

Implementation and enforcement of laws

Objective

Ensure the implementation and enforcement of laws banning violence against children, preventing problem alcohol use, and limiting youth access to firearms and other weapons.

Rationale

Developing and strengthening legal protections and policies for children and youth, in conjunction with the means to enforce these protections, is a prudent step in preventing violence against children.

Laws that prohibit behaviours, such as violent punishment and child sexual abuse, are useful in several ways. First, they show society that violent behaviour is not tolerated and can therefore reduce and prevent the normalisation of violence against children. Second, they hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. Third, laws and policies can also be useful in reducing exposure to key risk factors for violence against children by preventing problem alcohol use and limiting youth access to firearms and weapons.

Legislation can be a key part of preventing and responding to violence and promoting respect for children's rights. Effective enforcement of laws that define and prohibit all forms of violence against children may deter violence and ensure justice for victims. These protective laws are obligations for States Parties to implement as part of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



Additional legislation should address key risk factors for violence against children, such as problem alcohol use and youth access to firearms and other weapons. Laws alone may not reduce violence, but their effective implementation and enforcement play an integral role in supporting and strengthening all INSPIRE strategies to end violence against children. These laws can contribute to creating an enabling environment to maximize the effectiveness of other interventions.



Approach

● **Laws banning violence against children (including corporal punishment, sexual abuse and exploitation, and youth violence)**

These laws 1) prohibit violent punishment of children (for example by parents or caregivers, teachers, or other authorities); 2) define, criminalise, and offer mechanisms for prosecution of all acts of sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as provide for protection and support for child victims; or 3) prohibit peer-to-peer violence including through designating vulnerable subgroups as protected classes.

- **Evidence:** Laws banning violence against children remains prudent across high-, middle- and low-income countries. These laws are considered essential for creating an enabling environment for interventions to prevent violence against children. In the United States, there is emerging evidence that antibullying legislation can reduce peer victimisation, including among sexual minority youth.

● **Laws that prevent problem alcohol use**

These laws aim to reduce excessive alcohol consumption by increasing the price, establishing

minimum age for purchase, limiting times and days of sale, and reducing the density of outlets.

- **Evidence:** Evidence is concentrated in high-income countries and findings from strong-quality studies show mixed results across policies, though the studies in this area face significant methodological limitations in attributing causality from policy change to reductions in violence against children.

● **Laws limiting youth access to firearms and other weapons**

These laws provide stricter licensing requirements for firearms, combined with targeted enforcement and other measures to prevent illegal access to firearms and other weapons by children and youth.

- **Evidence:** In the United States, laws on secure storage of firearms (child access prevention) have promising evidence in reducing unintentional firearm deaths and emerging evidence in reducing unintentional firearm-related injuries among children. Evidence is limited for other firearm-related laws.

Intervention Type	HICs	LMICs
Laws banning corporal punishment by parents, teachers, or other caregivers	✓	✓
Laws banning the sexual abuse and exploitation of children	✓	✓
Antibullying legislation (including designating sexual and gender minorities as protected classes)	✓	—
Minimum alcohol-drinking age (policy change) on youth violence	✓	✓
Alcohol taxation and price control on child maltreatment	✓	✓
Alcohol trading restrictions on youth violence	✓	✓
Laws on child access prevention to firearms on youth homicide	✓	✓
Laws on child access prevention to firearms on unintentional firearm deaths	✓	✓
Laws on child access prevention to firearms on unintentional firearm-related injuries	✓	✓

- ✓✓ Recommendations for prioritized implementation are well-supported or supported by evidence
- ✓ Recommendations for prioritized implementation have promising or emerging evidence, or are prudent
- ✗ Recommendations for prioritized implementation are not currently supported by evidence
- No new systematic reviews