



FACTFILE

Corporal punishment

What is the issue?

- Is corporal punishment a human rights issue? What is wrong with a gentle smack?

Key points

- Corporal punishment of children breaches their fundamental human rights to respect for human dignity and physical integrity
- UNICEF, members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and key international human rights organisations and individuals are all in agreement that smacking, however 'gentle', is wrong and violates international law.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly stipulates that States must protect children from violence (Article 19). This has been unambiguously interpreted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to include smacking (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No.8 2006:para 14).
- For many, the approval, tacit or otherwise, of corporal punishment illustrates the depth of resistance to children's rights.
- At least 29 countries have abolished all corporal punishment of children, including Sweden, Germany, Kenya, Uruguay and New Zealand - and more have reforms under discussion.
- According to research, "The evidence is clear and compelling - physical punishment of children and youth plays no useful role in their upbringing and poses only risks to their development. The conclusion is equally compelling - parents should be strongly encouraged to develop alternative and positive approaches to discipline". <http://www.cheo.on.ca/english/4220.shtml>

Key quotes

- "Addressing the widespread acceptance or tolerance of corporal punishment of children and eliminating it, in the family, schools and other settings, is not only an obligation of States parties under the Convention. It is also a key strategy for reducing and preventing all forms of violence in societies. " Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment 8: The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment, <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=8495>
- "The most important child rights issues are those that are symbolic of children's status in society. So, in terms of my work, that means children having equal protection under the law from violence." Peter Newell, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, interview with CRIN