

Amplifying Voices, Protecting Rights: The Media's Role in Advocating for Vulnerable Communities

Remarks by: Mr. James Nkamba Chifwelu | National Director

Good morning, distinguished journalists, partners, and colleagues. I am honoured to be here today as we continue our journey towards more responsible, human-rights-focused journalism.

Today's training is a collaborative effort between the *Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (PPHR)* and the *Accelerating Action for Eliminating Child Labour and Forced Labour (AECFL)* projects. These initiatives, both funded by the European Union, have a shared goal of safeguarding the rights of children, people with disabilities, and victims of trafficking and forced labour. The PPHR project spans seven districts in Lesotho, while the AECFL project operates in five. Together, they are making a significant impact on preventing human rights abuses and building stronger legal frameworks.

Before we begin, let us reflect on the 2023 media engagement initiatives. Last year, we sensitized 20 editors and trained 25 journalists on the media's role in advocating for human rights. The journalists who participated gained reporting skills that emphasized the protection of victims' rights and the importance of responsible journalism.

We were encouraged by the outcomes of these engagements. The 54 entries submitted to the World Vision Media Engagement Awards were evenly split between two critical areas. Half of the articles addressed hunger, malnutrition, food insecurity, and the drought crisis, while the other half highlighted human trafficking, advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities, children's rights and protection, and policy advocacy. These powerful stories made a difference by not only raising awareness but also protecting the rights and dignity of those affected.

This success highlights the significant role that journalists play in shaping public opinion and influencing policies that protect vulnerable populations. Through this training, we hope to further equip you with the knowledge and tools to continue reporting on sensitive human rights issues such as human trafficking, child labour, and disability rights with the sensitivity, depth, and responsibility they require.

Your stories have the power to create awareness and drive change. By amplifying the voices of the most vulnerable, you help to ensure that their rights are protected and that justice is served.

Thank you for your commitment, and I look forward to the discussions and insights that will arise from today's training. And the stories that you will create to promote and protect human rights while playing a part in Accelerating the elimination of child labour and forced labour. Together, we can continue making a meaningful difference in the communities we serve.

Ke ea Leboha. Khotso. Pula. Nala.