Corporal punishment of children in Zimbabwe

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Child population 7,245,000 (UNICEF, 2020)

Summary of necessary legal reform to achieve full prohibition

Prohibition is still to be achieved in the home, alternative care settings, day care, schools and in penal institutions. Corporal punishment is unlawful as a sentence for crime under a 2019 Constitutional Court ruling but prohibition has not yet been confirmed through law reform.

Article 241 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act 2004 authorises "moderate corporal punishment" of children by parents, guardians and schoolteachers; article 7 of the Children's Act 2001 (Chapter 5:06) confirms the right of parents and guardians to "administer reasonable punishment". These provisions should be repealed and prohibition of all corporal punishment enacted in relation to parents and all persons with authority over children.

Alternative care settings – All provisions authorising corporal punishment by persons in loco parentis should be repealed, together with any laws specifically regulating corporal punishment in alternative care settings. Prohibition should be enacted in legislation applicable to all such settings (foster care, institutions, places of safety, emergency care, etc).

Day care – Corporal punishment should be prohibited in all early childhood care (nurseries, crèches, preschools, kindergartens, family centres, etc) and all day care for older children (day centres, after-school childcare, childminding, etc).

Schools – Provisions allowing corporal punishment in schools in the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act 2004, the Education Act 2004 and any other law or regulation should be repealed. Clear and explicit prohibition should be enacted in legislation applicable to all education settings, public and private.

Penal institutions – All legal provisions authorising corporal punishment should be repealed and prohibition of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure enacted in legislation applicable to all institutions accommodating children in conflict with the law.

Sentence for crime – Corporal punishment is unlawful following the 2019 Constitutional Court ruling but some legislation is still to be repealed, including provisions in the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 1927, the Prisons Act and the Children's Act 2001.

Current legality of corporal punishment

Home

Corporal punishment is lawful in the home. Article 7 of the Children's Act 2001 (Chapter 5:06) later revised through the Children's Amendment Bill, 2021 punishes ill-treatment and neglect of children and young persons but states: "(6) Nothing in this section shall be construed as derogating from the right of any parent or guardian of any child or young person to administer reasonable punishment to such child or young person." The Children's Amendment Bill, 2021 includes a new chapter (Part VA) in the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) relating to "early intervention and family preservation". Article 49B defines the purposes of early intervention and family preservation programmes. It requires every programme to include: (b) "…the promotion of positive and non-violent forms of discipline". However, it does not explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of children. As of July 2023, the Children's Amendment Bill, 2021 had not been signed into law by the President.

The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act 2004 states in article 241(2)(a) that "a parent or guardian shall have authority to administer moderate corporal punishment for disciplinary purposes upon his or her minor child or ward". Subparagraph (6) states: "In deciding whether or not any corporal punishment administered upon a minor person is moderate for the purposes of this section, a court shall take into account the following factors, in addition to any others that are relevant in the particular case: (a) the nature of the punishment and any instrument used to administer it; and (b) the degree of force with which the punishment was administered; and (c) the reason for the administration of the punishment; and (d) the age, physical condition and sex of the minor person upon whom it was administered; and (e) any social attitudes towards the discipline of children which are prevalent in the community among whom the minor person was living when the punishment was administered upon the minor person." Case law has found corporal punishment which causes death and corporal punishment involving burning beyond what is considered "moderate".[1]

The Constitution 1979 was amended in 1990 to allow "moderate" corporal punishment "in appropriate circumstances upon a person under the age of eighteen years by his parent or guardian or by someone in loco parentis or in whom are vested any of the powers of his parent or guardian" (article 15). According to the Government's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in 1999 efforts had been made to draft a Constitution which abolished corporal punishment but this was rejected by the populace.[2] But in 2011 the Government accepted recommendations to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings made during the Universal Periodic Review of Zimbabwe.[3] The new Constitution enacted in 2013 does not include the provision authorising corporal punishment of persons under 18. Rather, it protects the rights of all persons to respect for and protection of their human dignity and physical integrity, including the rights "to freedom from all forms of violence from public or private sources", and not to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; it states that no law may limit these rights. However, it does not explicitly prohibit corporal punishment. A General Laws Amendment Bill intended to harmonise laws with the Constitution is under discussion but the Bill as drafted in 2015 deals with "minor" amendments to existing laws: it does not prohibit corporal punishment of children. Further amendments proposed in November 2015 similarly do not address corporal punishment of children.[4]

A High Court review judgment in December 2014 expressed the possibility that corporal punishment by parents, guardians and persons in loco parentis might now be unconstitutional, but the judgment itself was concerned with judicial corporal punishment.[5] The ruling was confirmed by the Constitutional Court in relation to judicial corporal punishment but the Court refused to rule upon the constitutionality of corporal punishment in other settings (see "Sentence for crime", below).[6] In February 2017, a High Court judgment ruled that corporal punishment of children in homes and in schools was

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[1] R v Pondo & Anor 1966 RLR 478 (G) and S v Walata HH-84-89, cited in Feltoe, G. (2012), Commentary on the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23]
[2] [2011], CRC/C/ZWE/2 Unedited Version, Second state party report
[3] 19 December 2011, A/HRC/19/14, Report of the Working Group, paras. 94(22) and 95(5)
[4] National Assembly Order Paper for Tuesday 24th November 2015, Notice of Amendments: General Laws Amendment Bill, 2015 (HB 3A, 2015)
[5] The State vs Willard Chokuramba, High Court of Zimbabwe, 31 December 2014
[6] The State v. Willard Chokuramba, Constitutional Court, 3 April 2019, CCZ 10/19

unconstitutional: Justice Mangota held that parents and teachers inflicting corporal punishment on children were in breach of the 2013 Constitution which protects people's right to protection from inhuman and degrading treatment and from all forms of violence. This decision of unconstitutionality must be confirmed by the Constitutional Court but as of July 2023, the Court was still reserving its ruling.

In reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in November 2015, the Government stated that article 53 of the Constitution has the effect of prohibiting corporal punishment and it is currently considering the issue, which has been considered in consultations with all ten provinces in the country; recommendations were being prepared for the Children's Bill.[7] The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare Inter-Ministerial Task-Force (IMT) Technical Committee has prepared a draft discussion paper on the review of the Children's Act and related legislation which addresses corporal punishment: the Government recommends that article 7(6) of the Children's Act, which allows "reasonable punishment", be amended "to remove the endorsement of corporal punishment", but also notes that this recommendation "will have to await the outcome of the impending Constitutional Court judgment on this matter".[8] On 3 March 2017, the Health Minister declared that the Government was "looking at the [February 2017] ruling" and would be considering enacting a legal ban.[9] End Corporal Punishment no longer considers Zimbabwe as committed to prohibiting all corporal punishment of children without delay. Despite accepting recommendations to do so in 2011 during its Universal Periodic Review, subsequent recommendations in 2016 were not supported and the Government has given no indication that it intends to introduce law reform.

In March 2023, a High Court judgment[10] found not guilty and acquitted a mother whose son died after she subjected him to corporal punishment. Citing section 241 (2) of the Criminal Code, justice Munamato Mutevedzi argued that "in cases of murder resulting from corporal punishment administered by a parent or other authorised person, it is not enough for prosecution to simply allege assault." Justice Mutevedzi stressed that it is important to establish that the perpetrator "acted beyond the bounds of moderation". The judge therefore concluded that the mother "did not do anything outside the law. Her beating of the deceased remained reasonable".

Zimbabwe became a Pathfinder country with the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children in November 2019. This commits the Government to three to five years of accelerated action towards the achievement of Target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Alternative care settings

Corporal punishment is lawful in alternative care settings under article 241 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act 2004 and article 7(6) of the Children's Act 2001 (see under "Home").

Day care

Corporal punishment is lawful in early childhood care and in day care for older children under article 241 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act 2004 and article 7(6) of the Children's Act 2001 (see under "Home").

Schools

Corporal punishment is lawful in schools. Article 241(2)(b) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act 2004 states that a school teacher (defined as the head or deputy head of a school) "shall have

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[7] 16 November 2015, CRC/C/ZWE/Q/2/Add.1, Reply to list of issues, paras. 47, 48, 49 and 50
[8] Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (2015), Draft Discussion Paper on the Review of the Children's Act and Related Legislation, page 37
[9] http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/zimbabwe-considers-outlawing-corporal-punishment-children/, accessed 13 March 2017
[10] 9 March 2023, The State v. Yeukai Graham Mutero, HH 178-23

authority to administer moderate corporal punishment for disciplinary purposes upon any minor male pupil or student". A school is defined as including "an educational institution of any kind" (art. 242(1)). No teacher may administer corporal punishment on a female pupil or student (art. 242(4)) and school rules on the administration of corporal punishment must be adhered to (art. 242(5)). Subparagraph (6) sets out the factors a court must consider in deciding whether or not a punishment is "moderate" (see under "Home"). There is some case law concerning corporal punishment which exceeds the bounds of moderate chastisement by the headteacher.[11] In another case, a student teacher was convicted of assault for caning a schoolboy on his buttocks on the grounds that during the trial she admitted that she knew only the headmaster was allowed to administer strokes: however, without such an admission it may be that the common law right to impose moderate chastisement would apply to teachers.[12]

Article 69(2)(c) of the Education Act 1987 authorises for the making of regulations to provide for "discipline in schools and the exercise of disciplinary powers over pupils attending schools, including the administration of corporal punishment". Article 7(6) of the Children's Act 2001 (Chapter 5:06) provides a defence for the use of corporal punishment (see under "Home"). In 2011 it was announced that a decision had been taken to abolish corporal punishment in schools[13] but we have no detailed information. The Government has recommended that article 69(2)(c) of the Education Act be reviewed.[14] In reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2011, the Government noted that a Ministry of Education Policy Circular[15] provides that only the head of a school can administer corporal punishment on boys.

The 2017 High Court ruling (see under "Home") has deemed corporal punishment in schools to be unconstitutional. The judge also declared article 69(2)(c) of the Education Act unconstitutional – however the ruling has been referred to the Constitutional Court for confirmation.

The Minister of Primary and Secondary Education declared in March 2019 that the Government was moving to remove corporal punishment in schools through the Education Amendment Bill.[16] In 2020, a new article 68A on "Pupil discipline" was inserted by the Education Amendment Act. It states: "(1) The responsible authority of every school shall draw up a disciplinary policy for the school in accordance with standards set out in regulations prescribed by the Minister for the purpose. (2) The regulations and any disciplinary policy shall— (a) not permit any treatment which— (i) does not respect the human dignity of a pupil; or (ii) amounts to physical or psychological torture, or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; (b) prescribe the manner in which any punishment may be administered. (3) Disciplinary measures must be moderate, reasonable and proportionate in the light of the conduct, age, sex, health and circumstances of the pupil concerned and the best interests of the child shall be paramount. (4) No pupil may be suspended from school without first being granted a reasonable opportunity, with the support of his or her parents, to make representations with respect to the proposed suspension. (5) Under no circumstance is a teacher allowed to beat a child." But this new article does not explicitly prohibit all corporal punishment of children and does not amend article 69(2)(c) of the Act or article 241 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act.

Penal institutions

Corporal punishment is lawful as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions under article 241 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act 2004 and article 7(6) of the Children's Act 2001 (Chapter 5:06) (see under "Home").

[11] S v Mutetwa HH-373-87, cited in Feltoe, G. (2012), op cit.
[12] S v Mangwarira 1988 (2) ZLR 372 (S) X, cited in Feltoe, G. (2012), op cit.
[13] Plan International, AlertNet, 22 June 2011
[14] Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (2015), Draft Discussion Paper on the Review of the Children's Act and Related Legislation, page 37
[15] Policy Circular P35 of 1999
[16] See https://www.povonews.com/government/zimbabwe-gazettes-law-to-ban-corporal-punishment-in-schools/, accessed 3 April 2019

Sentence for crime

Corporal punishment is unlawful as a sentence for a crime under a 2019 Constitutional Court judgment.[17] In a High Court review judgment in December 2014, Justice Muremba had declared that corporal punishment as a criminal sanction for juveniles was no longer lawful because the new Constitution 2013 placed no limitation on protection from inhuman treatment and, unlike the previous Constitution, made no explicit provision for "moderate corporal punishment".[18] In 2019, the Constitutional Court confirmed the High Court ruling, finding that judicial corporal punishment violated article 53 of the Constitution. The judgment struck down article 353 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 1927 as unconstitutional and further ruled that, with effect from 3 April 2019, no male juvenile convicted of any offence could be sentenced to receive corporal punishment. The prohibition was extended to apply to sentences of corporal punishment which had already been imposed but were awaiting execution. Article 353 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 1927 had allowed for "moderate corporal punishment, not exceeding six strokes" to be ordered in lieu of or in addition to other punishments for males under 18.

In March 2023, the Parliament adopted the Child Justice Bill 2021 which aims to establish a distinct criminal justice system for children in conflict with the law. In its explanatory memorandum, the Child Justice Bill 2021 states: "[In Clause 80] it is prohibited for a court to impose a prescribed mandatory sentence in terms of any Act but rather sentence the child in accordance with the principles of child justice taking into account the circumstances of the case." Based on this provision, it seems that no child in conflict with the law shall be convicted of a sentence that is not provided by the Child Justice Bill 2021. Part X of the Child Justice Bill 2021 includes the list of sentences for convicted children. Corporal punishment is not included in the list of sentences. However, article 80 relating to the "prohibition of certain forms of deprivation of liberty and other sentences", does not explicitly list judicial corporal punishment among the prohibited sentences. It seems that as of January 2024, the Child Justice Bill, 2021 had not been signed into law by the President.

We are seeking information to confirm whether the Child Justice Bill 2021 intends to repeal all references to judicial corporal punishment from domestic legislation. In particular, article 336 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 1927 (amended 2004), which lists possible criminal sentences including "where the convicted person is a male person under the age of eighteen years, corporal punishment", must be amended. Articles 103, 104 and 105 of the Prisons Act set out the conditions in which "moderate" judicial corporal punishment should be carried out and should be repealed. The Government had previously recommended that article 336 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act and articles 101-105 of the Prisons Act be reviewed.[19]

The Children's Act 2001 provides for the children's court to make orders in respect of children and young people in need of care and of those who have been convicted of an offence. Article 20 of the Act lists the orders that may be made, and does not include corporal punishment. However, a child or young person aged 12 or over who fails to comply with an order to attend an attendance centre "shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a sentence of moderate corporal punishment, not exceeding six strokes, in accordance with section 353 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act" (art. 20(3a)). This provision contradicts the 2019 Constitutional Court decision and should be repealed. The Government had previously recommended that this provision in the Children's Act be removed.[20]

Universal Periodic Review of Zimbabwe's human rights record

Zimbabwe was examined in the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in 2011 (session 12). In its national report the Government stated: "Zimbabwe administers corporal punishment to juvenile male offenders. However, a medical officer should certify that the juvenile is medically fit to receive corporal punishment. In schools, such punishment is only administered to deviant male learners by the school

[17] The State v. Willard Chokuramba, Constitutional Court, 3 April 2019, CCZ 10/19
[18] The State vs Willard Chokuramba, Harare High Court, 31 December 2014
[19] Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (2015), Draft Discussion Paper on the Review of the Children's Act and Related Legislation, page 37
[20] Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (2015), Draft Discussion Paper on the Review of the Children's Act and Related Legislation, page 37

head or a designated official in the presence of such head and a record is kept. In addition, the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23] criminalises activities that infringe on a person's liberty and dignity."[21] The following recommendations were made:[22]

> "Prohibit corporal punishment as a form of sentence as well prohibit corporal punishment in all other settings (Austria);
>
> "Ratify the CAT, clearly criminalize torture and ban all kinds of corporal punishment (Portugal)"

The Government accepted the recommendations.[23]

Examination in the second cycle took place in 2016 (session 26). The following recommendation was made:[24]

> "Provide access to free quality health care services for all children; Abolish corporal punishment in all settings; and Strengthen child protection systems in full compliance with international human rights obligations including the implementation of national child protection programmes by December 2018 (Slovenia)"

At the Human Rights Council session in March 2017, the Government declared that it was "unable to support the part of the recommendation concerning corporal punishment as this matter is still pending before the Constitutional Court"[25] (see "Home" and "Sentence for a crime"). Although all decisions of unconstitutionality must be confirmed by the Constitutional Court, the Government has stated it was considering enacting a legal ban (see "Home").

Third cycle examination took place in 2022 (session 40). The following recommendation was made:[26]

> "Abolish corporal punishment in all settings and strengthen child protection systems in full compliance with its international human rights obligations (Slovenia)"

The Government noted the recommendation.[27]

Recommendations by human rights treaty bodies

Committee on the Rights of the Child

(29 January 2016, CRC/C/ZWE/CO/2, Concluding observations on second report, paras. 7, 42, 43, 76 and 77)

"The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to address its previous recommendations of 1996 (CRC/C/15/Add.55) which have not been sufficiently implemented and, in particular, those relating to reviewing the national legal framework (para. 22), combatting social attitudes and cultural and religious practices hampering the realization of children's rights (para. 26), forbidding the use of corporal punishment (para. 31), and raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility (para. 33).

"The Committee welcomes the Constitutional guarantee of freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. However it remains deeply concerned (CRC/C/15/Add.55, para. 18) that corporal punishment remains legal and widely practised in the family, in schools and in other settings. The Committee notes with serious concern legislative provisions and Government policy allowing the administration of 'reasonable' or 'moderate' corporal punishment.

"With reference to its General comment No. 8 (2006) on corporal punishment, the Committee reiterates

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[21] 19 December 2011, A/HRC/WG.6/12/ZWE/1, National report to the UPR, para. 49
[22] 19 December 2011, A/HRC/19/14, Report of the working group, paras. 94(22) and 95(5)
[23] 19 December 2011, A/HRC/19/2, Report of the Human Rights Council on its twenty-first session, para. 706
[24] 17 November 2016, A/HRC/WG.6/26/L.5, Draft report of the Working Group, para. 132(81)
[25] 13 March 2017, A/HRC/34/8/Add.1, Report of the Working Group, Addendum, para. 31
[26] 5 April 2022/A/HRC/50/9, Report of the working group, para. 140(92)
[27] 20 April 2022/A/HRC/50/9/Add.1, Report of the working group: Addendum

its previous recommendation (CRC/C/15/Add.55, para. 31) and urges the State party to:

a) repeal or amend, as needed, all legislation and administrative regulations in order to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings as a correctional or disciplinary measure;

b) sensitize and educate parents, guardians and professionals working with and for children, particularly teachers, on the harmful effects of corporal punishment and the need to end the culture of silence on cases of violence against children;

c) promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline in all settings, including through providing teachers and parents with training on alternative discipline measures.

"The Committee … remains concerned (CRC/C/15/Add.55, para. 21) about the:…

c) recourse to whipping as a disciplinary measure for boys;

"In the light of its General comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, the Committee urges the State party to bring its juvenile justice system fully into line with the Convention and other relevant standards. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/15/Add.55, para. 33) and urges the State party to: …

c) adopt a comprehensive policy for juvenile justice based on restorative practices and guided by the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration…."

Committee on the Rights of the Child

(7 June 1996, CRC/C/15/Add.55, Concluding observations on initial report, paras. 16, 18, 21, 31 and 33)

"The Committee further notes that insufficient attention has been paid to the principle of the best interests of the child both in legislation and practice, as well as to the respect for the views of the child in school, social and family life. In this regard, it is noted that, as recognized by the State party, the civil rights and freedoms of the child are to be exercised subject to parental consent or discipline, thus raising doubts as to the compatibility of this practice with the Convention, notably articles 5 and 12.

"The Committee expresses its concern at the acceptance in the legislation of the use of corporal punishment in school, as well as within the family. It stresses the incompatibility of corporal punishment, as well as any other form of violence, injury, neglect, abuse or degrading treatment, with the provisions of the Convention, in particular articles 19, 28 paragraph 2 and 37.

"The Committee is concerned at the present system of juvenile justice, including the lack of a clear prohibition of capital punishment, life imprisonment without possibility of release and indeterminate sentencing, as well as at the recourse to whipping as a disciplinary measure for boys.

"The Committee recommends that the State party adopt appropriate legislative measures to forbid the use of any form of corporal punishment within the family and in school.

"In the field of juvenile justice, the Committee recommends that the State party raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility and incorporate in the legislation a clear prohibition of capital punishment, life imprisonment without possibility of release and indeterminate sentencing as well as of the use of whipping as a disciplinary measure."

Human Rights Committee

(6 April 1998, CCPR/C/79/Add.89, Concluding observations on initial report, para. 21)

"The Committee is concerned about recent amendments of section 15 of the Constitution which inter alia authorize corporal punishment. The Committee reaffirms its position that corporal punishment is incompatible with article 7 of the Covenant."

African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

([October 2015], ACERWC, Concluding observations on initial report, para. 26)

“While appreciating the State Party for taking various legislative and administrative measures to protect children from abuse and torture, the Committee is concerned of the fact that children could still be sentenced by courts for whipping. The Committee, therefore, recommends the State Party to expedite the adoption of the General Amendment Bill as it has the effect of prohibiting child whipping and to abolish corporeal punishment in all settings and to promote alternative positive disciplining measures.”

Prevalence/attitudinal research in the last ten years

A survey conducted in January-February 2017 involving 1,200 adults found 28% of Zimbabweans believe the use of physical force to discipline children is never justified; 48% believe it is sometimes justified, and 25% believe it is always justified. Men and women hold similar views, as do urban and rural residents. Support for corporal punishment (the belief that it is sometimes/always justified) is higher among older respondents than younger respondents (22% of those aged 56 and older; 30% of 18-35 year olds) and is higher among better off respondents than poorer respondents (77% of those with “no lived poverty”; 70% of those with “high lived poverty”). Support for corporal punishment was highest in Matabeleland South (90%) and Midlands (87%) and lowest in Mashonaland Central (58%) and Manicaland (59%). In contrast, 80% of respondents believe it is never justified for a man to beat his wife.

(Ndoma, S., Contrary to court ruling, Zimbabweans endorse parental right to physically discipline children: Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 156, 12 July 2017)

A survey conducted in 2014 found that 63% of children age 1-14 years experienced “violent punishment” (psychological aggression and/or physical punishment) during the month preceding the survey: 53% experienced psychological aggression, 36% physical punishment and 5% severe physical punishment (hit/slapped on the face, head or ears and/or beat up, hit over and over as hard as one could). Harare had the highest percentage of severe physical punishment (8%), Matabeleland South Province the lowest (2%). Children aged 3-9 years were more likely to be subjected to violent discipline than any other age group and children in urban areas (68%) were subjected to some form of violent discipline more than their counterparts in rural areas (61%). On average, 38% of respondents believed that physical punishment is needed to bring up, raise, or educate a child properly. In contrast, 24% of children experienced only non-violent discipline.

(Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) (2015), Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014: Final Report, Harare, Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT))

A 2012 exploratory case study looked at 17 cases of unauthorised corporal punishment by teachers reported in the Masvingo region of Zimbabwe between 2005 and 2011. The study found that most of the victims were girls (14, compared to three boys), all of the perpetrators were male and accused of beating the child with a stick. It also found that some of the perpetrators were discharged from the teaching service and others were found not guilty of the offences.

(Shumba A. et al (2012), “An Exploratory Study of Corporal Punishment by Teachers in Zimbabwean Schools: Issues and Challenges” International Journal of Educational Science, 4(3), 279-287)

In a survey conducted in 2011, children age 13-17 years were asked about their experience of physical violence in the 12 months preceding the survey. The results show 44% of boys and 38% of girls had experienced physical violence perpetrated by their mothers; 46% of boys and 19% of girls experienced physical violence by their fathers; 95% of boys and 99% of girls experienced physical violence by teachers. In the same survey, people age 18-24 years were asked about their experience of physical violence prior to age 18 years, with mostly similar results: 43% of males and 59% of females had experienced physical violence perpetrated by mothers; 46% of males and 28% of females had experienced physical violence by fathers, and 95% of males and 99% of females by teachers. The survey report did not specify the extent to which the physical violence was inflicted in the guise of “discipline” or punishment.

(Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and UNICEF (2013), National Baseline Survey on Life Experiences of Adolescents, 2011, Harare: Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT))

End Corporal Punishment acts as a catalyst for progress towards universal prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment of children. We support and analyse national progress, monitor legality and implementation worldwide, partner with organisations at all levels, and engage with human rights treaty body systems. End Corporal Punishment is hosted by the World Health Organization and supported by a multi-partner Advisory Committee.