



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

**Day of General Discussion: Implementing Child Rights in Early
Childhood, September 17 2004, Palais Wilson, Geneva**
**SUBMISSION FROM THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO END ALL
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN**

Babies' and young children's lives are scarred by corporal punishment and other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by parents and other carers in almost every country in the world.

Available research suggests that babies and young children are the targets of the most corporal punishment – hitting, shaking, beating – both light and severe (for a summary of prevalence research, see www.endcorporalpunishment.org). The vast majority of physical maltreatment of children is delivered in a punitive context – it is corporal or physical punishment. Corporal punishment kills thousands of children every year and seriously injures very many more. In 2003, UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre produced a league table of child maltreatment deaths in OECD countries which showed that infants under one year are in greatest danger of death from maltreatment, with a risk level approximately three times higher than that for those aged 1-4 and approximately 6 times higher than those aged 5-14.¹

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has consistently upheld all children's right to protection from all corporal punishment and all other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It has stated that the CRC requires prohibition of all corporal punishment, linked to awareness-raising of children's right to protection and public education to promote positive, non-violent forms of discipline. It has made formal recommendations to more than 130 states in all continents. The Committee's position has been backed by other human rights treaty bodies, by Special Rapporteurs and by regional human rights mechanisms.

Despite the clear human rights imperative to eliminate all corporal punishment through prohibition and other measures, global progress is slow. Only about 13 states, most of them in Europe, have prohibited all corporal punishment including in the family. In all other states corporal punishment within the family remains tolerated by the law and approved by traditional attitudes.

¹ UNICEF (2003), *A league table of child maltreatment deaths in rich nations: Innocenti Report Card N.5* (Florence: UNICEF)

In the recommendations to be issued following this day of General Discussion, we hope the Committee will propose that all states should:

- without delay prohibit all corporal punishment and all other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of children, within the family and in all forms of child care and education. *This requires removal of any legal defences or justifications for violent or degrading punishment and implementation of explicit prohibition;*
- ensure appropriate and effective enforcement of prohibition. *Children have a right to equal protection under the criminal law on assault and it is essential that the law should send a clear message that assaulting a child is as unlawful as assaulting anyone else. But prosecution of parents is very seldom in the interests of their children: the law should be implemented in the best interests of the affected children, encouraging early and supportive, rather than punitive, interventions.*
- link prohibition with comprehensive awareness-raising of all children's right to protection and with the promotion of positive, non-violent forms of discipline and education. *These should be built into every state's existing varied contacts with future parents and new parents and young children, through health services, birth registration, pre-school and school systems and so on; and also into the training of carers and nursery teachers.*
- commission confidential interview research studies with parents, other carers and children to reveal as accurately as possible the extent of violent and humiliating punishment and other forms of violence suffered by babies and young children within the family. *This should provide baseline data to enable progress towards reducing and eliminating violence against children to be measured.*
- establish in all states a system for the independent review of and reporting on all cases in which it appears that babies and young children have died or suffered serious injury as a result of deliberate violence or neglect. *The prime purpose of the review should be to establish what happened and how the violence could have been prevented.*

Peter Newell, July 2004

The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children is supported by UNICEF, UNESCO, members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and a wide range of international and national human rights institutions and non-governmental organisations and individual activists. Its website documents progress towards ending all corporal punishment through legal reform and public education and provides information on research. There is a wide range of links to web-based resources promoting positive, non-violent forms of discipline.

www.endcorporalpunishment.org

info@endcorporalpunishment.org