

Empowering Education through Strengthening Schools' Resilience in Times of Crisis

Remarks by: Mr. James Nkemba Chifwelu | National Director

Protocol:

Hon. Minister of Training and Education
Principal Chief
Member of Parliament – Maliba Matso Constituency
District Administrator (Names) Area Chief
Area Chief
Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Mission and International Organizations (UNDP, WFP)
Senior Government Officials and Heads of Parastatals (PS Education & DMA CEO)
Non-Governmental Organizations (CRS)
Private Sector Organizations
The Lesotho Evangelical Church in Southern Africa School Proprietor
The Board member of Vuka Mosotho Primary
The Principal of Vuka Mosotho Primary
Teachers
The Media
Vuka Mosotho Community
Children

Bo 'Me le bo Ntate

Today marks a pivotal moment in our commitment to the children of Lesotho. We stand on the height of change, a moment where our actions can shape the future of our children and our nation. As we gather under the banner of the European Union-funded disaster risk reduction project, dubbed 'Consolidating and Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction (CSDRR)', in partnership with the Ministry of Education & Training and the Disaster Management Authority, we are not just here to witness the difficulties of Vuka Mosotho, but we are here to act.

This CSDRR project is designed to strengthen both national and community resilience to disasters, tackling the pressing need for comprehensive disaster risk reduction. This includes integrating disaster risk reduction into school curricula and policies, as well as mobilizing resources to reinforce schools' response capabilities.

As World Vision International Lesotho, we have been committed to our longstanding calling as advocates for child well-being in Lesotho since 1987, standing at the forefront of collaborative efforts to improve the well-being of children through our integrated programming in Health, HIV

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and Nutrition, Advocacy, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Livelihoods and Resilience, and Humanitarian Emergency Affairs sector projects. During our journey, we have witnessed firsthand the challenges our communities, families, and children face, especially during times of crisis.

Today, through the 'Consolidating and Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction (CSDRR)' project, we unite with the Ministry of Education & Training and the Disaster Management Authority with a shared goal to strengthen disaster preparedness and response capacities in schools, aligning with our vision that every 'child experiences life in all its fullness.'

Recent years have shown a stark increase in climate-change related disasters across our country, worsened by the El Niño that has hit the whole of Southern Africa, impacting not only food production but also posing significant threats to children's education. When a disaster strikes, more than 50% of the affected population are children, and it is during these hard times that children encounter challenges in accessing their right to education. Vuka Mosotho Primary School exemplifies the many schools in Lesotho in dire need of support to enhance disaster preparedness. It is our hope that this collaboration will extend to equally vulnerable schools across the nation.

Needs During Emergencies

In times of emergencies, learners and schools face numerous challenges that impede their ability to maintain educational continuity and safety:

- **Adequate Learning Spaces:** Disasters can damage school infrastructure, making it difficult for students to have a conducive learning environment.
- **Basic Educational Materials:** In emergencies, students often lack essential learning tools like desks, books, and stationery.
- **Safe and Secure Infrastructure:** Schools need fortified buildings to withstand disasters, ensuring the safety of students and staff.
- **Financial Resources:** Schools require funds to implement disaster preparedness plans and recover quickly from emergencies.
- **Community Support:** Involvement from the community and local businesses is crucial to provide ongoing support and resources.

Today signifies our stand as Basotho, standing up and saying, "No more will we turn a blind eye to the plight of our most vulnerable." Today is about realizing that the future of our nation lies in the hands of our children, and it's our responsibility to ensure they have access to quality education, regardless of the challenges that may come their way.

I am humbled and immensely grateful to each and every one of you who have answered the call, who have refused to sit idly by while our children's education hangs in the balance. Your presence here today, your willingness to lend a helping hand, speaks volumes about the strength of our community, about our collective resolve to overcome even the greatest of challenges.

While our efforts today may not address all immediate needs, they signify a crucial first step towards supporting the educational journey of the 340 learners of Vuka Mosotho Primary School. I extend heartfelt gratitude to the civil society organizations and the business community for their unwavering support, whether present here or through their generous contributions.

Pledges and Their Impact

I am pleased to announce the generous pledges made by our partners to Vuka Mosotho Primary School:

- **World Vision's Commitment of 100 Desks for Learners:**
These desks will ensure that students have a proper place to sit and learn, which is crucial for maintaining an effective learning environment and reducing disruptions caused by emergency conditions
- **Lesana Financial Services' Donation of 40 Bags of Cement**
The Cement will be used to repair and fortify school buildings, ensuring that the structures are safe for students and can withstand future disasters.
- **Mahlakapese Resort and Lodges' Pledge of M10,000**
- **Aloes Guest House's Contribution of M5,000**
- **Organo Vite Pty LTD's Pledge of M5,000**

The monetary donation can be used for various disaster preparedness efforts of Vuka Mosotho Primary School, enhancing the school's ability to respond to emergencies; such as stocking emergency kits, enhancing security measures, and supporting logistical needs, educational materials, emergency teaching aids, and programs that ensure children continue learning even in disrupted environments.

These contributions are not just financial pledges; they are critical investments in the resilience and future of our children. By addressing these specific needs, we are not only providing immediate relief but also building a foundation for long-term educational stability and success in the face of emergencies.

I recall the words of Nelson Mandela, who aptly stated, "*There can be no keener revelation of society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.*" World Vision remains steadfast in its dedication to children, and through the support of the EU, Ministry of Education and Training, the DMA, civil society organizations, the business community, and other stakeholders, we can see this dream come to fruition.

Together, hand in hand, let us write a new chapter in the story of Lesotho—one where resilience triumphs over adversity, where education shines bright even in the darkest of times. I thank each of you for your ongoing support of this noble cause.

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

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