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# SUCCESS STORY

## Protecting and Empowering Survivors

### **Victims of sexual abuse and violence find safety and support at center**



Photo: USAID/SA/Jessica Wells

Mandisa Ngonongono is the site coordinator of the Mannenberg Thuthuzela Care Center, which provides holistic care for survivors of sexual abuse or violence.

***“We give women options. We empower them,” said Mandisa Ngonongono, who runs a center that cares for and supports victims of sexual abuse and violence in Mannenberg, South Africa.***

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The Thuthuzela Care Center at the GF Jooste Hospital in Mannenberg, just outside of Cape Town, was the first center of its kind established in South Africa. Opened in 2000, the center aims to provide holistic care to victims of sexual violence, most of whom are women and children. This model is highly successful in empowering survivors to understand their rights and obtain care and comfort in a safe environment. USAID is helping the South African Government achieve its vision of a network of 80 such centers across South Africa to improve legal rights and protection for those who have suffered sexual violence and abuse.

A former legal advisor working with abused women, Mandisa Ngonongono is in charge at the Mannenberg center. Her responsibilities include coordinating the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders who contribute to the center, such as the South African Police Service, justice officials, hospital staff, social workers and USAID-supported non-governmental organizations. Survivors of sexual violence come to the center to receive comprehensive care and avoid secondary victimization by police or medical staff who may not be accustomed to working with rape cases. They can get medical attention, speak to a police officer, and can receive psycho-social counseling to cope with the violence they have endured.

Ngonongono believes that women feel empowered by the existence of the center and the support they receive there. This is especially true of Mannenberg’s center, which has a close relationship with the court system. Through the center’s case monitor, survivors are constantly updated on the status of their court case, including whether the accused has been released on bail. This information is especially important in the Mannenberg area, where gang members may try to intimidate victims from going to court.

Through the determined efforts of Ngonongono and the staff at the Mannenberg care center, women and children have more information about their rights if they become victims of sexual violence or abuse.