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SAVE THE CHILDREN, CHILD RIGHTS GROUPS URGE SOLONS, PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR POSITIVE PARENTING BILL

Dahlia, a 16-year-old student from Parañaque would scream each time her mother burns her arm with mosquito coil for household chores left undone. Whenever she passes by her mother's stall in the market, she would overhear her mother's gossiping, calling her "prostitute" for coming home late. She ran away from home when her stepfather strangled her just because her radio was playing loudly.

In a 2022 Report of the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), about 9,000 children suffered from all forms of abuses, including physical and humiliating punishments. **Dahlia**, and many more children who suffered terribly at the hands of parents or guardians remained unaccounted for. The Philippines is one of the 134 countries that's bereft of a legislation to curb physical and humiliating punishment against children.

Save the Children Philippines, in partnership with Child Rights Network, Child Fund Philippines, Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation, and parent and child rights advocates, strongly urge the government, legislators, and all Filipino families to unite behind the Positive Parenting Bill.

Rep. Natasha Co, Chairperson of the House Committee on the Welfare of Children and BHW Party list stressed that Positive Parenting will address the needs of parents on how to shift away from methods that use physical and humiliating punishments in disciplining their children.

"The State will support Filipino parents in practicing a more effective method of discipline, which is, Positive Parenting," Rep. Co added.

Rabiya, 38, mother to three children from Zamboanga City said that she used to hit her children each time they make mistakes. She wasn't aware that what she was doing was hurtful until she attended the Positive Parenting seminar conducted by Save the Children in their area. "I no longer hit them, instead I talk to them now. My children and I have better relationship when we talk about the problem."

During the presentation, Save the Children Philippines pledged full support to the Positive Parenting in All Settings Act (HBN 8306) and An Act Providing for Non-Violent Discipline of Children and Appropriating Funds (HBN 1269) because these bills recognized that children have rights and these rights must be respected. The bills also emphasized the use of physical and humiliating punishments do more harm than good to children. Parents have the responsibility to bring up their children in an environment that encourages positive and healthy development for children.

Tatay Darino, 45 years old from Bukidnon had difficulty providing for his family, including his two girls. “My guilt over not having enough food, enough money, and enough resources to provide for my children has made me a cruel and unreasonable parent. Save the Children Philippines helped me see the errors of my ways as a parent with the series of seminars I participated in. My children are my life. I learned that my relationship with them is better when I raise them in love.”

Moreover, Save the Children believes that positive and non-violent parenting approaches are much more effective and have optimal advantage of bringing out the best in children. In fact, the findings of a recent global report said that the use of corporal punishment as a discipline method contributes to lower academic achievement and school dropout. This also carries the risk of long-term harm to mental and physical health and future prospects of individuals, families and societies.

“My Nanay thought that beating me up is loving me,” **Carlito** (not his real name) said during a conversation with Save the Children Philippines. “My Nanay Aileen attended the Positive Parenting seminar and became one of the beneficiaries of Save the Children Philippines’ livelihood project.” Carlito noticed the change in her mother’s way of correcting him and his siblings whenever they are in the wrong. Nanay Aileen used to hurl expletives at them whenever he and his siblings asked for money to buy school stuff or whenever they spent too much time playing outdoors. But now, she would encourage them to reason together as a family. Carlito now performs better in school and has become more aware of his rights as a child.

Above all, Save the Children Philippines applauds the emphasis of the bills on the aspect that physical and humiliating punishments of children violate their fundamental rights. The World Report on Violence recommended the legal ban on all forms of physical and humiliating punishments particularly in the home. However, only 65 states have adopted the law that prohibits the use of physical and humiliating punishment of children in all settings.



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Katarina Rodriguez, Save the Children Philippines' ambassador and a beauty-queen-turned positive-parent to her children said, "when I was pregnant with my son, I learned so much from Save the Children Philippines about the rights of children. I learned the importance of showing them love and respect even though they are still young, even while we discipline them."

Two legislators have filed their versions of the bill in their respective chambers. Sen. Risa Hontiveros authored the Senate Bill 2036 subject for interpellation in the Senate. On the other hand, Rep. Angelica Natasha Co authored the House Bill 8306 scheduled for hearing at the committee level.

In one of the committee hearings, Hontiveros asked, "if we adults are mindful of the physical and emotional pains inflicted to us, how much more for the children who are the most vulnerable sector of our society?"

While Rep. Natasha Co declared, "at the heart of this bill is our ultimate wish – to bring Filipino families closer together. It is finetuned to ensure that it offers curative solutions rather than punitive actions, enabling it to pass the rigorous discernment of Congress."

Save the Children Philippines reiterated that the bill would become a living, moment-defining document if all Filipinos, especially the family which is the smallest unit of our society, would come to realize that our children are the future generation. If they are raised in love, respect, and dignity, we can expect future leaders and servants who will serve the country and the Filipino people in love, respect, and dignity.

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