

# CHILD PROTECTION BULLETIN

STATE CHILD  
PROTECTION  
SOCIETY, ASSAM

MONTHLY BULLETIN OF ACTIVITIES CONCERNING CHILD PROTECTION IN ASSAM

## EDITORIAL

Recently we have been faced with one of the world's most tragic online gaming incidents. The Blue Whale challenge has caused alarm across the world for reportedly abetting suicide. The 'challenge' starts with tasks such as watching a gory video or a horror movie, and the level of 'hardness' increases as one keeps completing tasks. Finally, players have to commit suicide to 'win' the challenge. Many schools in Dubai recently issued an advisory cautioning parent against the challenge.

According to some research 76% of children aged 12-15 and 62% of children aged 8-11 play games online. Perhaps more worrying for parents is that a quarter of 12-15-year-olds have played games online with one or more people they have not met in person.

Children are tending to be more and more introverts. They become addicted to mobile phones that they hardly have time for outdoor games. It is therefore, the responsibility of their parents to bring up their children gracefully.

In this month, we bring before the readers articles on online gaming and abolition of corporal punishment. We hope the readers will benefit from the readings.

Editorial Board,  
State Child Protection Society, Assam

## Online Game risk for children

Find out about the risks of online gaming, how to decide what games are best for your child and ways to keep them safe. Gaming can be a great way for young people to relax, socialize with their friends and have fun. Children can play on games consoles, apps or websites, and chat to other players or watch them play through live-streaming. But there are some dangers. And with so many games available online, it can be hard for parents to know how to keep their child safe.

That's where we can help. Our tips and advice will keep you up-to-date with the most popular online games, help you decide what's appropriate for your child - and help them play safely.

### What are the risks of online games?

- Children may view inappropriate or upsetting content if they play games that aren't suitable for their age. This could include sexual or violent material. It might be in-game content or produced by other players.
- Some players can be abusive towards others or try to exclude them from the game. Some players may also hack another user's account or try to steal and destroy their virtual possessions. This can be as upsetting for a young person as if it happened in real life.
- Children may play with adults they don't know. People of all ages play games. Some adults may exploit this and try to build an emotional connection with a child for the purpose of grooming.
- Some children may find it hard to stop playing games or find that gaming is getting the way of them doing other activities.

### 5 WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN PLAY SAFE

#### 1. Check the game's content

Always check age ratings but remember they don't cover everything. It's important to check the game out yourself before letting a young child play it. If you want extra information about the content of a boxed console or computer game, take a look at the Video Standard's Council's Additional Consumer Information (ACI).

#### 2. Know how to mute, block and report

Help children understand that people they meet online may not always be who they claim to be. Some games let you mute, block and report other users. Make sure your child

knows how to do this if someone in the game upsets them or makes them feel uncomfortable. Childline has online gaming advice to help them do this. Remind your child they can come to you if they're ever worried.

#### 3. Be Share Aware

Remind your child not to give out any personal information, photos or videos to anyone online, even if they know them. If your child plays games with people they don't know, remind them not to take the conversation off the game, onto other social networks or into a private chat.

#### 4. Activate safety settings

Turn on parental controls on gaming consoles to help



prevent children from downloading age inappropriate games or seeing harmful material. The Apple App Store lets you turn off in-app purchases on iPads and iPhones. And The Apple App Store and Google Play let you create a pin code that must be entered before you buy. You can also turn on privacy settings on some games to control what other users can see about you and stop strangers from contacting you.

#### 5. Keep the conversation going

Have regular conversations with your child about staying safe online. Agree what games are suitable for them to play and help them understand why others are inappropriate. Talk to them about the types of games they may be watching on game streaming sites.

Remind them they should tell a trusted adult, like a teacher or parent, if they see or hear something that upsets them when gaming. And they can talk to Childline for free 24 hours a day if they're ever worried.

*Time spent playing with children is never wasted*

— Dawn Iantero



**D**espite awareness campaigns and several initiatives, many schools-going children in India continue to face corporal punishment. A practice that can have severe long-term repercussions, it is time to recognize the problem of corporal punishment and eliminate it once and for all. It is a usual sight for Gopal's parents to see him come home with a bruised ear or swollen cheeks. His mother's immediate reaction is, "His school teacher has probably disciplined him. They keep complaining about his poor performance in class tests."

Gopal, who studies in Class 4, is one among many such school kids in his village who find themselves at the receiving end of the teacher's stick. While Gopal got away with a bruised cheek, many students regularly suffer serious physical injuries and mental abuse in classrooms in India. Most of these cases do not receive the necessary attention as the punishment is considered by most as the only path towards discipline, even by parents.

This issue is widespread in Indian schools and has been affecting millions of school children every day, with long-term repercussions on their future. The Government of India has recently recognized that 65% of school-going children face corporal punishment. The biggest threat to eradicating it is lack of awareness about it. The United Nations Committee in a Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2004 had concluded its observations on corporal punishment in India as, "The large population and high rate of growth are the major impediments to the implementation of educational initiatives. Also, extreme poverty and massive social inequality represent serious difficulties in the fulfillment of obligations." The Committee regretted that some of the concerns it had previously expressed, and the recommendations it had made, had not been sufficiently addressed, notably regarding violence and corporal punishment.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Women & Child Development, in its research, studied more than 3,000 children aged between 5-18, asking about physical abuse by teachers. In all age groups, 65% reported being beaten at school, which amounts to a very large proportion of the student population. The reasons for punishment ranged from being absent from school due to illness, domestic work, missing classes, not doing their homework, performing poorly in exams, not wearing the uniform, and so on. There are several social groups working actively towards replacing corporal punishment at schools with positive behavioural changes in students. The primary challenge they face is the lack of awareness at the level of teachers, parents, and school principals about the adverse impact of punishment on students.

#### **So what exactly is corporal punishment?**

The Child Rights Charter 2003 of India specifically states, "All children have a right to be protected against neglect, maltreatment, and corporal punishment." Additionally, in 2007, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, India issued a set of guidelines on corporal punishment and the efforts needed to abolish it within the educational system in India. However, guidelines or laws are not enough to tackle the menace of corporal punishment. For starters, it is important that we are all aware of what amounts to corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is not just what you see as punishments, and physical abuse inside/outside the school classroom. It encompasses physical as well as mental abuse in schools.

## **ABOLITION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT NEED OF HOUR**



Typically, physical forms of punishment involve slapping, punching students, twisting ears, hitting anywhere on the body, etc. Teachers carrying sticks to the classroom to discipline or scare students is the first stage of punishment, and needs to be strictly avoided. Physical punishment causes embarrassment and fear in students, but also has adverse effects on their health and performance. Another form of punishment is the mental harassment of students through abuses, or ridiculing someone by academic status, family background, learning difficulty, physical weakness, or disability.

**This form of punishment greatly impacts the well-being of students and scars them permanently.**

Unfortunately, the practices mentioned above are not considered "a big deal" by most school principals and

teachers. There are primarily two reasons behind this callous outlook towards punishment:

- Most school principals, teachers, and even parents are unaware of short-term and long-term consequences of corporal punishment on students. Another reason for the neglect is the limited period of student-teacher relationship.
- Teachers claim that they do not know alternative methods to corporal punishment. Many teachers, when asked why they carry sticks to their class, answer, "We don't use it. It's just there to instill fear or discipline." A few consider it as an inherent part of schooling, as experienced by them in their school days.

Let us look at it from the teachers' perspective. There are nearly 13 lakh schools in India, and most of these institutions have a very poor teacher-to-student ratio. Teachers face daily challenges, such as overcrowded and noisy classrooms, huge syllabi to complete, multiple lectures per day, and a large number of notebooks/test papers for correction. Teachers do not know how to handle this pressure, and resort to hitting a child as the nearest target. But the important question that teachers must ask themselves is, "Is it really the students' fault?" It is important for teachers to pause and reflect on this, because there is no excuse to resorting to corporal punishment. All students must be treated with respect and care.

#### **How does corporal punishment damage students in the short- and long-term?**

The immediate impact of punishment on students is visible in the form of physical harm, embarrassment, disinterest towards learning, and negative impact on their well-being (bruises, fever, fear of going to school, etc.). A child can lose his/her confidence and suffer from poor self-esteem. Studies have shown that students subjected to punishment on a regular basis develop aggressive or destructive behaviour. The students start believing that if you are angry, or someone is not listening to your instructions, it is okay to hit them. They may see similar incidents happening in their families as well, and this affects their value system, which eventually shapes society at large. Another consequence could be in the form of cowardice, as children learn to obey without asking questions. This hampers their independence and free-thinking ability.

#### **The way ahead**

There is an alternative approach to corporal punishment. The first step is to set agreements within the teachers/staff to enable this change. This is a

*Children must be educated by love, not punishment -- James Joyce*



commitment the staff have to make to themselves and others, which they can initiate during a staff meeting. Additionally, schools can support teachers in reaching a position where they do not practice corporal punishment.

The responsibility to check corporal punishment lies both with the school management/principal as well as teachers. The school principal must be well aware of incidents of punishment at their school. He/she should strive towards promoting a safe learning culture for students at all times. They should conduct regular discussions with the teaching staff and motivate teachers to refrain from hitting or abusing children.

Some schools have employed pretty unique techniques to get rid of corporal punishment. In Valley View School, Pune, the school principal took on the challenge of stopping corporal punishment in her school. The first step conducted was an awareness drive, in which teachers and students worked together and created mutual agreements.

Further, the school conducted an awareness campaign, where the teachers actively participated and interacted with parents about safety. Students joined

hands with teachers to create display cards on the theme of discipline and safety. Initiatives such as these help students feel motivated and responsible by giving them a sense of belonging to the school.

### A wake-up call for everyone

It is now high time for all of us to commit to this cause. After all, schools are the nurturing grounds for students to learn and adapt. Schools play a vital role in the cognitive and creative development of children. Hence, it is imperative that children learn in schools with a safe, secure, and healthy environment that stimulates positive behaviour.

It is everyone's collective responsibility to generate awareness and prevent future incidents of corporal punishment in schools. Every human being has the right to live a peaceful life. We cannot call ourselves civilised if we treat children without respect, and justify any form of violence against them.

*Adapted from <https://www.thebetterindia.com/96573/stop-corporal-punishment-schoolchildren/>*



## A SUCCESS STORY



It gives me immense pleasure in letting people know about the extraordinary success story about a seventeen years old boy who hails from Sivasagar. Literally the boy is untouched by the basic modern amenities that should be available to a normal citizen of India. The boy has been deprived of the love and affection from parents and had to drop out from school due to poor socio economic conditions.

Due to lack of care from parents and poor financial condition he was driven to get involved in anti-social activities which initially fetched him some relief from the drudgeries in his life along with a sharp rise in his crime record. However these days were over within a short period of time when he had to become guest of the Observation Home under the jurisdiction of Juvenile Justice Board Sivasagar. I being a counsellor in the Observation Home at Jorhat have had the opportunity to come in contact with the boy for three times. His first two stays were brief ones so I could not know much about the boy; however his third visit to the Home was sufficiently longer to interact with him and explore the inner talents and sincerity in the boy. It was really very interesting to know that lot of creativity existed in the boy accompanied by sincerity and deep sense of responsibility. Realising the worth of the boy, extra care was taken to teach him fine arts namely drawing, emboss painting etc. at individual as well as group levels during his last stay at Observation Home. He happened to perform too well in these and even completed a painting single handedly. The boy got so much interested in emboss painting that he continued with his practice after he went out from the observation Home, of course as facilitated by an NGO named Silverlining. The boy earned the distinction of selling more than twenty six numbers of well crafted artworks at 'Assam sahitya sabha' meeting held at sivasagar in 2016. The boy has of late started teaching the fine art to others. He is now doing well in life and the credit for such a spectacular change in the boy must go to the JJB Sivasagar as well as the 'Silver lining' without the assistance from either of the organizations the boy could not have achieved such a feat. I pray the almighty that he continues to receive strength to go ahead with such creative works in future and enjoy the life in its real sense.

*Talent is something rare and beautiful and precious and it must not be allowed to go to waste -- George Selden*



## Status Report on the functioning of the Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in Assam for the month of July 2017

Sl. No.	Districts	Juvenile Justice Boards			Child Welfare Committees		
		No. of cases instituted	No. of cases disposed	Total cases pending	No. of cases instituted	No. of cases disposed	Total cases pending
1	BAKSA	Cases are jointly dealt with Nalbari JJB			3	3	0
2	BONGAIGAON	0	0	10	5	2	22
3	BARPETA	6	3	142	102	15	171
4	CACHAR	3	4	24	6	9	6
5	CHIRANG	4	6	26	3	7	6
6	DARRANG	6	1	68	10	12	19
7	DHEMAJI	5	2	20	4	7	7
8	DHUBRI	8	0	110	7	9	8
9	DIBRUGARH	1	3	26	15	16	3
10	DIMA HASAO	1	6	9	0	0	5
11	GOALPARA	3	0	69	14	13	25
12	GOLAGHAT	5	2	14	8	2	16
13	HAILAKANDI	2	4	22	7	6	6
14	JORHAT	0	7	39	14	11	9
15	KAMRUP (M)	7	4	48	108	98	113
16	KAMRUP (R)	5	2	53	29	51	38
17	KARBI ANGLONG	1	2	54	5	4	5
18	KARIMGANJ	0	2	41	11	6	50
19	KOKRAJHAR	5	2	150	4	9	28
20	LAKHIMPUR	5	1	24	13	12	10
21	MORIGAON	6	6	24	4	5	10
22	NAGAON	3	4	163	18	23	28
23	NALBARI	3	0	24	4	1	81
24	SONITPUR	3	7	77	27	29	25
25	SIBSAGAR	8	3	27	23	23	24
26	TINSUKIA	7	0	43	9	12	54
27	UDALGURI	5	8	26	14	11	67
	<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>1333</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>836</b>

**Corrigendum:** In the month of June the number of pending case in Kokrajhar CWC should have been 33 instead of 30 and the Total Pending Case should have been 765 instead of 762.

For any feedback, write to :  
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DSW, Government of Assam