



## ENDING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN KOSOVO

**Kosovo ended corporal punishment in all settings on July 27th 2019, making it as one of the 55 countries in the world to do so. Approval of the law came as a result of a seven-year engagement and active advocacy work of Save the Children in alliance with local and global partners who have helped throughout this journey.**

In Kosovo, violence against children remains a problem. This is in part due to traditional norms combined with lack of knowledge on alternative, positive upbringing methods which ought to be introduced by government and in turn practiced by parents and teachers alike.

A research carried out in 2012, which involved 660 10-14 year olds attending eight schools, 70 parents and 70 teachers, found a high level of acceptance of corporal punishment of children by parents and teachers. Considering this high level of acceptance of corporal punishment and a lack of a comprehensive child protection law, Save the Children saw it important to bring about change through its advocacy work to ensure legislative change that prohibits corporal punishment in all settings through introduction of positive methodologies for parents and teachers.

Prior to reform, corporal punishment was not fully prohibited in the home, alternative care and day care settings.

A version of this Law was first introduced in June 2016 but lapsed after general elections the following year. The current Law was reintroduced to Parliament in June 2018 and was finally adopted on June 27<sup>th</sup> of 2019. This was a result of years of campaigning by Save the Children in Kosovo through coordinated advocacy linking local, national, regional and global levels, and amplifying the voices of children as right holders, but also of local partners working with them.

In 2012, when parents were asked if they consider that hitting or beating children was justified the responses were:

- 85 % justified it if a child steals
  - 70 % justified it if a child is in danger of hurting themselves
  - 58% if a child leaves the house without telling them (the parents)
- Children's acceptance of being beaten was:
- 59% justified violence if a child steals
  - 37% justified violence if the child leaves class without permission
  - 35% if a child is disobedient towards a teacher.

Fifty-nine per cent of children and 80% of parents said that teachers are violent towards children.

## LOCAL TO GLOBAL

Local to Global is both a Sida-funded program implemented by Save the Children Sweden and its global partners, and a way of working with advocacy across the Save the Children global movement.

Local to Global want to see changes at local and national level, working with and for children.

Through coordinated advocacy linking local, national, regional and global levels, it seeks to amplify the voices of children as right holders, but also of local partners working with them.

With the help of Save the Children's four Global advocacy offices Geneva, Brussels, Addis Ababa, and New York and SC country offices, children and local partners can get access to regional and global platforms.

Save the Children in Kosovo (SCiK) began its efforts to advocate with local institutions in ensuring that children are protected by a comprehensive child protection law. SCiK advocated for a ban on all forms of physical and/or humiliating punishment towards children in all settings. It was important to bring together public institutions/service providers, civil society organizations, and communities of parents and child-led groups - to work in ensuring that children in Kosovo are protected from all forms of violence.

In order to bring about change, SCiK used a holistic approach; building the capacities of duty bearers at local and national level, child and community mobilization, raising awareness amongst the general public but also very importantly, by introducing positive discipline as alternative to violence.

Positive discipline is...

An approach to parenting that teaches children and guides their behaviour, while respecting their rights to healthy development, protection from violence and participation in their learning. Positive discipline is based in research on children's healthy development and effective parenting, and founded on child rights principle



### Capacity Building of partners and institutions

Save the Children provided support to CSOs, Ministries, Ombudsperson, child-led groups and service providers at the local level in identifying and understanding what constitutes violence, the damage it causes and supported

supported schools and children in knowing child rights, promoting mechanisms for reporting and furthermore by introducing complaint mechanisms within schools and mechanisms of addressing the filed complaints.

### Awareness Raising

Through awareness raising campaigns, SCiK advocated to formal and informal stakeholders on what constitutes corporal punishment and its negative impact on children's lives.

Between 2013 and 2020, SCiK has implemented three awareness raising campaigns (including Every One Campaign- Race for Survival, Every Last Child Campaign and Raise Them With Love) whereby SCiK has promoted the ban on corporal punishment through production of more than 10 awareness raising videos, promoted alternative measures through positive discipline in everyday parenting through 2 videos. This was supplemented with brochures and promotion materials on child protection mechanisms, corporal punishment booklets and the negative effects of violence on children.

## Provision of alternative measures

In order to challenge the traditional norms to disciplining children, Save the Children in Kosovo promoted the use of Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP) among parents/care-givers and teachers.



According to the PDEP programme evaluation:

“A positive change in caregiver behavior was almost always associated with the child seeing an improvement in their well-being. PDEP also contributed to greater well-being for the care-givers, even if this was not the main purpose of the programme”.

SCiK has implemented the PDEP programme through five local partners in five major municipalities offering PDEP sessions to more than 800 parents and/or care-givers since 2017. Kosovo however will continue to face various challenges in strengthening the implementation of the full implementation of the approved law.

The latest UNICEF MICS report provides us with the information that while 24 % of children aged 1-14 years in Kosovo have experienced only non-violent forms of discipline, a large share of children (72 %) have experienced forms of violent disciplining. It will therefore be imperative to continue to promote and expand the understanding and embracing the positive forms of child rearing.

## Policy advocacy

Save the Children in Kosovo has created a joint task force with key CSO's and other stakeholders in country (Syri i Vizionit, ATRC, Unicef, Terres des Hommes) to advocate for the adoption of the law on child protection. In addition, SCiK has been part of the working group initiated by the Parliamentary group on Human Rights, Gender Equality and Petitions, providing input and building the capacities of the Kosovo MPs through study visits.

Save the Children in Kosovo was instrumental in advocating for the inclusion of the article within the draft law, specifying the legal ban of corporal punishment in all settings. SCiK supported good practices sharing processes by facilitating meetings of parliamentary commission members with their peers in the region.

## Mobilization of children and the community at the local, national and global level



Following the local to global approach to advocacy, safe and meaningful participation of children involvement was at the core of our advocacy campaign to ban corporal punishment in Kosovo. Children advocated successfully at the local, national and global level voicing their concerns and advocating for their rights.

At the local level, children from child-led municipal assemblies led advocacy initiatives and raised awareness for the need for a child protection law.



At the national level, SCiK has supported the national child-led groups such as [‘Respect Our Right’](#) and Child-led monitoring group for children with disabilities ‘Hëna’ by empowering them in sharing their perspectives towards duty-bearers and in increasing their overall

Fleta Mujaj, an ex-member and now mentor at Respect Our Right says **“The group has come a long way... We have managed to bring positive change to the lives of children at the national level through our advocacy work”**. For instance, ROR drafted the Resolution of Children of Kosovo which was presented to the Kosovo Assembly in 2017.

**Voices of girls and boys from Kosovo – being heard for the first time at a UN event!**

Despite declaring independence in 2008, Kosovo has yet to obtain recognition from some countries (bilateral recognition) or U.N. country membership (multilateral recognition). However, the cost of not being recognized as a country was not an obstacle for the Local to global programme, as an important opportunity was created for two children from Kosovo to voice their concerns at a global level.

Fat Ukaj and Fleta Mujaj (members of Respect Our Right – ROR group) took part and spoke at a major global event at the Palace of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

Fleta Mujaj, addressed the participants of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child – marking the 30th Anniversary, where she raised important topics concerning the implementation of the convention in Kosovo. By supporting child representatives from Kosovo to speak up at a major global events enables children to address important issues, take action to protect and demand their rights as stated in UNCRC, and furthermore make sure that the promises to them as right holders are held on the local level: from Local to Global and back.

