

# Working Group on Positive Discipline

## Newsletter

Vol. 3, no.2, September 2010

---

### EDITORIAL

After the meeting at the end of July with the faith-based sector, a warm welcome to the new members of the Working Group!

There have been some exciting developments in the Working Group since our last newsletter in April this year, and I look forward to sharing them with you in this edition of the newsletter.

### Goodbye to Sam



Some of you may be aware that Samantha Waterhouse has left RAPCAN and hence this Working Group. Since joining RAPCAN in late 2005, Sam was instrumental in building up the Working Group, and was the main driver of a number of its activities. An outspoken and articulate advocate for protecting children against all forms of violence, Sam was also able to be strategic in the work she did in general, and the leadership role she played in relation to promoting positive parenting in particular.

Sam has joined UWC's Community Law Centre as Parliamentary Programme Coordinator. One of the issues she is following up on is progress in reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and I doubt that she will be entirely lost to us or to this work. So, lots of success, Sam, in your new job, but we've a feeling we'll still see quite a lot of you!

Carol Bower

## GLOBAL UPDATE

There are now 29 countries with full prohibition of corporal punishment – more information on these can be found on the Global Initiative’s website at [http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/prohib\\_states.html](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/prohib_states.html).

The two latest countries to prohibit corporal punishment of children by their parents are African, the first on our continent to do so! In July 2010, Tunisia prohibited all corporal punishment of children in all settings, including the home, via Law No. 2010-40, which removed the clause providing a legal defence for the use of corporal punishment in childrearing. And in August, Kenya adopted a new constitution, Article 29 of which states that every person “has the right to freedom and security of the person, which includes the right not to be ... (c) subjected to any form of violence from either public or private sources; (d) subjected to torture in any manner, whether physical or psychological; (e) subjected to corporal punishment; or (f) treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading manner”.

Then, on 1 August 2010, a new law came into force in Poland prohibiting all corporal punishment in childrearing, making it the 22<sup>nd</sup> European state to achieve prohibition.

Currently, there are 146 countries where corporal punishment is allowed in all spheres, and where there is no commitment to prohibition, 20 where a legal reform process is underway, and 2 where prohibition has been achieved through the courts (Italy and Nepal). This means that there are 31 countries out of 196 with full prohibition – 15% of all the countries in the world. This may not seem like many, but it’s up from only 4% 10 years ago, with 21 countries having prohibited since 2000. It’s a movement that is growing!

## Regional activities

### **THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN NETWORK TO END CORPORAL AND HUMILIATING PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN: Promoting Positive Discipline**

The Southern African Network to End Corporal and Humiliating Punishment of Children (the Network) recently had the opportunity to support the nomination of two people well known to us to two important positions – important in terms of our continent’s progress towards the realisation of an Africa fit for children.

Firstly, Dr Benyam Mezmur’s nomination to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child by his government (Ethiopia) was supported by the Network – we are delighted to confirm that Benyam has indeed been elected onto the Committee of Experts. He is already fully engaged, having embarked on a project to assist the Committee’s deliberations on corporal punishment by finding

support for prohibition within the African Charter. It can only be good for our cause to have someone with Benyam's knowledge and passion on the Committee of Experts.

Then, nominations were called from networks in the East and Southern Africa region for a vacancy on the international NGO Advisory Council to the UN Special Representative on Violence Against Children. This arose because of the resignation of Gilbert Onyango of the CRADLE in Kenya, who represented our region from the inception of the Advisory Council in 2008. The Network was delighted to be able to nominate Judith Mulenga, Director of the Zambian Civic Education Authority, a long-time campaigner for prohibition. More information about ZCEA can be found on their web-site at <http://www.zamcivic.com.zm/>

## **SYMPOSIUM WITH THE FAITH-BASED SECTOR**

The furore created by the clause prohibiting parental corporal punishment when the Children's Amendment Act was going through the final stages of the Parliamentary process late in 2007 brought home just how deeply entrenched are the myths and misperceptions around corporal punishment, and how important the faith-based sector is in this endeavour.

Given that most South Africans align themselves with one of the major religions, and that faith plays an important role in most people's lives, including parents, the faith-based sector is an important partner in supporting parenting, building capacity to discipline without violence, and helping to change the harsh realities that so many children confront.

The Working Group committed to a greater engagement with faith-based structures in 2008, and this resulted in a meeting with around 40

representatives from the Muslim and Jewish faiths, along with wider representation from the Christian Community, and WCPD members also.

Presentations made included information on what research is telling us about the challenges faced by parents, and how they are coping; the reality of children's experiences; what the 'new' Children's Act as Amended says about parenting and building capacity to parent; what exactly is positive parenting and how do you do it; and the Zambian experience of working with the faith-based sector.

It was a fruitful meeting, resulting in discussions on practical ways in which churches, mosques synagogues and places of worship can work towards supporting parenting. A full report on the meeting will be on the web site soon.

# Working Group on Positive Discipline

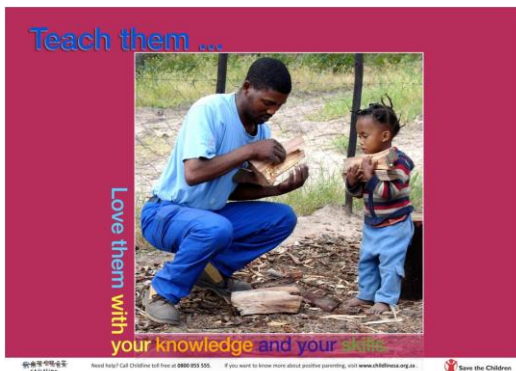
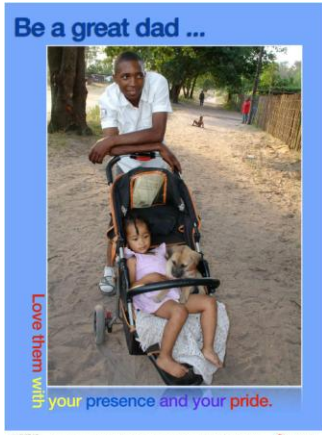
The WGPD is planning a national meeting in the second half of October. Actual date, time and venue to follow. The meeting will be an opportunity for further networking, for members to update everyone on their organisational activities, to undertake some collaborative planning for 2011, and to hear from the Department of Social Development about the implementation of the Children's Act.

The implementation of the project with the Department of Basic Education (*Today's children, tomorrow's parents – making informed decisions about sexuality*) ran into all kinds of delays. It is to be implemented in Lavender Hill as a pilot project in the 4h term (barring strikes and other unnatural disasters) and (hopefully) expanded to 1 school in each province in 2011.

## *Useful resources*

There are quite a few of these around. If you would like any of them, please let me know by e-mail ([bower.carol@gmail.com](mailto:bower.carol@gmail.com)) and I will forward them to you electronically. Here are just a few:

- *From Commitment to Action – what religious communities can do to eliminate violence against children*, a publication by UNICEF and the Religions for Peace, accessible at [http://www.unicef.org/media/files/What\\_Religious\\_Communities\\_can\\_do\\_to\\_Eliminate\\_Violence\\_against\\_Children\\_\(UNICEF\\_Religions\\_for\\_Peace\\_Guide\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/What_Religious_Communities_can_do_to_Eliminate_Violence_against_Children_(UNICEF_Religions_for_Peace_Guide).pdf) Two wonderful comics and a poster fact sheet from the Legal Assistance Centre in Namibia – which I have already circulated but please let me know if you'd like me to e-mail them to you
- A useful publication from UNICEF called *Disciplining Children with Kindness: A Shiite Shari'a Perspective*
- A series of posters and pamphlets produced by Childline South Africa.



# Upcoming events



**RAPCAN and Women's and Gender Studies, UWC**



Are hosting a Colloquium on:

***“Shaping new forms of gender equality - gender and sexual identities and practices in childhood: A child rights approach”***

Date: 14- 15 October 2010

Venue: School of Public Health,  
University of the Western Cape

Time: 8:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Contact [Nondwe@rapcan.org.za](mailto:Nondwe@rapcan.org.za) or 021 712 2330 for more information

