

South Africa, 09 July 2010 - Speaking at the launch of the Save the Children Project to assist unaccompanied migrant children at the Union Buildings in Pretoria on Thursday, Minister for Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya said all communities should be involved in the protection of children.

"It needs all of us to work together," the minister said.

The Save the Children project is aimed at assisting vulnerable children on the move in Musina on the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe. It also focuses on ensuring that systems are in place to assist unaccompanied migrants and other vulnerable children to protect them from exploitation, abuse, violence and discrimination.

Minister Mayende-Sibiya said children, irrespective of whether they are foreigners or not, deserve to be protected. "Foreigners too have the right to access services," she said.

The minister explained that Save the Children works through social services of government and local organisations building capacity and advocating for awareness and action to mitigate the plight of children on the move.

"The project is a good example of collaboration between government and civil society to provide support particularly to children who are forced by various circumstances to migrate," she said.

Julia Zingu from Save the Children emphasised that all children have a right to education and health facilities.

She expressed concern about children who are turned away from the services they need because they lack proper documentation.

"Children deserve to be educated and access health facilities," she said.

Save the Children received a grant from the Italian government of 250 000 Euros (R2, 25 million) to ensure that children on the move are protected from exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect.

Save the Children, in collaboration with government, has been responding to the plight of unaccompanied and separated migrant children in Musina since 2007.