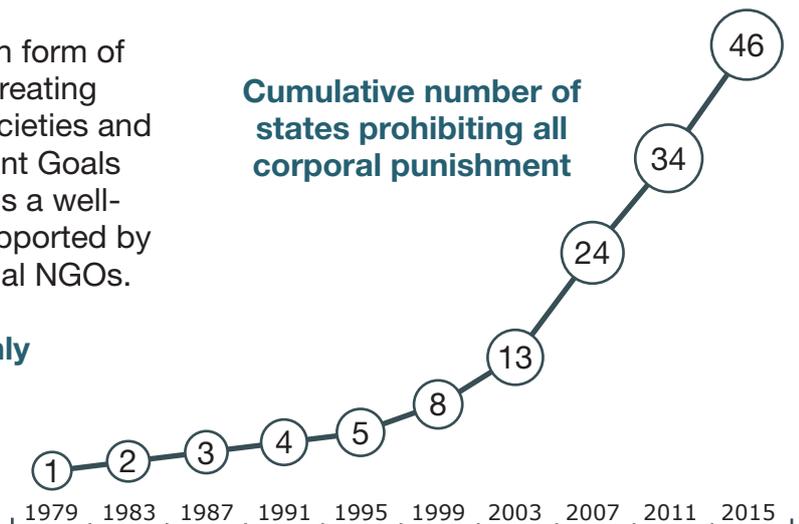


Ending violent punishment of children – a foundation of a world free from fear and violence

Indicators for target 16.2 – ending all forms of violence against children

Ending violent punishment – the most common form of violence against children – is fundamental to creating peaceful, non-violent and rights-respecting societies and key to achieving other Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. Prohibition of all violent punishment is a well-established human rights imperative and is supported by UNICEF, UNESCO and many major international NGOs.

This briefing urges the adoption of two highly “suitable, relevant and feasible” global indicators for SDG target 16.2 on ending all forms of violence against children.¹



Progress towards universal prohibition of violent punishment: more than half of states have achieved or have committed to achieving a complete ban

Worldwide, 46 states have prohibited violent punishment of children in all settings including the family home and 52 have committed to do so.² Nearly two-thirds of states have prohibited corporal punishment in schools and a large majority have prohibited it in penal institutions. Since the first state, Sweden, prohibited all corporal punishment in 1979, progress has accelerated rapidly (see graph). Universal prohibition of violent punishment of children by 2030 is a realistic and achievable aim. It is a fundamental element in fulfilling targets 16.1 and 16.2 of the 2030 Agenda and is highly relevant to other targets.



“To achieve the world free from fear and violence to which we all aspire, we must build societies in which violent punishment of children is not legally or socially tolerated. The acceptance by states of SDG target 16.2 on ending all forms of violence against children is a breakthrough; fulfilling it is fundamental to the achievement of other SDG targets on health, education, violence against women and equality. Now it is essential to adopt indicators that specifically cover prohibition and elimination of violent punishment, acknowledged to be the most common form of violence against children. This briefing demonstrates that these indicators are highly suitable and relevant and entirely feasible.”

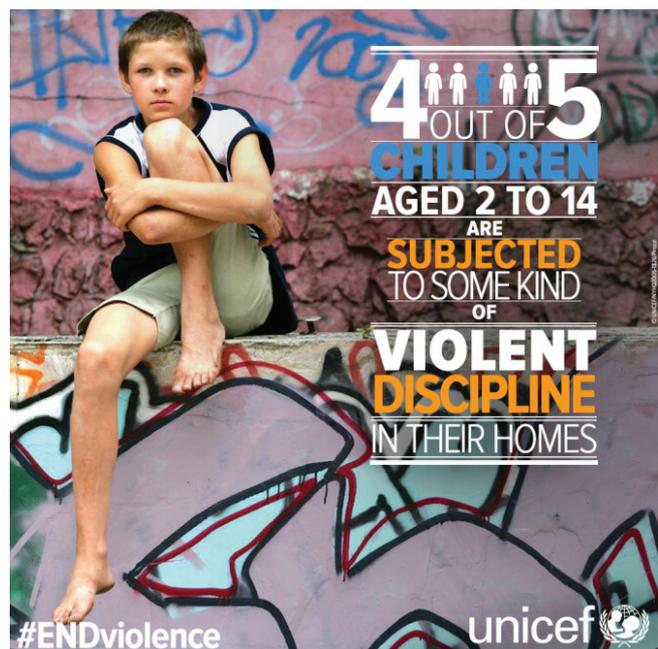
Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the Independent Expert who led the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children

Prohibition and elimination of violent punishment: essential for ending violence against children and for other SDG targets

Key SDG targets monitored by indicators on violent punishment

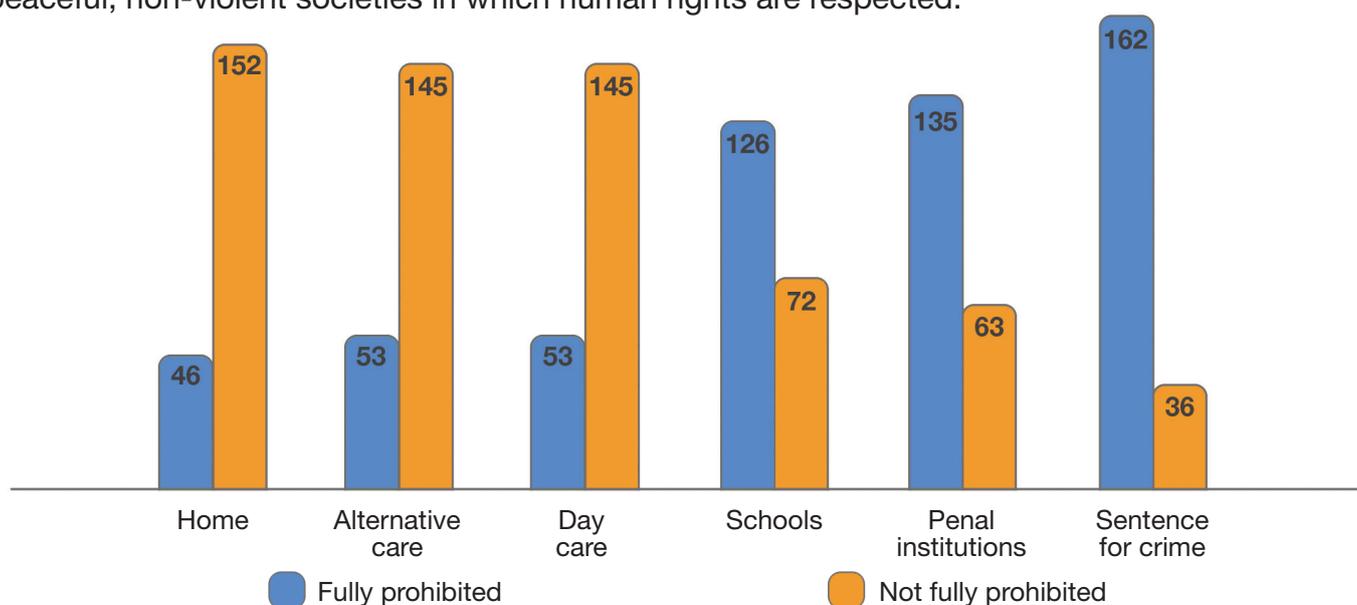
Target 16.2: “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children”

This briefing proposes that indicators on the legality and prevalence of corporal punishment would fall under target 16.2. Many UN entities and major children’s rights INGOs have proposed a priority indicator on the prevalence of violent punishment under this target. Violent punishment, the most common form of violence against children, is widespread in states in all regions. A major UNICEF report published in 2014 which used data from 62 countries found that on average 80% of children aged 2-14 had experienced violent “discipline” at home in the past month and 17% of children had experienced severe physical punishment (being hit on the head, face or ears or hit hard and repeatedly) at home in the past month.³ Prohibiting corporal punishment is essential in ending all abuse and violence against children.



Target 16.1: “Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere”

Ending violent punishment is key not only to ending violence against children, but to reducing violence across the whole of society in the longer term. Violence against children is the foundation and source of much violence in society. There is overwhelming evidence that violent punishment of children is associated with increased aggression and involvement in criminal behaviour in children and adults.⁴ Efforts to end corporal punishment are crucial to building peaceful, non-violent societies in which human rights are respected.



“We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity... A world ... in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation.”

Other SDG targets which indicators on violent punishment would monitor

Target 3.d: “Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks”

There is overwhelming evidence that violent punishment has a negative impact on the physical and mental health of children and adults. On the basis of this evidence, nine major international health professionals’ organisations have issued a statement calling on all governments to work for the prohibition and elimination of all corporal punishment.⁵ Prohibiting violent punishment is an essential public health measure and a key strategy for improving physical and mental health and other developmental outcomes for children and adults.

Target 4.a: “Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”

As well as violating children’s right to respect for their physical integrity and human dignity, violent punishment in schools and other education settings violates children’s right to education, including by creating a violent and intimidating environment in which children are less able to learn and by discouraging children from attending school. Yet violent punishment remains lawful in some or all schools in 72 states worldwide, and in day care (such as early childhood care and education settings) in 145 states. Prohibiting corporal punishment is vital to creating safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective schools for all children.

Target 5.2: “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”

Violent punishment is the most common form of violence against girls. The experience of violent punishment is gendered – girls may suffer different types of punishment than boys and may be punished for different reasons, typically reinforcing stereotypic ideas of what it

means to be a woman. Violent punishment is used to control and regulate girls’ behaviour, including their social and sexual behaviour, and to encourage deference, submission and timidity.

Violent punishment of children is closely linked to violence against women, including intimate partner violence: the two kinds of violence often coexist and experience of violent punishment as a child is associated with an increased risk of involvement in intimate partner violence as an adult, as both perpetrator and/or victim. Prohibiting violent punishment contributes to eliminating violence against girls and women both directly, in reducing violence against girls, and indirectly, in reducing gender-based violence across the whole of society.

“In almost all countries, parents and other caregivers are the most commonly cited perpetrators of physical violence against adolescent girls.”

UNICEF, “Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children”, 2014

Target 10.3: “Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard”

A legal system which allows children to be lawfully assaulted in the name of “discipline” while protecting adults from violent assault is inherently discriminatory. Prohibiting violent punishment is not only essential to ending violence against children; it is also about children’s status. Nothing is more symbolic of the low regard given to children than the fact that they are afforded less legal protection from violent assault than adults. Ending the legality of violent punishment is key in creating a non-discriminatory legal system and in raising children’s status in society, promoting a view of them as holders of human rights and in turn contributing to ending all violations of their rights.

The human rights imperative to prohibit violent punishment

Prohibition of violent punishment is a well-established human rights imperative. In its General Comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child highlights that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires states to prohibit and eliminate all violent punishment of children, in the family home and all other settings of their lives. The Committee consistently recommends prohibition and elimination of violent punishment to states it examines. The Human Rights Committee, the Committee Against Torture, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women have all recommended prohibition of all corporal punishment of children. The issue is frequently raised in the Universal Periodic Review of states' overall human rights records. UNICEF, UNESCO and major international human rights NGOs, as well as many national NGOs and prominent individuals, support prohibition.⁶

Prohibition and elimination of violent punishment: highly feasible global indicators for ending violence against children (target 16.2)

Proposed global indicator on the elimination of violent punishment

“Percentage of children aged 1-14 years [or preferably 0-17 years] who experienced any physical punishment by caregivers in the past month”

UN entities including UNICEF, EOSG/RoLU, PBSO, UNDP and UNODC and the group of child-focused agencies advocating on the SDGs, including major children's rights INGOs, have proposed this as a priority indicator under target 16.2. As many of these entities have noted, UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys provide a clear and internationally comparable set of data on the prevalence of violent punishment of children.⁷ The existing data, available for more than 60 countries, provides clear baselines for measuring progress towards the elimination of all corporal punishment of children. The internationally accepted methodology used to carry out these surveys could quickly and easily be used in many other states, and expanded to cover ages 0-17, making this a highly feasible indicator.

Proposed global indicator on prohibition of violent punishment

“Violent punishment of children is prohibited in all settings of children's lives including the family home”

Complete data for this indicator for all states and territories worldwide is available and acknowledged by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF and other UN bodies as fully reliable. The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children provides comprehensive and constantly updated information on the legal status of corporal punishment of children in all states and territories. The Global Initiative uses this detailed information to systematically brief six UN treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review on progress towards the fulfilment of states' human rights obligations to prohibit all violent punishment. The information has been extensively used by these mechanisms in the development of their work on challenging violence against children. The existence of this easily adaptable dataset makes an indicator on prohibition of violent punishment very feasible.

• 1. Relevance, suitability and feasibility are the criteria used by the Bureau of the UN Statistical Commission to assess potential indicators • 2. As at September 2015 • 3. UNICEF (2014), Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children, NY: UNICEF • 4. A detailed review of research is available at www.endcorporalpunishment.org • 5. The statement is available at www.endcorporalpunishment.org • 6. A full list of supporters of prohibition is available at www.endcorporalpunishment.org • 7. See for example UNICEF (2014), Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children, NY: UNICEF

See Sustainable Development Goals indicators website, <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>

Briefing prepared by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, www.endcorporalpunishment.org, info@endcorporalpunishment.org, October 2015



Global Initiative to
End All Corporal Punishment
of Children