

## Foreword

The notion of a child as a reduced version of an adult with equally reduced rights has been abandoned by society. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of the landmarks in overcoming this reductive notion of a child and clearly outlines the rights of a child. As any other human being children must have their human rights fully respected.

Despite the achievements of the Convention, many children seldom enjoy the same protection as adults. The physical and psychological chastisement of children is unfortunately a silent problem that continues to cross boundaries of many cultural, economic and social contexts around the world. Despite the clear international disapproval through bodies as the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Human Right Courts, the acceptance of so called “reasonable levels” of punishment remains present, even in national legislation in some cases. These ideas not only challenge Human Right principles and the CRC but open a dangerous door to other forms of violence in homes, schools and other institutions as the scale between reasonable and unreasonable violence is extremely clouded and volatile to subjective approaches. We overdue in overcoming this dangerous notion.

In 2003 I had the honor to be appointed by the UN Secretary-General to coordinate a global study on violence against children. The request for the study is a consequence of deliberations in the Committee on the Rights of the Child which after evaluating the issue in general days of discussion decided to recommend the development of an in-depth international study that would lead to the development of strategies aimed at effectively preventing and combating all forms of violence against children. The Study is since then, working to consolidate the available information on different forms of violence against children across different settings where it may take place. Corporal punishment is one of our clear concerns. For example, children themselves, participating in initial consultations linked to the study have repeatedly stressed that this is a critical issue for them.

We know that Corporal Punishment practices are hard to change, and that often these changes touch on very sensitive and personal issues such as parenting, and education. Corporal Punishment is also steeped in tradition, and has a very long history in most countries. In fact we know that most children and most adults in the world today have experienced it; and most people would say that they would prefer to have been spared the experience.

To change this reality it is surely important to deeply understand the context in which various forms of corporal punishment take place and what are the best strategies to respond. But urgent action is needed. This Manual for Action is an extremely appropriate contribution. As you will be able to see, the Manual brings to everyone a broad range of excellent tools to begin this changing process, taking in consideration the many different forms of humiliating and physical punishment may appear. The manual is extremely useful as it not only explains why people should not hit children, but gives excellent

strategies that make this practice completely unnecessary. Of course, children, as the naturally most interested group in this change, contributed to the manual and surely also will have an important role in promoting this change.

Certainly, there is a lot to be done. But nothing can excuse our inaction in tackling this serious issue when there is already so much information on how to avoid corporal punishment of children. Don't wait, read the manual and translate into reality!

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