

MESSAGE BRIEF (B): (ii) Increasing Services for Survivors of Sexual Assault Programme (ISSAP) **SEASON TWELVE**

2. Background

South Africa has among the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world. (Genderlinks, Gender and Media Progress Report. Chapter 5, p.52) One of the key responses of the SA government in providing care for victims of sexual assault has been the establishment of Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs) under the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. The aim of the TCCs is to provide a wide range of rape care services under one roof. The goal is for survivors to be cared for by specially trained staff in a way that reduces secondary victimization and to be assisted to build a case ready for successful prosecution. Fifty two centres have been established since 2006. (Gender-Based Violence Assessment Report- South Africa 2011).

3. Overview of the Concept and Function of Thuthuzela Care Centres

The TCC's integrated approach to rape care is one of respect, comfort, restoring dignity and ensuring justice for children and women who are victims of sexual violence. "Thuthuzela" is the Xhosa word for comfort and is meant to awaken feelings of warmth, freedom from emotional and physical concerns, safety, security, being pampered and cared for and, above all, re-enforcing dignity, hope and positive expectation.

TCCs are in operation in public hospitals in communities where the incidence of rape is particularly high. They are also linked to Sexual Offences Courts, which are staffed by prosecutors, social workers, investigating officers, magistrates, health professionals, NGOs and police; and located in close proximity to the centres.

When reporting an incident, the rape victim is removed from crowds and intimidating environments, such as at the police station, to a more victim-friendly environment before being transported by ambulance to the Thuthuzela one stop care centre at the hospital. Enroute, the victim receives comfort and crisis counselling from a trained ambulance volunteer.

Once at the Thuthuzela Care Centre, the victim is ushered to a quiet, private space, welcomed by the site-coordinator. A doctor is immediately summoned to conduct a medical examination. The victim is

then given information on the procedures to be performed. The victim (patient) signs a consent form for medical examination and blood specimens. If the medical examination happens within 24 hours of the rape, after which the victim is offered the opportunity to take a bath or shower and to change into clean clothes. After that, the investigating officer on call at the centre takes the victim's statement. Thereafter, the victim receives appropriate medication and is given a follow-up date for further medical treatment, before being transported home.

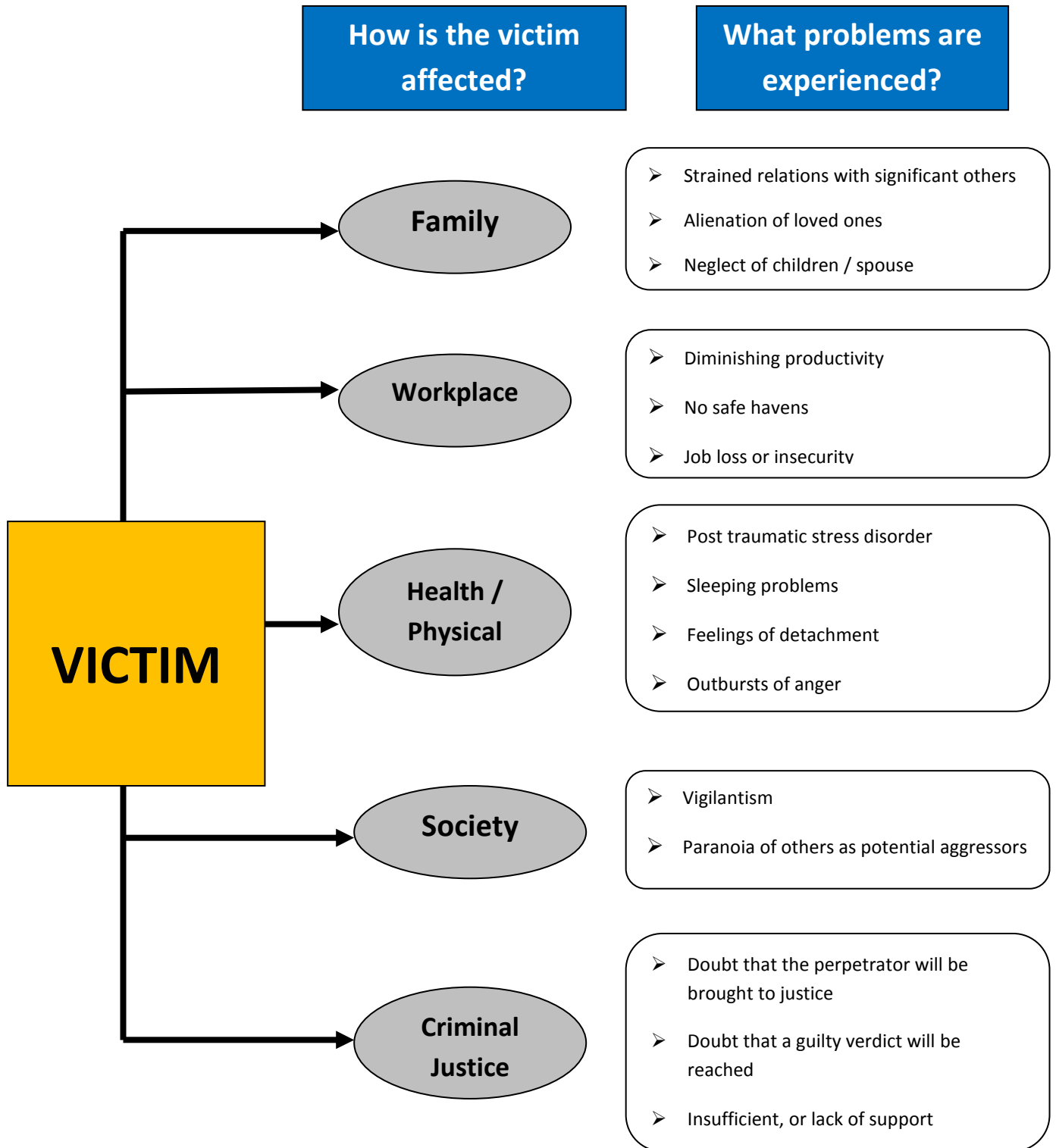
Doctors at Thuthuzela Care Centres have reported seeing increased numbers of child victims. Sadly, some of them are as young as three months. Accordingly, the need for specially trained child-friendly nurses or care-givers to receive and comfort children before they are taken for examination is critical. Various donors have also contributed to making the centres child-friendly, through offering technical expertise for the installation and availability of special tools. These include two way-mirrors, posters, drawings, and anatomically correct dolls comprising five family members, to help prepare children to appear in court, should that become necessary.

4. Actual services of the Thuthuzela Care Centres

- Welcome and comfort from a site co-ordinator or nurse.
- An explanation of how the medical examination will be conducted and what clothing might be taken for evidence.
- A consent form to sign that allows the doctor to conduct the medical examination.
- A nurse in the examination room.
- After the medical examination, there are bath or shower facilities for the victims to use.
- An investigation officer will interview the survivor and take his/her statement.
- A social worker or nurse victim assistance officer will offer counselling.
- A nurse arranges for follow-up visits, treatment and medication for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV and AIDS.
- A referral letter or appointment will be made for long-term counselling.
- The victim (survivor) is offered transportation home by an ambulance or the investigating officer.
- Arrangements for the survivor to go to a place of safety, if necessary.
- Consultations with a specialist prosecutor before the case goes to court.
- Court preparation by a victim assistant officer.
- An explanation of the outcome and update of the trial process by a case manager.

4. The Context of Rape

Rape is complex and has a wide impact in society....



Adapted from Generic Post Traumatic Stress Analysis (Vogelman, 1992)

5. Underlying principles of the messages in this brief

- i. These messages are the intended meaning and not slogans.
- ii. The messages are only related to part of people's lives so attention must be paid to ensuring that additional discussions are health promoting and promote gender equality.
- iii. The tone of the communication and engagement is important.

6. Objectives of the communication aspect of the project

- i) To popularise the TCC's to enable survivors to access them easily (adults and children)
- ii) To decrease stigma and encourage community support for survivors
- iii) To engage with health workers to ensure adequate referrals to the TCC's
- iv) Offering people alternatives if there is no TCC in your area

7. Target audiences for messages

The target audience for the intervention is the communities around the TCC's. In particular CBO's and other organisations such as churches that can support survivors will be targeted. An important approach is to talk to the supporter of a survivor so that we encourage and demonstrate to communities how survivors can be assisted. Service providers will be another target audience. Auxiliary staffs at hospitals (mostly men) are also important target audiences as they are often the first contact in getting to the TCC's.

Local councillors and leaders will also be encouraged to talk about rape and sexual abuse and support survivors to normalise this support.

5. Messages (in no particular order)

- i) When someone is raped or abused it is never their fault. No matter the clothes they wear, whether they are drunk nor how they behave it's still not their fault, the fault lies with the rapist/abuser.
- ii) Report rape to your nearest TCC within 72 hours to access medical and psychological and legal help.
- iii) If there is no TCC you need to get medical treatment within 72 hours

iii) Men can and must control their sexual urges

iv) Rape is an act of sexual penetration of a victim, without their consent. Unless the person agrees to sex it is rape. If you verbally pressurise someone into sex it is also rape.

Rape is crime and there are legal and social consequences of rape.

v) Communities can create a supportive environment for survivors of rape and sexual abuse by:

- Believing someone who says they were raped
- Taking the survivor to someone who knows and understands about rape, or the nearest TCC as soon as possible and within 72 hours to get medical and psychological help
- Standing by the survivor through all the legal and medical processes
- Not trying to persuade the survivor to drop charges and not putting pressure on her/him to press charges either.
- Ending rape and sexual abuse in the community

v) Rapists or abusers can also be members of your family, and you might not be the only victim. Don't let anyone persuade you not to disclose abuse and press charges because the perpetrator is a family member. Your life is as valuable and important as the rapist's or abuser.

vii) You don't have to report/lay charges to get services at TCC's. You are entitled to all the psychosocial services available at the TTCs.

viii) It is your right to get treatment at the TCC's that uphold the Victim Empowerment Charter and Bathopele principles especially respect, comfort, restoring dignity and ensuring justice for children, women and men who are victims of sexual violence

ix) Men can also be victims/survivors of rape and sexual abuse. Men also need to access services after they have been sexually assaulted.

x) In addressing the stigma of rape and abuse it must be remembered that there is the dual stigma of rape and HIV that also come into play.

xi) The following services can be expected from a TCC:

- You will be welcome and comfort will be provided by a site co-ordinator or nurse.
- They will explain the medical examination and what will be taken for evidence.

- You will be asked to sign a consent form for the examination by a doctor.
- A nurse will be present in the examination room with you.
- After the medical examination, you can bath or shower
- Clean clothes may be provided to you
- You will be interviewed by an investigation officer and your statement taken. But remember, you don't have to press charges immediately – or never, if that is your choice – to be able to access services at the TTCs.
- A social worker or nurse will offer you counselling.
- You will get a follow up appointment and you should get treatment and medication for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV and AIDS and pregnancy prevention
- A referral letter or appointment will be made for you to attend long-term counselling.
- You will be offered transportation home
- If necessary the TCC will arrange for you to stay at a place of safety.
- If you proceed with prosecution consultations with a specialist prosecutor will be offered before the case goes to court.
- You will get court preparation by a victim assistant officer
- You will get an explanation of the outcome and update of the trial process by a case manager.