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DCEO probes NUL's innovation hub over M1.9m

Staff Reporter

The National University of Lesotho (NUL) Innovation Hub is under investigation by the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) for possible mismanagement of funds, Newsday can reveal.

At the heart of the probe is possible mismanagement of a M1.9 million funding, which the hub received in 2023 from the Lesotho Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) project to incubate entrepreneurs or business startups.

Along with several Enterprise Support Organisations (ESOs) in the country, the hub received US\$100 000 (approximately M1.9 million) under the CAFI's initiative to improve the quality and breadth of integrated start-up business support services and provide better early-stage financing opportunities.

A significant portion, 70 percent of the allocated funds was designated for the direct benefit of startups.

Each of the first ten startups selected for incubation by the NUL Innovation Hub would receive \$7 000 (approximately M133 000), with the remaining \$30 000 (about M570 000) to be used by the hub to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem and provide valuable assistance to emerging entrepreneurs.

However, sources who spoke to Newsday on condition of anonymity revealed that the hub has allegedly diverted the CAFI funds for purposes unrelated to the designated projects.

The hub has allegedly instead diverted the CAFI funds for other uses. They were supposed to fund specific projects incubated under CAFI, but are believed to have used them for other projects; a development which has not gone down well with the powers that be



at CAFI.

They hub is also being probed for using part of the funding to remunerate its staff members instead of bringing in external experts to help with the training of CAFI beneficiary projects.

NUL's Communications and Marketing Director, 'Mamosa Moteetee late last night professed ignorance of the investigation, but promised to find out about it as soon as possible.

DCEO spokesperson, 'Matlhokomelo Senoko yesterday confirmed that they were investigating the hub but would not divulge more details as the investigation is currently underway.

Earlier this year, Newsday broke the news about accusations of exploitation and nepotism against the hub by some of its beneficiaries.

The allegations suggested that those at the helm were using the incubation process for personal gain. However, the NUL Innovations

Committee (NULIC) has vehemently denied these allegations.

NULIC is a voluntary committee that is made up of staff, students, and individuals outside of NUL who are responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Innovation Hub and NUL Research and Innovation agenda.

The committee is headed by a coordinator who reports to the Office of Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

Whistleblowers, who spoke exclusively to Newsday recently on condition of anonymity, painted a grim picture of a hub where the benefits of incubation are allegedly reserved for businesses with close ties to the hub's decision-makers.

According to one source, the Hub is a closed loop of privilege. The heart of the accusations revolves around the alleged unequal distribution of resources during the incubation process.

Startups unrelated to the hub's management or their associates, the sources claim, receive little to no financial assistance, crippling their chances of success.

The CAFI project aims to achieve various key outputs, including increasing the number of women-owned and youth-owned enterprises benefiting from private sector initiatives, enhancing the financing available to women-owned enterprises, and driving growth in both revenue and employment for these businesses.

Part of the project's subcomponents aim to strengthen the country's emerging entrepreneurial ecosystem and to facilitate early-stage financing for innovative small to medium enterprises, particularly those led by youth and women.

This involves establishing an Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing Facility to improve the quality and breadth of integrated start-up business support services, ultimately providing better early-stage financing opportunities. One of the primary goals is the incubation of up to 500 start-ups and innovative SMEs over five years.

The NUL Innovation Hub, a department of NUL, plays a pivotal role in incubating and accelerating businesses initiated by students.

According to information on the hub's website, the aim is to guide these businesses from their nascent stages to becoming professionally run entities capable of mass production.

Designed as an interface between academia and business, the hub provides incubated businesses with essential resources, including free space, electricity, water, internet, and other amenities to facilitate their focus on mastering production during the crucial early stages of development.

PM faces backlash as food insecurity crisis deepens

Staff Reporters

More than a month after declaring a national food insecurity disaster, Prime Minister Ntsoakoane Samuel Matekane is under fire for what has been described as a lack of tangible action to address the worsening crisis.

The Christian Advocates and Ambassadors Association (CAAA) on Wednesday expressed their frustration, accusing the government of failing to provide meaningful relief to the thousands of Basotho facing hunger.

"Nothing practical has been done to address this situation either by providing means of securing food for the needy, foodstuffs, and/or subsidising the cost of food," the association's lawyers wrote in a letter to the Attorney General.

The association's scathing letter follows growing concerns over the government's response to the escalating food crisis, which has been exacerbated by the worst El Niño-induced drought in a century.

Despite Matekane's July 12 declaration of a national disaster, critics argue that the government's response has been woefully inadequate.

Last month, Newsday reported that Matekane was under intense pressure to settle a constitutional challenge out of court, as the

CAAA demanded urgent government action to address the food crisis.

"We humbly pray that we make a consent order in the public interest and public health," the association stated at the time.

The CAAA had proposed several measures to alleviate the crisis, including the introduction of financially sponsored community development and poverty alleviation projects, the distribution of food parcels, and subsidising the cost of food for the needy.

These proposals, according to the association, were intended to provide immediate relief while also addressing the long-term socio-economic challenges that have left many Basotho vulnerable to food insecurity.

However, the association is now angered by what it perceives as the government's disregard for its offer.

"The government has simply formally acknowledged receipt of our settlement letter without more ado," the CAAA's letter, dated August 14, read.

"We reiterate that the right of access to food and/or means of securing food, i.e., money, is an inseparable part and parcel of the right to a healthy life protected in our Constitution."

The letter continued: "The problem posed by food insecurity and hunger to the lives of the people cannot be resolved by the adage

'tsuonyana robala tse ling li robetse'. Nor can it be remedied by the passage of time and forgetfulness."

The association emphasised the urgent need for the government to take positive action, including the implementation of legislation, policies, plans, programs, and projects aimed at alleviating food insecurity.

"Actions include, among others, providing food to the needy and/or subsidising the cost of food. Projects include, inter alia, creating community projects and piece jobs to provide the people with pecuniary means of securing food," the CAAA stated.

The association further expressed its concern that the government may not consider providing food to the needy as a priority.

"We humbly make a follow-up to our offer of settlement and pray you respond within three days of your receipt of this correspondence. Failing which we shall have no alternative but to reasonably infer that the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho has failed and/or refused to accept our offer."

The letter concluded with a warning: "We shall then prosecute our case pending in the High Court of Lesotho (Constitutional Division) to finality."

Matekane's declaration of a state of disaster on July 12 acknowledged the severity of the



Samuel Matekane, Prime Minister of Lesotho

food insecurity crisis, estimating that M1.2 billion would be needed to address the situation.

The government has since allocated M200 million to aid in relief efforts, but the CAAA and other critics argue that this is insufficient.

Compounding the controversy, Matekane had argued in a court affidavit that the government has no constitutional duty to provide food for its people. "It is denied that there is a right to food. I further deny that the right to life is inclusive of emotional, intellectual, or spiritual needs," Matekane stated in his affidavit.

He further denied that the lack of food poses a threat to life, stating, "Life is not dependent only on food as there are other contributory factors." Matekane's stance has drawn sharp criticism from the CAAA and other civil society groups, who argue that the government is shirking its responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of society.

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A short pause for a good cause

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project tunnel system and 'Muela Hydro-power Station will be shut down **FROM OCTOBER 2024, TO MARCH 2025** for essential maintenance operations. During this time, water transfer in the tunnels will stop, and the station will not generate electricity.

INTERVIEW

Fulbright specialist confronting mental health in Lesotho



In an exclusive one-on-one interview with Kananelo Boloetse, Editor of Newsday, we delve into the impactful work of Dorcas Grigg-Saito, a Fulbright Specialist with a focus on Global Health. Having recently completed her assignment in Lesotho, Ms. Grigg-Saito collaborated closely with Jhpiego, an international public health NGO, on a series of initiatives aimed at addressing the critical mental health needs of Basotho. With extensive experience in global health, Ms. Grigg-Saito brings valuable insights into the challenges and successes of adapting the renowned Friendship Benches model from Zimbabwe to the local context in Lesotho. This conversation explores her experiences, the in-

novative projects she led, and the lasting impact of her work in improving mental health services in a nation facing significant mental health challenges.

and youth peers to become lay counselors, providing compassionate, informal mental health counseling. It was a privilege to collaborate with such talented and compassionate individuals as we worked to create safe spaces for mental health support across communities. Reflecting on my time in Lesotho, I am deeply impressed by the genuine commitment, exceptional competence, and warmth of the Basotho people, especially the health workers I interacted with at Jhpiego, the Ministry of Health, the U.S. Embassy, and various NGOs.

Newsday: Can you highlight some of the key projects you worked on with Jhpiego to improve mental health services in Lesotho?

conditions and the country facing the highest suicide rate in the world. The Friendship Bench model, with its proven efficacy and cost-effectiveness, offers a crucial solution to addressing these challenges and improving the quality of life for many Basotho.

Newsday: Were there any particular successes or breakthroughs that you experienced during your assignment?

Dorcas Grigg-Saito: One of the first breakthroughs occurred even before my arrival, when Jhpiego, an international public health NGO, identified the urgent need for additional mental health resources in Lesotho and recognised the effectiveness of the Friendship Bench model, which has been successfully implemented in over eight countries and cultures. This model's problem-solving therapy has shown remarkable results, often improving the mental health of individuals with mild to moderate issues within just 4 to 6 sessions. For those with more severe conditions, we establish referral pathways to ensure they receive the higher levels of care they need.

A significant moment was witnessing the surprise—and then the commitment—of many people, even those within healthcare and NGOs, when they learned about Lesotho's alarmingly high suicide rate. As they connected this statistic to the mental health struggles of their friends and family members, it was like a light bulb went off, sparking a dedication to raise aware-

ness and take action on mental health and suicide prevention.

Friendship Benches will be set up in the districts of Molepolole and Butha Buthe. Anyone will be able to use the services, on their own or with a referral from family or friends, a health facility, a school, or other community organisation. If the pilot is successful, we plan to scale the project to additional locations, expanding the reach and impact of this vital initiative.

Newsday: How does the mental health situation in Lesotho compare to other countries you have worked in or studied?

Dorcas Grigg-Saito: Throughout my career in healthcare, I have worked extensively with refugees and immigrants from various parts of the world, and I have observed many parallels with the mental health situation in Lesotho. In particular, there are significant challenges due to limited personal and societal resources, which exacerbate the serious impacts of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. These conditions not only affect people's ability to manage their daily lives and care for their families but also hinder their overall health management.

A common thread across these contexts is a pervasive lack of hope, the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health or substance use issues, and the fear of discussing problems with others. My experiences underscore the critical importance of integrating mental health care with general medical care and educating people about the effectiveness of treatment. By addressing these challenges, we can help individuals lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.

Newsday: What lessons from your experience in Lesotho can be applied to other global health initiatives, particularly in resource-limited settings?

Dorcas Grigg-Saito: Mental health is a critical issue in every country, and its importance is increasingly being recognised globally. There is growing awareness of the profound impact mental health has on physical health and the effectiveness of medical treatments.

Given that over 77 percent of global suicides occurred in low- and middle-income countries in 2019, the strategies we have developed in Lesotho can serve as valuable models for other resource-limited settings. The cost-effectiveness of the Friendship Bench model, which trains lay counselors—whether they are grandparents, village health workers, or youth—is particularly relevant in these contexts. This approach demonstrates that effective mental health interventions are feasible and can be successfully implemented even in areas with limited resources.

Newsday: What advice would you give to other professionals looking to make a difference in global health through programs like the Fulbright Program?

Dorcas Grigg-Saito: My advice is to approach your work with an open mind and a willingness to learn from the people who live and work in the country—they are the true experts. Flexibility is key; be prepared to adapt your ideas and experiences to fit the local context and culture. It is crucial to understand that community members are the ones who know best how a program should be designed and implemented. Their insights and involvement are what ultimately drive success.

For more information about the Friendship Benches or to make a donation, please contact Oluwakemi Adeleke, Jhpiego Country Director, at Mariam.Adeleke@jhpiego.org.



novative projects she led, and the lasting impact of her work in improving mental health services in a nation facing significant mental health challenges.

Newsday: Can you describe your experience working in Lesotho as a U.S. Fulbright Specialist?

Dorcas Grigg-Saito: A significant part of my work involved laying the groundwork for implementing the Friendship Benches model from Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, this initiative trained grandparents, village health workers,

Dorcas Grigg-Saito: One of the highlights of my work was collaborating closely with the Ministry of Health, securing the support and partnership of key officials, including the Director General for Health Services, the Director of Mental Health, and the Director of Clinical Services. Together, we developed plans to adapt the model to the local culture and raise awareness about mental health and suicide among Jhpiego staff and the wider community. Mental health is a pressing issue in Lesotho, with nearly one-fifth of the population affected by mental health

ness and take action on mental health and suicide prevention.

Securing the advice and support of the Ministry of Health was another critical milestone. Their insights, suggestions, and belief in the Friendship Bench model have been instrumental in planning its establishment in Lesotho.

Most recently, we received the exciting news that Jhpiego has secured one-year funding to pilot the program in two districts. Approximately 20 Lay Therapists and their coordinators will be trained in Problem Solving Therapy, and



Upcoming Six-Month Shutdown for LHWP Phase I Tunnels: A Short Pause for a Good Cause

The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) reminds the public of the **upcoming maintenance exercise on the Phase I Water Transfer and Delivery Tunnels**. This planned shutdown, scheduled **from October 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025**, will **temporarily halt** water transfers from **Katse to 'Muela** and hydroelectric power generation at the 'Muela Hydropower Station. During this period, there will also be **no water deliveries from Lesotho to South Africa**.

This planned maintenance is a result of the findings from routine inspections carried out between **September and November 2019**. During these inspections, it was discovered that the paint on the steel-lined sections of the tunnels was deteriorating and would need refurbishment within five years. This is critical to maintain the safety and durability of the entire system. Given the priority that the LHDA places on safety, it has prioritized this maintenance to ensure the continued integrity and reliability of the water delivery system.

The upcoming maintenance of the **Transfer Tunnel (45 km from Katse to 'Muela)** and the **Delivery Tunnel (37 km from 'Muela to the Ash River Outfall in South Africa)** is crucial to sustaining the key functions of the system of water delivery, and the generation of electricity for Lesotho.

LHDA's **Chief Executive, Mr. Tente Tente**, emphasized the importance of this maintenance during a press conference held in Maseru earlier this year. He reiterated that the inspections from 2019 highlighted the urgency of the situation and assured stakeholders that the maintenance would ensure the continued safe operation of the tunnels for years to come.

The contractor responsible for this significant task, **Corocoat**, is already in the final stages of preparation. Recruitment for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers is currently underway. The LHDA, in collaboration with its HR consultant, is actively distributing advertisements and public notices within the catchment area and other platforms to ensure all relevant stakeholders and interested applicants are informed.

This planned shutdown is a vital step in safeguarding the infrastructure that supports both water delivery and the generation of electricity for Lesotho. LHDA is committed to keeping all stakeholders informed throughout this process and will provide regular updates as the maintenance progresses. The Authority has kicked off a **media campaign across all channels, including radio, print, TV, social media and outdoor media**, to ensure that all Basotho and key stakeholders are informed of this upcoming maintenance work.

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For more information and updates, stakeholders are encouraged to monitor public notices and LHDA's official communication channels.

BUSINESS

Higherlife powers learners' academic excellence to the U.S.

Seabata Mahao

Higherlife Foundation Lesotho (HLFL) is celebrating academic excellence as two of its scholars are set to pursue studies in the United States of America (U.S.).

The two students, Katleho Mokhele and 'Matlala Sefale, have been admitted to further their education at Earlham College in Indiana and St. Lawrence University in New York, respectively.

Mokhele will major in Psychology and Social Services with a minor in Education, while Sefale will be studying Data Science and Computer Science.

These two young scholars have been awarded scholarships to attend these prestigious institutions, thanks to HLFL, the social investment arm of Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL).

Both Mokhele and Sefale have demon-

strated outstanding academic excellence and have been selected to pursue fields of study that will equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to the development of Lesotho.

Their scholarships underscore HLFL's ongoing commitment to empowering the youth of Lesotho through education, mentorship, and leadership development.

Speaking at the event, ETL's Chief Executive Officer, Dennis Platjies, emphasized the importance of investing in education as a cornerstone for development in Lesotho.

"At ETL, we believe that education is the key to unlocking the potential of our youth and driving sustainable development in our country. Through the support of HLFL, we are proud to play a role in shaping the future leaders of Lesotho," said Platjies.

Since 2011, ETL, through HLFL, has been at the forefront of educational initiatives, providing scholarships, mentorship, and life skills training to thousands of students across Lesotho. HLFL's mission is to ensure that every young person in Lesotho has access to quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

The Minister of Education and Training, Professor Ntoi Rapapa, also spoke at the event, thanking ETL for its support and underscoring the Government of Lesotho's

(GOL) commitment to backing educational initiatives that empower the youth and contribute to the nation's growth.

"These scholarships represent a significant step in our collective efforts to uplift the education sector in Lesotho and provide our youth with the tools they need to contribute towards the country's development agenda," said Rapapa.

Since its inception in 2011, over 1,616 Basotho scholars have benefited from HLFL's Capernaum scholarships, while 20 have benefited from the Moshoeshoe I scholarship. Additionally, HLFL has invested over M43 million in education and has committed over M100 million across various interventions in Lesotho.

HLFL is currently in the process of recruiting 200 more Capernaum students and 10 more Moshoeshoe I students. Moreover, five students are studying at universities in Zimbabwe, three at the Star Leadership Academy in Zimbabwe, two at the African Leadership Academy in South Africa, one at the African Science Academy in Ghana, four at Waterford Kamhlaba in Eswatini, nine at Zambian universities, and five at South African universities.

Additionally, there are five scholars currently pursuing their studies in the USA, including Mahali Mabesa, Nthati, Katleho Pule, Moliehi Seipati, and 'Mapalo Esther Makweza.

Qacha's Tšoanelo Mongali wins Econet's top prize



Seabata Mahao

Tšoanelo Mongali from Qacha's Nek district has emerged as the first ultimate prize winner in Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL)'s Tobetsa campaign, taking home a brand-new Nissan NP-200 vehicle.

The Tobetsa promotional campaign offers participants a chance to win one of three Nissan NP-200 vehicles, along with cash prizes and smartphones, totaling over M2 million in value.

The campaign, spearheaded by Sasai Econet Financial Services, a subsidiary of ETL, was launched in May 2024 in Botha Buthe and will run until the end of August.

At the award event, Mongali expressed his gratitude for the opportunity.

"I am thrilled to be recognized as a winner of this valuable prize. The vehicle will significantly ease my daily activities. I regularly use EcoCash for my transactions, and I was fortunate to be selected in the draw," he said.

The event also featured multiple prize giveaways, including gadgets and airtime.

In a media briefing, ETL's Public Relations Officer, Retšelisitsoe Nkhahle, emphasized the campaign's role in promoting financial inclusion.

"The EcoCash Tobetsa campaign aims to provide customers with a seamless, secure, and convenient mobile money experience, enhancing financial inclusion and economic participation across Lesotho," Nkhahle

explained.

"The campaign includes various promotional activities, educational programs, and incentives to encourage the use of EcoCash for financial transactions, such as transfers, bill payments, and merchant payments."

The EcoCash Tobetsa campaign celebrates and promotes EcoCash, Lesotho's leading mobile money solution, while high-

lighting ETL's commitment to improving the lives of its users.

Customers interested in participating can enter the competition by dialing *100# or *199#, or by using the EcoCash App. To boost their chances of winning, customers are encouraged to engage actively with their EcoCash accounts—whether by purchasing exclusive and affordable Tobetsa bundles, paying bills, or making merchant payments.

By doing so, customers will accumulate points that qualify them for entry into a weekly random draw, where they could win cash prizes or one of the three Nissan NP-200 grand prizes.



HEALTH



Survey highlights alarming factors behind home births

Ntsoaki Motaung

A recent survey has shed light on the troubling socio-economic factors driving some women to give birth at home and contributing to early marriages, particularly in rural and impoverished communities.

The recently published annual Vulnerability Assessment Report of 2024 reveals that 6.5 percent of households surveyed reported home deliveries, a concerning statistic linked primarily to long distances from health facilities and a lack of transportation funds.

Out of the 153 households surveyed, 10 reported home births.

A staggering 70 percent of these cases cited the long distance to health facilities as the primary reason, while 30 percent pointed to the lack of money for transport.

Disturbingly, all households reporting home deliveries fell within the “very poor” or “poor” categories, underscoring the direct impact of poverty on maternal health.

The survey also found that 4.4 percent of households had a member who gave birth during the survey period, with a significant portion of these new mothers being teenagers. Specifically, 19.6 percent of the report-

ed births were from mothers aged 19 years or younger, with some as young as 10 to 14 years old.

Sexual violence and its consequences

The report also highlighted the prevalence of sexual violence within the surveyed households.

A total of 44 households reported incidents of sexual violence, with the majority occurring in rural areas and in households headed by females. The data shows that

sexual violence is most common in households where the head is aged 35-64 years (57 percent), followed by those aged 25-34 years (21 percent), and 65 years and older (16 percent).

The impact of sexual violence extends beyond the immediate trauma, as 52 percent of affected households had members living with HIV.

The survey also revealed a worrying trend: despite the prevalence of sexual vio-

lence, 38.6 percent of cases went unreported, reflecting the ongoing challenges in addressing and preventing such crimes.

Child marriage: An angoing challenge

Child marriage, according to the report, remains a pressing issue, with around one percent of households reporting that a member was married before the age of 18 within the last year.

These marriages predominantly occurred in rural areas, particularly in female-headed households classified as very poor or poor. The children involved were mostly aged 15 to 17, with 17 being the most common age at marriage.

The primary reasons cited for these early marriages were pregnancy, peer pressure, lack of food, and adherence to social norms.

The survey highlights a grim cycle where poverty, lack of education, and societal pressures force young girls into marriages that further perpetuate their vulnerability.

HIV prevalence among adolescents

The survey also examined the HIV status of households with adolescents, revealing concerning statistics.

Among households with female adolescents aged 10 to 14, 30 percent reported having an HIV-positive member, with the figure rising to 35 percent for those with female adolescents aged 15 to 19.

Similarly, 30 percent of households with male adolescents aged 10 to 14 reported an HIV-positive member, and the percentage increased to 34 percent for those with male adolescents aged 15 to 19.



WHO, Africa CDC declare public health emergency over Mpox outbreak

Ntsoaki Motaung

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have declared a public health emergency in response to the ongoing Mpox outbreak, which has rapidly spread across Africa.

“Mpox has now crossed borders, affecting thousands of people across our continent. I announce, with a heavy heart but with an unwavering commitment to our people, to our African citizens, that we are declaring Mpox a public health emergency,” said Jean Kaseya, Director of the Africa CDC, during an online press conference on Tuesday.

According to the CDC, as of August 4, Africa had recorded 38,465 Mpox cases and 1,456 deaths since January 2022.

The Mpox virus spreads through close contact, causing rashes, flu-like symptoms, and pus-filled lesions. While most cases are mild, the disease can be fatal, particularly for children, pregnant women, and individuals with weakened immune systems.

Faced with the escalating number of cases, Kaseya emphasised that this declaration is not just symbolic but a call to action.

“It recognises that we can no longer afford to be reactive. We must be proactive and aggressive in our efforts to contain and eliminate this threat.”

Last week, the Africa CDC raised alarms over the rapid spread of the viral infection, noting that more than 15,000 cases and 461 deaths had been reported on the continent since the start of the year—a 160 percent increase compared to the same period last

year.

Kaseya urged global partners to stand with Africa during this critical time.

“Africa has long been a frontline in the battle against infectious diseases, often bearing this burden with limited resources. But the fight against Mpox requires a global response. We need your support, your expertise, and your solidarity. The world cannot afford to turn a blind eye to this crisis.”

He also highlighted the lack of adequate international support during the initial phases of the Mpox outbreak.

“From May 2022 to July 2023, Mpox was declared a Public Health Emergency of In-

ternational Concern (PHEIC), but Africa didn’t receive appropriate support. When cases subsided in other parts of the world, there was silence on the rising cases in Africa. We call upon our international partners to act differently and work closely with Africa CDC to provide appropriate support to our Member States.”

Kaseya announced that a joint response plan, developed from country-specific strategies, would be available within the next two weeks. Additionally, he signed a tripartite agreement between Africa CDC, the European Union’s Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), and Bavar-

ian Nordic for the procurement and rapid distribution of 200,000 doses of vaccines across Africa.

Meanwhile, WHO also declared Mpox a public health emergency of international concern on Wednesday, following a recommendation from the emergency committee.

“Today, the Emergency Committee met and advised me that the situation constitutes a public health emergency of international concern. I have accepted that advice,” said WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus during a media briefing.

In the United States, there have been 1,634 reported cases of Mpox this year, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Although Mpox is endemic in parts of Central and Western Africa, cases have risen dramatically in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

This year alone, the DRC has reported more than 14,000 cases and 524 deaths.

There are two types of Mpox: clade I and clade II. Clade I, which has caused localised outbreaks in the DRC for years, includes a variant known as clade Ib, which appears to spread mainly through sexual contact and is believed to be driving the current outbreak in the DRC.

“The detection and rapid spread of a new clade of Mpox in eastern DRC, its detection in neighbouring countries that had not previously reported Mpox, and the potential for further spread within Africa and beyond is very worrying,” Dr. Tedros warned during the briefing.



WHO director-general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus /Getty Images



Theko Tlebere

COMMON CONCERN

Lesotho's Youth: The Nation's Hope and a Call to Action on International Youth Day

The celebration of international days has become monotonous and boring, and young people no longer feel connected to such occasions. Nevertheless, these days will continue to be celebrated.

On these days, we have an opportunity to uplift the spirits of Lesotho's youth by recognising and celebrating their energy, creativity, and untapped potential. This year's theme, "Youth as Catalysts for Sustainable Development," reminds us that the future of our nation depends on its young people. It is a day to acknowledge their importance in shaping a prosperous and sustainable Lesotho.

Today, we begin by commending a well-known The Advocates for the Supremacy of the Constitution, known as "SECTION 2." What caught my attention was the positive statement they made, expressing solidarity with the youth of Lesotho and the global community in recognising the immense potential of our young people.

They also deserve praise for acknowledging the SEBABATSO initiative, launched on October 25, 2023, by Prime Minister Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane. This initiative aims to address the high unemployment rates among our youth amidst challenging economic conditions. Its mission is to foster youth-led businesses and prepare them for local and international investment.

SEBABATSO focuses on crucial sectors such as agriculture, arts, science, technology, and tourism, emphasising the role of entrepreneurship in

driving economic transformation. This initiative demonstrates the government's commitment to youth development, providing hope and direction for many young Basotho and fostering self-reliance and innovation.

Unfortunately, my International Youth Day celebration was short-lived as I came across the long-awaited Lesotho Annual Vulnerability Assessment Report.

What shocked me the most was the significant challenges that Lesotho faces in its socio-economic context. With a population of approximately 2.3 million, a life expectancy of 56 years, and a poverty rate of 49.7 percent, the country also struggles with an unemployment rate of 22.5 percent and an inflation rate of 7.4 percent as of April 2024. Moreover, Lesotho grapples with a high prevalence of HIV at 25.6 percent and a maternal mortality rate of 618 per 10,000 births. More than 50 percent of these statistics represent the youth population, highlighting the plight faced by the youth in Lesotho.

Even though there are varying opinions about the vulnerability of Basotho and how much can be alleviated, it is crucial to examine the key findings from the vulnerability report. By doing so, we can build on the hope of Lesotho's youth for the future.

One major factor contributing to food and nutrition insecurity in Lesotho is climate-related shocks, which have caused significant damage to

crops and infrastructure. Additionally, pests and livestock diseases have worsened the situation. During the 2023/24 rainy season, dry spells induced by El Niño resulted in a 32 percent decrease in planted areas compared to the previous season.

This led to the lowest yield since 2018/19, leaving many households with insufficient food supplies that will only last for about three months.

The rising cost of living puts further strain on household budgets, with the Minimum Expenditure Basket increasing to M3,387.89 per month for a family of four. The Food Consumption Score indicates poor consumption for 19 percent of households, especially those affected by HIV.

According to the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis, it is predicted that from May to September 2024, 293,000 people in rural areas will experience crisis-level food insecurity (IPC3+). This number will then increase to 403,000 people from October 2024 to March 2025. The ECMEN assessment reveals that in urban areas, 296,049 people will face food insecurity. Therefore, the total number of food-insecure individuals for the 2024/25 consumption year is estimated to be 699,049, which represents a 17 percent increase from the previous year.

Given these challenges, the African Youth Charter (AYC) and Lesotho's National Youth Development Plan (NYDP) play crucial roles in empowering the country's youth. The AYC provides a legal

framework that supports youth rights and empowerment across the entire continent. It emphasises the significance of education, employment, and political participation, urging governments to create favourable environments for young people to thrive.

Complementing the AYC, the NYDP specifically addresses the unique challenges faced by Basotho youth. It focuses on education, entrepreneurship, and employment, encouraging young people to actively participate in the nation's development. More than just a plan, the NYDP calls for young people to seize opportunities, innovate, and contribute to the growth of Lesotho.

The youth of Lesotho are growing increasingly restless as slow progress tests their patience. We must not underestimate their discontent. History has shown that when young people unite, they can ignite movements that change nations. The Kenyan Youth uprising serves as a powerful reminder: Lesotho stands at a crossroads. We can either risk further unrest by continuing to delay or take bold action to empower our youth and secure our nation's future.

In these challenging times, it is important for the government to make compassionate and far-sighted decisions. This is a critical moment for the youth of Lesotho.

SECTION 2 highlights the urgency of compassionate governance that listens to young voices and bridges the gap between potential and opportunity. The youth of Lesotho are not only the leaders of tomorrow but also the change-makers of today. They will confront the challenges of our time - such as climate change, economic inequality, and social injustice - with their creativity, resilience, and commitment to justice.

The socio-economic shocks in Lesotho, including job losses, decreased opportunities, price hikes, and high inflation, have significantly reduced household incomes and weakened purchasing power.

It is recommended to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to households in crisis in rural areas and those below the Minimum Expenditure Basket in urban areas. Supporting local farmers through local purchases, agricultural input subsidies, and appropriate crop varieties is crucial. It is also essential to intensify Integrated Catchment Management, conduct vaccination campaigns, and implement the National Strategic Resilience framework to improve food and nutrition security and reduce vulnerability.

As we observe International Youth Day, let us reflect on our collective responsibility to empower the youth of Lesotho. To the young people of our nation: your dreams, aspirations, and actions will lay the foundations of our nation's future.

The SEBABATSO initiative has demonstrated that progress is achievable with vision and determination. However, the journey is not yet complete. We urge policymakers, civil society, and the private sector to empower and support our youth, creating spaces for their voices to be heard and acting on their recommendations. Together, we can build a future where the dreams and aspirations of our youth become a reality. The Future is Now!.

Young, Bold, and Determined: Empowering the Future Beyond International Youth Day 2024



Tanki Kotelo

From climate activism to economic empowerment, the youth of today are leading the way in redefining what it means to be a global citizen, driven by a passion for social good and a determination to leave the world a better place. In a world where the stakes have never been higher, inaction is no longer an option. As we commemorate International Youth Day, let us rally behind the passion and vision of our youth, supporting them in their quest to create a more just, sustainable, and inclusive world.

In 2024, where the use of digital technology for sustainable development is more pertinent than ever, collectively, let us empower the next generation of digital leaders, equipping them with the resources, skills, and opportunities they need to invent pioneer-

ing projects, grow their entrepreneurial enterprises, thrive, and drive real, lasting change

The theme for International Youth Day 2024, commemorated on August 12, is "From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development." This theme underscores the crucial correlation between digitalisation and accelerating the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), stressing the significant contributions of young people in this transformational development process.

Around the world, many nations are still forging ways of living after the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be evidenced through their adoption of all-inclusive policies that prioritise citizens' wellbeing, enacting democratic bills meant to promote security, freedom, and autonomy, and establishing economic ventures that prioritise people first.

Faced with the threat of depopulation, nations are realising that excluding and dispatching the youth to the margins in key issues will continue to hold development back as the youth is the future of tomorrow. In Lesotho, particularly, the youth are now demanding inclusion in key decision-making spaces. From organising protests tackling the status quo to collaborative economic ventures with the aim of curbing unemployment, the youth are aggressively declaring

themselves as agents of change with the potential to foster a far better, more inclusive Lesotho.

Lesotho's youth unemployment is estimated to be around 25%, making them the most unemployed faction in the country. Without adequate financial, educational, and skills resource support, as well as a lack of youth-first policy implementations and ventures, the future is uncertain, and unfortunately, the unemployment rate will persist and widen.

There is a pertinent need for equipping the youth with digital skills and creating platforms to have ground-breaking conversations on how to better exploit the skills, participate, and discuss what young people can bring to the table.

Through the following guidelines, we unpack some ideas, not only for the government but for every responsible institution to grow the power of young people to impact sustainable revolution:

- Meeting young people where they are and prioritising the needs and urgencies of young women and vulnerable youth with diverse identities and those from poor conditions.
- Encouraging youth's visualisation of politics and their participation in democracy while prioritising their chosen main concerns and plights for political reforms.

- Backing and financing the youth's economic ventures and aiding them to grow their informal and formal start-ups to participate in the national economic movement.

- Lastly, supporting youth's exercise of emancipative principles to shape their sustained commitment to a freer and more tolerant society.

The next decade is for the youth. And so, this calls for a more deliberate and cohesive approach. It calls for collectivism and vigorous participation. History tells us that no revolution has been won without bloodshed. But maybe the next revolution requires an unorthodox perspective. Amid the eminent anxiety, chaos, and uncertainty in the world, maybe our torches and swords should instead become values of humanism, demands of accountability, and non-complacencies of policies devoid of social inclusion.

How then can we purposely become the change we seek? By adopting crucial digital technologies, speaking our truth and walking majestically in it, immersing ourselves in key decision-enacting spaces, organising peace marches, and showing up at voting stations and defending and demanding that democracy be upheld. Out with the old, in with the new! Power to youth!

Bloom Communications is a Lesotho-based consultancy specialising in best-in-class media-driven communications, professional writing, public relations, social media management, and marketing for individuals, corporations, and micro, small, and medium-sized brands. For feedback, contact: info@bloomcommunications.co.ls.

OP-ED

The constitution and the circus: A tale of loopholes, Omnibus Bill, and political shenanigans

Kananelo Boloetse

I begin this op-ed with a frank acknowledgment: our constitution, like many others across the globe, is not without its deficiencies, some of which are indeed quite fundamental.

It is precisely for this reason that Basotho, in unison, have expressed the need for its reform. Notice my deliberate choice of the term “reform”—not amendment, not alteration, but reform. This distinction is critical and speaks to the collective intent of our people.

Despite its acknowledged weaknesses, I stand resolutely in defence of our constitution. My commitment to it is unwavering, for I believe that it remains a cornerstone of our democracy, deserving of rigorous defence whenever it is threatened.

However, when tasked with the responsibility of reforming the constitution, those entrusted with this mandate opted, for reasons best known to themselves, to pursue an approach centered on amending, rather than overhauling, the constitution.

Initially, I did not object to this strategy. My understanding of constitutional reform at that time was rudimentary compared to what I have since come to comprehend.

Thus, in 2022, an omnibus bill, comprising nearly 100 proposed amendments, was introduced and presented before Parliament. Regrettably, due to the habitual procrastination and lackadaisical attitude of our Members of Parliament (MPs), the term of that Parliament expired before the bill could be passed, leading to its dissolution.

In a controversial turn of events, a state of emergency was declared, ostensibly to facilitate the reconvening of Parliament to pass the omnibus bill.

It was at this juncture that I, alongside others who hold the rule of law in the highest regard, stood firm in our opposition. We could not, in good conscience, allow the constitution to be manipulated under the guise of expedient reform.

We challenged the declaration of the state of emergency and the reconvening of Parliament in court—and we prevailed. The case was straightforward, rooted in constitutional principles.

However, I did not anticipate the backlash that would ensue.

For merely upholding the constitution, we were branded as obstructionists, enemies of the reform process, and accused, without basis, of being beneficiaries of the status quo. To this, I ask: Does it appear that I have reaped any benefits from the mess our country is in?

On the contrary, I am a victim.

While I have acknowledged that our constitution has significant flaws that require redress, it is crucial to understand that these flaws are not the root cause of Lesotho’s persistent political instability and stagnation.

The crux of the issue lies with our political leaders, who lack a genuine commitment to constitutional democracy. They peruse the constitution not with the intent to uphold it, but to identify avenues for exploitation in pursuit of personal gain. This, more than anything, is Lesotho’s greatest challenge.

In this context, I am reminded of the renowned actor and comedian W.C. Fields, who was known for his atheism. Near the end of his life, Fields was found reading the Bible. When questioned, he quipped that he was “looking for loopholes.”

This is precisely what our leaders attempted to do in 2022. Having failed to pass the reforms through the proper channels, they sought refuge in a document they had long disregarded—the constitution—seizing upon a loophole that permitted the reconvening of a dissolved Parliament under a state of emergency.

The irony, of course, is that there was no genu-



ine emergency to justify such a declaration.

Even now, I find it perplexing that those of us who opposed this constitutional manipulation were met with such animosity, while those who perpetrated it continued to sleep peacefully. It is a paradox that defies logic.

The impetus behind this hostility, I believe, lies in the external pressures from development partners who have heavily invested in the reform process. Their primary interest was in seeing the reforms completed, with little regard for the legality of the process. The rule of law, it seems, is only a priority when it aligns with their objectives.

The fallout from this legal challenge has been profound. It became evident that those displeased with our actions were intent on not merely defeating us but utterly destroying our credibility and reputation.

In 2023, when a new Parliament sought to revive the omnibus bill, we once again turned to the courts, arguing that such an action was unconstitutional. While the High Court disagreed, the Court of Appeal concurred with our position, affirming that once Parliament is dissolved, all pending business dies with it. Any attempt to resurrect it must begin anew.

This decision was met with even greater consternation from those who had already been aggrieved by our earlier victory. The development partners, who had poured resources into the reform process, were particularly incensed, fearing that their investments would be rendered futile.

In response, the omnibus bill was divided into three separate bills: one requiring a simple majority, one necessitating a two-thirds majority, and one demanding a referendum.

In May of this year, the first two bills—the 10th and 11th Amendments to the Constitution Bills—were presented in Parliament.

Yet, the situation in Parliament has devolved into what can only be described as chaos. Many critical details have been stripped from these bills, and MPs are now inserting their own amendments. This includes adding provisions to the 10th Amendment to the Constitution Bill that require a two-thirds majority to pass, even though this bill was initially designed for amendments needing

only a simple majority.

In essence, it appears that MPs are, in effect, drafting a new constitution without the involvement of the true custodians of the Constitution—the people of Lesotho. This approach is nothing short of madness.

One of the fundamental purposes of having a constitution is to shield us from the dangers of majoritarian tyranny. It serves as a safeguard, not just against the excesses of the majority, but also against the possibility of MPs running amok and imposing their personal whims and wishes through constitutional amendments.

The constitution is designed to be the supreme law of the land, providing a stable framework within which the rule of law can prevail, and ensuring that any changes to this framework are made with the utmost care and respect for the principles of democracy and justice.

In this context, it becomes imperative that any attempts to amend the constitution are approached with caution, deliberation, and broad public consultation. The integrity of our legal system and the protection of our fundamental rights depend on it.

The constitution is not merely a tool for the powerful to reshape at will; it is a living document that reflects the collective will and values of the people. Therefore, it must be treated with the reverence and respect it deserves.

Lesotho stands as a unique democracy, where the King serves as the Head of State, embodying the unity and continuity of the nation.

The constitution, in its current form, delicately balances the roles of the King and the Prime Minister, with the Prime Minister serving at the King’s pleasure.

However, there are now efforts by MPs to alter this balance, proposing that the Prime Minister should serve at their discretion instead.

This shift not only undermines the existing constitutional framework but also threatens to diminish the role of the King in our Kingdom.

Some Basotho have expressed a desire to directly elect the Prime Minister. However, this idea was not included in the proposed amendments for a reason: Lesotho is a kingdom, and our system of

governance is designed to respect and uphold the role of the King as Head of State.

To diminish the King’s role by placing the Prime Minister entirely at the mercy of Parliament is not just a significant departure from our traditions but a direct affront to the constitutional monarchy that defines our nation.

It is deeply concerning that MPs seek to reshape the governance of our Kingdom in this manner. What they propose not only disregards the importance of the King’s role but also risks destabilising the delicate balance of power that has served us well.

Yet, there is a deafening silence.

Those who might speak out are paralysed by fear, aware that any opposition to the current process could lead to being swiftly labeled as anti-reform and subsequently ostracised. They have witnessed what happened to those of us who dared to defend the constitution and are understandably reluctant to face similar consequences.

Meanwhile, our development partners are watching quietly from the sidelines. Their primary concern seems to be the passage of the bills, regardless of the final content or the satisfaction of the Basotho nation. Their focus is on achieving a result they can report as a success, regardless of the process that leads to it.

In this environment, any level-headed Mosotho who dares to speak reason to Parliament would likely be condemned for their efforts.

So, I now turn to you, Basotho, the rightful heirs of Morena Moshoeshoe’s kingdom. What should be our course of action?

Do we stand by as our constitution is altered without our consent, or do we assert our rights and demand a process that respects our voice and our democracy?

The future of our nation is in our hands, and the time to act is now.

We cannot, and will not, stand idly by as our King is reduced to a mere figurehead, stripped of his constitutional role and responsibilities.

As the nation, we must protect the integrity of our constitutional monarchy and ensure that any amendments to our constitution respect the foundational principles of our nation.



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Ministry of Gender, Youth & Social Development

TENDER NOTICE

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF SUPPORTIVE WHEELCHAIRS FOR DISABILITY SERVICES

1. The Ministry of Gender youth and Social Development has received funding from the Government of Lesotho as a counter-part contribution towards the support of the disability services and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for Supply and delivery of every-day and supportive wheelchairs.

2. The Ministry of Social Development now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for supply and delivery of wheelchairs for Disability Department located at headquarters of the Ministry Gender Youth and Social Development 2nd floor room 201, 1010 Building opposite Pitso Ground playground.

3. Bidding will be conducted through national competitive procurement approach using a Procurement Act , 2023 of the Kingdom of Lesotho and is open to all eligible Bidders registered with the Ministry of Finance (IFMIS) and in good standing in taxes with the Lesotho Revenue Authority and license from Ministry of Trade and Industry.

4. All bidders shall provide valid certified copies of relevant Trader's License and Tax Clearance Certificates issued by relevant authorities in the Kingdom of Lesotho. All copies shall be certified at source. Failure to submit these documents will form grounds for disqualification of the bid.

5. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from Ministry of Social Development, Procurement Section during office hours from Monday to Friday.

6. The bidding documents will be available from 19TH AUGUST 2024 from 0800 – 1600 hrs and may be purchased by interested Bidders upon payment of non-refundable fee of M2000.00 to the Ministry of Gender Youth and Social Development, Ac-
- counts Section, 2nd floor room 201 near Pitso ground playground.

7. The government of Lesotho reserves the right to accept or reject any tender and is not bound to accept a tender with the lowest tender price. What is considered is the tender which provide value for money.

8. The bid security of 2% of the tendered amount must be in the form of a bank guarantee from an accredited financial institute and should accompany the tender submission.

9. Bids must be hand delivered to the address below and deposited in the tender box situated on the 2nd floor **BOARD-ROOM**,1010 building the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development on or before 30h September 2024 at 12:30hrs in one original and three copies clearly marked "COPY" and "ORIGIONAL" respectively in one sealed envelope clearly marked **"Supply and delivery of supportive wheelchairs for disability services in the ministry of social development"** bearing no identification of the bidder. Bids submitted after the deadline will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend on the 30th September 2024 day at 14:30hrs.

10. All bids shall be addressed to:
Procurement Office
Attention: Principal Secretary
Ministry of Gender Youth and Social Development
Private bag A222
Maseru 100
Lesotho



CALL FOR PROPOSALS:83471268

Title: Appointment of a Consultant for the Private Sector Engagement in GBV Prevention

Brief background: The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) provides services in the field of international development cooperation and international education work. We are working with partners in national governments, actors from the private sector, civil society and research institutions. Our goal is to deliver effective solutions that offer people better prospects and sustainably improve their living conditions.

GIZ has been supporting international cooperation between Germany and the Kingdom of Lesotho since 1976. The German and selected Southern African Regional Governments including Lesotho have agreed on a joint initiative: The Partnerships for Prevention of Gender-based Violence in Southern Africa (PfP-II). This is the follow-on module of the previous project (PfP-I), implemented in four countries (South Africa, Lesotho, Zambia and Zimbabwe) from December 2017 until November 2021. In the new phase, the programme will build on the experiences and successes of the first programme phase. While PfP-I was focused on improving the coordination amongst relevant stakeholders to establish multi-sectoral networks for primary GBV prevention, the new phase will focus on implementation of innovative and context-specific flagships for primary GBV prevention to alter social norms and practices that instigate GBV. The overall objective of the programme is to strengthen the joint implementation of evidence informed GBV prevention flagships by regional, national and sub-national stakeholders across sectors in Southern Africa.

Call for proposals: Against this background, the programme is looking to engage a **consultant to support realization of engaging with the private sector for GBV prevention in the workplace**. This hinges on the notion that various forms of violence against women such as sexual harassment, stalking and domestic violence can have serious impact on work performance, absenteeism, and the general well-being of staff, therefore, in return affecting company output/productivity.

GIZ invites eligible and professional **companies with local presence in Lesotho** to participate in this tender.

Tender documents are available for downloading at the following link <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/155390.html>

Your proposal must be submitted to **ZA_Quotation@giz.de** by **15.09.2024**. **Please quote reference 83471268** when submitting the documentation. **Late submissions will not be accepted.**



Invitation for Bids

Maseru, Lesotho
August 16, 2024

Re: Supply and Delivery of Tools and Materials for School Gardening- Ref No: IFAD/ROLL/0062G/2024-2025

The *Government of Lesotho* has received financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Global Environment Facility(GEF) ,Food and Agriculture Organization(FAO) and OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) and intends to apply a part of the proceeds of the financing to this purchase. 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 Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods.

1. The **Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods** includes rehabilitation of sixteen identified landscapes in Lesotho and improvement of the livelihoods of the people in the rural areas, within a period of eight years.

2. This invitation for bids (IFB) follows the general procurement notice that appeared in Lesotho times and Public eye newspapers on 30 May 2024 and 31 May 2024 respectively and mail &guardian on the 07 June 2024

3. The purchaser now invites sealed bids from eligible entities (bidders) for the provision of Supply and Delivery of Tools and Materials for School Gardening More details on these goods and related services are provided in the schedule of requirements in this bidding document.

4. This IFB is open to all eligible bidders who wish to respond. Subject to restrictions noted in the bidding document, eligible entities may associate with other bidders to enhance their capacity to successfully carry out the procurement.

5. Bidding will be conducted using the **national competitive bidding (NCB)** method, the evaluation procedure for which is described in this bidding document, in accordance with the IFAD Procurement Handbook which is provided at www.ifad.org/project-procurement. The NCB process, as described, will include a review and verification of qualifications and past performance, including a reference check, prior to the contract award.

6. Please note that a pre-bid conference **will not be** held as described in the bid data

sheet (BDS), Section III of the bidding document.

7. Bidding documents can be obtained by sending an e-mail or letter, giving full contact details of the bidder, to the following point of contact. This will ensure that the bidders receive updates regarding this bidding document.

Attn: Procurement Manager
ROLL Project
Ministry of Environment & Forestry
Industrial Area, Thaba Bosiu Building
Maseru 100
Lesotho
Tel: (+266) 6273 0763/ (+266) 6201 4410
E-mail: procurement.roll@gov.ls
Bids must be delivered to the address and in the manner specified in the bid data sheet – instructions to bidders 23.2, no later than **10:00** local time on the **19 September 2024**

8. Bidders shall be aware that late bids will not be accepted under any circumstance and will be returned unopened at the written request and cost of the bidder. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security or bid-securing declaration (as required) in the manner and amount specified in the bid data sheet.

9. Please note that electronic bids **shall not** be accepted.

Yours sincerely,
Procurement Manager
Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods Project
Ministry of Environment and Forestry
Industrial Area, Thaba Bosiu Building
Maseru 100
Lesotho
Tel: (+266) 6273 0763/ (+266) 6201 4410 EMAIL: procurement.roll@gov.ls





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Miss Lesotho pageant announces biennial coronation schedule

Chris Theko

The Miss Lesotho Pageant Organisation has announced a significant shift in its scheduling, deciding to host the coronation event biennially instead of annually.

According to the pageant’s director, ‘Mabahlakoana Mosola (Mululela Monyake), this change, while difficult, was necessary to allow for more thorough planning, better allocation of resources, and increased attention to the event.

“Going into 2025, we have decided to cancel the annual finale and instead hold Miss Lesotho every two years,” Mosola explained.

“This will enable us to ensure full and fair representation of each district. Auditions will be conducted across all 10 districts over the two-year period, selecting two representatives per district for the finale, which will be held towards the end of the second year.”

Mosola clarified that this new direction will allow the organisation more time to connect with individual districts and engage in community work with the reigning Queen, empowering and serving the relevant communities.

She noted that this has been challenging

in the past due to limited resources.

She explained that they have struggled to reach communities effectively due to a lack of resources and indicated that this change will allow us to serve and empower the relevant communities better,” she noted.

With the exception of 2020, when the event was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Miss Lesotho coronation has been held annually since 2010.

Mosola, a former Miss Lesotho 2015 runner-up, has been organising the glamorous event since 2021 through her company, The New Era Events. She highlighted that the decision to shift to a biennial format was informed by lessons learned over the past three years.

“Like with everything, we have been learning and making notes as we go along. This new format and structure may or may not work, but we lose nothing in trying. We can only gauge the success of this approach by giving it a chance,” she said.

Mosola also expressed confidence that the additional preparation time between events will allow the organisation to better equip the winner for any necessary international participation.

The organisers are committed to presenting Miss Lesotho as an empowerment

platform, rather than just a beauty contest.

“We aim to showcase Miss Lesotho as more than a title—it’s a platform for empowerment and growth,” Mosola added.

Meanwhile, after receiving entries from hundreds of hopefuls across the country, the Miss Lesotho Organisation has announced the top eight finalists who will compete for the crown currently held by Botha-Bothe-born law student, Lerato Masila.

Masila, who was crowned Miss Lesotho at a glittering ceremony at Avani Maseru in September 2023, also serves as a brand ambassador for Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL).

Mosola emphasised that the pageantry seeks individuals who embody the true essence of beauty with purpose and the virtues of a queen and ambassador of Lesotho.

“We have always looked for someone who shows the potential to carry the brand and represent Lesotho in everything they do during and after their reign. We hope for someone who is authentic, respectful, humble, and capable of inspiring others,” Mosola stated.

This year’s coronation will take place at Victory Hall, Maseru, on September 7th. The event is expected to be graced by Her Majesty Queen ‘Masenate Bereng Seeiso,

who will walk the red carpet, as well as the Minister of Arts and Culture, special guests, and VIP attendees, followed by the grand finale.



Miss Lesotho Director - Mabahlakoana Mosola



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Lady Sky: Empowering women through fashion

Arts

In the dynamic world of fashion, where trends come and go, one local venture, Lady Sky, is making waves by staying true to a timeless concept: the art of being a woman.

Founded in 2021, this female clothing business has quickly established itself as a beacon of luxury, innovation, and empowerment, creating garments that not only make a statement but also celebrate the diverse beauty of every woman.

From the very beginning, Lady Sky has been driven by a powerful mission: to inspire women to tap into their inner beauty. The company's founder, 'Neheng Phakoa, a visionary in her own right, recognised that fashion is more than just clothing—it's a means of self-expression, a way for women to showcase their uniqueness and confidence.

This belief is at the heart of every design, where creativity, luxury, and innovation come together to craft pieces that allow women to feel beautiful inside and out.

Lady Sky's mission is reflected in every stitch, with garments that are

meticulously designed and sewn to meet the highest standards of quality. Whether it's an elegant evening gown for a special occasion or a chic ensemble for everyday wear, each piece is crafted to enhance the wearer's natural beauty, making her the center of attention wherever she goes.

Redefining Luxury and Innovation

Lady Sky's commitment to luxury and innovation sets it apart in the competitive fashion industry. While many brands focus solely on aesthetics, Lady Sky takes it a step further by infusing each design with a sense of purpose.

The garments are not just beautiful—they are a celebration of the infinite diversity of women, designed to cater to a wide range of styles, preferences, and body types.

Innovation is a cornerstone of Lady Sky's identity. From cutting-edge design techniques to the use of premium materials, the company continually pushes the boundaries of what's possible in fashion.

The result is a collection of clothing that not only looks exquisite but also feels luxurious to wear. The brand's

dedication to quality is evident in every detail, from the intricate embroidery to the flawless fit of each garment.

A Future of Influence

With creativity at the heart of everything they do, Lady Sky is on a path to becoming one of the most influential luxury groups in fashion and lifestyle in the country and probably beyond. Their ultimate ambition is to lead the industry, setting new standards for what luxury fashion can be.

This vision is not just about achieving commercial success—it's about creating a lasting impact on the way women view themselves and the role of fashion in their lives.

As the company continues to grow, it remains committed to its founding principles. The future holds exciting possibilities, with plans to expand their offerings and reach even more women around the world.

New collections are in the works, each designed to inspire and empower, while

staying true to the brand's core values of luxury, innovation, and diversity.

In a world where fashion often feels fleeting, Lady Sky is carving out a niche that is both timeless and relevant. By focusing on the art of being a woman, they are not just creating clothes—they are crafting experiences, helping women to express their inner beauty and embrace their unique identities.

With a mission that resonates and a vision that inspires, Lady Sky is poised to leave a lasting mark on the fashion industry, one garment at a time.





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SPORTS

Seabata Mahao

The national junior teams will this weekend take on their South African counterparts in a series of friendly matches as part of their preparation for their upcoming international qualifier games.

In preparation for the Confederation of African Football (CAF) Under-20 qualifiers, the under-20 team, affectionately known as Makoanyane XI, will host South Africa's Amajita in a two-match series starting today at Bambatha Tšita Sports Arena, with the second match taking place on Sunday.

Bahlabani, the national Under-17 team will face their South African counterparts at the UJ Stadium in Soweto, with matches also scheduled for today and Sunday in preparation for the under-17 Africa Cup of Nations, and the Council of Southern Africa Football Associations (COSAFA) Qualifiers scheduled for September and December 2024, respectively.

Makoanyane XI's coach, Halemakale Mahlaha, welcomed the opportunity to test his team against a strong South African side, which he believes will provide valuable preparation ahead of the tournament in Eswatini.

"Let me first thank the Association for affording us this opportunity to test our team against a very strong South African side. We still have a bit of time before the tournament, and I have no doubt that these two matches will give us a clear picture of how far we have gone in our preparations," Mahlaha said.

Mahlaha is confident that players like Leluma Mofoka, Paseka Maile, and Malefetsane Tomako, who have already experienced playing at higher levels both domestically and internationally, will play a crucial role in securing positive results against Amajita.

On the other hand, Bahlabani's coach, Sidwell Mothea, acknowledged that playing

National junior teams face SA counterparts



against Amajimbos will present a different challenge compared to the matches played thus far in their preparations.

"The two matches are very important in our preparations leading to the COSAFA tournament because we are still a work in progress. I have seen a lot of improvements after our recent games in Bloemfontein and Durban, but I feel like playing South Afri-

ca will be a different ball game altogether. They play with high intensity and have a lot of individual brilliance in their team, which will be a good test for our players to assess our readiness before heading to the tournament," Mothea said.

Bahlabani Squad for Friendly Matches with Amajimbos:

- Goalkeepers: Kananelo Sebapala

(Fafatsa FC), Bataung Moleli (Molibeli Wonderous FC)

- Defenders: Kabelo Thamae (MPSA Academy FC), Lebohang Ramalitse (Hunters FC), Setsoto Lepheana (Hunters FC), Masupha Seetsa (Kick4life FC), Rapelang Lejakane (LMPS Development Maseru), Manama Hlojeng (Kick4life FC), Mothabeng Mothabeng (Success FC), Motati Pabatso (BB Fast XI FC), Karabo Lethoko (Roaring Lions FC)

- Midfielders: Lekanyane Kalache (Liponono FC), Leseli Makoe (Majimbos FC), Retshelisitsoe Mokhosi (Hunters FC), Lechesa Mkahupane (Mokhotlong LMPS FC), Thuto Khetsi (Kick4life FC), Hlompho Makhanya (Setoko FC), Sebilokanan (MPSA)

- Forwards: Rethabile Nqoko (Majantja FC), Lefa Marumo (Lehakoe FC), Skhosana Manamathela (Mokhotlong LMPS FC), Morena Masithela (FC Eagles Development), Mokhachane Rethabile (Young Tiger Boys FC)

Makoanyane XI Squad to Face Amajita:

- Goalkeepers: Leluma Mofoka (Matlama FC), Thabelang Thafeng (Swallows FC), Reitumetse Moeletsi (AC TIP FC)

- Defenders: Majara Mohale (CCX FC), Mahlomola Mafeto (AC TIP FC), Limpho Ralesupi (Majantja FC), Tšepo Matsoso (Majantja FC), Kopano Tsiane (AC TIP FC), Lehlohonolo Leemisa (AC TIP FC), Bafokeng Ntseno (Hunters FC), Malefetsane Tamako (Matlama FC)

- Midfielders: Sechaba Mohapi (Lioli FC), Tumelo Mokena (CCX FC), Tšepo Senamolele (K4L Juventude FC), Lebohang Janki (Swallows FC), Rorisang Malefane (Linare FC), Tumelo Shai (Orlando Pirates Development FC), Thandazo Ndlovu (Majantja FC), Reamohetse Mefane (Majantja FC), Mokhehi Raputsoe (Mzamane FC)

- Forwards: Nyolohelo Mahloane (Matlama FC), Tholang Makuru (Lioli FC), Paseka Maile (Kick4life Juventude FC), Kefiloe Nqoko (Kick4life Juventude FC), Tšepokome (Majantja FC)

Econet-sponsored high school tourney sizzles

Seabata Mahao

The Lesotho Institutions Sports Association (LISA) annual games recently took place for the third term in Maseru, attracting a total 63 schools to battle it out in 10 different sporting activities.

Sponsored by Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL), this year's games provided a platform for high school students to showcase their talent and passion across various sporting codes, including soccer, volleyball, netball, handball, basketball among others.

The tournament, backed by a notable M6 million contribution from ETL, marks a significant investment in the future of high school sports in the country. Taking place at Lesotho High School over the past weekend, the games concluded successfully and highlighted the sporting prowess of young athletes from across the country.

In football, Mphaki High School's girls emerged victorious, while Seeiso Griffiths High School claimed the title in the boys' category.

In volleyball, Lithabaneng High School took top honors, and LIFE High School triumphed in boys' basketball. The debate competition saw Mapetla High School crowned champions, with Leqe High School win-

ning the chess tournament.

ETL's Chief Executive Officer, Dennis Plaattjes emphasised the transformative power of sports, noting that ETL's investment is not just in the games but in the future of the nation.

"Our investment in the LISA Games reflects our belief in the power of sports to transform lives. By providing young athletes with a platform to showcase their talents, we are contributing to both their personal

development and the future of Lesotho as a nation," stated Plaattjes.

The games not only provide a competitive environment but also serve as a crucial platform for identifying emerging talent. Many participants are set to represent Lesotho at the Confederation of Southern Africa Sports Association (COSSASA) Games in Zimbabwe later this month.

On his part, the Minister of Sports, Motlatse Maqelepo, commended ETL for their con-

sistent support over the past three years and highlighted the critical role these games play in the development of young talent.

"We are eternally grateful to ETL for sponsoring the LISA Games. This support underscores our shared commitment to nurturing young talent and promoting sports as a vital component of youth development in Lesotho," said Maqelepo.

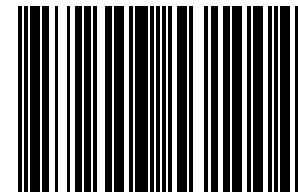
The event was also graced by the presence of representatives from the Lesotho Sports and Recreation Commission (LSRC) among other dignitaries.

The games are seen as playing a vital role in the holistic development of young athletes, with ETL's sponsorship ensuring that sports remain a cornerstone of youth empowerment in Lesotho. By investing in high school sports, ETL plays a significant role in the development and empowerment of young people.

Sports help students build discipline, teamwork, leadership skills, and a strong work ethic—qualities that are essential not only in sports but also in their academic pursuits and future careers. ETL's investment ensures that Basotho youth are better prepared for the challenges of life, creating a stronger, more capable future workforce.



LISA Awards Ceremony



16 - 22 August 2024

Ramakongoana carried injury at the Olympic Games

Seabata Mahao

Long-distance runner Tebello Ramakongoana missed out on a possible Olympic medal due to a hamstring injury that hindered his performance in the 42 kilometre (km) marathon at the recently concluded 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, France.

Despite the setback, Ramakongoana made history by finishing seventh, and setting a new national record with a time of 2:07:58 hours.

The marathon began with a slow start for Ramakongoana, who found himself in 60th place at the 5km mark and 70th at 10km. However, he steadily improved his pace and reached third place by the 15km mark. By the halfway point, he was in 14th place but managed to finish seventh in a highly competitive field.

Ethiopia's Tamirat Tola won gold with a new Olympic record time of 2:06:26, surpassing the previous record set in the 2008 Beijing Games. Ramakongoana finished just 58 seconds behind Kenya's Benson Kipruto, who claimed the bronze medal.

In a post-race interview, Ramakongoana reflected on his performance, noting that a hamstring issue three weeks before the Games had limited his potential.

"I tried my best, but I wasn't expecting this result. I aimed for a top-five or top-three finish. My hamstring problem was a setback, but I managed to finish strong despite the pain," he said.

In addition to Ramakongoana, Lesotho was represented by Michelle Tau and Mokulubete Makatisi at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Makatisi achieved a person-

al best of 2:30:20, finishing 31st in the women's marathon. Despite a fluctuating performance early in the race, she improved significantly, reaching 27th place at the 40km mark before finishing 31st.

"The race was challenging, with steep climbs and tough descents," Makatisi said. "I'm pleased with my performance given the difficult conditions and am motivated to continue improving."

Michelle Tau competed in taekwondo and finished 11th in her weight category. Although she was knocked out in the round of 16, Tau expressed gratitude for the support she received. "I'm disappointed not to have won a medal, but I'm proud of my performance and thankful for everyone who supported me, especially my mother," she said. Tau plans to focus on upcoming competitions, including the Grand Prix Final 2024 and World Championships 2025.

Despite not winning medals, the performances of Ramakongoana, Makatisi, and Tau have inspired hope for future success. The athletes will be honored in an official ceremony soon. Ramakongoana and Makatisi returned to Lesotho on Tuesday, welcomed by the Minister of Sports, Motlatsi Maqelepo, at Moshoe-shoe I International Airport, while Tau has returned to Spain to continue her preparations.

Lesotho's participation in taekwondo and athletics at the Olympics demonstrates the country's potential for success in future Games, with the next opportunity for glory set for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles, USA.



Tebello Ramakongoana / Getty Images



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