

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA welcomes repurposing of vacant government buildings into shelters for survivors of gender-based violence
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) applauds the recent decision to repurpose Department of Public Works buildings into shelters for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

This initiative is a significant step towards addressing the urgent need for safe spaces for victims of GBV. The Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure has handed over 15 properties in Mpumalanga and Gauteng respectively that will be used as shelters for GBV victims. This action by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure demonstrates its commitment to address challenges faced by the country while improving people's lives.

Repurposing these buildings for the good of humanity is a sign that government is aware of the challenges facing citizens. The PSA previously called on government to make use of such buildings for the benefit of the country, including renting these to worthy causes. Unoccupied government building are costly to government to provide security and may become havens for criminality or even be illegally occupied.

The PSA calls on the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure to roll out this initiative across the country as there are many government-owned buildings that are unutilised. The PSA recognizes the transformative potential of this action, which not only provides immediate relief and protection to survivors but also underscores the government's commitment to combating GBV. By utilising existing infrastructure, this initiative demonstrates a pragmatic and compassionate approach to GBV. Statistics indicate that almost one in three women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life.

Utilising vacant buildings where GBV victims remains vulnerable and homeless is, however, a concern. The PSA calls for collaboration between government entities, civil society, and community organisations to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of these shelters. By means of such collective efforts substantial progress can be made to combat GBV and provide support to those in need. The PSA is committed to advocating for policies and actions that protect and empower survivors of GBV and will continue to support efforts that promote safety, dignity, and justice for all.

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