SUCCESS STORIES

Supporting Young People and Families Experiencing Violence
Introduction

Isibindi is a community-based intervention that provides prevention and early intervention care for children and youth in poor communities where few other services are available. The care services are provided by trained child and youth care workers (CYCWs). The CYCWs are recruited from the communities in which they work. This means that they understand and are known and trusted by the community.

The core of the Isibindi model is the provision of child and youth care services to children and youth in their homes. CYCWs work with community members to identify vulnerable children and youth. They connect with these young people and build relationships with them and their caregivers through the use of daily life events. Through this work, the CYCW, the young person and their family identify what they need and what services and actions can help address the needs. Through working in the life space of the young person, the CYCW also gains a better understanding of the family dynamics, its strengths and its weaknesses. CYCWs themselves provide many services, but also assist the young person and their family to access other services. In most Isibindi sites, there are also Safe Parks supervised by CYCWs where young people can spend their free time playing, socialising, and engaging in organised activities such as study groups.

The success stories in this document illustrate how Isibindi CYCWs have helped young people who have experienced violence of one form or another. It shows how the CYCWs select from a “toolbox” of different ways of engaging with the young people and their families to build on and build up their strengths so that they can cope better with their situation.

The CYCWs use each tool that they select in a way that is appropriate for that particular young person and family. This is seen clearly in these stories in respect of memory boxes. The idea of using boxes in which young people store objects that remind them of loved ones was initially used in Isibindi to help young people who had lost parents or other family members through HIV and AIDS. Over time, the use of the memory box has been adapted for other purposes. Some young people use it to keep things that are meaningful about their own lives, for example documents or photos relating to their christening and birthdays, or their first shoes. It can even be used to store favourite family recipes! In short, the memory boxes provide a safe space to objects that remind the young person of the love and support they received from their family which contributed to their being who and where they are today.
Family conferences are also among the common tools used by CYCWs. Several of the stories illustrate how such conferences are used in different cases to discuss and come up with solutions to particular problems. As the stories show, the people who participate in these conferences are selected according to the circumstances. The CYCW acts as the facilitator to help avoid the usual family dynamics preventing the family coming up with solutions.

The success stories illustrate that Isibindi does not provide a one-off service. Instead, Isibindi is based on the recognition that dealing with difficult life circumstances – and particularly experience of violence – takes time and requires ongoing support. It is the combination of different types of support, and the knowledge that the CYCWs can be trusted to support them, that strengthens the resilience of the young person and their family.
The stories

DUDUZILE NKOSI, Mpumalanga

The story of Duduzile Nkosi illustrates that violence is rarely, if ever, the only problem facing a family. In almost all cases, there are also financial challenges. In many families, one or both of the parents have died or are absent for some other reason. In this family, it was the disability of one of Duduzile’s siblings that first brought a CYCW to them.

This story also illustrates how Isibindi’s assistance can extend beyond the family defined as people who are living together. In this case, the CYCW included Duduzile’s boyfriend when providing assistance, because he had also suffered trauma, and he could be a support for Duduzile. Within the family, the CYCW assisted the father to get help for both his health condition and his care responsibilities for the disabled child.

The story illustrates that trauma needs to be dealt with in multiple ways. While the support centre’s counselling assisted Duduzile, she also needed to attend the Isibindi-Childline residential Child Protection Programme to receive intensive counselling and support. After the programme she received further support from the CYCW to help her integrate what she had learnt in the programme in her life.

Finally, the story illustrates how Isibindi’s ongoing support allows beneficiaries to deal with further challenges as they arise. In this case, Isibindi supported Duduzile with her early motherhood and decision to avoid further pregnancies until later, as well as through changing her career path.

Duduzile Nkosi is the second oldest child in her family. She is currently 22 years old and her eight siblings range in age from 13 to 22 years. There are two sets of twins among the nine siblings. All have lived with their grandmother and father since their mother died. They live in a rural part of Mpumalanga. Financially, the household is dependent on the child support grants (CSGs) and one care dependency grant of Duduzile’s younger siblings, the old age grant of the grandmother, and the father’s earnings as a security guard at a shop. The older brother is no longer studying, but does not want to work, and generally does not contribute to the family.

1 Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.
The reason that the Isibindi CYCW identified the family for intervention in 2012 was a child with a disability. The CYCW referred the child and father to the Rehabilitation Centre at the hospital, and the child was given a wheelchair, crutches and a walking frame. Currently the child is at a mainstream school, but he is on the waiting list for a resource school. The father joined a support group to help him cope with having a disabled child. He also disclosed to the CYCW and Isibindi mentor that he was HIV-positive. With the CYCW’s support he is now adhering to his treatment and doing well. The CYCW's intervention helped the family to deal with the disability and the father’s positive HIV status. But there were further challenges facing the family. In September 2013, when Duduzile was 18 years old, the CYCW was informed that she had been sexually abused by three men whom she did not know. The attack occurred in the morning when her boyfriend was accompanying her to her house. The men beat them up and sexually abused Duduzile in front of her boyfriend.

The CYCW assisted Duduzile to report the case to the police and to social workers, and she received counselling from Masisukumeni Women’s Crisis Centre. The CYCW assisted her in all the steps, even accompanying her to some of the counselling sessions. Her boyfriend also accompanied her to counselling as he also experienced the abuse and remained supportive of Duduzile.

In 2014 Duduzile attended Isibindi’s residential Child Protection Programme because the men had not been arrested and, despite the counselling, she was still afraid that they would come back. She also attended Isibindi’s Young Women Empowerment programme, which motivated her to further her studies. All this support and counselling improved her self-confidence and self-esteem and she became actively involved and an informal leader in Safe Park activities.

Duduzile completed matric in 2014, and achieved good enough results to be able to enrol for a university degree course. The CYCW had assisted her with bursary application forms and she obtained a bursary to study nursing.

In late 2014 Duduzile fell pregnant with her boyfriend. Her boyfriend’s 60-year old mother is now looking after Duduzile’s daughter while Duduzile and her boyfriend continue with their studies. Both have been tested and are HIV-negative. They are now using contraception so as not to have another child until they get married.

Duduzile’s academic results were not very good at the end of 2016 and she was advised to choose another course. She decided to change to psychology. She is happy with her new choice and plans to become a clinical psychologist.
Both Duduzile and her twin brother are currently studying. They have received support from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), but this was not enough to cover all their costs. Accommodation costs, in particular, were a problem. Duduzile’s father contributes to their costs, but there was not enough to cover adequate food and accommodation. NSFAS took up the issue with Wits University and Duduzile has now been told that she can stay in one of the university residences as from May.

Isibindi continues to support Duduzile. For example, she is being encouraged to join available youth development programmes in Gauteng. With Isibindi’s support, Duduzile has recovered enough from the sexual abuse to be able to talk about it openly without crying. She is grateful that Isibindi has continued to support her after she moved to Johannesburg to study.

**BERNARD MOFOKENG, Gauteng**

Bernard’s story is about emotional violence and the harm it can do. In Bernard’s case, the emotional abuse came from both within the family and outside of it. It is also a story that illustrates that it is not only girls and women who are affected by gender-based violence.

The story illustrates how CYCWs assist young people to be true to who they are, and find ways of satisfying their needs.

The story provides an example of how CYCWs use family conferencing to bring family members together to discuss and solve the challenges they face. It also shows collaboration and links between Isibindi and other services. For example, the family was referred to Isibindi by a worker from the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), the CYCW ensured that the family was assisted by the Thuthukani Centre, and Bernard is currently working for the centre.

As with Duduzile’s story, Bernard’s abuse was not the reason for Isibindi’s initial involvement with Bernard’s family. However, because of Isibindi’s whole-family approach, the abuse soon came to the CYCW’s attention and could be addressed.

Bernard and his brother live with their mother, aunt, uncle and grandfather in a RDP house and backroom shack. Their only source of income is the grandfather’s old age grant and his mother’s earnings from occasional piecework jobs.
Bernard is currently 20 years old. The family was enrolled in the Isibindi programme in early 2015 after an EPWP worker referred them to the CYCW on account of the mother’s alcohol abuse problem and her failure to adhere to treatment. Bernard’s brother also abuses substances. Bernard himself is gay and suffered frequent abuse and judgment at school and in the community because of this. For example, Bernard was mocked when he chose to play netball. Even his mother would swear and call him names when she was drunk. Experiencing this abuse led to Bernard isolating himself from other learners at school and youth in the community.

The CYCW encouraged the mother to adhere to treatment and drink less alcohol so as to improve her health. She also had one-on-one talks with Bernard in which she encouraged him not to be upset by other people’s opinion and instead to focus on himself and what he wants for his future. Because the family was poor, the CYCW arranged for them to receive food parcels and clothes from the nearby Thuthukani Centre.

The CYCW also called a family conference. She encouraged all family members to speak out and resolve their differences so that they can give Bernard the love, care and support he needs. She emphasised that the family could be Bernard’s strongest weapon in overcoming the bullying and discrimination he received from others.

The CYCW’s interventions assisted Bernard to become a happy young person and to mix with his peers again. He joined a Mango Groove and Sarafina dance group at the Thuthukani Centre and wore skirts and dresses without worrying what others would think and say about him.

The CYCW assisted Bernard to move to a different school where he could study Dramatic Arts. He excelled at the new school and in 2016 was one of the top 12 matriculants in Gauteng. He applied to study drama at Wits University and was provisionally accepted. He also applied to NSFAS for funding assistance, and Isibindi was planning to assist with ABSA funds. Unfortunately, however, despite receiving a distinction, Bernard did not get a place at Wits as they had already filled their quota of students. The mentor team did advocacy on his behalf and he was offered the opportunity to study drama part-time. The CYCW and mentor suggested that he study fashion design at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in 2016 and apply again to study drama in 2018. However, Bernard was clear that he wanted to study at Wits. He is therefore working as a volunteer at the Thuthukani Centre instead of studying in 2016. Bernard is currently a proud gay person. He is motivated and, no matter what challenges he faces, he knows that he has strong support from his CYCW and his family. Other people cannot now upset him because he has accepted himself for who he is.
Nosipho’s story is one of domestic violence, in that she was raped by her cousin. As often happens in such cases, other members of the family denied that this had happened and did not support Nosipho. As is also common, the police did nothing when the rape was reported to them.

Isibindi CYCWs only learnt about Nosipho’s rape four years after it happened. As in other cases, the experience had affected Nosipho negatively in many different ways. For example the teacher reported that the impacts included a change in personality and poor school performance.

Usually CYCWs approach the family as a whole. In this case, however, the CYCW first spoke to Nosipho alone. The CYCW needed to get Nosipho’s agreement before approaching the family because otherwise Nosipho was unlikely to trust her. After visiting the family, the CYCW helped them address some of their other problems instead of focusing only on the issue of the rape. This helped to gain some trust from the family.

Nevertheless, this story illustrates that sometimes the situation in their current family is so harmful for the young person, that it is better for them to move to another family. In Nosipho’s case, Isibindi assisted her to move to extended family, and later, when she was old enough, she moved to live with her sister. Isibindi continued to assist her through all these changes.

Nosipho lives with her uncle, his second wife and their two children. Her cousins, who are from the wife’s early marriage, are much older than Nosipho, who is currently 19 years old. Nosipho moved to live with her uncle and aunt after her mother died as the family did not know who her father was. Her new family depended on her aunt’s disability grant and her uncle’s earnings from piece jobs.

One night when Nosipho was 13 years old and in Grade 8 she and her cousin were watching TV. They were in her cousin’s room which the family always used for watching TV. That night she was alone with her cousin, who was 40 years old at the time. While she was watching, her cousin forced himself on her sexually and threatened to kill her if she told anyone about his actions. Nosipho nevertheless reported the incident to her aunt. The aunt said Nosipho was lying as her son would
never do something like that. Nosipho then reported the incident to her class teacher at school, who reported it to the police. When the police asked the family about it, they denied all the allegations. Nosipho was not given an opportunity to speak and the cousin again threatened her about what he would do if she did speak. The police did not open a case.

In early 2015, when Nosipho was 17 years old, Nosipho’s teacher shared Nosipho’s story with Isibindi CYCWs when they were doing an awareness campaign in the school. The teacher asked the CYCWs to support Nosipho. She told them that Nosipho was clever and was previously doing well at school, but the sexual violence had caused her performance to deteriorate, had made her emotional, and had resulted in her no longer interacting with her schoolmates.

Nosipho was called for an interview and she agreed that a CYCW should visit the family. However, she warned that the family was not supportive of her and would oppose anyone who came to support her.

The CYCW supported the family in a range of different ways. The family’s income was low, so the CYCW arranged for a food parcel. The family had a garden, but was not using it well and they had not ploughed at all that year, so the CYCW assisted the family to plough and look after the garden. The CYCW also tried to restore the relationship between Nosipho and the rest of the family. She assisted Nosipho in making a memory box with which she could comfort herself when she missed her mother, and also involved her in griefwork together with 11 other children who had lost loved ones.

The CYCWs did regular home visits over the next months, and assisted Nosipho with her schoolwork and in other ways. During the June 2015 school holidays, Nosipho participated in the Isibindi-Childline residential Child Protection Programme. Her 43-year old female cousin attended the programme with her acting in the family caregiver role because the aunt refused to do so. However, even the cousin was not supportive, did not play a positive role during the Programme, and continued to disbelieve that her brother had done anything wrong. Nevertheless, the Programme helped Nosipho improve her self-esteem and express her feelings. She also showed began to show renewed interest in her school studies.

Because of the lack of support in her home, the Childline therapist suggested that, instead of returning to her aunt and uncle’s home, Nosipho should stay at a place of safety while they looked for some other extended family who would look after and support her better. After a month in the place of safety Nosipho was placed with the Khumalo family, who had raised her mother. This family lived in the same area, but even closer to the school that Nosipho attended so her schooling was not disrupted. The Khumalo family included three children and relied on three child support grants to survive. The CYCW assisted the family to apply for a foster child grant for Nosipho. The process took a very long time as they needed to advertise for her unknown
father. In the end, they were not approved for a foster child grant.

Nosipho was much happier in her new home and continued to do well at school. The CYCW continued to support her. The support included involvement in study groups, provision of previous exam papers, attendance at educational events arranged in the area, and assistance with applying for a place at university through KwaZulu's Central Applications Office, as well as applying for financial support.

Nosipho achieved a diploma pass in matric which meant she could not study at university. Instead, she applied to study at Amajuba College starting in June. She relocated to Durban where she lived with her sister. She had been separated from this sister after her mother died as there was no extended family who felt able to take on two new children. Nosipho’s sister was therefore placed with an aunt in Vryheid while Nosipho was placed with her uncle. Her sister found a job and moved to Durban after she finished school. After Nosipho completed matric, her sister said she was willing to assist Nosipho in looking for further education and jobs in Durban.

When the Isibindi mentor supervisor contacted Nosipho to see how she was doing, Nosipho said she was happy, and looked forward to receiving further support from Isibindi to pursue her career.

BABALWA MTHEMBU, Gauteng

Babalwa’s story illustrates one of the many ways in which the Safe Park contributes to the success of Isibindi. In this case, the CYCW learnt about Babalwa’s rape through discussions of other young people who attended the Safe Park. She then conducted a home visit to investigate the matter. The fact that the supervisor accompanied the CYCW on the first visit to the family also illustrates how more senior Isibindi staff assist CYCWs with difficult cases.

The story illustrates how the CYCW needed to build a trust relationship with Babalwa before she heard the full story of the rape. Even then, Babalwa did not want to report the incident because she did not want her aunt and uncle to know. The CYCW respected her wishes, and instead organised a family conference to learn from everyone what they thought was causing problems in the family. Through further family conferences and other interaction and assistance, the two parts of the family got to the point where they ate together and interacted better.

The story illustrates how complicated cases can be. In this case complications included the non-standard family composition, Babalwa’s epilepsy, and the fact that one of the boys involved in the gang-rape was her boyfriend. The Isibindi intervention took account of all these complications.
The Mthembu family was made up of three siblings – Brian, Sindi and Babalwa currently aged 25, 22 and 15 years respectively – when the family first became part of a CYCW workload. The oldest sibling worked as a taxi driver and lived most of the time in Kwa-Mhlanga, but he visited his sisters at the end of every month.

The three siblings were born of the same mother, but had different fathers. Both the mother and grandparents had passed away, as had two of the three fathers. The children’s house was in the same yard as the house of their maternal uncle and aunt. The uncle received a foster child grant for the youngest sibling. The father of the oldest sibling was at that time living in another house in the same yard, but passed away in November 2016.

The Mthembu family came to the attention of the Isibindi CYCW in September 2015 when the CYCW overheard children in the Safe Park discussing how one of the Mthembu children, Babalwa, had been gang-raped by five young boys.

The CYCW and supervisor visited the family to find out what had happened. They engaged with Babalwa but felt she was not being truthful about the incident. They understood that Babalwa might not be comfortable talking to them about the rape because she did not have a close relationship with them. After some time, Babalwa started to trust the CYCW and told her that she had slept with two, not five, boys who were under 16 years of age while the other three boys watched. She was afraid to discuss the incident because she did not want her aunt and uncle to know about the incident.

The CYCW found that the siblings also had other challenges. Sindi was studying electrical engineering at the N2 level at a TVET college, but was struggling to cover the costs of transport to and from college. Babalwa was epileptic, had learning difficulties, and was often angry. Sometimes when the CYCW tried to talk with her, she would frown and not respond.

The siblings’ relationship with the aunt and uncle was also not good, as the aunt was not happy that the uncle was supporting the siblings financially.

Near the start of the Isibindi intervention, the CYCW and supervisor held a family meeting with the aunt and uncle to understand the discord between family members. The aunt and uncle shared information, including that Sindi was uncooperative and did not assist her siblings in the day-to-day running of the house. The CYCW then facilitated and led a further family meeting with all members of the family. In her subsequent regular visits to the family she observed that relationships were improving and the aunt and uncle and siblings now spoke to each other and shared food.
The CYCW encouraged the family to have Babalwa receive HIV counselling and testing and a pregnancy test. When they agreed, she accompanied Babalwa and another member of the family to the clinic to support them. Fortunately, both the HIV and pregnancy test results were negative.

Babalwa then had the confidence to tell the truth about the rape incident. A case was opened, but the perpetrators were not arrested because the police said they were under-age and must attend school. One of the boys was Babalwa’s boyfriend.

Babalwa seemed relieved and happy after receiving the test results. However, as the CYCW continued to give regular support to the family, she observed that Babalwa was having difficulties at school and had been repeating grades. The CYCW gave life space counselling to both Babalwa and the family. The CYCW also visited the school to engage with Babalwa’s teacher and monitor her performance. The teacher reported that Babalwa was attending school regularly and did not misbehave. The challenge was that she was struggling with learning.

A case discussion was held with the project mentor, who suggested that the CYCW advise Babalwa to go to Kwa-Masanabo church for counselling as the pastor was a qualified counsellor. The CYCW did this but Babalwa refused saying that she did not want or need therapy.

The CYCW worked together with Babalwa and her sister to draft and implement a study routine, and provided support with school work during homework supervision. The CYCW also encouraged her to attend the Safe Park which she did every day. At the Safe Park, Babalwa taught other children how to perform various dances such as Mango Grove, Sarafina and traditional dancing and singing.

The CYCW also helped the young people to create memory boxes so that they could more easily accept and grieve over the death of their parents and grandmother. The siblings found that this activity allowed them to express their feelings and share memories.

On the financial side, the CYCW arranged with the community development worker for the family to get food parcels. They received food parcels for three months and also applied successfully for social relief of distress. The CYCW took these steps to provide assistance to the siblings in the period when the aunt was not yet happy with her husband supporting them.

To address Sindi’s transport challenge, the CYCW approached the owner of one of the local Indian shops who donated R200. With this help and the support of the CYCW, Sindi succeeded in her N2 exams and the CYCW then obtained learnership forms from the Department of Human Settlements so that Sindi could apply for a learnership. The CYCW asked the community
development worker to prioritise Sindi’s application because of the need of the family. The application succeeded and Sindi began working as a bricklayer. The plan was that she would obtain a qualification through the one-year learnership at the same time as earning, and afterwards continue with her studies in electrical engineering. Unfortunately, however, the learnership was put on hold when political parties resisted a community demand that all wards be covered.

Babalwa, meanwhile could not progress from grade 7 because the family arranged for her to participate in a cultural ritual that prevented her writing the end-of-year exams. Her epilepsy is, however, better controlled as she attends the clinic every month for a routine checkup and to collect medication, and the CYCW regularly reminds Sindi to ensure that her younger sister takes her medication every day.

The aunt and uncle and the siblings still stay in separate houses, but are communicating with and assisting each other since the CYCW’s intervention. For example, they all planned the cultural ritual together, and all — including Brian — supported each other through the celebration.

The CYCW plans to continue her support, including monitoring Babalwa’s progress at school, and attendance at the Safe Park and providing psychosocial support, and assisting Sindi to save money so that she can continue with the N3 in electrical engineering part-time.

Nomvula’s story is an example of where the younger person is the perpetrator of the physical violence. However, Sihle is also herself the victim of emotional violence. The story thus illustrates how violence of one sort often provokes further violence of another sort, and Isibindi’s interventions need to address the causes of both.
NOMVULA MKWANAZI. Eastern Cape

The story is an example of where a family itself approaches Isibindi for assistance. In this case, the family did so because of the young person’s anger and behaviour, including violence.

As in some of the other stories, the interventions included programmes to assist the caregivers – in this case the Sinovuyo parenting programme. This and the family conferencing helped Nomvula and her grandmother tell each other which behaviour of the other had made them angry. The CYCW then encouraged both of them to change their behaviour in ways that would make the other less angry. She encouraged Nomvula to assist with household chores, and encouraged the grandmother not to shout at Nomvula but instead use the skills she had learnt about in Sinovuyo.

Nomvula’s anger is now less than it was previously, but has not disappeared. The CYCW therefore has plans for where she can get further assistance.

The two Mkhwanazi siblings – Nomvula and Veli – and Nomvula’s 17-month old child, Mpho, live with their paternal grandmother. Their parents are alive but separated in 2009. The father married another woman from his village. The mother is working in Johannesburg and has had another child, a two-year old boy, who lives with her. She does not visit her older children and sends money only at Christmas time. The grandmother receives child support grants for Veli and Mpho, but not for Nomvula as she is already 18 years old and so not eligible for the CSG.

The CYCW intervened in May 2015 after the family told her that they were struggling with Nomvula’s behaviour. Nomvula was then in grade 9 but was not attending school regularly. Her relationship with her grandmother was poor and they often shouted at each other. Nomvula did not want to do household chores. When she was angry, she would break the windows and furniture in the house. She also beat her brother. And she wanted her grandmother to give her the CSG money for Mpho.

The grandmother and Nomvula participated in the pilot of the Sinovuyo parenting programme in the Eastern Cape. They attended the Sinovuyo sessions but Nomvula continued to disobey her grandmother, for example by sleeping at friends' homes without her grandmother’s permission and coming home very late at night. The CYCW realised that the two were not communicating well and organised a family meeting. Nomvula shared during the meeting that her grandmother
swore at her and paid more attention to Veli than to her. The grandmother meanwhile explained that she was concerned about Nomvula’s behaviour and, in particular, was concerned that she was promiscuous. The CYCW encouraged both of them always to share how they felt about each other instead of shouting. She reminded them what they had learnt in the Sinovuyo programme. The grandmother then apologised to Nomvula for shouting and swearing at her and Nomvula apologised for her behaviour.

The CYCW encouraged Nomvula to assist her grandmother with household chores before visiting her friends. Routines were also introduced so that each person knew what was expected of them. These interventions helped to improve the relationship between Nomvula and her grandmother. Since the family income was very low, the CYCW also showed the grandmother how to make a food garden.

The CYCW taught the family budgeting skills so that they could better manage their income. She introduced the idea of a memory box in which the children could keep items that would help them remember family members who had died and allow the youngest child to know about the family tree.

The CYCW encouraged Nomvula to attend school regularly. She assisted her with her homework and asked her to do group discussions with her friends for Maths and Physical science.

With all the assistance, Nomvula passed grade 9 and is currently in grade 10. Veli is meanwhile in grade 9. Both attend school regularly and always do their homework. The CYCW will, however, continue to support the family with budgeting. She will also encourage Nomvula to attend sessions at the Trauma Unit in Bisho to help her manage her anger, and she will encourage her to build a relationship with her father.
This is the second story in this set that illustrates the problems that arise when adults abuse alcohol. In this case, the impact included violence towards their children, poor use of the limited available money, and negative behaviour of the children themselves.

This family was referred to Isibindi on account of their financial difficulties. The family conference soon revealed that alcohol abuse seriously worsened the problem.

The CYCW’s assistance included direct poverty-related interventions. However, much of the assistance focused on issues – such as alcohol abuse, and poor parenting – contributing to the poverty as well as to other problems. This illustrates how CYCWs attempt to identify causes instead of only addressing the more visible problem that prompted the intervention.

Further, as in almost all cases, the CYCW assisted the younger people with their education while helping the family sort out other problems. By doing this, the CYCW was strengthening the children so that they would be better able to face challenges in the future.

There are two children in the Skhosana family – 20-year old Bulelwa, and 13-year old Vuyi. Bulelwa is in grade 12 and Vuyi in grade 5. They live with their 53-year old mother and 46-year old father.

When the Isibindi CYCW first intervened with this family in August 2014, both parents were abusing alcohol. When they were drunk, they became aggressive and initiated disputes with other people. The parents’ behaviour impacted negatively on Bulelwa and Vuyi. This resulted in their fighting with their parents and other children, and also not doing household chores. The parents used Vuyi’s CSG to buy alcohol. Because the available money was wasted, the children sometimes went to school without food, which negatively affected their school performance.

Bulelwa and Vuyi are not their mother’s only children. She has three older children aged 23 to 29 years whom she left with other family members in KwaZulu-Natal in 1995. She has had no contact with them since then. She also lost her identity document in the move from KwaZulu-Natal and does not have her ID number.

The CYCW intervened with the family on account of their financial difficulties. She established a trusting relationship with all the family members by conducting a Family Group Conference.
where they discussed their challenges, behaviours such as alcohol abuse and fighting, and how these affected the children’s behaviour.

The CYCW visited the children’s schools to discuss with their class teachers how she could support them with their schoolwork. She provided study guides for Bulelwa for grade 11, which helped her achieve a good pass. She also arranged for Bulelwa to attend the Young Women Empowerment Programme in July 2015, which helped her to realise that her focus should be on her studies rather than boyfriends. Bulelwa also attended and completed the Adolescent Development Programme. Both children attend the Safe Park.

The CYCW introduced a budget book to help the family save money, as well as a memory box for the children to store things that were precious and important for them. She assisted the mother to write a letter to Khumbul’ikhaya, the SABC evening TV show which helps those who are searching for their families. The mother hopes that the show will help her find and reconcile with her three older children. Unfortunately, there is a long waiting list for the show, so this has not yet happened. The mother has also applied for a new ID.

The family is now independent and they love and care for each other. Both parents do piece jobs, which helps the family financially. The family attend church and Bulelwa is one of the church youth leaders. The CYCW’s education of the parents about the dangers of alcohol helped them drink less and respect each other. The CYCW also motivated the mother to join the Sinovuyo Programme to learn better parenting skills.

Going forward, the CYCW plans to encourage the family to establish a food garden, ensure that funeral cover is in place, and monitor budgeting skills. She will also continue to support Bulelwa and Vuyi with their school work and visit their schools to monitor their academic progress. She will support Bulelwa to take forward her plans to study for a Bachelor of Education at the Walter Sisulu University. The support will include provision of study guides, past exam papers and bursary application forms. She will also follow up with Khumbul’ikhaya and with the Department of Home Affairs to ensure that the mother receives here new ID.
The next story involves younger children who witness their mother, who is bringing them up alone, being abused by their father.

While the other stories in this set mainly involved older children and youth, this one concerns much younger children. CYCWs are trained to use different ways of helping children who may not be old enough to express themselves well through talking. For example, this story illustrates how the CYCW used a memory box to help the children, even though they were not orphans.

The Isibindi intervention for this family drew on a multi-disciplinary team that included the police. The CYCW included all members of the team in a family conference in her efforts to clarify the problems and what should be done. The involvement of the police from early on resulted in their continuing to give regular support after the mother had been issued with an interdict against the father. Meanwhile the CYCW continued giving other forms of support.

The children are receiving support from their peers through the Safe Park, while the mother is supported by her own peers through her involvement in a group of women volunteers. The Isibindi intervention has thus helped the family establish other sources of support.

Seven-year old Lerato and 6-year old Fikile live with their single mother, Hloni. The mother was unable to provide financially for the children. The father of the children was in and out of the house, but without establishing a relationship with his children. The children’s experience of seeing their father abuse their mother had affected the children's behaviour and their ability to establish a good relationship with their peers.

The CYCW first intervened in June 2014 to try to address this situation. After conducting a family assessment, she developed a plan to address the different problems. She helped the family report the abuse to the police. She used a memory box to help the two boys express their feelings about the situation at home and at school. She supervised their homework and visited the school to check on their progress. The class teacher said that Lerato was not doing well academically. The CYCW accompanied the mother to the school so that she could establish a relationship with the class teacher and learn how she could support the children. The CYCW also encouraged the children to attend the daily Safe Park programmes so that they could benefit from the activities and supervision of the CYCW team.
The police were part of a multi-disciplinary team that participated in family group conferencing for the Sidzumo family, and they assisted with referral to a court so that an interdict could be issued to protect the mother and her two children. The CYCW and other Isibindi staff accompanied the family through the process. After the interdict was issued, the police started monitoring the family twice a week while the CYCW visited the family daily to check on the children’s progress. The Isibindi team leader supported and encouraged the CYCW in her work throughout.

Through Isibindi, the two children now interact well with other children at school and in the Safe Park, and display appropriate behaviour at home and at school. The mother has joined a group of women volunteers who cultivate food gardens for the benefit of the households of vulnerable children. In this way, Isibindi’s support of this family has brought benefits beyond the family itself.

**DIKELEDI LEBOPA, Limpopo**

Dikeledi’s story is one which illustrates how children with disabilities are at heightened risk of sexual abuse. It also illustrates how a caregiver’s efforts to earn money to provide for children can hamper her ability to care for the children in other ways. The fact that Dikeledi told her grandmother that she had been raped by the grandmother’s boyfriend, and the grandmother immediately took action to protect her, reveals that the grandmother took her responsibilities seriously. However, her situation hampered her fulfilling all the required roles. She was also unable to talk to the children about their deceased mother because of her own pain.

In this case, as in one of the others, the Isibindi intervention revealed that it might be in the best interests of the child to be removed from the family in which they were living. However, in Dikeledi’s case the removal was physical but not emotional, as the CYCW encouraged the grandmother and children to maintain a strong relationship.

The CYCW drew on the assistance of social workers to provide counselling, as CYCWs are not qualified to provide the sort of counselling that Dikeledi needed. The social worker participated in the family conference where it was agreed that the children would move to live with their uncle. This uncle was also loyal to the children, choosing to leave his current partner who was not supportive of the children.

Finally, the story shows yet another way – door-to-door campaigning – through which young people and families can become part of Isibindi.
The Lebopa family was recruited into the Isibindi program through a door-to-door campaign conducted by CYCWs in 2014. The family consists of two orphaned children, 13-year old Kgopotso and 12-year old Dikeledi, and their 56-year old grandmother, Anna. Kgopotso is in grade 7 at the nearest primary school. Dikeledi was born with intellectual and physical impairment. She first attended mainstream school but was referred to a resource school because of her learning impairment when she was in grade R.

The children lived with their grandmother after their mother passed away in 2011. The whereabouts of their father, George, were unknown. The grandmother tried to provide for the family by selling western beer as well as traditional beer which she brewed. Her RDP house was therefore also a shebeen, with one of the four rooms used for storing the beer. The children’s uncle John stayed in a separate house with his wife and children.

When the CYCW visited the family, she found a range of different problems. Although the family received child support grants for both children, the grants together with earnings from the shebeen did not provide enough money to buy adequate food, clothes and other things needed by the family. In particular, there was not sufficient money to buy school uniforms for the children. The house was not clean and hygienic as the children were still too young to do all the house chores, and the grandmother was always busy brewing and selling beer.

The CYCW also discovered that the grandmother's boyfriend had moved in to live with her. One day the grandmother returned home from shopping and found Dikeledi in pain. Dikeledi informed her grandmother that she had been raped by her grandmother’s boyfriend. The grandmother immediately took Dikeledi to the nearest clinic where it was confirmed that she had been raped. She received treatment, a case was immediately opened, and the boyfriend was arrested. However, Dikeledi was traumatised by the incident, which left her sad, withdrawn, not interacting with other children, and crying alone.

The CYCW began visiting the family regularly so as to build a trusting relationship with the grandmother and the two girls. During these visits she observed that the children were grieving for their mother. They did not have anyone to talk to about this as their grandmother did not want to talk about her daughter and occupied herself the whole day with her beer business. The CYCW planned a weekend activity to introduce a memory box for the family to allow the children and grandmother to express and share their feelings. The children shared their concerns about spending most of their time alone because the grandmother was always busy with chores and fetching firewood to make traditional beer and generate income for the family.
With the CYCW’s encouragement, the children spent time together on the memory box, looking at pictures of their deceased mother and sharing how much they missed her. Dikeledi also shared with the CYCW the painful experience of being raped by her grandmother’s boyfriend. The grandmother shared her concern that although she had opened a case and it went to court, the case was dismissed and the perpetrator freed. The CYCW encouraged the child and grandmother to reopen the case with the assistance of the social worker. She also encouraged the grandmother to spend more time with the children so as to strengthen their relationship.

The CYCW taught the children to do chores and become independent. She helped them draw up a daily routine to guide them on their chores. The grandmother agreed to guide and support the children with the CYCW monitoring and providing feedback.

The CYCW helped the grandmother to apply for a foster child grant and a care dependency grant for Dikeledi. The application was successful and provided money for the grandmother to cater better for the children’s needs, including buying the school uniform for which Kgopotso had been waiting. The CYCW guided the grandmother on budgeting and opened a bank account for each of the children so that they could save towards building a bigger house. She encouraged the grandmother to take out a funeral policy.

The CYCW arranged a family meeting with all family members and the social worker to discuss the removal of the children. The grandmother agreed because she recognised that a shebeen house was not a safe home for the children. The social worker placed the children at their uncle’s house.

The placement did not work well at first because the uncle’s wife was not cooperative. The uncle then took the children and went to live with another woman who was very supportive of the children.

The CYCW found a resource school where Dikeledi could stay during term time, and come home during school holidays. She arranged for monthly child abuse counselling sessions for Dikeledi after she had attended the residential Child Protection programme in Tzaneen. The counselling helped Dikeledi interact with other children, and she now happily participates in Safe Park activities when she is not at boarding school. Dikeledi now looks happy and enjoys school, is able to take care of herself and does household chores.

The children’s lives have changed significantly as a result of the CYCW’s intervention. The children have the support they need to deal with their feelings of grief for the loss of their mother and the younger child receives counselling for the sexual assault which she suffered. Both children are at school, and the CYCW visits the schools
to check on their progress. The children are saving regularly for their long-term needs. The family is more stable and CYCW has introduced external support from social workers alongside support from other family members. The relationship between members of the family as a whole has been strengthened and they enjoy doing things together. The regular visits of the CYCW continue so that she can monitor the state of the family and ensure that they continue to thrive and care for each other.

**Conclusion**

Taken together, this set of stories illustrates some of the many ways in which young people can be affected by violence. It illustrates the many different ways in which this problem is linked, and adds, to other challenges that face young people and their families in South Africa. Finally, the stories illustrate how Isibindi CYCWs have been provided with a basic framework and set of tools that allows them to develop and implement tailored interventions that address the specific needs of that particular young person and family, and build their own ability to take care of themselves.