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STATEMENT
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Save the Children Philippines' Statement on the Veto of the Positive Discipline Bill

Save the Children believes that children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence; and it is the duty of the State to ensure this through various measures including the passage of appropriate laws and policies such as the proposed Positive and Non-Violent Discipline Act. This is part of the State's commitment to uphold the right of Filipino children to protection as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified in 1990.

The Council for the Welfare of Children's data shows that physical and psychological violence particularly in the home setting remains to be the most pervasive type of violence experienced by Filipino children. The National Baseline Study on Violence against Children reveals that 3 in 5 children experienced some form of physical violence. Sixty percent (60%) of these cases happened in the home with one in two children experiencing corporal punishment. About 4.6 percent led to the hospitalization of children. The report also showed the lifetime prevalence of psychological violence during childhood which was estimated at 59.2%. This indicates that almost 3 out of 5 children have been verbally abused, threatened and/ or abandoned by their parents or guardian. The 2017 Philippine Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children (PPA-EVAC) which was developed by various government agencies and partners identified the enactment of a national policy prohibiting the use of physical and humiliating punishment as one of its key strategies.

The proposed Positive and Non-violent Discipline Act could have provided the necessary mandate for government agencies and local government units to establish programs and services to help parents, caregivers, teachers and others involved in taking care of children to learn how to practice positive and non-violent discipline. Research shows that disciplining children using positive and non-violent means lead to: (1) better child-development and well-being; (2) better academic performance; and (3) better family relationships. Not many parents actually believe that physical punishment is necessary for child rearing but they still resort to physical and humiliating punishment because they have been raised to think that this is how children should be disciplined and have no experience or exposure to effective and non-violent alternatives.

Enacting the proposed Positive and Non-violent Discipline Act could have been a good opportunity towards providing children with the full protection they need in all settings including the home, where they should feel safest and loved and where they can go for support when feeling unsafe in their schools and communities. This means that 6 out of 10 children will continue to experience physical and psychological violence in the home. The passage of the proposed policy would have contributed to changing social norms that accept physical and psychological violence in disciplining children, which is critical in ending the cycle of violence in the society.

In various consultations, Filipino children have been asking to be protected from physical and humiliating punishment since we submitted the 2009 alternative report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Parents, caregivers, teachers and service providers have also continuously asked for support in learning how to discipline children without using violence.

If the State is true to its commitment to “defend the right of children to ... special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development” as stated in the Philippine Constitution, it would have enacted the proposed law that would put an end to an age-old practice that has been proven by research to do more harm to children.

Save the Children thanks its allies and champions in Congress, national government agencies, local governments, civil society, professional associations, parents, teachers, service providers, and boys and girls who have heeded the call of these children and adults, and never wavered in their support for the passage of the proposed Positive and Non-violent Discipline Act over the past decade despite the odds. We assure you that Save the Children stands by its mission to inspire breakthroughs in the way children are treated in the Philippines. We remain committed to relentlessly pursue the protection of children from all forms of violence including physical and humiliating punishment, and calls on the Philippine government to do the same in fulfillment of its duty to protect the Filipino children.

¹ Council for the Welfare of Children Philippines (2016). *National baseline study on violence against children: Philippines: Executive Summary*. Manila, Philippines: Author.

² Council for the Welfare of Children (2016). *National baseline study on violence against children: Philippines: Executive Summary*. Manila, Philippines: Author.

³ Council for the Welfare of Children Philippines (2017). *Philippine Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children: Philippines*.

⁴ Lansford, J. E., Alampay, L. P., Al-Hassan, S., Bacchini, D., Bombi, A. S., Bornstein, M. H., Chang, L., Deater-Deckard, K., Di Guinta, L., Dodge, K., Oburu, P., Pastorelli, C., Runyan, D., Skinner, A., Sorbring, E., Sombat, T., Tirado, L. M. U., & Zelli, A. (2010). Corporal punishment of children in nine countries as a function of child gender and parent gender. *International journal of pediatrics*, 2010. doi: 10.1155/2010/672780.

⁵ Council for the Welfare of Children (2016). *National baseline study on violence against children: Philippines: Executive Summary*. Manila, Philippines: Author.

