

#NOguti 2.0 - Massive Social Media Campaign Launched to Celebrate International Day to End Corporal Punishment

30th April 2024 is the International Day to End Corporal Punishment; physical abuse is the most common form of abuse affecting 1.3+ billion children annually around the world. However, neither the Government of Sri Lanka nor the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) seem to recognize the significance of this day despite the fact that Sri Lanka was bestowed the honor of being the only South Asian Path-finding country committed to ending violence against children, Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 in 2017. Ironically, the National Plan to End Violence Against Children (NPEVAC) collapsed in 2018.

#NOguti was launched 2 years ago focused on raising public awareness. #NOguti 2.0 is an intensive social media campaign from 1st April to 30th April focused on enforcing the proposed penal code reforms to unequivocally ban corporal punishment.

Stop Child Cruelty Trust (SCCT) and Sri Lanka's first Child Protection Alliance (CPA), is flanked by 20 advocates and influencers in a massive effort to enforce cabinet submission of proposed Penal Code Reforms to ban corporal punishment unequivocally in Sri Lanka.

Child protection is a national crisis in our paradise island. The number of cases of child cruelty/physical abuse reported to NCPA has increased three fold in last ten years. A Study on Child Disciplinary Methods Practiced in Schools in Sri Lanka, conducted by NCPA in 2017 shockingly revealed that 80% of students are subjected to at least one episode of corporal punishment within one school term, 53% to physical abuse, and 72.5% to psychological aggression. 61.9% of teachers freely admitted to subjecting students to at least one episode of corporal punishment. None of the 18 recommendations have been implemented by the relevant authorities to date. There are significant physical and mental health implications with unbearable strain on education, health, law enforcement, justice and social services.

Dr Tush Wickramanayaka, Chairperson of SCCT and Co-convener of CPA explained that there were several significant mile stones achieved towards eradicating corporal punishment. "In February 2021 the Supreme Court gave a historic verdict in case no: SC/FR/97/2017 referencing the definition of corporal punishment as per the UN Convention of Rights of the Child (UNCRC), recommending penal code reforms repealing sections that legitimizes corporal punishment, endorsing Ministry of Circular no 12/2016 banning corporal punishment and strong message to general public to reject archaic forms of discipline still practiced in our communities", Dr Wickramanayaka reiterated. On 01/01/2024 the amendments to Children and Young Persons Act were actioned via extra ordinary gazette notification. The two significant changes were increasing the age limit of a child from 16 to 18 to synchronize with the international definition and repeal of section 76(1) banning corporal punishment. In 2018, the UNCRC made five key recommendations as "critical and urgent"; the top priority was to end violence against children, including corporal punishment with an unwavering obligation to fulfill the State party's obligations.

"After years of extensive work by multi stakeholders a draft proposal for the cabinet memorandum to prohibit corporal punishment has been forwarded to Secretary of Ministry of Justice on 15/09/2023 but

we are disappointed that the Minister of Justice has delayed the submission without a plausible reason. #NOguti 2.0 is our collective effort to overcome the final hurdle to push the cabinet submission towards the dawn of a new era without violence for the true beneficiaries of the future, our children”, Dr Wickramanayaka passionately concluded. You can obtain further information on www.stopchildcruelty.com