

---

## Empowering Girls Today for a Brighter and Sustainable World Tomorrow

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

### Protocol

Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso

The Minister of Education and Training Prof. Ntoi Rapapa

The Minister of Gender, Youth, Sports, Arts, Culture and Social Development Hon. Pitso Lesaoana

Faith Leaders

The District Administrator

Media house here present

Representative of Children

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning and a warm welcome to all of you on this special occasion. Today, we gather here to commemorate the International Day of a Girl Child under the theme "Our time is now—our rights, our future." It is indeed a privilege to have with us Her Majesty Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso, the Minister of Education and Training, and the Minister of Social Development. Your presence adds significant importance to this event, and we are honored to have you here.

The International Day of the Girl, observed annually on the 11th of October, serves as a global platform to advocate for the rights of girls around the world. We celebrate this day to highlight the importance of empowering girls and ensuring they have equal opportunities to thrive. Our theme, "Our time is now—our rights, our future," emphasizes the urgency of addressing the challenges that girls face and ensuring their rights are protected.

When we restrict the rights of girls and roll back progress on gender equality, we witness harmful consequences such as high dropout rates among girls in schools and teenage pregnancies. It is deeply concerning to note that, as of May 2022, the UNFPA reported that 36% of girls aged 10–14 presented to one hospital with incomplete abortions, indicating that our girls are still facing alarming rates of teenage pregnancies. This, in turn, leads to child marriages, robbing these young girls of their futures.

World Vision is actively working towards promoting equality for both boys and girls. This year, we have undertaken various initiatives to protect and uphold the rights of girls. We are focusing on areas such as the protection and rights of girls in the digital world, life skills programs, including violence prevention, and hygiene promotion for girls. Additionally, we are committed to ensuring that child-friendly services are readily available within the justice sector, and we are actively involved in translating, simplifying, and socializing the Counter Domestic Violence Act of 2022 to communities. This law is a crucial step in promoting equal opportunities for girls and women.

Furthermore, we must recognize the gaps in our legislation that safeguard the rights of children, such as the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011. We highly appreciate government's efforts in

---

World Vision is a global Christian, relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with the most vulnerable children, families and communities to overcome poverty and experience the fullness of life. We help children of all backgrounds, even in the most dangerous places, inspired by our Christian faith.

collaboration of other role players in addressing these gaps. We highly encourage the speedy enactment of Children's Protection and Welfare Amended Bill of 2017. Doing so will assist the government and civil society organizations to ensure promotion, protection, respect and fulfilment of children's rights in Lesotho.

## **Milestones**

Now, let me address some of the specific actions World Vision has taken to protect the rights of girls and boys in the digital world. We have reached a total of 7,000 adolescent girls, providing them with essential knowledge on how to protect themselves online using the "How to be Safe Online Model" developed by World Vision.

One of our significant campaigns is "It takes a World to end Child Marriage." This campaign was initiated to combat child marriage, which was instrumental in implementing programmes aimed at enhancing prevention, protection and mitigation of child marriage interventions at the community, district, national and international level. This include but not limited to capacity enhancement for different community based structures including Faith Actors to deepen communities understanding on their role in addressing root causes of child marriage. effective implementation of child protection laws through strengthened advocacy efforts with other relevant partners as to address policy gaps that perpetuate child marriage. Provision of biblical life skills for children, adolescents and youth as to enable them to learn best strategies on how to protect themselves against child marriage and other violations. Successful integration on ending child marriage campaign interventions in different sectors such as Water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH), Health, HIV/AIDS and Nutrition, Livelihoods and Resilience and Education.

I would like to assure you Bo Mme le Bo Ntate that, there are lot of milestones reached as a result of Queen's engagement in supporting awareness raising and advocacy efforts aimed at creating a safe, protective and violence free environment for children in Lesotho including the girl child. These include but not limited to the following:

Percentage of parents who know about the harms of child marriage and violence increased from 6.50% to 69.30% in line with SDG 16. (WVIL Technical Program Evaluation report, 2022/23)

Increased proportion of households reporting good participation and self-efficacy in community child wellbeing activities from 16.70% to 65.70%. Provision of at least 936 girls with hygiene packs in FY 2023 as to keep them in school even during their menstruation as to enable them to have access to quality education in line with SDG 4 among others.

We have also noted increasing number of reported Child protection cases to relevant partners due to improved knowledge and understanding on the importance of reporting and referral of child protection issues following Her Majesty's engagement in awareness raising interventions, hence our sincere appreciation for Her support.

- In terms of life skills programs, we have successfully reached **2,100** girls in FY2023, focusing on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) life skills.
- We have reached **4,327** girls in violence prevention programs,
- We have established **6** Child Friendly Spaces. One of these spaces is right here in Rothe. Three more are located in Mafeteng, and two are in Quthing.
- In addition to our call to the government for the enactment of laws protecting children's rights, we advocate for other crucial actions.

- Institutionalization of Children's Parliament, where girls can freely advocate for their rights.
- Put more emphasize the provision of free sanitary pads in schools to ensure that girls can access education without any barriers.

In conclusion, the International Day of the Girl Child reminds us of the importance of championing the rights of girls worldwide. Together, with the support of governments, civil society organizations, development partners, and the public, we can create a world where every girl can fulfill her potential, and where her rights are not just celebrated on this day but protected every day.

Thank you and let us continue our collective efforts to empower and protect the rights of the girl child.

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