

UNICEF offers support to Pakistan as child abuse probe continues

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United Nations: The United Nations' agency for children has offered its support to Pakistani authorities as they open an investigation into widespread abuses against children and called on the government to bring to justice those responsible for the "terrible" crime.

UNICEF's Regional Deputy-Director for South Asia Philippe Cori said reports of children being sexually abused over a period of several years in the Kasur district of Pakistan are "appalling".

"UNICEF is in contact with the Government authorities to understand the full dimension of this crime. Our sympathies are with the children who have been victims to this abuse. It is vital that the children and families affected are immediately offered the necessary care and protection that will prevent further victimisation and allow the difficult process of healing to begin," Cori said.

Cori added that UNICEF is working closely with the authorities in Pakistan to prevent and respond to such issues affecting children, including sexual violence and abuse.

The agency is also ready to expand its work with local and national authorities to increase such efforts, so that no child has to suffer these terrible horrors.

"We hope also that every effort will be made by the Government of Pakistan to bring to justice those responsible for these terrible abuses," he said.

"No child should suffer violence, abuse or exploitation. The horrific crimes in Kasur underline how we must all do more to protect children from such abuses," Cori said.

Cori's remarks come as Pakistani authorities continue their investigation into allegations that a gang of men reportedly abused more than 200 children in a series of criminal acts beginning in 2006.

- PTI