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## Strengthening Child Protection: Launch of the National Child Protection Reporting and Referral Pathways

*Remarks by: Mr. James Nkemba Chifwelu | National Director*

### **Protocol:**

Hon. Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development  
Principal Secretary, Ministry of Social Development  
Head of Diplomatic Mission (UNICEF Lesotho)  
Senior Government Officials  
Media Houses  
Young Advocates

It is an honour to stand before you today as we launch a critical milestone in our collective efforts to protect the most vulnerable members of our society; our children. Today's launch of the National Child Protection Reporting and Referral Pathways marks a pivotal step in strengthening the safety nets that ensure children's protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. As we gather here, I am reminded of the critical importance of creating safe spaces for children to grow, develop, and thrive.

The establishment of these Referral Pathways, by the The Ministry of Gender, Youth, and Social Development, World Vision Lesotho, and UNICEF Lesotho, reflects a shared commitment to safeguard our children from harm. This initiative, born out of our collaboration, ensures that children and communities across Lesotho are empowered with the knowledge and mechanisms to report child abuse, neglect, and exploitation. These pathways offer a clear roadmap for identifying concerns, taking appropriate action, and ensuring that cases are managed with care, professionalism, and in the best interest of the child.

### **The Role of Reporting and Referral Pathways in Child Protection**

Reporting and referral systems are fundamental to protecting children. They provide a structured and efficient process for identifying and addressing concerns regarding child safety. The pathways being launched today offer a clear mechanism through which community members, service providers, and children themselves can report incidents of

abuse. This mechanism is not only a tool for reporting; it is a lifeline for children who may otherwise be voiceless in the face of harm.

These Referral Pathways build the capacity of our communities, ensuring that every child, family, and community member understands where to report cases of abuse and the steps to follow. More importantly, they define the roles of various service providers—such as health, police, judiciary, and psychosocial support—in managing child protection cases from identification to resolution.

## **World Vision's Role in Child Protection**

As World Vision Lesotho, we are deeply committed to seeing an increase in boys and girls protected from violence. Through this launch, we reaffirm our dedication to supporting the most vulnerable children in Lesotho. Our goal is to not only protect children but also empower communities with the knowledge and resources needed to act swiftly and effectively when incidents of abuse occur.

World Vision Lesotho has supported the development of these National Child Protection Reporting and Referral Pathways by printing 3,000 copies that will be distributed in public areas across the country. These resources will be made available in churches, clinics, schools, community council offices, and other key locations, ensuring that information on how to report child abuse reaches every corner of our society.

Furthermore, we are proud to have partnered with the The Ministry of Gender, Youth, and Social Development to establish and strengthen Child Protection Teams across the areas where we operate. These teams are at the frontline, identifying cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and referring them to the appropriate authorities for intervention. Through our continued investments, we have also supported the Ministry of Police by providing 200 information boxes, distributing 10,000 sexual medical forms, renovating child-friendly offices for the Child and Gender Protection Unit, and supporting the establishment of children's courts.

## **A Collaborative Effort**

Today's launch is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together. World Vision, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth, Gender, and Social Development, UNICEF Lesotho, and the National Child Protection Coordinating Committee, is proud to play a role in strengthening child protection systems in Lesotho. These pathways, which we are launching today, are a product of our collective vision—a vision that ensures every child is protected, heard, and valued.

We are particularly excited that children themselves have been involved in this process, and that they will be represented here today to speak about the importance of these pathways. Their voices remind us why we do this work: to ensure that children are not only protected but that they are part of the solution.

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## The Way Forward

As we move forward, let this day be a reminder of our shared responsibility. Child protection is not just the duty of governments or organizations—it is a societal obligation. Every community member, every service provider, every leader, and indeed every child, has a role to play in preventing harm and reporting cases when they occur.

I am confident that these Referral Pathways will significantly improve how child protection cases are managed in Lesotho. They offer a common understanding, step-by-step guidance, and clear roles for all involved, ensuring that children receive timely and appropriate services from all stakeholders.

As we celebrate this important launch, let us remain committed to our vision of a Lesotho where every child can live a life free from fear, abuse, and violence.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all our partners, including the Ministry of Youth, Gender, and Social Development, UNICEF Lesotho, and the National Child Protection Coordinating Committee. Together, we have made significant strides, but our work is far from over. We must continue to invest in the protection of children, especially the most vulnerable, ensuring that every child in Lesotho can enjoy their right to safety and security.

Let us continue to work together to create a future where children are not only protected but empowered.

**Ke ea Leboha  
Khotso.Pula.Nala**