



Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education

Creating Safer Schools : Alternatives to Corporal Punishment in Schools in Sierra Leone

A Training Booklet to End Violence in Schools

October, 2021

Acknowledgment

This Training Booklet is designed to help end violence against children in schools in Sierra Leone. It does this by introducing **Positive Discipline** as an alternative to the use of corporal punishment in schools by teachers and school administrators. The booklet is the product of an extensive review of the research literature on corporal punishment in schools in Africa, including Sierra Leone, undertaken by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) in 2020-2021. The booklet is fundamentally an adaptation of material from this literature review, principally from South Africa's *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment* and *Positive Discipline: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment Training Manual* prepared by the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Republic of Uganda with the assistance of World Vision Inc. and SAGE-DREAMS Project. MBSSE would like to thank its Oxford Policy Fellow, James Gard, for conducting the research review and pulling together the research materials that inform the content of this booklet. Immense thanks go to MBSSE Chief Education Officer, Dr. Yatta Kanu, for adapting and modifying those materials to produce this fit-for-purpose handbook for use in Sierra Leone. We are grateful to all those whose dedication to the improvement of the lives of children in schools has enabled the production of this booklet.

Introduction

Corporal Punishment is defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as ‘any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light.’¹

Most involves hitting the child with a hand or implement such as a stick, but can involve ‘kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion (for example, washing children’s mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices)’.² In addition, there are other non-physical forms of punishment which are also cruel and degrading and thus incompatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. “These include, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child”.

The use of corporal punishment in both home and school has been in steady retreat since Sweden became the first country to prohibit it in 1979. Currently a hundred and eighteen countries have banned corporal punishment in schools, including nineteen in Africa.

It is not simply out of concern for the physical safety of children that we seek to prohibit the practice of corporal punishment. It violates their dignity as human beings and it has emotional, developmental and educational consequences.

Research over the last thirty years has pointed increasingly to the long-term damaging effects of corporal punishment,³ showing it to lead to psychological damage such as depression, rigidity, heightened anxiety and suicidal thoughts.⁴ It has been demonstrated to predict increased levels of aggression in children and youth. Children who are subjected to physical punishment show higher levels of disruptive and aggressive behaviour, such as hitting siblings, parents, and peers.

Corporal punishment has also been linked to the increased prevalence of self-harm among children and the acceptance of violence as normal behaviour, including bullying in school and perpetuating cycles of violence once the students become adults. Children who are subjected to corporal punishment are often fearful of trying new things, frequently feel ashamed of themselves, or are angry and humiliated. For students who have behavioural or learning problems or come from difficult home environments it can undermine confidence and lead to negative feelings about school. Children come to hate the teacher, the subject, the school. It interferes with the learning process and has been associated in many countries with school drop-out and truancy.

Corporal punishment does not work over the long term. It achieves discipline by making children do what teachers want them to do out of fear of the consequences, not because they are learning to take responsibility for their own actions and achieving self-discipline. It creates an environment in which students are more concerned with avoiding being caught than in doing the right thing. It does not stop

¹ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ‘General Comment No. 8’ (2006), CRC/C/GC/8 paragraph 11

² Ibid

³ Joan Durrant and Ron Ensom, ‘Physical Punishment of Children: Lessons from 20 Year of Research’, (2012) 184 (12) *CMAJ* 1373-1377

⁴ Tracie O. Afifi et al, ‘Physical Punishment and Mental Disorders: Results from a Nationally Representative US Sample’ (2012) 130(2) *Pediatrics* 184-192

the behaviour being punished – indeed most teachers would be aware that punishment is often dealt out to the same students for the same misdeeds time and time again. It impedes communication between the educator and the student and undermines the caring relationship that should be between them as children come to live in fear of those who teach them. Children who experience corporal punishment on a regular basis live with slow and interrupted cognitive and emotional development. Their performance at school deteriorates and their ability to form healthy, satisfying relationships can be severely affected. At the same time, research has also increasingly indicated that corporal punishment has minimal effect on children’s behaviour, and indeed none beyond immediate compliance.⁵ Clearly, the continued presence of corporal punishment in schools in Sierra Leone undermines the optimal educational objectives that Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) is trying to achieve through policies of radical inclusion and comprehensive safety of all children in school. It is time to stamp it out in schools in Sierra Leone.

⁵ *Ibid*: 72

Positive Discipline

The goal of discipline is not to control children and make them obey. It is rather to give them skills for making decisions, learn self-control and be responsible for their own behaviour.⁶

Positive discipline is based on the assumption that most children want to behave. It understands that children learn with cooperation, and that the promise of rewards can be a greater motivator than the threat of punishment.

It relies on the modelling of appropriate behaviour by teachers, setting clear rules on what is acceptable and not acceptable, on rewarding children who behave well with praise, and listening to the children. It is not a system that runs away from disciplining bad behaviour, but any sanctions must be proportionate and should not involve physically harming the child or humiliating them. And it is the behaviour that is to be criticised, not the child.

Discipline should be used constructively, in which learners experience a corrective approach encouraging them to be self-reliant and self-controlled, accepting their own responsibility for their actions.

Sierra Leone

According to Citizens Perceptions 2019 (Education) by SABI, 'almost all (89%) students report that they are flogged at school. Flogging more than once a week is the most common frequency, reported by 56% of students. Astonishingly, those most likely to report flogging everyday are students with disabilities (7% PWD, 5% for people without disabilities), and those most likely to report being flogged more than once a week were pregnant girls or women (83%).'

Both the current and previous government of Sierra Leone have committed themselves to eradicating physical and humiliating punishments from the nation's schools.

Laws and Conventions

The continued use of corporal punishment violates Sierra Leone's international commitments and current law.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1987):

- Article 37: 'no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment'.
- Article 19 requires all States to 'take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.'

⁶ UNESCO, *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments*

- Article 28(2): ‘State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.’

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child⁷ has stated that corporal punishment, including by parents, is against the rights of the child and violates the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly the 3 articles above. They have also said that, given the traditional acceptance of corporal punishment, ‘it is essential that the applicable sectoral legislation [eg Education Law] clearly prohibits its use in the relevant settings. In addition, it is valuable if professional codes of ethics and guidance for teachers, carers and others, and also the rules or charters of institutions, emphasize the illegality of corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment.’⁸

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child commits its members to ensure that ‘a child who is subjected to school or parental discipline shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the child and in conformity with the present Charter.’⁹

Child Rights Act 2007

It is the opinion of Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education that the following provisions of the Child Rights Act make corporal punishment in Sierra Leone illegal.

s. 33 (1): ‘No person shall subject a child to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment including any cultural practice which dehumanises or is injurious to the physical and mental welfare of a child.’

(2) ‘No correction of a child is justifiable which is unreasonable in kind or in degree according to the age, physical and mental condition of the child and no correction is justifiable if the child by reason of tender age or otherwise is incapable of understanding the purpose of the correction.’

⁷ (CRC) CRC General Comment No. 8 (2006): The Right of the Child to Protection from Corporal Punishment and Other Cruel or Degrading forms of Punishment (U.N. CRC/C/GC/8) 2007 Mar 2

⁸ Ibid, Para 39

⁹ Article 11.5

So what is happening elsewhere in Africa

Currently eighteen African countries have prohibited corporal punishment in schools in one way or another. To give a few examples:

South Africa

South Africa banned corporal punishment by law in 1996. In its place the government introduced a system by which each school would develop its own code of conduct, drawn up through the school governing body composed of elected parent representatives. The code is reviewed every year. In doing this, South Africa adopted an approach towards punishment that stressed consensus, non-violence, negotiation and the development of school communities. A discipline strategy called Alternatives to Corporal Punishment (ATCP) was introduced in 2000, encouraging approaches to installing discipline such as verbal warnings, demerits, additional work, tidying the classrooms and detention.¹⁰

Disciplinary codes mean that punishment systems vary from school to school, but can include:

- Detention after school (after-school detention on Fridays for persistent offenders). Offenders are assigned tasks like picking up litter and cleaning toilets.
- Warning letters to parents
- Verbal reprimands
- Suspension of up to a week
- In exceptional cases, expulsion.

South African formal advice to schools in the ATCP for how to establish discipline in their classrooms involved:

- Adopting a whole school approach, ensuring that individual classroom discipline reflects school policies;
- Establishing clear ground rules;
- Being serious and consistent about the implementation of rules;
- Building relationships with students;
- Managing the learning process and the learning environment enthusiastically and professionally;
- Being inclusive;
- Giving learners an opportunity to succeed on their own terms;
- Allowing students to take responsibility;
- Giving attention seekers attention.

Uganda

Uganda banned corporal punishment in its schools in 2016.

The Ministry of Education and Sport in Uganda has published 'An Introductory Handbook for Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools for Quality Education: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment'.

¹⁰ George Moyo et al, 'Disciplinary Practices in Schools and Principles of Alternatives to Corporal Punishment Strategies', (2014) 34(1) *South African Journal of Education*, 1–14, 4

The Ministry recommends positive discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment. According to their handbook a disciplinary response should be:

1. Relevant to the misbehaviour
2. Proportional to the offence
3. Focused on correcting the behaviour, not humiliating the student
4. Aimed at rehabilitation (learning from mistakes) not retribution (payback)

However, the teacher's first action should be to decide if discipline is even appropriate. The teacher must ask whether the poor behaviour is due to factors outside the child's control.

Alternative disciplinary techniques recommended by the government can include imposing a ten-minute 'time-out' on the student, letter writing, oral apology, withdrawal of privileges, detention, reparations, involvement of parents, limited suspension, or, as a last resort, expulsion.

It should also involve setting ground rules for learning, engaging students in classroom management, and creating opportunities to celebrate success.

Research has shown that teachers use manual labour (cleaning the classroom, gardening in the teacher's quarters, digging ant-hills, preparing new school playing grounds), suspension, detention, counselling and guidance, isolation, public shaming and military style drills such as frog-jumps as punishments.

Kenya

The Kenyan government banned corporal punishment in Kenyan schools in 2001.

Apart from detention, manual punishments (digging flower beds, cleaning school facilities, picking up litter) is often used. Punishment methods are usually contained in individual school regulations. Peer mediation, guidance and counselling and teacher-student conferencing are utilized. These are usually held outside class hours.

ALTERNATIVES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

(Adapted FROM SOUTH AFRICA's *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment*). The training material in this section can be delivered in one day

Corporal punishment may contribute to social violence, it is harmful to children and is essentially anti-educational. But, bearing in mind that:

- many teachers have to deal with disruptive learners;
- corporal punishment has been part of the history of many learners and teachers;
- change is in itself often a difficult process, and;
- discipline is a recognised area of struggle for many teachers,

it is not surprising that there are educators and even parents who find this a difficult shift to make.

Discipline versus Punishment

Before we consider alternatives to corporal punishment, it is important to explore the terms that we are using to talk about discipline. Many people use the words discipline and punishment to mean the same thing. Let us therefore take a closer look at these words and their associated meanings:

Activity

- Individually, list down the differences between discipline and punishment.
- Pair up with someone next to you and share and discuss your two lists.
- Now, working as a class led by the facilitator, share and discuss items from the lists of 5 or 6 pairs of learners.

In managing the school environment, *discipline* should be proactive and constructive. Learners should experience an educative, corrective approach in which they learn to exercise self-control, respect others and accept the consequences of their actions.

Punishment, on the other hand, is reactive; it is not constructive or educative; it is retribution for an offence; the goal is to inflict pain, payback time; it is disrespectful of others; it is devoid of reflection by the learner; it does not teach self-control; it is authoritarian; it is about power and control over the learner; it is negative discipline.

Reflection

So, does this distinction make a difference to you? Take a minute to think about your own disciplinary practices by reflecting on these questions:

Do you use or have you ever used corporal punishment? Under what circumstances? What did you accomplish by using corporal punishment? Can you think of another disciplinary method you could have used to accomplish the same thing?

Do you recognise why the change in focus from corporal punishment to alternatives is important?

Are you willing to put in the extra energy and effort to make these changes?

How will you deal with those days when it seems that nothing works?

If you have used corporal punishment as a means of discipline, you are not alone.

Examine your approach – read through each of the boxes and put a tick in the box that you think you are most likely to use.			
Positive		Negative	
Presents learners with possible alternatives – focuses on positive behaviour		Tells learners what not to do and not offer alternatives	
Seeks the reasons behind persistent offences		Persistently punishes without seeking reasons for offences	
Focuses on rewarding learners for effort as well as good behaviour		Attempts to control learners' behaviour by punishing bad behaviour	
Learners attempt to keep the rules because they have been discussed and agreed upon		Learners follow the rules because of fear, threats or bribes	
Is respectful, dignified as well as physically and verbally non-violent		Is controlling, negative and disrespectful. Involves a show of power, through sarcasm, beating and humiliation.	
The consequences of breaking a rule are directly related to the learner 's behaviour		The consequences of breaking a rule are often punitive, illogical and unrelated to the learner's behaviour	
Time out, if used, is open-ended and managed by the learner who determines his/her readiness to gain self-control, i.e. when the learner can return to the learning environment, depends on the learner agreeing on the terms and then determining when they are ready to comply		Time out, if used, is meant to isolate and banish a learner for a set period of time. It is managed by the educator	
Is based on empathy and an understanding of the individual and their needs, abilities, circumstances and developmental stages		The needs and circumstances of learners are not taken into account and responses are thus often inappropriate and lack empathy	

Recognises that children have an innate sense of self-discipline and can be self-directed		Regards children as in need of control from an external source	
Redirects behaviour by selectively ignoring minor misbehaviour, using reflection on an incident through give-and-take discussions and so on		Good behaviour is associated with not being caught. Learners only behave so that they don't get caught out and are then punished	
Mistakes are regarded as an opportunity to learn. Learners are treated with empathy and are given the opportunity to express healthy remorse		Minor issues result in constant reprimands or punishment	
Behaviour, not the learner, is the focus		The learner is criticised	

Go back to the beginning of the table and count how many ticks you have in each column: which way do you lean – towards the positive or the negative? Identify ways that you can use discipline more constructively.

Establishing discipline in your classroom

A classroom climate based on mutual respect within which learners feel safe and affirmed will decrease the need for disciplinary action and develop the learners' ability to practice self-discipline. By implementing a proactive approach, teachers can put things in place, which will safeguard the culture of learning and teaching in their classrooms, simple things like:

- preparing for lessons/preparing engaging lessons for your class
- exercising self-discipline
- having extension work available for those who finish assigned tasks early
- ensuring that teaching and learning happen consistently
- ensuring that learners are stimulated
- establishing class rules with the learners
- making a space for time out or a conflict resolution corner
- affirming learners
- building positive relationships with learners.

These are all strategies which will set the stage for a positive learning environment and can significantly reduce problems with discipline in the classroom.

Let's explore these ideas on how a positive culture of learning and teaching can be created in more depth:

- **Adopt a whole school approach and make sure that your classroom discipline reflects the school's policies** – discipline is not only a classroom issue, it impacts on the whole school. Classroom and school strategies should be congruent. Create a climate in which these issues are discussed, evaluated and new strategies put in place. Co-operation and consistency among the staff will strengthen whatever individual teachers try to implement in their classes and give learners a sense of security, as they will know what to expect as well as what is expected of them.
- **Establish ground rules** – set class rules with your students at the beginning of the year, along with the consequences for breaking those rules; you may choose to re-evaluate them at the beginning of each new term. Make sure that everybody understands the logic behind each rule. Put the rules where they can be seen or give each learner a copy; they could even sign it as an agreement with everybody in the class.
 - **Class rules developed by a group of South African grade 6 learners:**
 - Talk quietly when working in small groups
 - Listen when others are speaking – don't interrupt
 - Co-operate to accomplish assigned tasks
 - Share thoughts with one another and respect others' views and ideas
 - Respect other people and their space
 - Think before you act
 - Share
 - Be on time for class
 - Complete all unfinished class work for homework
- **Be serious and consistent about the implementation of the rules** – the rules and consequences should apply equally to everybody in the class. Be fair – it is critical to a relationship of trust between yourself and the learners. Make sure that any disciplinary action is carried out firmly but fairly.
- **Know your learners and focus on relationship building** – build a relationship of trust in which learners feel respected, understood and recognised for who they are. Do things like: remember their names, get to know them, notice who seeks attention and who does not, be sincere, ask how they are if they have been ill, find out about their lives, talk to them, make it clear that you care about them, make time for them. Reach out to everybody, including those who may be part of a clique or a social group, including gangs. Send a message of inclusion and lay the foundation for open communication channels.
- **Manage the learning process and the learning environment enthusiastically and professionally** – your motto should be: "Be prepared". Work for the day should always be well prepared, anticipate that some learners will finish before others and have something for them to do. Make sure that the work is relevant to the learners. Set up a learning environment that is conducive to learning, display learners work or involve them in setting up classroom displays. Be self-critical: if something does not work, consider all the reasons why this may be so, including that perhaps you could have done something differently.

- **Learning materials and methodology** – include things like conflict management, problem solving, tolerance, anti-bullying, gender sensitivity, and so on in your learning materials as well as in the way in which the classroom is managed. The methodology should provide the opportunity for learners to practice their skills in these particular areas as well as to build a cooperative learning environment in which learners understand the dynamics of working together and are able to give and take in a group situation.
- **Be inclusive** – leaving learners out, not reflecting an understanding of their needs, and so on could alienate them. Use materials, pictures, language, music, posters, magazines and so on that reflect the diversity of the class so that no learner feels left out or that his or her identity is not valued.
- **Give learners the opportunity to succeed** – Learners who feel positive about themselves and their ability to succeed will make better learners. Some traditions that have been around for a long time may contribute to some students feeling superior and others frustrated or inadequate. For example, only acknowledging those learners who obtain A aggregates as opposed to those learners who have worked to their best ability and achieved what is for them the equivalent of an A symbol may be frustrating to a learner who worked hard. Take steps to avoid favouritism and celebrate a broad range of student achievement.
- **Allow learners to take responsibility** – provide space for learners to be responsible, whether in the way they conduct themselves in the classroom, running a community project, taking care of a class pet or filling in the class list for the teacher. Being responsible for the day to day events that take place in the class, will develop their sense of self-worth as well as their ability to take responsibility for themselves and their communities.
- **Give attention seekers what they want** – attention! It is unlikely that learners who seek attention are going to stop doing what they are doing because they are being ignored. It is even more improbable that negative attention like being shouted at or responded to with sarcasm will stop them or impact positively on their behaviour. If a learner constantly seeks attention, albeit negatively, seek out ways that you can engage with him or her in a positive way, even if it is through simple strategies like giving them a task to do, sending them out of the room for a few minutes on an errand, or giving them responsibility for something or anything else that will acknowledge them.
- **Use professional assistance** – if there are learners who display particular difficulties in the classroom such as issues of socialisation, learning barriers, emotional difficulty, distress, aggressive behaviour, bullying and so on, seek help from your colleagues and if necessary from professionals such as psychologists or community counsellors.

A well-managed learning environment in which proactive strategies are put in place will reduce the need for disciplinary measures significantly. It will, however, not eradicate it. It is therefore important to put additional strategies in place, which pre-empt disciplinary situations that may arise so that they can be managed consistently with a minimum amount of disruption and stress.

Keeping discipline going in your classroom

Adopting a non-violent constructive approach to discipline does not mean that everybody will suddenly be using identical approaches. Some educators might find that they use a number of different styles

according to who they are, how they perceive the learner and his or her needs and their reading of the situation. Others might find that they feel most comfortable with the certainty of one particular style.

In the following section, we will consider four broad approaches to discipline. Read through each of them and try to identify where you would locate yourself.

1. The Democrat

Involves learners in the developing and keeping of rules:

- In the classroom learners are consulted on issues that arise between themselves and the educator.
- Emphasis is placed on participation of all learners as the rights and responsibilities implicit in disciplinary codes.
- The development and implementation of disciplinary codes and the consequences of breaking the code are a whole school process involving learners, educators, parents and other role players.

Strategies for Democratic Discipline

Democratic discipline places emphasis on the process which is based on participation and involvement. Procedures could include: allowing learners to explore their own ideas and feelings about behaviour; involving them in the development of a code of conduct; agreeing on the consequences of good and bad behaviour; ensuring that the code fits with other school processes; involving parents; and revisiting the process, evaluating it and changing things if necessary.

Democratic strategies of discipline are designed to teach, to encourage students to respond for intrinsic and moral reasons, to let students know that they are cared for and that they must learn to care for others. Emphasis is given to sharing standards, customs, mores, agreement, values and commitments. Instead of striking behavioural contracts, the emphasis is on teachers and students together developing a social and moral constitution that spells out what is right and good for the community, what each member of the community can expect from others, and what each member must give in return. As a school moves towards democratic approaches, dos and don'ts that manage behaviour are exchanged for rights and wrongs that teach lessons about caring, citizenship and community. With a social and moral constitution in place, teachers can respond to disciplinary problems as follows:

The Event	What is happening? What is the student doing (not doing) that is causing a problem?
The Social Contract	What are our agreements? What are our commitments to one another, to the class, to the school? What does the class suggest the consequences of actions should be?
The Moral Connection	Why is what happened wrong? How has the standard failed?
Next Steps	What must be done to fix things up? What natural consequences will be endured? For grave infractions, what rational consequences must be endured?

Revisiting Commitments	Looking ahead, what are our commitments to one another and to this community?
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2 The Community Builder

- Thinks beyond discipline to the issues that impact on the building of a community.
- Takes a holistic approach to create a classroom based on commitment, respect, care and dignity.
- Believes that through this process, discipline as something outside of the learner will be replaced by self-discipline.

Community Building Strategies

Community disciplinary processes challenge educators to think about the assumptions they make about the classroom and what they expect of learners. What it suggests is that the child might not be acting up – the expectation or the environment (amongst others) might in itself be the problem.

The suggestions given by South Africa’ Department of Education on establishing a community in the classroom are the following:

- **It takes time:** developing a spirit of community does not happen immediately or through some kind of blueprint or step by step procedure.
- **Respectful adults:** children are more likely to be respectful when they themselves feel respected by the adults who work with them. They are also more likely to show care for others if they feel cared for.
- **Communication:** teachers are authentic and unpatronising. They explain to learners what they are doing and why they are doing it. They ask learners for their opinions and are sincerely interested in their responses. Learners’ needs are met through open communication with their teacher who takes time to listen and enjoy private conversations with them.
- **Facilitate connection between learners:** Situations in which learners share with the rest of the class aspects of their identity so that they can build on their knowledge and understanding of one another. In that way relationships of respect are built.
- **Class-wide discussions:** The class as a community discusses together issues which affect them as a community.
- **Conflict resolution:** Conflict is a natural part of life and according to educators who subscribe to this type of process, conflict facilitates learning around the values, attitudes and skills associated with conflict resolution.

Community service can be employed as a disciplinary measure, the rationale being that, if one takes away from the community, it is right that one should put something back into it: this can be a very constructive process for learners.

3. The Behaviourist

The premise on which this school of thought is based is that people learn most effectively when their behaviour is reinforced by reward or by recognition. The behaviourist uses behaviour modification as a strategy by placing emphasis on:

- clear and consistent rules and expectations
- clear and consistent consequences
- thoughtful and strategic positive reinforcement, and
- the modelling of good behaviour.

Strategies for behavioural modification

1. **Setting expectations:** children like and need rules as long as they are clear and make sense. These rules should be based on the core values of the classroom such as safety, respect, kindness and so on. Too many rules become confusing and inhibiting: make sure that rules provide a balance between structure and freedom.
2. **Positive reinforcement:** behavioural strategies emphasise the importance of positive behaviour. Children who behave in positive ways are given a positive response that encourage them to repeat this behaviour. Bad behaviour is prevented. The child's bad behaviour is observed by the educator who identifies triggers and thus finds strategies for diverting the bad behaviour before it becomes entrenched. Some examples of positive reinforcement are as simple as a smile, praise, public acknowledgement, and so on. This system works most effectively when there are privileges attached to good behaviour. Reward systems may include things like start charts, badges or classroom rewards.
3. **Consistent consequences:** learners should know what the consequences of bad behaviour will be. The application of these consequences on the part of the teacher should be consistent. Consequences may include:
 - **Withdrawal of privilege:** create activities the learner enjoys and are regularly part of when they behave well. Take away the privilege of being involved when there is a behavioural issue.
 - **Time out:** this strategy involves the removal of the learner from the situation in which he or she is unable to exercise self-discipline to a cooling down place. The space used should encourage contemplation and self-reflection. Often there is an expectation on the learner to fulfil certain criteria before being able to leave this space and to communicate with the educator that he or she wished to participate in the class activities once again and that the rules will once again be adhered to.
 - **Daily reports:** this is a system that gives learners the opportunity to reflect on their bad behavioural patterns and to give them opportunities on a daily basis to improve and to receive reinforcement for that improvement. The teacher explains to the learner that he or she is going onto a daily report system and explains why. The form used is shown to them and the procedure of having it filled in by every teacher is demonstrated. At the end of the school day, the teacher and the learner look at the report together and discuss the entries. The report is then taken home and signed by the parents. The child starts the process again the next day. The system is stopped once the child has a clear sheet for three days.

- **Model good behaviour:** the teacher has the responsibility of being a living example of the kind of behaviour that is expected. This is based on the idea that children learn from role models. For example, if a child grows up with violence, he or she is likely to resort to it as a way of responding to difficulty. On the other hand, if they are met with a model of compassion, patience and understanding, they are more likely to adopt these behaviours for themselves.

4. The Empathiser

Responds to the whole child and tries to see things from their point of view. Might even overlook minor behavioural issues in order to avoid alienation. Does not waste time making silly rules that lend themselves to being broken. Regards behaviour issues as a reflection that the learner:

- is facing problems at home;
- has a learning barrier;
- is struggling with the learning environment or with teaching methods;
- may feel alienated for a number of reasons.

Practical strategies

This approach is based on the idea that behavioural problems are rooted in practical real life issues faced by learners and that there is no quick fix for these problems. An educator who uses this approach will try to find out what problems underlie the child's behaviour.

The focus on the social and psychological causes of difficult behaviour provides important practical solutions to a wide range of discipline problems. It places emphasis on the early identification of learning barriers and social challenges, and the provision of appropriate support and services to learners. In order to successfully begin to identify problems, an educator must be increasingly curious about the behaviour, personality and life circumstances of each child. Being alert to each child combined with the seeking out of information and help on the part of the teacher will result in the identification of a wide range of problems facing young people today.

Educators are not expected to be psychologists. They are, however, in a position where they work most directly with learners and should therefore be in touch with learners' behavioural problems. Their role is to understand the nature of the problem and to be able to identify appropriate help. In communities where support services are not available, a suggestion is that the educator has an even deeper responsibility to access the best programme forward in the face of scarce resources.

(This section of the booklet is adapted from Uganda's *Positive Discipline/Alternatives to Corporal Punishment Training Manual* and Save the Children's *Ending Corporal Punishment and other Cruel and Degrading Punishment of Children*)

ABOUT THIS TRAINING BOOKLET

The positive discipline booklet is designed for teachers and other stakeholders engaged with learners to end violence against children in schools. It aims at equipping them with skills and information to alternative forms of discipline to corporal punishment.

The training booklet consists of the following:

- Definitions of corporal punishment
- Myths and facts about corporal punishment
- Research findings on causes and magnitude of the problem of corporal punishment
- International and national legal frameworks that address corporal punishment
- Alternatives to corporal punishment, sometimes referred to as positive discipline, as a better way of helping learners develop into confident and responsible citizens of Sierra Leone.

This training will be delivered in a two-day workshop by trained facilitator

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the training program, participants will be able to:

- Identify what constitutes corporal punishment in schools, its effects on learners, legal frameworks and the need to change the social norms and practices from corporal punishment to alternatives that promote positive discipline.
- help teachers and other stakeholders embrace their roles as protectors of children and agents of change in preventing violence against children.
- adopt alternative strategies to corporal punishment.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This training program is intended to:

- Build the capacity of teachers to fully explore the advantages of positive discipline, non-violent attitudes and behaviours in schools and classrooms - a reward that ultimately benefits each of them individually, their classrooms, schools, communities and the society at large.
- Promote a safer school learning environment and children's retention and participation in schools.

TRAINING CONTENT

DURATION OF THE TRAINING

- The duration of the orientation is usually 1 to 2 days depending on the size of the team, and the background of the participants in the team and the facilitator's ability to channel the discussions. By background we refer to participants' extent of familiarity with each other, the team, and their prior work experience with children because the depth of interactions is dependent on these factors.
- A few participants may be already self-critiquing whether they are doing the right thing by punishing the children. Once such participants feel assured that they will not be judged, they begin to voice their inner conflict pertaining to physical punishments. Such sharing should lead to discussions and debates.
- The success of the orientation is in facilitating reflection and a healthy debate towards the gradual development of a new thinking process rather than providing quick-fix solutions. It is important to ensure that nobody feels 'Judged' or 'Misjudged' for being honest with their beliefs about punishments. However, it is equally important to drive home the message that it is inappropriate to physically and verbally abuse children.

SESSION - I

CLIMATE SETTING SESSION

Introduction	This session helps participants to learn more about one another and to establish trust while providing an overview and the goal of the training program. It will give them an opportunity to express their achievements in regard to children's education.
Objective	This session allows participants to know each other and set the climate for delivery of the program
Activity	Introduction; self-reflection; setting workshop goals, ground rules, expectations and fears
Materials	Flip chart, sticky notes, and markers
Methodology	Group work
Time	45 minutes
Facilitator's Guide Introduce the session, objectives, and duration.	
Instructions <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask participants to introduce themselves by mentioning their names and the school or institution they belong to.2. Divide participants into small groups of 4 – 6 persons per group.3. Ask them to choose an interesting name for their group.4. Ask participants to brainstorm on the ground rules for their small group's participation. Write the rules on a flipchart.5. Ask participants to share their achievements as teachers towards the cause of children's education. Identify a volunteer to write down the points and another volunteer to present the group's points. Ask each group's presenter to share what they have written and discuss it as a class6. Ask participants to write one expectation from the training program and one fear on a sticky note and post it on a designated flip chart.7. Invite several of the participants to share their expectations and discuss them. Invite them also to share their fears and explore the reasons for those fears.8. At this point, take a 20 minute Tea Break.	

SESSION – II

EFFECTS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ON LEARNERS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Introduction	In this session, participants will use their experiences and explore the effects of corporal punishment on learners, teachers and parents.
Objective	By the end of the session, participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe the effects of corporal punishment
Activity	Group work
Materials	Flip charts, markers and masking tape, cards cut from manila paper
Methodology	Pair and share, group work and brain storming
Time	01 hour 10 minutes

Facilitator's Guide

Before doing the activities below: As a class, read and discuss the material on Page 2 of the Reference Material in the booklet titled *What are the Effects of Corporal Punishment?*

Introduce the session, objectives, and duration.

Activity 1: Pair and Share

Time: 30 minutes

1. Explain to the participants that all people desire to discipline their children properly. This exercise will enable us to reflect upon the disciplining strategies that were used at home and while we were in school.
2. Ask participants to pair up and share their personal experience when they were disciplined using corporal punishment (let them discuss how it made them feel and whether it forced them to change)
3. Ask 4 to 5 people to share with the larger group (be sensitive about the gender)
4. Ask participants to say if they use corporal punishment at home and/or at school now. If so, why do they use this form of discipline with children? Take responses from participants and explore/discuss the responses.

Activity 2: Group Work

Time: 30 minutes

1. Ask participants to get into their small groups. In each group, they identify a teacher/parent or a child and reflect on how they felt when they were in school and share their experiences of corporal punishments.
2. In each group, one person should be a teacher, the other a parent and another one a child. Distribute three cards to each group (one each for the teacher, parent, and the child).
3. Tell participants in their different roles to only describe their feelings about corporal punishments they received at school. Group members should take turns to write their points on the respective cards.
4. Ask the following questions:
 - As a parent or a teacher, what did you feel after giving corporal punishment to a child?
 - As a child, what did you feel after getting a corporal punishment?
5. Ask participants to put up their cards on the same flip chart or wall.
6. Ask a volunteer from each group to read out what is written on the cards.
7. As a class, discuss some of the points on the cards by asking participants to comment on what they have heard being read out.
8. Summarize the discussions on corporal punishment by reminding the participants about the negative effects of corporal punishments on learners.

Take a LUNCH BREAK at the end of this activity.

Activity 3: Harmful Nature of Corporal Punishment on Learners

Time: 30 minutes

1. Ask each participant to write down any further effects of corporal punishment not already mentioned in the class discussion. Participants should write their responses on a sticky note and place it on a flip chart or on the wall.
2. When participants have completed posting their responses, call on 6 participants at random to read out their responses. Briefly discuss each response before moving on to the next.
3. The facilitator should put forth the following questions for class discussion:
 - Is there any use in resorting to a practice which causes more harms than benefits?
 - What should we do to stop corporal punishments in our schools and communities?
 - Note down the responses for these questions on a flip chart and place it on the wall for reference.
 - Summarize the session by emphasizing the need to end corporal punishments given the harms it causes to the learners, parents and children.

SESSION – III

CHALLENGING WIDELY ACCEPTED BELIEF THAT CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IS ESSENTIAL TO DISCIPLINE AND HELP CHILDREN TO LEARN

Objective	By the end of the session, participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge the widely accepted belief that corporal punishment is essential to discipline and help children learn
Activity	Interactive presentation and discussions
Materials	Prepared flip charts containing the following points, copies of the sheet containing myths and realities
Time	40 minutes

Facilitator's Guide

Introduce the session, objectives, and duration.

- Emphasize that in the previous activity, participants shared their experiences on corporal punishment and its effects but now we will explore whether certain beliefs about corporal punishment are justifiable.
- Ask participants to get into their small groups where they come up with responses to the following beliefs: (one group member to jot down their points).
 - It happened to me and did no harm
 - Corporal punishment teaches obedience
 - Corporal punishment is part of our culture
 - It is the only way I can control the children in my class. I have too many.
- Ask participants to present in a plenary (one group member to present their points)
- Invite 4 participants to comment on the different responses
- Challenge the myths and explain that corporal punishment brings temporary results. Repeat that these are myths and not facts of life. It negatively impacts someone's behaviour, character, relationships and the person disciplining.
- Now provide each participant with a copy of the **Myths and Realities** on corporal punishment.

Myths and Realities⁶

Facilitator should do the following:

- Read out each statement and then discuss as a class why it is a myth and not a fact.
- Distribute copies to participants at the end of the session.
- After discussing the statements below, also distribute and discuss the material on page 3 of the Reference Material titled *WHY IS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT SO COMMONLY USED AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN IS SO DEVASTATING?*

Myth No. 1: "It happened to me and did me no harm."

Fact: Though they may have felt fear, anger, and mistrust from being hit by parents or teachers, people who use this argument often do it to reduce the guilt they have for using corporal punishment on their children today. In their minds, they are defending their violent actions against their children. However, their actions reveal that corporal punishment did, in fact, do them harm: it perpetuated the cycle of violence that they now inflict upon children, and similarly these children are more likely to perpetuate the violence for generations to come.

Myth No. 2: "Nothing else works!" or "They ask for it!"

Fact: The problem is the disciplinary approach, not the misbehaviour of the children. Justifying that a child has asked for violence is really intended to make the perpetrator feel less guilty and transfer the blame to the victim. Besides, do you normally hit your boss, employee, spouse, or best friend when it appears that "nothing else works"? Hopefully not!

Myth No. 3: "Corporal punishment works best. Other methods don't."

Fact: Corporal punishment creates a sense of distrust and insecurity in the child, it destroys the teacher-child relationship. Children become angry at why someone who is supposed to teach and care for them is instead threatening, beating, or insulting them. While a single act of corporal punishment may seem to be effective, it only temporarily frightens a child into submission.

Myth No. 4: "Corporal punishment teaches obedience."

Fact: In the past, the practice was to teach children to obey authority without questioning. Now teachers adopt child-centred learning techniques to encourage children to explore, ask questions, and to learn the joy of finding answers as a major way of learning. Corporal punishment, however, stops a child from questioning, thinking critically, and achieving personal goals; yet these are qualities that both adults and children need to excel in a dynamic, competitive, and innovative society.

Myth No. 5: "I only do it as a last resort. I had no choice."

Fact: This argument is not acceptable; for example, is a husband justified in hitting his wife as a last resort? It should be no more acceptable when it comes to our students. Besides, it is quite common for parents and teachers to turn to physical punishment at the first instance rather than as a last resort.

Myth No. 6: It's the only way I can control the children in my class. I have too many!

Fact: This excuse is common among teachers who face large classes. It usually arises because the classroom has no set rules or routines; the children do not know what is expected of them and the consequences for misbehaving; and the teacher did not take the time to build a positive relationship with the children so they would want to be good. Like Myth 4 above, enforcing blind obedience through threats of physical violence does not encourage children to learn from the teacher, only to fear him or her. As a result, they don't want to learn, which makes our job harder, and they don't learn well, which reflects poorly on our performance as a teacher.

Myth No. 7: "Corporal punishment is a part of our culture."

Fact: Promoting alternatives to physical punishment is looked at as a "Western"

imposition not considering Sierra Leonean values. In African societies, age-related status hierarchies prevail and the expectation is that the young should respect, serve, and obey older people including teachers. Although physical punishment is widespread in Africa, there is no necessary connection between certain core values of African societies such as maintaining social harmony. Violence through corporal punishment destroys the social harmony in the classroom in terms of student-teacher relationship, and erodes children's confidence and self-esteem. Lack of self-control as a way to dominate others is made acceptable. The traditional ways that can be used as alternative forms of discipline includes for example, "Respected adults modeling good and non-violent behavior which children would imitate and learn."

SESSION – IV

LEARNING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUNISHMENT AND DISCIPLINE

Introduction	This session exposes participants to the difference between punishment and discipline
Objective	By the end of this session, participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the difference between punishment and discipline
Activity	Interactive presentation and discussion
Materials	Flip charts, Masking tape, Markers, sticky notes
Methodology	Time line disciplining strategy, Gallery walk
Time	1 Hour: 30 minutes

Facilitator’s Guide

Introduce the session, objectives, and duration.

Prepare 5 flip charts for the different age categories (0-3yrs, 4-6yrs, 7-13yrs, 14-20yrs)

2. Distribute sticky notes of various colours to participants and ask them to write twoways of disciplining children at different age groups as per the displayed charts
3. Post the sticky notes on the charts
4. Engage participants in a gallery walk to identify positive methods used.
5. Let participants return to plenary and use the following questions to guide the discussion
 - a. Under what circumstances are the positive ways of discipline used? (Looking out for specific behaviours)
 - b. Why are they used in such circumstances?
 - c. What are the benefits of using the positive disciplining strategies?
6. During the discussion, enrich the participants’ ideas and emphasise the different positive discipline methods as provided in the facilitator’s notes.
7. Provide participants with a handout on discipline versus punishment

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

Positive Discipline	Corporal Punishment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplining is a process of teaching or training someone to obey set rules and regulations in the short and long term. • It is a process of building a character of a person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punishment is meant to control a child’s behaviour while discipline is meant to develop a child’s behaviour especially regarding how the child should conduct her/himself regardless of whether they are alone or with others.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive discipline is a nine-step process which recognises and rewards appropriate behaviour. • Discipline is meant to teach the child self-control and confidence of what we 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punishment is a one-off act focusing on what the child has done wrong. • Punishment humiliates, degrades, causes loss of confidence, dehumanizes, does not make the child learn, creates fear and
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<p>want the child to learn and what the child can learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The positive discipline techniques: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The appropriate behaviour is described and encouraged 2. Clear rules and reasons are provided 3. Acknowledgement is requested 4. Correct behaviour is rewarded while inappropriate behaviours is discussed and rejected with reasons 	<p>resentment and does not help the child learn or build good character or behaviour.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement is a type of reward that helps the child to work, learn and achieve. • It builds self-esteem because the child learns that he/she worked and was directly responsible for earning the reward or praise. Children may choose to work and earn it or not which makes them have control over their lives, a healthy way of establishing self-esteem. • Likewise, not giving encouragement for misbehaviour such as throwing tantrums or negative attention seeking will help the child over time to learn that it is inappropriate behaviour that is not good to reinforce. • Examples of positive discipline techniques: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Model orderly, predictable behaviour, respectful communication and collaborative/peaceful conflict resolution strategies 2. Use positive body language: nod, smile, look the student in the eye 3. Lower yourself to the level of the child: bend, kneel or sit at the same level with the child 4. Re-direct behaviour positively; use mistakes to correct behaviour rather than abuse the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punishment causes pain which discourages children from learning.
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DISCIPLINE VS. PUNISHMENT	
<i>Discipline is ...</i>	<i>Punishment is ...</i>
Giving children positive alternatives	Telling children only what NOT to do
Acknowledging or rewarding efforts and good behaviour	Reacting rather than responding to misbehaviour

When children follow rules because the rules are discussed and agreed upon	When children follow rules because they are threatened or bribed
Consistent, firm guidance	Controlling, shaming
Positive, respectful	Negative, disrespectful
Nonviolent	Violent
Consequences that are directly related to the misbehaviour	Consequences that are unrelated to the misbehaviour
When children realize their behaviour affects others and know how their behaviour affects others	When children are punished for hurting others, but not aware of how the behaviour affects others
“Time-outs” that are open-ended and governed by a child’s readiness to gain self-control	“Time-outs” that banish a child for a set amount of time governed by the adult
Understanding individual abilities, needs, circumstances and developmental stages	Not taking into consideration individual abilities, needs and circumstances
Teaching children to maintain self-control	Constantly reprimanding children for minor infractions, causing them to ignore you
Reflection and effective communication	Forcing children to comply with illogical rules “just because I say so”
Using mistakes as learning opportunities	Teaching children to behave only to avoid punishment
Teaching empathy and healthy remorse by showing it	Being sarcastic or demeaning
Directed at the child’s behaviour, never the child	Directed at the child, rather than the child’s behaviour

SESSION – V

APPLYING THE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND POSITIVE DISCIPLINE TO THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE

Introduction	In this session, participants will be exposed to ways of applying the knowledge about corporal punishment and positive discipline to their own experience.
Objective	By the end of the session, participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply the knowledge about corporal punishment and positive discipline to their own experiences
Activity	Group discussions using case studies
Materials	Sample case studies used for group work
Methodology	Group discussions using case studies
Time	60 minutes

Facilitator’s Guide

Pages 4 – 11 of the Reference Material provides important background reading before doing the Activity in this session. As a class, please read and discuss that material (30 minutes)

Introduce the session, objectives, and duration. Announce that there are three Case Studies to discuss in small groups.

1. Distribute the sample case studies to the participants in small groups
2. Ask participants in their groups to discuss the case study given to them and agree what they would do if faced with such a scenario?
3. Ask participants to write down their suggestions and present them in plenary for comments and discussion by the whole class

Case study 1

Josephine is a student in senior 3 in Bo district. Her parents are very poor and chronically ill. Josephine is always troublesome in the class, disturbing everyone whenever the teacher is out of the class. She makes noise and distracts the whole class.

Guiding questions:

- What is the fundamental problem in this case?
- How should the teacher’s approach to Josephine be?
- What is the role of Josephine’s classmates in supporting her?

Case study 2

Henrietta and Emma are in senior 2 in Port Loko. On an examination day last term, they arrived early for their afternoon session. The teacher notices them entering the examination room, rushed to meet them and slapped both of them on their faces. Both girls cried and their faces that were happy and bright suddenly turned gloomy and full of tears. The teacher justified her actions by saying, who will manage them when they come before time.

Guiding questions:

- What are your comments about the teacher's behaviour?
- How else could the teacher have handled the situation to help the girls learn?

Case study 3

During last paper for the mock examinations in Kenema District, the students did not pack their lunch or bring books for the afternoon because they assumed that they will not have classes after their examinations and will return home for lunch. However, Ms. Karimu, their chemistry teacher, knew she had a lesson with the class after their last examinations. When she learnt that the students had not brought lunch or books to study, she thought they had deliberately left their books and lunch to escape from her class. She took the matter to the head teacher immediately. The head teacher made the girls stand in the hot sun in front of his office for hours, hungry, feeling bad and humiliated because everyone passing could see them being punished.

Guiding questions for discussion:

- What was wrong with the teacher's approach?
- What did the teacher achieve?
- How could the teacher have handled the situation differently?

SESSION VI

COMMITTING TO ERADICATE HARMFUL PUNISHMENTS AND ADOPTING POSITIVE DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Introduction	This session solicits commitment from the participants about adopting positive discipline techniques in schools as opposed to corporal punishment.
Objective	By the end of the session, participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to eradication of harmful punishment and adopting positive discipline techniques in their schools and communities
Activity	Commitment to Positive discipline
Materials	Manila papers, markers, pastels, Flip charts
Methodology	Group work
Time	1 hour :30 minutes

Facilitator's Guide

Before doing the Activity below, as a class, read and discuss pages 11 – 13 of the Reference Materials titled *POSITIVE DISCIPLINE, VIOLENCE-FREE and SAFE SCHOOLS IN ACTION*.

Introduce the session, objectives, and duration.

Activity 1: Commitment to Positive Discipline

Time: 45 minutes

1. Ask participants to get into groups according to their schools
2. Distribute one manila paper and markers to participants per school
3. Ask participants to trace one hand on the manila paper using a marker
4. Ask participants to write their commitment inside the traced hand. These will be displayed in their schools in a place of choice.
5. Close this activity by asking participants to read out their commitment to the class.

Activity 2: Action Planning

Time: 60 minutes

1. Ask participants to get into groups according to their schools
2. Provide them with flip charts and markers
3. Guide participants on how to come up with action plans (activity, time frame, personal responsibility) on how they are to effect positive discipline in their schools
4. The project team and the teachers get copies of the action plans (to be used for support, supervision and Monitoring & Evaluation)
5. Emphasize the need for action planning as a measure of transferring the knowledge and skills acquired to promote positive discipline in schools.
6. Let participants share their action plans in a plenary and invite questions and comments from the class.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

WHAT IS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT?

“Any punishment in which physical force is used intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting (smacking, slapping, spanking) children with the hand or with an implement e.g. whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, burning, scalding, or forced ingestion (for example, washing children’s mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow something). In addition, there are other non-physical forms of punishment which are also cruel and degrading and thus incompatible with the Convention. These include, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child.”

“Corporal punishment is always degrading and has no place in the home or our schools”.
(UN Committee on the Rights of the Child)

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT?

- Corporal punishment can lead to lifelong psychological damage, such as depression, inhibition, rigidity, heightened anxiety and suicidal thoughts.
- Corporal punishment causes children to lose interest in school and learning.
 - Children resent the learning experience and, as a result, do not value education.
 - Children learn to hate a subject or teacher.
 - Education does not thrive when children live in fear of those who teach them.
 - School absenteeism and dropout increase. Children lose interest.
- Corporal punishment breeds cruelty and violence. Violence breeds more violence.
 - It is common knowledge that a significant number of people who commit crime and violence were physically punished when they were children.
- Corporal punishment tarnishes the school's image.
 - Some parents do not take their children to schools known for degrading and humiliating children.
- It costs money to treat injured children.
 - When children are injured from corporal punishment, the school must take responsibility for paying the medical expenses.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT HAS PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

Many children suffer physical injury as a result of corporal punishment, such as broken bones, infections and physical illness. These physical consequences can be painful for children and costly for families. Injuries can affect children's physical development and can have an economic impact on the entire community.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT HAS EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

When children are beaten, they often feel anger and shame at the same time, which leads to a feeling of humiliation. When we force children to tolerate an injustice, we damage their sense of dignity and self-confidence. Children may also stop trusting adults who repeatedly use corporal punishment against them. These negative experiences can lead children to depression, thoughts of suicide, desires for revenge and aggression toward others.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT HAS BEHAVIORAL CONSEQUENCES

Many children who experience corporal punishment bully other children, or as adults, use domestic violence. Corporal punishment teaches children that violence is an acceptable way of imposing their views on someone less powerful than themselves.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT HAS DEVELOPMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Many children who experience corporal punishment on a regular basis live with slowed or interrupted cognitive and emotional development. They become withdrawn and fearful of trying new things. They feel ashamed of themselves due to regular humiliation. They need more time to learn social and academic skills. Their performance at school deteriorates, and their ability to form healthy, satisfying relationships can be severely affected.

WHY IS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT SO COMMONLY USED AND YET ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN IS SO DEVASTATING

Several false arguments and myths are used by adults and older children to use corporal punishment on children. Below are some of myths about corporal punishment.

1. Spare the rod and spoil the child.
2. Without pain there is no gain.
3. Good teachers are always in control of their students.
4. I was beaten and I learned how to behave better.
5. I only use corporal punishment sparingly
6. I only use corporal punishment as a last resort.
7. The ears of African children are on the buttocks.
8. Adults do not know what other methods to use to discipline children.

Think back to your own experience of school. How many times a week did you experience corporal punishment? How many times a day?

- If you explore your own experiences or speak with today's students, you will realize that all corporal punishment does is make children fearful and ashamed. It does not teach them what is wrong with their behaviour.
- It does not instil in them the joy of learning and the ability to apply their skills to new situations.
- Imagine what your education would have been like if your school had provided these experiences?

WHY SHOULD WE EXPECT OUR SCHOOLS TO CHANGE?

It is sometimes argued that schools reflect the norms of our communities. If more than 90 percent of adults say that in their community children are beaten, shouted at and denied food or other basic needs as a form of punishment, is it any surprise that corporal punishment is widely practiced in the schools of those communities? Why do we have a higher expectation of schools, given the prevailing norms in our communities?

As a society, we expect our schools to be places where new ideas emerge. We expect our schools to nurture our best minds and to develop new directions for the progress of society. Our schools should be places where we learn to think critically, evaluate ideas, develop new ways of relating with each other and develop the skills that will help us progress as a nation. That is why we have high expectations for the values our schools should embody. That is why we invest our hope in creating good schools—schools that will help our children achieve their aspirations. That is why safer schools are crucial to the development of Sierra Leone.

ALTERNATIVES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT: POSITIVE DISCIPLINE WITHIN SAFER SCHOOLS

- Prohibiting corporal punishment, a common response to children's misbehaviour will only succeed if schools are given workable alternatives.
- Alternative of using positive discipline in the context of a safer school offers an opportunity for children to learn while they develop self-discipline without having to go through pain.

WHY DO CHILDREN BEHAVE AS THEY DO?

- We need to understand what motivates children's behaviour if we want to guide children by using alternatives to corporal punishment.
- Just as children have basic physical needs, they also have basic emotional and psychological needs. For children to develop to their full potential, these emotional and psychological needs must be met. These needs include the following:
 - The need to belong to the group they find themselves a part of.
 - The need to be accepted by people who matter the most to them.
 - The need to feel emotionally and physically secure.
 - The need to feel respected by their peers.

When these needs are met, children are far more likely to become self-respecting individuals who make positive contributions to their communities. However, if these needs are not met, children will display unhealthy behaviours as they attempt to meet these needs for themselves. Take for example children who are noisy or disrespectful in class. They may be behaving this way because they do not feel accepted by their peers. For some reason, they are feeling vulnerable and insecure in that class and, in turn, are trying to make themselves look brave and strong.

Think of other common misbehaviours at your school. Could they be understood as children trying to fill their emotional and psychological needs?

- A child's behaviour may also be influenced by the gender roles imposed by the community or the child's social status within the community. For example, girls are often expected to carry a larger burden of the work at home and to be submissive to their male counterparts. This may affect their attendance and participation at school.
- Children with a disability are often stigmatized and ridiculed within the community. This may affect their ability to respond to the teacher's questions, because they may fear additional ridicule.
- When teachers understand children's behaviour in this way, they will find it easier to determine nonviolent responses that will benefit everyone. They will discover new ways of guiding children's behaviour. Sometimes a teacher will realize that the behaviour is not the child's fault and that the child needs support rather than punishment.
- At other times a disciplinary consequence will be necessary. Many times, a teacher will find effective and creative ways to respond to children's behaviour, without disrupting the class with disciplinary action.

WHAT IS POSITIVE DISCIPLINE?

- Positive discipline is a way of guiding children's behaviour by paying attention to their emotional and psychological needs.
- It helps children take responsibility for making good decisions and understand why those decisions were in their best interests.
- Positive discipline helps children learn self-discipline without fear. It involves giving children clear guidelines for what behaviour is acceptable and then supporting them as they learn to abide by these guidelines.
- Positive discipline includes nonviolent consequences for poor behaviour. It uses consequences that replace the experience of humiliation with the following:
 - Considering the effects of one's behaviour and
 - Identifying alternative and preferred behaviours
 - Demonstrating understanding of why a preferred behaviour is important
 - Replacing harmful social, cultural norms with safe environment

This approach may require students to engage in various activities to change their behaviour from bad to positive. These may include:

- writing essays about the effects of bad behaviour
- making apologies to the person they have wronged
- performing chores in the classroom i.e. activities that make them stop, think and demonstrate their intention to act differently in the future without making them feel humiliated.

Note: Positive discipline does not reward children for poor behaviour. It provides children with an opportunity to grow as individuals by understanding their mistakes and appreciating how appropriate behaviour can bring them positive experiences and opportunities.

ALTERNATIVES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

- A positive discipline approach is child-centric, placing at the heart of every interaction the best interests of the child. Central to this approach is the relationship between teacher and child: its tone, its nature and the compassion and respect within it. Teachers create these relationships based on basic knowledge of children's developmental needs and frame their responses to children with the aim of helping them learn and grow.
- Positive discipline depends on the teacher's role as mentor and guide. It involves providing positive reinforcement for good choices as well as consequences for poor choices.
- A positive discipline approach rejects the use of violence as a tool for teaching. It's about making a long-term investment in a child's development, rather than grasping for immediate compliance.

WHY SHOULD WE USE A POSITIVE DISCIPLINE APPROACH IN OUR SCHOOLS?

- Corporal punishment is ineffective as a means of discipline. There are positive ways to teach, correct or discipline children that do not include physical and humiliating punishments. These methods improve children's development and their relationships with their parents and community.
- If we legitimize physical and humiliating punishments through our actions, it becomes difficult to protect children. We must show through our leadership that there are no acceptable forms of violence against children.
- Physical and humiliating punishments increase the use of violence in society and make violence acceptable in the eyes of subsequent generations.
- A commitment to positive discipline teaches children that violence is an unacceptable and inappropriate strategy for resolving conflicts or getting people to do what you want.

HOW DOES POSITIVE DISCIPLINE CREATE SUCCESSFUL INDIVIDUALS?

Experiencing positive discipline instills a desire to possess and demonstrate self-discipline. People who learn through positive discipline show its positive effects in their personalities.

- They have clear goals.
- They believe in themselves.
- They are self-motivated.
- They are willing to work hard for their goals.
- They trust their own judgment.
- They think of new ways to solve old problems.
- They are persistent.

Their self-discipline comes from within, because they feel positive about themselves and the people around them. They respect themselves and recognize that each person has a meaningful contribution to make to our collective development. Through many different experiences, they realize that their decisions and actions determine whether or not they will succeed. They learn to accept responsibility for their destiny.

Think of your school as a child. Did it help you develop this strong self-confidence and desire to succeed?

Unfortunately, as educators we have inherited the idea that we should intimidate the students in our classrooms instead of cultivating their confidence. We beat children and humiliate them with the aim of creating obedient students. We even refer to this process as imposing discipline. However, by intimidating children, we are not equipping them to respond to the challenges of life.

The children we are educating today will need a wide range of skills and abilities to compete for jobs and make wise decisions. We need to help them develop self-discipline by allowing them to experience positive discipline.

HOW DOES POSITIVE DISCIPLINE LEAD TO BETTER SCHOOLS?

By using positive discipline, we change what we know as education. Instead of children coming to school to obey rules and memorize information, they experience school as a place where they discover and define the kind of person they want to be.

Inspired by the outcomes of positive discipline, schools around the world are now supporting all aspects of children's growth, rather than just giving children information. This is a life-changing opportunity for many children, but they will only take advantage of it if they feel physically and emotionally safe.

Positive discipline helps children feel safe and supported, but this sense of safety must extend beyond the classroom. We must ensure that everything about a school makes children feel as safe and supported as possible in all areas of their development, in all aspects of growing up. This new kind of school is what we call a "safer school."

A safer school ensures that its structures and policies respect children's rights, include children as valued stakeholders and support children in growing their skills as leaders and thinkers. A positive discipline approach succeeds when implemented within a safer school, because a safer school demonstrates the same investment in children's development. Without this school-wide consistency, children will lack trust in the system and positive discipline will fail. Positive discipline, therefore, inspires us and requires us to develop safer schools.

A positive discipline approach succeeds when implemented within a violence free and safe school.

WHY A SAFE AND VIOLENCE FREE SCHOOL?

There is a positive association between school safety and average reading achievement, and a demonstrated correlation between safe environment and children's inclination to stay in school, as well as parents' willingness to send or continue sending their children to school, thereby increasing attendance and retention rates.⁷

A violence free and safe school provides an environment, relationships and governance structures that enable children to grow to their full potential. A violence free and safe school enables children to become compassionate, responsible, creative and thoughtful individuals.

A safe and violence free school is one that implements a zero-tolerance policy on violence in the school. It involves all stakeholders (teachers, pupils, school administrators, support staff, SMC/PTA and parents) are involved in the development of the policy, and all

⁷ Mullis et al. 2007

stakeholders understand and respect it. When a school is safe and the entire learning environment is safe and supportive, students are motivated to attend school every day especially when they also feel safe traveling to and from school. This system makes pupils feel safe and their ability to concentrate on their studies will improve.

Students who perform well at school develop high self-esteem than those who do not. Children are happy to engage in learning because their teachers are friendly and supportive. In violent free schools, students are encouraged to actively participate in and out of classroom activities without fear of humiliation or punishment even when their answers are not correct.

If pupils have people at school and at home whom they trust to share their challenges related to studies, personal safety, peer and staff relations, they will not be afraid to report experiences of violence and ask for support when needed. Additionally, if these cases are handled properly and the culprits dealt with, the pupils will feel safe and free to report and violence can be eliminated.

VIOLENCE FREE AND SAFE SCHOOLS LEAD TO BETTER LEARNING AND HEALTHIER CHILDREN

A VIOLENCE FREE AND SAFE SCHOOL EDUCATES THE WHOLE CHILD

Helps children build courage and confidence in all three areas of their development: cognitive development (how children think), social development (how children interact with others) and ethical development (how children become responsible citizens). Contributing to children's holistic development is the right thing to do. This enables children to have various services e.g. access to clean and safe water, clean and separate toilets for boys and girls, compound and classrooms. All these contribute positively to their good health. Ensuring holistic development of a child calls for inter-sectoral approach as one program may not provide these. Ultimately, the health of our nation will be judged by the way we treat and educate our children.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

A safe school goes beyond teaching children to memorize information. It helps children feel safe experimenting with the information they learn. It helps them gain the courage and skills to examine the information presented to them, to ask questions about the information and to try using it outside the classroom.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A safe school goes beyond the elimination of corporal punishment. It makes children feel accepted and valued as members of their community. It develops children's self-confidence and ability to trust their own judgment. It provides children with an opportunity to build strong relationships with others and understand how to positively contribute to those relationships. It enables children to develop positive attitude towards school and develop interest in learning to achieve their goals. Children focus on their studies and perform well because they are not afraid of corporal punishment.

ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT

A safe school makes children feel safe asking questions about values and about their responsibilities. It engages children in democratic school processes and in the creation of progressive school policies. The adults at a safe school role model clear ethical standards and guide children in developing a lifelong value system.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

A safe school helps children develop self-discipline by providing children with mentoring, clear guidelines and ongoing support. Through positive discipline, children develop clear goals for themselves and help them build the skills and character to achieve those goals. It inspires children to be persistent and recognize that achieving worthy goals takes hard work. It motivates children to look forward to coming early to school daily because school is fun, and there is time and space for playing games and sports that makes them physically healthy and fit. Playing with their friends helps children develop social skills for healthy relationships.

SERVES ALL CHILDREN EQUALLY

A safe school is sensitive to the varying needs of children. Girls may need special protection from sexual violence, including harassment from teachers and older boys. They may have specific needs relating to their reproductive health, such as during menstruation. A safe school meets the needs of children with disabilities by equally including them in the learning process and ensuring their participation is not undermined by bullying and stigma.

WHY SHOULD WE CREATE VIOLENCE FREE AND SAFE SCHOOLS?

A safe and violence free school provides the following benefits:

1. BETTER BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM

Once you invest in creating helpful relationships with children, and present the work in the classroom as collaboration between the teacher and the students, the classroom environment will likely change. Once students realize that their views and opinions matter and that you take them seriously, they may invest in contributing more positively rather than focusing on disrupting the class or misbehaving to gain attention. As a result, their behaviour in the classroom will improve.

2. INCREASED TEACHER SATISFACTION

When you have a class full of students who are interested in what you must teach, instead of feeling intimidated by your presence, teaching can become more fulfilling. The satisfaction of seeing students fully attentive and excited about learning is what makes teaching a meaningful activity.

3. IMPROVED CLASSROOM LEARNING

When students are encouraged to explore ideas and ask questions, they learn more

efficiently. They are better able to remember the information and apply it to new situations. You may also see better academic performance on tests and exams.

4. BETTER SCHOOL REPUTATION

Enthusiastic students are great ambassadors for schools. As they share their pride in their school with their family and community, the school will gain a reputation for being outstanding. In their direct and indirect representation of the school, you will see the positive effects of implementing alternatives to corporal punishment.

5. GREATER CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITIES AND THE NATION

Creative, bright students who can apply their knowledge and skills are not only good for our schools but also for our communities and country. They will become the problem solvers of the future. They will become active participants in our economy and the leaders of our nation.

6. SHARED CONFIDENCE IN DOING THE RIGHT THING

Contributing to children's holistic development is the right thing to do. Ultimately, the health of our nation will be judged by the way we treat and educate our children. By getting that right, we can make a substantial contribution to everyone's future.

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO CREATE SAFE AND VIOLENCE FREE SCHOOLS?

Everyone has the responsibility to insist on safe and violence free schools in our communities. Governments have the responsibility to develop policy guidelines and laws that help educators create safer schools. Educators such as head teachers, teachers, school administrators and the public officials involved in education have the collective responsibility to turn their schools into safe and violence free schools and to engage all stakeholders, including children, in that process.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Did the school teach you skills that you could use to keep growing as a person?
- Beyond teaching you reading, writing and basic arithmetic, did your school teach you the life skills you needed to become successful?
- Did your school allow you to participate in making decisions that affected you?
- Were you taught in an environment and with methods that made you feel excited about learning and confident that your teachers were interested in helping you learn?
- Did your school build your confidence to make a positive contribution to your family, community, school and country?

Think back to your experience and answer these questions honestly. If you answered “no” to any of these questions, you are not alone.

You may have found a way to manage with the opportunities you were given, but imaginewhat your possibilities might have been. We can do so much more for the children in our schools today.

- We can prepare our children to compete in the global economy by improving our style of

education along with the rest of the world.

- We can update our professional skills and methods so that children are excited about leading our nation rather than intimidated into following our commands. We need to create safe and violence-free schools to ensure our nation's success.

It is clear that children who are taught in an encouraging environment, in which they feel respected and valued, get more out of their school experience i.e. more skills to apply to their daily lives, more experiences for improving their minds and more opportunities to learn leadership and self-discipline. Everyone wants to give children better opportunities than they themselves had. You are in a position to make this possible. Imagine the effect you could have on the lives of children if you took the steps to create a different kind of school.

REFLECTION GUIDE

Imagine a school in which children feel safe to learn. Imagine a school in which children are active participants. Imagine a school in which children not only learn all the basic skills but also explore new ways of thinking, so that they can succeed in changing the world around them. If you do that, you will have imagined a safe and violence free school. Everybody has the responsibility to make our schools safe and free of violence.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE, VIOLENCE FREE AND SAFE SCHOOLS IN ACTION

What are the first steps for creating a safe and violence free school?

Creating a safe and violence free school requires a school-wide commitment. It will require the teachers, non-teaching staff and prefects to learn new skills and collectively reflect on the methods the school uses to discipline children. If you want to create a safe school, consider starting with the following steps:

1. EDUCATE YOURSELF

- Do some background reading of publications on safe, supportive and positive schools,
- Visit selected safe and violence free schools that have already begun this process and learn about the approaches they are using, what is working , what does not work, what is challenging.
- Write down your ideas of what you think might be possible or needed in creating a safe and violence free school.

2. CREATE A SHARED VISION

- If you want to create a safe and violence free school, all stakeholders need to get involved. It will take everyone's time, effort and patience to create such a school.

Stakeholders are more likely to own the process and remain committed if you engage them right from the beginning and develop a shared vision.

- As a group the stakeholders need to answer the following questions:
 - Why does our school exist?
 - Does it exist to produce outstanding learners who will become creative, thoughtful and disciplined members of the community?
 - Or does it exist simply to contain children in a classroom?
 - Will we be satisfied if children emerge with basic skills? Or do we want to provide a higher standard of education?
 - What kind of individuals do we want to have graduate from our school? And what kind of educational environment do we want them to graduate from?
 - What kind of school do we want five years from now?

3. SHARE IDEAS AND GENERATE INTEREST

Share your ideas with potential supporters.

These could include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that may be interested in influencing the quality of education at your school, as well as local district officials in your area. Create a short presentation on safe and violence free schools and how this will benefit everyone in the community.

Ask for a special meeting with teachers.

Include the head teacher and school administrators, to discuss how these approaches could help the school achieve better results.

- Discuss how these approaches could be implemented and who would lead the school through this process.
- Emphasize that creating a safe and violence free school may seem hard at first but is in the best interests of everyone concerned.

Design special lessons and classroom discussions about positive discipline and why your school is choosing to apply it. Explain carefully what it is and what it isn't. For example, emphasize that with positive discipline teachers still have a responsibility to guide children and may still give consequences for children's poor behaviour.

Organize an open day for parents. Explain how your school is improving their children's education. Encourage parents to get involved and apply the positive discipline ideas at home.

4. CREATE WRITTEN POLICIES

Develop a written policy on positive discipline at school. This document should include a basic explanation of positive discipline and the responsibilities of teachers and students in applying it. Once finalized, launch the policy publicly with the support and involvement of students, governing bodies, teachers, parents and community leaders.

Write a Code of Conduct that specifically tells teachers what they can and can't do when they discipline at school.

- This document should clearly outline consequences for the breach of school standards.
- It should also describe what support the school is willing to offer teachers to help them fulfill their role professionally.

Develop a written action plan for how you will create a safer school, and review the plan once a month to monitor progress.

- Ensure that this plan takes into account the varying needs of children in your school.
- Think about the special needs girls may have based on the beliefs and stereotypes in your community.
- Consider the gender norms that may influence how teachers discipline boys differently from girls.
- Think about children who have a disability and how you will ensure that they are not excluded from participating in school activities.

Ensure that the entire community is aware of the school's transformation and is committed to the process. If appropriate, you could engage community members, including community leaders, in signing a community-wide agreement that supports and promotes the new policies and plans.

5. CREATE STRUCTURES THAT WILL KEEP ALL STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED

Establish an elected student's body that has a clear say in all of the above decisions.

Establish a teachers' committee that, together with the student's body, has the day-to-day responsibility to spearhead the process of creating a safe and violence free school.

Create a regular forum for teachers and students through which they can share their ideas and experiences of creating a safe and violence free school.

- It could be a school-wide essay writing competition,
- Picture drawing competition,
- Suggestion boxes,
- School assembly presentations,
- Music, Dance and dramas, skits, short stories
- Poems or any other method through which ideas can be shared.
- Sharing ideas and experiences can also take place through formal class projects or peer education projects.

6. BUILD TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' ABILITY TO SUCCESSFULLY USE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

Positive discipline is a critical component of safe and violence free schools. It is important to train all teachers and school administrators and provide each school with resources for them on how to use positive discipline.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM USING POSITIVE DISCIPLINE?

The following table will help you analyse your current approach to teaching. Read through the table and compare the two columns. Consider how you would rate yourself based on the guide provided. Assess yourself by circling a number for each row (rows A to F). Be as honest as possible, since this activity is entirely for your own learning.

CHOOSING A NUMBER

1 means your approach is completely described by the positive discipline column.

2 means your approach is mostly described by the positive discipline column, although you have some doubts.

3 means you are not sure. You agree with parts of the descriptions in both columns.

4 means your approach is mostly described by the corporal punishment column, although you have some doubts.

5 means your approach is completely described by the corporal punishment column.

INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE

Once you have circled a number for each row, add up the circled numbers to determine your score.

A total score of **6 to 14 means you are already practicing the ideas of positive discipline**. You could be a valuable role model for other teachers in your school and could take a leadership role in creating a safe school for your community.

A total score of **15 to 21 means you agree with some ideas of positive discipline** and would also gain from building your understanding and skills. Review the contents of this handbook and meet with your colleagues to discuss the ideas presented. Through discussions with colleagues you can advance your skills and knowledge with greater ease and support.

A total score of **22 to 30 means you approach education using the ideas of corporal punishment**. We hope you will choose to engage with some of the ideas in this handbook and begin to think about the effectiveness of using a positive discipline approach.

Take a few days to reflect on your results. Then repeat the questionnaire, except this time choose numbers based on what kind of an educator you aspire to be. Compare your two scores. As you improve your knowledge and skills for using positive discipline, continue to re-evaluate yourself. Aim to decrease the difference between the two scores.

	Positive Discipline		Corporal Punishment		
	Motivates. You never use violence and instead role model values and behaviours that children aspire to acquire. While doing so, you provide a clear indication of rewards and consequences for choices.		Punishes. You use fear or shame to ensure that children think or behave in a prescribed way. You use such punishments as beating, insulting and humiliating.		
A	1	2	3	4	5
	Aims to empower children. You help children take responsibility for making good decisions by providing them with the skills and environment to freely explore ideas.		Aims to create obedient children. You create a classroom environment in which children learn to obey what they are told instead of think for themselves.		
B	1	2	3	4	5
	Child-centric. You consider all issues from a child's perspective and calculate all your responses based on how they will help children learn from their mistakes.		Teacher-centric. Your priorities prevail in all considerations and your point of view determines the right course of action.		
C	1	2	3	4	5
	Democratic. You tolerate different ideas and even mistakes if they may lead to constructive learning. Your aim is to create workable rules that are mutually beneficial.		Authoritarian. You tell children what to do and punish them if they choose another course of action.		
D	1	2	3	4	5
	Values and respects individuality. You accept that all of us are individuals with a variety of views and priorities. You welcome these differences.		Values conformity. You reward those who behave and think like you do and punish those who do not.		
E	1	2	3	4	5
	Long-term development. Your approach is based on nurturing the development of the whole child over a long period of time.		Short-term compliance. Your approach aims to create obedience in a specific situation. It only gives secondary and indirect consideration to the long-term development of the child.		
F	1	2	3	4	5

HOW DO I RESPOND TO MISBEHAVIOR USING POSITIVE DISCIPLINE?

Many teachers agree that when they discuss or read about positive discipline it makes sense, but when they attempt to practice positive discipline on a day-to-day basis it becomes harder to understand. They are able to eliminate physical violence from their responses, such as no longer using a cane, but still feel dependent on other equally humiliating punishments.

Note that:

Changing to a positive discipline approach is not easy. It is a process that requires patience and persistence. In collaboration with your colleagues, you will need to build your understanding of the principles of positive discipline and learn practical positive discipline techniques.

THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

In a positive discipline approach, a disciplinary response should be:

1. Relevant to the misbehaviour
2. Proportional to the offence
3. Focused on correcting the behaviour not humiliating the student
4. Aimed at rehabilitation (learning from mistakes) not retribution (payback)

However, your first action when using positive discipline is not to apply these four principles in your disciplinary response but rather to decide if discipline is even appropriate. When it seems a student has misbehaved, your first challenge is to ensure you understand the reasons for the child's behaviour and to evaluate whether the behaviour actually deserves a disciplinary response.

Often poor behaviour results from factors outside a child's control and, therefore, disciplining the child will not eliminate the behaviour. Instead, other interventions and support for the child are required. For example, sometimes children come late to school because they were sent by parents to run errands.

Other times, however, children make poor choices based on flawed beliefs. For example, sometimes children make no effort to arrive on time for school because they do not believe that punctuality is important. These types of beliefs should be corrected through a disciplinary response—they are correctable beliefs.

Once you have established that the behaviour is based on a correctable belief, as opposed to circumstances beyond the child's control, you can begin to respond with disciplinary measures that adhere to the four principles of positive discipline.

THE FOUR CATEGORIES OF POSITIVE DISCIPLINE RESPONSES

In order to follow the four principles of positive discipline you will need to customize your disciplinary response for each child and each misbehaviour. This process will become easier with practice. Within the following four categories of positive discipline responses you will find a variety of practical ideas for responding to varying degrees of misbehaviour. These

ideas can be applied alone or in combination. The four categories of responses are *Reflection, Penalty, Reparation and Last Resort*.

1. REFLECTION

For minor day-to-day problems, such as coming late to school or being disruptive in class, a teacher could ask children to think about their misbehaviour by using one of the following techniques:

- **Imposing a time-out.**
 - This would involve asking children to either leave the class or sit in a quiet place for 10 minutes to think about their behaviour.
 - To be released they have to articulate what they did wrong and how they will avoid repeating the mistake. This should be done firmly, but without humiliating the child.
- **Letter writing.**
 - This could involve asking children to write a letter or even an essay on why they behaved in a certain way and what they will do to avoid repeating the mistake. If appropriate the writing should include an apology.
- **Oral apology.**
 - This involves asking children to apologize to the wronged person and to ask for forgiveness.

2. PENALTY

For offences that are persistent and detrimental for all concerned, such as continually coming late without an adequate explanation, missing school without an adequate explanation or insulting other students, a teacher could impose an appropriate penalty. Penalties within a positive discipline approach include the following:

- Withdrawal of privileges, such as children not being allowed to go out during recess or to play games during school.
- Additional time at school (detention), such as children remaining for an extra half hour after school to reflect on what they did wrong.

Note that:

- Care must be taken to ensure that the penalty meets the principles of positive discipline.
- The penalty should also provide children with an opportunity to think about their behaviour and to think of an alternative behaviour for future similar circumstances.
- At the end of a penalty, teachers should help children learn what was wrong with their behaviour and how not to repeat the same mistake.

3. REPARATION

For offences that cause damage to a third party, such as hitting other students, bullying younger children, damaging property, or fighting and causing general disorder in school, a teacher could insist that a child undertake public reparation, such as the following:

- The child apologises in the assembly to the entire school.
- If feasible, the child contributes toward replacing or repairing the damage, such as erecting a fence, chopping wood or repainting a wall (based on the capacity of the child and the damage made).

- The child receives a written notice in the school disciplinary record and commits to change his/her behaviour.
- The school involves parents in preventing a repeat of the behaviour.

4. LAST RESORT

For persistent and serious offences, such as violating other children or serious damage to the school property or reputation, the head teacher could take action as a last resort, using interventions such as the following:

- Summon and discuss with parents the possible next steps, as a warning to the child.
- Implement a time-limited suspension (e.g., one week) with a written warning and referral to a counsellor or probation officer.
- As a very last resort, refer the case to the Chief Education Officer with a specific recommendation for expulsion from school, including the involvement of a probation officer and an action plan for next steps to help the child.

HOW DO I CREATE A POSITIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT?

Positive discipline guides children in understanding their misbehaviour and in building a personal desire to make better choices in the future. However, it is far more than just responses to misbehaviour. It combines nonviolent disciplinary action with a positive classroom environment, an environment that encourages students to get involved in defining the conditions for success.

This approach involves establishing a different kind of relationship with students and new methods for engaging and supporting them over the long-term. In the beginning, it may be difficult, as you get used to a new way of doing things. However, over a period of time, it will become easier and you will notice positive changes in your students' behaviours, both inside and outside the classroom. Here are a few ideas for getting started.

All of these activities aim to share decision making power with students and create an environment in which students can feel invested in their school. These activities are part of a positive discipline approach, because they encourage students to identify themselves as key stakeholders in their school and, as a result, feel more accountable for their behaviour.

1. SET SHARED GROUND RULES FOR LEARNING

Engage students in jointly developing class ground rules for learning. Explain that you want to involve the class in creating a new way of learning together and provide them with some examples of possible class ground rules. Examples of rules could include any of the following:

- Everyone must come on time.
- The lesson will start and finish on time.
- Questions are encouraged.
- Only one person can speak at a time.
- We will listen to everyone's ideas with respect.

- Everyone is responsible for her or his own learning. This means if you don't understand, you will ask questions.
- Students will pay attention when the teacher is talking.
- The class will decide what to do when someone breaks a rule, based on guidelines discussed earlier by the class.
- Teachers and students will both give and get respect.
 - Write the rules on paper or cardboard and tape them on the wall for the class to refer to on an ongoing basis.
 - Be aware that at first the class may find it difficult to stick to the rules, but over a period of time they will get used to it.
 - Be patient, but remain consistent and firm in applying the rules.

2. ENGAGE STUDENTS IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Establish an elected student committee that is responsible for representing students' views in the class.

- This committee could also serve as a peer disciplinary committee that responds to anyone who breaks the class rules persistently. However, these students must receive and follow guidelines regarding positive discipline so that they do not abuse fellow students.
- At the beginning of each term, call a class meeting and explain the work that needs to be covered during that term. Make a plan as a class for how the work will be accomplished and identify the students responsible for monitoring progress.
- Keep track of each disciplinary incident and monitor the overall trend.
- Motivate the class to improve performance by setting targets (e.g., next month we will reduce disciplinary incidents by 20 percent).
- Make a chart that tracks progress and rewards the class for outstanding achievements.
- Introduce a classroom-based or school – wide forum for discussing how the school could serve its students better.
- Encourage constructive ideas and ensure that practical ones are put into action. For example, if students prioritized access to drinking water or sanitary supplies, then the school could try to prioritize these in its budget or ask parents to support.

1. CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO CELEBRATE SUCCESS

- Create “Student of the Month” and “Teacher of the Month” programs that ask each student every month to nominate one child and one teacher as potential candidates.
- Announce clear qualifying criteria, such as timeliness, helpfulness to others, good performance in class and acting as a role model to students.
- Announce the winners at the school assembly.
- Introduce a “School Pride Day” for which students can share and implement ideas that involve everyone taking pride in their school. Some ideas could include cleaning the school compound, planting trees, appreciating a helpful teacher in assembly or helping someone with homework.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE DISCIPLINE IN ACTION?

Remember, a positive discipline approach combines nonviolent disciplinary action with a positive classroom environment. Through practice you will begin to witness how these two ideas support one another. You can also build this understanding by reading, analysing and discussing the following skill-building scenarios.

The following five scenarios involve common perceived misbehaviours for which adults often use corporal punishment. For each scenario, try to identify alternatives to corporal punishment and then read out the alternatives provided.

Remember, it is crucial that you begin by understanding the reasons for the child's behaviour. Sometimes there may be a justifiable explanation, and in that case, it is far more useful to help the child find a solution to the situation than to enforce a punishment.

SCENARIO 1: ARRIVING LATE TO SCHOOL

Fatmata: I live two kilometres from my school. In the morning, sometimes I have to fetch water and sweep the compound around our house before I can go to school. I have no money for transport, so I walk to school. I know that being beaten is just the way things are at our school. Sometimes, because I am tired, I take it easy. I will just take the three canes. Sometimes, I try to hide in the bush until the teacher leaves, but most of the time there is no escape. I just have to take the beating.

Fatmta's teacher: I have to make sure the children understand that coming late to school is not acceptable. They have to know that there are consequences for their lateness. I always give them three canes. Some of them are even used to it. They just offer themselves up because they know I don't listen to any excuses.

WHAT ARE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE ALTERNATIVES?

In this situation, beating Fatmata does not teach her what is wrong with coming late to school. It just teaches her that she will experience pain. She may get used to it and, therefore, never learn from her mistake. After all, if beatings taught her what was wrong with arriving late, she would try to arrive on time.

Consider the following alternatives:

- a) The teacher could begin by trying to understand why Fatmata comes late. The teacher could get in touch with her parents to see if together they could help Fatmata get to school on time.
- b) The teacher could hold discussions in class about the importance of being on time and the values behind punctuality. The class could make a list of reasons for being on time, such as:
 - The lessons can start and finish on time.
 - You will not miss part of the lesson because you are late.
 - It shows respect for your fellow students, teachers and school.
 - It shows that you take pride in your conduct and enjoy being at school.

- c) Fatmata could be offered counselling on how to ensure that she is on time. This approach could involve listening to her reasons for being late and taking into consideration her situation.
- d) It may involve getting her to write a letter to explain why she comes late or asking her to apologise to her class for arriving late.
- e) It may involve sending a note home to her parents or, if it is a small community, arranging personal communication with her parents to explain why Fatmata needs to arrive at school on time.

If Fatmata is persistently late, the teacher could tell her that she is not allowed to enter the classroom late and, therefore, not able to join the first class. This will cause her performance in this class to suffer, and she will see how her behaviour has consequences. She will learn that she has the power to change her own situation by coming on time. However, it is important that other options have been tried before this one is exercised.

SCENARIO 2: MAKING NOISE IN CLASS AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

James: I was feeling good today. I was telling funny stories and everyone was laughing. The teacher tried to tell me to stop talking, but I wanted to show everyone that I was not afraid. I am tough and can't be bossed around by a teacher.

James' teacher: I have to ensure that they fear me in this class. Otherwise, they will just get out of control and I will not be able to teach. The students will take over and other teachers will laugh at me. I will put James in his place by embarrassing him publicly and beating him. I will make an example out of James so that students will not dare to show disrespect by making noise in my class.

WHAT ARE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE ALTERNATIVES?

In this case, James may be trying to get some attention and praise rather than wanting to be disruptive for the sake of it. Consider the following alternatives:

- a) The teacher could begin the term by developing class ground rules. The class would agree on these rules together. These rules could include:
 - No side talking during the lessons.
 - All the lessons will start and finish on time.
 - The teacher will not humiliate students if they don't know the answer to a question.
 - Students will take responsibility for trying hard by asking questions when they don't understand.
 - Everyone will respect each other in class.
 - If a person breaks any of the rules, the teacher will take an appropriate action already discussed with the class.
 - In the case of persistent offenders, the class disciplinary committee will follow pre-written guidelines to determine the appropriate discipline.
- b) The teacher could get James to write a letter to the class regarding his behaviour and what effect he thinks it has on the class.
- c) The teacher could exclude James from the class for 10 minutes to help him reflect on his actions.

SCENARIO 3: FAILING A TEST OR GIVING A WRONG ANSWER TO A QUESTION

John: I am so nervous in class. I am afraid that the teacher is going to pick on me and ask a question when I don't know the answer. Even if the answer is obvious, sometimes when the teacher looks at me, I can't speak. I become scared and just remain quiet. I know everyone is staring at me and laughing, but what can I do. I just can't risk giving the wrong answer. Even in tests, I feel so afraid and always fail, because I don't know how to answer the questions. I just don't understand anything that is being taught, and I don't want to be laughed at. The best thing is to stay quiet or just leave that question blank on the test.

John's teacher: This boy is rude and stupid! He is insulting me by not paying attention. How many times have I taught this thing? Is he not listening? I am tired of trying hard when this class just doesn't care. Last week almost everyone failed the test and now they don't even know the answer to this simple question. I am going to teach this class a lesson. I am going to thrash this boy so that everyone will learn that when I teach they have to pay attention. They should know the right answer before I ask the question!

WHAT ARE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE ALTERNATIVES?

Learning is a delicate process. The ability to learn depends on the emotional and mental state of the learner. Even if the lesson is simple, some learners may still experience difficulty absorbing the information.

Consider the following alternatives:

- a) The class could agree to the following rules for learning:
 - The teacher will present the information in many different ways—so that children who can't understand one way have an opportunity to understand another way.
 - The teacher will frequently check to see if children understand what is being taught.
 - The teacher will happily repeat information and will welcome students' questions.
 - The teacher will not punish students for giving wrong answers.
- b) The teacher could adopt practices that support cautious and slower learners, such as the following:
 - When possible, the teacher offers extra help after class to children who had difficulty with the lesson.
 - If a child does not know the answer to a question, the teacher moves to another child. The teacher never keeps attention focused on just one or two children.
 - The teacher explains that wrong answers are part of learning and that students should not be afraid of giving a wrong answer.
 - When students try hard but give wrong answers, the teacher congratulates the students for trying and then guides them in understanding the correct answer.

SCENARIO 4: MISSING CLASS OR BEING ABSENT WITHOUT PERMISSION

Amina: Sometimes my mother sends me to sell things at the market and I can't go to school. Sometimes I feel bored on the way to school and visit my friend instead of going to school. Sometimes I don't like being in a class where the teacher asks me questions all the time and looks at me in a funny way. I know that I am not going far after primary school ends, so what's the point? I might as well do what I want.

Head teacher at Amina's school: We can't have a child missing class whenever she wants. She has to be made an example of so that her behaviour doesn't spread. In the morning assembly, I will single her out, cane her six times and give her a final warning. If she doesn't listen, she is out of this school. We can't have children undermining authority at this school.

WHAT ARE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE ALTERNATIVES?

- Amina needs help to see the value of education and feel hopeful that the school has something important to offer her.
- She may also need help convincing her family that if she does well at school, she deserves a chance to continue with her studies.

Consider the following alternatives:

- a) The head teacher could try to find out why Amina is missing classes and try to convince Amina's parents to prioritise her education.
- b) The head teacher could refer Amina to a counsellor who could help her see that if she invested in her education now, her life could be different.
- c) The head teacher could ask Amina to write a letter regarding what the school means to her.
- d) The head teacher could ask a trusted teacher to encourage and motivate Amina during this difficult time.
- e) The head teacher could pair Amina with another student who could encourage her participation in school.

SCENARIO 5: BULLYING OTHER CHILDREN

Peter: I am the toughest boy in this school. Everyone fears me, and I need to make sure that no one gets away with undermining my status. I keep others' respect by showing them what might happen if they don't fear me. I tease small girls, and sometimes rough-up an annoying boy. Everyone in school knows not to cross me. They know my father is tough at home and I am tough at school.

Peter's teacher: This boy is a problem. He is making other children miserable and giving our school a bad name. Today in assembly, I am going to humiliate him. I will slap him a few times and ask another teacher to cane him six times. I will then announce that we don't tolerate such behaviour from anyone. I will warn him publicly that if he persists we will throw him out of this school.

WHAT ARE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE ALTERNATIVES?

Peter's behaviour may be motivated by the humiliation he is subjected to at home or elsewhere. Thus, further humiliation at school is unlikely to be helpful. Before taking any firm action, it is important to find out the root cause of his behaviour, through counselling as well as enquiring within the community. However, it is also important to provide immediate protection for other children.

Consider the following alternatives:

- a) The school could develop a written policy about zero tolerance for bullying and post it on a public board.

- b) The school could ensure Peter receives counselling for his problem. If the problem persists, the school could involve other community members, such as a parent, relative, religious leader or other community leader.
- c) If the problem still persists, the school could consider referring Peter to another school that is able to deal with the problem more effectively.
- d) The school could involve a probation officer or an official for Children’s Affairs in the local area.
- e) The head teacher could talk about the incidents during the school assembly and emphasize that violence against children is unacceptable—regardless of whom it comes from. To do so effectively, the head teacher would focus on talking about the behaviour rather than about Peter.

A TESTIMONY FROM A TEACHER ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

“I was born in a village in a family where my father had two wives. He was a respected man because he had land. He provided for both families, but me and my brothers and sisters were afraid of him. He was so harsh. He would beat you for any small mistake.

“He beat me and shouted at me all the time. If I didn’t do the housework or did not do my homework or did not greet somebody properly, he would beat and he would shout. He was terrible to all my siblings and me. He gave our mother money for food and expenses and said that it was no business of hers how he chose to discipline his children. My mother tried to help us but what could she do?

“All through my school years, I feared everyone and remained quiet and obedient. I tried to avoid troubles. I thought men were just like that and there is nothing I can do. But then when I was 22, I met my current husband. He is kind and never shouts. At first, I thought he was just trying to tempt me, but till now he has remained like that. Perhaps violence is not about being a man or a woman but what kind of person you are.

“We have two children and at first I used to beat them and shout at them just like my father used to do to me. One day I saw how afraid my daughter was about everything and I thought of how I was when my father used to beat me. I talked to my friend about it and she helped me see what I was doing to my daughter. I felt sorry and apologised to her. Then I attended a workshop about children’s rights and learned that it does not have to be like that. My husband and I talked about it and have decided that we will never beat our children the way we were beaten by our parents. I do not want my children to be afraid of everything, the way I was. We even try to help our neighbour’s children when they beat them too much. “I don’t know if it was the workshop that changed me. I knew in my heart that violence was wrong because I know what it feels like. The workshop helped me understand what was in my heart. Now I work at this school where the headmistress has made a rule that corporal punishment is not allowed. Sometimes it is hard, but I also think it is right. I wish all schools were like ours.”

CONCLUSION

Common reasons given for practicing corporal punishment are no longer applicable. There are many laws and government policies that condemn it. A large number of teachers are speaking out against it and corporal punishment prevents children from realizing their full potential as students and subsequently as members of their communities. It is not right to continue to violate our children in this way. All that remains is for you to take action based on what you know. The question is will you end violence against children today?