

# ZERO-TOLERANCE GBVF PROGRAMME

**Lindi Dlamini**, CEO of the GBVF, shares the important work and impact of a community-based organisation in the fight against gender-based violence and femicide in Limpopo

**T**he same as any “virus” infecting a community, gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) is present 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is not selective about those it targets. As with any society-based ailment, it cannot be tackled effectively unless its existence is acknowledged, and people band together to find solutions and structure programmes to prevent its spread.

This may sound like a call to “community action 101”, but when you regularly have more than 100 cases of assault and 49 incidents of rape reported to your organisation every month, fighting this scourge is not easy. This is perhaps even more challenging if your organisation operates in a remote rural area comprising more than 100 villages housing about 600 000 people.

However, for the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme (TVEP), this is a challenge that has not only been met, but has also set international standards. For Thohoyandou and the Thulamela Municipality in Limpopo, about 500 kilometres from Johannesburg, this has meant that problems such as HIV/AIDS, sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse are now constructively addressed.

“TVEP has a staff of 44, of whom 38 are women. This means we can reach out to women who are most often the survivors of GBV, identify and sympathise with them, and help them to find solutions,” says Fhatuwani Manthada, project manager: access to justice and trauma services at the nongovernmental, community-based organisation (CBO).

## CARING ASSISTANCE AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Help begins with ensuring that women can report abuse at the two TVEP trauma centres located at the regional and local hospitals. Through its relationships with the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Health and the Department of Social Development, TVEP ensures that women who are being abused are supported through the medical, legal and counselling process. Keeping in touch with the survivor, making home visits, and offering a “shoulder to cry on” through a daunting process is a “TVEP buddy” who assists the survivor for as long as is required.

Assistance usually involves the provision of clothing, medication and accommodation for up to a month for women who cannot go home because of the personal risks involved.

