



NOT A PRIVILEGE: A Walkerville orphanage was closed down after allegations of child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse and fraud. Children must grow up knowing that not being abused is a right, not a privilege, says the writer. PICTURE: ZIPHOZONKE LUSHABA

Helping children become the best adults they can be

WOMEN and children remain victims of abuse and many of them – the poor, the uneducated and the downtrodden – remain voiceless, unable to tell the rest of the world of the emotional, psychological, physical and sexual violence they suffer.

Figures around the actual number of incidents of abuse remain inaccurate – mainly because many of those who are abused are not coming forward. There are various reasons why someone would choose not to report their abuser – ranging from fear to a belief that they are not “privileged” enough not to be abused.

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Children, on November 25, marked the start of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children.

Girls and Boys Town (GBT) supports this initiative but remains concerned over the difficulties in accumulating accurate figures on the number

of cases of such acts.

In a country like SA where abuse is entrenched in communities, everything must be done to encourage those who are abused to come forward.

We must, as a society, educate and empower victims and let them know that abuse is not acceptable and that you have the right to speak up when you are abused in any way.

If we do this, we can stop the cycle of abuse, not just now but for future generations to come.

GBT encourages communities to be vigilant and work with the police against such violence.

GBT works with the government and other organisations to act against the violation of rights against women and children.

Through GBT’s Mobile Units, counsellors intensify public focus on child protection and promote the role of communities in providing safe environments in which children can grow up to their

fullest potential without being victims of any form of violence, abuse or exploitation.

Children have the right to a loving and caring environment but that may not be possible when the mother figure’s rights are also infringed.

One of the aims is to shake off the misconception that the right to not be abused is a privilege.

At GBT we also equip our children with the necessary skills to become highly functioning members of society and to break the cycle of abuse.

For many of them this is a long, difficult journey from a life filled with tragedy, fear, loss, despair, abuse and neglect to one characterised by hope, courage, faith and triumph.

Children, families and communities experiencing difficulty are encouraged to take a step forward and contact the Girls and Boys Town hotline counsellors on 0861 58 58 58.

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