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Call for Proposals for the establishment of Safe Spaces for survivors of Gender Based Violence, victims of human trafficking and Persons with Disabilities

1.0 Background

Violence against women and girls continues to prevail in Eswatini despite a conducive legislative and policy environment that protects all citizens against violence. Among adolescents and young women, lifetime sexual violence is the most prevalent form of violence experienced by 8.1% of girls aged 13-24 years, followed by lifetime physical violence at 5% of girls of the same age. However, it is worth noting that all types of violence experienced by girls aged 13-24 years declined drastically between 2007 and 2022, potentially as a result of the GBV interventions implemented in the country.

Physical violence is common among intimate partners, with 1 in 2 women reporting to have been abused by their current or former partner. Ever married women or in union as well as women who are formerly married or were once in a union, experience the highest levels of physical violence at 66.5% and 71.8% respectively, MICS (2021-2022). Intimate partners, including husbands and boyfriends, are the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against women. Unmarried women have lower levels of physical violence at 36.3%.

Males are more affected by physical violence (23.2% vs. 10.5%), particularly from peers. Recently, there has been a rise in violent incidents, especially in the Shiselweni region, involving the assault and harassment of women by men. Despite over two-thirds of survivors disclosing their experiences, only a quarter seek professional help (VAC 2023). Cultural tolerance and concealment of violence hinder effective response and support for survivors.

The National Strategy to End Violence in Eswatini (2023-2027) acknowledges that Persons With Disabilities are underserved in GBV prevention and response efforts. Community cadres and duty bearers often lack the capacity to address violence against PWDs, as services are generally designed for able-bodied individuals. This is particularly challenging for those with speech and hearing difficulties.

UNFPA in collaboration with the EU is implementing the Hlonipheka - Thriving for Dignity Programme to advance the human rights and well being of GBV survivors and Persons with Disabilities. One of the interventions of the programme is the creation of safe spaces.

2.0 Definition of a safe space

A safe space is a formal or informal place where women and girls feel physically and emotionally safe. In this context **safe** refers to the absence of trauma, excessive stress, violence (or fear of violence), or abuse. It is a space where women and girls, being the intended beneficiaries, feel comfortable and enjoy the freedom to express themselves without the fear of judgment or harm.

3.0 Objectives of safe spaces

The safe space seeks to provide an area where women and girls can:

- a. Socialize and re-build their social networks;
- b. Receive psychosocial support and counselling;
- c. Acquire contextually relevant skills and knowledge including economic empowerment;
- d. Access safe and non-stigmatizing multi-sectorial GBV response services (information, psychosocial, legal, medical);
- e. Receive information on issues relating to women's rights, health, and services.

4.0 Eligibility Criteria and application process

Interested organizations who already provide counselling and psychosocial support as part of their service package and have a room that could be enhanced into a 'safe space', are invited to submit a technical and a financial proposal to UNFPA's Administrative Assistant Mapontane Maseko at email address, maseko@unfpa.org or hand delivered at UNFPA Offices, UN House, 4th floor, Corner of Somhlolo Street and Madlenya Road, Mbabane, Eswatini.

Deadline for applications: **Extended until 31st January 2025.**

Applications received after the closing date will not be considered.

Only shortlisted firms will be contacted.