

MEDIA RELEASE

Children Urged to Speak Out and Stop Abuse as Child Protection Week 2007 is observed in Guyana

Georgetown, Guyana- 25th September, 2007 UNICEF – “Stop abuse; Speak out. Stop abuse – Speak out”.. this mantra was repeated by over 500 primary and secondary school-aged children as they marched through the streets of the capital city Georgetown, before congregating in the National Park for a children’s rally, as part of the formal activities to mark National Child Protection Week 2007. Activities to mark this year’s observance began on Sunday 23rd September under the theme, “Our Children, Our Responsibility - Stop Abuse, Speak Out.”

Child Protection Week was first launched in 2004 with the aim of sensitizing the nation on child protection issues and advocating for nationwide support in the prevention of violence against children. During this week all of society - parents, caregivers, international and local NGOs, religious bodies, the media and children and young people themselves are sensitized on issues of violence and abuse.

Child Protection in Guyana remains of critical importance, especially in light of the prevalence of reports of abuse to the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security one of UNICEF’s main counterparts. Commenting on UNICEF’s participation in this year’s observances, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist Doris Roos said that *“We have a social, moral and cultural responsibility to protect not only our own children but every child in Guyana. Let’s speak out against child abuse and exploitation and ensure our children grow up in a safe environment.”*

For this reason, UNICEF has remained a strong technical and financial supporter of the Ministry by strengthening both their institutional and legislative capacity. “UNICEF is lobbying for the Children’s Bill to be tabled in Parliament this year, the Juvenile Offenders Bill, the implementation of standards for children in residential care, and we are also supporting Legal Aid for children who come in conflict with the law. Further we are also giving support to birth registration and a number of community based organisations in the areas of psychosocial and nutritional support and the implementation of Health and Family Life Education (FHLE) at the community level,” She reiterated.

Other activities during this week include a Television Panel Discussion based on the theme Our Children, Our Responsibility - Stop Abuse, Speak Out, Open discussions in schools for students, teachers and parents, A workshop on Child Abuse in Region 3, community outreach programmes in regions 4,5,6,and 10; A Sports and Fun Day, seminars on Good Parenting and several regional children rallies.

It is hoped that through these activities, UNICEF together with the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, can move closer to ensuring a protective environment for our children. And according to Ms. Roos, We are here for the long haul...we remain committed...these are our Children and this is our responsibility.”

About UNICEF

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UNICEF is on the ground in 155 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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