

Strengthening Child Protection Through Safe Spaces: Handing Over of the Pitseng Child-Friendly CGPU Office

Remarks by: Mr. James Nkemba Chifwelu National Director / 09 May 2025

Protocol

His Majesty King Letsie III

The Right honorable, the Prime Minister

The Cabinet Ministers in particular, the hon. minister of local government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police- Ntate Lebona Lephema.

The Principal Chief of Leribe

Hon. Member of Parliament for Pitseng constituency

Principal Secretary

Commissioner of Police and all LMPS team members present here with us today

Government officials, Representatives from Civil Society Organizations and Citizen Voice and Action team members. Media houses, Children representatives

Ladies and Gentlemen - Let me say all Protocol observed.

Good morning, every child deserves to feel safe, heard, and valued! That's why today is more than a handover but a celebration of our collective commitment to protect our children. It is an honour and a great privilege for me, on behalf of World Vision International Lesotho, to officially hand over this Child-Friendly facility to the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) as part of our continued efforts to strengthen child protection systems across the country. Too many children in Lesotho still face exploitation, neglect, and harm often suffering in silence. Our presence here today is a demonstration of our shared responsibility and unwavering determination to ensure that every child has access to justice in a safe, friendly, and protective environment.

World Vision International Lesotho has remained a steadfast partner to LMPS, particularly in supporting the transformation of Child and Gender Protection Units (CGPUs) into child-friendly spaces. These efforts are part of our broader vision: to ensure that every child, especially those who are victims of abuse or exploitation, is met with dignity and care when seeking justice. In our mission to enhance effective reporting and referral systems, we continue working closely with LMPS and key partners to improve both prevention and response mechanisms against violence affecting children.

Some highlights of our joint efforts include:

- **Launch of the National Child Protection Referral Pathways**
In 2024, together with the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, UNICEF Lesotho, and other partners, we launched a national guide to help community members, caregivers, and service providers identify, report, and refer cases of child abuse. This tool ensures children are linked to justice and care.
- **Printing and Dissemination of 3,000 Copies**

World Vision supported the dissemination of 3,000 copies of these pathways across the country, equipping not only professionals but also children with the information and confidence to act when their rights are violated.

- Introduction of Information Boxes
To ensure confidential and accessible reporting, we introduced secure Information Boxes at selected police stations and communities. These allow survivors or witnesses, especially those who fear retaliation to safely and anonymously report abuse, or to access information about protection services. This small tool holds immense power to break the silence around abuse.
- Provision of 10,000 Sexual Assault Medical Forms
We supplied 10,000 forms to LMPS to improve case documentation, ensure timely support for survivors, and strengthen medical and legal processes that lead to justice.

We believe that how children experience justice is just as important as justice itself. That is why, beyond tools and materials, we are dedicated to ensuring that the environments in which children report abuse are safe, confidential, and respectful. To this end, we have partnered with LMPS to construct and refurbish Child-Friendly CGPU Offices and to provide Child-Friendly Park Homes; spaces thoughtfully designed to help children feel safe, welcomed, and supported.

Achievements to Date:

To date, we have made significant progress across various districts:

- Provision of Park Homes to CGPUs in Mt. Moorosi, Mohalinyane, Matelile, and Tšakholo
- Refurbishment of CGPU offices in Sekameng Police Station, Mohale's Hoek, and Quthing
- Construction of a new Child-Friendly CGPU office in Pitseng
- Ongoing construction of CGPU offices in Morija, Thlanyaku, and Mokhotlong District

We have also supported the Government of Lesotho through the Citizen Voices Addressing Violence Against Children (CVAVAC) project, funded by the European Union in Lesotho, to establish Children's Courts in Leribe, Berea, Maseru, and Mohale's Hoek. These courts apply child-sensitive procedures, ensuring a non-intimidating environment that places the best interests of the child at the centre.

Today's Milestone

Today, we are proud to officially hand over the Child-Friendly CGPU office in Pitseng and to recognize all other completed facilities to date. While some constructions are still ongoing, this handover represents a significant milestone in our efforts to make justice systems more accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of children.

For the Pitseng CGPU, we are still fundraising to install CCTV cameras to enhance safety and accountability within the facility. We remain hopeful that this important addition will be realized soon with continued support. Let this building and every one of the facilities we've helped create not stand only as a physical structure, but as an inspiration of hope; a symbol of our shared vision to end all forms of violence against children and gender-based violence in our communities.

On behalf of World Vision International Lesotho, I extend my deepest appreciation to LMPS, the Government of Lesotho, our partners, and communities for walking this journey with us. Let us continue working hand in hand until every child in Lesotho is safe, empowered, and free to thrive.

Ke ea Leboha
Khotso. Pula. Nala.