

KZN NGO receives R35k grant through Vital Awards

South Africa's sexual violence statistics are appalling, especially those regarding children, with reported cases of child sexual abuse having increased 400% in the last nine years! And if the crime itself wasn't horrific enough, the system does little to help: victims are often further abused while being examined, aftercare is inconsistent or non-existent, and cases are frequently thrown out of court for lack of evidence.

Bobbi Bear, a non-profit based in Doonside, Amanzimtoti, which rescues, represents and reintegrates sexually abused children in KwaZulu-Natal, has received a grant of R35,000 from the Vital Foundation's newly established Vital Awards. The organisation is the second winning nominee of the monthly awards programme, which kicked off on 18 August and runs until 24 November.



Source: [Vital Foundation](#)

The Vital Awards draws support from South Africans across the country who each month nominate an organisation committed to fighting woman and child abuse to receive a R35k donation, and nominees are then entered into a lucky draw to win a Samsung prize.

The donation will go towards buying rescue kits designed to assist child safety officers (CSOs) to care for the immediate needs of victims as they arrive on the scene.

Jackie Branfield of Bobbi Bear says the grant couldn't have come at a better time. "With the festive season fast approaching, our work will almost double. It's the busiest time of the year for the Bobbi Bear team - children are at home for the school holiday period, parents are at work, and children are vulnerable and become easy targets for crime and rape."

"Just talking and listening wasn't sufficient"

Launched in 2000, Bobbi Bear's grassroots projects include Bobbi Bear Rescue Centres, which offer counselling and community helpdesks for child sexual abuse; a training and mentorship programme for CSOs; an HIV/Aids awareness and education programme for children; a foster care programme; various community member training programmes; a Saturday morning support group; and a court preparation programme.

Branfield, who was herself abused at the age of 10, started helping others in a similar predicament at 20 years old. But "just talking and listening wasn't sufficient," she recalls. It was in the mid-90s, while trying to access post-exposure prophylactic medication for sexually abused victims, that Branfield was reminded of the many hurdles that had to be overcome to assist vulnerable people who needed immediate assistance. And so Operation Bobbi Bear was born, with rescue kits of essential tools and equipment that her team could carry with them. The kits include underwear, sweets and a cool drink, plus a marker pen and a teddy bear - both of which can be used by traumatised children to point out where on their own bodies they've been hurt.

George Grieve, Managing Director of Vital Health Foods, says, "Business can no longer sit back and do nothing about an issue that affects not only civil society, but our economy as well. We have to do more." R1 from every Vital Health Foods supplement sold through leading retail outlets around the country is donated to the Vital Foundation, which was founded in August 2013. In the past year, Vital has raised R3,9 million this way.