

# **A Multi-religious commitment to end violence against children – Kyoto Declaration**

*A tenth anniversary guide  
for reflection and discussion*

**CNNV**



**Save the Children**



Global Initiative to  
End All Corporal Punishment  
of Children

## Acknowledgements

CNNV multi-religious reference group.

Design by Simon Scott.

Printed by The Russell Press Limited, Nottingham.

## Contents

The Kyoto Declaration – 10th anniversary and beyond _____	1
The Kyoto Declaration – A guide for reflection and discussion _____	2
Reflecting on the preamble _____	4
Reflecting on recommendations 1 – 8 _____	5
Resources _____	13

Published 2016

### CNNV

The Churches' Network for Non-violence was formed to broaden religious support for law reform to end corporal punishment and other cruel and degrading forms of violence against children and to challenge faith-based justification for it. CNNV aims to work with others towards developing a network of support, practical resources and information and to encourage religious communities to play an active role in the movement for reform.

<http://churchesfornon-violence.org>, [info@churchesfornon-violence.org](mailto:info@churchesfornon-violence.org)

### Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children

The Global Initiative was launched in Geneva in 2001. It aims to act as a catalyst to encourage more action and progress towards ending all corporal punishment in all continents; to encourage governments and other organisations to "own" the issue and work actively on it; and to support national campaigns with relevant information and assistance. The context for all its work is implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its aims are supported by UNICEF, UNESCO, human rights institutions, and international and national NGOs.

[www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org), [info@endcorporalpunishment.org](mailto:info@endcorporalpunishment.org)

### Save the Children

Save the Children has made a significant contribution to the UN Study on Violence against Children, as well as to its follow up studies. Save the Children has been advocating for the prohibition of physical and humiliating punishment in all settings, including the home and has supported children and young people to consolidate and advocate key messages. In 1979 Save the Children contributed to Sweden becoming the first country to explicitly ban corporal punishment. It is currently working to highlight the issue of achieving legal ban and total elimination of physical and humiliating punishment and to put the issue on the political agenda around the world.

<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se>

## The Kyoto Declaration – 10th anniversary and beyond

During May 2006, Religions for Peace and UNICEF convened a global consultation of religious leaders and experts in Toledo, Spain, to provide a religious perspective on the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children and to look at ways of supporting the report's recommendations. Participants from 30 countries representing many world religions were challenged to draw on the unique strengths and skills of religious leaders and communities to find solutions and adopt strategies to protect children from violence.

An important outcome of the consultation was a declaration of "A Multi-Religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children" which was formally adopted at the Eighth World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Kyoto, Japan, August 2006.

The Kyoto Declaration has served as an invaluable resource for those engaged in multi-religious cooperation and advocacy for children. It explicitly recommends prohibition of corporal punishment and has provided a guide for religious leaders working with others towards prohibition of corporal punishment and other forms violence against children.

The Kyoto Declaration has assumed renewed significance and relevance during the 10th anniversary of the UN Secretary General's Global Report on Violence against Children. UNICEF'S ground breaking report "Hidden in Plain Sight" published in 2014 and the launch of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals provide additional new opportunities to promote the Kyoto Declaration and re-visit its recommendations.

The following reflections and discussion points are suggested as a guide for those working towards prohibition of corporal punishment of children and they can be used to engage with religious communities, particularly during the process of multi-religious cooperation, to encourage religious communities to develop their work as active advocates for children.



## The Kyoto Declaration – A guide for reflection and discussion

### A Multi-Religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children (The Kyoto Declaration)

As representatives of various religious communities gathered at the Religions for Peace VIII World Assembly in Kyoto, Japan, we are committed to confront the reality of violence that affects children in our societies. We offer our support to mobilizing the international community through the United Nations Study on Violence against Children to address these critical issues, and we are ready to work in partnership with governments, UN agencies, and other civil society actors to implement the recommendations of this study.

We find strong consensus across our religious traditions about the inherent dignity of every person, including children. This requires that we reject all forms of violence against children and protect and promote the sanctity of life in every stage of a child's development. Our religions share principles of compassion, justice, love and solidarity that are great strengths in dealing with the difficult presence of violence in human society.

Our faith traditions take a holistic view of a child's life, and thus seek to uphold all the rights of the child in the context of its family, community and the broader social, economic and political environment. All children hold these rights equally and we must ensure that boys and girls have equal opportunities to enjoy these rights, particularly education, protection, health, social development and participation. Our religious communities are blessed to be multi-generational, and we must use this to support the active participation of children in their own development and to address issues of violence.

We must acknowledge that our religious communities have not fully upheld their obligations to protect our children from violence. Through omission, denial and silence, we have at times tolerated, perpetuated and ignored the reality of violence against children in homes, families, institutions and communities, and not actively confronted the suffering that this violence causes. Even as we have not fully lived up to our responsibilities in this regard, we believe that religious communities must be part of the solution to eradicating violence against children, and we commit ourselves to take leadership in our religious communities and the broader society.

None of us can address this problem alone. It requires partnerships, solidarity, and building alliances. Even as our religions have much to offer, we also are open to learning more about the development and well-being of children from other sectors, so that we can each maximize our strengths. We are strongly committed to fostering effective mechanisms for inter-religious cooperation to more effectively combat violence against children.

Based on these principles and guided by the power of the Divine as it is understood in each of our traditions, we make the following recommendations and commitments, speaking to our religious communities, governments, the United Nations, civil society and to all throughout the world who have held a child in love – with tears for its pain, with joy for its life:

1. We will create greater awareness in our communities about the impact of all forms of violence against children, and work actively to change attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence in homes, families, institutions and communities, including corporal punishment, emotional and sexual violence.
2. We will promote the child as a person with rights and dignity, using our religious texts to provide good examples that can help adults to stop using violence in dealing with children.
3. We have an important obligation to teach and train our children, which involves discipline and helping children understand their responsibilities. We will educate and train parents, teachers, religious leaders and others who work with children to find non-violent forms of discipline and education that will ensure their proper upbringing and protect them from violent actions.
4. We will develop curricula to use in theological training and in parental education to raise awareness about child rights and ways to eliminate the use of violence.
5. We are committed to inter-religious cooperation to address violence and will make use of the synergies among our religious communities to promote methodologies, experiences and practices in preventing violence against children.
6. We call upon our governments to adopt legislation to prohibit all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment, and to ensure the full rights of children, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international and regional agreements. We urge them to establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of these laws and to ensure that religious communities participate formally in these mechanisms. Our religious communities are ready to serve as monitors of implementation, making use of national and international bodies to maintain accountability.
7. We encourage religious communities and other public actors to use special days, such as the International Day of the Child, to bring public and media attention to child rights issues, particularly violence against children.
8. We call on UNICEF and the World Conference of Religions for Peace (Religions for Peace) to facilitate the sharing of information and developing of resources to assist our communities to more effectively address violence against children.

Kyoto, Japan  
28 August 2006

## Reflecting on the preamble to the Kyoto Declaration

Read the Preamble to the Kyoto Declaration (the first five paragraphs, page 2).

Since the Kyoto Declaration was endorsed, many religious leaders have taken action and have often been in the forefront of campaigns to end violence against children.

### Discussion points

- From the perspective of your faith tradition identify the unique strengths and skills of religious leaders and communities.
- How can these be put into action towards protecting children from violence?
- Highlight particular references to children and non-violence in the scriptures or teachings of your religion.
- How can these teachings be used to counter the arguments of those who misuse their religion to justify corporal punishment of children?



## Reflecting on recommendation 1 of the Kyoto Declaration

*We will create greater awareness in our communities about the impact of all forms of violence against children and work actively to change attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence in homes, families, institutions and communities, including corporal punishment, emotional and sexual violence.*

### Discussion points

Religious leaders have unique insights into attitudes and cultural practices in their communities and are well-placed to challenge all forms of violence against children.

The shared principles of compassion, kindness, justice, love, equality and non-violence are incompatible with violence against children.

- Discuss ways in which the universal principles can be used to promote change in cultures and traditions in which corporal punishment is embedded and normalised.
- What is known about the nature and scale of corporal punishment in the religious community and the community at large?
- How do local laws, customs and traditions affect the protection of both girls and boys from corporal punishment?
- Discuss the best ways of creating awareness of the impact of different forms of violence against children including corporal punishment.



Conclude with a prayer or reflection. Prayers and reflections and other resources can be downloaded from “Ending corporal punishment of children – a handbook for multi-religious gatherings” pages 24-34. [www.churchesfornon-violence.org](http://www.churchesfornon-violence.org)



## Reflecting on recommendation 2 of the Kyoto Declaration

*We will promote the child as a person with rights and dignity, using our religious texts to provide good examples that can help adults to stop using violence in dealing with children.*

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Human dignity is something inherent that cannot be taken away – it means that every person has value and is worthy of respect; in religious terms it means that all life is sacred. A number of religious communities believe children are born in the image and likeness of God and that we need to recognise that goodness or divine spark in each other.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child confirms that children, too, are holders of human rights, and that these rights apply to all children, without discrimination. A child’s right to respect for human dignity is expressed in part through the right to be protected – through legislative and other measures – from all forms of violence, including from all corporal punishment and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

### Discussion points

- How is respect for children’s human dignity demonstrated in the religious community?
  - What do our religious and spiritual traditions teach about children’s right to human dignity?
  - Highlight particular references to children and non-violence in the scriptures or teachings of your religion.
  - How can these teachings be used to counter the arguments of those who misuse their religion to justify violence against children?
  - What are the similarities between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and core religious teachings and value systems?
- How can religious leaders create awareness and understanding of the CRC for children, adults, in schools and in the wider community?



Conclude with a reflection or prayer. Prayers and reflections and other resources can be downloaded from “Ending corporal punishment of children – a handbook for multi-religious gatherings” pages 24-34.

[www.churchesfornon-violence.org](http://www.churchesfornon-violence.org)



## Reflecting on recommendation 3 of the Kyoto Declaration

*We have an important obligation to teach and train our children, which involves discipline and helping children understand their responsibilities. We will educate and train parents, teachers, religious leaders and others who work with children to find non-violent forms of discipline and education that will ensure their proper upbringing and protect them from violent actions.*

The term “discipline” is often misunderstood to mean “punishment” but it means to teach or guide children with adults serving as positive role models. Punishment means to “cause to undergo pain”.

There is no place for punishment in positive non-violent discipline – which is based on an understanding of the needs and rights of the developing child. It is always respectful and gives encouragement.

Positive non-violent discipline respects the human dignity and physical, emotional and spiritual integrity of the child. It:

- gives guidance to a child without the use of violence;
- builds loving, trusting empathic relationships;
- fosters an understanding of the physical and emotional needs of the developing child;
- promotes and encourages a child’s participation and self-evaluation;
- respects the child’s point of view;
- listens to the child and encourages the child to problem-solve; and
- teaches and models skills for resolving conflict without the use of violence.

### Discussion points

- How is “discipline” understood in the religious community?
- Children who are discriminated against because of disability and gender can be particularly vulnerable. What are the community attitudes towards these children?
- Discuss ways in which positive non-violent discipline can be promoted in the community.

Conclude with a reflection or prayer.



## Reflecting on recommendation 4 of the Kyoto Declaration

*We will develop curricula to use in theological training and in parental education to raise awareness about child rights and ways to eliminate the use of violence.*

Sacred texts and scriptures which demonstrate respect for children and non-violence can be effective in changing attitudes. Theologians, teachers and scholars have authority to study religious practices and texts and interpret them in the light of the core values and tenets of the religious tradition. They are in a position to explain misunderstandings and misinterpretations of scripture which condone violence and perpetuate violations of children's rights through harmful practices.

### Discussion points

- Discuss ways of encouraging theologians, teachers and scholars to study their religious texts and teachings and develop resources which promote non-violent discipline.
- What resources and training materials are needed to encourage theological reflection and clarification of scriptural interpretation to end religious justification for violence against children?



Conclude with a reflection or prayer.

## Reflecting on recommendation 5 of the Kyoto Declaration

*We are committed to inter-religious cooperation to address violence and will make use of the synergies among our religious communities to promote methodologies, experiences and practices in preventing violence against children.*

Inter-religious cooperation enables people to work towards a common goal and share skills and expertise. When people from different religions come together and speak with one voice they can be a powerful influence in changing attitudes and achieving reform. They can be an effective, visible example of cooperation between diverse religious traditions for the protection of children.

Inter-religious forums are representative of diverse religious communities and may function at local, national, regional and international level. They often have close ties with local and national governments and may be consulted by outside bodies for their views on policy.

It is important to engage with women of faith who are often under-represented in multi-religious forums and to involve them in the decision-making process. It may be necessary to hold special meetings with women so that their voices are heard in the movement to end violence against children.

Ensure indigenous peoples and those from minority groups are included alongside the major religious traditions.

### Discussion points

- Discuss ways of building inter-religious cooperation to take action to end violence against children.
- What action can be taken by the inter-religious body to raise the status of children in the community?
- Discuss ways of developing awareness of the harm caused by violent punishment of children.
- Discuss a plan of action towards ending violence against children.



Conclude with a reflection or prayer.



## Reflecting on recommendation 6 of the Kyoto Declaration

*We call upon our governments to adopt legislation to prohibit all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment, and to ensure the full rights of children, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international and regional agreements. We urge them to establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of these laws and to ensure that religious communities participate formally in these mechanisms. Our religious communities are ready to serve as monitors of implementation, making use of national and international bodies to maintain accountability.*

Prohibition of corporal punishment by law is an essential strategy for ending all forms of violence against children. It recognises a child's right to respect for their human dignity and physical integrity. It makes it clear to all people responsible for the care of children that hitting a child is no more lawful than hitting anyone else.

An active campaign for law reform challenges the way in which children are regarded and promotes children as people in their own right. It is important to identify respected religious leaders who support law reform. They can be influential role models and can help in accessing support from other religious leaders.

Although governments have a primary obligation to protect children, all adults have a responsibility to end violence against children. Religious leaders and their communities have a vital role to play and above all they can be role models and lead by example and they can set a standard for others to follow.

No country can say it has prohibited corporal punishment in all settings until it has passed legislation which does this. In order to make a difference in children's lives legislation should be accompanied by implementation strategies and public education to raise the awareness of children and adults of children's rights, to information about the dangers of corporal punishment and to provide adults with information on positive non-violent forms of discipline.

### Discussion points

- Discuss ways in which religious leaders and communities can support law reform
- Discuss the opportunities for religious leaders to be role models and lead by example – how does this relate to ending violence against children?
- What can religious leaders and communities do to help implement the law?

Conclude with a reflection or prayer.



## Reflecting on recommendation 7 of the Kyoto Declaration

*We encourage religious communities and other public actors to use special days, such as the International Day of the Child, to bring public and media attention to child rights issues, particularly violence against children.*

There are many opportunities for using special days to draw attention to children's issues. These include Universal Children's Day; The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, International Children's Day, Religious Festivals and 16 Days of Activism to end violence against women and girls.

### Discussion points

- Many religious communities are involved in campaigns to end violence against women which is closely connected with violence against children. How can special events to end violence against women draw attention to the connections with violence against children?
- How could your religious community use religious festivals to promote childhoods free from violence?



Conclude with a reflection or prayer.

## Reflecting on recommendation 8 of the Kyoto Declaration

*We call on UNICEF and the World Conference of Religions for Peace (Religions for Peace) to facilitate the sharing of information and developing of resources to assist our communities to more effectively address violence against children.*

Following the World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Kyoto, Japan in 2006, UNICEF and Religions for Peace produced a resource “From Commitment to Action – What Religions Communities Can Do to Eliminate Violence against Children”. The resource calls for collaboration with religious, multi-religious and inter-religious organisations and for the sharing of resources and training materials and guides for dissemination within religious communities.

It also calls for meaningful participation of children towards protecting children from violence. It recognises that through their participation, girls and boys can highlight the violence they experience and with the support of adults, take action to address it. Religious communities are in touch with people throughout the life span and are in a unique position to promote children’s participation by listening to their views on violence and creating opportunities for them to express their thoughts, ideas and solutions.

### Discussion points

- What resources are needed to assist religious communities to end violence against children?
- Identify ways of collaborating with others to develop, share and disseminate resources.
- What barriers to participation do children face in your religious community? How can these be overcome?
- How can local religious communities share training and resources to facilitate children’s meaningful, safe participation?
- What information and support do children need to participate safely and meaningfully?
- What are some of the ways in which children can be involved in strategies to end violence against children?

Conclude with a reflection or prayer.

*Children are the only true experts on what it is like to be a child. I call on you to consult with us before you make decisions that affect us. Remember that the times are changing. We live in a different world than you did. For that reason, you shall never assume that the challenges today are the same that you faced when you were a child. We have the competence you need. Our participation will benefit society, not only today, but also in our common future.*

Camilla, from Norway, in a speech at the follow-up to the UN Special Session on Children at the General Assembly in New York in December 2007 (from CRIN website).





## Resources

### **The United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children**

[www.unicef.org/violencestudy](http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy) This site has links to a number of resources including the World Report on Violence against Children, a photo essay Stopping the Violence, and a video Youth against violence, with contributions from young people in India, Philippines, Romania, Venezuela and Zambia. A child friendly report and video Youth against violence can be downloaded at [www.unicef.org/violencestudy/responding.html](http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/responding.html)

### **Understanding the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

[www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc)

The site includes the videos Teaching the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Speak for Yourself, Children, the UN and the CRC.

### **Website of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children**

<http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org>

This site has links to many publications and resources on violence against children. A special section for children and young people contains child friendly materials including A Road Map to End Violence against Children and children's declarations. Further resources are available at <http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/children-corner>

### **Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

### **Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting**

Written by Joan Durrant, published by Save the Children, third edition 2013, this manual with associated materials is available at [www.positivedisciplineeveryday.com](http://www.positivedisciplineeveryday.com)

### **Parenting for a Peaceful World**

This is the title of a book by Robin Grille. An associated video narrated by Ajas Swafford aged 10, traces the history of violent treatment of children from early times and discusses the negative effects of violence on generations of children. It can be viewed at [www.naturalchild.org/videos/parenting\\_peaceful\\_world.html](http://www.naturalchild.org/videos/parenting_peaceful_world.html)

### **Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH)**

[www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/child/plh/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/child/plh/en/)

The site provides Information on the development and testing of a suite of affordable parenting programmes to prevent violence in low-resource settings. Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) is being developed through collaboration between WHO, Stellenbosch University in South Africa, the University of Cape Town in South Africa, Bangor University in Wales, the universities of Oxford and Reading in England, and UNICEF. Related links include a video introducing PLH.

**Hidden in Plain Sight: a statistical analysis of violence against children (2014)** and companion publication **Ending Violence against Children: Six strategies**, UNICEF

[www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_74865.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_74865.html)

### **UNICEF - Child Rights Education Toolkit**

The toolkit contains a range of practical tools, checklists, mapping exercises, project examples and evidence of the benefits of high quality child rights education.

[www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30184.html#toolkit](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30184.html#toolkit)

