Violence against children in schools affects approximately one million children worldwide every day. The impact on children affected by violence is devastating and has wide-reaching social and economic consequences both within communities and countries at large.

Learn Without Fear
Campaign Progress Report

Learn without fear.
Violence against children in schools affects approximately one million children worldwide every day.

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44 countries running the Learn Without Fear campaign
Contents

Campaign highlights in numbers 2
Introduction 4
Legislative changes 7
  1. Legislation on child protection 10
  2. Legislation on corporal punishment 11
  3. Legislation on sexual violence 13
  4. Legislation on bullying 14
Campaign approaches for addressing violence 15
  Reducing violence through training 18
  Creating a safe school environment 19
  Partnership and coordination 19
  Raising awareness in the community 20
  Supporting children affected by violence 22
Call to action: elimination of violence in schools 23
What’s next for Learn Without Fear? 27
Appendix A 29

Acronyms
CHI    Child Helpline International
CFS    Child-Friendly School
EU     European Union
INGO   International Non-Governmental Organisation
NGO    Non-Governmental Organisation
ODI    Overseas Development Institute
MDG    Millennium Development Goal
UN     United Nations
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
In the two years since the Learn Without Fear campaign has been fully operational, the campaign has contributed to¹...

¹ Based on a survey of 44 countries running the Learn Without Fear campaign.
...Changes in legislation

* Over 390 million children benefited from legislation protecting them from various forms of violence in schools
* Over 370 million children benefited from legislation protecting them from corporal punishment
* Over 20 million children benefited from legislation protecting them from sexual violence
* Over 6 million children benefited from legislation protecting them from bullying
* Plan is actively supporting the drafting and development of laws and policies against violence in a further 27 countries

...Changes in creating safer schools and communities

* 19,458 teachers have been trained in peaceful teaching methods
* 18,335 schools participated in supporting the campaign
* 108,915 family members received education on children’s rights to protection from violence
* 36 countries are able to demonstrate how training and education on violence positively impact behaviour
* Plan is collaborating with teachers’ unions to eliminate violence in schools in 19 countries

...Improved awareness

* 597,886 children participated in supporting the campaign
* Over 94 million people have been reached by campaign messages
* 22 countries report a reduction in girls’ school dropout rates in targeted campaign areas
* 23 countries report a reduction in boys’ school dropout rates in targeted campaign areas
Violence against children in schools affects approximately one million children worldwide every day.
The impact on children affected by violence is often devastating\textsuperscript{2} and can have wide-reaching social and economic consequences both within communities and countries at large\textsuperscript{3}.

Although children’s rights are increasingly acknowledged across the globe, “the right to education and the right to a violence free childhood” are rarely addressed as a collective concern. A child’s right to an education, free from violence, is not an issue adequately addressed and often lacks a sufficiently coordinated response to the problem in light of the magnitude of school violence worldwide.

In October 2008, Plan launched a global campaign to eliminate violence against children in schools, called \textit{Learn Without Fear}. As of August 2010, the campaign is operating in 44 countries worldwide. In two years, key anti-violence campaign messages have reached an audience of over 94 million adults and children through radio and television shows, leaflets, training sessions and workshops. Children are involved in all aspects of the campaign – ranging from campaign planning in Malawi and Egypt, to running radio shows three times a week in Senegal, and participating in regional art collaboratives across Asia. In working with schools, local communities and national governments across the world, the \textit{Learn Without Fear} campaign demonstrates that stopping violence against children in schools – by engaging and educating those who are able to prevent violence from ever taking place – is possible.

\textsuperscript{3} Overseas Development Institute and Plan (forthcoming 2010). \textit{Economic impact of Social Violence}. London, ODI.
During this campaign, Plan has been working towards a world where:

1. No one can inflict violence on children in schools without facing punishment.

2. Children are able to report violent incidents and expect appropriate care and support when they are affected by school violence.

3. Children are recognised as critical participants in developing strategies and solutions to address violence in schools.

4. Governments establish holistic data collection systems and carry out research to ascertain the scale and severity of violence in their schools.

5. Significant resources are earmarked by governments and international organisations to tackle violence in schools.

6. UN agencies, multilateral donors, development banks and international NGOs increase support to governments to tackle violence in schools.

7. Pupils, parents, all school staff and the community work together to expel violence from schools.

This report serves two primary purposes: one, it serves as a collection of campaign successes in ensuring children worldwide are safe from violence in schools; and, two, the report calls upon NGOs, government and UN agencies to integrate the aim of eliminating school violence into their education agendas and initiatives. All facts and figures in this report are taken from the 44 countries where the campaign is running that were extensively surveyed between May and July 2010.

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In the absence of legislation that explicitly protects children from violence in schools, there are no legal obligations that hold countries and their citizens to account for committing acts of violence against children.
Legislation is necessary in order to ensure that a child’s right to a safe education is enforceable. At international level, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) seeks to make explicit the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children. The Convention, which came into force in September 1990, has been ratified by 194 countries in total but, at present, no complaints procedure exists for the convention – as such there is no way to seek a remedy where children’s rights have been violated.

The elimination of violence in schools requires clear national legislation underpinned by the principles of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Specifically, strong national legislation is needed in relation to:

- Corporal punishment
- Sexual violence
- Bullying.

See Appendix A for detailed overview on the legislative status of these issues prior to the start of the campaign.

Since the start of the campaign nearly 400 million more children are protected from violence in schools due to new legislation in one or more of these areas and efforts being made to implement existing legislation. Plan has been involved in these legislative developments in a variety of different ways.

In recognition of the need for strong legislative changes that favour the elimination of violence, more than half of the countries involved in the campaign are actively lobbying their government on issues of violence in schools. Many governments are actively working in support of Learn Without Fear, including the Minister of Education in Guinea, the Secretary of State for Education in Cameroon and the Government of Thailand, which has started its own anti-violence campaign.

In spite of the varied challenges that arise from social, traditional and cultural norms, Learn Without Fear has helped forge stronger relations amongst government and NGO actors in addressing school violence. Plan offices involved in Learn Without Fear work with government at both local and national levels to collect the information and evidence needed to make the case to end
violence in schools. The *Too often in silence* report\(^5\) developed by a Plan regional office in partnership with other NGOs is one such example. This report, which highlights the reality of violence in schools in West Africa, is being used as a significant evidence base from which to lobby national governments and regional institutions.

Children are being protected from violence in schools through four areas of legislative development.

1. General child rights
2. Corporal punishment
3. Sexual violence
4. Bullying

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1. General child rights legislation developments

In some countries, the three areas of legislation that specifically deal with the 3 main types of school violence – namely, corporal punishment, sexual violence and bullying – are approached collectively through overarching child rights legislation.

Liberia
By providing evidence-based programme experiences, Plan helped draft the Liberia Children’s Act, which is a piece of legislation that protects the fundamental rights of all children and was adopted in June 2010. The legislation includes provisions for the criminal court specifically to hear cases on violence against children and includes child protection as a mandatory element of teacher training. The Children’s Act also includes clear follow-up provisions to Liberia’s new anti-rape law.

Laos
Plan played a leading role in the influential Government-Donor Education Sector Working Group comprised of various child rights NGOs in Laos resulting in law detailing the protection of children’s rights in 2009.
2. Corporal punishment legislative developments

Despite the fact that 194 countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Right of the Child, corporal punishment remains legal in 89 countries. The following outlines recent campaign successes, contributing towards our vision of a world where corporal punishment is illegal in all countries:

**THE PHILIPPINES**

In the Philippines, Plan was actively involved in the development of the Anti-Corporal Punishment Bill, which was adopted in January 2010. This piece of legislation now protects over 21 million children in the Philippines.

**ZIMBABWE**

Plan’s 2008 baseline corporal punishment survey in Zimbabwe served as a significant piece of evidence in the recent decision to revise Statutory Instrument 362 of the current Child Act, which initially stated that the use of corporal punishment against boys by school teachers was acceptable. This revision ensures that over two million boys are now protected under the law from being hit by teachers.
PAKISTAN
Plan has been actively involved in developing the child protection amendment bill currently pending in Pakistan’s Parliament, which includes anti-corporal punishment measurements.

INDIA
Plan lobbied for the ratification of The Right to Education Act, that was passed in the Parliament in 2009. The Act establishes a national ban on corporal punishment in schools, and makes specific assertions on protecting children from physical or mental harassment noting that those in violation will be punished by law.

SOUTH SUDAN
The Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly passed the Child Act in late 2008 prohibiting corporal punishment and other abuses. Plan is currently working with government stakeholders to improve implementation of this Act.

TOGO
Plan is supporting the General Secretary of the Ministry of Education’s efforts to implement an action plan on anti-corporal punishment measures and to develop a national committee dedicated to the issue.

These examples of progress and other successes have contributed to the provision of legislative protection from corporal punishment for over 372 million children around the world since the campaign launched.
3. Sexual violence legislative developments

Legislation relating to sexual violence is often mistakenly seen as something that predominantly affects girls. One particular challenge relating to this area of legislative change is the need to ensure there is already broad support for gender equality as a precursor to advocating for legislation addressing sexual violence. In the context of the Learn Without Fear campaign, the strategic approaches taken in advocating for legislative changes for sexual violence tend to be country-specific. The following section highlights some of the best examples of recent successes in this area.

KENYA
Plan has actively been involved in reviewing and revising guidelines for the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), the primary employer for all public teachers, to help protect children from sexual violence committed by teachers. Plan is also helping to review the commission’s practice to ensure it is acting in accordance with laws such as the Sexual Offences Act and the Children’s Act – both of which provide a legal remit for the elimination of violence in schools.

TANZANIA
Plan is supporting the implementation of Tanzania’s Law of the Child Act 2009 through the provision of training on dealing with sexual violence, including reporting incidents. This law explicitly protects children from all forms of sexual abuse.

These and other successes have contributed to the provision of legislative protection from sexual violence in schools for over 20 million children around the world since the campaign launched.
4. Bullying legislative developments

Bullying is a uniquely challenging area of legislation given the pervasive cultural acceptance of bullying as a normal part of school life in many parts of the world. As a result, there is a significant lack of legislation addressing bullying in schools. Notable achievements in this area include the following:

**BRAZIL**

Plan is offering support and guidance to the Brazilian Congress on an anti-bullying bill currently under consideration. At present, there are anti-bullying laws in four states of Brazil but there is no legislation that currently exists at national level.

**NICARAGUA**

In 2009, Plan helped promote the passage of a Ministerial Agreement (No.134-2009) that prohibits teachers, authorities and school staff from inflicting any kind of physical, moral or psychological suffering. Currently, Plan is supporting efforts to include the prohibition of corporal punishment in Nicaragua’s Family Code.

**VIETNAM**

Plan was part of an NGO effort to address bullying in Vietnam’s Criminal Code of Education Law. These efforts succeeded in prompting the Ministry of Education to issue a ‘correspondence’ in March 2010, which serves as a legal framework for lower levels of government to strengthen regulations that prevent bullying and violence amongst students.

These and other in-country campaign successes have contributed to the provision of legislative protection from bullying in schools for over six million children around the world since the campaign launched.

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The campaign has enabled us to reach out to children, especially those who have been marginalised before. Now there is hope they will have a better future.

Patricia Mbatha, Community leader, Kenya

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6 The Family Code is the section of the Nicaraguan Constitution which states that family relations should be based on respect, solidarity and the absolute equality of rights and responsibilities for men and women.
Campaign approaches for addressing violence

Violence against children has long since been considered acceptable behaviour by some in various cultures throughout history.
With the understanding that changing widely-held cultural perceptions, attitudes and behaviours about violent practices starts by educating individuals, the campaign is working to change perceptions about violence using a variety of methods.

**WORKING AT LOCAL LEVEL**

These methods include educating families on the impact of violence against children; training teachers about non-violent disciplinary methods; developing procedures and practices for non-violent schools; working in partnership with local community organisations and raising awareness of the issues.

Evidence from the different countries where the campaign is running, suggests that these methodologies are helpful in fostering changes that reduce violent behaviours and this, in turn, may in part help to reduce school dropout rates.7

**CHILD-LED LOBBYING**

As evidenced throughout the campaign, children have been active participants in leading initiatives that protect their rights at both national and global levels. Highlights of active child participation include the following:

- In Liberia, representatives of the Children’s Parliament met with various government representatives to promote the development of the Children’s Act, which subsequently passed.
- In Bolivia, 190 boys and girls participated in a debate about violence in schools at the National Assembly organised by Plan.
- Children from Ghana shared their experiences and called for global action to eliminate violence in schools at the UN session on Violence against Children in 2009.

**PARTNERING WITH TEACHERS’ UNIONS AND EDUCATION**

Close and constructive working relationships and partnerships with teachers’ unions and education authorities is recognised as being one of the most effective ways to enforce legislation protecting children from violence. Since the start of *Learn Without Fear*, campaigners have helped forge such relationships with teachers’ unions and education authorities in 19 countries.

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so far. For example, Plan is working with the Punjab teachers’ association in Pakistan which represents about 500 members, and in El Salvador Plan works with the teachers’ unions representing 15,000 members.

EDUCATING FAMILIES AND PARENTS

Violent practices are often learned at home. Children who are being hit at home are more likely to hit other children, repeating the behaviours they have been taught. To address this, the campaign is working directly with families to educate them about children’s rights and the negative impact that violent practices have on children. To date, Plan has worked with nearly 109,000 parents and family members worldwide. When asked, staff in 36 out of 44 countries believed the training contributed to positive behaviour change.

In some places, communities have strongly embraced the messages they have learned through the campaign and are proactively seeking further changes. For example, in Shaanxi Province, China, community members have expressed a desire to learn more about how to end violence against children. In the Philippines, parents are using Parent Teacher Association meetings as an opportunity to work together with teachers to develop ways to end violence.

I’ve learned that I should stop hitting my children. I don’t want them to experience what I’ve suffered from my father.

Participant from Municipal Parents’ Congress and Parent Effectiveness Service Sessions, Philippines

Reducing violence through training

Teachers are recognised as critical partners in the campaign to eliminate violence against children in schools. Since the start of the campaign, over 19,000 teachers have been trained in non-violent teaching methods. As a result, 37 of the 44 campaign countries report an increase in non-violent practices amongst educators. In Peru, teacher training even includes lessons in anger management.

In addition to teachers, there are several other professions whose work brings them in direct contact with – or may significantly impact upon the well-being of – children, including journalists, police, lawyers and religious leaders. Though the campaign currently does not provide training for these individuals to the same extent, there are some emerging good practices in the provision of training for professionals who work with children.

In Indonesia, for example, over 1,000 community leaders have been trained in child rights and child participation. Globally, nearly 600 journalists have received training on the issues related to violence in schools.

Other governments, including Zambia, are also setting aside provisions to train police officers and social welfare officers on how to support violence reduction in schools.

I was underestimating the gravity of bullying and corporal punishment in schools; we need to expose such cases.

Farai Matebvu, participating journalist in Learn Without Fear training session, Zimbabwe
Creating a safe school environment

There are several examples of initiatives carried out as part of the Learn Without Fear campaign that are intended to promote and reinforce a safe, violence-free school environment for students and staff:

- In Guinea Bissau, an 11 year old student breaking the teacher’s stick in front of the class as a symbolic act to signify the end of corporal punishment at their school.
- In Tanzania, the campaign focuses on eliminating sexual violence in schools. One activity to achieve this is the development of safe girls’ dormitories in Jukwaa ka Wakoto district – 200 girls now benefit from protection 24 hours a day.
- In Niger, 100% of the 133 schools where Plan works have created specific action plans which set out practical ways to eliminate violence in schools in each specific context.
- In Bangladesh, head teachers and teachers have publicly committed to ending corporal punishment by putting signed statements at the entrance to their schools.

Partnership and coordination

To maximise impact, the campaign works strategically in collaborative partnerships whenever possible. As one local NGO employee from Liberia explains, “Fighting violence in schools will require our collective efforts and resources.”

Many of the national campaigns are being undertaken in close partnership and collaboration with governments – for example the core campaign team in Nepal is made up of representatives
from the Ministry of Education, Department of Education, the National Centre for Educational Development, UNICEF, Save the Children and Plan.

Children are also working in a cross-country collaboration across the region of Asia. The Young Hearts festival, for example, in October 2009 brought together talented youth from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam to raise their voices against violence in schools. Other contributors included arts and media personalities and the Prime Minister of Thailand. Their efforts helped produce films, TV, radio programmes, musical performances, recordings, short stories, poems, theatre productions, comics, posters and other visual arts pieces – all of which expressed youth perspectives and experiences of violence in schools and were broadcast to millions.

Raising awareness in the community

Over half a million children have participated in activities which have spread the messages of the campaign, helping to raise awareness of the issues amongst their peers, communities and countries. Here are just a few examples that help to illustrate these engaging and exciting activities:
In Colombia and Bangladesh, young people are using the power of theatre to tell stories about violence in schools.

In Ecuador, six schools now have their own radio shows to talk about child rights and sexual and reproductive health.

In Bangladesh, Plan used a national television channel (Ekushe Television) to communicate the impact of violence against children in schools and what can be done to overcome it, broadcast to the national population of 156 million people.

In both Rwanda and Burkina Faso, children are writing about Learning Without Fear for their local papers to convey the reality of violence in schools and communicate what the campaign is doing to address their concerns.

In Mali, children are using new media methods. In each council, twenty children have received training in online communications as a way to voice their experiences and to call for action around violence in schools.

In Ethiopia, children used the Great Ethiopian Run to raise awareness of the campaign by securing the ambassadorial role of the Olympic gold medal winner Paula Radcliffe to run in a campaign t–shirt. This helped the race organisers to promote the campaign, meaning hundreds of runners wore Learn Without Fear branded t–shirts. Collectively these efforts ensured a large amount of national media coverage.

Awareness raising plays a critical role in helping to change attitudes and perceptions about children’s rights, the importance of a violence-free education, and understanding how to make this happen. Campaign efforts will continue to ensure that attention is given to ensuring effective awareness raising strategies.

After receiving the Learn Without Fear peer-to-peer training, I understand more about my rights in the society and know how important it is. I can share important knowledge with other children and adults so that there is no more beating at home and at school in my area.

Sokha, 17 years old,
Sierra Leone
Supporting children affected by violence

The campaign is helping thousands of children who have been affected by violence in schools. Campaign initiatives have resulted in:

- 27 countries out of 44 participating in the campaign have improved their ‘violence in schools reporting systems’, which are mechanisms that provide children with the opportunity to report violent incidents and hold perpetrators to account.
- In Mali, 100% of schools where Plan works have effective reporting mechanisms on violence in schools. In Malawi, 2 out of 5 districts have ‘happy’ and ‘sad’ reporting boxes where children report on their experience of violence in schools, depending on whether they are deemed to be bad or good (i.e. whether or not the situation of violence is improving). In the Dominican Republic, Plan produced a new website for children and adults to use to report incidents of violence.
- 36 of the campaign countries provide access to medical support for injuries related to violence in schools and 28 countries also provide counselling services for affected children. In Guatemala, Plan works in partnership with a medical organisation through whom medical and psychological support is provided for children affected by violence in all provinces.
- 31 campaign countries provide legal support to ensure perpetrators of violence are punished appropriately for their actions. For example, in Benin, Plan provides legal support for parents whose children have died as a result of being physically abused by a teacher.

The Learn Without Fear campaign aims to create a world where such support services are no longer necessary but, until then, the campaign will endeavour to call for support for children who have suffered violence.
Call to action – the elimination of violence in schools needs to be recognised as a prerequisite for getting all children into school and keeping them there.

On a global level, there are two UN high-profile initiatives, which seek to improve education around the world through a global, coordinated effort by 2015.
The two UN initiatives are:

**Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2: achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE)**
*By 2015, aim to ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.*

**Education for all – UNESCO**
*Aims to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.*

The findings from the Learn Without Fear campaign shows how it directly contributes to – and is fundamental to the success of – these initiatives. These initiatives include global efforts to help get children into school and keep them there. However, the issue of violence in schools is currently not a priority objective within these agendas.
At present, the indicators used to measure the progress of these agendas do not include any mention of eliminating violence in schools. More needs to be done to integrate the elimination of violence in schools into these agendas. Without this, the wider education goals are significantly weakened.

There is a clear link between the *Learn Without Fear* campaign and the MDG agenda. Millennium Development Goal 2, achieve UPE, explains the success factors in meeting this MDG in the following way:

2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education

2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary school

The *Learn Without Fear* campaign is resulting in more children enrolling in school, and staying in school. Violence in schools, or fear of violence, is not the only reason why children, both boys and girls, do not enrol or why they drop out – but it is one of the key reasons.\(^\text{10}\) This is evident from some of the improvements in these two areas where the campaign is being implemented.

**GETTING CHILDREN INTO SCHOOL**

In Liberia, there is a reported increase in school enrolment in 100 schools where the campaign is running. In 2008, boys’ enrolment was 53 per cent and girls’ was 47 per cent, respectively. In 2009, they had increased to 63 and 55 per cent, respectively. In Laos, enrolment rates have increased in the first year of Plan’s basic education and child protection programme.

**KEEPING CHILDREN IN SCHOOL**

The campaign survey results showed two thirds of campaign implementers observing a reduction in school dropout rates over the last two years.

- In Ethiopia, a review of the campaign in 85 schools revealed the campaign was one of the factors contributing to the reduction of the school dropout rate.

\(^{10}\text{EveryChild (2010). Protect for the future: placing children’s protection and care at the heart of achieving the MDGs, p.16. London, EveryChild.}\)
In Brazil, a 13 year old student did not go to school for 14 out of 22 school days. He was found begging for money on the street. The reason he did not attend school was because his classmates called him names and raised questions about his masculinity. Plan staff talked to his teacher. Now he reports incidents and does not miss school.

- In Uganda, the percentage of boys completing primary school increased in areas where the campaign is running.
- In one area of Bangladesh where the campaign is in operation, the dropout rate of boys went down from 15 to 12 per cent in the last year and the dropout rate of girls went down from 12 to 8 per cent.
- In Cambodia, the dropout rates across three provinces have decreased from an average of 10.2 to 9.7 per cent since the campaign started.
- In Togo, campaign staff have observed that girls who previously feared violence in school and dropped out have since returned to school since the campaign has been in operation.

Achieving universal primary education is the second MDG, acknowledging the role education plays in eliminating poverty and giving children the chance to improve their lives. Major advances have been made since 2000; billions of dollars have been spent on building new schools, paying for teachers and buying new text books but those efforts are wasted if children are too scared to go to school.

The need to eliminate violence in schools is crucial in order to enable children to receive the quality of education they are entitled to.
What’s next for Learn Without Fear?

*Learn Without Fear* will continue to advocate for the elimination of violence in schools and to enable children to call for the education to which they are entitled.
Plan will continue working towards a world free of school violence by:

- Lobbying on the original calls to action will continue in all countries.
- Developing safer schools and communities by working on prevention measures through a variety of means such as: training, sharing best practice and awareness raising.
- National campaigns will continue to develop both community and national level activities, to ensure the focus is on both levels at the same time across the country.
- The campaign will develop a focus on implementation in the areas where children are most vulnerable and marginalised.
- A global commitment to the importance of the elimination of violence in schools in the success of other education agendas will be secured.

In spite of the progress that has been made to date, there are still children right now who are too afraid to go to school. Learn Without Fear seeks to change this reality by creating a world in which all children can learn in a safe, violence-free school environment.
## Appendix A

**Summary of the legal status* of corporal punishment, sexual violence and bullying of school children, in countries where Plan works**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Prohibited in the school</th>
<th>Ratification date of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989</th>
<th>School population**</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Corporal punishment</td>
<td>Sexual violence</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
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Learn Without Fear

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
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<th>Ratification date of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989</th>
<th>School population**</th>
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*Notes
Some: Prohibited in some states, state schools, primary •• schools and/or pre-schools
• a: Accession

Sources:
• Corporal punishment: The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (endcorporalpunishment.org)

*Status of legislation as at May 2008.
**School population figures include pre-school, primary and secondary schools only.
All of this would not be possible without the generous support of individuals and organisations who generously donate to Plan. Thank you for supporting us in our mission to end violence in schools.
Learn Without Fear

Campaign Progress Report

Violence against children in schools affects approximately one million children worldwide every day.

The impact on children affected by violence is devastating and has wide-reaching social and economic consequences both within communities and countries at large.

ABOUT PLAN

Founded over 70 years ago, Plan is one of the oldest and largest children’s development organisations in the world. We work in 48 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas to promote child rights and lift millions of children out of poverty.

Plan works with more than 3,500,000 families and their communities each year.

Plan is independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations.