

WRITE FOR RIGHTS



SOUTH AFRICA

Women and girls in Mkhondo

IMPROVE ACCESS TO MATERNAL HEALTH RIGHTS

In Mkhondo municipality in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa, an antenatal check-up can be a humiliating and even frightening experience.

Amsterdam, a typical town in the region, has only one antenatal clinic that everybody uses. Women and girls say that the nurses there shout at girls for getting pregnant too young or without being married, are physically rough with patients, and gossip about people in front of other patients.

Administrative procedures and the clinic's physical layout make it possible to identify patients attending for HIV treatment, so there is a real fear of HIV test results being disclosed to family and neighbours. For many women and girls, it's enough to put them off seeking antenatal care. And those most likely to be deterred are those whose health is at greatest risk during pregnancy: women with HIV and adolescents.

Not using the service – or leaving it too late – could lead to avoidable health risks, and even death.

■ www.amnesty.org.uk/mkhondo

'I had a friend whose mother was a nurse. There was a girl who had an abortion... When my friend came to school, she told me about it, because her mother told her. This is a small community. It spreads.' **Thandesha, 18, mother of one**



SEND A SOLIDARITY CARD TO:

Inhabitants of Mkhondo, Mpumalanga
c/o Amnesty International
3 on Glenhove
Melrose Estate
Johannesburg 2196
South Africa

■ **Preferred language** English

■ **Suggested message**

Please choose one of these messages per card.

(For women and girls) I support your right to decide about your own health and your own body. Your friend...

(For healthcare workers) Thank you for the important work you do. I urge to you ensure that privacy and confidentiality measures are in place in your clinic.

(For men and boys) I encourage you to learn more about your sexual and reproductive rights and respect the rights of women and girls.

■ **Additional information** 1 December is World AIDS Day.

CAN I

Send a religious card or message?

Send an Amnesty card or mention Amnesty?

Include my name and address?

SEND AN APPEAL LETTER TO:

Call on the Minister to remove barriers that prevent women and girls from accessing early and ongoing antenatal care in Mkhondo.

Write to: Mr Gillion Mashego
MEC for Health, Mpumalanga Province
No 7 Government Boulevard
Building No 3
Riverside Park
Extension 2
Nelspruit 1200
South Africa

Fax: +27 13 766 3475

Salutation: Dear Minister Mashego

In your letter:

- Call on the Minister to ensure that the Department of Health implements effective measures to improve 'Caring and Positive Attitudes' in health facilities in Mkhondo Municipality as recommended by the National Healthcare Facilities Baseline Audit 2012/13.
- Urge him to prioritise training for healthcare workers on patient rights and how to provide professional, non-discriminatory services particularly to adolescents.
- Ask him to ensure barriers that prevent women and girls in Mkhondo accessing antenatal care and emergency health services are removed.