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## **933 Hotlines Launched to Protect Women from Political Violence as 2026 Elections Loom**

**LUSAKA, ZAMBIA – February 24, 2026** – At the official launch of the **933 VAWE Hotlines** held at The Urban Hotel on Friday, Lifeline/Childline Zambia CEO, **Florence Chileshe Nkhuwa**, delivered a landmark address detailing a strategic shift in how Zambia protects women's participation in democracy. Under the theme *"Women Deserve Safe Elections,"* the launch signaled a move toward specialized, data-driven protection for women in the political sphere.

In a keynote address, Mrs. Nkhuwa noted that in previous election cycles, Lifeline Childline Zambia had recorded numerous cases of violence against women in elections, however, these were often miscategorized broadly as "gender-based violence" (GBV) or other forms of abuse.

*"This general classification limited our ability to track and analyze the specific patterns of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE)," Madam Nkhuwa explained. "By failing to distinguish political violence from general abuse, the call center's ability to provide targeted interventions was constrained."*

Mrs. Nkhuwa revealed that Lifeline Childline Zambia data from the 2021 elections showed a significant surge in violence targeting women directly linked to electoral activities. She emphasized that incidents of intimidation and harassment online and offline were not random, but were strategic barriers that negatively impacted both women's participation rates and their ultimate electoral outcomes.

With 2026 elections on the horizon, the CEO warned that **similar patterns are already emerging**, making the specialized activation of the 933, 116 and 944 hotlines more urgent than ever. The hotline is also integrated to social media platforms enabling VAWE survivors to report cases via the social media platforms such as Facebook, chat and WhatsApp.

Mrs. Nkhuwa expressed deep gratitude to **NDI (National Democratic Institute), TECH Matters, Carter Centre, UNICEF and UNFPA** through the UN Spotlight Initiative for their technical support. Mrs. Nkhuwa stated that their partnership has empowered Lifeline Childline Zambia to distinguish VAWE cases from general GBV in real-time, use disaggregated data to inform rapid response and prevention strategies and ensure that the specific nature of political violence is documented for legal and policy action.

Mrs. Nkhuwa concluded by asserting that the ultimate goal of these improvements is a more inclusive and fairer democracy. Through improved data accuracy and strengthened protection responses, the 933 hotline will ensure that women entering the 2026 elections can campaign, lead, and vote without the looming shadow of fear or intimidation.

She also thanked the commitment by government in protecting women from VAWE as evidenced by the participation of various government departments such as Gender Division, National Prosecution Authority, Zambia Human Rights Commission at the launch.

*"This is a historical moment. Zambia is now better equipped than ever to protect its women leaders," Mrs. Nkhuwa said. "When we can capture the data correctly, we can inform programmes correctly and ensure that every woman's voice can be heard free from intimidation and harm."*

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