, 116 children who had been convicted of theft and children at the national rehabilitation centre, aged 10-19 years and 71 parents/guardians were interviewed. The prohibition of caning in the juvenile justice system under the Children's Statute was perceived as a weakness by 14% of parents. The research confirmed that despite the law, children are tortured and beaten in police stations. 52% of parents said they normally disciplined their children by caning.

(Kakama, P.T., 2002, *Deprivation of Basic Needs as a Motivator for Criminal Activities among Children*, Save the Children UK)

Research carried out by the Mulago Child Health Development Centre showed that mothers were the main enforcers of corporal punishment, and between 55% and 82% of them reported caning, slapping or beating their children.

(Cited in Economic and Social Council, 1999, *Report submitted by Ms Katarina Tomasevski, Special Rapporteur on the right to education Addendum Mission to Uganda 26 June – 2 July 1999*, E/CN.4/2000/6/Add.1)

The initial state party report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child cites research by the Child Law Review Committee which established that of the 129 children who were found guilty and sentenced, 15.5% were caned.

(Initial state party report, 1996, CRC/C/3/Add.40, para. 243)

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

Research into the use of corporal punishment in schools across the country revealed a high prevalence rate and the strong support of parents in both urban and rural schools: 65% of pupils accepted corporal punishment, 85% of parents. All pupils disliked corporal punishment. Punishments included contorted body positions, frog jumps, push ups, kneeling down, standing in bright sunshine, lying on sand and lifting stones, with most pupils being subjected to more than two types.

("Kuleana study on corporal punishment in primary schools in Mara region", 1997, reported in initial state party report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1999, CRC/C/8/Add.14/Rev.1, paras.187-194)

ZAMBIA

A large scale survey conducted by Save the Children in 2005, involving 2,321 children aged 6-18 years from all nine of Zambia's provinces, looked at children's experiences of corporal punishment over a two week period. The findings were also informed by in depth qualitative research with 384 children from four provinces. The research found that 24% of children reported experiencing corporal

punishment in the home during the period, including being beaten with hands, sticks and belts. Despite the prohibition of corporal punishment at school, 32% reported being hit with a hand during the period and 38% with an object, most commonly a stick or hosepipe. Other punishments included hard physical labour and excessive physical exercise. Humiliating punishment was reported as being experienced in the home by 43% of children and in school by 37%. Corporal punishment was more common in low income than high income environments and more common for younger (6-12 years) than older (13-18 years) children. It was most often inflicted by mothers in the home and by teachers in schools. It was also administered by prefects in boarding schools. Almost three in four children (70%) felt corporal punishment was unacceptable in the home and in school; 79% felt that humiliating punishment was unacceptable.

(Clacherty, G., Donald, D. & Clacherty, A., 2005, *Zambian Children's Experiences of Corporal Punishment*, Pretoria: Save the Children Sweden)

ZIMBABWE

An analysis of epidemiological data of reported physical abuse of primary school pupils by teachers between January 1990 and December 1997 (73.9% reported to the Ministry of Education, 26.1% to the police) examined cases of corporal punishment which violated the regulations established for its administration (see above). The study found that of 38 cases, in 80.4% the victims were beaten, whipped or hit, 10.9% were clapped or slapped, 4.3% were punched with fists, 2.2% were kicked, and 2.2% punched. Boys were more commonly physically punished than girls (58.7% compared with 41.3% respectively).

(Shumba, A., 2001, "Epidemiology and etiology of reported cases of child physical abuse in Zimbabwean primary schools", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 25, pp.265-277)