
Empowering Women, Strengthening Communities: Launch of the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Project

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

OHonorable representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, Gender, Youth, and Social Development, esteemed partners from SADP II, IFAD Representative, SADP II Director, respected Faith Leader, Youth representatives, valued community leaders, and distinguished guests: I am deeply honored to welcome each of you here today. Today's event marks not just the launch of a new project but a powerful affirmation of our shared commitment to building a more equitable future for all.

Today, we come together to launch the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) Project—a vital initiative with a transformative mission to drive gender equality and economic empowerment for women and youth across Lesotho. This project seeks to strengthen women's leadership, enhance economic opportunities, and foster sustainable, thriving communities. It is grounded in a vision of hope, resilience, and unity.

World Vision's Commitment and the Role of Women's Empowerment: At World Vision, our mission to break the cycles of poverty and empower communities is deeply rooted in a commitment to support the most vulnerable, ensuring they have the resources to build secure, sustainable lives. In alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, we are driven by a purpose: to end poverty in all its forms by 2030, creating environments where every child can reach their full potential.

Our Livelihoods and Resilience Program is an essential part of this mission. Through it, we aim to uplift families from extreme poverty by enabling self-reliance and economic stability. But we know that achieving this vision requires more than just resources; it requires empowered women who can lead their families and communities. When women are empowered, their entire families, and indeed entire communities, are strengthened."

Breaking Down Barriers and Fostering Sustainable Livelihoods: We are committed to equipping women and youth with the skills and resources they need to make decisions that affect their livelihoods, household nutrition, and their communities' resilience. This is why the GEWE project is designed to support:

- **Economic Empowerment and Financial Access:** By giving women and youth increased access to finance and essential capacity-building resources, we're opening doors to new economic opportunities, enabling them to transform their businesses, farms, and communities, and thus address 16.9% unemployment rate in Lesotho (World Bank Report, 2019)

- **Women's Leadership in Agriculture:** Through fostering women's roles in agricultural leadership and decision-making, we are enhancing food security, improving household nutrition, and creating an environment of resilience. When women are part of the conversation, they drive change that is more inclusive, more effective, and more sustainable.
- **Balanced Power Dynamics and Gender-Sensitive Practices:** The GEWE project promotes equitable systems where both women and men contribute to balanced power relations. From equitable policies and gender-sensitive technologies to supportive social norms, we are building communities that stand strong together, fostering environments where women can participate meaningfully in economic and social spheres.

Through initiatives like the GEWE project, we are advancing our commitment to women's economic empowerment, supporting women to access resources, services, and opportunities and to exercise their agency in both economic and personal decisions. When we empower a woman economically, we empower her family, her community, and ultimately the nation."

The Importance of Partnership and Collaboration: This journey of empowerment is not one we undertake alone. We are here today with partners from SADP II, local community leaders, and government ministries who share this vision. Together, we are working hand in hand to promote sustainable practices that transform lives, uplift families, and build resilient communities.

Our collaboration extends to the broader community as well. By working with men and community leaders, we aim to create an inclusive environment that supports the success of women and youth, recognizing that gender equality benefits everyone. With your partnership and dedication, the GEWE project will create a ripple effect, empowering countless women and youth to lift their communities toward a brighter future."

As we launch the GEWE Project, let today be a testament to the potential within each woman and young person in Lesotho. Let us all commit to supporting this mission—not only in words but through action, partnership, and unwavering dedication. Together, we are building a Lesotho where every woman can thrive, every community can prosper, and every child can grow up in a world free from poverty and filled with hope.

In conclusion, let me bring to your attention that, all the planned initiatives under this project will contribute towards the achievement of some of the international commitments ratified by the government of Lesotho such as 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda especially SDG 5 an, 1 and 3. Thank you for being part of this journey and for standing with us in our pursuit of a brighter, more equitable future for all." **Kea Leboha**

Khotso. Pula. Nala