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CHINA FUELLED FUTURE GROWTH



02

- Lesotho, China launch alliance engine as nations elevate strategic partnership
- Forge deeper ties with major financial pacts during historic visit

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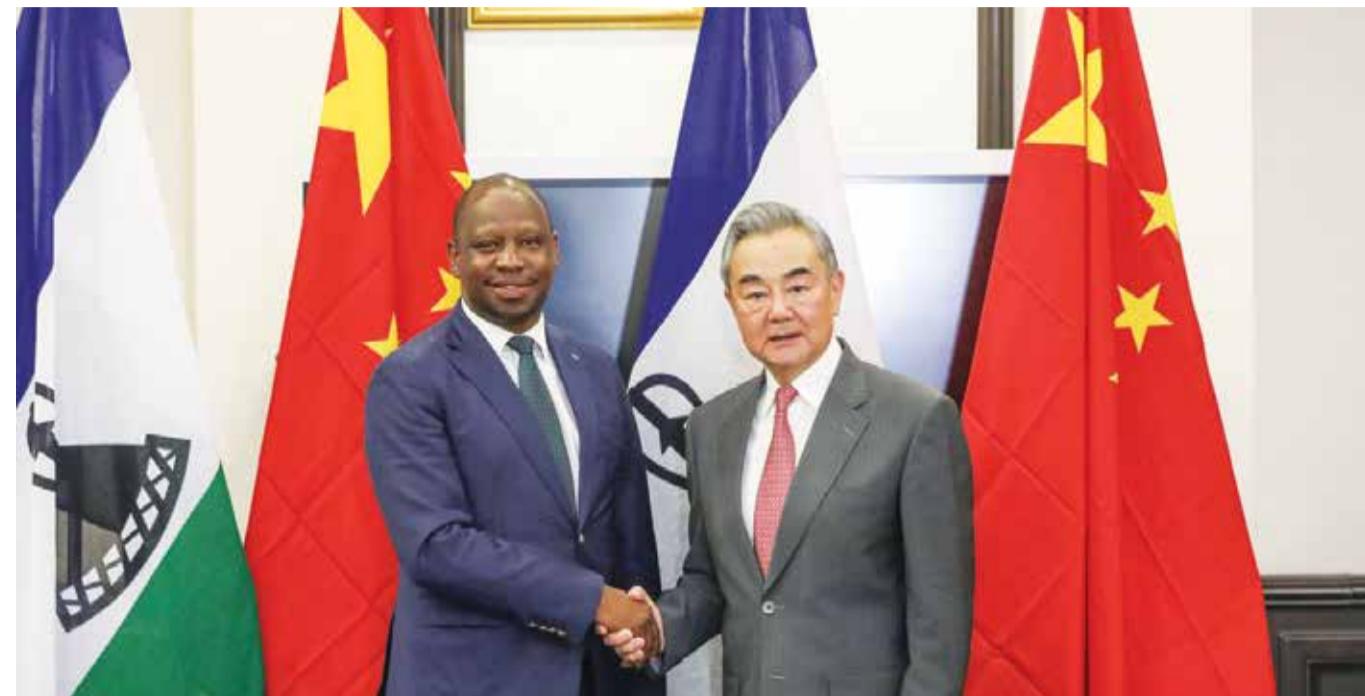
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China fuelling future growth

- Lesotho, China launch alliance engine as nations elevate strategic partnership
- Forge deeper ties with major financial pacts during historic visit



TEBOHO KHATEBE MOLEFI

MASERU - Lesotho and the People's Republic of China have ushered in a new era of their comprehensive strategic partnership, anchored by substantial financial agreements and a powerful institutional framework, following the landmark visit of China's foreign minister, Wang Yi.

The high-level talks, held in Maseru last week, yielded immediate, action-oriented outcomes, headlined by a significant infusion of Chinese support aimed at catalyzing Lesotho's national development priorities.

Minister Wang's visit sent a clear and reassuring message to Africa and to Lesotho. For 36 consecutive years, China has chosen Africa as the destination of its foreign minister's first overseas visit, a tradition that speaks volumes about the depth of China-Africa friendship.

Just before arriving in Lesotho, Minister Wang attended the launching of the 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges at the African Union headquarters, conveying President Xi Jinping's message that exchanges among peoples are the foundation and lasting source of vitality of China-Africa relations. At a time of profound global uncertainties, China came to Africa with sincerity and respect - African countries not as peripheral players, but as indispensable partners.

Against this background, the visit to Lesotho conveyed a simple yet powerful message that Lesotho matters, its people matter, and that China stands ready to deepen people-centred cooperation and work with Lesotho as a trusted strategic partner

for shared development and a shared future.

In a major announcement this week at the launch of the newly established Bilateral Cooperation Mechanism, Chinese Ambassador to Lesotho, Yang Xiaokun, detailed a generous multi-million Maloti package of assistance. This includes a substantial targeted grant, alongside another significant discretionary grant for the government to allocate as needed. Additionally, a concessional loan was announced to begin the second phase of the Ha Ramarothole Solar Power Plant in Mafeteng.

During the FOCAC Beijing Summit in September 2024, China pledged a M246 million in development assistance to Lesotho, making this 2026 pledge the second major commitment in as many years.

The project's Phase II, which includes a 7MWh energy storage system and a direct link to the Ha Ramarothole substation, is expected to produce approximately 95 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually. Over its projected 25-year operational lifespan, the plant will contribute an estimated 2.375 billion kilowatt-hours to the national grid, substantially reducing reliance on imported power and supporting the country's renewable energy transition.

While exact financial details of the new project remain undisclosed, the development aligns with a broader commitment of support from China to Lesotho under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

The Lesotho side retains authority to disclose specific investment figures related to the solar project. Nevertheless, the initiative underscores deepening bilateral cooperation in clean energy and infrastructure.

In addition to construction, the agreement includes a three-year post-completion operation and maintenance package, ensuring the plant's efficiency and longevity. The integration of energy storage is particularly notable, enabling more stable and reliable power supply even during periods of low sunlight.

This project reflects Lesotho's ongoing efforts to harness its solar potential and improve electrification rates, while also highlighting the role of international partnerships in achieving sustainable development goals. Energy ministry officials indicate further renewable projects are under consideration as part of the national energy strategy.

China will also provide M30 million for emergency food assistance.

These commitments, made against the backdrop of the inaugurated 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges, signal a decisive shift from dialogue to delivery in the bilateral relationship.

The Principal Secretary (PS) for foreign affairs and international relations, Thabang Lekhela, delivering a speech on behalf of the government, framed the visit as transformative.

"Today, we reflect on a transformative milestone - a visit that has powerfully elevated our comprehensive strategic partnership to new heights," the PS stated.

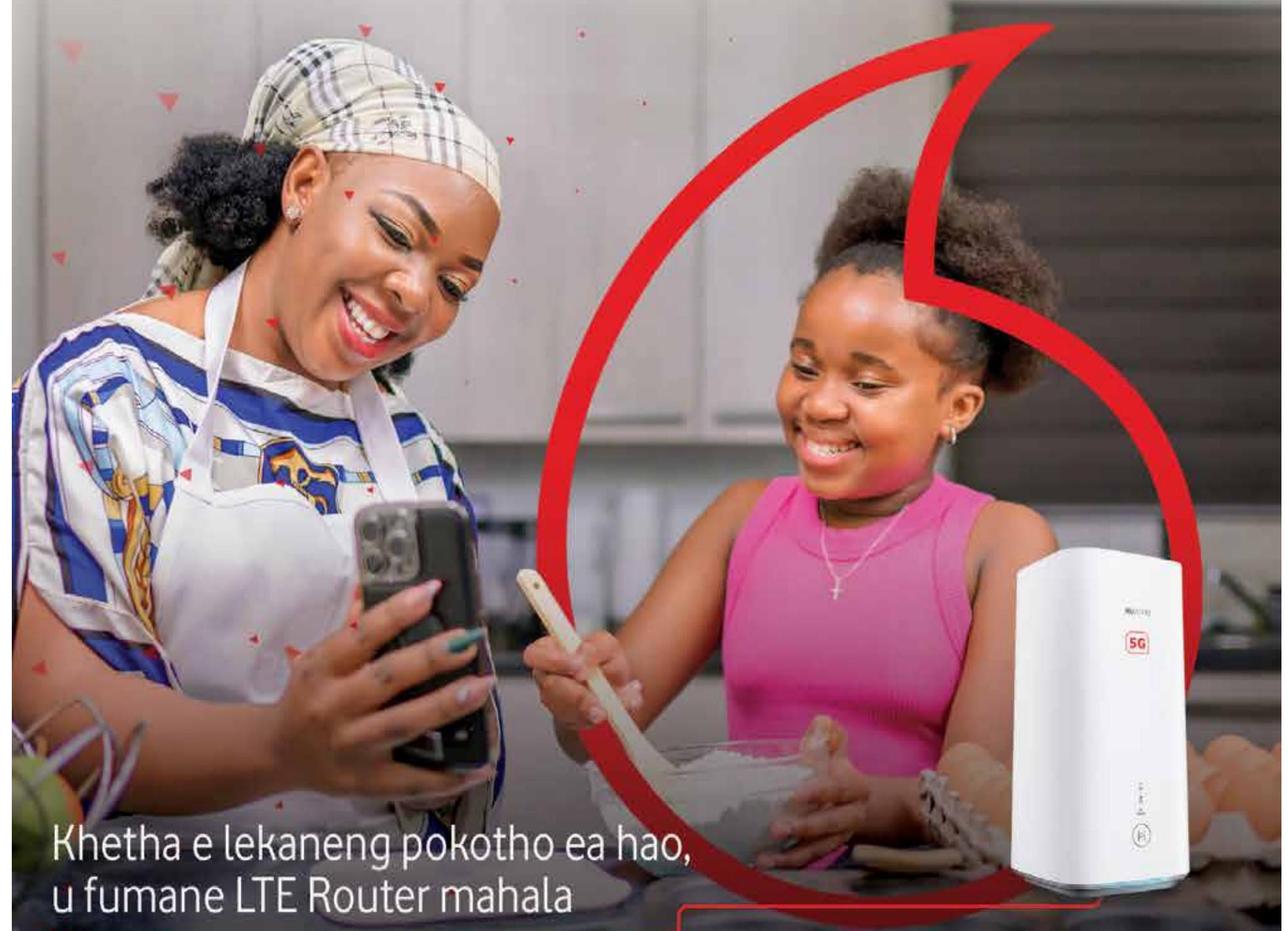
"This visit has moved our cooperation decisively from the realm of promises to the phase of project delivery and mutual benefit."

Story continues to page 04...

Tonight		Partly cloudy skies.	20°	8 km/h	0mm
Tomorrow		Clear weather. Strong winds.	31°	19°	30 km/h
Saturday 24 Jan		Clear weather.	33°	19°	24 km/h
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News

China fuelling future growth

Story continues from page 02

A partnership forged in history and principle

The robust outcomes of Minister Wang Yi's visit are built upon a decades-long foundation of Sino-Lesotho diplomacy. Formal diplomatic relations were established in 1983, with ties growing steadily based on mutual respect and shared developmental aspirations.

A cornerstone of this relationship has been Lesotho's consistent and unwavering adherence to the One-China Principle, a point powerfully reaffirmed during this visit.

Principal Secretary Lekhela emphasized this bedrock of trust on Tuesday's launch, reiterating the position that: "Lesotho's firm and unwavering adherence to the One-China Principle, recognizing Taiwan as an inalienable part of China's territory," remains "non-negotiable."

This political solidarity has facilitated deepening cooperation across forums such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); and Lesotho has been a beneficiary of Chinese-supported projects in infrastructure, healthcare, and education, setting the stage for the more comprehensive, strategic alignment cemented this week.

In his remarks at the same event, Ambassador Yang emphasized action-oriented collaboration and mutual support as paramount to bolster bilateral relations.

He said the establishment of the bilateral cooperation mechanism as a formal channel was "a vivid demonstration of the high level of mutual trust and friendship between China and Lesotho" through which both nations reaffirmed their commitment to elevating their strategic partnership.

"This mechanism is result-oriented and action-focused," stated Ambassador Yang in his remarks.

"Its main purpose is to maintain close coordination on major issues, to strengthen our mutual support, to review progress in the implementation of key cooperation projects, and to facilitate problem-solving."

The envoy highlighted that the initiative directly responds to a proposal from Prime Minister Ntsoane Matekane, aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of agreements reached during the visit. He underscored the mechanism's role in solidifying



the unique bond between the two countries, calling it a future "model of friendly exchanges and common development between countries with different national conditions and systems."

Ambassador Yang also outlined tangible economic benefits underpinning the partnership, noting China's commitment to "accelerate the implementation of its zero-tariff policy for African countries, including Lesotho," and to "facilitate broader access of Lesotho's specialty products to the Chinese market."

Concluding his address, the Ambassador emphasized collective responsibility for the new mechanism's success, stating, "Its success will depend on the sustained commitment and joint efforts of both sides."

The launch marked a structured, forward-looking approach to fostering deeper cooperation on bilateral, regional and international matters between China and Lesotho.

The talks: From consensus to concrete blueprint

The closed-door discussions between foreign minister Wang and Prime Minister Matekane, alongside the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lejone Mpotjoane, were described as "pivotal." They occurred at a critical juncture for Lesotho, which faces global economic headwinds and urgent domestic imperatives like economic diversification, infrastructure modernization, and youth unemployment.

The talks crystallized into a substantive Joint Communiqué, providing what the PS Lekhela termed "a clear blueprint for progress."

The key action-oriented results include:

1. Political solidarity: A reinforced mutual commitment to support each other's core interests and sovereignty.

2. Economic transformation: A direct instruction to accelerate flagship projects like the Ha Ramarothole Solar Power Plant and identify new collaborations in agriculture, manufacturing and the digital economy - sectors central to Lesotho's National Strategic Development Plan.

3. Institutional fortification: The landmark decision to establish a high-level Bilateral Cooperation Mechanism. Described as an engine for implementation, this mechanism is designed to ensure accountability and transform commitments into tangible results for the Basotho.

4. Multilateral alignment: A shared resolve to champion true multilateralism, coordinate on issues like UN reform and climate justice and advocate for a more equitable international order.

5. People-to-People Exchanges: A commitment to activate the 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges through scholarships, cultural dialogues and youth forums.

Breathing life into People-to-People bonds

The launch of the 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges during this visit is particularly symbolic. China's emphasis on people-to-people connectivity has been a growing pillar of its engagement with Africa for over a decade, evolving from early academic and cultural scholarships to encompass vast networks of sister cities, media exchanges, tourism promotion and vocational training.

In Lesotho, this has previously manifested in Chinese medical teams, Confucius Institute activities, and government scholarships for Basotho students. The new commitment seeks to dramatically scale these efforts.

"We are committed to breathe life into the 2026 China-Africa Year... building the social foundation for a lasting partnership," Lekhela affirmed. This aligns with a continent-wide trend where such exchanges are seen as vital for fostering mutual understanding and ensuring the sustainability of political and economic partnerships.

Grants for security and energy independence

The most immediate outcomes are the financial agreements, which underscore a deepening of cooperation aimed at enhancing Lesotho's institutional capacities.

Phase 2 of the Ha Ramarothole Solar Power Plant strikes directly at Lesotho's developmental heart, as energy security and the transition to renewable sources are top government priorities - this project not only aims to boost generation capacity and reduce reliance on imports but also promises job creation during construction and operation.

In response to the announcements, the PS expressed profound gratitude: "I wish to express... our profound and sincere gratitude to the government and the people of the People's Republic of China on the generous financial support announced during the visit.

These significant pledges are not merely gifts; they are strategic investments in Lesotho's future and a concrete embodiment of our shared commitment to mutual growth and development." Echoing this sentiment, Chinese Ambassador Yang highlighted the partnership's mutual benefits and strategic direction.

"China and Lesotho are true friends and reliable partners. These grants reflect China's consistent philosophy of supporting African friends in their pursuit of self-driven, sustainable development," Yang stated.

"The launch of our Bilateral Cooperation Mechanism and the focus on clean energy projects like the Ha Ramarothole plant show our relationship is entering a phase of higher-quality, result-oriented cooperation that directly improves the livelihoods of the Basotho people."

The path forward

With the political mandate and roadmap now clear, the focus shifts to execution. The new bilateral cooperation mechanism is tasked with convening without delay to translate directives into action, starting with skills training and project rollout. Lesotho also plans to strategically align its National Strategic Development Plan with China's cooperation frameworks like FOCAC and the BRI to attract further resources.

"We must build domestic capacity to ensure Basotho businesses and professionals are ready to fully participate in and benefit from these partnerships," PS Lekhela noted, outlining a critical step for ensuring local ownership and maximizing the developmental impact.

As the visit concluded, the mood in Maseru was one of optimistic determination. The combination of substantial financial assistance, a new implementation engine, and a reinforced commitment to people-centred exchanges has set a brisk pace for 2026.

The partnership has been fundamentally recalibrated - from one of aid to one of development-focused investment and mutual strategic interest.

In a final toast, Principal Secretary Lekhela captured the moment: "To the enduring One-China Principle, to the new Bilateral Cooperation Mechanism, to the ever-growing bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two nations and peoples."

This toast raised in Maseru celebrated not just a successful visit, but the tangible dawn of a new, more consequential chapter in China-Lesotho relations.

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MPs to engage on climate change and SRHR

Parliament hosts landmark workshop on legislative action

LIAPENG RALIENGOANE

MASERU — In a pivotal move to address interconnected crises, parliament will convene a two-day capacity-building workshop on February 4 to 5, designed to strengthen lawmakers' ability to scrutinize legislation through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a sharp focus on the critical intersection of climate change and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

Supported by the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF), the workshop arrives as Lesotho grapples with the harsh realities outlined in its National Strategic Development Plan II: intensifying droughts, devastating floods, unpredictable frosts, and severe storms that are undermining livelihoods, health, and stability.

In an interview, the Chairperson of Parliament's SDGs Committee, Itumeleng Rantšo, emphasized the urgency of the moment.

"Climate change is no longer a distant threat; it is a present reality reshaping the lives of Basotho," she stated. "Simultaneously, pressures on essential SRHR services are escalating, especially in rural and disaster-prone areas. This engagement is about equipping Parliamentarians to legislate, budget, and exercise oversight in a way that is informed, responsive and centred on the people."

Rantšo explained that the SDGs Committee's mandate is to ensure the SDGs are meaningfully integrated into national legislation, oversight, and policy. "Regarding

climate change, we scrutinize policies, budgets, and international commitments to ensure they respond to Lesotho's realities: drought, food insecurity, water stress, and vulnerable rural livelihoods," she said.

"On SRHR, our role is to highlight how climate change disproportionately impacts women, girls, and marginalized communities. We must ensure laws and strategies protect access to essential health services, even during climate shocks. We serve as a bridge between evidence, communities, and lawmakers, ensuring climate action and SRHR are treated not as separate issues, but as deeply interconnected priorities for sustainable development."

Rantšo outlined practical steps MPs can take, such as advocating for "climate-responsive budgeting" that explicitly protects funding for SRHR services during emergencies like droughts and floods. They can also champion laws and policies that formally recognize SRHR as an essential, non-negotiable service, even in times of crisis.

Echoing this sentiment, 'Mammehela Matamane, the SADC-PF Lesotho SRHR Officer, detailed the workshop's objectives.

"We aim to equip Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff with practical tools to apply SDG-informed oversight in law-making, budgeting, and monitoring," she said.

"Participants will explore how integrating gender-responsive and climate-resilient perspectives can dramatically improve policy outcomes, particularly for SDG 3 on health, SDG 5 on gender equality, and SDG 13 on climate action. Addressing these goals in isolation is ineffective; cross-committee collaboration is

essential," Matamane emphasized.

The workshop will bring together members from key parliamentary committees - including the Social Cluster, SDGs, Pandemics, and Natural Resources committees - alongside support staff. Through foundational discussions and practical case studies, the event is designed to translate complex knowledge into actionable legislative and oversight strategies.

The SADC Parliamentary Forum, established in 1997, is a regional inter-parliamentary body dedicated to advancing democratic governance, human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development across its 16 member states. This workshop is not an isolated event but part of a broader, sustained regional initiative.

Through its flagship SRHR, HIV, and AIDS Governance Project, SADC-PF has consistently worked to strengthen parliamentary oversight and legislation related to health, education, and gender equality. Similar capacity-building initiatives have been conducted in numerous SADC parliaments, from Malawi and Zambia to Namibia and eSwatini, fostering a regional network of legislators adept at addressing the nuanced links between health rights, gender, and environmental sustainability.

These regional efforts underscore a growing recognition: sustainable development cannot be achieved if SRHR is side-lined, especially as climate change exacerbates existing inequalities and health vulnerabilities.

The importance of elevating SRHR awareness within legislative chambers cannot be overstated. Climate-related disasters often disrupt healthcare systems, limit mobility, and increase economic hardship, leading to spikes in

gender-based violence, unintended pregnancies, and maternal mortality. Women and girls, who are primary caregivers and often depend on natural resources for livelihood, bear the brunt of these cascading effects.

Informed legislators are the first line of defence. By understanding these linkages, they can craft laws that ensure SRHR services are climate-resilient - for instance, by mandating that disaster preparedness plans include the distribution of reproductive health supplies or by funding mobile clinics for displaced populations.

They can also hold governments accountable for fulfilling both their climate adaptation commitments and their obligations to uphold health rights under international and regional treaties.

As parliament prepares for this critical engagement, the expectation is to foster a more cohesive and proactive legislative approach. The goal is to move beyond viewing climate change solely as an environmental or agricultural issue and SRHR as merely a health concern. Instead, lawmakers are being called to see them as intertwined strands of the same challenge - securing a just, healthy, and sustainable future for all Basotho.

This workshop represents a significant step towards building a parliament that is not only reactive to crises but is strategically proactive, using the powerful tools of legislation, budgeting, and oversight to build resilience at the very intersection of human health and planetary health.

The outcomes here in Maseru will contribute to a larger, vital conversation sweeping across the SADC region on how to legislate for a world where rights are protected, even as the climate changes.

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News

Senior lecturer faces corruption charges

NUL Professor Mosotho George granted bail amid allegations of fraud totalling M129 000; case shines light on ongoing governance concerns

'MATHATO SEBOKA

MASERU – Professor Mosotho George, a lecturer at the National University of Lesotho (NUL), was granted bail of M15 000 on Tuesday in the Maseru Magistrate's Court following his arrest on charges of fraud and corruption.

The case, brought by the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO), alleges that the academic illicitly secured approximately M129 000 in university research funding for a private company in which he held an undisclosed ownership stake.

Presiding Magistrate Nkhethoa Molapo ordered George's release under strict conditions, including that he must not interfere with crown witnesses, attend all remand hearings, and remain present throughout his trial until its conclusion. The professor is scheduled to return to court on January 27, for the setting of a trial date.

The charges stem from events alleged to have occurred in 2023 at NUL's Maseru offices.

According to the DCEO, George "unlawfully and with intent to defraud" arranged for one Reitumetse Khoabane to present a business proposal to the National University of Lesotho Innovation Committee (NULIC) and the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) initiative. The proposal sought funding for Orbitalab, also known as Orbitals (Pty) Ltd - a company Professor George founded and in which he held shares.

Crucially, the prosecution asserts that George deliberately concealed his founding role and financial interest in Orbitalab from both NULIC and CAFI, a fact he had a duty to disclose under university ethical guidelines and procurement policies. Acting on the proposal, the committees approved funding totalling M129 000 for the company, a decision allegedly made to the detriment of the university

and the publicly-funded CAFI programme. This incident is not the first time Professor George has been linked to controversy. In recent years, his name has surfaced in internal university audits concerning procurement irregularities and alleged conflicts of interest in research grant allocations.

While not all prior incidents resulted in formal charges, they have contributed to a growing concern among staff and stakeholders about governance and transparency within NUL's research and innovation units.

The university administration, when contacted for comment, issued a brief statement acknowledging the court proceedings and affirming its cooperation with the DCEO.

"NUL upholds the highest standards of integrity and accountability. We are aware of the matter and will allow the legal process to run its course," read the statement. It did not clarify whether George has been suspended or

faces internal disciplinary action.

Anti-corruption advocates have pointed to the case as a test of Lesotho's renewed commitment to tackling graft within public institutions.

"When individuals in positions of academic trust fail to declare conflicts of interest, it undermines not only institutional integrity but also public confidence in higher education and innovation funding," said 'Mamohau Mahloko, a spokesperson for the local transparency watchdog, Accountability Lab Lesotho.

The case has sparked debate on campus and in academic circles about the adequacy of existing disclosure protocols and monitoring mechanisms for staff involved in private enterprises.

Some colleagues expressed shock, describing George as a dedicated lecturer, while others noted that questions about his external business interests had been privately raised in departmental meetings as early as 2022.

As the case moves toward trial, observers will be watching closely to see how the evidence unfolds and what implications it may hold for broader anti-corruption efforts in Lesotho's educational sector.

For now, Professor George remains free on bail, awaiting a January court date that will determine the next phase of a legal battle that could have lasting repercussions for his career and for the governance of public-funded research in the country.

Likhoele goes digital: T-Connect Lesotho hands over free community hotspot

...powered connectivity opens doors for education, jobs, and smart farming in Mafeteng

KEISO MOHLOBOLI

MAFETENG – T-Connect Lesotho has officially handed over a free community Wi-Fi hotspot at the office of the Principal Chief of Likhoele, marking a major step toward digital inclusion in the region.

The Likhoele handover is the fourth community to benefit from T-Connect Lesotho's free hotspot initiative, which began in October last year.

Previous rollouts have connected the offices of Principal Chief of Matsieng, Chief Seeiso Bereng Seeiso, Chief Khoabane Theko in Thaba Bosiu and Chief Leretholi Seeiso in Mokhotlong.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, T-Connect Lesotho Managing Director, Advocate Phelane Phomane, said the initiative goes beyond corporate social responsibility.

He emphasised that 'Phiri ejeoa moreneng', when the community is connected, everyone



can rise and be part of something bigger. "This project is not just about giving back to communities," said Advocate Phomane. "It is about opening doors for Basotho to participate meaningfully in the global digital economy. Access to reliable internet is no longer a luxury, it is essential for education, employment, and economic participation."

Advocate Phomane highlighted the growing importance of online education and digital employment, especially given Lesotho's high youth unemployment.

"Many young people in Lesotho are struggling to find jobs. With connectivity like this, learners can access online educational resources, apply for opportunities beyond our

borders, and acquire digital skills that are relevant in today's job market," he said.

"The internet gives our youth a fighting chance." He also emphasised the role of technology in transforming agriculture, encouraging communities to embrace smart farming practices.

"Technology can help our farmers work smarter, not harder. Through internet access, farmers can learn about climate-smart agriculture, access market information, improve productivity, and make informed decisions that strengthen food security and livelihoods," Advocate Phomane noted.

The event was attended by the United States Ambassador to Lesotho, Charge d'Affaires, Thomas Hines, who expressed his appreciation for the initiative and the partnerships behind it.

"We are pleased to witness the handover of the Likhoele Community Hotspot, a project that demonstrates progress, partnership, and shared opportunities," said Hines.

"The US Embassy Maseru is proud to support initiatives that expand digital access, promote inclusion, and empower communities." Ambassador Hines highlighted that the hotspot is more than just equipment.

"This is a platform that enables learners to access educational resources, entrepreneurs to grow and formalise their businesses, and community members to connect with services, information, and opportunities far beyond Lesotho's borders."

He encouraged the community to take ownership of the facility:

"I urge the community to protect, utilise, and take responsibility for this hotspot so that it continues to serve current and future generations." Surrounding villages Ha Qobete, Ha Sebusi, Ha Jooase, Makeneng and Ha Mahosi, each home to no fewer than 700 people, now have access to free, reliable and stable Wi-Fi, benefiting an estimated 4 000+ Basotho.

Speaking on behalf of the Likhoele community, Haretsebe Mahosi welcomed the initiative and requested further support in digital skills development.

"Access alone is not enough," said Mahosi. "We hope to receive training so residents can use the internet productively for education, skills development, and employment opportunities."

The Likhoele Community Hotspot is expected to benefit surrounding villages, providing free, reliable, and stable internet access that strengthens education, economic participation, and social inclusion.

As T-Connect Lesotho continues its nationwide rollout, the Likhoele handover demonstrates how technology, partnerships, and community leadership can bridge the digital divide and empower future generations.

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WE'RE HIRING



'MATHATO SEBOKA

TEYATEYANENG - As stone mining threatens health and livelihoods in Lekokoaneng, Berea, a student dialogue championed by Development for Peace Education (DPE) has highlighted the environment as a foundation for sustainable peace, urging action from local to global levels.

In the heart of Berea district, the community of Lekokoaneng recently became a vibrant forum for a critical conversation: the intrinsic link between a healthy environment and lasting peace. This past Tuesday, under the theme "How does the environment contribute towards peace?", the DPE convened a powerful student dialogue, uniting young minds from Lekokoaneng High School, Mokoaleng High School, Piting Secondary School and Fusi High School.

The event, supported by the Denmark Lesotho Network and attended by community members and Danish tourists, showcased a profound understanding from youth that the fate of their nation's tranquillity is entwined with the stewardship of its natural wealth. The students presented compelling arguments, asserting that Lesotho's resources - water, forests, and diamonds - must be managed wisely and equitably to benefit all Basotho and prevent conflict.

"Our resources such as water, forest and diamonds must be well used and benefit Basotho to avoid conflicts in the country," one student articulated, capturing a sentiment of generational responsibility. They further elaborated on how Lesotho's majestic mountains and rivers naturally foster unity and a shared sense of community, positioning environmental preservation as a cornerstone of social cohesion.

This dialogue is a core initiative of DPE's 'Peaceful School Model', which seeks to cultivate non-violent learning spaces and empower student leaders. DPE Programme Officer, Melida Bohloko, emphasized that such forums are vital for nurturing young voices in peacebuilding. The dialogue resonated with

Youth voice for peace

Berea students link environmental stewardship to national harmony in DPE-led dialogue

DPE's foundational ethos, conceived by the late Veronica 'Mapaseka Phafoli. A teacher, principal, and the first Mosotho provincial of the Order of Sisters of Holy Names, Phafoli was driven by theological reflection on transforming human misery into peace. Alarmed by growing inequality and diminished agency for ordinary citizens, she founded DPE in 1987 as a civil society organization anchored in Christian values of justice, sharing, and respect for human dignity.

Legally registered in 1989, DPE has since been a steadfast advocate for human rights, believing that true development cannot occur without peace, and peace cannot be sustained without justice and environmental integrity.

The students' insights are particularly urgent against the backdrop of Lesotho's environmental state. The nation, renowned for its water-rich highlands, faces significant degradation: soil erosion, deforestation, and the scarring impacts of extractive industries like stone and sand mining. These challenges threaten not only ecosystems but the very livelihoods and health of communities.

In response, there is a growing movement among young Basotho, exemplified by this DPE dialogue, to champion sustainability. From school environmental clubs to nationwide clean-up campaigns and advocacy for stronger policies, youth are increasingly at the forefront, recognizing that their future hinges on the health of their land. This local activism mirrors a global surge in youth-led environmental action, aligned with international standards for protection. Frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) - particularly Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 15 (Life on Land), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) - provide a blueprint. The Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity set further benchmarks for national commitments.

Worldwide, movements like Fridays for Future demonstrate how young people are holding governments accountable to these standards, advocating for a just transition to green economies and emphasizing that ecological damage is a direct threat to human security and peace.

The dialogue in Lekokoaneng took a sombre turn as local residents voiced the harsh realities of living near sandstone quarries - a challenge echoing across Africa and the globe. Community member Teleko Sechoala described the visible scars: "There are huge cliffs as a result of stone mining and that puts our children's lives at risk because the land is not rehabilitated."

This lack of post-mining restoration is a common failure, leaving behind unstable landscapes and polluted resources.

The health implications, as outlined by a Village Health Worker from Berea Hospital, are severe and systemic. The dust from quarrying operations is a silent menace, linked to respiratory diseases.

"This dust causes Tuberculosis (TB)," the health worker stated, revealing the ministry's struggle to conduct widespread testing in affected communities. Furthermore, the disruption of local hydrology creates secondary crises: "The mud blocks the streams where villagers do their laundry and where animals

drink." This contamination of water sources poses risks of waterborne diseases and disrupts both domestic life and livestock rearing, compounding poverty and community stress.

These narratives from Lekokoaneng are not isolated. From silica dust in India's stone quarries to water pollution from mining in the Amazon, communities neighbouring extractive sites worldwide face elevated risks of pulmonary illnesses, cancers, and contaminated food and water sources.

The environmental injustice is often acute, with marginalized communities bearing the brunt of degradation while deriving minimal benefit. This inequity sows the seeds of conflict, as competition over diminished and polluted resources intensifies. Environmental activist, 'Mantopi Lebofa, present at the dialogue, connected these dots succinctly: "When communities work together to protect the environment like managing water, planting trees, it builds cooperation and reduces conflict." She charged the students with carrying this mantle forward.

Thuathe constituency Member of Parliament, Vuyiswa Tsheka, underscored the foundational importance of peace and praised DPE for instilling values of cleanliness and responsibility in children. She called for more in-depth forums involving businesses and the broader community, highlighting the need for multi-stakeholder action.

The Lekokoaneng dialogue ultimately wove a powerful narrative: environmental care is not a separate agenda but the very bedrock of peace, health, and human rights. For DPE, an organization built on advocating for human dignity, this means championing the right to a clean, safe, and sustainable environment as inseparable from the right to live in peace.

As the echoes of the students' presentations settle, their message is a clarion call to leaders at all levels. It urges investment in ecological restoration, enforcement of rehabilitation standards for mines, and the genuine inclusion of youth and affected communities in environmental governance.

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Constitutional Court land ruling exposes cracks in land governance system

Molapo case highlights systemic failures, family fractures - calls for urgent reform beyond the courtroom



MOTSAMAI MOKOTJO

MASERU – A recent landmark judgment by Lesotho's Constitutional Court has laid bare the profound and persistent challenges at the heart of the nation's land governance. The case of Tholoana Nancy Molapo vs 'Mankuebe Gloria Molapo, Matlole Molapo, and the Land Administration Authority (LAA) transcends a simple property dispute, serving instead as a stark diagnostic of systemic weaknesses in land allocation, inheritance, and conflict resolution.

Delivered by a bench comprising Justices Polo Banyane, Tšeliso Mokoko and Realebha Mathaba, with Advocate Fusi Sehapi representing the applicant, the ruling forces a national conversation.

It questions not only the application of land laws but the very structures designed to administer them, revealing a system where individual family conflicts become constitutional battles, draining resources and severing social bonds.

At its surface, the case involves members of the Molapo family – 'Mankuebe and Matlole stood as respondents alongside the LAA. This familial dimension underscores a painful truth - land conflicts in Lesotho are intensely personal. They are not abstract legal debates but intimate wars that pit relative against relative, often causing irreparable damage to kinship and community ties.

The formal judicial system, built on adversarial proceedings and win-lose outcomes, is a blunt instrument for resolving disputes deeply entangled with family dynamics, cultural expectations and ancestral legacy. Yet, as this case demonstrates, in the absence of effective, accessible, and trusted alternative mechanisms, litigation becomes the default - a costly and often destructive path of last resort.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of the case is the inclusion of the land administration itself as a respondent. The LAA, the state entity mandated to manage land matters efficiently and fairly, found itself in the dock rather than acting as a neutral referee. This raises fundamental questions about institutional design and efficacy. Is the authority structured to prevent and resolve disputes, or does its very operation invite conflict? Does it possess the adequate resources, technical capacity, and transparent procedures required to serve the ordinary Mosotho effectively?

Its appearance as a party to be sued suggests administrative failure, indicating that disputes which should be settled at the local or administrative level are instead escalating, consuming precious judicial time and deepening grievances. The LAA operates within a broader context of constrained state capacity, political

sensitivity around land, and competing societal demands. While judicial rulings can clarify legal principles, they cannot manufacture administrative competence or inject resources where they are lacking.

A judgment cannot fix broken databases, train insufficient staff, or simplify opaque procedures. The court's involvement, therefore, highlights a vacuum of effective frontline governance.

The fact that a family land dispute reached the Constitutional Court is a significant red flag. Constitutional litigation is the apex of legal recourse - immensely resource-intensive, time-consuming, and requiring sophisticated legal representation often beyond the means of most citizens.

Its necessity in land cases points to one of two bleak realities: either lower courts and administrative bodies lack the authority, capacity, or will to provide definitive solutions, or the legal framework governing land is so ambiguous and conflicted that it requires constant constitutional interpretation.

Both possibilities speak to a system in crisis. They suggest that for many Basotho, justice in land matters is neither swift, affordable, nor accessible. The emotional and financial toll on families who must wage legal war to the highest level is immense, a burden disproportionately borne by the most vulnerable.

While the full facts of the Molapo case require the detailed judgment, its trajectory invites scrutiny of gender dynamics in Lesotho's land conflicts. Historically, customary practices have often limited women's rights to inherit, hold, and control land.

These practices exist in unresolved tension with the Constitution's guarantees of equality and non-discrimination.

Courts adjudicating such cases are tasked with an almost impossible balancing act: respecting cultural traditions while upholding fundamental individual rights. This inherent conflict ensures that rulings often leave all parties partially dissatisfied and underscore the need for legislative and social clarity that the judiciary alone cannot provide.

The case reminds the nation that land justice is inextricably linked to gender justice.

The Constitutional Court's ruling will settle the specific legal question before it, contributing to Lesotho's evolving land jurisprudence. However, this case illuminates the uncomfortable limit of what courts can achieve.

A judge can adjudicate legal title, but cannot mend fractured families, restore community trust, or address grievances rooted in perceived disrespect or historical inequity.

The persistence of such high-level litigation reveals the limited success of land law reforms undertaken in isolation. New statutes achieve

little if the institutions meant to implement them are dysfunctional, if the public is unaware of their rights, or if alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are weak or non-existent.

What Lesotho's land governance system

requires is a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that moves beyond reliance on courtroom battles.

This must include:

Strengthening the LAA: A fundamental overhaul to build its administrative capacity, ensure transparency, and restore its role as a neutral, effective first-line administrator, not a frequent litigant.

2. Investing in alternative dispute resolution: Developing and resourcing accessible, culturally sensitive mediation and arbitration channels to resolve conflicts before they harden and escalate to formal courts.

3. Harmonizing legal traditions: A sincere and sustained national dialogue to reconcile the tensions between customary law practices and statutory/constitutional rights, particularly concerning gender equality.

4. Public education and legal empowerment: A major initiative to inform citizens about land rights, procedures, and available remedies to demystify the process and reduce exploitative uncertainty.

5. Political will and sustained investment: Ultimately, courts interpret laws; they cannot generate the political commitment or budgetary investment required to build a fair, efficient, and accessible land governance ecosystem.

The Molapo case is both a resolution and a warning. It demonstrates the Constitutional Court's critical role as a guardian of rights and a forum of last resort. Simultaneously, it documents the systemic failures that make such drastic recourse necessary.

Whether this judgment becomes a catalyst for meaningful reform or merely another entry in a growing ledger of land litigation depends entirely on actions taken outside the courtroom.

Without systemic repair, the Constitutional Court's doors will remain besieged by cases that are, at their core, not merely pleas for legal judgment, but cries for a functioning system.

Lesotho commemorates World Braille Day with call for inclusive communication

MOSA MAOENG

MASERU – The Lesotho Network for the Development of the Blind (LNDB), in partnership with the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC), marked World Braille Day this Friday with a renewed commitment to promoting Braille literacy and the full inclusion of persons with visual impairments.

Held annually on January 4 - the birthday of Louis Braille, the inventor of the tactile writing system - World Braille Day is a global observance that underscores Braille's vital role in education, human rights, and social inclusion.

This year's theme, "Promoting Inclusive Communication," resonated deeply in Maseru, where advocates gathered to highlight Braille not as a mere alternative, but as an essential tool for independence, literacy, and dignity.

Nteboheling Leseo, Information Officer of LNDB, explained that the commemoration is part of an ongoing tradition for the organization.

"This is not our first celebration," she noted. "Previous years have seen community events, educational workshops, and partnerships aimed at amplifying the message of accessibility." These efforts reflect a sustained local drive to advance the rights of the visually impaired, mirroring activism seen in cities worldwide.

Globally, World Braille Day was formally recognized by the United Nations in 2019, though celebrations long predate this. From Nairobi to New York, the day serves as a platform to advocate for accessible publishing, inclusive education, and the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The international meaning behind the day is profound: it affirms Braille as a fundamental human right to information and communication, crucial for breaking cycles of exclusion and enabling participation in all spheres of life.

In Lesotho, the LNDB - established in 2005 and registered in 2009 - has been at the forefront of this advocacy. The organization provides a

platform for skills development, disability rights advocacy, and social integration.

According to Leseo, their accomplishments include implementing educational programmes, pushing for improved accessibility, and running community support initiatives that have impacted hundreds, if not thousands, of Basotho with visual impairments.

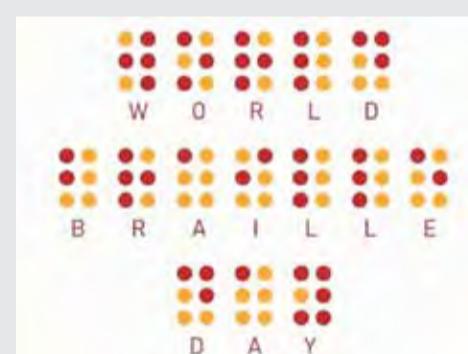
This year's partnership with LDTC aims to harness distance learning expertise to develop specialized educational materials tailored for visually impaired learners, thereby expanding opportunities.

Despite progress, significant challenges remain. Leseo highlighted widespread misconceptions about the abilities of the visually impaired, leading to limited employment opportunities, social stigma, and diminished expectations.

"LNDB works to address these through targeted empowerment programmes," she said. These include mobility training, self-acceptance support, and strategies for income generation, such as guidance on starting small businesses.

In a notable step toward corporate inclusion, Vodacom Lesotho Foundation launched Braille versions of its Protection Code and impact booklet on May 6 - a move directly informed by consultations with the disability community.

As Maseru joined the world in reflection this World Braille Day, the message was clear: true inclusion requires sustained effort, innovative partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to ensuring that Braille - and the independence it fosters - is accessible to all.





Parly clashes over Digital Diamond-Token

- As lawmakers question Lesotho's persistent poverty
- Chair of Chairs challenges govt as LDBT proposal seeks to unlock national wealth

MOSA MAOENG

MASERU – In a tense session that laid bare the frustration over Lesotho's untapped potential, Parliament's Committee of Chairs this week grappled with a bold digital proposal to monetize the nation's diamond wealth, while its chairperson directly challenged the government to explain why the country remains mired in poverty.

The committee, comprising chairs of various parliamentary clusters, convened to scrutinize the proposed Lesotho Diamond Backed Token (LDBT), a protocol designed by economist Tebogo Matsinyane.

The session quickly evolved into a broader interrogation of governance and resource management.

Mokhethu Makhanyane, the Chair of Chairs, threw down the gauntlet to Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane's administration and fellow legislators.

"There is a need to question how a country with so many natural resources is considered the poorest in Africa," he declared, demanding a response to this enduring paradox.

The LDBT protocol, presented by Matsinyane, aims to "tokenize" Lesotho's sovereign diamond assets. In essence, it proposes converting physical diamond

reserves into digital tokens on a block-chain, thereby transforming "frozen national wealth into liquid, publicly accessible" assets. This model is designed to allow citizens and investors to hold and trade fractions of the country's diamond wealth directly.

Faced with a staggering 56.8 percent debt-to-GDP ratio and contracting traditional sectors like mining and textiles, Matsinyane argued for innovative solutions.

"The mining industry is contracting and the textile sector is being outpaced," he stated, positioning the LDBT as a necessary pivot.

To ensure stability and compliance, the proposal includes safeguards: only 80 percent of any tokenized asset would ever be sold, with 20 percent permanently held to guarantee the physical diamonds remain secured.

Matsinyane also advocated for a controlled "Regulatory Sandbox" environment to demonstrate full anti-money laundering compliance before a national launch.

The concept of asset-backed digital tokens is gaining traction globally. Notably, the United Arab Emirates has explored tokenizing commodities, including gold, to enhance market liquidity. In Africa, while no nation has yet launched a sovereign diamond-backed currency, Botswana's careful management of its diamond revenues through

partnerships with giants like De Beers offers a model of resource beneficiation.

Similarly, South Africa has long leveraged its mineral wealth as a cornerstone of its economy, though not yet via public digital tokens. The LDBT seeks to adapt this principle of direct public participation in resource wealth for the digital age.

Lesotho's diamond story is one of high value but limited national gain. Home to the iconic Letšeng Diamonds Mine, renowned for producing some of the world's most valuable diamonds, the sector's contribution to the national treasury has been inconsistent.

Despite diamonds being a key export, revenues have often failed to translate into broad-based development, with complaints rampant that "the water does not benefit them," as Makhanyane echoed.

The government's diamond policy framework has historically focused on royalty collection and licensing, but critics argue it lacks the sophistication to maximise in-country value addition, ensure transparent pricing, and secure optimal tax revenues.

Makhanyane highlighted a glaring shortfall: for the 2024/2025 fiscal year, Parliament expected M90 million in tax from mines but received only M70 million, amidst total tax refunds of M1.7 billion.

The Committee's response to the LDBT was a mixture of intrigue and deep skepticism,

reflecting broader systemic challenges.

Itumeleng Rantšo, Chairperson of the Sustainable Development Goals Cluster, praised the "good thoughts" but highlighted the legal vacuum. "They are not backed by any law," she noted, questioning the practical starting point for Parliament amidst a complex web of needed legislation.

While Sello Hakane, Chairperson of the Economic and Development Cluster, raised existential threats. He pointed to the rise of lab-grown synthetic diamonds, primarily from China, which are flooding the market and devaluing natural stones.

"By the time the parliament's committees are done implementing the laws, the diamond industry would have crumbled," he warned, chastising the government's slow pace.

Chief Whip, Lethole Lethole, voiced concerns over regulation, noting diamonds lack a fixed price like gold and questioning who would ensure the tokens are properly governed.

Amidst the technical debate, Makhanyane's challenge resounded as the session's core theme. His frustration pointed to a cycle where resources "get to go out of the country and even dissolve but they dissolve without leaving any value in the country."

The LDBT proposal, therefore, stands at a crossroads. It is both a specific technological innovation and a symbol of the urgent need to rethink Lesotho's relationship with its natural endowment.

While Matsinyane's digital blueprint offers a provocative vision for inclusive wealth, its fate hinges on answering the fundamental question posed by the Chair of Chairs - Can Lesotho's institutions move swiftly and wisely enough to convert underground wealth into tangible, above-ground prosperity for all Basotho?

The government's response to this challenge remains awaited.



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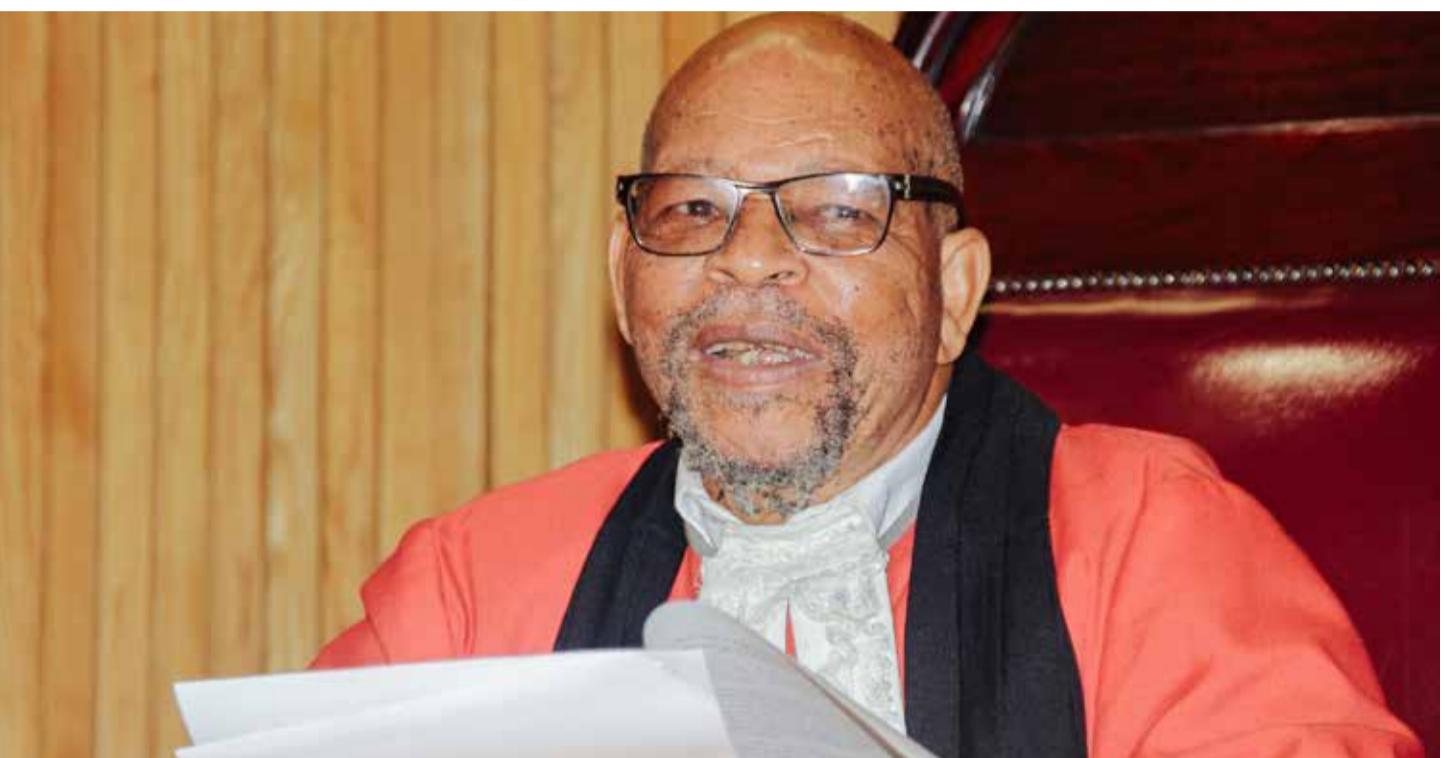
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CJ's frustration erupts in pension battle with retired judge



PICTURE by The Post

RELEBOHILE TSOAMOTSE

MASERU - In a correspondence that laid bare the simmering tensions at the heart of Lesotho's judiciary, Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane's strongly-worded letter to retired Judge Tšeliso Monapathi was born not of malice, but of profound frustration.

This revelation, made in court this week, uncovers the human friction behind a constitutional crisis that now questions the very obligations of a judge beyond retirement.

The Chief Justice's lawyer, Advocate Rudie Cronje, told a specially convened tribunal that his client's primary concern was the staggering backlog of 120 cases left unresolved on Justice Monapathi's desk as he approached retirement.

"Chief Justice may have expressed himself strongly, but it was out of frustration. He wanted the cases resolved," Cronje pleaded, urging the court to look beyond the heated exchange and focus on the constitutional imperative for judicial efficiency.

This legal showdown, however, is merely the latest chapter in a protracted and deeply personal feud between two of Lesotho's most prominent legal minds, a clash of philosophy, authority, and personality that has now spilled into the public domain.

Justice Tšeliso Monapathi is no ordinary jurist. A veteran of the Bench, his career has been marked by both scholarly contributions and a noted independence that often bordered on defiance. Appointed to the High Court years ago, Monapathi developed a reputation for meticulous, if sometimes deliberate, judgments.

Colleagues describe him as a traditionalist, deeply principled and resistant to what he perceived as administrative overreach.

Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane, by contrast, is viewed as a reform-minded leader. Since assuming the mantle of head of the judiciary, he has publicly prioritized

case clearance rates and administrative efficiency to combat case backlogs, a chronic ill plaguing Lesotho's courts.

His leadership style is seen as more hands-on and managerial, a approach that has inevitably clashed with the autonomous, chamber-focused tradition embodied by judges like Monapathi.

The roots of their discord are whispered in hallways rather than documented in official files. It is said to stem from fundamental disagreements over court management, judicial workload distribution, and the extent of the Chief Justice's administrative authority over fellow judges.

Monapathi has historically been a vocal critic of centralized judicial administration, advocating for absolute independence in how a judge manages his or her docket. This philosophical rift transformed into a cold war, with the issue of pending cases becoming the battleground.

The friction ignited into open conflict in July 2024. With Monapathi's retirement slated for August, Chief Justice Sakoane wrote to him on July 26, issuing a direct directive. He demanded written timetables: one, for delivering reserved or pending judgments within four months; another, for completing part-heard matters within six.

The subtext was clear: finalize your work. The letter carried a significant sting - the processing of Monapathi's terminal benefits and pension would be contingent upon the completion of all outstanding judicial work.

Attached was a potent reminder: a 2023 judgment penned by Chief Justice Sakoane himself, ruling that a judge (excluding foreign judges) has a binding legal obligation to finish cases pending before retirement.

"...resignation does not relieve the judge of an obligation to finish what he started. The reason is that the constitutional duty to finish what has been started is incidental to the proper exercise of judicial authority," Sakoane had written, foreshadowing the current standoff.

Monapathi's response, filed through his lawyers on September 16, claimed the July letter only reached him in September. He affirmed his "constitutional obligation" to finalize the cases but framed the obstacle as a lack of resources, not will.

He "humbly" requested a temporary chamber in the High Court, a computer with internet, and support staff.

Without these, he argued, executing his duties was impossible. He portrayed the Chief Justice's directive as an unfair shifting of the administrative burden onto a retired judge who was willing but logically hamstrung.

The dispute rapidly escalated into a full-blown constitutional challenge. Monapathi, arguing that withholding pension benefits to compel work is unlawful, took the matter to court. A panel of three foreign judges - Justices Mankambira Mankambira of Malawi, Sylvester Salufu Mainga of Namibia and David Mangota of Zimbabwe - was appointed, a move the Judiciary's PR officer said was to ensure "justice is not only done, but is seen to be done." In court, the arguments crystallized around competing interpretations of the Constitution.

Monapathi's legal team, led by Advocate Mocheta Makara, anchored their case on Section 121 (2). This clause states that a judge who has reached retirement age "may continue in office for so long... as may be necessary to enable him to deliver judgment... in relation to proceedings that were commenced before him before he attained that age."

They argue the keyword is "may" - it is a discretion vested in the judge, not a compulsion enforced by the Chief Justice. Withholding benefits, they contend, violates judicial independence (Section 118 (2)) and effectively amounts to "forced labour."

"My lords, our client was very willing to complete his cases, but he was not afforded the assistance he needed to finalise them," Makara argued, painting Monapathi as a judge abandoned by the system and then

punished for its failures.

For the Chief Justice, Advocate Cronje framed the issue as one of duty overriding discretion. He pointed the court to Section 121 (1), which sets the retirement age, and argued that the discretion in subsection (2) is a tool to fulfil a duty, not an escape from it. The oath of office, Cronje suggested, binds a judge to complete their work.

The Chief Justice's role is to uphold that fundamental principle. "It can never be that a judge has a discretion and now the Chief Justice has to do damage control," Cronje asserted, implying that Monapathi's discretion had lapsed into dereliction.

Cronje urged the court to interpret Section 120 in this context, arguing it does not absolve judges from completing work before leaving the bench.

The "crux of the matter," he insisted, is whether a judge can walk away from unfinished business without consequence. In his court papers, Justice Monapathi launched a robust, and at times passionate, defense. He rejected the characterization of the issue as mere administrative frustration. To him, it was an existential threat to judicial autonomy.

He argued that continuing to serve post-retirement is a personal choice, contingent on maintaining the "status quo" of his working conditions as a sitting judge.

"I am to remain a judge of the High Court with full benefits due to a judge... until such time as I have completed all outstanding matters," he submitted. By denying him resources and then withholding his pension, the administration, in his view, breached this implicit contract.

His rebuttal to Chief Justice Sakoane's 2023 precedent was particularly sharp. He accused the Chief Justice of selectively citing a Zimbabwean judgment while ignoring passages that emphasize the judge's personal power to decide to continue.

"This interpretation presupposes forced labour upon a judge of the High Court when they retire or resign. The Constitution itself is being interpreted against its own provisions, as it prohibits both slavery and forced labour," Monapathi wrote, dramatically elevating the stakes of the legal interpretation.

"Any attempt by any authority to dictate when and how he, as a judge, should complete matters interferes with my judicial autonomy and independence," he stated, drawing a clear line in the sand against what he perceives as executive-style overreach from the head of the judiciary.

After hearing these intense arguments, the three-judge foreign panel has reserved judgment. Acknowledging the complexity of the case and its potential to shape Lesotho's jurisprudence for years to come, they have taken the submissions under advisement.

The legal community now holds its breath. The ruling will do more than decide whether Justice Monapathi receives his pension. It will set a monumental precedent on the balance of power between a judge and the judicial administration, define the limits of post-retirement obligations, and clarify the meaning of judicial independence in a practical, pressing context.

At the center of it all remains the image of a frustrated Chief Justice, driven by a zeal to clear the dockets and uphold the court's efficiency, and a retired judge, standing on principle, defending his autonomy to the end.

Their personal and professional feud has become a conduit for a national conversation about justice, duty, and the price of independence. The verdict, when it comes, will not just settle an account; it will write a fundamental rule for the robe.

'MATHATO SEBOKA

MASERU – In a move that has ignited immediate controversy, the Council of State has proceeded to appoint new commissioners for the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), selecting Dr John Maphephe as chairperson alongside Pontšo ‘Mamatlere Matete and Dr Chelete Monyane as fellow commissioners, according to sources close to the process.

The appointment is particularly contentious as Dr Maphephe was, until recently, a UNDP consultant tasked with formulating the IEC's very voter registration strategy.

This development unfolds against a backdrop of ongoing legal disputes challenging the fairness and constitutionality of the commissioner selection process itself. A constitutional application, filed by Attorney Tumisang Mosotho and Transformation Resource Centre director, Tsikoane Peshoane - both disqualified from the selection race - remains pending before the courts.

The plaintiffs argue procedural irregularities, placing a cloud of judicial scrutiny over the new appointees before they have even formally assumed office.

Records reveal a rapid and eyebrow-raising professional transition for the new chairman.

In a letter dated January 9 the IEC's Director of Elections, Advocate Mpaphele Maqutu, introduced “Dr John Maphephe a UNDP Consultant” to various stakeholders. His mandate was clear - to “document a blueprint/road map for IEC” to build a credible and inclusive voter register.

This consultancy fell under the UNDP's Inclusive Lesotho Project for electoral support.

Merely months later, the same individual has been elevated to lead the very commission he was advising. This blurring of lines between an external consultant and the internal, constitutionally-mandated leadership raises immediate questions about perceived neutrality, the scope of his prior work, and potential conflicts of interest.

Critics argue it creates an impression of a pre-selected candidate being groomed for the role. The appointments proceed despite an active constitutional challenge. Mosotho and Peshoane's application disputes the legitimacy of the process that filtered candidates, arguing

From consultant to chairman

- Dr Maphephe's controversial ascent to IEC top post
- Council of State presses ahead with commissioner appointments amidst pending court challenges

their disqualification was unjust. The case represents a direct legal threat to the newly appointed trio's tenure, as a court ruling in the applicants' favour could invalidate the entire appointment exercise.

This is not the only legal storm buffeting the IEC. In a separate but related appeal filed last December, Mosotho and Peshoane are challenging a High Court judgment concerning IEC procurement processes, specifically the hiring of another consultant, Workplace Solutions Pty. Ltd. While that case focuses on transparency in spending, it feeds a broader narrative of public scrutiny over the IEC's internal governance and adherence to legal “rigours.”

The new commissioners will inherit an institution that has recently pursued an aggressively proactive regulatory stance. Under the leadership of Director Maqutu, the IEC has embarked on a sweeping deregistration campaign, culling political parties that fail to meet statutory requirements like submitting audited financial statements. From 65 registered parties in 2022, the political field has been drastically reduced to just 38. Purged parties include historical giants like the 63-year-old Maramatlou Freedom Party and the 19-year-old Basotho Democratic National Party (BDNP).

The IEC maintains this is a routine “clean-up” essential for credibility, but analysts note the timing coincided with the period of commissioner recruitment, suggesting a possible link between compliance enforcement and political influence over the reconstitution of the commission's leadership.

Reaction to the appointments has been mixed. Basotho National Party leader, Machesetsa Mofomobe, whose party sits in the opposition, confirmed the names and



expressed delight. “I know for a fact that those are the newly appointed Commissioners... I am delighted for these new appointments, because it is the constitutional challenge that led us to the appointments,” Mofomobe said, suggesting the move resolves a longstanding institutional gap.

However, the IEC's official channel remains cautious. IEC Media and Communications Liaison Officer, ‘Marafaele Mohloboli, stated, “I cannot really confirm or deny because as IEC we have not received any formal communication of the appointed commissioners.” The path forward is fraught with both legal and administrative challenges. The pending constitutional case hangs like a sword of

Damocles over the appointments. Furthermore, Dr Maphephe's first major task will be to oversee the finalization and implementation of a national voter registration strategy - a blueprint he himself was recently paid to draft. This unique circumstance will test public and political confidence in the commission's impartiality.

The coming months will determine whether this new leadership can navigate the legal challenges, manage perceptions of conflict, and steer the IEC towards a period of stable and trusted electoral management, or whether their appointment becomes the next flashpoint in Lesotho's turbulent electoral governance landscape.

AD leader Rapapa calls for unity as 2027 elections loom

THABISO NTAOTE

MASERU – Alliance of Democrats (AD) leader, Professor Ntooi Rapapa, has issued a resolute call for party cohesion, urging members to stand united and strengthen their ranks in preparation for the pivotal 2027 national elections.

This appeal comes at a time of significant internal turbulence, with more than 13 constituency committees actively seeking his removal. Since its founding in 2016 by former Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleki, the AD has navigated the turbulent waters of Lesotho's coalition politics. Born from a significant split within the then-ruling Democratic Congress (DC), the AD positioned itself as a new centre of political gravity, promising reform and stability.

However, its journey has been marked by the very factionalism and defections that define the nation's political landscape.

The party's early years were characterised by strategic alliances and inevitable fractures. It entered government in 2017 as part of a coalition led by Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's All Basotho Convention (ABC), an alliance that tested its identity and discipline.

Internal fights over influence, policy direction, and patronage became a recurring theme, leading to notable defections that whittled away its parliamentary numbers.

These defections, often to newly forming parties or rival coalitions, underscored the chronic instability plaguing local politics.

Despite these challenges, the AD demonstrated resilience. Its most crucial political manoeuvre came at a moment of national crisis. Following the 2022 general elections, which saw the meteoric rise of Ntsokoane Matekane's Revolution for Prosperity



(RFP), political fragmentation threatened governance. It was at this juncture, under the stewardship of then-leader Monyane Moleki, that the AD made the decisive move to join the RFP-led coalition government.

This entry provided the fledgling administration with much-needed stability and experience. Professor Rapapa's ascent to the party helm in 2023 was itself a testament to navigating internal currents. His leadership has since been defined by a steadfast commitment to the coalition, even when tested.

The most severe test emerged later the same year, when a formidable motion of no confidence threatened to topple Prime Minister Matekane.

At the time, party insiders alleged that former leader Moleki questioned the AD's continued support for the government, creating a powerful internal faction aligned with the opposition's push. Rapapa stood firm. “I do not dream of abandoning my responsibilities for this party, never,” he asserted then, a stance he reiterates

today. The motion ultimately failed, saved by the Basotho Action Party's entry into the coalition, but the episode laid bare the persistent “two centres of power” within the AD.

Rapapa's leadership was forced to confront not only external opposition but also internal dissent.

Reflecting on the 2022 election tsunami led by the RFP, Rapapa acknowledges it was a “hard hit for every party.” He reveals that powerful voices within the AD advocated for the party's dissolution and absorption into the then-infant RFP.

“I stood firm with ‘M'e ‘Maboiketlo Maliehe,’ Rapapa recalls. “Only the two of us believed the AD could still exist and have impact even with the advent of the RFP. I dearly respect that woman even today.”

This personal resolve was mirrored in his home constituency of Mosalemane, where he worked strenuously to reassure members that he would not desert them amid speculation of the AD's collapse. His subsequent victory there

against his own brother, Tšoinyana Rapapa of the ABC, was a deeply personal vindication.

“This is when it becomes clear that being a leader is not by one's choice, but by the choice of the people,” Rapapa notes.

Under his leadership, the AD has shown signs of organic growth. The party claimed a strong third-place finish in the 2023 local government elections and now boasts over seventy councillors nationwide - a footprint Rapapa attributes directly to his inclusive and persistent leadership style.

“The AD is in a great position to head in the right direction. These numbers are crucial in the lifeline of a political party,” he states.

Yet, the spectre of past defections and the current orchestrated campaign against his leadership serve as a stark reminder of the party's volatile history. The call for unity, therefore, is not merely rhetorical but a strategic imperative. As the 2027 elections approach, Rapapa envisions a party that is battle-ready but not battle-weary from internal strife.

“The next government needs to be led by credible leadership and a high level of competency. Its longevity rests on the leaders' credible associates supporting the same vision,” Rapapa stressed, framing the upcoming contest as one requiring discipline and shared purpose.

For the AD, a party forged in split, hardened by defections, and stabilised through coalition, the path to 2027 is fraught with familiar dangers. Professor Rapapa's message is clear: survival and success hinge on closing ranks, learning from the fractures of the past, and presenting a united front to the Basotho electorate.

Whether this call can silence the baying for his ouster and consolidate the party's structure will be the defining story of the AD's coming months.

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AI and the future of work: turning disruption into opportunity for Lesotho's workforce



Staff Reporter

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping workplaces across the world. While headlines often focus on job losses, a more balanced picture is emerging — one that highlights adaptation, new skills and fresh opportunities. For Lesotho, the rise of AI presents not only challenges, but also a chance to future-proof its workforce.

AI is already being used to automate routine tasks such as data entry, customer queries and basic reporting. In some organisations, this has led to job restructuring or role redefinition. However, technology is also creating demand for new skills and responsibilities that did not

exist a decade ago.

“AI is changing how we work, not simply replacing workers,” says Thabo Mofokeng, a Maseru-based economic analyst. “The real opportunity lies in how quickly we adapt.”

A shifting workplace landscape

In Lesotho, where formal employment opportunities are limited, any technological shift is understandably met with concern. Many employees worry about being left behind as digital tools become more common in banks, government offices, education institutions and private companies.

Yet history shows that technology rarely eliminates work entirely — it transforms it. The introduction of computers,

mobile phones and the internet followed a similar path, initially disrupting jobs before creating new industries.

“Every major innovation changes the job market,” Mofokeng explains. “The difference this time is speed, which means training and reskilling must happen faster.”

New skills, new opportunities

While some routine jobs are declining, demand is rising for workers who can manage, interpret and apply technology. Digital administration, system support, data handling and creative problem-solving are becoming increasingly important across sectors.

Continued on Page 8



GOVERNMENT OF LESOTHO

Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture (MTSAC)

Request for Proposal

Country: **The Kingdom of Lesotho**
 Name of Projects: **Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP) Lodge Concession and Nazareth Caravan Park (NCP)Concession**
 Sector: **Consultancy**
 Reference No.: **RFP No. MTSAC/5/5/2/SNP – For SNP**
RFP No. MTSAC/6/5/1/NCP – For NCP

(a) 1. The Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture (MTSAC), invites Request for Proposals (RFP) to procure services of a Private Party through a Concession contract for the Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP) Lodge and Nazareth Caravan Park (NCP)Concession.

(b) 2. The Projects are being procured and this RFP is being issued in accordance with the Public Procurement Act 2023.

3. Interested eligible Applicants may obtain further information from the MTSAC at the address below during office hours **8:30 a.m. to 16:00 p.m.** A complete set of tender documents in the English Language for either **Sehlabathebe National Park/and Nazareth Caravan Park** may be obtained by interested Applicants on the submission of a written application to the address below.

Email Address: tenders.mtsac@gov.ls Cc: procurement.mtsac@gov.ls.
 The document will be sent by Electronic Mail.

Pre-Bid Meeting will be held: **Yes**Date: **3rd February 2026** Location: **Nazareth Caravan Park – Maseru - Nazareth** Time: **10:15 a.m.**Date: **5th February 2026** Location: **Sehlabathebe National Park – Qacha's Nek** Time: **10:15 a.m.**

2.1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW FOR SEHLABATHEBE NATIONAL PARK

The Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture has proposed to:

(i) Engage a Private Party through a Concession contract to manage the new SNP Lodge and the old lodge (as one facility) for a **15-year Service Period**.

(ii) The Private Party will be contractually responsible for the upgrade and operate of the SNP Lodge and Old Lodge facilities, which include financing the costs of all developments, repairs and necessary rehabilitation for the infrastructure and facilities on the site.

2.1.2 This RFP is intended to solicit bid submissions from private firms that are interested in assuming responsibility for overseeing the upgrade and management of commercial operations at then New

SNP Lodge and Old Lodge facilities through a Concession contract with the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture

2.1.3 PROJECT OVERVIEW FOR NAZARETH CARAVAN PARK

The Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture has proposed to:

(iii) Engage a Company / Consortium through a Concession contract to develop, manage and operate the Nazareth Caravan Park for a **15-year Service Period**.

(iv) The Company / Consortium will be contractually responsible for the design, development, maintenance and operation of the Nazareth Caravan Park, which includes financing the costs of all construction developments of the infrastructure and facilities on the site.

2.1.4 This RFP is intended to solicit bid submissions from private firms that are interested in assuming responsibility for overseeing the upgrade and management of commercial operations at then Nazareth Caravan Park (formerly Toll Gate) facilities through a Concession contract with the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture

DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSIONS

All bidders must submit **Valid Traders License, Tax Clearance and Value Added Tax (VAT) Certificate** where applicable. Applications for Request for Proposal MUST be submitted in clearly marked “**Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP) Lodge Concession**” envelopes for Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP) Lodge tender and “**Nazareth Caravan Park (NCP) Concession**” envelopes for Nazareth Caravan Park (NCP) tender and be delivered to the address below by **10:00 a.m. on 27thFebruary 2026**. The opening of the Applications shall be at: **27thFebruary 2026, 10:30 a.m. Local Time at the Boardroom, 3rd Floor, Post Office Building, Corner Constitution and Palace Road**. In addition to the original, the number of copies to be submitted with the Application is: **two (2) copies of the original**.

Late applications shall be rejected.

Name of PE: **The Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture**Name of Officer and Title: **The Principal Secretary**

Postal address: **P.O. BOX 729, Maseru, Lesotho, 3rd Floor, Reception Area, Post Office Building, Corner Constitution Road, and Palace Road**. Telephone Number: **+266) 2232 1208**

The Government of Lesotho reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders/bids, or to annul the tender at any time without incurring any liability to any bidder/tenderer

Principal Secretary
Government of Lesotho – Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture

Back to School: Educators driving progress in Lesotho's classrooms and campuses



Staff Reporter

As schools and tertiary institutions across Lesotho reopen for the academic year, the familiar phrase “back to school” signals more than the return of learners to classrooms. For teachers and lecturers, it marks a fresh opportunity to reset, innovate and continue shaping the nation’s future workforce.

While education is often discussed in terms of challenges, the start of the school year also highlights the resilience, professionalism and commitment of educators who operate in one of the country’s most impactful workplaces. From a business and development perspective, the education sector remains a key driver of human capital and long-term economic growth.

Education as a professional and purpose-driven workplace

Schools and universities function as structured organisations with systems, targets and accountability. Teachers and lecturers operate as professionals who manage time, performance and people on a daily basis.

“Back to school is a busy time, but it’s also motivating,” says ’Masebelisoa Mokoena, a secondary school teacher in Maseru. “You come back with a clear purpose — to help learners start the year strong and set good habits early.”

For many educators, the first weeks of term are about establishing direction. Lesson plans are refined, classroom routines are introduced and expectations are clearly communicated.

This early investment creates stability and momentum that benefits learners throughout the year.

A strategic start to the academic year

From a workplace perspective, the beginning of the academic year resembles the launch of a new operational cycle. Educators review previous performance, set new goals and adjust strategies to improve outcomes.

“At the start of the year, you reflect on what worked and what didn’t,” explains Dr Thabo Ndlovu, a lecturer at a public university in the region. “It’s an opportunity to improve teaching methods, strengthen engagement and support students better.”

At tertiary level, lecturers balance teaching with research and academic leadership, contributing not only to student success but also to institutional growth and knowledge production in Lesotho and the wider region.

Embracing technology and innovation

Technology has become an important tool in modern education, transforming classrooms and campuses across the country. Digital platforms, online resources and blended learning approaches are increasingly supporting both teachers and learners.

“Technology has made planning and communication more efficient,” says Neo Rakotsoane, a primary school teacher in Leribe. “It helps us track progress, share resources and stay connected with learners and parents.”

For lecturers, learning management systems and digital libraries have

expanded access to information and improved academic collaboration. When supported by training and infrastructure, technology continues to enhance productivity and innovation within the education workplace.

Leadership and collaboration as strengths

Strong leadership and teamwork are among the most valuable assets in successful schools and institutions. Principals, heads of departments and academic leaders play a key role in setting a positive tone during the back-to-school period.

“When leadership is supportive, teachers feel encouraged to give their best,” says Mokoena. “Teamwork makes a big difference, especially at the beginning of the year.”

Collaboration among educators allows for shared planning, peer support and professional growth. Schools that promote cooperation often experience smoother transitions into the academic year and improved learner outcomes.

Educators building Lesotho’s human capital

Beyond classrooms, teachers and lecturers are shaping the skills, values and work ethic of Lesotho’s future professionals. Every sector of the economy — from health and engineering to business and public service — relies on the foundation laid by educators.

“Education is an investment with long-term returns,” notes Dr Ndlovu. “When educators are supported, the entire country benefits.”

This perspective positions teachers and lecturers not only as public servants but as key contributors to national development and economic resilience.

Wellbeing, balance and sustainable performance

While the start of the year is demanding, many institutions are increasingly recognising the importance of staff wellbeing. Professional development, peer support and realistic workload planning are helping educators sustain high performance.

“Teaching requires energy and focus,” says Rakotsoane. “When teachers are supported, learners respond positively.”

A positive workplace culture encourages motivation, retention and excellence — principles that apply as much to education as they do to business.

A year of opportunity

Back to school represents more than a return to routine. It is a moment of renewal for educators across Lesotho — a chance to inspire, innovate and lead.

As the academic year unfolds, the commitment of teachers and lecturers remains central to national progress. By recognising and supporting education as a professional workplace, Lesotho continues to invest in its most valuable asset: its people.

In celebrating the start of the school year, the country also celebrates the educators who make learning possible — not only as teachers, but as builders of the future.



Specific Procurement Notice
Request for Bids
Small Works
(Two-Envelope Bidding Process)

Procurement of:

**DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACTOR FOR
 SEA KA IRRIGATION SCHEME QUTHING DISTRICT, LESOTHO**

Employer: Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, SADP II Project

Project: Tsikoane Irrigation Scheme

Contract title: Design-Build of Seaka Irrigation Scheme

Country: Lesotho

Loan No. /Credit No. / Grant No.: P165228

RFB No: LS-MAFS-530022-CW-RFB

Issued on: 24th December 2025

1. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, SADP II Project has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the SADP II Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for Design-Build of Tsikoane Irrigation Scheme.
2. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, SADP II now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for Design-Build of Tsikoane Irrigation Scheme, construction period Four months, Seaka, Quthing No margin of preference applicable, etc.]
3. Bidding will be conducted through **open international competitive procurement** using Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers February 2025 Procurement Regulations edition as per legal agreement" ("Procurement Regulations"), and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.
4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the **Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, SADP II Project, and procurement@sadpii.org.ls** and inspect the bidding document during office hours **08:00 to 16:30 hours or download the bid document at the address given below;** <https://www.sadpii.org.ls/procurement/>
5. Bids must be delivered to the address below [*state address at the end of this RFB*] on or before **30th January 2026 at 12:00hrs**. Electronic bidding **will not** be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. The outer Bid envelopes marked "**ORIGINAL BID**", and the inner envelopes marked "**TECHNICAL PART**" will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend, at the address below [*state address at the end of this RFB on [Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Livestock offices SADP II, Mosheshoe II Maseru 14:00hrs and 30th January 2026]*. All envelopes marked "**FINANCIAL PART**" shall remain unopened and will be held in safe custody of the Employer until the second public Bid opening.
6. All Bids must be accompanied by a **Bid Security of LSL400,000.00**.
7. The address(es) referred to above is:

Procurement Office
 Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Livestock offices, SADP II Project, Mosheshoe II
 P.O.Box 24, Maseru 100, Lesotho
procurement@sadpii.org.ls, +266 22312578
www.sadpii.co.ls



Kingdom of Lesotho

**MINISTRY OF THE
 PUBLIC SERVICE
 REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

**PROJECT NAME: JOB EVALUATION AND SALARY REVIEW
 FOR SECURITY SERVICES**

RFP REF: MPS/001 OF 2025/2026

Proposals are invited from eligible Consultants and or firms to conduct a **JOB EVALUATION AND SALARY REVIEW FOR SECURITY SERVICES**-Lesotho Defence Force (LDF), National Security Services (NSS), Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS), and Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS)

A detailed Request for Proposal (RFP) document shall be obtainable from Tuesday the 13th January 2026 at Procurement Unit 1st Floor, Office No. 1013/1014, The Sun Gardens Unit 1, Nightingale Road, Opposite Palace of Justice, Maseru at a non-refundable fee of **One Thousand Maloti Only (M1,000.00)**. Payment must be made to the following banking details:
ACCOUNT HOLDER: Central Bank of Lesotho, Maseru Lesotho, Account Name: Main Revenue Epicor 10, ACCOUNT NUMBER: 0101403715016, BRANCH CODE: 586611, CODE: CBLELSMXXX, REFERENCE: 343 Tender and company name.

Last date for submission of proposals is **Thursday the 5th February 2026 at 12:00hrs**.

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NATIONAL DRUG SERVICE ORGANISATION

P O Box 1167
 Mafeteng 900
 Lesotho
 Tel:(+266)2221 5300
 Fax:(+266)2270 1340

INVITATION TO REGISTER AS AN APPROVED SUPPLIER ON THE NATIONAL DRUG SERVICE ORGANISATION'S PREQUALIFIED SUPPLIER DATABASE

1. The National Drug Service Organization (NDSO) is a Trading Account for the Ministry of Health in Lesotho. It is mandated to procure, store and distribute Medicines, Medical Supplies and Laboratory Consumables for the Health Institutions in Lesotho. NDSO was legally established through a gazette Supplement No.4 to Gazette No.19 of the 2nd March 2007.

2. NDSO invites legally registered suppliers interested in doing business with the organisation to register on its database. The Organisation specifically request service providers in the following categories:

NO.	CATEGORY	SCOPE OF SUPPLY / SERVICES
1	Travel, and Transport Services	Travel agency services, transport hire, including airline
2	Valuation and Asset Disposal Services	Asset valuation, auctioneering and disposal services
3	Branding, Media and Communication Services	Corporate branding and promotional materials, graphic design, print media and advertising agencies, radio advertising, photography and videography
4	Accommodation, Catering, Conferencing and Events Services	Accommodation, Catering services, conferencing facilities, event management
5	Logistics, Courier and Clearing Services	Courier services, customs clearing and forwarding
6	ICT Equipment and Electronics	ICT equipment, electronics, and related accessories
7	Office Equipment, Furniture and General Supplies	Office equipment and stationery, furniture and fixtures, general supplies
8	Printing, Publishing and Content Services	Printing and photocopying, editing and publishing
9	Facilities Management and Maintenance Services	Facility maintenance and repairs, fumigation and pest control
10	Utilities, Power and Environmental Systems	Power supply solutions (generators, UPS, solar), HVAC systems including cold rooms and refrigeration units
11	Fleet Maintenance and Vehicle Support Services	Tyres, spare parts, panel beating, repairs and service, towing and accessories
12	Legal and Professional Services	Legal advisory and related professional services
13	Health, Safety and Environmental Services	Personal protective equipment (PPE), Pharmaceutical waste management services
14	Construction, Engineering and Technical Works	Construction and renovation of building facilities, electrical installations and repairs, plumbing and sanitation works, fire detection and suppression systems, cold room construction and maintenance
15	Insurance service	Staff/employees Property Fleet and equipment

3. Mandatory Documents for submission

Interested vendors must submit the following mandatory documents:

- Company Profile
- A valid Tax Clearance certificate
- A valid Traders' License or equivalent
- Three Reference letters for services recently provided

4. Submission Instruction:

Mandatory documents should be send in **PDF format** not exceeding 9MB by e-mail to tenders@ndso.org.ls. The e-mail subject should be **Supplier Database 2026**.

Suppliers should on the body of the email explicitly show the category and scope of supply that they fall under for proper classification. If one supply falls in more than one category, all those categories must be listed.

The deadline for registration and submission of mandatory documents is **Thursday, February 12th, 2026, at 17:00 pm**.

For further clarification, please contact the Assistant Procurement manager by email at tenders@ndso.org.ls Telephone +266 2221 5300.



LESOTHO HIGHLANDS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

P.O. Box 7332, Maseru 100, Lesotho. Telephone: (+266) 311 280 Fax: (+266) 22 310 632

REQUEST FOR QUOTATIONS - CONDUCTING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

THE LESOTHO HIGHLANDS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY INVITES QUOTATIONS FROM HEALTH PRACTITIONERS TO CONDUCT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT FOR LHDA WORKERS EXPOSED TO OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS.

DOCUMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR COLLECTION AT LESOTHO HIGHLANDS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, PROCUREMENT OFFICE, 7TH FLOOR, LESOTHO BANK TOWER, KINGSWAY; MASERU, OR CAN BE DOWNLOADED AT
<https://www.lhda.org.ls/procurement/currentTenders>

SEALED QUOTATIONS CLEARLY MARKED '**QUOTATIONS - CONDUCTING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS**' BEARING NO IDENTIFICATION OF THE BIDDER SHOULD BE DEPOSITED AT LESOTHO HIGHLANDS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, 7TH FLOOR, LESOTHO BANK TOWER NOT LATER THAN 1200 HOURS ON THE 20TH FEBRUARY 2026



ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROPOSED SOUTHERN REGION COURT COMPLEX PROJECT IN MOHALE'S HOEK

Official Invitation to a Public Meeting

The public, Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs), local authorities, and stakeholders are hereby invited to attend a public meeting regarding the proposed. The public meeting forms part of the Public Participation Process (PPP) undertaken for the project. It aims to present the findings of the ESIA Draft Report, as well as to receive comments, concerns, and inputs from stakeholders before finalisation of the report.

Meeting Details

Date: 30th January 2026 Time: 12h00

Venue: Anglican Church of Lesotho (Chache), Mohale's Hoek

Purpose of the Public Meeting

- To present the ESIA Draft report.
- To outline anticipated environmental and social impacts
- To inform stakeholders of proposed mitigation measures
- To provide an opportunity for public comment and participation before finalisation of the report.

Access to the ESIA Draft Report

The ESIA Draft Report is available for public review and comment at the following locations:

Physical Access

- Chief Office – Moeaneng, Thabaneng
- District Council
- Urban Council
- District Administrator Office
- Reserve Chief Office
- Electronic copy is available upon request

Written comments on the Draft Report may be submitted:

- During the public meeting, and/or
- Via email

The closing date for comments is **05/02/2026**

All comments received will be considered and incorporated, where applicable, into the Final ESIA Report.

For additional information or clarification, please contact:

Mathabo Lerotholi
 Cell: +266 62649869/ 5920 5393
 Email: greenvcc@gmail.com

Mpepuoa Thulo
 Cell: +266 5910 6397
 Email: mpepuoagthulo@gmail.com



NOTICE OF SEKHAMETSI INVESTMENT CONSORTIUM LTD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given of the **Annual General Meeting** of **SEKHAMETSI INVESTMENT CONSORTIUM LTD (SMIC)** to be held on **Sunday, 8 February 2026** at **Avani Lesotho (Lesotho Sun)**. Registration will start from **08h00 to 09h00**.

Any SMIC shareholder who is entitled to attend and vote at the meeting may appoint a proxy or proxies to be present and speak on his/her stead and where appropriate vote on a poll.

The proxy forms are available at the SMIC offices situated at 1st Floor Sekhametsi Place or may be emailed to the shareholder upon request made to the office on info@sekhambetsi.org.ls. Filled proxy forms should be hand delivered to the office or emailed to the same address no later than **16h00 on Friday 6 February 2026**.

A Shareholder, which is a company or any registered entity, may by resolution, authorize any person to act as its representative in the meeting. The copy of the Resolution and nomination instrument can be hand delivered at the SMIC offices situated at 1st Floor Sekhametsi Place or by email to info@sekhambetsi.org.ls not later than **16h00 on Friday 6 February 2026**.

The electronic pack for the meeting has been delivered to the shareholders by email. If any of the shareholders know of others who have not received the correspondences from the SMIC office, kindly advise them to contact the office on **58882645** or write an email to the company's email address info@sekhambetsi.org.ls for assistance.

Issued by:
Adv Thabiso Mohapi
SMIC Company Secretary

TSEBISO EA PHUTHEHO E AKARETSANG EA SELEMO LE SELEMO (AGM) – SEKHAMETSI INVESTMENT CONSORTIUM LTD

HO TSEBISOA litho tsohle tsa **Sekhametsi Investment Consortium Ltd (SMIC)** hore phutheho e akaretsang ea selemo (Annual General Meeting – AGM) e tla tsoaroa ka **Sontaha sa la 8 Hlakola 2026, Avani Lesotho (Lesotho Sun)**. Ngoliso ea ho kena phuthehong e tla etsoa ho tloha ka **08h00 ho isa 09h00**.

Setho sefe kapa sefe sa SMIC se nang le tokelo ea ho ba teng le ho ketha kopanong, se ka tlisa moemeli (proxy) kapa baemeli, ho ba teng, ho bua le ho khetha ho latela Molao le Melaoana ea Lik'hamphani oa 2011.

Liforomo tsa boemeli (proxy) li ka fumaneha liofising tsa SMIC tse Mokatong oa Pele, Sekhametsi Place, kapa li ka romelloa ka email ho setho ho info@sekhambetsi.org.ls Liforomo tse tlatsitsoeng ka bottalo li ka tlisoa ka letsoho liofising tsa SMIC tse Mokatong oa Pele, Sekhametsi Place, kapa ho romelloa ka email atereseng e boletsoeng pele kapa ka hora ea bone **ka Labohlano**, la la **6 Hlakola 2026**.

Setho seo e leng k'hamphani kapa se ngolisitsoeng ka molao, se ka romela qeto ea sona (resolution), ho fana ka tumello ho moromuo oa sona hore a se emele phuthehong. Kopi ea qeto eo hammoho le tokomane ea ho khetha moemeli (proxy) li ka tlisoa ka letsoho liofising tsa SMIC tse Mokatong oa Pele, Sekhametsi Place, kapa ho romelloa ka email ho info@sekhambetsi.org.ls pele kapa ka hora ea bone **ka Labohlano**, la la **6 Hlakola 2026**.

Tokomane ea litaba tse tla buuo phethohong (AGM pack) e se e rometsoe ka email ho litho. Litho li fe kapa li fe tse tsebang ba bang ba sa fumanang molaetsa o tsoang ofising ea SMIC ka litaba tsena ba kopuoa ho ba bolella hore ba ikopanye le ofisi ka nomoro ea mohala ea **5888 2645** kapa ba ngolle ofisi ho info@sekhambetsi.org.ls mo ba tla thusoa.

TSEBISO E ETSOA KE
Adv Thabiso Mohapi
Mongoli oa Boto - Sekhametsi Investment Consortium Ltd



THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

WOOL AND MOHAIR VALUE CHAIN COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT

Applicants are hereby notified that due to unforeseen circumstances, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition Advertisement which ended on the 22/08/2025 at 16:00 hrs; for Project Coordinating Unit Position of National Breeder Expert is hereby withdrawn.



We Are Hiring

Temporary Clients Service
Consultant Thaba-Tsaka
<https://url-shortener.me/8UX5>

Sales Manager Mohale's Hoek
<https://url-shortener.me/8U6C>

Interested candidates should apply online before or on the 6th February 2026

[Apply Now](#)

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Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition

WaMCoP

P.O. Box 24

Maseru 100



RE-ADVERTISEMENT

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

(Individual Consultants)

LESOTHO
WOOL AND MOHAIR VALUE CHAIN COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT

Assignment title: International Consultant for Wool and Mohair Policy Review

Reference no.: LSO-2000003942-0019-CS-ICS

The Government of Lesotho has received financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) towards the cost of Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the recruitment of consulting services provided by an individual consultant as part of the post of International Consultant for Wool and Mohair Policy Review.

The use of any IFAD financing shall be subject to IFAD's approval, pursuant to the terms and conditions of the financing agreement, as well as IFAD's rules, policies and procedures. IFAD and its officials, agents and employees shall be held harmless from and against all suits, proceedings, claims, demands, losses and liability of any kind or nature brought by any party in connection with Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project.

The consulting services ("the services") includes review and refine the wool and mohair sector policy to enhance growth, development of the sector, quality standards, improve market competitiveness, and increase returns for producers with coherence and connectivity within the wool and mohair value chain. The assignment is expected to take 120 working days. The applicant consultant will work under the supervision of the WaMCoP PCU with support from the DOM, the selected consultant will be responsible for the sets of deliverables above.

This request for expressions of interest (REOI) follows the general procurement notice that appeared on Lesotho Times on 1 May 2025 and on The Reporter on 2 May 2025.

The attention of interested consultants is drawn to IFAD's Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Policy¹ and the Revised IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption its Activities and Operations². The latter sets forth IFAD's provisions on prohibited practices. IFAD further strives to ensure a safe working environment free of harassment, including sexual harassment, and free of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in its activities and operations as detailed in its IFAD Policy to Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.³ By entering in this document, you certify to have read, understood, and agreed to be bound by the Privacy Policy of IFAD.⁴

Interested consultants shall not have any actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest. Consultants with an actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest shall be disqualified unless otherwise explicitly approved by the Fund. Consultants are considered to have a conflict of interest if they a) have a relationship that provides them with undue or undisclosed information about or influence over the selection process and the execution of the contract, or b) have a business or family relationship with a member of the client's board of directors or its personnel, the Fund or its personnel, or any other individual that was, has been or might reasonably be directly or indirectly involved in any part of (i) the preparation of the REOI, (ii) the selection process for this procurement, or (iii) execution of the contract. Consultants have an ongoing obligation to disclose any situation of actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest during preparation of the EO, the selection process or the contract execution. Failure to properly disclose any of said situations may lead to appropriate actions, including the disqualification of the consultant, the termination of the contract and any other as appropriate under the IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Projects and Operations.

The following conflict of interest rules shall apply with respect to recruitment of government/client staff within the consultant's proposed team:

a. No member of the client's board of directors or current employees of the client (whether part time, or full time, paid or unpaid, in leave status, etc.) shall be proposed or work as, or on behalf of, any consultant.

- b. Except as provided in sub-clause 8.6(d), no current employees of the government shall work as consultants or as personnel under their own ministries, departments or agencies.
- c. Recruiting former client or government employees to perform services for their former ministries, departments or agencies is acceptable provided no conflict of interest exists.
- d. If a consultant proposes any government employee as personnel in their technical proposal, such personnel must have written certification from the government confirming that: (i) they will be on leave without pay from the time of their official proposal submission and will remain on leave without pay until the end of their assignment with the consultant and they are allowed to work full-time outside of their previous official position; or (ii) they will resign or retire from government employment on or prior to the contract award date. Under no circumstances shall any individuals described in (i) and (ii) be responsible for approving the implementation of this contract. Such certification shall be provided to the client by the consultant as part of its technical proposal.
- e. In the case where a consultant seeks to engage the services of any person falling under ITC sub-clauses 8.6(a) – 8.6(d), who may have left the client within a period of less than twelve (12) months of the date of this RFP, it must obtain a written "no objection" from the client for the inclusion of such a person, prior to the consultant's submission of its proposal.

The Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project now invites eligible Individual consultants ("consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the services in the form of a curriculum vitae (CV). A consultant will be selected in accordance with the individual consultant selection (ICS) method set out in IFAD's Project Procurement Handbook that can be accessed via the IFAD website at www.ifad.org/project-procurement. Interviews will not be conducted as part of the selection process.

The shortlisting criteria are:

- A minimum of a post graduate degree in Economics, Development Planning, or relevant discipline is required.
- A PhD in a relevant discipline will be considered an added advantage.
- At least 10 years' experience in the development of policies, plans and strategies, with at least 5 years specifically related to the public sector.
- Working experience with the government of Lesotho in development of sector policies, strategies, and implementation program is desired.
- Experience in wool and mohair industry.

Any request for clarification on this REOI should be sent via e-mail to the address below no later than **16:00hrs on 04 February 2026, Lesotho time**. The client will provide responses to all clarification requests by **16:00hrs on 06 February 2026, Lesotho time**.

Expressions of interest in the form of curriculum vitae (CV) must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail or by e-mail) by **12:00hrs on 12 February 2026, Lesotho time**.

Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project
Attn: Procurement and Contracts Manager
P.O. Box 24
Department of Livestock Services
Old Airport Road, Mosheshoe II

e-mail: procurement@wamcop.org.ls and cc: imonethi@wamcop.org.ls and mlejota-thakong@wamcop.org.ls

¹ The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/document-detail/asset/41942012>.

² The policy is accessible at https://www.ifad.org/anticorruption_policy.

³ The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/document-detail/asset/40738506>.

⁴ The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/privacy>.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST – EXTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES



CHAI began working in Lesotho in 2004 to help the government reduce HIV by introducing better treatment for adults and children and eliminating mother-to-child transmission. CHAI-Lesotho program has grown since its inception to managing multiple projects and programs serving over 350,000 people in the country, including children, mothers and caregivers.

CHAI invites qualified **External Audit Firms** to express their interest in providing external audit services on CHAI's Financial Statements for the period **1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025**.

Interested firms are advised to:

- Send their Expression of Interest (EOI) to procurementlesotho@clintonhealthaccess.org
- Write subject as: **EOI: CHLES/AUD/26/01 – CHAI LS Audit Services**
- Include the following **mandatory documents** in the EOI:
 1. Valid copy of the company's license or registration certificate or certificate of incorporation.
 2. Valid Lesotho Institute of Accountants (LIA) practicing Certificate
 3. Valid Tax Clearance Certificate
 4. VAT Registration (if applicable)
 5. Business / Company Profile (showing firm's experience; max 5 pages)
- **CLOSING DATE** for EOI: 23 January 2026 at 16:00hrs



Government of Lesotho
Invitation to tender

**The Ministry of Law and Justice (MLJ)
Government Printing**

The Ministry of Justice and Law invites tenders from suitable qualified registered businesses for the supply and delivery of **Stationery, Material and Paper** for the fiscal year 2026/2027 for **three years' closed framework agreement**.

Tender Ref No.: **MLJ/ GP / 01 / 2026 / 2027**

Instruction to Bidders

1. REQUIREMENTS
Interested bidders or tenderers are advised that detailed specifications for this tender have been included in the bidding documents. Interested bidders or tenderers who wish to buy bidding documents are requested to refer to the Section on Sale of Tender Documents in this Invitation to Tender.

2. MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Ref. No.	Mandatory Requirements
1	Valid Traders License and/or Business identification card
2	Valid Tax Clearance certificate
3	VAT Registration Certificate (where applicable)
4	Certificate of incorporation and company extract detailing operations, ownership (share allocation) and identification documents of owners (sole proprietors and partnership should provide equivalence)
5	Three months bank statement for a period not exceeding six months before the issue of the tender
6	A bid security of M20000.00 in a form of Bank Guarantee valid 90 (ninety) days after bid opening
7	Recent letter confirming the availability of credit line from the bank
8	Certificate of Bona Fide Tendering to be completed, stamped and signed by one of the Directors.

3. PRE BID MEETING

There shall be a compulsory pre bid meeting at Government Printing at 10:00am on the 29th January 2026 and on the 5th February 2026.

4. SALE OF TENDER DOCUMENTS

Tender Documents and detailed specifications are obtainable at a payment of a **non-refundable fee of M1,000.00 (One Thousand Maloti Only)**. Bidders are expected to pay at the **Accounts Office Government Printing and Stationery**. The receipt has to be presented to the **Procurement Unit Office Government Printing and Stationery**. Document can only be purchased during office hours between **9:00am to 2:30pm from 22nd January to 04th March 2026**.

5. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF TENDERS

All bidders **must** deposit their bid documents in the Tender Box situated at the Government Printing and Stationery Industrial area near Maseru Bridge.

Tenders in duplicate (**one (1) original and four (4) copies**) shall be submitted in sealed envelope **bearing no identification of bidders** and must be clearly marked and addressed to:

The secretary, Procurement Committee, Ministry of Justice and Law, P.O.Box 33 Maseru 100 Lesotho "Supply of Stationery" for Stationery Items, "Supply of Paper" for Paper Items and "Supply of Material" for Material Items.

6. CLOSING AND OPENING DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF TENDERS

The closing date for the bids is **12th March 2026 at 10:00 am and tenders will be publicly open on the 12th March 2026 at 10:30 am**.

7. LATE TENDERS

Late Tenders **SHALL NOT BE ACCEPTED**

8. VALIDITY PERIOD OF TENDERS

Tenders shall remain valid for 90 days following the date of public opening of Tenders to enable completion of evaluation processes, contract award, cooling off-period and any other mandatory tender processes.

9. AWARD OF CONTRACT

The award of a contract shall not be based on the lowest price but on long-term value for money and whole life cost of the contract and compliance to mandatory requirements, and adherence to specifications and instructions to bidders.

10. OTHER COSTS

PRICES should include all relevant and essential unavoidable costs e.g., transport costs, inflationary factors, insurance, unforeseen circumstances that might arise during the term of the tender and should be **VAT INCLUSIVE**

11. ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF TENDERS

- a) The Procurement Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Tenders.
- b) The Procurement Committee reserves the right to order a re-tender of this requirement, postpone implementation or to cancel the process.

12. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR CLARIFICATIONS

For additional information or request for clarifications on issues concerning the request should be in writing, please contact the following office:
**Ministry of Justice and Law
Department of Government Printing and Stationery,
Maseru**
Tel: +266 22 311 160/22 313 023
Email: lawjusticeprocurement@gov.ls

The National University of Lesotho



The National University of Lesotho invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for the following posts:

POST NO. 's	POSITION	DEPARTMENT / FACULTY	DEADLINE
0795 (Re-advert)	Senior Lecturer/ Lecturer in Education Policy Studies	Educational Foundations / Education	20 February 2026
1860	Senior Lecturer/ Lecturer	Political & Administrative Studies / Social Sciences	20 February 2026
0514 (Re-advert)	Assistant Registrar (AR)	Thomas Mofolo Library	04 February 2026

FOR POST NO. 0514, ALL APPLICANTS WHO HAD APPLIED IN THE PREVIOUS ADVERTISEMENT (CLOSING DATE WHICH WAS 17 JUNE 2025), NEED NOT TO APPLY AGAIN.

For full job description please refer to NUL Website: www.nul.ls or visit our HR Office at Roma for a hard copy. Please quote the post number you are applying for. For further clarifications call +266 22340247 or +266 22340601 ext 3842/3844.

In your application letter, include the names and contact details of your three (3) referees

Please combine covering letter, CV, certificates, Identity Document/Passport and email them in read only PDF (Compressed file, ONE DOCUMENT, if not, will be disqualified). All applications should be emailed to dhr@nul.ls and addressed to:

Director - Human Resources
National University of Lesotho
Roma 180 - Lesotho



**RE - INVITATION TO TENDER NO:
BDC/D/2/2025/2026**

The Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police (MOLGCHP) – Berea District Council has received funds from the Government of Lesotho and intends to apply these funds for **Supply and Delivery of Construction Materials for Makeoane Gravel Roads Project**. Therefore, eligible suppliers who own **Hardware Stores or Specialised Dealer of Construction Materials** are invited to bid for the financial years 2025-2026 to 2026-2027.

REGISTRATION OF THE TENDER DOCUMENT

Tender documents are available at Berea District Council at a non-refundable registration fee for participation amounting to **M2, 000.00 (Two thousand Maloti only)** during working hours paid into the Standard Lesotho Bank a/c No: 9080006362180 (Reference be company's name). The stamped Bank Confirmation to be taken to Accounts Office at Berea Urban Council for receipt.

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

Supply and Delivery of Construction Materials for Makeoane Gravel Roads Project.

There are Two (2) lots made up of the following items and specifications will be shown in the bid document.

Description of an item	Size	Qty (+/-)
1. Heavy duty Diesel Generator	7.5KVA,25 litres SRGE 8500D	1
2. Outdoor solar light. Solar powered LED light with motion sensor.	-Post mounted height 3.5m	4
3. Cement High strength	50 kg	1500
4. Galvanised pipes	2400mm*2.6mm	30
5. Gabion basket corrugated	2m*1m*1m	200
6. Tin hut	4m*3m with insulation	1

LOT 2

Crushed stone	19mm	555 tones
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The bidder may submit for one or two lots

TIME TABLE

Activity	Dates
ITT ISSUED	20 th January 2026
PRE BID MEETING	2 nd February 2026
TENDER SUBMISSION DATE & TIME	16 th February 2026, 10:00 AM
TENDER OPENING DATE AND TIME	16 th February 2026, 10:30 AM
EVALUATION AND CONTRACT AWARD	16 th February 2026 - 5 th March 2026

Dates are subject to change

commitment

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Bid Security for an amount of 2% of the tendered price is required for each lot and has to be drawn in favour of Berea District Council. It has to be from financial institution recognized by Central Bank of Lesotho. Successful bidder is expected to provide 10% performance guarantee before entering into a contract. It has to be from the bank or institution recognized by Central Bank of Lesotho

Pre-tender meeting

Compulsory pre-bid meeting will be held on the 2nd February 2026 at Berea District Council's board room at 10:00 am.

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

The bidder should follow the instructions contained herein and supply information. Failure to comply with these instructions deserves automatic disqualification.

- Relevant and valid Trader's License
- Valid Tax Clearance Certificate
- 2% bid security per lot of a tendered price
- Compulsory Pre-bid meeting
- Company profile with clear **IBR NUMBER**
- Power of attorney will be needed in case of existing joint ventures, companies and societies
- Certificate of Incorporation and Company Extract on companies
- Completed and stamped (suppliers stamp) Certificate of Bonafide
- Completed and stamped (suppliers stamp) statement of

EVALUATION CRITERIA

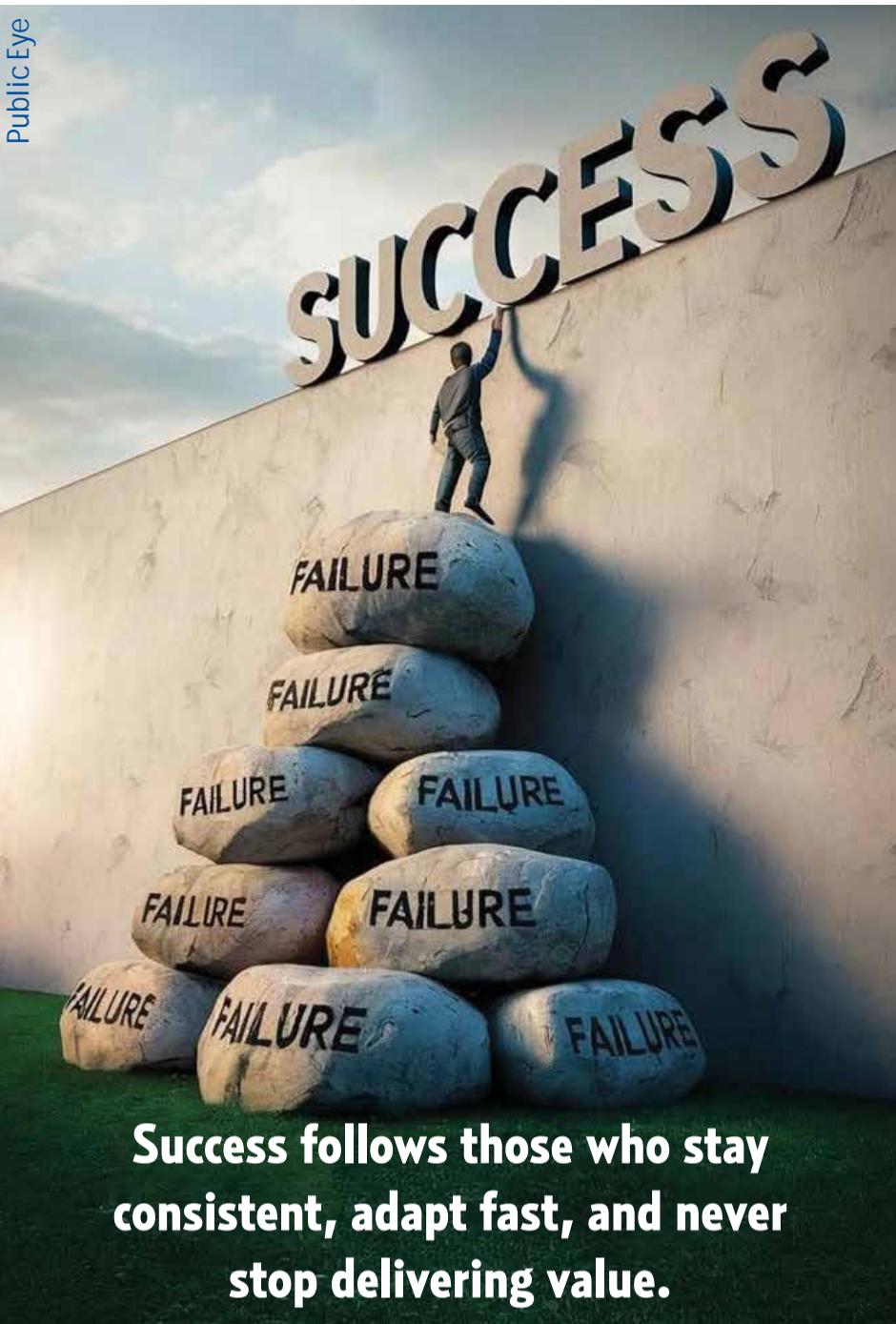
- Compliance to Tender Conditions
- Technical Capability (50%)
- Price (50%)
- Basotho Preference Margin

Tender Issuance and Submission

*The issue date for this tender is 20th January 2026 and the closing date is 16th February 2026. Original documents of the tender responses are to be delivered to the tender box situated at Berea District Council, NOT LATER THAN 10:00 AM. All tenders will be opened on the 16th February 2026 at 10:30 AM. Sealed envelopes or packages bearing no identification of bidder **MUST be marked**, for **SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS FOR MAKEOANE GRAVEL ROADS PROJECT**. Tenders will be opened in the presence of bidders or representatives at 10:30 a.m. on the same day.*

Disclaimer:

The Council also reserves the right to cancel the tenders before the submission or opening of tenders, postpone the tender submission/opening date and to accept or reject any or all tenders at any time prior to the award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or any obligation to form the affected bidder of the grounds for Berea District Council's action. The council is not bound to accept the lowest or any bid. For more information contact Procurement Unit at the following contacts: +266 57183276 and email address: procurementbereadec@gmail.com



Central Bank of Lesotho

INVITATION TO TENDER



The Central Bank of Lesotho (the Bank) invites proposals from qualified and experienced service providers for provision of Window Cleaning services.

For full details of the tender requirements, the soft copy of the **RFP** can be downloaded from the website at www.centralbank.org.ls. Closing date for receipt of proposals is on or before **Friday, 2nd March 2026 at 14:30hrs.**

Site Visit: 3 February 2026 at 10:00am

For clarifications:

tenderclarifications@centralbank.org.ls



KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

Ministry of Health

Request for Applications

Title: Laboratory Technical Assistant

Duration: 13 months

Reporting to: Director Laboratory Services and Research

1. Background

The Ministry of Health, through its Laboratory Services and Research Department, is in the process of establishing a genomic laboratory to support national efforts in disease surveillance, antimicrobial resistance monitoring, and public health emergency response. To ensure effective implementation, the Ministry seeks the services of a qualified Technical Assistant to support the setup, documentation, training, and quality assurance aspects of this laboratory.

Under the supervision of the Director Laboratory Services, the Laboratory Consultant will provide technical support and advice to the national Laboratory Team and the National Rapid Response Team in aspects relating to the investigation and response to public health emergencies in the country including emerging and re-emerging diseases specifically focusing on laboratory diagnostics. The consultant will dedicate part of his/her assignment in building the capacity of the national staff in the National Reference Laboratories and other sub-national laboratories to improve their laboratory diagnostic capacities as needed under different diseases. He/She will support analysis of data and generate information for dissemination to stakeholders that include, but not limited to; Partners forum, Health Partners' Coordination mechanism and other technical working groups.

Purpose of the Role

To support, capacitate and mentor the laboratory department across national programs, ensuring integration with the national laboratory strategic plan and alignment with Ministry of Health priorities.

2. Objective of the Assignment

- Capacitate Laboratory Services staff in aspects relating to the investigation and response to Public Health emergencies
- Enhance diagnostic capacity for priority diseases and public health emergencies
- Support the development and implementation of laboratory quality management systems (QMS)
- Strengthen national laboratory systems in line with international standards (ISO)
- Promote data-driven decision-making through robust laboratory information systems

3. Scope of Work / Key Responsibilities

The Technical Assistant will be responsible for the following tasks:

A. Laboratory Technical Support

- Provide technical input into laboratory layout, equipment selection, and workflow design for diagnostic testing
- Support development of a phased implementation plan for laboratory operations
- Assist in identifying biosafety and infrastructure requirements
- Assist in the development of a guideline to show equipment end-of-life,

decommissioning, disposal, and handling of equipment and reagent donations by MOH laboratory services in line with Public Procurement Act 2023

- Assist the MOH Laboratory team to develop a comprehensive Implementation plan to monitor the implementation and completion of activities appearing in the DNO
- Assist MOH Laboratory services to develop guidelines for proactive monitoring of performance by preventive maintenance service providers to ensure cost-effective service delivery. The guidelines should include proper reporting of equipment malfunction and facilitate oversight and coordination at a national level.

B. Capacity Building

- Conduct trainings and mentorship needs assessment for genomic laboratory staff
- Develop and deliver training materials and sessions on sample preparation, sequencing, data analysis, and interpretation
- Mentor staff through hands-on training and knowledge transfer during pilot runs
- Provide technical advice to laboratory staff on biosafety, biosecurity and testing of specimens as a component of training and mentoring laboratory staff

C. Quality Assurance and Accreditation Readiness

- Develop and implement internal quality control measures for laboratory diagnostic testing
- Guide the MOH laboratories in establishing quality management systems aligned with ISO 15189 and/or ISO 17025 standards
- Support the lab in preparing for external quality assessments and proficiency testing participation
- Support national laboratory team to develop clear SOPs to identify specimens for testing (based on case definition)

D. Documentation and Policy Support

- Assist in developing and reviewing SOPs, biosafety manuals, quality manuals, and data handling policies
- Provide templates and guidance on records management and document control systems
- Develop implementation plans and track progress on management actions issued for Laboratory systems strengthening

E. Coordination and Reporting

- Coordinate the interpretation of all laboratory data generated and prepare reports for submission and dissemination at different stakeholder mechanisms
- Work closely with Ministry of Health counterparts and partners to ensure alignment with national strategies
- Participate in technical working group meetings related to molecular and genomic diagnostics
- Submit periodic progress reports and a final report summarizing key achievements, challenges, and recommendations
- Perform other duties related to laboratory aspect as assigned by the Director Laboratory Services

F. Deliverables

- Strengthened laboratory system through availability of the following:

- Laboratory workflow design for diagnostic testing
- Phased implementation for laboratory operations
- Guideline for end-of-life Laboratory Equipment
- Updated and costed DNO Implementation plan
- Guidelines for Monitoring of Preventative Maintenance Service Providers

- Operational plan for genomic lab setup
- Training curriculum and training reports as well as identified Laboratory staff capacitated as focal points in different areas for sustainability
- SOPs to identify specimens for testing, biosafety manuals, quality manuals, and data handling policies
- Quality management system (QMS) implemented with QMS checklist
- Monthly progress updates, Quarterly report, and a Final report on TA support and sustainability recommendations costed with timelines
- Documentation of successes, challenges, and lessons learned

5. Required Qualifications and Experience

- Advanced degree in Medical Laboratory Science, Microbiology, or related fields; advance degree in Public Health is an added advantage
- At least 5 years of relevant professional experience in laboratory systems strengthening
- At least 5 years of experience in molecular or genomic laboratory setup and operations
- Proven experience in laboratory quality management systems and supporting accreditation
- Strong background in diagnostic services, biosafety, biosecurity, and emergency preparedness
- Experience with laboratory information systems and data management is an asset
- Excellent communication, training, and mentorship skill

Application Instructions

Submission - Interested Candidates should send email and indicate position on the subject to: senate.lerotholi1@gov.ls and cc to annahmasetso@gmail.com before **16h30 on 28th February 2026**.

- The application shall include covering letter accompanied by detailed CV and **certified copies of their academic and training certificates, certified copy of their National Identity Card** and full names and contact details of **3 Referees**.

Human Resource Department
Ministry of Health,
P.O. Box 514,
Maseru 100, Lesotho.

Contacts: **(266) 22314183**

Only shortlisted and successful candidates will be contacted within two weeks of the submission deadline. If you do not receive a call and email from us, consider application not successful.

From Page 1

In education, AI tools are helping teachers and lecturers reduce administrative workload, allowing them to focus more on teaching and student support. In business, AI assists with planning, customer engagement and productivity.

"AI has helped me work smarter, not harder," says Lerato Khomo, an administrative professional in Maseru. "Instead of replacing me, it has changed my role."

This shift highlights a key message: employees who learn to work with AI are more likely to remain relevant and valuable.

The role of education and training

Education institutions have a critical role to play in preparing the workforce for an AI-driven economy. Digital literacy, adaptability and problem-solving are becoming essential skills across all professions.

Universities, colleges and training centres in Lesotho are gradually introducing technology-focused programmes, while short courses and online learning platforms are expanding access to new skills.

"We need to teach people how to think, adapt and learn continuously," says a lecturer at the National University of Lesotho. "That is how you prepare for jobs that don't yet exist."



Lifelong learning is no longer optional. Employees who invest in self-development improve their chances of staying employable as roles evolve.

Responsible adoption by employers

Businesses adopting AI also carry responsibility. Ethical implementation means supporting workers through change, not simply replacing them.

Forward-thinking employers are retraining staff, redesigning roles and involving employees in the transition process. This

approach builds trust and ensures technology strengthens, rather than weakens, workplace stability.

"People are more willing to embrace AI when they are part of the journey," says Khomo. "Fear comes when decisions are made without communication."

A strategic moment for Lesotho
For Lesotho, AI offers an opportunity to leapfrog certain development stages. With the right investment in skills, the country can position itself competitively within the regional and global digital economy.

Government policy, private-sector collaboration and education reform will be key. Supporting digital skills training, innovation hubs and youth entrepreneurship can help turn technological change into inclusive growth.

The national conversation around AI should therefore move away from fear and towards preparedness.

Progress with people at the Centre

AI is not an enemy of employment — it is a tool. Like all tools, its impact depends

on how it is used. When people are placed at the centre of technological change, progress becomes sustainable.

For Lesotho's workforce, the future of work will favour those who are adaptable, curious and willing to learn. With the right support systems in place, AI can enhance productivity, create new opportunities and strengthen the economy.

As workplaces continue to evolve, the challenge is not to resist change, but to shape it in a way that benefits both employers and employees. In doing so, Lesotho can ensure that technological progress becomes a shared success — not a source of fear.

ESTATE NOTICE

ESTATE MATAASELO
ENOCH LEHEMA B

157/25

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 44 of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No. 2 2024 calling upon all persons having claims against the deceased or her estate to lodge the claim with that executor within such period from the date of the latest publication of the notice not being less than thirty (30) days or more than three months, as the executor considers it proper in the particular circumstances of each case.

DATED AT BUTHA-BUTHE ON THIS 13-JANUARY-2026.

ADDRESS
HA KAMOHO, BOTHA-BOTHE
BOTHABOTHE
Cell: +266 558739448

ESTATE NOTICE

Notice in terms of section 61(b) of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No.2 of 2024;

ESTATE LATE MOKHETHI MOHLABASE- EC/28/2024

The above matter refers.

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 44(1) of the Administration of Estate and Inheritance Act No. 2 of 2024 that all persons having claims against the deceased or her estate to submit their claims within thirty (30) days of publication of this notice with the Executrix Dative on the address given below.

ADDRESS:
L.E Molapo Chambers
1st Floor, Haji Alli Centre
Opp. Leribe Metropolitan
Private Bag C0099
Hlotse, Leribe
Kind Regards,
ADV. L.E. MOLAPO
Estate Agent

Notice in terms of section 61(b) of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No.2 of 2024;

ESTATE LATE BASIA MORRIS RAKUBUTU EF/267/2025

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 61(b) of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No.2 of 2024 calling upon all creditors of the deceased to lodge their claims with the administrator of the deceased's estate within thirty (30) days of this publication.

The address at which the said claims can be lodged is mentioned hereunder;

NAME: MAKUBUTU C. RAKUBUTU
ADMINISTRATOR
ADDRESS: MATAENG
HA SEKOATI
MOHALE'S HOEK
CELL NO. (+266) 57022234

ESTATE NOTICE

Notice in terms of section 37 of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No.2 of 2024

ESTATE LATE MALIBA PUTSOA E1786/2025

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 37 of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No.2 of 2024 calling spouse, all heirs, legatees and creditors of the deceased to attend a meeting before the Master of the High Court in Maseru on **THURSDAY 29th JANUARY 2026 at 09:00 AM** for the purpose of;

Proposing some person/persons to be appointed by the Master as Executor dative.

Dated at Maseru on this 23rd day of DECEMBER 2025.

Master of the High Court
Magistrate Court
Old Prosecutors Office
Maseru



Public Notice of the change of FHI 360 Lesotho office physical address

Notice is hereby given to the general public that FHI 360 Lesotho office location has changed from MCG Park, Corner Pope John Paul II and Mpilo Boulevard Road, Katlehong, Maseru, Lesotho to **Lancers Inn Corner of Kingsway & Pioneer Road in Maseru, Lesotho** from January 1, 2026.

Inquiries can be directed to:

Administration FHI 360 Lesotho

Email: procurement.lesotho@fhi360.org

ESTATE NOTICE

Notice in terms of section 61(b) of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No.2 of 2024;

ESTATE LATE SELEBALO LEFORA EH 82/2025

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 61(b) of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No.2 of 2024 calling upon all creditors of the deceased to lodge their claims with the administrator of the deceased's estate within thirty-five (30) days of this publication.

The address at which the said claims can be lodged is mentioned hereunder;

HA MANTEKO
QACHA'S NEK
CELL NO. (+266) 57862922
MANTHABELENG LEFORA
(THE ADMINISTRATOR)

Low cost housing initiative for low income earners. Pay monthly!

OPTION A
2 Roomed House + Bath
Estimated Costs
Total cost M150,000.00
40% upfront, M60,000.00
Monthly M750.00

OPTION B
2 Bedrooms + Bath Open Kitchen + Lounge Estimated Costs
Total cost, M275,000.00
40% upfront, M110,000.00
Monthly M1,375.00

OPTION C
3 Bedroom House Open Kitchen + Lounge Estimated Costs
Total costs M346,000.00
40% M138,400.00
Monthly M1,730.00

OUR CONTACT
266 5324 8859
266 6341 1399
tetrishousingtrust.co.ls
Room 5, Husteds, Kingsway Road

TETRIS
TECHNOLOGIES TRUST

NB: Estimates vary depending on architectural specifications.

Leaders

A dangerous precedent: When appointments mock the courts

As we have learned, the recent confirmation of new Independent Electoral Commission commissioners, while appeals against their very selection process remain unresolved in court, is not merely an administrative oversight. It is a brazen subversion of judicial authority and a chilling blow to the foundational principle of the rule of law.

This move, executed with staggering disregard for pending legal challenges, transforms a vital democratic safeguard - the right to appeal - into a hollow, academic exercise. It signals a disturbing belief within the appointing bodies that political expediency trumps constitutional process.

At the heart of this debacle lies the fundamental legal doctrine of sub judice - a principle meant to restrain public commentary and action on matters actively under judicial consideration, to prevent prejudice and respect the court's role.

By proceeding with the appointments, the Council of State has effectively rendered the applicants' appeal pointless. What, pray tell, is the court being asked to adjudicate?

A fait accompli.

Should the appellants succeed, the court would be placed in an impossible position - ordering the unwinding of already-made appointments, a remedy fraught with political difficulty, or issuing a ruling that is purely declaratory and thus toothless.

On the other side there is a legitimate expectation from those who have been appointed, batho ba se ba ntse ba seha li-suit.

This stratagem deliberately boxes the judiciary into a corner, undermining its authority before it even delivers a judgment.

This is not a novel tactic of power; it is a page from the playbook of autocracies and failing democracies.

Recall the 2022 constitutional crisis in Pakistan, where attempts to appoint key officials during a Supreme Court hearing on the process's legality were widely condemned as an attempt to pre-empt the judiciary.

Similarly, in Malawi prior to its 2020 rerun election, attempts to bypass legal challenges to electoral staff appointments were seen as a direct attack on the integrity of the entire electoral cycle. These international examples serve as stark warnings - when the state proceeds as if courts do not exist, it is the credibility of democracy itself that is placed on the docket.

Thus, the most urgent question now is not only about the merits of the original challenge, but about the courage of the bench. If the appellants prevail, will the courts have the fortitude to order a full reversal - to demand that the Council of State's decision be nullified and the process restarted lawfully? Or will they settle for a meek reprimand, a symbolic slap on the wrist that ultimately sanctifies the violation?

The judiciary now stands at a precipice. To accept the appointments as irreversible, regardless of legal flaws, would be to surrender its constitutional role as a check on executive and administrative overreach. It would declare that certain state actions, once done, cannot be undone, no matter how unlawfully they were executed.

This episode reeks of an ulterior political calculus - a desire to settle the electoral commission's composition on terms favourable to the ruling establishment, regardless of procedural niceties like lawful challenge. It is a classic case of a political decision sabotaging the rule of law.

The message is corrosive. The law and its processes are obstacles to be circumvented, not pillars to be upheld. It tells citizens that justice is secondary to the whims of the powerful, that their right to seek redress can be neutralized simply by acting before the judge's gavel falls.

Such actions erode public trust not just in the Independent Electoral Commission, which must be seen as impeccably neutral, but in the entire constitutional order. If the bodies meant to guard our democracy show such contempt for its rules, why should the citizenry respect the outcome of their endeavours?

The timing and manner of these appointments are a stain on our democratic credentials. They represent a short-term political victory that inflicts long-term institutional damage.

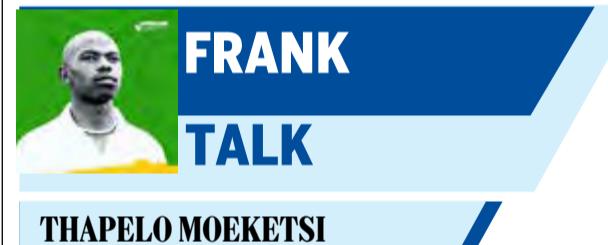
We condemn this move in the strongest terms. It is an affront to justice, a disrespect to the courts, and a betrayal of the democratic compact. The Council of State must be reminded that its role is to uphold the constitution, not to outmanoeuvre it.

The judiciary must be supported in asserting its authority, however inconvenient the consequences. To remain silent is to acquiesce to the normalization of lawlessness. The rule of law must be something we live, not just something we cite when it is convenient.

This appointment is a test, and so far, the state is failing it miserably.



Human Rights Under Siege in Lesotho



The Global Expression Report 2025 reveals a global decline in the freedom of expression, and Lesotho is among the countries facing this decline. Once celebrated for its vibrant culture and civic engagement, Lesotho is now witnessing a steady erosion of fundamental human rights. Authorities have targeted famo music, a cornerstone of the Basotho identity, alleging that it fuels violence and insecurity.

Silencing artists under the guise of national security deepens mistrust and suppresses cultural creativity. There is an urgent need for the government of Lesotho to adopt rights-based policies that ensure national laws align with regional and international human rights standards.

The government must also separate crime from art, allowing citizens to express themselves freely and ensuring the protection of journalists and activists. Lesotho's national laws should reflect regional and international human rights obligations.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) both affirm the freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. Aligning Lesotho's legal framework with these principles would reinforce constitutional rights and show a commitment to democratic principles.

To meet its obligations under the African Charter and the ICCPR, Lesotho should amend laws such as the Penal Code Act 2010, Public Order Act 1993, Labour Code Order 1992, and restrictive common-law offences, ensuring the protection of constitutional rights to expression, assembly, and association.

Independent institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) need empowerment to monitor human rights abuses and demand accountability without fear of reprisal. Through sustainable funding, legal protections, and capacity-building initiatives, donors and development partners can support these institutions and CSOs.

Regional partners, particularly the Southern African Development Community, should encourage Lesotho to honor its commitments to protecting human rights through constructive engagement and institutional reform. The rights of association and peaceful assembly, essential to a democratic society, are facing greater restrictions in Lesotho.

Authorities frequently deny citizens permits to march or deliver petitions to Parliament, which contradicts democratic principles. Peaceful protest is a legitimate form of civic engagement, which the government must not treat as a threat.

In Kenya, peaceful protests have demonstrably achieved specific governance outcomes. When citizens can express themselves freely and gather without intimidation, public trust in governance will grow stronger.

Learning from recent events in Kenya, where citizens are demanding better governance through protests, Lesotho must protect the right to peaceful assembly by encouraging structured dialogue between the government and citizens.

The dialogue can happen through regular consultation forums, such as community gatherings (Pitsos), civil society-government dialogue platforms, and police-community engagement forums.

Clear guidelines on the police's response to protests and independent oversight by the Office of the Ombudsman, the courts, and the parliament, would prevent abuses and ensure accountability.

Freedom of speech also faces serious restrictions in Lesotho. Journalists, commentators, and activists often face harassment and arrest for voicing their opinions.

This pattern of intimidation limits open discussion, which is essential to an informed society, and undermines democracy. There must be no interference with citizens who hold the government accountable, including members of the media and civil society.

Protecting them would show genuine respect for the principles of a democratic system. The government is not above criticism, and every citizen can exercise their right to free expression and hold the government accountable. It is also the duty of the government to defend media freedom.

Creating an independent media council can help the government achieve this duty. A media council would promote ethical journalism, protect reporters from political interference, and provide a neutral platform for resolving disputes.

Supporting the media through fair regulation and institutional backing, rather than censorship, would help restore public confidence and international credibility. Lesotho stands at a defining moment in its democratic journey, in which repression, censorship, and fear only fuel instability and alienation.

Allowing cultural voices to flourish, protecting free expression, and embracing peaceful civic action will be the genuine test of Lesotho's democracy. Sustainable peace will emerge only through listening to citizens and respecting their rights.

By fostering open dialogue and inclusive participation, Lesotho can rebuild public trust, strengthen its institutions, and lay the foundation for lasting stability and national unity. Thapelo Moeketsi is a writing fellow at African Liberty.

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Beyond East and West

Why our sovereignty demands a pragmatic, not ideological, partnership



TEBOHO KHATEBE MOLEFI

What a strategic leap for us in the Mountain Kingdom. This week's formal launch of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Lesotho and the People's Republic of China marks a pivotal moment in our nation's foreign policy. Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane's government deserves significant commendation for successfully enticing and negotiating this elevated framework.

This is not merely another diplomatic agreement; it is a profound shift in how Lesotho engages with global powers, moving from a posture of supplication to one of strategic agency.

The significance, expertly underscored by Principal Secretary (PS) Thabang Lekhela and Ambassador Yang Xiaokun at the Maseru launch, cannot be overstated. For decades, the relationship between many African nations and major economies has been trapped in the stifling paradigm of donor and beggar.

This dynamic, however well-intentioned at times, often fosters dependency, dictates priorities and undermines sovereign ownership of national development agendas.

By securing a partnership with a global giant like China, Prime Minister Matekane's initiative shatters that outdated mould. The term "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" implies mutual benefit, shared long-term vision, and cooperation across diverse sectors - from infrastructure and agriculture to technology, culture and education. It suggests that Lesotho is bringing its unique value, its geographic position, and its developmental needs to the table as a partner, not with an empty bowl, but with a blueprint for collaborative growth.

For a small, landlocked nation like our, this is a masterstroke of diplomatic confidence. It signals to the world that Lesotho is open for business and serious investment, not just aid. It acknowledges China's global role while firmly asserting our own national interests.

This partnership, if managed with continued transparency and a focus on tangible outcomes for Basotho, can

catalyze technology transfer, job creation and critical infrastructure development on terms that respect our sovereignty.

The challenge now lies in the diligent execution to ensure this framework delivers prosperity for all of us. Yet, the foundational achievement is clear: Prime Minister Matekane has steered Lesotho onto a new path of dignified and strategic international engagement.

This past week, Maseru was not just a recipient but a negotiator. That, in itself, is a victory for every African nation aspiring to true and equitable partnership on the world stage.

We have all borne witness to the reality that the global order is not just shifting; it is fracturing into a new era of multipolar competition. For nations like ours, perched high in the mountains of Southern Africa, the deafening narrative from external powers presents a false, even dangerous, binary - align with the "democratic" West or embrace the "developmental" East.

This framing is not only reductive but is a profound insult to our intelligence, history, and agency. It treats Africa as a schoolboy to be lectured, or a doormat to be contested, rather than as a continent of sovereign equals capable of strategic calculus. For you and I, from the streets of Maseru to the cattle posts of Mokhotlong, this moment is not about choosing a side in someone else's cold war.

It is about cold, hard evaluation - which engagement, on which project, with which partner, delivers tangible, sustainable and dignified progress for Lesotho and for Africa as a collective?

The historical experience with traditional Western partners is a tapestry of both invaluable support and profound frustration. Development aid from Europe and America has built clinics, funded NGOs, and supported governance structures. The United States' Millennium Challenge Corporation compact, for instance, directly targeted infrastructural and institutional constraints.

Yet, this partnership has often come wrapped in the velvet glove of conditionalities - governance prescriptions that can feel paternalistic, and economic policies that sometimes prioritize open markets for external goods over nurturing

domestic industry.

The relationship has, at times, echoed a teacher-student dynamic, with the unspoken assumption that development is a one-way transfer of wisdom and resources. The recent geopolitical pivot, where partnership feels increasingly contingent on echoing foreign policy positions, adds a layer of transactional pressure that can side-line our own priorities.

Conversely, the engagement from powers like China presents a starkly different model, one that has filled a vacuum left by others. Their approach is not couched in political sermons but in concrete, visible projects and a doctrine of "non-interference."

The State Library, the Ha Ramarothole Solar Project, the National Convention Centre and the construction of the Maseru District Hospital are physical testaments to this.

For a citizen tired of potholes and power cuts, a new road or hospital speaks louder than a hundred democracy workshops. The Chinese model offers speed, scale, and a focus on hard infrastructure - the very skeleton of development that we desperately need. It treats government as a client, not a pupil.

However, to view this through a simplistic lens of "good vs bad" is myopic. The debt-trap narrative, while sometimes exaggerated, is a real risk that demands rigorous, technocratic scrutiny, not ideological fearmongering. The quality of some infrastructure and the opacity of some contracts must be subject to the highest level of parliamentary and public oversight.

The question is not whether to engage, but how. Do we have the capacity, the will and the unity to negotiate from a position of strength? When Chinese businesses operate, are we ensuring skills transfer, environmental protection, and fair labour practices? The risk is not partnership itself, but entering into it from a position of weakness and desperation.

This is where our sovereignty is truly tested. The best option is not a monolithic patron, be they from the East or West. The best option is a ruthless, pragmatic, and self-interested strategy that picks and chooses on a case-by-case basis, always

holding Lesotho's long-term health as the sole criterion.

Consider energy.

Lesotho's water is potential energy, not just for us but for the region. Should we partner with Western firms offering cutting-edge, sustainable technology but at higher cost and with stringent climate conditions? Or with Eastern firms offering faster, cheaper roll-out but potentially with different environmental standards?

The answer lies in a transparent bidding process evaluated by our own experts against our own defined needs: cost, speed, sustainability, and local job creation. The flag of the company is irrelevant; the benefit to Lesotho is paramount.

Look at agriculture.

To transform from subsistence to sustainable commercial farming, do we need conditional grants from the EU or joint ventures with agri-tech firms from other emerging economies? Perhaps a blend of both. The model that provides our farmers with drought-resistant seeds, access to cold-chain logistics, and fair export markets - without undermining our seed sovereignty - is the one we choose.

Critically, our most important partnership is not with any foreign capital, but with our African kin. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents a more transformative opportunity than any single foreign deal. Building value chains with South Africa, Botswana, and beyond - processing our wool and mohair here, adding value before export - shifts us from a supplier of raw materials to a player in regional industry.

This is partnership between equals, a collaboration where our voice is inherent, not granted. Strengthening SADC and advocating for its collective bargaining power on the global stage is true strategic sovereignty.

To the political elite in Maseru - your duty is to equip the nation with the tools for this tough-minded pragmatism. This means investing in a diplomatic corps and civil service of the highest calibre, with the legal, financial, and engineering expertise to dissect complex international agreements. It means fostering a vibrant, critical media and civil society to serve as watchdogs.

It means rooting out corruption, because a corrupt official is the easiest point of entry for any predatory foreign interest, regardless of its longitude.

To every Mosotho, this is about your community's clinic, your child's school, your brother's job. Demand details, not slogans. Ask not whether a project is Western or Eastern, but whether it will last, who will maintain it, what skills your youth will learn from it, and what debt your grandchildren will inherit from it.

Reject the infantilising narrative that we must choose a camp. We are not a prize to be won.

Africa is not the world's playground, its lecture hall, or its quarry. It is a continent of partners. Lesotho, with its unique water resources, strategic location, and resilient people, has something of value to offer in any genuine partnership. The path forward is neither Lobamba nor Brussels, neither Washington nor Beijing.

It is the path that winds from Qacha's Nek to the future, built by our hands, guided by our interests, and paved with the best tools, capital and partnerships we can negotiate from a position of confidence, clarity, and uncompromised equality.

Our choice is not East or West.

Our choice is Lesotho, first, last, and always. And from that unshakeable position, we will deal with the world, on our terms.



Government in disarray over Davos no-show

MOTSAMAI MOKOTJO

In the crisp, refined air of Davos, Switzerland, world leaders, billionaire investors, and global policymakers converge each January for the World Economic Forum (WEF). It is a glittering, high-stakes symposium where the global agenda is shaped, deals are brokered, and the future of economies is debated.

For a small, developing nation like Lesotho, securing a seat at this table is not a mere photo opportunity; it is a vital strategic imperative.

Yet, this year, a fog of confusion and evasion has descended over Maseru regarding Lesotho's participation - a fog that reveals troubling cracks in governance, coordination and commitment at the highest levels.

When I simply asked whether Lesotho had sent a delegation to this year's summit, the response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not just unclear - it was an alarming spectacle of bureaucratic breakdown.

The ministry's spokesperson, Pulane Lesita, professed ignorance: "I don't know whether we have a delegation or not." This admission from the official voice of the department managing the country's international engagements is staggering.

Her subsequent, awkward attempt to fill the silence by mentioning listening to US President Donald Trump, and a desperate WhatsApp voice note pleading, "I hope you shouldn't quote me, I know nothing about the World Economic Forum," transformed a simple inquiry into a case study in failed public communication.

This episode is far more than a public relations blunder. It is a profound failure of duty and a symbolic red flag for the state of Lesotho's economic diplomacy. The

silence was not confined to Foreign Affairs. The Prime Minister's office offered only a cryptic non-answer.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lejone Mpotjoane, was unreachable. A wall of silence was constructed, brick by bureaucratic brick, around a simple question: Is Lesotho representing its interests on one of the world's most critical stages? To understand the gravity of this absence, one must understand what Davos is.

The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting is the preeminent gathering for global elites. It brings together sitting heads of state, finance ministers, central bank governors, and the CEOs of the world's largest corporations and financial institutions.

For a week, the Swiss Alpine town becomes the nerve center of global capitalism and policy-making. Panel discussions, private lunches, and cocktail receptions are not mere talk shops; they are where billions in investment are discussed, where development partnerships are fostered, and where small nations can pitch themselves directly to those with the capital and influence to change their fortunes.

For a country like Lesotho - landlocked, facing high unemployment, reliant on migrant remittances and vulnerable to economic shifts in South Africa - the benefits of attending Davos are tangible. It is a platform to:

- **Attract investment:** To directly showcase sectors like textiles, agriculture, water export, and nascent technology ventures to global investors seeking emerging opportunities.
- **Secure partnerships:** To engage with development agencies, international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank, and philanthropic

organizations focused on poverty reduction and climate resilience.

- **Learn and advocate:** To learn from global best practices in tackling unemployment, economic diversification, and governance, and to advocate for Lesotho's specific interests in international forums.
- **Elevate national profile:** In a crowded world, visibility matters. A presence at Davos signals that Lesotho is open for business, engaged with global trends, and serious about reform. It is a statement of intent to the international community.

Last year, Finance Minister Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane represented Lesotho at Davos. Her presence acknowledged this strategic value. This year's apparent absence - and the government's chaotic refusal to explain it - is, therefore, baffling and damaging.

What changed in twelve months? Has the government decided the forum lacks value? Is it a matter of cost-cutting? Or is it, more worryingly, a symptom of poor planning, inter-ministerial disarray, or a simple failure to prioritize critical economic diplomacy?

The spokesperson's floundering points to a deep-seated issue: a lack of coordination and strategic clarity. The WEF sits at the intersection of foreign affairs, finance, trade, and development. Organising an effective participation requires a whole-of-government approach: deciding who attends, what message they carry, which bilateral meetings to secure, and how the mission aligns with national development goals.

The fact that the Foreign Affairs spokesperson was utterly in the dark suggests this coordination mechanism is either broken or non-existent. The left hand

does not know what the right hand is doing, or if it is doing anything at all.

The cost of this failure is multifaceted. First, there is the immediate opportunity cost. While other nations, including regional peers, were in Davos networking and deal-making, Lesotho's voice was absent. Potential investors looking at Southern Africa may have met with delegations from Rwanda, Ghana, or Botswana, hearing their pitches and reviewing their portfolios.

Lesotho was not even part of the conversation.

Second, and perhaps more corrosive, is the reputational damage. The international community pays attention to signals. A no-show at a major forum, accompanied by confusing signals from officials, suggests disorganization, a lack of strategic direction, or internal discord.

It undermines the very narrative of stability and openness that Lesotho must project to attract investment.

It tells partners that engaging with Lesotho might be fraught with communication challenges. Finally, and most importantly, is the betrayal of public trust.

The citizens of Lesotho have a right to know how their government is representing them abroad, especially on platforms tied directly to economic prospects and job creation.

When officials respond to legitimate media questions with ignorance, evasion, and attempted retractions, they erode the foundations of accountable democracy.

Lesita's plea not to be quoted is particularly egregious - it epitomizes a culture of opacity where officials prefer to say nothing rather than risk saying something wrong, or worse, reveal that there is no coherent plan to communicate.

This Davos debacle must serve as a wake-up call. The government needs to immediately:

1. Break the silence: Issue a clear, formal statement explaining Lesotho's presence or absence at this year's WEF, with reasons. The public deserves an answer.
2. Audit coordination: Establish a clear, inter-ministerial protocol for planning and communicating participation in major international forums. The spokesperson for a ministry must be the best-informed person, not the last to know.
3. Reaffirm strategic engagement: Publicly recommit to active, strategic participation in global economic dialogues. Develop a multi-year strategy for forums like Davos, with clear objectives and accountability.
4. Professionalize communication: Train officials, especially spokespersons, in professional media engagement. "No comment" or "I don't know" on a core portfolio issue is never an acceptable answer.

Lesotho stands at a crossroads, facing profound economic challenges. Its path to sustainable development is inextricably linked to its ability to engage confidently and competently with the world.

The confusion over Davos is not just about a missed meeting; it is a symptom of a governance style that appears reactive, uncoordinated, and opaque.

For the sake of the nation's economic future and the integrity of its democracy, this must change.

The mountains of Lesotho should not be a barrier to the world, but its officials' silence and confusion are building a wall far more formidable. It is time for the government to tear that wall down, starting with a simple, honest explanation.

Feasibility of Diplomacy Institute dream questioned amid clash over Lesotho's funding priorities

MOTSAMAI MOKOTJO

MASERU — The foreign affairs minister, Lejone Mpotjoane's vision for a professional foreign service collides with the National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS) stance on international relations as a "non-pressing" need.

A fundamental debate over where Lesotho should invest its scarce educational resources has ignited, pitting the long-term vision of a professional diplomatic corps against immediate, pressing developmental needs.

At the heart of the dispute are two contrasting government perspectives: that of the foreign affairs minister, who is championing the creation of a Lesotho Institute of Diplomacy, and NMDS Acting Director, Thabo Ntoi, who argues that international relations education is not a priority for state sponsorship. Minister Mpotjoane's ambitious plan, embedded in the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution, aims to establish a dedicated institute to train diplomats, formulate foreign policy, and conduct research. The vision includes collaboration with the National University of Lesotho (NUL) to create a Centre for Diplomacy, offering formal certification and skill development.

"Our staff should also be trained... in other countries there are certificates for international relations," Mpotjoane told Public Eye in a recent interview, emphasizing the need to build institutional and individual capacity to navigate an interconnected world. He argues that a professional foreign service is critical for securing trade, investment, and influence.

However, this strategic ambition faces a significant practical hurdle: funding and prioritization. The NMDS, the state's principal body for sponsoring tertiary education since 1978, holds a divergent view. The Acting Director asserts that in a country grappling with acute socio-economic challenges, international relations simply does not rank.

"When you assess Lesotho and its economic situation, we need to check what are the things that we can do in a bid to improve and ultimately put our resources into... International Relations is not a pressing need according to our developmental standing; it's not a pressing need," Ntoi stated.

His position reflects a developmental realist approach, directing finite resources toward sectors like engineering, health sciences, and education - fields seen as delivering direct, tangible returns for Lesotho's struggling economy.

This clash highlights a classic policy dilemma for developing nations: short-term necessity versus long-term strategic positioning. Critics of Mpotjoane's plan point to the country's strained fiscal space and urgent needs in healthcare, infrastructure, and basic education. They question the feasibility of allocating significant funds to professional diplomacy when domestic fronts are demanding.

Further complicating the minister's dream are lingering concerns about the current foreign service's professionalism. Critics have long alleged that diplomatic postings are often political appointments, leading to questions about the competence and credibility of missions abroad.

Mpotjoane vigorously defended the current system, stating, "It's not true! If you assess our database for people in foreign missions... two of them were directors at foreign affairs... it says they are experts."

He contends that the current model balances necessary political alignment with professional competency, but acknowledges the need to move beyond past shortcomings through structured training.

The proposed Institute of Diplomacy is presented as the solution to this professionalization gap. By institutionalizing training and creating a pipeline of certified diplomats, Mpotjoane believes Lesotho can ensure its international engagements are informed, strategic, and effective.

Yet, sceptics warn that even constitutionally-backed plans face implementation challenges. Bureaucratic inertia, funding constraints, and shifting political winds could stall or dilute the initiative. The success of the proposed NUL centre would depend on sustained investment and a clear commitment from

successive governments - a non-trivial challenge in itself. Analysts suggest a potential middle path lies in reframing international relations not as a luxury, but as a development tool. A professional diplomatic service could actively secure foreign direct investment, negotiate favourable trade terms, and attract development partnerships, ultimately generating resources for domestic priorities.

"This debate serves as a reminder that human capital investment is not merely a domestic concern," one commentator noted. "The question is whether Lesotho can design a programme that is lean, strategically focused, and explicitly tied to development outcomes, thereby satisfying both the NMDS's demand for returns and the foreign ministry's need for expertise."

For now, the conversation remains unresolved, embodying a tension between the pragmatic and the visionary. Ntoi's caution anchors the discussion in the stark reality of limited resources, while Mpotjoane's dream urges the country to look beyond immediate horizons.



As policymakers weigh the next steps, the feasibility of the Lesotho Institute of Diplomacy will hinge on one critical factor: the ability to craft a compelling case that demonstrates how investment in diplomatic capital can, itself, become a direct contributor to national development.

The outcome will reveal much about Lesotho's governance philosophy and its aspirations on the world stage.

M1.4 Billion Bitumen Project to transform rural connectivity



MATHATO SEBOKA

MASERU — In a major stride towards national infrastructure development, the Roads Directorate has signed a landmark contract to upgrade the crucial Matlali to Lebakeng road to bitumen standard, a project valued at M1.4 billion.

The contract was awarded to the China International Water and Electric Corporation (CWE), signalling a significant investment in connecting the remote communities of Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka districts.

The Roads Directorate, as the central authority mandated with the planning, development, and preservation of Lesotho's road network, plays a pivotal role in the nation's socio-economic engine.

Its core duty extends beyond mere construction; it involves sustaining a safe, efficient, and integrated transport system that links communities, fosters trade, and enables access to essential services.

This project exemplifies the directorate's commitment to executing that mandate, particularly in underserved regions where poor infrastructure has long stifled growth and compromised safety.

Announcing the project on Wednesday, Roads Directorate Director General, Teboho Mokhoane, outlined its transformative potential.

"This project intends to improve access to rural and remote communities, strengthen connectivity between Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka Districts, and contribute to the development of an integrated rural transport system," he stated.

The upgrade addresses profound challenges faced by residents. The current gravel road, often rendered treacherous or impassable, has posed severe safety and social hurdles. Communities grapple with dangerous stream crossings lacking drainage, periodic road washouts that isolate them, and children frequently missing school.

A critical concern has been accessing the Lebakeng Clinic, especially for the Mosenekeng community, where crossing the Senqu River in emergencies remains a perilous ordeal.

"The project will address these challenges through improved road design, drainage, and the construction of a bridge across the Senqu River," Mokhoane assured. He detailed that the project will directly benefit approximately 1 777 households and 8 652 people.

The enhancements are expected to unlock economic potential by improving access to markets for wool and mohair farmers, ensuring year-round access to the Lebakeng Airstrip - bolstering its utility beyond medical evacuations - and facilitating the smoother movement of goods and services.

The scope of work is comprehensive. It entails upgrading approximately 45 kilometres of road from Ha-Matlali through Mosenekeng to Lebakeng, linking the Lebakeng Constituency to Qacha's Nek Town via the A4 Road. Key components include engineering investigations, road construction, the building of four bridges over the Tsoelike, Lijabatho, Melikane, and Senqu Rivers, extensive drainage structures, and the erection of road signs and markings.

A dedicated 1.4-kilometre access road to Melikane Combined School is also part of the plan, promising reliable access to education. The project is slated for completion within 48 months, with a total budget of LSL 1 409 511 553.08.

For the Roads Directorate, projects like this are integral to its mission of sustaining the national network. This involves a continuous cycle of assessment, prioritisation, and investment - converting precarious gravel tracks into durable, all-weather arteries.

Each upgraded corridor reduces vehicle operating costs, improves road safety, stimulates local economies, and integrates isolated populations into the national fabric, thereby enhancing overall resilience and development.

Shelile confident on AGOA renewal

As Lesotho's economic lifeline awaits Trump's pen



RETHABILE MOHONO

MASERU - In a decisive message aimed at calming a nation on edge, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Business Development, Mokhethi Shelile, has publicly assured Basotho that the critical extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is firmly on track, despite the final decision resting in the hands of United States President Donald Trump.

The minister's assurance comes at a pivotal moment for the mountain kingdom, where the textile and apparel industry - the backbone of the economy - faces existential threat without the renewal of the trade pact that grants duty-free access to the lucrative US market.

Speaking at a media briefing on Tuesday, Minister Shelile detailed the encouraging outcomes of a high-stakes lobbying mission to Washington DC last week. He led a delegation representing four African nations - Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius and Tanzania - which engaged in crucial meetings with multiple US congressional committees. "The reception was overwhelmingly positive," Shelile stated.

"The committees we met with have given a green light to the AGOA extension. We are buoyed by the substantial support the Bill has already garnered, with 340 lawmakers in the House of Representatives backing it."

This legislative momentum was confirmed on January 12, when the US House voted overwhelmingly, 340 to 54, to approve a three-year extension of AGOA. The programme had expired on September 30, 2025, after a short lapse,

disrupting billions in trade, straining African manufacturers and US importers alike, and severing a vital transcontinental economic link.

"Since it will be tabled along with other Bills, the expectation is that by the end of January it would be passed by the Senate," Shelile projected, outlining the next steps.

Following Senate approval, the legislation, known formally as the AGOA Extension Act, will advance to the Oval Office for President Trump's approval and signature.

While acknowledging that the delegation "does not have control over the President's decision," Shelile expressed measured optimism.

"Based on our engagements and the broad, bipartisan support this Bill has received, we are hopeful that the President will approve and sign it into law."

The minister's confidence is a calculated beacon for a nation deeply anxious about its economic future. For Lesotho, AGOA is not merely a trade agreement; it has been revolutionary.

Since its inception in 2000, it has catalyzed the growth of a formidable textile sector, transforming the country into a significant exporter.

Shelile revealed that approximately 45 percent of Lesotho's total merchandise exports are destined for the United States, with garments constituting a staggering 80 percent of those shipments.

The industry is the lifeblood of the local economy, directly employing between 30 000 and 40 000 Basotho - predominantly women - and contributing roughly one-third of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The recent lapse of AGOA exposed the profound vulnerability of this preferential trade dependency. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had previously warned that losing AGOA preferences could slash Lesotho's exports by up to 70 percent and trigger widespread factory closures.

"The decline in our exports to the US from 65 percent to 20 percent in recent times is a huge setback," Shelile admitted, underscoring the urgency of renewal.

"This is why our mission to Washington was not just advocacy; it was a fight for the survival of an entire industry and the tens of thousands of livelihoods it supports."

The legislative path to this point has been meticulously navigated. As outlined by Basotho National Party (BNP) leader, Machesetsa Mofomobe, AGOA's renewal requires a four-stage US legislative journey.

The first hurdle was cleared on December 10, 2025, with approval by the House Ways and Means Committee. The second stage was the full House vote on January 13.

"The approval by the House means that AGOA renewal has now passed two of the four critical stages, with two still outstanding," Mofomobe noted.

The Bill now enters its third and notably unpredictable phase: consideration by the US Senate. This process could take a month or longer as senators debate, potentially amend, and eventually vote on the legislation. The final, most critical stage rests with the executive branch.

"The fourth and most important stage will be when President Donald Trump either signs the bill into law or vetoes it," Mofomobe emphasized.

The proposed AGOA Extension Act is

more than a simple renewal. It contains several tailored provisions:

- **Core extension:** It aims to change the expiration date for trade benefits from September 30, 2025, to December 31, 2028.
- **Apparel sector boost:** It amends provisions for regional apparel programs, increasing limits on certain categories to allow more duty-free exports.
- **Flexibility on fabrics:** Adjustments are made to third-country fabric programmes, enabling the use of a wider variety of textiles in production.
- **Retroactive relief:** A crucial provision allows for duty-free treatment to be applied retroactively to goods that entered the US between September 30, 2025, and the Act's enactment. Importers can request duty recalculations, offering financial redress for the lapse period.
- **Ancillary fee extensions:** The Bill also extends certain customs user fees, aligning them with the new timeline.

Despite the promising progress in Congress, clouds of uncertainty linger, particularly regarding regional stability.

The ongoing trade and diplomatic tensions between the US and South Africa cast a shadow over South Africa's continued AGOA eligibility.

Given the integrated nature of Southern African supply chains - where Lesotho often sources materials and shares logistics - instability in the region's largest economy poses an indirect but serious threat to Basotho operations.

In response to these vulnerabilities, the Ministry of Trade is not placing all its eggs in the AGOA basket. Director of Trade, 'Malineo Seboholi, outlined a parallel strategy focused on diversification.

"As part of our response, we are targeting diversification of both products and markets," Seboholi said. "We have been establishing and strengthening partnerships with alternative markets in Europe and the United Kingdom."

Minister Shelile's assurance, therefore, is coupled with a stark warning and a call to action. The potential three-year extension is framed not just as a resumption of business as usual, but as a "finite window of opportunity." It is a lifeline that must be used strategically to future-proof the economy.

"The industry and the government must use this time wisely," Shelile urged. "We must enhance our competitiveness, diversify our product lines, explore regional fabric sourcing to better meet rules of origin, and heavily invest in skills development. Our goal must be to build a more resilient economic sector."

The message from Maseru is clear - while the reassuring vote in the US House has put AGOA back on track, the nation holds its breath for the Senate deliberations and the ultimate decision from President Trump.

The coming weeks will determine whether Lesotho can reclaim its duty-free access, prevent a looming economic crisis, and secure the time needed to forge a more self-reliant economic path.

The foundation built by AGOA has been transformative, but its recent lapse is a stark reminder that foundations built on external policy can shift.

How Lesotho navigates the next three months - and potentially the next three years - will define the strength and sustainability of its most critical industry for a generation.



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BOKANG MOSHOESHOE

MASERU - In a significant boost for local talent and national development, the Vodacom Lesotho Foundation this week celebrated the selection of six exceptional Basotho students as recipients of its coveted Vodacom Lesotho Bursary.

Chosen from a highly competitive pool of 180 applicants, these scholars are set to embark on tertiary studies in Science, Technology, and related fields at leading universities across South Africa.

The announcement, made at a farewell ceremony in Maseru, underscores a deep-seated commitment by the Foundation to empower youth and address critical skill gaps within Lesotho.

For years, the Vodacom Lesotho Foundation has positioned education as the cornerstone of its corporate social investment, operating on the belief that sustainable progress is built on the foundation of an educated and skilled populace.

The Vodacom Lesotho Foundation is the social investment arm of Vodacom Lesotho, a leading telecommunications provider.

Established with a mandate to drive meaningful and sustainable change, the Foundation channels its efforts and resources into strategic areas that align with national development goals, with a particular focus on education, health, and community empowerment.

Beyond the headline-grabbing bursary programme, the Foundation has a proven track record of implementing impactful initiatives designed to uplift the needy and foster inclusive growth. These have included extensive digital literacy campaigns aimed at bridging the digital divide, especially in rural communities.

By equipping individuals, from schoolchildren to small business owners, with essential digital skills, the Foundation empowers them to participate in the modern economy.

In the health sector, the Foundation has invested in initiatives such as the "Mobi-Clinic" project, which has facilitated mobile health screenings and access to medical information in remote areas.

Furthermore, during times of national crisis, such as severe droughts or the Covid-19 pandemic, the Foundation has been at the forefront, providing essential resources, sanitation facilities, and support to vulnerable communities.

These multi-faceted efforts paint a picture of an organization deeply embedded

Vodacom investing in futures

- Vodacom Lesotho Foundation awards prestigious bursaries to six outstanding students
- Telecommunications giant reinforces commitment to national development through education and upliftment initiatives



in the social fabric of Lesotho, committed to creating tangible improvements in the quality of life for Basotho.

The annual bursary programme, to which the Foundation allocates approximately M4 million, is a flagship initiative with a clear strategic vision.

It specifically targets students pursuing studies in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). These disciplines are globally recognized as engines of innovation, industrial growth, and economic transformation.

By investing in STEM education, Vodacom Lesotho is directly contributing to building a pipeline of highly skilled professionals equipped to tackle Lesotho's socio-economic challenges and drive the nation's competitiveness on the global stage.

Addressing the beneficiaries, Vodacom Lesotho Chief Executive Officer, Mohale Ralebitso, framed the bursary as more than mere financial aid.

"This programme is a long-term investment in our country's future leadership, innovation capacity, and economic sustainability," he stated. He congratulated the students and urged them to remain disciplined and focused.

"We encourage you to work diligently... so that upon your return you can play a meaningful role in contributing to the growth and development of Lesotho's

economy." The ceremony was marked by an emotionally powerful moment when one of the beneficiaries, Leqele Tšosane from Mahobong in Leribe, addressed the audience.

Tšosane, who boasts an impressive academic journey from Molapo High School to Machabeng International College, will pursue a Bachelor of Commerce in Actuarial Science at Stellenbosch University.

Speaking on behalf of his peers, Tšosane expressed profound gratitude to Vodacom Lesotho for the life-changing opportunity. He then delivered an inspiring message of resilience, drawing from his personal experience as a hearing aid user.

"I would like to encourage people to never let their disabilities define their future. They must never give up and must dream beyond their disabilities, because disability does not define who they are," he asserted.

His words underscored the Foundation's commitment to inclusive development, supporting gifted students regardless of background or personal challenge.

The Vodacom Lesotho Bursary programme has a distinguished history of producing graduates who have gone on to become leaders, innovators, and change-makers in various sectors, both within Lesotho and internationally.

The Foundation's philosophy rests

on the idea that by identifying and supporting academically gifted and determined students - particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds - it can help bridge educational inequalities and catalyze a cycle of positive change.

Initiatives like this bursary scheme reinforce Vodacom Lesotho's dual role: as a premier provider of connectivity and as a dedicated partner in nation-building. The company understands that its success is intertwined with the prosperity of the communities it serves.

By empowering Basotho youth with quality education and opportunity, the Foundation is effectively planting seeds for a brighter, more self-reliant future.

The knowledge and expertise these six new ambassadors will acquire are not merely for personal advancement; they represent an intellectual investment in Lesotho's own development bank.

As they depart for their academic journeys, they carry with them the hopes of their families, the investment of a corporate citizen, and the potential to return and architect a more prosperous tomorrow for Lesotho.

Through such sustained commitment, the Vodacom Lesotho Foundation continues to demonstrate that true corporate leadership is measured not just in profits, but in the lasting positive impact forged within society.

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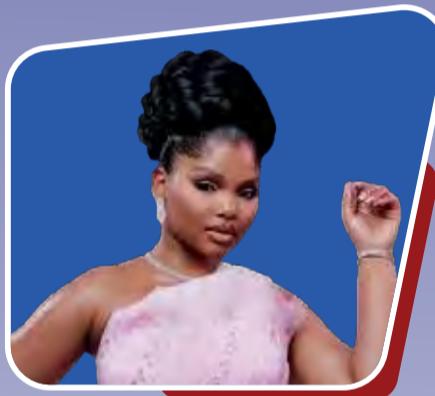
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Interview

In an inspiring conversation with *Public Eye*, Motjopi Molise (MM), the visionary founder of Delight Supermarket, traces the roots of his entrepreneurial journey back to a deeply personal story of struggle and observation. The 45-year-old from Roma, now residing in Khubetsoana, reveals that the spark for his business did not come from market charts or profit forecasts, but from watching his own father grapple with the harsh realities of farming in Lesotho.

The elder Molise, like many local farmers, faced the heart-breaking cycle of harvesting produce only to be met with inadequate markets, dictated prices, and the eventual loss of perishable goods to rot.

It was this familial challenge that planted the seed for Delight Supermarket - a venture conceived not merely as a store, but as a dedicated platform to empower local producers.

In this interview with reporter **'Mathato Seboka (PE)**, Molise details how this early inspiration evolved into a concrete plan to create a retail space that blends international shopping experiences with local relevance.

Despite a professional path that saw him climb the ranks in retail management at major chains like Woolworths, Mr Price, and Game, Molise's dream was steadfastly rooted in community solution.

He candidly discusses the significant hurdles of pooling capital - ultimately relying on a consortium of friends after formal institutions hesitated - and the pragmatic scaling down of his initial M10 million vision to open the doors on November 29, 2023.

More than a business narrative, Molise's story is a testament to transforming personal witness into a communal resource, aiming to reshape the local economic ecosystem one shelf at a time.

PE: Thank you for speaking with us. For our readers who are just getting to know you, who is Motjopi Molise?

MM: I am a 45-year-old Mosotho man, born and raised in Roma, though I now call Khubetsoana home. At my core, I am a businessman and a problem-solver, but I am also a son, a father and someone who believes deeply in building something that lasts for my community and my family.

PE: Let's start at the beginning. Can you walk us through your educational journey?

MM: My foundation was built right here in Lesotho. I attended Roma Primary School and then Christ the King High School.

I had an interest in the structured world of numbers, so I pursued studies at the Centre for Accounting Studies. However, I wasn't able to complete my General Accounting Qualification. That wasn't the end of learning, though.

I believe in continuous growth, so I turned to short courses to build specific skills. I studied business entrepreneurship, took an Advanced Principles of Labour Law course with the University of the Free State, and acquired my MQS7 qualification. My education has been a blend of formal and practical, always geared towards understanding how organizations and people work.

PE: Before you took the plunge into entrepreneurship, you had a significant corporate career. Did those roles provide the business skills you needed?

MM: Absolutely, and I consider that period my real-world business education. It all started in 2004 when I joined Woolworths as an Administration Manager.

That role taught me about back-end operations, systems, and efficiency. I then moved to Mr Price, where I spent many



years immersed in the fast-paced world of retail, understanding customer trends and stock management. My last corporate role was as a Store Manager at Game, from which I resigned in 2023.

That position was crucial - it gave me a holistic view of running a full-scale retail operation, from P&L responsibility to team leadership and strategic buying.

These roles didn't just give me skills; they gave me the confidence to finally execute my own vision. So, in 2023, I took the leap, established Delight Supermarket, and we opened our doors on November 29 of that year.

The journey has continued - in 2025, while still Managing Director of Delight, I took on the role of CEO at Mountain Kingdom Drops.

And I am excited to soon launch Motjopi All Business Solution (MABS) Consulting, a venture aimed at helping other Basotho entrepreneurs navigate the very challenges I faced.

PE: Speaking of your vision, what was the initial spark? What personal need or observation led you to found Delight Supermarket instead of continuing on the corporate path?

MM: The inspiration was deeply personal, rooted in watching my father struggle as a farmer. I saw the cycle of hardship first-hand.

He would work tirelessly to harvest his crops, only to face two major problems: a lack of reliable market access, and when he did find buyers, they would dictate prices so low it was unsustainable.

The worst part was watching perishable vegetables, his hard work and livelihood, rot in storage because he couldn't sell them in time. That pain stayed with me.

I kept thinking there had to be a better way - a platform that could connect farmers like my father directly to a steady, fair market. That idea eventually crystallized into Delight Supermarket.

My vision was twofold: to create that reliable outlet for local producers and to give customers in our community an international-quality shopping experience right in their own neighbourhood. It was about bridging a gap I had seen my entire life.

PE: Turning that idea into reality requires capital, which is a famous hurdle for entrepreneurs here. How did you pool the necessary resources? Was it personal savings, family, or formal loans?

MM: Financing was our first major mountain to climb. I initially approached formal financial institutions with a solid business plan.

I quickly realized the common reality: they are very reluctant to finance small, unproven start-ups, regardless of the plan's merit.

The business I envisioned required about M10 million to start properly. With

From father's

Molise's Delight Supermarket born from a farmer's struggle



the traditional route closed, I turned to my network.

I presented my idea to my friends - people who knew me and believed in my capability. Eight of them came on board, and we all contributed.

However, even our combined resources didn't reach the full M10 million. We had to make a tough, pragmatic decision: we launched anyway but scaled down the initial vision.

We opened the store but had to cut certain planned departments to fit the budget we had. It was a lesson in agility.

The dream of a full-scale supermarket is very much alive; we simply started with a strong, viable core with the plan to expand department by department as we secure more funding and generate internal growth.

PE: Beyond financing, what was the single biggest challenge in translating that scaled-down plan into an actual, physical store, and how did you overcome it?

MM: If financing was the first challenge, logistics and inventory management were the brutal second act. As a start-up with no trading history, we had no credit with suppliers.

We had to purchase our initial stock entirely upfront. Finding reliable suppliers who would sell to us at affordable prices was incredibly difficult. Everyone wants a proven partner.

The second, self-inflicted challenge was that we bought our initial stock without a detailed, department-specific budget. We were enthusiastic but inexperienced in precise category management.

The result was a classic retail imbalance: some departments were wildly overstocked with items that sold slowly, tying up crucial capital, while other departments were understocked on fast-moving goods, meaning we missed sales opportunities.

To overcome this, we had to take a loss. We drastically reduced the prices on overstocked items to clear the shelves and free up cash.

We then used that capital to invest in the fast-moving stock. It was a painful but critical lesson in data-driven purchasing and the absolute necessity of a disciplined budget from day one.

PE: Looking back, how did that initial vision for Delight Supermarket hold up

against the reality of the first few years of operation?

MM: We had to adapt, which is the reality for any business. Our core vision of supporting local producers hit a practical snag.

We wanted to buy predominantly from the local market, but we found that many local producers couldn't always guarantee consistent supply in the quantities and varieties we needed to meet daily customer demand.

To ensure our shelves were never empty, we had to supplement with imported goods.

This was a blemish of the initial vision, but it was necessary to meet the immediate reality of customer expectations. We haven't abandoned the local vision - we still carry and promote local brands as much as possible - but we had to balance idealism with operational practicality to survive and build trust with our customers.

PE: As you stabilized, what key milestones or strategic decisions were most crucial in scaling Delight Supermarket to where it is today?

MM: The most crucial step was moving from reactive to proactive management. We instituted a formal process of reviewing store performance meticulously.

This led to our most important strategic decision: cutting all unnecessary costs that we had carried over from our rushed inception phase.

We stopped guessing and started listening. We focused our investments - every Loti - specifically on what the sales data told us our customers needed most.

This shift from a "build-it-and-they-will-come" mind-set to a "listen-and-respond" model was the real turning point. It allowed us to optimize our offering, improve cash flow, and build a loyal customer base.

PE: How has your product offering or customer service philosophy evolved to specifically meet the needs of your local community?

MM: It has evolved entirely through observation and data. We moved from assuming we knew what the community wanted to actually learning it.

Through diligent sales tracking, we began to see clear patterns - purchasing habits, popular brands, peak shopping times, and even which products were

plight to market light



bought together.

This intelligence became our guide. We invested more in the high-demand items and categories.

Our customer service philosophy became about accessibility and responsiveness. Being a local store means the owners and managers are on the floor every day.

We hear feedback directly and can act on it quickly, whether it's about pricing, a requested product, or store layout. We are not a distant corporate entity; we are neighbours running a shop.

PE: Beyond being a retail outlet, how do you see Delight Supermarket's role in the local ecosystem - in job creation, supporting producers, or keeping wealth in the community?

MM: This is central to our identity. From the start, job creation was a priority.

We wanted to specifically prioritize hiring from the immediate community around the supermarket, provided candidates met the necessary skill requirements for good customer service.

We started with a team of about 30, which was optimistic. When we had to narrow down operations initially, we unfortunately had to reduce staff. It was one of the hardest decisions.

We are currently a team of 16 dedicated employees. As we expand, responsible job creation remains a key goal.

In terms of supporting producers, while we've had to import, we actively seek out and list local products that are reliable.

Every can of locally made relish or bag of locally grown produce on our shelf is a small victory.

And of course, by operating here, paying salaries here, and sourcing what we can locally, we are part of the cycle that keeps spending within the community.

PE: In a market that includes larger regional chains, what do you believe is the distinct competitive advantage of a local brand like Delight?

MM: Our local relevance is our entire competitive advantage. It's why we exist. Large chains are magnificent at standardization and efficiency, but that is also their weakness.

They often have a centralized buying system that cannot possibly cater to the unique, hyper-local tastes and needs of every community they serve.

Being locally owned and operated, we have the flexibility to adapt. We can quickly stock a product that our community is asking for. We can build personal relationships with our customers.

We can support the small local brand that a big chain's system would overlook. We are not just a store; we are a part of the social and economic fabric of this specific area.

PE: How is the current economic climate - with inflation, currency fluctuations, and changing consumer spending - affecting your operations and planning?

MM: It affects us profoundly and daily. Our strategic planning has had to become incredibly nimble. The grand vision of being a large-scale bulk retailer has been tempered by economic reality. We see customers watching every Loti.

In response, we have had to make difficult choices, sometimes sourcing alternative products at lower price points to ensure our goods remain accessible.

We have shifted strategy from "what we

want to sell" to "what our customers can afford to buy" without sacrificing essential quality.

It's a constant balancing act between maintaining margins and maintaining our customer base.

PE: In this challenging environment, what adaptations have been most crucial for remaining resilient?

MM: The number one adaptation is proximity - to our customers and our stakeholders. We have doubled down on being close to our customers, actively seeking their feedback on a daily basis to understand their shifting priorities.

This isn't abstract; it's conversations at the till, in the aisles, and on community social media pages.

Secondly, we have focused on building stronger, more engaged relationships with all our stakeholders - suppliers, employees, and local community leaders.

Transparent communication during tough times builds trust and often leads to collaborative solutions, like flexible payment terms with suppliers or shared

community initiatives that drive foot traffic.

PE: From your perspective, what is the biggest opportunity and the biggest threat for local businesses in Lesotho today?

MM: The biggest opportunity lies in professionalizing our approach to business. Many Basotho businesses are driven by passion and necessity but not always by professional discipline.

There's a massive opportunity for us to collectively improve our financial management, to use data to make decisions rather than gut feelings, and to formalize our operations.

This is what I hope to address with my upcoming consulting venture, MABS. When we run our businesses professionally, we unlock growth, create sustainable jobs, and build real economic resilience.

The biggest threat, conversely, is our slowness to adopt technology. We are largely reactive, not proactive. Our economy and our business habits are still very much based on physical contact.

While there's value in that, the world is moving online - to digital sales, online marketing, data analytics, and efficient digital operations.

Our reluctance to embrace these tools makes us less efficient and vulnerable to more agile competitors, including those from across the border. We risk being left behind if we don't start integrating technology into the very heart of how we do business.

PE: What is the most important piece of advice you would give to a young Mosotho with an entrepreneurial dream, especially about overcoming the fear of starting?

MM: My advice is simple: reframe how you see challenges. Do not be scared to face them; understand that a business exists to solve challenges.

The problem you identify - whether it's a lack of a service, an inefficient market, or an unmet community need - is the business opportunity.

The fear of starting is often the fear of problems. Embrace that. See every hurdle not as a stop sign but as the very thing that will shape your unique solution.

Opportunities are hidden in plain sight within our daily frustrations. Your dream is likely the answer to someone else's problem.

PE: Looking ahead, what are the next big goals for Delight Supermarket?

MM: Growth and partnership. We are actively looking for strategic partnerships with other stakeholders and investors.

The goal is to secure the capital needed to expand our current store to its full original vision and, ultimately, to open new locations countrywide.

We want to prove that a community-focused, professionally run local brand can scale successfully.

PE: Finally, what is your ultimate vision for Delight Supermarket's legacy - not just as a store, but as an institution in Lesotho?

MM: I envision Delight Supermarket as a cornerstone for generational wealth. I don't just see it as my business; I see it as a lasting entity.

I want my children to benefit from the foundation we're laying, and I want their children to find it not only still existing but thriving and evolving.

Beyond my family, I want it to be remembered as an institution that showed it was possible - that a Basotho business, born from a desire to solve a local problem, could grow with professionalism, serve its community with integrity, and stand the test of time. That is the legacy I am building for, one customer and one day at a time.

Historic leadership transition at MMB

As 'Mapeete Ntjana assumes helm amid industry challenges'



RETHABILE MOHONO

MASERU – In a landmark appointment for one of Lesotho's industrial pillars, 'Mapeete Ntjana has taken the reins as Managing Director of Maluti Mountain Brewery (MMB), effective January 1.

Her ascension marks not only a personal career pinnacle but also a historic milestone as she becomes the first woman to lead the brewery in its decades-long history. Ntjana steps into the role at a critical juncture, as the company navigates significant economic headwinds and a transformed regulatory landscape.

MMB was established in 1979 as a joint venture between the government of Lesotho and the South African Breweries (SAB), now part of AB InBev. Its creation was a strategic move to foster local industry, reduce reliance on imported beers, and create employment.

Situated in Maseru, the brewery quickly became synonymous with quality, producing iconic brands such as Maluti Premium Lager, then later expanding its portfolio under franchise agreements with global giants.

A pivotal moment in MMB's history came in 1996 when SABMiller acquired a majority stake, injecting capital, technological expertise, and international standards into its operations.

This period saw significant expansion, modernisation of facilities, and the introduction of popular international brands like Peroni and Castle Lager under license, solidifying MMB's dominance in the Lesotho market and its growing footprint in the region.

The ownership structure evolved again in 2017 when Heineken International, through its subsidiary Brand Investments, acquired a significant shareholding from SABMiller following the latter's acquisition by AB InBev. This transition ushered in

a new era of brand alignment and global supply chain integration, though it also meant adapting to a different corporate culture and strategic focus.

Today, MMB stands as Lesotho's sole major brewer and a cornerstone of the national manufacturing sector.

It is a critical contributor to the economy through tax revenues, direct and indirect employment, and support for local agriculture via raw material sourcing.

However, its current state is one of resilience under pressure, grappling with the lasting impacts of the high alcohol levy introduced by the government, which has compressed margins and altered market dynamics.

Ntjana's journey to the top office is a testament to internal growth and strategic vision. She joined MMB in September 2019 as Planning and Performance Manager in the Commercial division.

Her acumen quickly propelled her to the role of Country Finance Manager for Lesotho, and subsequently to Finance Manager for the Rest of Africa, where she oversaw financial operations in Lesotho and eSwatini. This trajectory, she notes, provided an invaluable "end-to-end view of the business."

"The appointment was both humbling and affirming," Ntjana reflected. "Professionally, it came with a strong sense of responsibility to all stakeholders and the country. I see it less as a personal milestone and more as a stewardship role I am entrusted to serve."

While proud to be the first female managing director, she consciously shifts focus from symbolism to substance.

"I am proud of the milestone, but I am even more focused on what it represents – progress," she stated. "I believe leadership should always be based on capability, integrity, and performance. If this moment encourages more women to aspire confidently to leadership roles,

then it has meaning beyond me." Ntjana assumes command during one of the most challenging periods for the alcohol industry in Lesotho.

The substantial alcohol levy has drastically reshaped the operating environment, affecting consumer affordability, depressing volumes, and forcing painful structural adjustments, including the closure of several regional depots.

"The levy has undoubtedly affected the business and reshaped the operating environment," Ntjana acknowledged. "Like others in the industry, we had to adjust to lower margins, changing consumer behaviour, and take difficult structural decisions."

Compounding this are broader macroeconomic pressures - high inflation, subdued consumer spending, and rising operational costs - that are squeezing businesses nationwide.

"I am stepping into the role at a time when the broader economy is under pressure, and many organisations are experiencing similar challenges," she noted.

Despite these trials, Ntjana emphasises the enduring strengths she inherits. "I am inheriting a committed workforce and strong brands, which give us a solid foundation to build on. Maluti Mountain Brewery may be challenged, but it remains a sustainable business."

Ntjana's strategic compass is oriented towards long-term, sustainable value creation rather than short-term fixes. Her vision is to build "a business that balances the triple bottom line – People, Planet, and Profit."

She elaborates: "I describe this as building a safe, proud, and high-performing Maluti Mountain Brewery: trusted for quality, respected for how we treat our people, and competitive in the market for the long term."

Her immediate tactical priorities are firmly rooted in strengthening core fundamentals. "My immediate focus is on the fundamentals – operational efficiencies and discipline, cost control, brand profitability, and execution excellence," she explained. "Sustainable profitability comes from mastering the basics consistently. Once those fundamentals are strong, growth opportunities follow naturally."

On innovation and potential diversification - a path some competitors have taken - Ntjana advocates for a deliberate, strategic approach.

"We are always evaluating opportunities, but we approach innovation and partnerships deliberately. Any initiative must strengthen our core business, align with our values, and deliver long-term value, not short-term excitement."

Regarding the contentious issue of government policy, particularly the levy, Ntjana strikes a tone of pragmatic cooperation. "It is the government's role to shape policy and we respect that," she said.

"Our approach has always been constructive engagement where we share data, insights, and industry perspectives while remaining compliant and responsible."

Her leadership philosophy is explicitly values-driven and people-centric.

"I lead with clarity, fairness, and accountability," Ntjana described. "I believe in listening carefully, making informed decisions, developing people, and holding them to clear standards. These are principles I uphold which transcend gender."

She is a strong advocate for the tangible benefits of diversity. "In my observation, diverse leadership teams tend to make better decisions. When people feel represented and respected, psychological safety improves, and we know engaged teams perform better."

Balancing the immense demands of leadership with personal life, she admits, is an ongoing effort.

"I survive by being disciplined, prioritising better, and above all, the support I get from both work and at home," she shared, highlighting the importance of building trusted teams.

As she embarks on her tenure, Ntjana's narrative carries a resonant message for Lesotho's aspiring professionals, especially young women.

"Women are skilled, capable, and prepared, but too often held back by systemic barriers and self-doubt," she observed. "Don't wait to feel ready. Growth often comes before confidence."

She frames her own journey as a lesson in resilience and agency.

"My journey is proof that no situation or circumstance is permanent. What matters is how you respond to it. Leadership is not about status or position - it carries responsibility and impact."

Concluding with a forward-looking charge, she added: "Lesotho needs thoughtful, principled leaders, and there is space for many more to rise."

As Ntjana begins her chapter at the helm, the MMB stands at a crossroads between its storied past and a future demanding agility, principled leadership, and unwavering focus on sustainable growth.

The nation's corporate watch will be keenly fixed on how this historic leader guides its iconic brewery through the prevailing storms and toward a renewed era of stability and success.



World Affairs

Danish leader says her country can't negotiate on sovereignty

Denmark's prime minister is saying after U.S. President Donald Trump announced he agreed a "framework of a future deal" on Arctic security with the head of NATO that her country can't negotiate on its sovereignty and she has been "informed that this ha...



COPENHAGEN, Denmark's prime minister insisted that her country can't negotiate on its sovereignty on Thursday after U.S. President Donald Trump said he agreed a "framework of a future deal" on Arctic security with the head of NATO, and she has been "informed that this has not been the case."

Trump on Wednesday abruptly scrapped the tariffs he had threatened to impose on eight European nations to press for US control over Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

It was a dramatic reversal shortly after he insisted he wanted to get the island "including right, title and ownership."

He said "additional discussions" on Greenland were being held concerning the Golden Dome missile defense program, a multilayered, \$175 billion system that for the first time will put US weapons in space. Trump offered few details, saying they were still being worked out.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said in a statement that security in the Arctic is a matter for all of NATO, and it is "good and natural" that it be discussed between the US president and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte.

She said that she had spoken with Rutte "on an ongoing basis," including before and after he met Trump in Davos.

She wrote that NATO is fully aware of Denmark's position that anything political can be negotiated on, including security, investment and economic issues - "but we cannot negotiate on our sovereignty."

"I have been informed that this has not been the case," she said, adding that only Denmark and Greenland can make decisions on issues concerning Denmark and Greenland.

Frederiksen said that Denmark wants to continue engaging in constructive dialogue with allies on how to strengthen security in the Arctic, including the US Golden Dome program, "provided that this is done with respect for our territorial integrity."

-ABCnews

European leaders to gather in Brussels to 'coordinate' plans on Trump, Greenland

DAVID BRENNAN

LONDON - The heads of all 27 European Union member states will gather in Brussels on Thursday for what the body is calling an "extraordinary" summit regarding the recent crisis in transatlantic relations prompted by U.S. President Donald Trump's efforts to acquire Greenland.

European leaders "will discuss recent developments in transatlantic relations and their implications for the EU and coordinate on the way forward," a notice posted to the website of the European Council -- the body made up of EU national leaders -- said.

The meeting, which is scheduled for 7 p.m. local time, comes after several weeks of tensions between the U.S. and its European allies over the fate of Greenland, a self-governing part of the Kingdom of Denmark which Trump has repeatedly said -- across both his first and second terms in office -- that he wants to acquire for the U.S.

The issue has dominated this week's World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland. Trump addressed the event on Wednesday, swinging between apparent threats against NATO allies over Greenland while also ruling out the use of military force to seize the massive Arctic island.

Trump described Greenland as a "piece of ice" and framed his proposed acquisition of the territory -- which he several times incorrectly referred to as Iceland, though the White House denied that he misspoke -- as payment for decades of US contributions to NATO and European security.

Trump met with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte after his address. Later, Trump wrote on social media that the "framework of a future deal" on Greenland had been reached on Greenland.

The president said he would shelve plans to impose tariffs on eight NATO allies who deployed small numbers of troops to Greenland earlier this month -- a



threat that prompted fierce criticism from European leaders and raised the prospect of a transatlantic trade war.

Neither Trump nor Rutte immediately revealed the details of the purported deal. Trump told CNN that the US got "everything we wanted," while Rutte told Fox News that the issue of Greenland's sovereignty "did not come up" in his meeting with the president.

A NATO spokesperson told ABC News that trilateral talks between the US, Greenland and Denmark were ongoing.

Rutte told Reuters on yesterday, "We came to this understanding that collectively as NATO, we have to step up here, including the US."

Rutte said that minerals exploitation in Greenland was not discussed during his talks with Trump on Wednesday, and that specific negotiations relating to Greenland will continue between Washington, Copenhagen and Nuuk. "You can always take Donald Trump at his word," Rutte

said. "He is the leader of the free world, and he is doing what I would love for a leader of the free world to do."

Yesterday morning, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said in a statement that Copenhagen and Nuuk have been coordinating on discussions over Greenland.

Denmark was in "close dialogue with NATO" and with Rutte before the latter's meeting with Trump, she said.

"NATO is fully aware of the position of the Kingdom of Denmark. We can negotiate on everything political; security, investments, economy. But we cannot negotiate on our sovereignty," the prime minister said.

"I have been informed that this has not been the case either. And of course, only Denmark and Greenland themselves can make decisions on issues concerning Denmark and Greenland," Frederiksen said.

A European Council spokesperson

told ABC News there had been "no change in the agenda" for yesterday's meeting in Brussels following Trump's announcement of a possible deal.

In a statement on the Council's website, the body's President Antonio Costa said that the key topics for discussions yesterday would include "unity around the principles of international law, territorial integrity and national sovereignty" and "unity in full support and solidarity with Denmark and Greenland."

Also to be discussed, Costa said, are a "shared transatlantic interest in peace and security in the Arctic, notably through NATO" and "concern that further tariffs would undermine relations and are incompatible with the EU-US trade agreement."

"The EU wants to continue engaging constructively with the United States on all issues of common interest," the statement said.

-ABC News

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— Simone Biles

Sello conquers South Africa's oldest race

From Lesotho's highlands to marathon glory

MOSA MAOENG, 'MATHATO SEBOKA and BOKANG MOSHOESHOE

MASERU - In the pre-dawn chill of Welkom, a city built on gold, a different kind of treasure was being pursued. On the historic start line of the AECI Mielie Marathon, the oldest marathon in South Africa, a rising star from the mountain of Botha-Botha toed the mark, not just as a competitor, but as a testament to a club's dream.

When Morabaraba Sello of the Hillsbusterz Athletics Club broke the tape in a blistering time of 2:30:12 he fell short of breaking the 2:18:34 race record, but he didn't just win a race - he etched his name into the rich tapestry of a South African sporting institution and announced his arrival on the regional distance running scene.

The victory was a triumph of altitude-forged resilience over the flat, demanding roads of the Free State. The AECI Mielie Marathon, first run in 1966, is a bedrock of South African athletics. For over half a century, it has tested the nation's finest distance runners on its 42.2km circuit through Welkom and its surrounding mining areas.

Winning this race carries a prestige distinct from faster, bigger city marathons; it is a victory steeped in history, a hard-earned conquest on a classic course.

This year's chapter, however, was written by an outsider from the highlands of Lesotho. Sello's win was the culmination of a journey that began not on the tarmac of Welkom, but on the rugged, dirt trails of Lesotho.

He is a product of the Hillsbusterz Athletic Club, a story of grassroots passion in itself. Founded in 2016 in the Mafeteng district by a



group of former runners and enthusiasts, the club was born from a simple, powerful idea: to provide structure, coaching, and opportunity for the raw talent that abounds in Lesotho's mountainous regions.

Named to embody the spirit of conquering steep hills, the club has steadily grown, focusing on disciplined training and competitive exposure. Sello's victory is their most significant validation yet, a beacon for every aspiring athlete training at altitude under the club's banner.

For 30-year-old Sello, the path to Welkom was paved with incremental progress and local dominance. A dedicated athlete since his late teens, he has been a consistent force on the Lesotho road running circuit, racking up wins in national half-marathons and 10km races.

His training with Hillsbusterz, under coaches who emphasize strength endurance suited to his natural terrain, had been pointing toward a marathon breakthrough.

The AECI Mielie Marathon, with its history and competitive field, presented the perfect stage.

Race day unfolded as a tactical battle. Sello, running with the confidence of a man prepared for the long grind, stayed with the lead pack through the early stages. As the kilometers wore on and the sun rose over the Free State plains, his strength, honed on far steeper gradients, became apparent. Making a decisive move after the 30km mark, a point where many marathons are won or lost, he opened a gap that his rivals could not close. His powerful stride carried him through the final, lonely kilometers to a

decisive victory. "We were 25 runners from the Hillsbusterz Club and I was running the 42km distance. This was my first distance after sustaining an injury last year. I started running in 2017 and at the time I settled for the 21km races, but since 2020 I began running to take on the 42km distance," he said.

He appealed to aspiring athletes to work hard in training, follow programmes, have patience and chase progress more than money. Everything needs patience and time, he added.

The 2026 results crowned a new king. Following Sello's winning 2:30:12, South Africa's Abram Magashoa from Gauteng (Run Alex) claimed second in 2:40:27 - a 10 minutes' gap behind Sello - with Jacobus Sevenster from the Free State (Bloemfontein Striders) rounding out the podium in 2:55:19.

Sello's triumph is more than a personal best or a podium finish. It is a narrative of cross-border inspiration, proving that talent from smaller clubs and nations can emerge to claim major honours. It brings immense pride to the Hillsbusterz Club, vindicating their years of community-focused work.

And for the AECI Mielie Marathon, it adds a thrilling new layer to its long history - a champion from the mountains, arriving to conquer the plains, and ensuring that the oldest marathon in South Africa continues to produce unforgettable stories of athletic endeavor.

Also speaking Public Eye, Hillsbusterz Club president, Thabang Lenono, said the club is extremely proud of Sello's performance at the Mielie's race. He said winning by such a big 10 minutes' margin after crossing the finish could only be explained as superb for the young athlete.

"This shows his quality and consistency, and this result is especially meaningful because it is not his first time on the podium. As Hillbusterz Running Club, we have great ambitions for him and we are committed to giving him all the support he needs to compete with the best."

This victory also reflects our broader goal as a club to become a dominant force in races across Lesotho and Free State," a proud Lenono said.

President Lenono himself ran the 21km race where he attained position 28 from the 245 runners who participated - clocking 1:45:55.

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