

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

 East Asia and Pacific Launch of the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Millions of children spend more time under the care of adults in educational settings than anywhere else outside their homes. The Convention on the Rights of the Child requires States parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the Convention. While schools have an important role in protecting children from violence, for many children school is a place of violence:

- Violence perpetrated by teachers and other staff includes physical violence, humiliating forms of psychological punishment, sexual and gender-based violence and bullying. Corporal punishment such as beating and caning is standard practice in schools in many countries. While corporal punishment in school has been banned in 106 countries, enforcement is uneven.
- Other children can be cruel too, causing pain and distress through bullying. This can include not only physical aggression but the daily, repeated harassment that leaves deep scars. Too often bullying is not taken seriously by school authorities and children are reluctant to report it.

Facts and figures

- Bullying, by both students and staff, is often linked to discrimination against students from poor families, marginalized groups or those with particular personal characteristics, including those with disabilities. It is generally verbal, but can spill over into physical violence. Often bullying is repetitive and insidious.
- Sexual and gender-based violence is often directed at girls by male teachers and classmates. Such violence is facilitated by government failure to enforce laws to protect students from discrimination. Violence is also directed against lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gendered young people.
- Schools are affected by events in the wider community, such as gang culture and related criminal activity, particularly the drug trade.

Recommendations include:

- Legislate to prohibit corporal punishment in schools and educational establishments and put in place mechanisms to enforce this. Put in place safe, well publicized, confidential and accessible mechanisms for children and their families to report violence against children.
- Ensure the use of non-violent teaching and learning strategies. Adopt disciplinary measures that are not based on fear, threats, humiliation or physical force.
- Create programmes to address the whole school environment, including such things as nonviolent conflict resolution and anti-bullying policies.