



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stop Sexually Abusing Children!

Tuesday, 2nd May 2023: Save the Children Fiji (SCF) is horrified and in strong terms condemns the recent reports of sexual abuse of children in Fiji. It is appalling, distressing and distasteful to learn of reports of children these past few months who are as young as three and four years old becoming victims of heinous sexual crimes. Child sexual abuse is a serious violation of children's rights and robs a child of the opportunity to enjoy their childhood while impacting them emotionally, psychologically and physically in the long term. The damages faced by children who are sexually abused is a lifelong one.

Recently the Fiji Police highlighted a case of a 12-year-old child who was allegedly raped by her 37-year-old uncle in Labasa as well as a 16-year-old girl allegedly raped by two men in Sigatoka. These atrocious acts committed on children must stop and as a society, we collectively hold our heads in shame that such abhorrent behaviors have become a daily occurrence in our society. Equally concerning was the report released by the Office of the DPP in Suva of the February sexual crimes statistics that shows that of the 29 victims of sexual crimes, 18 were under the age of 18 years old, or children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and relevant domestic legislation. In the DPP's January 2023 statistics, there were 26 victims of sexual crimes of which 22 were under the age of 18. These statistics are an indication of a huge problem that exists in our society and one that demands a concerted effort and collaboration of government and stakeholders to address.

CEO of Save the Children, Shairana Ali calls on the government and all relevant stakeholders to address the increasing number of sexual attacks on children. "It is time for us to have hard conversations about child sexual abuse. We must break the silence and the taboos around sexual

abuse conversations especially with our children and begin to shine a light into this abhorrent practice.” Ali said.

SCF is urging members of the public to closely supervise their children and talk to children about sexual abuse and how to get help if they have been sexually abused. SCF is specifically concerned to hear that majority of the perpetrators who have committed such crimes are known to the children and often, they are trusted and in positions of power and authority and are from within the family unit.

SCF reiterates that every child has a right to safety and protection and a child is never responsible for the sexual abuse.

Children may mask their emotions for a number of reasons especially if the perpetrator is known and is someone whom they trust the most, for example, they may love him as their grandfather but want the sexual abuse to stop!

Ali is calling on the State as the duty bearer and relevant stakeholders including parents, faith-based institutions, business houses, communities and NGOs to work together to ensure child safeguarding and child protection policies are in place and that we collaborate to ensure that children are protected from these heinous crimes.

“Sexual abuse of children must stop immediately. As a society, we are failing our children and destroying their future if we are not able to keep them safe and protected from abuse and exploitation.” Ali reiterates.

“We must do better to protect our children. When communities work together and take action, we are able to provide a safe and nurturing environment for our children. All children deserve a good start in life. They deserve to live a life of dignity and enjoy their childhood. Child sexual abuse and neglect are serious social problems that can have long-term impact on health, education, opportunity, and wellbeing of children. We must address this scourge in our community now, whether through national platforms, community talanoa sessions, faith-based settings or even in family. These hard conversations must be had.” Ali added.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, call Police on 917 or 919.

Children and youths can also contact Child Helpline Fiji on 1325 to seek the help of professional counselors.

Save the Children Fiji: 3313178 or email us on info.fiji@savethechildren.org

Medical Services Pacific: 3630108 or 3548062

Department of Social Welfare: Suva: 3315754 Nasinu: 3683395 Nausori: 3479449

Save the Children Fiji (SCF) is committed to protecting children, regardless of gender, race, country of origin or religious belief. The organization's work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which states that children should be protected from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect, maltreatment, and exploitation, including sexual abuse.

A child is anyone who is below the age of 18 (CRC).

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