

African Bank Limited press release

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### **You *can* run - and you *can* hide**

The current statistics for violence against women remain dire in South Africa. According to a survey carried out in partnership with Stats SA and the SA Medical Research Council (MRC), 40% of men assault their partners daily and as many as three women in South Africa are killed by their intimate partner every day.

The survey also showed that it is particularly women living in the lowest wealth quintile that experience the most physical violence. Similarly women with no education are also at high risk.

The Western Cape is no exception. When you drive down Klipfontein Road in Athlone, Cape Town, it seems like any other slightly run-down neighbourhood on the flats. But when you turn into the gates of the *Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children*, you are surprised at the heavy security at the entrance.

“Some of the women here have escaped extremely violent home situations,” explains Dorothea Gertse, the centre’s operations manager. “We have our ‘high risk’ guests - women whose husbands are dangerous gang leaders or notorious criminals - that’s why you can’t take any photos either. We don’t want their location known.”

Although this may sound like a frightening place to be, the Saartjie Baartman Centre is like an oasis of peace amidst the tense streets around it - with voices of children playing and the happy chatter of women everywhere.

Liesel Borman, a single mother herself and Sales Consultant at African Bank Vangate Mall has been visiting the centre for years, dropping off her children’s clothing as they grow bigger. “Many women simply run from their homes,” Liesel explains, “so they arrive here with just the clothes on their backs. They often have small babies or young children, so every little bit helps.”

Liesel applied for African Bank’s Community Champion Awards, now in its second year, and received R10 000 to buy non-perishable foods, baby clothing, bottles and toiletries for the ladies.

“I wanted to use the money wisely. These women deserve the comforts of home - they are facing the normal challenges of motherhood, however under the most dire conditions,” says Liesel.

The centre was founded in 1999 and has been a safe haven to many women and children. This incredible organization puts each visiting woman through a 4 month training

programme where they learn computer skills, engage in art and household tasks, and if they pass through the 4 month programme, they are offered a small house on the property for 6 months rent free.

“Last year we added a detox programme,” says Dorothea [REDACTED], [REDACTED] from the centre explains showing the closed section of the property. “Many women arrive with drug and alcohol dependencies - we help them detox and put them through a sobriety support programme.”

Many women live safely on the property for up to ten months and during this time secure paid work on the outside and find suitable accommodation for themselves and their children. Others return to a family member or husband, who ends up once again beating them and threatening their lives. “It is frustrating that women have to try and break the cycle of violence themselves,” says Dorothea sadly, “Men don’t change and continue to abuse their women and children. We unfortunately see the same women coming back to us year after year, but we never turn them away. They are our family and we have to keep supporting them.”

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#### Editors note:

The Saartjie Baartman Centre is grateful for any form of support from businesses and individuals. Their current needs include donations for the running costs of the organization and detox centre, new jungle gyms for children’s play, a new TV, second-hand computers and assistance with repairs.

For more information go to <http://www.saartjiebaartmancentre.org.za>

## BLOCK - SOME STARTLING FACTS

### Physical violence against women

- **21%** of women over the age of 18 reported that they had experienced violence at the hands of a partner. That’s one in five women.
- **8%** of these women reported that they had experienced such violence during the last 12 months of taking the survey
- **Divorced** or **separated** women are more likely to experience physical abuse
- The **Eastern Cape** has the highest rate of physical abuse (with a whopping **32%** women reporting physical abuse)
- **KwaZulu-Natal** has the lowest rate of physical abuse (with an equally shocking **14%** of women reporting physical abuse)
- Other provinces also showed worryingly high figures: The North West (29,4%); Mpumalanga (26,4%); Free State (21,4%); Western Cape (21,2%) and the Northern Cape (18,7%)

### Sexual violence against women

- **6%** of women over the age of 18 reported that they experienced sexual violence

- **2%** of these women reported that they experienced such violence during the last 12 months of taking the survey
- **16%** of divorced or separated women experienced experienced sexual violence by a partner
- **10%** of women living with a partner reported sexual violence against them
- The **North West** reported the highest rate of sexual violence (with 11,8% of women reporting sexual violence against them)
- **KwaZulu-Natal** reported the lowest rate of sexual violence (with 3,1% of women reporting sexual violence against them)

Source: You can read the full SADHS report released by Stats SA here  
<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report%2003-00-09/Report%2003-00-092016.pdf>

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