

## **Example from Mauritania**

### **Religious leaders call for ending corporal punishment of children**

Corporal punishment is widespread in Mahadras (Koranic Schools) and in secular primary schools and within families in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. UNICEF Mauritania analysed its prevalence in order to find the best way to address it. They used the recommendation of the UN Global Study on violence against children which advises close collaboration with community and religious leaders.

The Network of Imams in Mauritania carried out a study to assess whether corporal punishment is allowed in Islam. The evidence was overwhelming. The study found that violence has no place in the Koran. The results of the study will form the basis of a fatwa (religious edict) barring physical and verbal violence against children in the educational system and in the home.

A regional workshop to validate the study was held in April 2009, in Atar. Participants included 30 Imams from the Adrar and Inchiri regions, as well as UNICEF Representative in Mauritania, Christian Skoop.

Hademine Ould Saleck, President of the Network of Imams, Islamic Republic of Mauritania stated: “The evidence that corporal punishment is forbidden by Islam is clear and abiding for all of us. Let us stop arguing. We don’t have a choice, and we must apply Sharia {Islamic Law} which fully protects children”.

Christian Scoog of UNICEF said: “We have to use this fatwa prohibiting corporal punishment as a powerful tool to put an end to violence in mahadras, schools and religious events.”

The child rights initiative coincides with the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

*Source: UNICEF Newslines 5 May 2009*