



Save the Children

Press Release

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*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

Bullying is Never Acceptable

“Bullying is an issue that has affected too many students for too long and too many have suffered as a result”. These were the words of Save the Children Fiji Chief Executive Officer, Iris Low-McKenzie after learning of the latest bullying incident claiming the life of a 16-year-old student of Ratu Navula College in Nadi.

It is indeed very sad to hear of the passing of this child. More and more we hear of the incidences of bullying in schools and online, perpetuated by those that are supposed to care for our children. When adults model and justify violent behavior, or if children are exposed to violence by other means, children think that violence is acceptable behavior to solve problems.

We need to assess the reasons and the background of the child, which we know the investigation process will determine. Unfortunately, the child in this case did not consider the consequence of his actions that day, and this will live with him for the rest of his life and it has resulted in the loss of another child. This case can be used as a teachable moment for our children, talk to them about what happened here and the consequence of their actions. Reiterate that bullying is not acceptable and instead promote kindness, peace, acceptance and tolerance.

“We need to come together, as a community – the family, schools, Faith Based Organisations, civil society and Government to take steps to denounce bullying and stop bullying behavior, sending a clear message, especially to children that bullying is not okay. Silence is no longer an acceptable response to bullying. Adults, students, and educators can no longer look away when they see bullying. Ignoring it won’t work. Everyone needs to be empowered with options to respond.” Says Low-McKenzie.

For the past years, SC Fiji has been requested to speak in schools and communities specifically about bullying. It is important for teachers and parents to understand the signs of bullying and how to address it but we cannot only leave it at that. The issue of bullying and any act of violence against another human being needs to start with children at a very young age and we must include the families – in particular, the opportunity of Parent, Teacher Associations in schools so that there is a collective approach to this issue and the message at home and in school is consistent – do not solve your problems through violent or bullying behavior.

We need to continue to invest in family time and talk with our children, constantly check on them, understand them and be vigilant noticing changes of behaviors and encourage them to talk to us. There’s a lot of help available and we need to encourage children and families to reach out like the Child Helpline – 1325.

Save the children reiterates to children that their rights come with responsibility and to make responsible choices.

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