

18th September 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: STATISTICS ON CHILD ABUSE CASES SHAMEFUL AND DISTRESSING

Save the Children Fiji (SC Fiji) is deeply concerned and appalled by the recent revelation of distressing statistics on child abuse, which was shared by the Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection Honourable Lynda Tabuya during the parliamentary session held on Wednesday, 13th of September 2023. According to the reported data, a staggering 950 cases of child abuse have been documented from January to July of this year. Equally distressing is the fact that four of these innocent children are below the age of one.

“SC Fiji Chief Executive Officer, Shairana Ali stated that the 950 cases are not just numbers; they represent the suffering and anguish endured by our most vulnerable members of society – our children. Child abuse in any form is a grievous violation of the rights of children and a grave injustice. It is one of the worst forms of degradation that can be committed on a child. These statistics reveal a deeper rot within our societies and we must urgently address this scourge. Child abuse is unacceptable, it is inexcusable and a despicable act that warrants the prosecution of perpetrators to the full extent of the law. These statistics demand our unequivocal condemnation and a swift, coordinated response to end the child abuse scourge in our society. Child abuse is an affront to our shared values, and it must be eradicated from our society with the utmost urgency. She added.”

In light of this alarming revelation, and in accordance with our obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the relevant criminal legislation, we call upon the Government, stakeholders and partners to:

Strengthen and Enforce Laws: We urge the government to strengthen and rigorously enforce existing laws against child abuse, and amend laws where necessary to ensure that perpetrators face the full brunt of the law

Public Awareness Campaigns: We emphasize the importance of investing in comprehensive public awareness campaigns to educate our citizens about child protection and the available resources for reporting abuse.

Resource Allocation: We call for the allocation of additional resources to support abused children and their families, including the provision of counselling, medical care, and legal assistance.

Collaborative Efforts: We encourage collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, faith-based institutions, school, education sector and all our communities to ensure the creation of child protection or safeguarding policies that identifies clear measures or steps to be taken to avoid and/or address child abuse.

Continuous Evaluation: We stress the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of child protection initiatives to ensure their effectiveness in safeguarding children.

Strengthen Family Values and Safeguards – We encourage parents and guardians to provide close monitoring, supervision, and advice and ensure the safety of children especially if they are in the care of adults in the family or community.

SC Fiji commends the Honourable Minister for standing firm and for bringing this critical issue to the forefront of parliamentary discourse and is calling for a strong decisive leadership to end all forms of abuse and exploitation of children in Fiji.

Save the Children Fiji's child protection currently runs awareness programs in 24 communities in the Central Division and 10 communities in the western division advocating and raising awareness about the importance of child protection.

Call the Child Helpline toll-free number 1325 available 24/7 or reach out to Save the Children Fiji on 3313178 to report any concerns with children.

For more information please contact:

Communications Officer: Vika.Ramara@savethechildren.org

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