



GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO  
End All Corporal  
Punishment of Children

# Global report 2019

**Progress towards ending corporal  
punishment of children**



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corporal punishment of children**

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**NOTE ON FACTS AND FIGURES**

The Global Initiative bases its analyses on a total of 199 states: all states parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child except Holy See, plus the Republic of Kosovo, Taiwan, USA and Western Sahara. Child population figures are from UNICEF 2015 and, where these are unavailable, Government of the Republic of Kosovo, 2015, Ministry of Interior, 2015 (Taiwan) and UNICEF 2013 (Western Sahara).

# Our mission

**To end violence against children through universal prohibition and elimination of all corporal punishment – the most pervasive and accepted form of violence against children**

**We work as a catalyst to end all corporal punishment worldwide.**



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**Corporal punishment is not only a violation of children’s right to protection from harm – the evidence base continues to grow confirming the serious impact of violent punishment on children and societies.**

ANNE CROWLEY, CHAIR



A message from  
**Anne Crowley**

Chair, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children

In 2019, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – we also saw the total number of states prohibiting all corporal punishment of children jump from 54 to 58, increasing the global child population fully protected in law from 10 to 12%.

At the Global Initiative, we see this as evidence of the growing awareness of this form of violence against children as a fundamental human rights issue. This is heartening, in a year marred by pushback against human rights in many parts of the world. Living in a world of multiple serious and challenging issues, children are often not prioritised – but this is always a mistake. Investing in children’s issues is an investment in so many other issues.

Corporal punishment is not only a violation of children’s right to protection from harm – the evidence base continues to grow confirming the serious impact of violent punishment on societies. Children who experience corporal punishment are more likely to display aggression, to engage in **peer violence** as teenagers, and to grow up to be either perpetrators or victims of intimate partner violence. Vulnerable children such as **children with disabilities** and **displaced children** are more likely to experience corporal punishment.

By tackling this form of violence, we can stop intergenerational cycles of violence. Therefore, we are calling on more states to commit to confront this issue, recognising that by doing so they can challenge **gender-based violence** and wider forms of violence in society. Ending corporal punishment of children is truly a critical factor in achieving sustainable development, and we need to see it prioritised now that we have just one decade left to meet the objectives in the Sustainable Development Goals.

It will take a global movement of actors to see corporal punishment fully eliminated. For 2020, the Global Initiative has committed to building our supporter movement so that it is even bigger, spans more of the world, and is yet more active. We have started this process with a multi-lingual website to ensure our information and resources reach a wider range of activists, and extend the momentum for change as far as we can.

**Will you join our movement?**

# Mobilising and growing across the globe

We have been busy this year mobilising and growing our global movement of advocates for children's rights across the globe. This includes strengthening networks of supporters and civil society actors, including women- and youth-led groups, helping them to improve collaboration and grow their knowledge, scale of activity and reach to end corporal punishment.



Recognising the value of collaboration, throughout 2019, we have been active members of the **Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children**, in particular contributing to its CSO Forum and the development of the global **#SafetoLearn campaign**. We also took part in the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, where the vital importance of ending violence against children (Target 16.2) was reiterated.

Ending corporal punishment and all violence against children requires sustained collaboration between government departments and agencies and with a broad range of service providers, professional bodies and non-governmental and civil society actors, including faith-based, youth and marginalised groups. Building alliances and working as a coalition allows many different actors to play a role, each bringing their own specialism and audience, and demonstrating support for law and policy reform across different sectors.

The journey is long and requires knowledge and evidence, motivation and above all perseverance. Our global network of supporters is therefore vital in achieving our mission to end corporal

**Ending the abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, is of particular importance to achieve sustainable development. We must challenge socially accepted violence against children, and the pervasive use of corporal punishment in the home, schools and other care settings, or we risk eroding any progress towards meeting SDG 4 on a quality education.**

AMIRA ABOHUSSEIN, SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF THE UN MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, JULY 2019

punishment and promote positive, respectful relationships between adults and children. Through our diverse group of almost **2,000 partners across all world regions**, we show solidarity in numbers, we encourage collaboration, we learn from each other's successes and setbacks, and we establish partnerships for sustained activity.

The Global Initiative maintains and supports this network with a **comprehensive hub of evidence**, targeted advocacy resources and the provision of training, technical assistance, connections and translations to support their work. We also provide a **platform for partners** to showcase their work, share their learning and grow their own networks, and we continually seek to expand our global network and the support that we provide.

To this end, in 2019, we published a **short guide to law reform**, launched a new **Asia-Pacific newsletter**, and expanded our website to include **guest features** and targeted information relating to each region and different areas of work. We have translated our country reports in **26 languages** and we continue to maintain all 237 reports in English. We also launched websites in **French, Spanish and Portuguese**, packed with information on global progress, human rights mechanisms and a range of resources to support advocacy, and we are preparing to launch sites in Arabic, Chinese and Russian soon.

A big thank you to all of our partners and supporters for continuing this vital work to keep children safe. Together we are holding governments to account to end everyday violence against children. Join our network at [endcorporalpunishment.org/supporters](http://endcorporalpunishment.org/supporters)

# Challenging ‘reasonable chastisement’ in the UK and worldwide

The past year has seen encouraging progress in UK nations and territories challenging the English common law defence of ‘reasonable chastisement’ of children. Scotland repealed the equivalent defence in October, followed by the British Crown Dependency of Jersey in December and Wales in January.

As these legal defences only apply to assaults on children, removing them means that the law on assault now applies equally to children, recognising their right to the same protection from violence as adults and effectively prohibiting corporal punishment.

This is certainly a milestone to celebrate for children in Scotland, Jersey and Wales, now and for generations to come.

The Global Initiative has proudly supported campaigns to prohibit corporal punishment across the UK since our creation in 2001. Throughout 2019, we worked with child rights advocates in Scotland to support and promote law reform, including providing written and oral evidence to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee who examined the Bill to remove the defence. We have also continued our longstanding support to the Welsh campaign, responding to calls for evidence and working closely with the Equal Protection Network Cymru (formerly CAU Wales) and other campaigners.

**Through its colonial past, England has been responsible for rooting this legal defence in over 70 countries and territories throughout the world... In the action being taken today the [Irish] Government is putting children first and providing leadership, which will I hope give confidence to the Government at Westminster, the devolved UK administrations and other countries across the globe to discard these archaic and disreputable defences and give full respect to the dignity of children.**

JILLIAN VAN TURNHOUT, FORMER SENATOR, IRELAND\*



**63 OF THE 141**  
STATES THAT HAVE  
NOT YET PROHIBITED  
ALL CORPORAL PUNISHMENT  
HAVE DEFENCES OF  
‘REASONABLE  
CHASTISEMENT’  
OR SIMILAR

**17 OF THE 32**  
STATES WHERE  
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT  
(WHIPPING, FLOGGING, CANING)  
IS STILL LAWFUL  
AS A SENTENCE FOR CRIMES  
COMMITTED BY CHILDREN ARE  
MEMBERS OF  
THE COMMONWEALTH

While we congratulate Scotland and Wales, children in England and Northern Ireland must not be left behind. Their right to equal protection – equal to adults and equal to children in other UK nations – needs urgent attention. We will continue putting pressure on the UK Government to guarantee all children equal protection from assault.

In 2019, we collaborated with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland to create an animation calling for equal protection for children, launched in Belfast in May. We provided evidence to the International Development Parliamentary Committee’s inquiry on the Government’s support for SDG 16, which highlighted how the UK’s current domestic legislation and international aid policy will not

be enough to meet Target 16.2 by 2030. And we held a workshop on Equal Protection in England at the ‘Celebrating Children’s Rights’ conference to discuss how to capitalise on momentum and bring the rest of the UK in line.

But this is not just a UK issue. England’s colonial past has resulted in legal defences for corporal punishment that still exist in statutes or in common law all over the world. Thankfully, challenges to this archaic defence are becoming more commonplace, not just within the UK. Recognising that it no longer reflected their societies, it was removed in Israel (in 2000), New Zealand (2007), the Pitcairn Islands (2009), Ireland (2015) and South Africa (2019). The time is overdue for the whole of the UK – and the world – to catch up.

# South Africa prohibits all corporal punishment

**On 18 September 2019, the Constitutional Court of South Africa ruled that the common law defence of ‘reasonable and moderate chastisement’ is unconstitutional, effectively banning all corporal punishment of children.**

Considering an appeal to a 2017 judgment by the South Gauteng High Court which struck down the defence, the Constitutional Court agreed that allowing physical discipline violates children’s rights. The Court found that it is in children’s best interests to abolish the defence, in light of the existence of alternative non-violent methods to achieve the same goal of raising a responsible member of society.

The ruling was welcomed by the Government, child rights activists and faith-based organisations as a landmark moment in the struggle to end violence against children, including gender based violence, in South Africa. The Global Initiative joined the case as amicus curiae, along with Parent Centre and the Dullah Omar Institute for Constitutional Law, Governance and Human Rights.

SOUTH AFRICA  
IS THE

8<sup>TH</sup>

AFRICAN STATE

TO PROHIBIT ALL  
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT  
OF CHILDREN

South African CSOs including the Children’s Institute, the Peace Centre and Sonke Gender Justice were respondents in the case, represented by the Centre for Child Law.

This ruling marks a milestone for children’s rights in South Africa. It is the result of a long-standing collaboration between a range of stakeholders including government and UN agencies, international and national NGOs and CSOs. The Global Initiative has worked closely with national partners for over ten years towards prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment. While we celebrate the effective ban achieved by the Constitutional Court ruling, one important step remains.

In 2007, CSOs were actively campaigning for law reform to repeal the common law defence of ‘reasonable and moderate chastisement’. A proposed amendment to the Children’s Act included a provision prohibiting corporal punishment in the home but the Portfolio Committee on Social Development removed the provision, claiming it needed further investigation.

In 2018, the draft Children’s Third Amendment Bill was published and opened for feedback. The Global Initiative, in collaboration with and endorsed by Save the Children South Africa, The Peace Centre and Sonke Gender Justice,

submitted commentary on the Bill calling for clear and unequivocal prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings. The Bill, which includes provisions on child discipline, provides a timely opportunity for the Government to confirm the Constitutional Court ruling with an explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in legislation. As at January 2020, the Bill is yet to be adopted.

As in all states, prohibition of corporal punishment in South Africa needs to be accompanied by a nationwide campaign that promotes children’s right to protection from violence and equips

parents and teachers to use positive methods of raising and educating children. Child rights activists are already mobilising, but the Government must provide adequate resources and support to ensure the ban on corporal punishment becomes a reality. South African children deserve to live free from violence. The time is now.

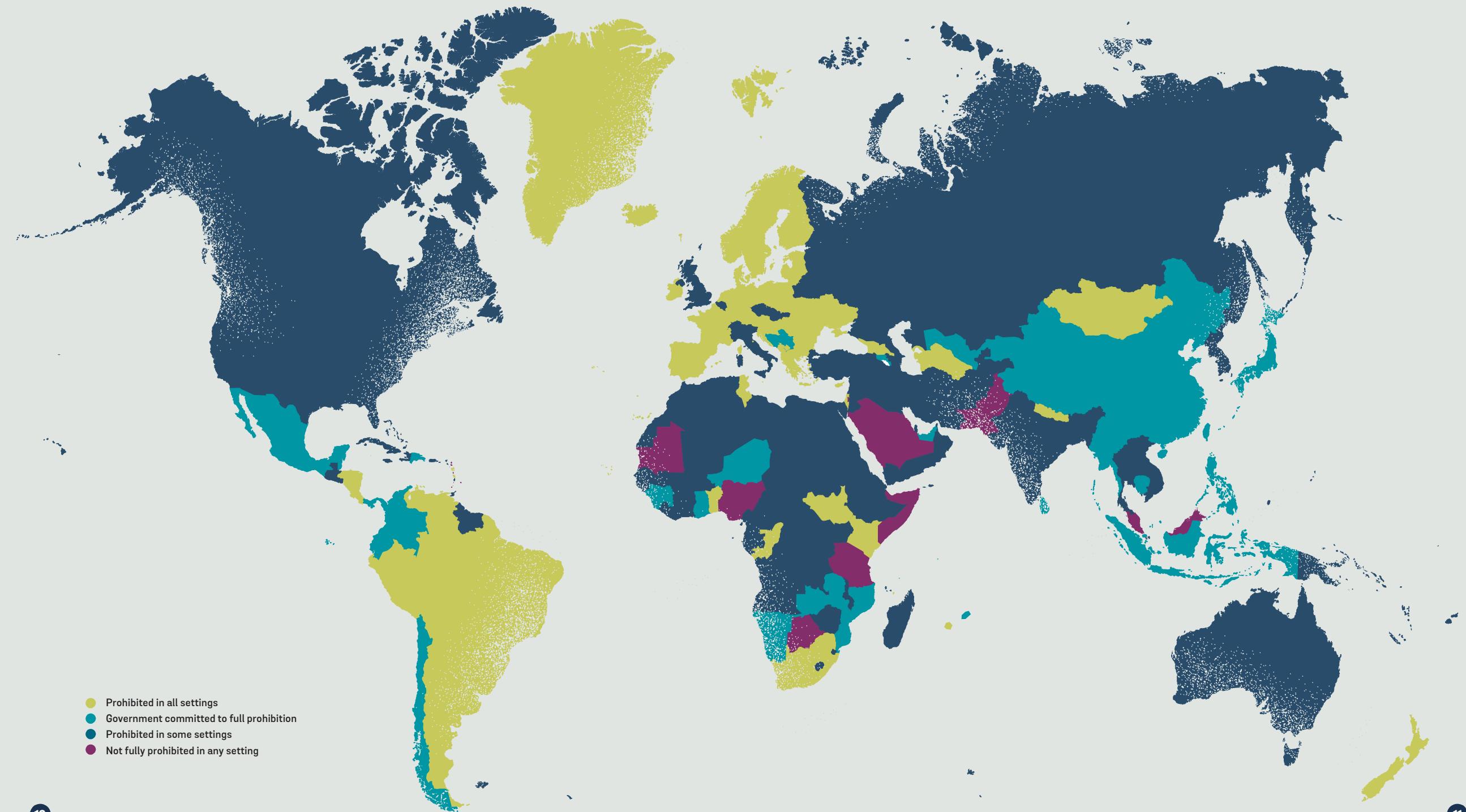
**THE GOVERNMENT  
MUST PROVIDE ADEQUATE  
RESOURCES AND SUPPORT  
TO ENSURE THE BAN ON  
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT  
BECOMES A REALITY**



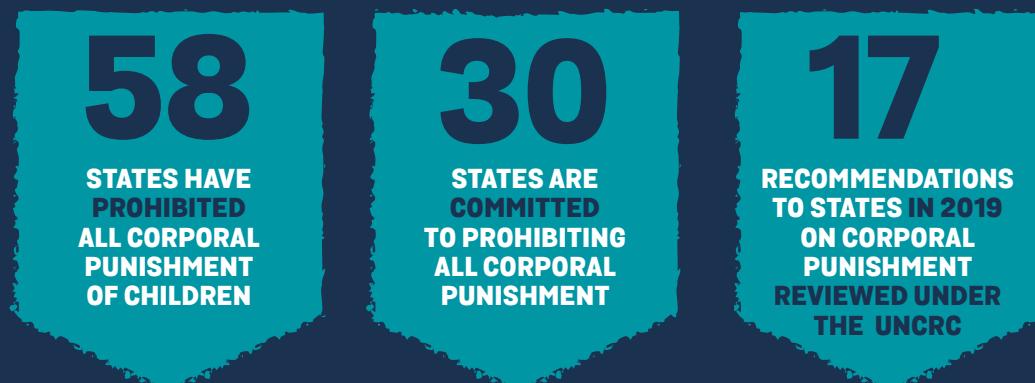
# Legality of corporal punishment

Throughout 2019, we reviewed states' commitment to law reform and called on all governments to publicly commit to enacting legislation which prohibits all corporal punishment of children in all settings including the home, without delay.

As of January 2020, there are 30 states committed to law reform, down from 56 in January 2019. You can find more information on the review and see if your state has made the cut at [endcorporalpunishment.org/committed-states](http://endcorporalpunishment.org/committed-states).



# Progress in numbers



States that issued the most UPR recommendations on corporal punishment in 2019

MONTENEGRO  
URUGUAY  
CHILE

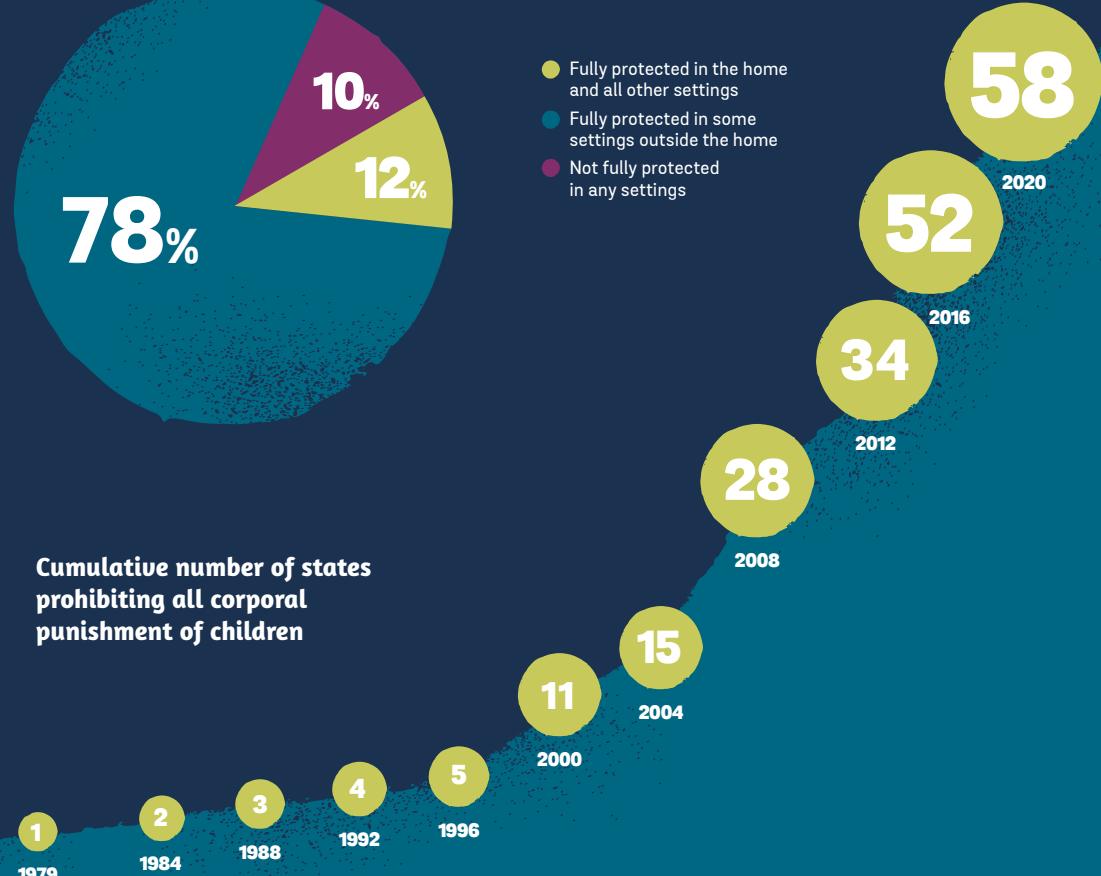
Number of states worldwide prohibiting corporal punishment of children in law



Percentage of global child population fully protected in law from corporal punishment



Cumulative number of states prohibiting all corporal punishment of children



# Coming up in 2020

## Working towards reform in Nigeria

We are rolling out a new and exciting project together with Amnesty International Nigeria to bring law reform on corporal punishment to the forefront of the Government's agenda. Nigeria's first national Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) conducted in 2014 found half of all children experience physical violence, with parents or adult relatives the most common perpetrator. This project will begin to address the outdated legislative approach to corporal punishment, involving Government and civil society and culminating in a strategic law reform workshop.

## Decade of Action for delivering the SDGs

In January 2020, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres launched a decade of action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. This includes an annual 'Action Platform' to highlight inspiring action and drive progress on the Goals; the first will take place in September 2020 as part of the UN's commemoration of its 75th anniversary.

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development will take place on 7–16 July 2020 on the theme *Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*, where 50 countries will conduct Voluntary National Reviews.

## Biennial global conference on corporal punishment

It is proposed that the next High Level Global Conference on the Universal Prohibition of Corporal Punishment be held in Tunisia this year. The last event was held in Malta in 2018, under the patronage of Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta (2014–2019).

[endcorporalpunishment.org/  
malta-2018](http://endcorporalpunishment.org/malta-2018)

## End Violence Solutions Summit

The second End Violence Solutions Summit will be held in late 2020, to share learning and best practice on what works to end violence against children, including corporal punishment. The first event was held in Sweden in 2018. The Global Initiative launched a report at the Summit, analysing progress to end corporal punishment in Pathfinding countries of the End Violence Global Partnership.

[endcorporalpunishment.org/sdgs](http://endcorporalpunishment.org/sdgs)

## Global status report on violence prevention

The second edition of this global review of violence prevention efforts will be launched in the coming months by WHO, UNDP, and UNODC. The first edition, published in 2014, included data from 133 countries on child maltreatment, including corporal punishment, and called for stronger legislation and enforcement of laws to prevent violence.

**A decade of action and delivery is our opportunity to fulfill the historic promise of the 2030 Agenda and ensure collective, global action and shared responsibility. We must take action – striving together, delivering for all.**

TIJJANI MUHAMMAD-BANDE,  
PRESIDENT OF THE UN  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY\*

## Exciting progress towards prohibition

### Japan

The implementing guidelines on the amendments adopted in June 2019 should be finalised by 1 April 2020. The draft guidelines reportedly prohibit all forms of corporal and other humiliating and degrading punishment, in all settings regardless of parental authority.

### Kyrgyzstan

A draft new Child Code and amendments to the Code of misdemeanours which prohibit all corporal punishment were introduced in Parliament in December 2019.

### Colombia

A Bill aiming to prohibit all corporal punishment, drafted by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute in partnership with civil society, was introduced in the House of Representatives in August 2019 and could be passed in 2020. Clarification is needed on whether the ban would apply to indigenous communities.

### Mauritius

The Children's Bill was introduced to the National Assembly in September 2019. As introduced, the Bill explicitly prohibits all corporal punishment.

\* Speaking at the UN Summit on Sustainable Development Goals, September 2019.

# How you can help

**There are many ways that you can get more involved as a supporter and contribute to our growing network:**

- Write a **guest feature** for our website to share your story about how you or your organisation is working to end corporal punishment.
- Commission a **law reform workshop** where we can guide your organisation and your partners to develop a national strategy and action plan to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment.
- Check our **global map of supporters** to see what organisations in your country are signed up – encourage more to join the network and form a coalition to end corporal punishment.

**We cannot continue our work without the generous financial support from people like you.**

- Make a donation on our website [endcorporalpunishment.org/donate](http://endcorporalpunishment.org/donate).
- Join our **major gifts** programme. By becoming a sustaining member of the campaign, you will ensure we have the resources to continue holding governments to account on their commitment to end everyday violence against children.
- Leave a **legacy**. Changing laws and policies and ensuring they are implemented properly is a long, arduous process, but the result is sustained systematic change that will help generations of children to come. Make a lasting difference by leaving a gift in your will.



**JUST  
12%**  
**OF THE WORLD'S  
CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED  
IN LAW FROM VIOLENT  
PUNISHMENT.**  
**YOU CAN HELP US MAKE THIS  
100%**

To find out more about any of these options, contact us at [info@endcorporalpunishment.org](mailto:info@endcorporalpunishment.org)



GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO  
**End All Corporal  
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The **Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children** provides support for law reform to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment of children.

[www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)

