

Unite against child abuse, believe in zero

UNICEF is calling on all South Africans to unite behind the goal of zero violence against children. In the run up to Child Protection Week, which takes place from 28 May - 3 June 2012, UNICEF's newly launched 'Believe in Zero' campaign highlights the role that everyone - not only the authorities - has to play in the protection of children.

"South Africa's levels of violence against children are among the highest in the world. Tens of thousands of children are victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation every year - and offenders often go unpunished," says Aida Girma, UNICEF Representative.

Statistics from the South African Police Service confirm there were more than 54,000 reported crimes against children in 2010/2011; however, crimes against children are grossly underreported and the real figure is much higher.

Sexual offences make up about half of that figure, while around 30% of these victims are under the age of 10 years. Research has shown that in most abuse cases, the offenders are known to the children.

UNICEF Ambassador Yvonne Chaka Chaka has added her voice to the Believe in Zero campaign: "Child protection starts with every one of us, as individuals - no matter who we are and where we live."

UNICEF is driving the Believe in Zero initiative online. A specially designed Facebook app urges people to express their support, upload photos or videos, post messages and engage their networks on the goal of zero child abuse.

Among those people who share their views through the app, one passionate supporter will be given the chance to take a field trip with UNICEF to see first-hand how the organisation works with partners - and children themselves - towards the fulfillment of child rights.

To find out more about Believe in Zero, or participate in the campaign, visit www.unicef.org.za or join the conversation on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).