

Abuse Centre a first in Namibia

The opening of a Women and Child Abuse Centre in Windhoek in July signifies a break from the manner in which survivors of rape and abuse have been treated in the past.

In all societies women are vulnerable to, and commonly the victims of rape. It is estimated that the true numbers of rape are much higher than those that get reported to the police. Survivors of rape feel that reporting a rape is like a second rape. It leaves them vulnerable and traumatised. When reporting

a rape, women have to relive the ordeal of the rape - this time with insensitive police men who do not know how to help rape survivors.

Over the years women's groups have called for a more survivor-friendly environment where women who have been subjected to this form of abuse can be treated with respect and not be stripped of their dignity.

A response to this demand came from the police who, as the primary agency for investigating complaints, have set up a centre to address the needs of women

and children who are victims of physical, psychological or sexual abuse. The centre sets out to improve the initial care provided by the police.

The centre is currently on a six month pilot period and is staffed by three police women. Here rape survivors can talk to police women in privacy, there is a doctor and nurse available on call and a social worker who is linked to it part time.

The centre, located in wing C of the Katutura Hospital in Windhoek, has overnight facilities for women who feel that they might be subjected to violence once more if they return home. Women who don't want to lay charges, can also approach the centre where the police will put them in contact with counsellors.

Though still very new, women are already benefitting from the services available. In the first three weeks since its establishment, the centre dealt with ten criminal cases. And a man was arrested and sentenced for indecently assaulting a seven-year-old girl.

The centre is open from 08h00-17h00. The three police women are also on call at night. Women can contact them at tel. (061) 221222/ 22568/ 239740 or at night through the police radio 10111.

Mitchinson exhibits in Windhoek

An exhibition of paintings, prints and drawings by the noted artist Susan Mitchinson opens at the Arts Association in Windhoek on Friday 24 September and runs until October 9.

The presentation on the various works will be given by Jane Katjavivi. The art of Mitchinson conveys an impression of life and movement through clear bold lines while the vibrant colours are descriptive and create atmosphere. The artist rises above the realities of everyday life showing us inner truths about ourselves and then invites us to seek what remains unsaid. It is the art of sensual happiness.

