

The production of the film on alternatives to corporal punishment:

A Betta Way



“We have a serious problem in our school. Teachers beat us and even give names to the sticks they beat us with. If you fail a test you get beaten and if you start crying you get an extra beating. Some of us even want to drop out of school because of this beating.

Sometimes we get scars due to the beatings.”

Quote from a Namibian child

“I don't like it when my parents beat us with the sharp object.”

Quote from a Namibian child

The use of corporal punishment as a form of child discipline is common in Namibia. According to a recent research study, it is estimated that 40% of people spank, hit or slap their children with a bare hand and 30% spank, hit or slap children with something such as a belt, hairbrush, stick or other hard object. Parents consider beatings justifiable for things like disobedience, talking back or not wanting to go to school.

However Article 8 of the Namibian Constitution states that the dignity of all persons shall be inviolable – and this includes children. The degrading and humiliating treatment that is often described as corporal punishment is a violation of this right to dignity. While many people still argue that corporal punishment is the only effective means of discipline in the country, there have been cases in Namibia where excessive physical force has been used against children in the home. There are cases where children have been seriously injured or burned by means of such “discipline”, and some children have even been beaten to death.

To help address these problems, the Gender Research and Advocacy Project at the Legal Assistance Centre produced a film, *A Betta Way*, to raise awareness on why corporal punishment is a problem and what alternative forms of discipline can be used – with the ultimate aim of making Namibia a less violent society, and ensuring that children are treated with respect so that they will grow up knowing how to respect others.

Film synopsis

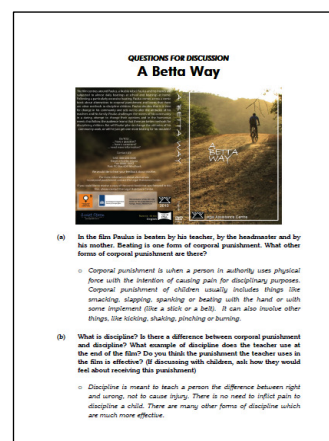
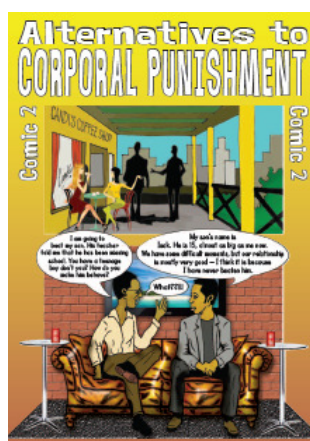


Depicting a battle to change the opinions of a whole community, the film is not only an educative tool but also a compelling story to watch. Set in a rural community school, Paulus and his friends are subjected to almost daily beatings at school and beatings at home. When Paulus comes across a comic about alternatives to corporal punishment, the information starts him thinking. Paulus sets out to change the attitudes of his teachers and his family. In the humorous events that follow, the audience learns that there are better methods for disciplining children. Paulus challenges the norms of his community in a daring attempt to change their opinions. But will Paulus' plan to change the attitudes of his community work, or will he just get one more beating for his troubles?

The unique aspect to this film is the fact that the comic really has been produced by the Legal Assistance Centre.

Supporting materials

GR&AP has produced *two comics on alternatives to corporal punishment*, one of which featured in the film. GR&AP also produced a simple *discussion guide* that can be used by facilitators to discuss key points in the film.



The main characters



PAULUS: *The likable rebel. Our main character. An intelligent young man who is prepared to stand up for his rights. He is determined to see justice prevail, even if it means his expulsion from school.*

“A film like this would have been great if it had been screened when I was at school,”

“I really did go through the whole beating thing, and I related to the scenes that we acted in the film. A beating really does have an impact on a person.”

“The film is good, people should watch it,”

Morris Kalunduka, Paulus



JACKIE:
Paulus's class-mate and best friend. A member of the drama group.



JENNIFER: *Class-mate and member of the drama group.*

CAROLINE: *Class-mate and member of the drama group.*



THE CORPORAL: *as he is known by the kids behind his back, or Mr Auseb, the strict teacher who still firmly believes in corporal punishment. He's pompous and a trifle conceited, and far too free with his ever present cane. He will never accept that he could be out manipulated by a student.*

DOZI: *A real klutz. Always sleeping, and woefully gullible.*

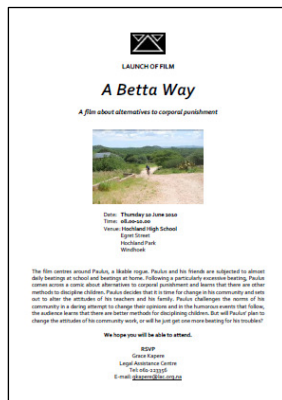


Rehearsals and production

Rehearsals for *A Betta Way* started in January 2010, with filming starting in February 2010.



Launch and screenings of A Betta Way



The film was launched 10 June 2010 at Hochland High School. Schools within the vicinity of Windhoek were invited to attend, as well as other stakeholders such as NGOs and representatives from donor organisations. The film was extremely well received and a lively debate ensued after the film. Three of the actors were able to attend the launch and were very popular with the learners. The launch was covered by Radio Kosmos and NBC News and reported in the *Die Republikein* and *New Era* on 11 and 17 June respectively.



The English version of the first alternatives to corporal punishment comic was inserted on the same day in *The Namibian* newspaper. The Oshiwambo and Afrikaans versions were inserted the following day. On the day the English comic was released, we received 79 text messages from 60 people.¹ The majority of smses we received were **thank you messages** for the comic. Some people specifically stated that they do/have beaten their children but wanted to change:

Thank for you words of advise how to punishment sons. I am the one who use even to hit my teenager boy.

One message was sent by a Ministry of Education Official. We also received a number of **text messages from teachers**.

Hi! I enjoyed yr comic on alternatives to corporal punishment. I hope you could get valuable comments, if you would shown it to adults (principal and teachers) first, then children. Severina Neingo MoE,DATS.

¹ For comparison, the maintenance comic received 160 text messages from 103 people on the day it was released and the protection order comic received 56 text messages from 38 people. Therefore the response rate for this comic sits midway between the other 2 comics.

Many people said that they would ***show the comic to their children:***

I read your comic on alternatives to corporal punishment, and it surely changed my perception. I've a son who never listen & to help him, I'll give him to read

We also received some responses from ***young people***. One of the youngest people to give feedback was 12-year old child

The comic makes me feel i also have a right i am 12 yrs old

Many people also send messages asking for ***advice*** to deal with specific situations.

Hi i read the comic nd it s really interestn, and i hav a question mayb my kid hurt other kid by throwin a stone at other kid nd tht kid is bleedin should i beat my kid or not?

Only 2 people sent messages that supported the use of corporal punishment and one of these people later replied to us to say that the comic had been very informative: “*Ive learnt alot*”

alternatives to corporal punishment has taught us (at school) a good lesson,beating is not the solution to our problems,but why dont u come and sit in the classrom and teach? Maybe u wil understand why corporal punishment is needed especially in high schools.

Hi.i want 2 comment about punishment. 1.is good 2 speak 2 child if he do it again u need look him in the house wef not play that day and beat coz the bible tel us 2 punish ur kids. That was my opinion.thanks

In addition to the launch of the film and release of the comic, the topic was discussed on *Good Morning Namibia* that morning and discussed later that afternoon on the NBC National Radio programme *Young and Cool*. We also made a pre-recording for the NBC radio programme *Your Rights Right Now* to be aired the following week.



We received a similar level of responses when the second comic on alternatives to corporal punishment was released, indicating that the public continued to appreciate the release of information.

Screenings at 9 schools

Following the launch of the film, we screened the film at a further 8 schools during the month of June. Group discussions were held after the film. Learners also spoke with the Legal Assistance Centre on a one-to-one basis afterwards for more information and support regarding how to deal with situations of corporal punishment. We found that many of the schools visited still use corporal punishment and many teachers do not agree with the ban on corporal punishment.

	School	Number of learners/teachers	Publications distributed	Sample comments
1	Hochland High School (launch)	700	1000	
2	Pioneers Boys School	90	100	After the movie the boys described it as excellent screening. They commented that the movie is not only fun to watch but also very educative and they value the laws against corporal punishment.
3	Shifidi Secondary School	800	700	
4	Higher Technical School (HTS)	635	500	
5	Jan Jonker Afrikaner SS	90	100	
6	Goreangab SS	100	500	
7	Michelle McLean Primary School	115	500	
8	David Bezuidenhout	1200	500	They even asked for a replay of the movie and cheered the movie all the way. They described the movie as the best ever and asked questions on what measures to follow as learners if they have problems with CP
9	St Andrew's Primary School	540	0	
	Total	4270	3900	

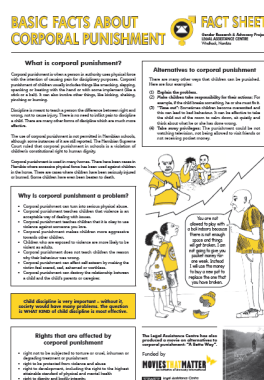
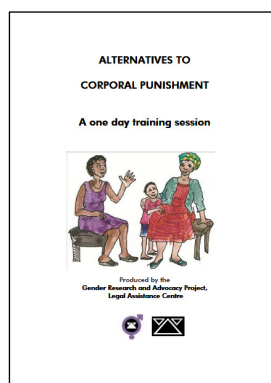
Below are some comments from the learners and teachers:

- *“My parents said they beat me because they love me” – high school learner (girl)*
- *“Can you please show the film to our parents as well” – high school learner*
- *“What can a teacher do if learners are always coming late for school?” – primary school teacher*
- *“Is it corporal punishment if I asked a child to hold up a chair in the air as punishment?” – primary school teacher*

We also received funds from Amnesty International to screen the film in two other regions. Overall under the Amnesty budget we were able to screen the film a total of 15 times to 1446 people. This project included screening the film at the National Theatre of Namibia, with the event hosted by a local radio DJ, screening the film at teacher training colleges and running a trainer of trainer session. The project also included funds to print a poster about alternatives to corporal punishment and a one-day training blueprint on alternatives to corporal punishment. Therefore the total screenings come to 23 screenings with 5716 people.



Local DJ Matilda Riruako with children who attended the screening at the National Theatre of Namibia.



Training guide and poster

Between June and September 2010 we screened the film to a total of 5716 people at 23 screenings.



Screening of movie on national television – twice

The LAC film *A Betta Way* was shown on the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation television on Sunday 18 July at 1pm and again on 22nd of August 2010 . Below is a summary of the smses we received:

The majority of smses we received were **thank you messages** for the comic. Three examples are shown below:

Hi,i would like to congratulate you guys on your drama under the topic CORPORAL PUNiSHMENT is inspiring many,i really appreciate your hard work on that,you taught us alot,thank u!

Tht ws rlly an inspiring drama, its rlly appriciatable..kip it up! thts alyn 4rm Ondngw

Hi,i feel ur drama it was so nice,nd i go wth u 100%,say no 2 copral punishment!

Some people also wanted to know what would happen next and asked for the film to be screened again:

That was really great,but what happen to paulus family,what did they do? T.k

Hi wantd to know when will the play be broadcasted again the one about coporal punishment?

It must repeat at next tme,it is good,i dit wch at the bengng,

Many young people responded, including from people who would like to do similar things in their own region or to get involved :

*Hi you i just want toe say that di DRAMA that ws on NBC tv ds afternoon it really waz excullent aweh from ***** i'm also in a Drama Group in karasburg grade 10.²*

I enjoyed your play it's true that teachers like to hurt us for no reason you guys show them a good example.in grade 9c k .s. s.frm w/b

Good morning.... I'm a first year student at unam, studying media as my major and voice and speech and psychology as my subjects. I'm really impressed by the drama play that was just viewed now on nbc.... It's amazing how namibia has got such great talent. I would really love to act in one of your plays. This is my number and you contacting me when you need an actress will be highly appreciated. Please say something.³

Adults also wanted to get involved:

² We will be sending this young man a DVD of the film to motivate the drama group

³ We have passed her contact details to OYO, a local NGO that uses drama and arts to educate young people

*If we are a worker and we want to take part in the drama, it's okay? Just to show parent and teacher how to handle learner at school.*⁴

Other young people were just happy to see the promotion of children's rights in Namibia:

I personally think that was a very good drama I hope to be seen in more often concerning different school issues. A proud learner at Khorab SS Deppy

Thanks for the information it's such an educational program for learners.....will definitely stand up for our rights

*CONGRATULATIONS on that film, it's subjected to parents, guardians/care takers, teachers and all those that are involved with children. Those that have eyes they watched and those that have ears have listened. It was educative and indeed informative. Thumbs up to the legal assistance centre and keep up the great work. ***** Polytechnic of Namibia.*

The film motivated some people to ask for help. This shows how important it is to show films such as this.

Yesterday I was beaten by my father and now I am blue!

I got a very naughty daughter and she's only 4yrs and every time she did wrong I just feel like beating her is the solution since she's too young for me to explain to her or ask her to fix her mistake (We suggested that she try alternative methods and asked her to keep in touch)

The sms line also **allowed people to ask for more information:**

May you please explain to me in more details! What do you mean by "use time out" instead of corporal punishment?

One person sent an sms supporting the use of corporal punishment:

I have seen your film but I think theoretical it's fine not practical. Do you really know how overcrowded the classes are. In a class with 48 learners do you think you will succeed. I think this will only put too much work on teacher. Let corporal punishment be there to build our kids up not to hurt them. It can be done but with love.

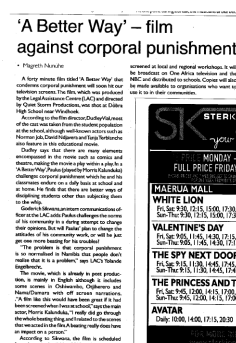
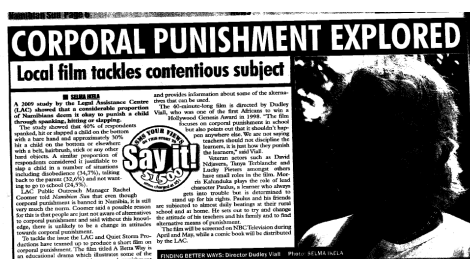
⁴ We will also be sending a copy of the DVD to this person

Media coverage

The table below summarises the media coverage achieved for the film. The coverage does not list all the advocacy on corporal punishment (this will be reported separately).

Overall, we achieved 8 print articles, 7 pieces of coverage on television (including 2 screenings of the film), and 3 pieces of coverage on radio.

Date	Media	Topic	Person
28 th Jan	<i>Television: GMN</i>	Corporal punishment and making of the film	LAC (Yolande Engelbrecht) & film director
19 Feb	<i>Print: The Namibian</i>	Article on a Better Way	Journalist based on press release from LAC (Godrich Sikwana)
3 March	<i>Radio: NBC Your Rights Right Now</i>	Alternatives to CP and making of film	LAC (Rachel Coomer)
April	<i>Print: Insight magazine</i>	Making of film	Journalist
22 April	<i>Print: Namibian Sun</i>	Article about making of the film	Journalist
9 June	<i>Radio: Kosmos</i>	Launch of film	LAC (Rachel Coomer)
10 June	<i>Radio: Kosmos</i>	Launch of film	LAC (Rachel Coomer)
10 June	<i>Television: GMN</i>	Launch of film	LAC (Rachel Coomer)
10 June	<i>Television: NBC News</i>	Launch of film	Journalist
11 June	<i>Print: Republikein</i>	Article about launch of film	Journalist
13 June	<i>Television: NBC</i>	Interview about film	LAC (Dianne Hubbard)
3 July	<i>Print: Namibian</i>	LAC film mentioned in article about Namibian films	Journalist
9 July	<i>Print: Namibian</i>	Review of DVD <i>A Better Way</i>	Journalist
13 July	<i>Television: One Africa</i>	Coverage of screening of DVD at National Theatre	Journalist
18 July	<i>Television: NBC</i>	Screening of <i>A Better Way</i>	
20 July	<i>Print: YouthPaper</i>	Coverage of NTN screening	Journalist
6 August	<i>Print: Namibian</i>	Article about film being replayed by popular demand	Journalist
22 Aug	<i>Television: NBC</i>	<i>A Better Way</i>	



Impact

The making of this film has been a participatory process in itself as itself as considerable media coverage was engaged during the process. The making of the movie acted as a talking point about the issue of corporal punishment.

There is a great need for debate on the use of corporal punishment in Namibia. Following the screenings, it has become clear that there is widespread prevalence of the use of corporal punishment in schools, despite the practice being banned by a Supreme Court decision in 1991. Young people also often reported violence at home at the hands of parents and other adult caregivers. At each event, the most frequent question was: where can a child go for help if they face violence at school, in the community or at home? The fact this question was continually asked illustrates a lack of awareness/knowledge about avenues for help that are available to children who are living with violence. Of those who were aware of possibilities for reporting violence, many questioned the effectiveness of such reporting, particularly within a family setting.

The film is a sustainable outreach medium. NBC has already screened the film twice and we expect that they will continue to show the film at appropriate intervals. We received funds from Amnesty International to screen the film in two extra regions and this is a good example of how we can continue to use the film even after the initial funding to produce the film has finished. Save the Children, Sweden have also provided funds to screen the film in a third region at the end of 2010. Therefore we will be able to continue to use the film in our outreach work. The trainer of trainer session conducted in June (funded by Amnesty International) and the continued use of the DVD in other workshops is allowing us to increase the number of people who can screen and facilitate a discussion about this film and we continue to distribute the film to interested parties.

In summary, this project has been extremely effective. Namibia does not have a strong reading culture but stories and film are extremely popular. This film has addressed an important issue in Namibia in a fun and accessible manner. The response to the film has been extremely popular and we will continue to use the DVD in our outreach.