

## National Dialogue on Disaster Preparedness and Response Capacities in Urban Lesotho

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

Distinguished Guests,  
Government Representatives,  
Development Partners,  
Representatives from Civil Society and the Private Sector,  
Members of the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to stand before you today at this National Dialogue, a crucial platform for advancing disaster preparedness and response capacities in our country. I extend my gratitude to all stakeholders for their dedication to building a resilient Lesotho.

Lesotho faces significant challenges from both natural and manmade disasters. Persistent droughts, unexpected snowfall, hailstorms, strong winds, and localized floods continually threaten our communities. These challenges are compounded by the risks of plant diseases, social conflicts, and sudden emergencies like fires and motor accidents. Yet, even amidst these adversities, we see an opportunity; a chance to strengthen our collective resolve and chart a path toward resilience and preparedness.

### **The Role of World Vision Lesotho**

At World Vision Lesotho, we have committed to supporting the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) in fulfilling its mandate to enhance the capacity and resilience of communities to respond effectively to disasters. Through robust disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans, improved management and coordination, and regular monitoring and evaluation, we strive to create safer communities.

Our Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) model is at the heart of our approach. By being community-driven and multi-sectoral, CBDRM integrates livelihoods, Water Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH), health, and child protection. This model not only prepares communities to reduce, respond to, and recover from disaster events but also fosters social cohesion, ensuring communities come together during times of need.

### **Achievements in Disaster Preparedness and Resilience**

Our interventions have yielded tangible results:

- We have empowered 93 Village Disaster Management Teams (VDMTs) and updated their Community Disaster Preparedness Plans (CDPPs), ensuring that communities are better equipped to face disasters.
- In partnership with the DMA, we developed Standard Operating Procedures for the Food Management Unit (FMU), improving disaster response and resource allocation.
- Through the application of drone technology, we have produced hazard and vulnerability maps, identifying high-risk areas and guiding climate adaptation strategies.

- We have engaged youth and educators in DRR debates and dialogues, amplifying their voices and solutions in disaster preparedness.

Furthermore, we have enhanced community resilience through inclusive water and sanitation systems and trained communities on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, ensuring that no one is left behind.

### **Strengthening Urban Preparedness**

While these achievements are significant, the challenges of urban disaster preparedness demand greater collaboration and innovation. Urban areas, with their rapid growth and infrastructure gaps, are increasingly vulnerable to disasters. This National Dialogue presents a pivotal opportunity to address these challenges through:

1. Raising awareness about the importance of disaster preparedness in urban planning and budgeting.
2. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities among stakeholders to foster accountability.
3. Strengthening political will to integrate disaster preparedness into national and urban strategies.

As we engage in discussions over the next two days, let us not lose sight of the critical need to act decisively. Let us ensure that the tools, methodologies, and strategies we discuss here lead to concrete actions that benefit all Basotho, particularly the most vulnerable.

### **A Shared Responsibility**

Disaster preparedness is not the responsibility of one sector or organization; it is a collective effort. World Vision Lesotho is proud to collaborate with the DMA, Lesotho Meteorology Services, Ministry of Agriculture, and many other stakeholders to build resilient communities. Together, we can ensure that disaster preparedness becomes a national priority embedded in our policies and practices.

**In closing**, I urge all of us to commit to the objectives of this dialogue: raising awareness, sharing best practices, and strengthening political will. By working together, we can build a resilient Lesotho where every child, family, and community can thrive despite the challenges they face.

Let us seize this moment to foster accountability, drive innovation, and create a future where disasters no longer devastate but instead reveal the strength of our collective resilience.

Thank you.

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