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Lesupatsela Director in hot water

- **Accused of delaying payments to thousands of youth**
- **Faces disciplinary action threat**

Staff Reporter

Metsing Lemphane, the director of the Youth Apprenticeship Program in the Office of the Prime Minister, commonly known as Lesupatsela, is facing a disciplinary hearing for the persistent delay in payments to thousands of youth employed under the program.

In a stern show-cause letter dated Wednesday, December 4, 2024, 'Mabataung Khalane, Principal Secretary (PS) for Defence and the Office of the Prime Minister ordered Lemphane to explain within five working days why disciplinary action should not be taken against him and his team for putting the program's credibility at risk.

Attempts to reach Lemphane for comment before publication were unsuccessful, as he could not be reached for an interview.

Khalane's letter outlines the ongoing issues surrounding delayed payments.

"In June 2024 the Office of the Prime Minister initiated the process of engaging public works labourers to perform different tasks as stipulated by respective constituencies where by more than Six Thousand (6000) labourers

were engaged on a month-to-month basis," Khalane wrote.

She said that since the inception of the program, both labourers and leadership have not been receiving their stipends in a timely and consistent manner, causing significant grief, misery, and frustration for them, the ministry, and the government.

"... and this trend is not going to finality," she

**... and
this trend is
not going to
finality**



Prime Minister Ntsokoane Samuel Matekane

added.

She further stated that despite discussing with Lemphane on multiple occasions the need to elaprepere documents for payment processing, track progress, and resolve the queries, these efforts have been in vain.

"To date, we still have several outstanding payments due to unresolved queries, with no clear explanation. It's already December, and we have only resolved queries for the month of July from Mechachane, 'Maliepetsane, Mpharane, Pela-Tšueu, Motete, Mafeteng, Machache, Hololo, Qalabane, and Thabana-Morena. All constituencies for August are still pending," she wrote.

Khalane further explained that on November 19, 2024, the cabinet approved an increase in stipends for leadership positions and labourers, and M40 million was released on November 22, 2024, to process those payments.

"On Wednesday the 27th, yourself and your team made up of Mr Tieho Mamasiane and Mr

Sechaba Mokoqo collectively made an undertaking to the Honorable Minister, Acting Principal Secretary and Director Finance - OPM, that all documents for September and October shall be submitted to OPM Accounts Department by close of business for immediate pay-outs, but to no avail, similar commitment was again made to the Minister on Thursday the 28th, but as of today, only requests for September (short of Mhales Hoek and Quthing constituencies) amounting to M3,132,400.00 have been submitted to Accounts and sent to Treasury for disbursements into the service providers hence to Lesupatsela labourers," she said.

"Based on the above, I instruct you to show cause why disciplinary action cannot be instituted against you and the rest of your team for putting the office and the Lesupatsela Program into disrepute. You are expected to give your answer within five (5) working days upon receipt of this letter," she concluded.



The leader of the Basotho National Party (BNP), Machesetsa Mofomobe, has declared his readiness to face the Principal Secretary (PS) for the Ministry of Energy, Tanki Phapano, in court over a defamation claim.

Mofomobe defiant amid M3 million defamation claim

This follows a demand letter from Phapano's attorneys, seeking M3 million in damages and a public apology.

"I do not know what they are talking about. I think this letter is lost. They are talking about something that does not exist, so I decided not to reply to it. I am waiting for them to take the matter to court; we will meet there," Mofomobe told Newsday last night.

The demand letter, dated November 21, 2024, from K.J. Nthontho Attorneys, outlines allegations against Mofomobe for a Facebook post on November 8, 2024.

According to the letter, Mofomobe shared a video of Phapano counting money, accompanied by a caption accusing the government, including its ministers and principal secretaries, of corruption.

The letter read: "Client informs us that on or

around the 8th November 2024 on your social media Platform, namely Facebook, which happens to have a large following in and outside the country, you intentionally and wrongfully published a video of Client, which was taken without his knowledge and consent, by posting same on your timeline thereby causing him reputational harm."

The caption reportedly read:

"Bobolu ba puso ena le tjojo li holimo mane li kenyelletsa matona le li PS. Re tla utulloa le tsohle tse patiloeng, ntumelisetseng ntate PS Energy."

This was loosely translated as:

"The current government is riddled with corruption, including its ministers and PSs. We will expose everything that has been hidden. Pass my regards to Mr. PS Energy."

The attorneys allege that the video and cap-

tion insinuated that Phapano, as a government official, is corrupt or accepts bribes.

"It further suggests that the money he is seen counting in the video is either the proceeds of bribery or corruption," the letter stated.

The attorneys argue that Mofomobe's actions were deliberate and defamatory, intended to harm Phapano's reputation.

"When you published the said video and words, you were fully aware of their defamatory nature, as they would lower him in the estimation of ordinary, right-thinking members of society," the letter added.

Phapano's legal representatives demand that Mofomobe pays M3 million in damages and issues an unconditional public apology within seven days.

Failure to comply, they warn, will result in legal action without further notice.

Newsday (+266) 2231 4267 / 5945 8983

Carlton Centre
3rd Floor
Room 302
Kingsway
Maseru

PUBLISHER
Newsday Media (Pty) (Ltd)
Maseru

MANAGING EDITOR
Lerato Matheka
managingeditor@newsdayonline.co.ls

NEWS EDITOR
Kananelo Boloetse
editor@newsdayonline.co.ls

SUB EDITOR
Bereng Mpaki

NEWS ROOM
Nisoaki Motaung
Seabata Mahao
Relebohile Makhetha
Kabelo Masoabi

CONTRIBUTORS
Theko Tlebere
Motsamai Mokofo

PRODUCTION
Bolokang Mahlo
Bataung Monaheng

VIDEOGRAPHER
Pheello Mosesi

DISTRIBUTION
Mahlo Bolokang

MARKETING
Tefah Sello
Mosa Lekhoaa
Tumelo Ramotsoane
marketing@newsdayonline.co.ls

WEBSITE
www.newsdayonline.co.ls

FACEBOOK
Newsday Newspaper LS
X
@LsNewsday

INSTAGRAM
Newsday Lesotho

PRINTER
Thabure Media Group
Maseru, Lesotho

Malnutrition ravages Maputsoe as hunger deepens



Kabelo Masoabi

It is 10 a.m., and already lines are beginning to form outside the chief's residence in the tight-knit village of Chonapase, located just behind the bustling town of Maputsoe.

A police van arrives, bringing much-needed food containers.

The ushers quickly unload the provisions, offering a glimmer of hope to those waiting. As the young and old line up with their basins, excitement and anticipation fill the air. The distribution begins, and each villager receives a warm portion of soft porridge.

"It is delicious! It's probably mixed with butter," exclaims 'Mamoshoti Sehalo, her face lighting up with joy as she savours the meal.

However, not everyone is as fortunate.

The food supply runs out too quickly, leaving some, including four small toddlers, empty-handed. They wait patiently as the ushers gather the empty containers and prepare to leave.

"My boss told me to let you all know that today is the last day we'll be bringing food here," an usher calls out from the van, which roars to life and speeds away.

Later, it becomes clear that the 'boss' refers to a generous donor: a manufacturing company that has been providing breakfast meals to underprivileged families in the Maputsoe

urban area for months.

Among the beneficiaries is Pusetso, a 13-year-old boy who is unable to attend school.

He lives in a small, rented room with his older brother, aged 21. Tragically, their parents have passed away, leaving the siblings to fend for themselves in a harsh environment.

Pusetso shared that they are originally from Mantšonyane in Thaba-Tseka. After their parents' deaths, they moved to Maputsoe in search of a better life and more opportunities. Despite his brother securing a small job at a local shop, their living situation has not improved significantly.

He expressed his frustration, stating that his brother rarely provides food for him due to his struggle with alcoholism. This ongoing issue leaves Pusetso feeling neglected and hungry, lacking the essentials for a better life.

Rethabile Mothake from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition confirmed the distressing malnutrition situation in Maputsoe, especially among children.

Mothake explained that through nutrition clubs created for communities, they educate people on producing their own food on small plots and engage them in handcraft projects that generate income for the poor.

"Currently, I'm not in possession of famine statistics in this area, but the situation is frus-

trating. Malnutrition negatively affects their growth. Some donors are extending a helping hand," she said.

Tefo Tefo, the chief's handyman in Chonapase, shared that the donor feeding program had become a daily lifeline for many in the village, providing nourishment to jobless individuals and hungry children alike.

However, Tefo voiced concerns about the program's lack of regulation, noting that even those who could afford food lined up for the donated provisions.

"Poverty, worsened by unemployment, has led to an increase in crime here," he explained with a heavy heart. "House break-ins have become all too common, with thieves often stealing food and small items they can trade for a meal"

The closure of several textile factories in the area has worsened the starvation crisis, as thousands of community members were sent home over the past two years.

On July 12, 2024, Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane declared a state of National Food Insecurity Disaster after a historic drought, triggered by El Niño, led to the lowest crop yields since the 2018/19 agricultural season.

According to the government, about a third of the population, approximately 700,000 people, will face hunger in the coming months. In rural areas, more than 400,000



Multitudes line up to receive maize porridge

people are expected to experience crisis levels of acute hunger through March 2025.

Vulnerability assessments predict that an additional 296,049 people in urban areas will become food insecure. The drought has also led to severe water shortages, with wells running dry.

USAID reported this week that climatic shocks, diseases, and socioeconomic conditions continue to drive high levels of acute food insecurity in Lesotho.

In particular, El Niño-induced conditions, including erratic rainfall patterns and prolonged dry spells, have resulted in the lowest crop yields since 2018/19, increasing reliance on markets and depleting household food stocks prematurely.

"Drought conditions have also reduced water levels in reservoirs and rivers, resulting in widespread livestock losses as of October," said USAID. "An estimated 80 percent of Lesotho's population depends on the agricultural sector for food and income, making households more vulnerable to climatic shocks."

In response to these challenges, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) supports World Vision Lesotho in providing unconditional food assistance through cash-based transfers to vulnerable individuals across nine community councils in Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, and Quthing.

These transfers help increase access to local markets, supporting the local economy and improving food security for drought-affected populations.

Legal roundup: Cases of violence and theft

Man accused of attempted murder awaits court date

Tumelo Pitso, 42, of Serutle, appeared before the Botha-Bothe Magistrate Court on November 27, 2024, facing attempted murder charges involving his wife. The incident, which occurred on October 15, 2024, reportedly stemmed from a heated argument over Pitso's substance abuse. He is accused of pouring boiling water, initially intended for poultry preparation, on his wife and locking her in a hut before fleeing to South Africa.

Tumelo was apprehended at the border on November 26, 2024, after being repatriated from South Africa. He remains in custody

and is scheduled for his next court appearance on December 11, 2024.

Women sentenced for targeting elderly in theft scam

Two women from Ha Mapeshoane, Mothepane 'Matli (35) and Libopo Molengoane (27) appeared before the Maseru Magistrate Court on November 27, 2024, charged with theft under false pretenses. On November 22, 2024, the pair reportedly distracted a 77-year-old woman in Ha Pilietsane, Ha Mofoka, and stole her bag, which contained M560, an ID card, chicken meat, and other documents.

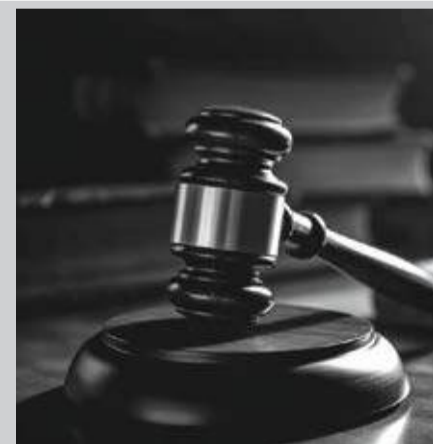
Both were convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison or a fine of M10,000 each. Unable to pay the fine, they were sent to prison to

serve their sentences, with the court emphasising the need for reform and respect toward the elderly.

Woman charged with boyfriend's murder in Ha Tsolo

In Maseru Urban, a 24-year-old woman from Ha Seoli has been charged with the murder of her 32-year-old boyfriend from Ha Tsolo. The incident occurred on November 30, 2024, at around 9:30 PM.

Police reports indicate that the couple, both allegedly intoxicated, argued after the woman requested money, which the man refused. Suspecting infidelity, she fatally stabbed him multiple times with scissors. The accused was scheduled to appear in court on December 3, 2024.



24-Year sentence for girlfriend's murder

In Mohale's Hoek, Tšoelesa Molata, 41, of Ha Makoanyane, was sentenced to 24 years in prison by Judge Tšelislo Mokoko on November 29, 2024. The conviction relates to the 2018 murder of his girlfriend, 'Makatiso Mabea.

Molata violently assaulted and strangled Mabea, suspecting her of infidelity. The court condemned his actions as a severe violation of human rights, highlighting the tragic loss of life caused by gender-based violence (GBV).

2025 resolution: Get children into pre-schools

Nicole Tau



During school hours, the sight of young children roaming the streets should be unusual, after all, they are supposed to be in class. Yet in Lesotho, this is a common situation for children who should be in preschool.

The culprits? A lack of financial resources and awareness about the importance of early education. The conditions are even direr in rural areas, where, even when preschools are available, children often face the daunting challenge of traveling long distances, sometimes alone, just to reach them.

Such scenes are a stark reminder of the uphill battle Lesotho and many other Southern African countries face when it comes to Early Childhood Development (ECD). Despite growing evidence of its transformative power, ECD remains one of the most underfunded and neglected sectors in the region.

But there is hope. Earlier this last month, in November, Lesotho hosted the Southern Africa Regional Early Childhood Development and Education Conference, bringing together government leaders, international organisations, and experts from across the region. The message was clear: investing in ECD is not just about children; it is about the future of Southern Africa itself.

To understand why ECD matters, think of it as a foundation. From birth to age eight, a child's brain develops faster than at any other time in their life, forming the groundwork for their health, learning, and behaviour. These early years are crucial.

According to the communique issued at the Southern Africa Regional Early Childhood Development and Education Conference, children who receive proper care, nutrition, and stimulation during this period are more likely to succeed in school, stay healthy, and become productive adults.

ECD is not just about teaching ABCs. It is about ensuring that children have access to proper nutrition and medical care to grow strong and resilient, exposure to play, books, and stimulating activities that ignite curiosity and an environment where they feel valued and secure, enabling them to explore and grow.

In short, ECD is the starting line for life. But in Lesotho, many children do not even make it to that line.

Lesotho's ECD landscape paints a worrying picture.

According to UNICEF, only 33 percent

of children in the country have access to pre-primary education. By comparison, South Africa boasts an access rate of over 90 percent. In rural areas, the disparity is even starker, where poverty, limited infrastructure, and long distances to schools keep many children out of early learning programs.

The challenges do not end there. Malnutrition affects 27 percent of children under five in Lesotho, leaving them stunted and impairing their brain development. And while the government has policies supporting ECD, only two percent of the national education budget is allocated to this critical sector, far below the recommended 10 percent.

These numbers are not just statistics; they represent futures at risk.

Children who do not receive adequate care and education early in life are more likely to drop out of school, struggle to find work and remain trapped in cycles of poverty.

Lesotho's struggle with ECD is mirrored

across Southern Africa, but there are lessons to be learned from its neighbours.

In South Africa, pre-primary education is now compulsory, with free meals provided in many schools. Namibia offers free education for children aged 4 to 5, while Botswana has made significant investments in teacher training and subsidies for preschool programs.

These efforts show what is possible with political will and proper funding. But Lesotho faces unique challenges. Its mountainous terrain and small budget make reaching rural communities especially difficult. Yet, the recent conference in Maseru signaled a growing recognition that partnerships, with organisations like UNICEF, the Roger Federer Foundation, and local NGOs, could be the key to overcoming these barriers.

The communique from the Maseru conference stressed the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to Early Childhood Development, calling for collaborative efforts among governments, civil society, and international partners.

Why does ECD matter so much? The answers go far beyond the classroom.

First, investing in ECD is one of the smartest economic decisions a country can make. According to the World Bank, every \$1 spent on ECD generates up to \$13 in long-term returns. This is because children who receive proper care and education early in life are healthier, more employable, and less likely to depend on social services.

ECD also has the power to break cycles of poverty.

Consider this: a child who grows up malnourished and misses out on early learning is less likely to finish school or find a stable job. But with the right start, that same child could become a teacher, entrepreneur, or leader, contributing not only to their family's well-being but to the nation's development.

And ECD benefits everyone, not just children. It allows parents, especially mothers, to work, improving household incomes and advancing gender equality. Communities become safer, healthier, and more prosperous when their youngest members are nurtured.

The communique issued at the conclusion of the event highlighted ten critical actions to advance Early Childhood Development across Southern Africa. Among these were calls for free, compulsory pre-primary

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education for all children, training more ECD teachers in culturally relevant play-based methods, and forging partnerships to fund sustainable programs.

These are not abstract ideas, they are actionable steps that can create real change. For instance, Namibia's investment in free education for 4- and 5-year-olds shows how prioritising ECD can quickly improve access. South Africa's focus on teacher training demonstrates the importance of building a skilled workforce.

Lesotho has a long way to go, but it also has unique strengths. Community-driven initiatives, such as home-based preschools, offer a way to reach rural children. Partnerships with organisations like the World Food Programme, which supports school feeding programs, can help combat malnutrition.

NECDOL, a key player in Lesotho's ECD landscape, remains hopeful.

"From NECDOL, all we can say is that we hope the lessons learned from the conference can be implemented throughout the region, and the newly proposed initiative of the Toy Library can be realised in different countries," the co-founder and Director of NECDOL, Shoeshoe Mofokeng noted.

She added: "We are looking forward to working together with all ECDE stakeholders to ensure all children have access to equitable, quality services and a good foundation in life."

At the heart of ECD is a simple truth: children are not just the responsibility of parents, they are the society's most valuable resource. And as Chair of the Social Cluster Committee in Lesotho, Makhwanyane Mokhothu, put it, "Our work is to make sure that we enact the laws that protect our children."

The stakes could not be higher. By 2050, Africa will be home to one-third of the world's youth. If we invest in ECD now, we can equip this generation to tackle challenges like poverty, inequality, and climate change. If we don't, we risk perpetuating cycles of struggle and lost potential.

Lesotho's story is not unique, but it is urgent. The time to act is now, because the future of Southern Africa begins in the small, eager faces of its youngest children.



MISA Lesotho, TRC double down

... Reject 'unconstitutional clauses' in Cybersecurity Bill



Kabelo Masoabi

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Lesotho Chapter and the Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) have once again firmly opposed controversial sections of the Computer Crime and Cybersecurity Bill during a consultation meeting held at Victory Hall in Maseru this week.

The proposed law, intended to address cybercrimes and ensure cybersecurity, has been met with consistent resistance from media practitioners and human rights defenders, who argue that it contains unconstitutional clauses that threaten freedom of expression and other fundamental rights.

The Ministry of Information, Communications, Science, and Innovation has been pushing for the enactment of this legislation, citing the need to regulate cyberspace and combat disinformation. However, journalists and civil society organisations, specifically TRC, view the bill as a veiled attempt to stifle dissent and restrict media freedom.

Six key sections – 24, 26, 38, 39, 43, and 59 – have drawn particular criticism for granting the state sweeping surveillance powers and imposing punitive measures on individuals

found in possession of confidential state documents.

Critics argue these provisions could drive journalists to self-censorship, undermining their role as watchdogs of democracy.

“Passing this bill without amending the contentious clauses will deny citizens their right to verified, independent information and push media practitioners into self-censorship,” said MISA Lesotho Director Ntsukunyane Lekhetho.

Investigative journalism, according to MISA Lesotho and TRC, a cornerstone of accountability and transparency, faces severe threats under the proposed law.

MISA Lesotho has expressed concerns that whistle-blowers, a vital source of information, will be silenced for fear of legal repercussions.

“Clauses from Section 21 to 59 contain provisions that threaten press freedom and investigative reporting,” MISA noted. “While we support the need for cybersecurity legislation, these sections must be revisited to ensure they do not infringe on constitutional freedoms.”

Journalists at the meeting voiced similar concerns.

Freelance journalist and former MISA Le-

sotho chairperson Nkoale Tšoana suggested convening a targeted meeting with security agencies, civil society, media representatives, and other stakeholders to address the bill's problematic clauses.

“Some provisions, such as the one on illegal access to information, are ambiguous and open to misuse. We have seen journalists harassed by police in the past. This bill, as it stands, would legitimise such actions,” said Tšoana.

A report by the MNN Centre for Investigative Journalism last year highlighted the economic vulnerability of journalists in Lesotho. It warned that the hefty fines and imprisonment penalties proposed in the bill, up to M5,000,000 or five years in prison, would effectively criminalise journalism.

Minister of Communications, Nthathi Moorosi, urged stakeholders to expedite discussions, emphasising that the absence of a cybersecurity law discourages potential investors.

“Without this legislation, businesses operating in the technology space feel unprotected and hesitant to invest in Lesotho,” Moorosi said.

Chief Legal Officer in the ministry, 'Makamohelo Mofolikoane, added that Lesotho is lagging behind its Southern African Development Community (SADC) counterparts, all of whom have implemented a model cybersecurity law.

Mofolikoane argued that the lack of legal protection leaves cybercrime victims vulnerable.

Stakeholders agreed to engage with the parliamentary portfolio committee for further deliberations.

While the government insists on the urgent

need for cybersecurity legislation, MISA Lesotho and TRC remain resolute in their demand for a law that upholds constitutional rights and balances the interests of all stakeholders.

In an op-ed published in September this year by the South Africa's Daily Maverick, Herbert Moyo, a journalist and editor, said this Bill, previously rejected in 2020 and again in 2022 due to its unconstitutional provisions, signals a troubling return to oppressive governance, jeopardising press freedom, citizens' right to privacy, and freedom of expression.

Moyo stated that Lesotho cannot afford to slide back into authoritarianism under the guise of ensuring cybersecurity.

“With its sweeping and vague definitions of 'classified' information, this Bill criminalises the work of journalists and whistleblowers who expose government corruption,” he said.

“Punishing journalists with up to 17 years in prison or fines reaching M12 million (\$673,800) for possessing or reporting on information deemed classified by the government is not aimed at protection – it is a blatant attempt to stifle accountability and silence dissent,” he added.

Moyo further mentioned that the public's right to know the truth was being sacrificed at the altar of state control, creating an atmosphere of fear that is antithetical to the principles of a free press and right to information.

“Moreover, the Bill's provisions to reintroduce criminal defamation into Lesotho's statutes, despite a landmark Constitutional Court ruling outlawing it in 2018, are a direct affront to judicial independence and the constitution itself.

“In a democratic society, the courts' authority should be respected, not undermined by sneakily reintroducing laws or clauses that have been deemed unconstitutional.”

He indicated that the government's move raised serious concerns about the government's respect for the rule of law.

Woman sentenced for fatally stabbing man in alcohol-fueled feud



Relebohile Makhetha

Matseliso Tšoeliane, 46, has been convicted of culpable homicide following the death of Toka Mosotho on December 27, 2021, at Sefikeng, Ha Moeketsi, in Berea.

Court records indicate the tragic incident occurred at a liquor establishment around noon when an altercation escalated, leading to Tšoeliane fatally stabbing Mosotho with a knife.

On December 3, 2023, Tšoeliane pleaded guilty to the charge.

During mitigation, her lawyer, Advocate Masoabi, appealed for leniency, emphasising her status as a first-time offender and her expression of remorse. He highlighted her efforts to assist with Mosotho's burial, including providing groceries and covering the cost of the coffin.

Advocate Masoabi proposed a suspended sentence, allowing Tšoeliane to pay M15,000 over two years as compensation to the deceased's family.

In sentencing, Judge Tšelisio Mokoko balanced the severity of the crime with the community's interests and noted the influence of alcohol in the incident. While acknowledging Tšoeliane's remorse and her financial contributions, he stressed that no amount of money could replace the sanctity of life, which he described as a divine gift.

Tšoeliane was sentenced to seven years in prison, suspended for three years on the condition that she pays a fine of M30,000 within the same period.

The fine is to be paid in monthly installments of M830, due on the last day of each month at Chief Libe Masupha's office. Failure to meet this obligation will result in her imprisonment.



Kingdom of Lesotho

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTRY

INVITATION TO TENDER – Ref MEF/ENV/4/5/6/2024 - 25

Invitation to tender MEF/ENV/4/5/6/2024 - 25

Tenders are invited from interested and suitably qualified companies and suppliers for Provision of computers and their accessories at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

Tender documents will be obtained from Procurement Office at Post Office Building, 6TH Floor, Procurement Office during office hours from **18th November, 2024**. Submission of tender should be on or before **9:00am** on the **9th January, 2025** on the 7th Floor, Ministry of Environment Board Room entrance. **SEALED BIDS SHOULD BE CLEARLY MARKED; “Provision of computers and their accessories at Ministry of Environment and Forestry”**

- One Original copy and associated 4 copies should be submitted for each LOT

The opening of the tender shall be at 9: 30 am on the 9th January, 2025 at the Ministry's boardroom in the presence of the bidders or their representatives. All bidders are expected to comply with all the requirements.

Ministry of Environment and Forestry does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender nor assign reasons for acceptance or rejection of any tender.

For any enquiries call: 22315491

Or

Email: dqhobela@gmail.com or semakalengmabitle@gmail.com

BUSINESS

Commercial banks formalise collaboration



The incoming Chairman of Bankers' Association of Lesotho (BAL)

Seabata Mahao

In a move to unify and strengthen Lesotho's banking sector, the Bankers' Association of Lesotho (BAL) has established a dedicated secretarial office.

This milestone aims to centralise coordination, foster collaboration among financial institutions, and enhance the sector's role in driving Lesotho's economic development.

BAL represents the country's four commercial banks namely: FNB Lesotho, Lesotho Post Bank, Nedbank Lesotho, and Standard Lesotho Bank.

Until now, BAL functioned as an ad hoc organisation led by the principal officers of these banks, without a formal support structure that oversees day to day operations.

The secretariat will serve as a hub for coor-

inating common banking activities, streamlining communication with regulators, businesses, and the public. It also underscores BAL's commitment to evolving the banking industry to meet the needs of Lesotho's economy and its stakeholders.

At the unveiling of the secretariat, BAL's new chairperson, Nkau Matete, hailed this step as a significant milestone.

"This is more than just a physical office; it represents our collective effort to enhance collaboration, transparency, and service excellence," Matete said.

He emphasised BAL's dedication to staying connected with stakeholders and ensuring that the banking sector responds effectively to the needs of communities.

Outlining his vision, Matete stressed the importance of unity, innovation, and growth for Lesotho's banking industry.

"Our strength lies in our ability to work together as member banks and stakeholders to achieve shared goals. The future of banking demands innovative solutions that meet the needs of a digital and globalized world. A thriving banking sector is essential for the socio-economic development of our nation," Matete said.

He also pledged to strengthen ties with re-

gional and international bodies such as the SADC Banking Association, highlighting the importance of collaboration for enhancing competitiveness and financial inclusion.

Reflecting on his new role as BAL chairperson, Matete expressed gratitude for the leadership of his predecessor, Delekazi Mokebe, the CEO of FNB Lesotho.

"Your tenure was marked by exceptional leadership and notable achievements that have advanced the banking sector in Lesotho. On behalf of all of us, I thank you for your service," Matete stated.

One of the key challenges facing BAL under Matete's leadership is the recent regulatory changes to cross-border payments within the Common Monetary Area (CMA), which includes Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, and Eswatini.

Under the new regulations, EFT debit transactions can no longer be processed directly between foreign and local banks. Instead, these transactions must now be facilitated through local banking intermediaries.

While the changes align with updated regulatory standards, they have posed challenges for businesses in Lesotho that rely on South African suppliers, causing delays and disruptions in cross-border trade.

Econet pumps M6m into summer campaign

Seabata Mahao

Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) has launched a summer campaign worth a whopping M6 million in which subscribers stand a chance to win lucrative prizes over the next four months.

The campaign dubbed "Baso200" in line with Lesotho's ongoing bicentennial celebrations, not only promises exciting prizes but also a grand celebration of the nation's 200-year milestone.

Over the next four months, ETL will give away amazing prizes including a brand-new bakkie valued at over M500 000. The campaign features daily, weekly, and monthly draws, ensuring 200 lucky winners will share in the festivities.

In financial terms, this year's festive campaign dwarfs that of 2023 during the same period, which was worth M2 million, underlining ETL's commitment to endearing its clients as the nation marks 200 years in existence.

Speaking at the launch, Puleng 'Mathabo Masoabi, ETL's Acting General Manager for Marketing, Communications, and Customer Experience, described the campaign as a tribute to the shared heritage and progress of the Basotho people.

"As ETL, we are excited to honor this historic milestone with our valued customers who have made our journey possible," she said.

Among the prizes include daily rewards of



ETL's Acting General Manager - Marketing Communications and Customer Experience, Puleng 'Mathabo Masoabi

M2 000 in cash, weekly prizes of M10 000 in cash or a smartphone worth the same value; and a monthly jackpot of up to M200 000. One grand prize winner will drive away with the state-of-the-art bakkie.

Masoabi also outlined how new and existing subscribers can participate. New subscribers must spend at least M10 to unlock campaign benefits, including 200 local seconds, 200 ETL-to-ETL daily minutes, and 11.3GB data. These benefits, valid for 200 minutes, make the user eligible for the daily, weekly, or monthly draws.

Existing subscribers can join the campaign by purchasing the M10 Nalane Daily Bundle, which includes 200MB of data and 200 seconds of talk time. To qualify for the draws, they must meet the set thresholds.

In addition to the monetary and grand prizes, participants stand a chance to win unique, customized embroidered Econet Basotho Blankets, specially designed to commemo-

rate Lesotho's 200-year legacy.

"With Baso200, we invite everyone to connect with the future powered by Econet technologies such as 5G, VoLTE, and eSIM," Masoabi emphasised.

This campaign underscores ETL's commitment to innovation and celebrating milestones with its customers, reflecting both progress and cultural pride.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF LESOTHO (COMMERCIAL DIVISION) Held at MASERU

MAMPEO LEISANYANE

AND
ESTATE OF MANTHATI MABOKOANE

MABATA MABOKOANE

CCA/ /2023
CCT/0540/2022

APPLICANT

1st RESPONDENT

2nd RESPONDENT

NOTICE OF SALE IN EXECUTION (IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

Following the judgement of the above honorable court dated obtained against the Defendants on or about the 21 February 2023 in the Commercial Court of Lesotho and the Writ of execution and the Deputy Sheriff's notice of attachment served upon the same, the immovable property listed hereunder will be sold in execution on the 13th December 2024 at 10:00am in the forenoon at the front entrance of the High Court Maseru to the highest bidder in terms of the conditions of sale that may be inspected at the office of the deputy sheriff.

The immovable property is the following:

- Undeveloped site situated at HA MATALA, MASERU URBAN AREA MASERU bearing Plot Number 14303-10009.

DATED AT MASERU ON THE 11TH NOVEMBER 2024

APPLICANTS ATTORNEYS
2nd FLOOR, ROOM 26
MANONYANE CENTRE
PITSO GROUND
INSTR. ADV LEISANYANE LJ
ROOM 15B, NRH MALL, KINGSWAY RD
MASERU 100

HEALTH

Does Lesotho have the world's highest suicide rate?

Nica-May van Zyl

"The small African country with the world's highest suicide rate", reads the startling headline of an article published by the BBC in August 2024.

Lesotho is a high-altitude country encircled by South Africa. Its population in 2023 was just 2.3 million.

"According to the World Health Organisation, 87.5 people per 100,000 of the population take their own life every year in Lesotho," the article reads.

"By contrast that is more than double the next country on the list, Guyana in South America, where the figure is just more than 40," it continues.

In this fact-check, we look into the numbers and investigate whether Lesotho really has the world's highest suicide rate.

How suicide rates are measured

There are two ways to calculate suicide rates. The crude rate is the number of suicide deaths in a year, divided by the population and multiplied by 100,000. In 2019, the latest year for which data is available, the crude suicide rate for Lesotho was 72.4 per 100,000.

The age-standardised rate uses a common reference population to remove variations arising from differences in age structures across countries and over time. Age-standardised rates are desirable for comparisons.



In 2019, the age-standardised suicide rate for Lesotho was 87.5 per 100,000, as the BBC article stated.

This was higher than the suicide rate for 183 member states included in the WHO's 2019 estimates.

Estimates were derived from modelling data for many countries, including Lesotho, which was classified as having a data quality score of four, meaning that "death registra-

tion data are unavailable or unusable due to quality issues".



When high-quality data is not available, modelled estimates are used to indicate prevalence. This approach has weaknesses, but it is preferable to assuming, for example, that there are no suicides.

For this reason, when comparing suicide rates across countries, caution is advised.

Why Lesotho's suicide rate is high

"The mental health crisis in Lesotho is

multifaceted. With the second highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world, mental health issues such as depression and anxiety are abundant," said Kate Lambert, Executive Director of Help Lesotho.

Help Lesotho is a non-profit organisation that offers community-based mental health assistance and training programs.

Lambert said that many people in Lesotho experience the ongoing challenges of poverty, food insecurity, and unemployment. Due to limited mental health infrastructure, many are unable to access necessary care and suffer in silence. In rural areas, mental health services are either very limited or unavailable, and the stigma around mental illness often discourages individuals from seeking help.

Conclusion

The claim that Lesotho has the world's highest suicide rate is supported by publicly available data. However, due to data quality, comparisons across countries may not be straightforward.

This report was written by Nica-May van Zyl as part of a mentorship programme by Africa Check, the continent's first independent fact-checking organisation. The programme, funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), aims to foster the practice of fact-checking across the continent



Ministry of Natural Resources
Department of Rural Water Supply

Tender Notice

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF TEACHING AIDS MATERIAL FOR 'MATHEKO VOCATIONAL YOUTH TRAINING CENTRE

The Government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Natural Resources, supported by UNICEF hereby invites tenders from suitable companies interested in contracting their services for **rehabilitation of water supply systems in Mhale's Hoek, Maseru and Thaba Tseka Districts of Lesotho.**

Work Description

The title of the tender is: **Rehabilitation of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Projects 2024-2025.** Tender No: **DRWS/RE/002/2024-2025.** This tender will require the contractor to rehabilitate water supply systems in the three districts of Lesotho. Additional information and requirements are as specified in the Tender Documents.

Bidder Qualifications

To tender for the proposed contract, bidders must be in DRWS category A and B, and registered companies in Lesotho. Bid security of M20, 000.00 in a form of bank guarantee valid for one hundred and twenty (120) days will be required.

Tender Submission

The tender documents are available at the Department of Rural Water Supply Head Office (DRWS), Accounts Office Maseru at a non-refundable fee of **M2, 000.00, from Tuesday 26 November 2024 until Wednesday 8 January 2024. The method of payment is cash. Bidders must produce the receipt obtained from accounts to procurement Unit at the (DRWS) in order to receive the soft copy of the Tender document. The closing date for this tender is 10.00am on the 15 January 2025.** Bid documents one (1) original, 4 copies, soft copy, and sealed financial proposal must be deposited to the Ministry of Natural Resources Tender Box situated at the entrance of **DRWS Office Khubet-**

soana, Resource Centre, Next to Appropriate Technology Services (ATS) on or before the closing date and time in sealed envelope clearly Marked "Tender for Rehabilitation of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Projects 2024-2025."

All bidders are advised that Contractor and Suppliers to Lesotho Government are expected to be in compliance with their tax obligations. Please submit together with the tender, valid certified copies of DRWS certificate (certified **at source**), Traders License, VAT certificate and Tax clearance.

Pre-tender Meeting

A Compulsory pre-tender meeting shall be held on the **11th December, 2024, 10.00am** at the DRWS Khubetsoana Resources Centre.

Site visits

Site visits are also compulsory and will be on the 12 to 13 December 2024 in Mhale's Hoek, 16 to 17 December 2024 in Maseru and 18 -19 December 2024 in Thaba Tseka

Tender Opening

Bids will be opened on the date of submission at **10:30am** in the presence of bidders or their representatives who wish to attend at the following address: DRWS Office Khubetsoana, Resource Centre, Next to Appropriate Technology Services (ATS),

Questions and Clarifications

All questions and clarifications relating to this tender should be directed to The Procurement Unit, Ministry of Natural Resources, Bokamoso Business Suit, Old Christie House, Orpen Road, and Opposite Centre for Accounting Studies Maseru. Tel: 27325160.



INVITATION FOR BIDS

OPEN NATIONAL COMPETITIVE TENDER LES/IEC/TEN/2024-25/10

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) invites tenders from interested companies for Supply and Delivery Office Furniture and Equipment.

DESCRIPTION

Lot: 1
i. Executive Desks x 11
ii. Office Desk x 102
iii. Activity Storage - 3 drawer x 1

Lot: 2
i. Visitor's Chairs x 30
ii. Office chairs x 110
iii. High Back Chair x 1
iv. Office Filing Cabinets x 10
v. Stationery Cabinet x 1

Lot: 3
i. Hoovers x 10
ii. Microwaves x 10
iii. Shredding Machine x 1

Lot: 4
(i) Smart Tvs x 3

BIDDING DOCUMENT

Tender document is obtainable from Election House Procurement Unit 2nd Floor, Corner Maluti and Caledon Road, Maseru West during working hours from 09:00am to 16:00 hours. Bidders must purchase a copy of tender document at a **NON-Refundable fee of M2, 200.00 (Two Thousand, two hundred Maloti).** The procedure for obtaining the Tender document is as follows: Payment of bid document must be made at IEC Finance Department 2nd Floor. **The receipt issued must be taken to the office of Procurement where document will be issued.**

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Technical weight 60%	Financial weight 40%
Specifications.	Price.
Experience - proven track record	Financial Capability: Current bank statement for three months and a valuation letter from the bank as an assurance that the suppliers will be financed for incapable supplier. OR Tenderers own current financial statements with an audit opinion from a qualified independent Auditor.
Lead time.	

N:B
IEC is not bound to the lowest price.

Technical bid should include	Financial bid should include

Specification	Quotation
- Experience	- Financial
- Lead time	Capability: Current bank statement for three months and a valuation letter from the bank as an assurance that the suppliers will be financed for incapable supplier. OR Tenderers own current financial statements with an audit opinion from a qualified independent Auditor.
- Mandatory requirements	

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

- The price should be VAT inclusive for suppliers who qualify to collect VAT (attach VAT Registration Certificate).
 - Price should be quoted in Maloti currency.
 - Attach valid and relevant Traders License/ Business Identity Card.
 - Attach valid copy of Tax Clearance Certificate.
 - The specifications should be written.
 - The Bonafide Certificate should be filled and signed by company's authorized representative (failure will lead to rejection) and the total cost should be written on the certificate.
 - Provide access to credit facilities of 70% of the quoted price (Strictly form the bank).
 - Provide current two reference letters for similar work done in with the last two years.
 - Provide Bid Security, 10% of the total cost valid for three months, and fill a bid security declaration form.
 - The provided Bid Security Form/ Bank Guarantee should be filled by the Suppliers Bank.
 - Provide original bidding document and four copies.
 - Bid validity period shall be ninety (90) days beginning on the closing date of the tender.
 - Access to credit facilities of 70% of the quoted price (Strictly form the bank)
 - Companies should tender for all or any lots but cover all items in each lot.
 - Provide three envelopes, the outer envelope clearly marked **"Supply and Delivery of Office Furniture and Equipment"** the two inner envelopes, one clearly marked **"technical bid"** containing original and four copies and the other one clearly marked **"financial bid"** containing original and four copies.
- N.B
- Bidders are informed that 5% source tax will be deducted from payments.
 - Electronic bidding shall not be permitted.
 - Payment will be done after delivery of Office furniture and Equipment.
 - Unavailability of mandatory documents will lead to disqualification of the bid.
 - Bidders are informed that IEC will not be a signatory to any Bank confirmation letter OR any letter from a Financial Institution with regards to payment terms.

Sealed Envelopes bearing no identification of the suppliers should be deposited in the tender box at Election House, Ground Floor, Corner Maluti and Caledon Road, Maseru West. **On or before 12:30pm 13th January 2025** and will be opened on the same date at **14:30hours 1st Floor Boardroom.** Envelopes should be clearly marked: **"SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF OFFICE FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT"**

For further information, relating to the above information please contact,

The Procurement Unit
Independent Electoral Commission
Election House
2nd Floor
Corner Maluti and Caledon Road
Maseru West
E-mail: tenders@iec.org.ls

The Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.

Procurement Unit-IEC

OPINION

The Mirage of Lesotho's Print Media: Advertising Platforms Masquerading as Newspapers?

Chris Mokolatsie

Lesotho's print media landscape, dominated by publications such as the *Lesotho Times*, *Newsday*, *The Post*, and *Public Eye*, among others, appears to be little more than an advertising revenue scheme masquerading as journalism. These so-called newspapers seem to prioritise profit over purpose. A quick glance at any edition reveals a glaring omission: the absence of genuine news on the front page. Instead, it is invariably reserved for advertisements. Where is the breaking news?

A brief perusal of their content exposes a troubling pattern: an overwhelming reliance on advertising, predominantly from public sector entities and a select few private companies, with little emphasis on quality journalism. Articles are unnecessarily long, poorly structured, and padded with irrelevant details. Accompanying photographs are often blurry and unprofessional, evoking outdated cell phone snapshots rather than the polished visuals expected in contemporary journalism.

The digital editions are no better. These papers merely upload their print layouts as cumbersome PDFs, which are difficult to navigate – particularly on mobile devices, the primary platform for digital content consumption today.

Style Over Substance

The editorial style of these newspapers exacerbates the problem. Stories are often bloated, lacking conciseness, engagement, or substance. Readers are left overwhelmed by sprawling text and underwhelmed by the lack of meaningful information. What passes for "news" frequently consists of minimally edited press releases or verbatim political statements, offering little analysis or depth to educate or engage the public.

Take, for example, a recent article in *Public Eye* titled "Mahao Schools Prime Minister." The paper failed to report the actual news, that the Prime Minister had dismissed Professor Mahao as Minister of Energy. Instead, readers were subjected to a meandering 1,000-word narrative spread across three pages. Similarly, *The Post* devoted two full pages to a mundane legislative amendment on banning the initiation of minors under 18, a story devoid of urgency or widespread interest.

Such long-winded, poorly executed reporting highlights a fundamental lack of professionalism in Lesotho's print media. Consider *Newsday*, which last week published an opinion piece titled "Water for South Africa - Despair for Villagers" under the wrong byline. While mistakes happen, this basic error reflects a troubling lack of editorial oversight.

Are These Really Newspapers or Adver-

torials?

This raises a critical question: Are these publications genuine news organisations, or are they merely advertising platforms disguised as newspapers? A closer look suggests the latter.

In Lesotho, advertising revenue—particularly from government departments and state-owned enterprises—is a lucrative and steady income stream. Consequently, these publications prioritise securing advertisements over producing quality content. This dynamic is exacerbated by advertisers' lack of objective criteria for selecting publications. A newspaper's existence alone appears to suffice.

This approach rewards mediocrity, encouraging newspapers to rely on connections rather than content quality to secure advertising revenue. In a market with limited competition, these publishers have settled into a low-effort, high-reward model: producing the bare minimum to attract advertising while charging readers between M6 and M7 per copy. What value do readers get for their money?

Quality Journalism Requires Investment

True journalism requires integrity, curiosity, and a relentless commitment to serving the public interest. It also demands investment: in skilled reporters, professional photography, and diverse, engaging content. Globally,

leading newspapers attract loyal readerships through investigative reporting, sharp editorials, and dynamic coverage of sports, entertainment, and human-interest stories.

Lesotho's print media, however, consistently falls short. The current crop of publications appears content with minimal effort as long as advertising revenue continues to flow. Few seem interested in expanding coverage to rural areas or diversifying their reporting to reflect the complexities of the nation.

A Call for Change

Lesotho desperately needs serious investment in its print media landscape from publishers who view journalism as a public good rather than a quick-profit enterprise. These investors must prioritise quality reporting that informs, critiques, and fosters public debate, and off course well paid and well-trained reporters.

From the outside looking in, the current state of Lesotho's print media is disheartening. Most publications: *Newsday*, *Public Eye*, *The Post*, *Lesotho Times* etc etc all of them without exception prioritise advertising revenue over their journalistic responsibilities, leaving readers shortchanged. Until this changes, the print media in Lesotho will remain a scam, selling adverts not news.

It is not enough to print content on newsprint, roll it off a press, and call it a newspaper. The nation deserves better. The time for change is now.

The Smart ID Debate: Revolutionising Governance or Masking Inefficiencies?

Theko Tlebere

In a recent motion before Lesotho's National Assembly, Hon. Thabiso Lekitla, MP for Meking Constituency, proposed the introduction of non-expiring smart Identity Documents (IDs). This initiative aims to resolve frustrations experienced by Basotho in accessing services due to expired IDs. While the idea of modernising IDs may seem progressive, it sidesteps the root issue: administrative inefficiencies within the Ministry of Home Affairs. Moreover, introducing such IDs without addressing these inefficiencies risks creating new challenges. This article examines why addressing inefficiencies through administrative reforms, rather than legislative or technological shortcuts, is a more sustainable solution. It also highlights practical interventions such as pre-budgeting and local ID production as essential steps.

Smart IDs: A Promising but Misaligned Solution

Globally, smart IDs have gained traction for their ability to store biometric data securely, enhance identity verification, and streamline public services. Hon. Lekitla envisions such IDs as a way to alleviate the burdens of renewal delays and align Lesotho with international best practices. By eliminating expiration dates, Basotho could ostensibly avoid interruptions to essential services, such as banking, education, and healthcare, caused by expired IDs.

However, the proposal assumes that expiration dates are the primary problem. In reality, delays and inefficiencies within the Ministry of Home Affairs are the root cause. Without tackling these challenges, the introduction of smart IDs may only mask systemic issues rather than resolve them.

Why Smart IDs Alone Won't Solve the Problem

1. Misdiagnosing the Issue;

The frustrations surrounding expired IDs stem not from the existence of expiration dates but from delays in processing renewals. Non-expiring IDs do not address the Ministry's inefficiencies in handling applications. Furthermore, expiration dates serve a practical function: ensuring IDs reflect accurate and up-to-date information, such as changes in appearance, marital status, or legal names. Removing them risks compromising the integrity of the national registry.

2. High Costs and Limited Resources;

Transitioning to smart IDs requires significant financial investment in infrastructure, technology, and personnel. In Lesotho's context, where resources are limited, diverting funds toward this initiative without addressing existing inefficiencies could worsen service delivery.

3. Potential for New Problems;

Without expiration dates, mechanisms would still be needed to update outdated personal information. Ad hoc systems for managing updates could create new administrative burdens, further complicating service delivery. Additionally, smart IDs that are dependent on foreign production could face supply chain challenges, leading to delays and higher costs.

Addressing the Root Cause: Administrative Solutions

Rather than pursuing legislative amendments or prematurely introducing smart IDs, the government should prioritise systemic reforms to resolve inefficiencies in the Ministry of Home Affairs. Key interventions include:

1. Pre-Budgeting for ID Programs;

Proper pre-budgeting ensures that the Ministry of Home Affairs allocates adequate resources for ID production, distribution, and renewal. Regular budget planning would mitigate funding shortfalls that often delay services. A dedicated fund for ID programs could be established to ensure financial stability and predictability.

2. Local ID Production;

Producing IDs locally would significantly reduce costs and reliance on foreign suppliers, speeding up issuance and renewal processes. Establishing a local production facility could also create jobs and strengthen Lesotho's capacity for self-reliance in critical government services.

3. Streamlining Processes;

Simplifying ID application and renewal procedures is essential. By conducting a comprehensive review of existing workflows, the Ministry can identify bottlenecks and implement solutions to reduce processing times. Digitising application tracking systems would provide transparency and improve accountability.

4. Investing in Capacity;

The Ministry must address resource constraints by hiring additional personnel, training existing staff, and decentralising services. Mobile registration units and regional service centers could bring services closer to communities, reducing congestion at central offices.

5. Embracing Digital Solutions;

Expanding online services such as applications, renewals, and payment systems, would improve accessibility and convenience. Automated reminders for ID renewals via SMS or email could also help citizens stay on top of deadlines, minimising last-minute rushes.

6. Public Education Campaigns;

Awareness campaigns are critical for educating Basotho on the importance of timely ID renewal and the processes involved. Clear communication about deadlines and required documentation would help prevent unnecessary delays.

7. Enhancing Accountability;

Establishing performance benchmarks and monitoring mechanisms within the Ministry ensures efficient service delivery. Citizens should have access to feedback channels to report delays or inefficiencies and seek redress where necessary.

Smart IDs as a Long-Term Goal

Smart IDs should remain part of Lesotho's modernisation agenda, but their introduction must be carefully planned and aligned with broader systemic reforms. By first addressing administrative inefficiencies, the government can build a solid foundation for the eventual adoption of smart IDs. Local production and pre-budgeting would further ensure that this transition is sustainable and cost-effective.

Hon. Lekitla's call for smart IDs reflects an understandable desire to alleviate Basotho's frustrations with ID-related delays. However, addressing administrative challenges through technological or legislative shortcuts risks compounding the problem rather than solving it. The real solution lies in strengthening the Ministry of Home Affairs by streamlining processes, investing in capacity, and adopting practical measures such as pre-budgeting and local ID production.

By focusing on administrative accountability and efficiency, the government can deliver timely and effective identity services to Basotho. Only then will innovations like smart IDs truly benefit the nation, providing not just a modernised system but a robust and reliable one that meets the needs of all citizens. The future is NOW!

OPINION

There are years that ask questions and years that answer

Likhapha Ntlo-Ea-Lefu

Recently, I have found myself reminiscing about the opening line of Chapter 3 in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

It reads, "There are years that ask questions and years that answer." This sentiment has lingered in my thoughts, especially as I wrestle with pressing questions about Lesotho's economic development.

Why is Lesotho so beset by economic challenges? Why are so many Basotho still mired in the depths of extreme poverty, hunger, and unemployment?

These questions gnaw at my mind, demanding answers.

As a nation, we have had – and continue to have – vast opportunities to confront and address our economic disparities, yet we repeatedly fall short. Despite our abundance of natural raw materials, we have failed to make meaningful strides in leveraging them to transform our material conditions.

Unlike Botswana, which provides a fair comparison, we squandered the opportunities presented by our immense natural wealth. While Botswana successfully capitalised on its resources to drive economic development, we missed crucial chances to do the same, leaving us to grapple with persistent challenges.

In 1986, we squandered a pivotal opportunity for development when the military regime of Major General Justin Metsing Lekhanya signed the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) Treaty with South Africa's apartheid regime.

This agreement marked the beginning of Lesotho's hydro-colonisation by South Africa, as the treaty disproportionately favours South Africa, leaving Lesotho with meager benefits from its own natural resources.

The exploitation of indigenous communities has been a recurring issue in the implementation of both Katse Dam (Phase I) and Polihali Dam (Phase II). Concerns about human rights violations are frequently raised, yet they remain largely unaddressed.

Moreover, South Africa's interventions and mediations in Lesotho's political affairs – ostensibly aimed at fostering peace and stability – are often driven by its vested in-



Cannabis-in-Lesotho-scaled

terest in safeguarding its access to Lesotho's water resources, placing economic and political pressure on an already fragile nation.

We also missed the chance to turn our mining industry into a sustainable economic driver. Instead, lopsided contracts allowed European-based companies to reap immense profits while leaving Lesotho with mere crumbs.

Even those meager gains were tainted by unbridled corruption and incompetence, as politicians and civil servants plundered resources without facing accountability. Now, with the global diamond market in decline, Lesotho has little to show for being a producer of high-quality diamonds.

Amid skyrocketing unemployment, the retrenchment of mineworkers has become a harsh reality, further deepening our economic woes.

As if this litany of failures were not enough, we undermined a promising wool and mohair market by empowering a Chinese national who, with the complicity of politicians, swiftly defrauded farmers. We squandered the immense potential of the cannabis (marijuana) industry. We botched our public-private partnership with Netcare. We became entangled in the poorly managed Solar Frazer project.

Moreover, we repeatedly bailed out multinational corporations, even as they flagrantly violated tax regulations, costing us millions that we are unable to recover. These missteps have left us grappling with

lost opportunities and a crumbling economic foundation.

These unscrupulous decisions have painted Lesotho as a fragile and diminutive economy, a vulnerable enclave heavily reliant on foreign aid and investors for its survival. We have overlooked the critical need to balance the intense financialisation of our economy, particularly the outflows and inflows of money.

At present, outflows far exceed inflows, as vast sums legally leave the country to pay for goods and services, while additional funds are illicitly siphoned out. In both cases, this money is rarely, if ever, fully recovered.

This imbalance underscores the importance of strengthening basic services like healthcare and education within our borders. By prioritising these fundamental needs, we can create lucrative job opportunities, foster infrastructure development, and reduce economic dependence on external forces.

Guided by Zora Neale Hurston's words, I recognise that while the question of economic development has lingered through fifty-eight years of independence, the answers have long been evident: they lie in the competent management of our natural resources and the strategic execution of prospective projects.

Yet, as a nation, we have failed to act on these answers.

Our primary affliction remains the persistent vacuum in political leadership, compounded by the insidious plague of

corruption. We lack decisive, strategic, and enlightened leaders.

Instead, at the helm of the current leadership, we see brazen theft carried out with impunity by politicians, civil servants, and their accomplices, 'ice-boys', who plunder the nation's resources without consequence.

This entrenched culture of corruption has robbed us of the ability to address our economic challenges effectively, leaving us mired in stagnation and missed opportunities.

However, the blame for our nation's economic disparities cannot rest solely on the shoulders of politicians. The rest of us must also be held accountable. For fifty-eight years, we have tolerated political leaders who trample on us with their cyclical personalities and pork-barrel politics, masquerading as messiahs to our plight while being the truest villains.

We have rarely challenged their decisions in any meaningful or collective way, giving them the audacity to consider signing 99-year contracts with disastrous consequences for both present and future generations to establish Special Economic Zones.

Their actions have yet to provoke the collective outrage necessary to hold them accountable. Instead, we have repeatedly elected individuals unworthy of leadership, a reflection of our lack of political and socio-economic consciousness.

As Phindile Kunene aptly observes, *it is on the floor*.

Emergency delayed, trust denied: A reflection on LEC

Kamohelo Makhofola

When it comes to essential services, urgency should never be negotiable. However, recent events involving the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) suggest otherwise.

A recently burning electricity pole at Ha Thetsane, Lekhalong, in Maseru, sparked alarm among residents, who quickly reached out to LEC for assistance, only to be told that help would come after lunch.

This response is not only disheartening but also emblematic of a larger issue in public service delivery. Emergencies, by their very nature, demand immediate attention.

Delaying action for something as routine as a lunch break sends a troubling message about priorities, accountability, and the value placed on public safety.

The burning pole is just one example of LEC's shortcomings. A larger concern has

emerged in a section of town that has been without electricity for days.

Residents have been told that LEC is waiting for equipment that will replace the ruined equipment, a statement that raises serious questions about the company's preparedness. Essential services like electricity cannot afford to operate reactively. Waiting for outages or failures to order and stock critical equipment is a recipe for repeated crises.

The impact of LEC's inefficiency is not just about inconvenience; it has real economic consequences. One business owner, 'Mamojela Masupha, commenting on social media, wrote: "business e mpha mme guys. Motlakase o bile sieo since morning. Ha ke tsebe mo ke tlo nka refund ea cake tse nne ha bosiu bo sa. Ekare nka iketsetsa motlakase."

Her words echo the frustration of count-

less others whose livelihoods depend on consistent electricity supply.

Preparedness is the foundation of effective service delivery. For an organisation tasked with managing something as crucial as electricity, the expectation is clear: they must anticipate potential failures and proactively ensure they have the resources and infrastructure to respond swiftly.

This includes maintaining an inventory of equipment, having skilled technicians on standby, and ensuring their staff prioritises emergencies over routine schedules.

At the heart of this issue is a failure to recognise the critical role LEC plays in ensuring public safety and maintaining public trust. Emergencies, whether a burning pole or a prolonged blackout, are not minor inconveniences: they disrupt lives, businesses, and essential community functions.

For LEC to trivialise such incidents by deferring action is both unprofessional and unacceptable.

To regain public trust, LEC must commit to transparency and responsiveness. An emergency hotline, staffed at all times, could be a vital first step. Regular training and performance evaluations for staff could also ensure that incidents like this are handled promptly and professionally. Additionally, a robust supply chain and inventory system would allow LEC to act without unnecessary delays.

Public service delivery is a cornerstone of any functioning society. When entities like LEC fail to act in critical moments, it erodes trust and raises serious questions about their ability to fulfill their mandate. Emergencies cannot wait, and neither should the people of Lesotho. Such classic chaos!



**Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP II)
Matching Grant Programme**

Call for Applications

Background: The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security of Lesotho, with the support of the World Bank has established within the SADP II a Matching Grants Programme (MGP) to support investment by small and medium agriculture-related businesses, farmers, farmer groups and cooperatives and rural youth seeking to increase climate resilience, raise productivity, improve commercialization and increase production and consumption of high nutrition food products.

Priorities: The MGP invites applications for investment projects, with a maximum duration of one year and 4 months, which focus on the adoption and use of appropriate technologies and business initiatives by smallholder farmers and small and medium-scale private agri-business enterprises in Lesotho. These investments should: increase climate resilience, raise farm productivity and improve commercialization among smallholder farmers; increase competitiveness and profitability, increase value-added to local products among agri-business enterprises and increase market opportunities for smallholder farmers; and increase the production, consumption and availability of high nutrition food products. Eligible investments include: (i) improved seed and seedling varieties for crops, vegetables and fruit; (ii) improved livestock breeds; (iii) shade nets, tunnel houses, drip irrigation, water storage equipment, boreholes and pumps; (iv) equipment for cultivation, harvesting and weed and pest control; (v) product collection, storage, post-harvest handling, processing, grading/sorting, marketing, packaging, labeling, brand development, presentation and promotion of agricultural products; (vi) improvement of product quality and standards, food safety management practices and product certification; (vii) diversification and introduction of high value-added and niche products; (viii) better linkages and development of contractual arrangements among smallholder farmers, processors, traders and service providers; (ix) marketing intelligence including information, test marketing and studies when associated with concrete actions for specific products; and (x) improvement of accessibility by small farmers to various services and input supply. Sectors could include meat production, poultry (broiler), fruits and vegetables, fish production, and products and activities such as mushrooms, aromatic and medicinal herbs and organic products. This list is not exhaustive and other innovative topics may be considered.

Grant financing: Two grants windows will be available to applicants: (i) grants for smallholder farmers and farmer groups to support investment in climate smart agricultural technology and other productivity enhancing technology up to a maximum of \$US 30,000; (ii) grants for small and medium size agri-businesses of \$US 30,000 to \$US 100,000, to support investment in value added activities including small-scale processing and marketing as well as provision of inputs and services.

Eligible Applicants: Applicants with farms and/or agri-business activities operating in all ten districts of Lesotho are eligible for grants. Eligible applicants include a) farmers or farm groups; b) registered cooperatives or associations; c) registered small and medium size agri-businesses; d) registered local, district and national associations and cooperatives; e) sub-groups of registered associations and cooperatives; rural youth; and f) partnerships between the above categories and registered processing/trading businesses in Lesotho. Smallholder farmers, members of farm households, rural youth and small and medium-scale

agri-business enterprises will receive priority for grant support but non-farm applicants with demonstrated farming experience and a strong knowledge of the proposed investment will also be considered. Eligible applicants may also submit joint proposals up to the maximum grant stipulated above. Youth under 35 and women are particularly encouraged to apply. Employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food security are not eligible.

Partnership with Service Providers: The potential applicants will be required to form partnerships with a qualified service provider(s). The service provider(s) will (i) provide technical and financial assistance and advice to the applicant to develop the business idea and prepare the application, (ii) work with the applicant to clarify different technical and financial aspects of the activity and prepare an activity implementation plan; (iii) provide technical and financial assistance to the applicant during project implementation and provide the products and services to be delivered according to an agreed schedule; (iv) support the applicant in managing grant funds, including keeping the necessary accounts and collecting contributions from beneficiaries; (v) supervise the inputs of beneficiaries/applicants and sub-contract technical assistance as necessary; (vi) monitor the progress of activities; (vii) support the applicant in the preparation and submission of the required financial and technical reports. Eligible service providers include a wide range of specialists engaged and already trained by SADP on development of the proposals and list available at SADP offices in each district. Employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security are not eligible to work as Service Providers. Service providers will be contracted directly by the applicants, with their responsibilities and rights clearly spelled out in the service contract, and their services would be funded through the grant.

Service Providers will need to show that they have successfully completed a training program on the preparation and technical and financial analysis of investment projects approved by the PMU or the MGC.

Beneficiary contribution: In all cases successful applicants will be required to make a co-finance contribution in cash to engender ownership and demonstrate commitment. The larger grants for agri-business enterprises will also be conditional on their willingness and ability to generate employment and build effective supply agreements with smallholder producers. Co-finance cash contributions will vary according to the grant sub-program as follows: (i) grants for smallholder farmers and farmer groups to support investment in climate smart agricultural technology and other productivity and post-harvest enhancing technologies to a maximum of \$US 30,000 will require a 20% co-finance contribution; (ii) Agri-business grants for registered agriculture-oriented and privately-owned enterprises, associations and cooperatives will receive a grant of \$30 000 to \$100 000 : grants in this program will require a 30% co-finance contribution.

Service providers may also contribute to the co-finance. The participation and contribution from different partners should be confirmed by written agreement reached between the principal applicant, the service provider and/or other partners.

Eligible Expenditures under Grant: Of the grant amount, the indicative types of financial support are: a) Provision of technical assistance by the service providers: This category may not be more than 20% of the grant amount up to a maximum of US\$ 3,000 equivalent, to be spent as an honorarium to cover

the costs of staff, travel, allowances and overheads of the service provider(s). Although not a requirement, co-financing proposals from the service providers (especially in the case of NGOs and other projects and various development programs serving as service providers and wanting to co-finance the project) could be sought, provided they are made in cash.

b) Investment Acquisition, Installation and Operation: This category must comprise at least 60% of the grant amount and may include costs associated with the purchase of improved seedling and livestock varieties; the purchase and installation of equipment for cultivation, harvesting, post-harvest handling, processing, preservation, storage, grading, packaging etc; the construction of necessary buildings for livestock production, storage, processing, marketing; the purchase and installation of tunnel houses, shade nets, irrigation equipment, pumps, boreholes, tanks etc; product development; alignment with national and international food and safety standards; and marketing campaigns. Where the investor is making substantial physical investments, the costs of land surveys will be covered for smallholder farmers in order to ensure that they have secure land ownership as a means to secure the benefits of investment. Agri-businesses will not be eligible for support for land surveys. Land survey costs may not be more than 10% of the grant amount, up to a maximum of \$US 2000 equivalent. The costs of land purchase, land lease or land rental will not be covered for any grants.

Furthermore, the project will consider applications which show that the applicant has part of infrastructure and needs to have a full package. As such, a grant window will start from a minimum M200 000.00 to up to the highest value of M1 500 000.00.

Non-Eligible Expenditures under Grant: The following items would not be covered out of the grant amount: (a) Salaries or payment for works and services provided to the project by the grant applicants or its members; b) any expenditures made prior to the date of signature of the Grant Agreement or after closure date of the project; c) purchase, rent or leasing of land and existing buildings; d) any expenditure related to operating costs, which are expected to be the direct responsibility of the applicant; e) any expenditure made in territories of any country that is not a member of the World Bank for goods produced in or services supplied from such countries; f) any expenditure with a hazardous impact on the environment.

Deadline and Place for Submission of Applications: The deadline for submission of applications is not later than **30th December 2024 at 4:30 p.m. Applications should be submitted in four copies (one original plus three photocopies) and delivered by hand at the office of the SADP II located in Districts Agricultural Offices in all the ten districts. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.**

Evaluation of the Applications: All applications received within the deadline will be screened by the MGP Secretariat for compliance with the above rules. The successful applications will then be evaluated by specialized Technical and Financial Reviewers and submitted to the MGC for approval. The list of successful applicants will be widely published in newspapers and through public posting at the MGP Secretariat's office. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed by letter and their original project documents could be returned to them on request.

Application Documentation: The official application forms and further necessary information on drawing up the application may be obtained from the Service Providers who will lead the development of the proposals in each district.



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR PUMA SHOP FRANCHISE OPERATOR



Puma Energy is a leading global company with a growing network of over 2900 Service Stations Globally, including in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

As part of our newly introduced franchisee model, Puma Energy is focusing on developing convenience stores / shops across its retail network and is now looking for suitable companies or individuals to take up this exciting opportunity to operate one or more of our convenience stores in Lesotho.

REQUIREMENTS.

1	Working capital minimum of LSL 500,000.
2	Excellent business acumen with experience in FMCG, supermarket, restaurants, retail store.
3	Be in possession of detailed business plan for an operating a convenience store / supermarket.
4	Provide audited financials for the past 12 months
5	Valid Company Registration Certificate and TAX clearance certificate
6	Should have strong management skills, Store operations and administration.
7	Should have a flair for business and adherence to Puma & Lesotho health and safety standards.

POTENTIAL SITE LOCATIONS

- Berea, Teya-Teyaneng
- Masianokeng

Interested parties are requested to submit their Company Profile, Letter of Intent (LOI) and detailed Business plan to the address below or via registered mail to Convenience.Lesotho@pumaenergy.com by **2nd January 2024**

NFR Project Coordinator
Puma Energy Lesotho
1 Motsone Industrial Road
P.O Box 12103
Maseru

ISO 9001-2017 & ISO 14001-2017 CERTIFIED
1 Mtsone Industrial Road
Maseru Lesotho
www.puma-energy.com



Revenue Services
Lesotho

TENDER NOTICE:

TENDER NOTICE: Consultancy Services for Delivering the Climate Culture Survey Report'
RSL/BE/SCM/04/11/24

The Revenue Services Lesotho invites interested and qualified suppliers/ companies to submit proposals for **"Consultancy Services for Delivering the Climate Culture Survey Report"**. The proposed solution must produce a climate culture survey report that will provide a clear picture of the RSL culture and highlight areas that can be improved for higher performance. The culture survey report should enable the RSL to measure future improvement in as far as its culture perspective is concerned. The bidder must be ready to deliver the work upon the award of the tender. All potential Bidders must be in possession of a proven track record and must be licensed for providing services of this nature.

All bidders must attach certified copies of valid Tax Clearance Certificates, company registration licenses, copy of shareholding certificates, and the most recent annual financial statements for RSL to assess the financial strength and capability of the bidder to carry out the assignment. Bids without these required minimum documents shall be disqualified.

The detailed Request for Proposal (RFP) document indicating all requirements and specifications shall, upon request, be sent through email from the **02 December 2024 @ 10:00 am**. Interested entities shall contact Supply Chain Management office **through the email** stated below.

Terms and Conditions:

1. Tender documents will be available at a non-refundable tender deposit of **M500.00**.
2. The price quoted in the Bids must be in Maloti/Rand and must include all applicable taxes and duties.
3. The Bids must be submitted not later than **12:00 hours** on the **31 January 2025** and

they shall be opened on the same day at **12:30 hours**.

4. Tenders received later than the above-mentioned deadline shall not be accepted.
5. Non- electronic tenders **shall not be accepted**; and
6. Detailed tender packaging and labelling requirements in the Request for Proposal (RFP) must be adhered to or this shall lead to **disqualification**.

1. Important indicative dates:

Action	Date
Issue RFP	02 December 2024
Pre- bid meeting	10 January 2025@1000hrs (Teams)
Final date to submit written questions only (email format)	10 January 2025@1700hrs
Distribution of questions and answers to all bidders (email format)	24 January 2025@1700hrs
Final date for submission of Bidder proposals in response to the RFP electronic	31 January 2025@1200hrs
Public opening of the bids (virtual)	31 January 2025@1230hrs

All tenders/ queries must be addressed to: The Secretary – Tender Adjudication Committee Revenue Services Lesotho at this e-mail address: supplychainmanagement@rsl.org.ls



Revenue Services
Lesotho

TENDER NOTICE:

'Supply and Delivery of Consultancy Services for Establishing Digital Forensic Facility Solution'
RSL/BE/SCM/02/11/24

The Revenue Services Lesotho invites interested and qualified suppliers/ companies to submit proposals for **"Supply and Delivery of Consultancy Services for Establishing Digital Forensic Facility Solution"** The proposed solution must help RSL Investigation department to establish a Digital Forensics Function. The solution must also entail training of RSL staff members, who will be using the solution, in the use of Digital Forensic tools. The bidder must be ready to deliver the work upon the award of the tender. All potential Bidders must be in possession of a proven track record and must be licensed for providing services of this nature.

All bidders must attach certified copies of valid Tax Clearance Certificates, company registration licenses, copy of shareholding certificates, and the most recent annual financial statements for RSL to assess the financial strength and capability of the bidder to carry out the assignment. Bids without these required minimum documents shall be disqualified.

The detailed Request for Proposal (RFP) document indicating all requirements and specifications shall, upon request, be sent through email from the **02 December 2024 @ 10:00 am**. Interested entities shall contact Supply Chain Management office **through the email** stated below.

Terms and Conditions:

1. Tender documents will be available at a non-refundable tender deposit of **M500.00**.
2. The price quoted in the Bids must be in Maloti/Rand and must include all applicable taxes and duties.
3. The Bids must be submitted not later than **12:00**

hours on the **27 January 2025** and they shall be opened same day at **12:30 hours**.

4. Tenders received later than the above-mentioned deadline shall not be accepted.
5. Non- electronic tenders **shall not be accepted**; and
6. Detailed tender packaging and labelling requirements in the Request for Proposal (RFP) must be adhered to or this shall lead to **disqualification**.

1. Important indicative dates:

Action	Date
Issue RFP	02 Dec 2024
Pre- bid meeting	14 January 2025@1000hrs
Final date to submit written questions only (email format)	14 January 2025@1700hrs
Distribution of questions and answers to all bidders (email format)	16 January 2025@1700hrs
Final date for submission of Bidder proposals in response to the RFP electronic	27 January 2025@1200hrs
Public opening of the bids (virtual)	27 January 2025@1230hrs

All tenders/ queries must be addressed to: The Secretary – Tender Adjudication Committee Revenue Services Lesotho at this e-mail address: supplychainmanagement@rsl.org.ls



Revenue Services
Lesotho

TENDER NOTICE:

Engagement Of Service Provider - RSL Wellness Programme'
RSL/BE/SCM/03/11/24

The Revenue Services Lesotho invites interested and qualified suppliers/ companies to submit proposals for **"Engagement of Service Provider - RSL Wellness Programme"**. The proposed solution must entail the provision of comprehensive and accessible wellness support to all staff for the betterment of their welfare. The focus of the programme will be to support staff welfare, promote healthy lifestyles and psychosocial wellbeing. The bidder must be ready to deliver the work upon the award of the tender. All potential Bidders must be in possession of a proven track record and must be licensed for providing services of this nature.

All bidders must attach certified copies of valid Tax Clearance Certificates, company registration licenses, copy of shareholding certificates, and the most recent annual financial statements for RSL to assess the financial strength and capability of the bidder to carry out the assignment. Bids without these required minimum documents shall be disqualified.

The detailed Request for Proposal (RFP) document indicating all requirements and specifications shall, upon request, be sent through email from the **02 December 2024 @ 10:00 am**. Interested entities shall contact Supply Chain Management office **through the email** stated below.

Terms and Conditions:

1. Tender documents will be available at a non-refundable tender deposit of **M500.00**.
2. The price quoted in the Bids must be in Maloti/Rand and must include all applicable taxes and duties.
3. The Bids must be submitted not later than **12:00 hours** on the **29 January 2025** and they

shall be opened same day at **12:30 hours**.

4. Tenders received later than the above-mentioned deadline shall not be accepted.
5. Non- electronic tenders **shall not be accepted**; and
6. Detailed tender packaging and labelling requirements in the Request for Proposal (RFP) must be adhered to or this shall lead to **disqualification**.

1. Important indicative dates:

Action	Date
Issue RFP	02 December 2024
Pre- bid meeting	17 January 2025@1000hrs (Teams)
Final date to submit written questions only (email format)	17 January 2025@1700hrs
Distribution of questions and answers to all bidders (email format)	21 January 2025@1700hrs
Final date for submission of Bidder proposals in response to the RFP electronic	29 January 2025@1200hrs
Public opening of the bids (virtual)	29 January 2025@1230hrs

All tenders/ queries must be addressed to: The Secretary – Tender Adjudication Committee Revenue Services Lesotho at this e-mail address: supplychainmanagement@rsl.org.ls

Re itokisetsa Mzansi Young Farmers Indaba e hlophisoang ke Food for Mzansi, se ke oa salla morao. Eba karolo ea lihoai tse tlo tsamaea le Seahlolo

Date: 1-2 April 2025

Venue: Lavender Kontrei Market, Pretoria North, Gauteng.



- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Package 1: 6000 | Package 2: 10 400 |
| Includes: | |
| -Event Entry | -Entry and Exhibition Limited to ONLY 5 farmers. |
| -Transport | NO perishable goods will be allowed |
| -3 x nights | -A table on the Exhibition floor |
| -50+ Exhibitions | -Transport |
| -6 + Masterclasses | -3 x nights -6 + Masterclasses |
| -Funding Opportunities | -50+ Exhibitions -Funding Opportunities |

Food is NOT included
Non-Refundable registration: M500



MZANSI YOUNG FARMERS INDABA
1-2 APRIL 2025
POWERED BY FOOD FOR MZANSI

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Contact details: 50920676 OR 62425157 (WhatsApp)



FARM GIRLS GATHERING

07 DEC 2024
10 a.m to 5 p.m



VENUE : DURHAM LINK DRESS CODE : "BRANDED" FARMERS ATTIRE
FEE PER PERSON : M150.00 BRANDED ATTIRE (OWN LOGO)
M 170.00 NOT BRANDED
M200.00 (NO ATTIRE & NON MEMBERS)

ACTIVITIES : M1330.00 PER 7 - 10 PEOPLE SHARING



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Allegro brings intimate musical escape with 'Muru'

Pheello Mosesi

Soulful local DJ Allegro Africa is ready to light up the stage tomorrow at *The Caff* in Maseru with his much-anticipated show titled *Muru*.

Designed to create an intimate and immersive experience, the event promises an evening filled with good vibes, heartfelt interactions, and exceptional music.

"I want to give my people an opportunity to connect with me," Allegro shared. "Our lives are so tied up with busy schedules, and I think this event will be a perfect escape from the hectic world."

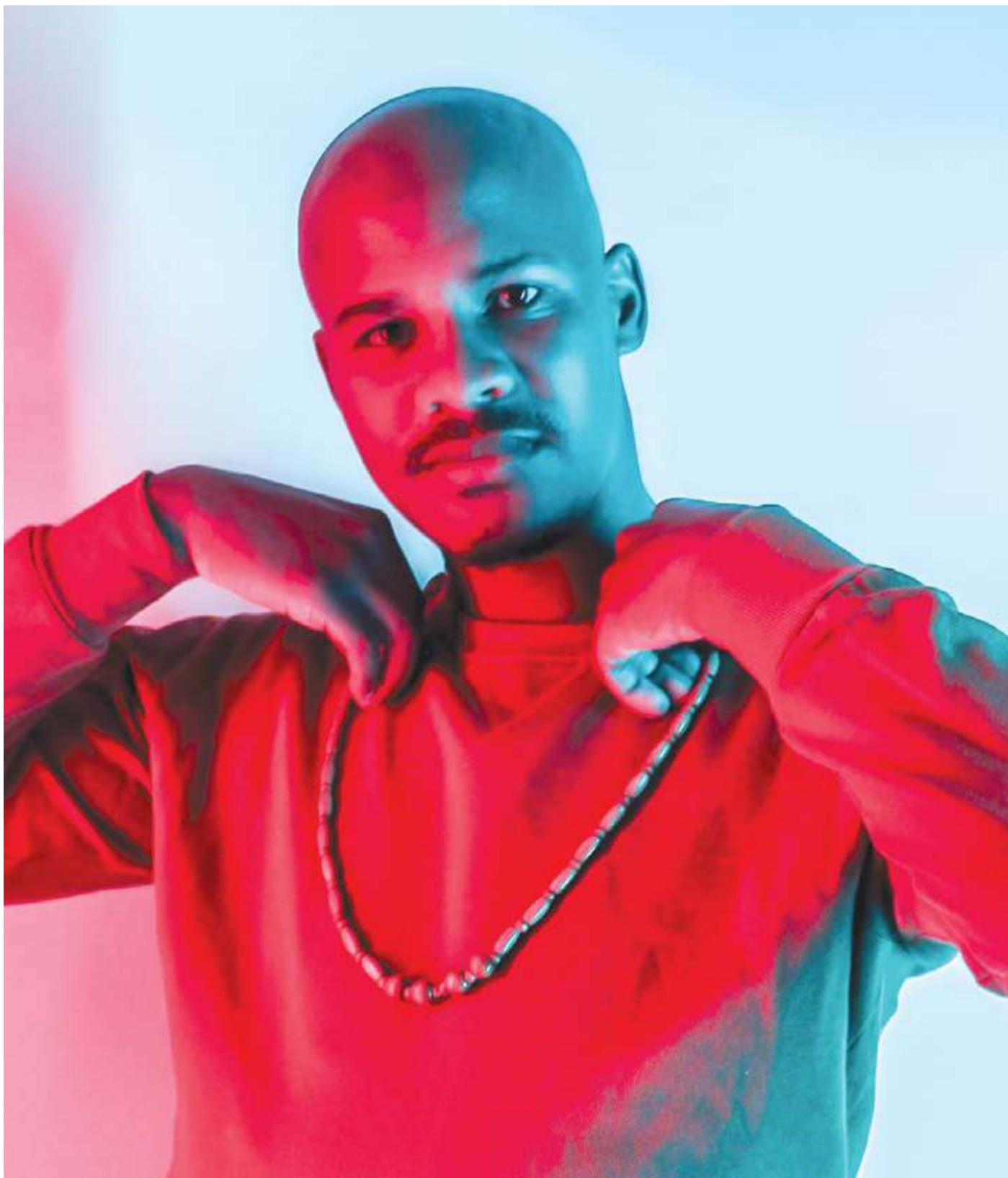
The venue for *Muru*—a forest setting—makes the name a natural choice, as *Muru* means forest in Sesotho. The ambience will enhance the audience's connection with both the music and nature, adding to the magic of the evening.

Allegro's hectic schedule includes hosting his online podcast, *The Allegro Africa Podcast*, which is now in its 44th episode and thriving. Despite his packed calendar, Allegro expressed his excitement about finally bringing this long-planned event to life.

"We felt that now is the perfect time to host this event, especially with inspiration running high," he noted.

The show will feature live performances by Allegro himself, with a special touch of intimacy as he collaborates with "friends of Allegro"—a group of close friends and industry colleagues who share his vision of a supportive and harmonious creative environment.

Joining Allegro on stage are talented artists and DJs, including Kheb-



Allegro Africa

za, Fivo, El Part El, Mr. Beekay, and Phiz DJ. Each performer brings their unique style, promising a versatile and dynamic musical experience. Allegro emphasised the importance of their contributions, stating: "Their support will make

this event more versatile, ensuring it's worth every penny for those attending."

Muru also serves as a precursor to another exciting event. In February 2025, Allegro is set to co-host a show with the Sematsatsa

hitmaker, vocalist, and recording artist Morena Sway.

For now, fans can look forward to an unforgettable night at *Muru*, where music, friendship, and creativity come together to create an extraordinary experience.

Maluti, Liranta hitmaker returns

... Abuti Thato drops 'City Bag'

Pheello Mosesi



The versatile rapper, producer, and songwriter, Abuti Thato, known for his

2016 hit Maluti Liranta, is back with a new single set to drop tomorrow.

Titled City Bag, the song features Yemba Shungu and Piigh and serves as a motivational anthem for hustlers striving to improve their lives.

Produced by MJ Elphy with a beat crafted by U.S.-based producer Horizon Beats, City Bag is a trap-infused urban track.

"City Bag is a song dedicated to the lifestyle of young musicians, influencers, and the general public. It motivates making money while you are still young and full of potential energy," Abuti Thato wrote in a statement shared on his social media platforms.

Hustler's anthem with a collaborative twist

Listeners familiar with Abuti Thato's work might find thematic similarities between City Bag and his 2022 single, Never Give Up, featuring rapper Dunamis and vocalist Morena Sway.

However, the artist emphasizes key differences.

"Never Give Up was my return to the music scene after taking time off to focus on family and building multiple income streams. The video set a high standard for my work. With City Bag, being a collaboration with Yemba and Piigh, it's exciting because it broadens our reach through our combined audiences," he explained.

Thriving amid industry shifts

Despite Sesotho rap dominating Lesotho's music scene, Abuti Thato remains optimistic about his English-dominated craft.

"We live in an era where culture is celebrated more, and I'm thrilled to see Sesotho getting this level of appreciation. However, I believe diversity is essential. Our industry should reflect both official languages. What matters most is

Arts

making great music, not the language it's performed in."

He expressed a desire to work with rising Sesotho rapper Phoka ea Boroa, saying: "Phoka has always appreciated my moves and music. I know we could create something amazing together."

Looking ahead: The Merlin EP

Abuti Thato's return to music is not stopping with City Bags. He is gearing up to release the Merlin EP before Easter next year. The project will feature an impressive lineup, including Piigh, Yemba Shungu, Dunamis, Bobby Stringz, Metal Jacket, Jwoker, Skebz D, and potentially HBK, Mystq, and TURK.

"We're polishing the EP and adding new songs and features with MJ Elphy," he said.

Collaboration and chemistry

Describing the studio sessions for City Bag, Abuti Thato said: "The chemistry was crazy. Working with artists like Piigh and Yemba, who think outside the box, creates an environment where we challenge each other with our unique writing styles."

For now, City Bag will be available exclusively on YouTube and local platforms. Fans are encouraged to stay tuned to Abuti Thato's social media for updates.

Lesotho's music scene continues to evolve, and with artists like Abuti Thato leading the charge, fans can expect a blend of fresh sounds, meaningful lyrics, and a celebration of creativity.

LETOFE marks 20 years in style

Seabata Mahao

The 20th edition of the annual Lesotho Tourism Festival (LETOFE) Lifestyle Experience promises to be a spectacular celebration this festive season.

Scheduled for December 21, 2024, the event will reward the best-dressed man and woman in honour of its two-decade milestone.

The event has evolved into a vibrant music and lifestyle experience, thanks in part to Standard Lesotho Bank (SLB), the headline sponsor for the past three years, and other supporters such as Alliance Insurance.

This year's festival will showcase a lineup of artists spanning multiple genres, highlighting both established icons and emerging talents from Lesotho. Attendees can expect the soulful tunes of local jazz, contemporary beats, and traditional rhythms, reflecting the country's rich musical diversity.

Headlining the event are South African music legends Zonke and Lira, alongside Lesotho's internationally celebrated artist Morena Leraba, whose unique style has earned him recognition across Europe.

Beyond music, LETOFE will also feature an array of food stalls offering local and international dishes, providing attendees a chance to explore Lesotho's

culinary delights.

Speaking at the event's launch on December 3, 2024, in Maseru, festival organizer Montoeli 'Moleli described LETOFE as more than just a music festival—it is a celebration of fashion, culture, and community.

"Over the past 20 years, this festival has thrived thanks to the unwavering

support of companies in Lesotho. The artists are at the heart of this event, and we are proud to collaborate with them in making this festival a success," Moleli said.

He added that, for the first time, a performance schedule will be released in advance to help attendees plan their experience.

Standard Lesotho Bank Marketing Manager, Communications, and Sponsorships, Manyathela Kheleli, emphasised SLB's commitment to promoting arts and culture as key drivers of national development.

"SLB recognises the importance of arts and culture in fostering national

growth. This event is not only a celebration of Lesotho's cultural richness but also an investment in the economic and artistic future of our country," Kheleli noted.

He further highlighted SLB's ongoing support for LETOFE as a way of giving back to society. SLB cardholders can enjoy a six percent discount on ticket purchases until limited discounted tickets are sold out.

On behalf of the participating artists, Mookho Moqhali expressed gratitude to SLB for including women in the festival. She credited LETOFE for helping her gain international recognition and new opportunities.



LETOFE Lifestyle Experience 2024 edition launch

SPORTS

Maroala, Qoaling Highlanders dominate A-Division League



Northern stream standings 24\11\24



No	teams	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Maroala FC	8	7	0	1	13	5	8	21
2	Sehenehene FC	8	4	2	2	6	5	1	14
3	Lits'ilo FC	8	3	3	2	7	4	3	12
4	Lits'ehlo FC	8	2	5	1	3	5	2	11
5	CCX FC	8	3	2	3	7	7	0	11
6	Rangers FC	8	2	4	2	5	5	0	10
7	Kick4life Juventude	8	1	5	2	3	4	-1	8
8	Lerotholi polytechnic FC	8	1	4	3	5	8	-3	7
9	Lilemela FC	8	1	3	4	2	6	-4	6
10	Butha-Bothe Warriors FC	8	0	4	4	3	8	-5	4

Seabata Mahao

Maroala FC and Qoaling Highlanders FC have emerged as the early pace-setters of the 2024/25 A-Division League season, comfortably leading their respective streams after eight exciting rounds of matches.

In the Northern Stream, Maroala FC sits at the top of the log with 21 points, courtesy of seven wins and just one loss, boasting a positive goal difference of eight.

In the Southern Stream, Qoaling Highlanders FC leads the pack with 19 points, having secured six wins, one draw, and one loss, also with a positive goal difference of eight.

The league is set to play its final fixtures for the year this weekend before breaking for the festive season. Matches will resume in mid-January 2025.

In the Northern Stream, Maroala is closely followed by Sehenehene FC, who have 14 points from four wins, two losses, and two draws, with a goal difference of one. At the other end of the table, Lilemela FC and Botha-Bothe Warriors FC are struggling with six and four points, respectively.

In the Southern Stream, Qoaling Highlanders' nearest rivals are Liponono FC, who hold 17 points after five wins, two draws, and one loss, with a superior goal difference of nine. Meanwhile, 05 United

FC and Naughty Boys FC occupy the bottom spots with five and three points, respectively.

Historically, teams leading the A-Division League at this stage, like Qoaling

facing Maroala FC at Agric College Ground.

On Sunday, Botha-Bothe Warriors FC will host Rangers FC at Botha-Bothe Ground, while Lilemela FC will take on Litšehlo FC at Sefikeng Ground.



Southern stream standings 01\12\24



no	teams	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Qoaling Highlanders FC	8	6	1	1	12	4	8	19
2	Liponono FC	8	5	2	1	15	6	9	17
3	Members FC	8	5	1	2	9	4	5	16
4	Quthing LMPS FC	8	4	3	1	12	5	7	15
5	Swallows FC	8	2	5	1	10	4	6	11
6	Mahlaseli FC	8	2	2	4	7	10	-3	8
7	FC Summit	8	2	2	4	8	14	-6	8
8	Qacha's Nek LMPS	8	2	1	5	3	13	-10	7
9	05 United FC	8	1	2	5	8	16	-8	5
10	Naughty Boys FC	8	0	3	5	7	15	-8	3

Highlanders and Maroala, have shown strong potential for promotion to the Premier League. If they maintain their form during the league's second leg, they are likely to secure a spot in Lesotho's top-tier football competition.

This weekend's fixtures on Saturday, in the Northern Stream will see Sehenehene FC hosting Litšilo FC at Ha-Mabote Ground, Lerotholi Polytechnic FC taking on CCX FC at LCS Ground, and Kick4Life FC

In the Southern Stream on Saturday, Members FC will host Swallows FC at Machekoaneng Ground, Qoaling Highlanders FC will play Liponono FC at Qoaling Ground, and Qacha LMPS FC will meet Naughty Boys FC at Qacha's Nek Ground.

On Sunday, Quthing LMPS FC will host Mahlaseli FC at Quthing Ground, while Summit FC will face 05 United FC at Mazenod Ground. All matches are scheduled to kick off at 15:30 hours.

Young in ninth wonder at the Roof

Seabata Mahao



South African rider Wade Young has etched his name in history once again by clinching his record-tying ninth title at the 2024 Roof of Africa (ROA).

Held under sweltering heat and dry conditions, this year's race proved to be an endurance test for riders navigating Lesotho's rugged highlands.

The race is a three-day event that challenges riders with treacherous terrain while providing a breathtaking backdrop. The main event, hosted at Matsieng Oxen Hill, brought together elite competitors and spectators from across the globe.

Young's victory ties him with legendary rider Alfie Cox for the most wins in ROA history, solidifying his status as one of the world's premier off-road racers. Reflecting on his achievement, the 28-year-old expressed gratitude and pride.

"I am so happy to be the winner again, especially with the pressure to defend my title. This year's race was different—it was my first time racing around Matsieng Village, and the terrain presented unique challenges, making it one of the toughest races I've ever done," said Young, who races for Team Sherco.

Young has claimed Roof of Africa titles in 2012, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. His inaugural win in 2012, achieved at the age of 16, still stands as a record for the youngest champion in the event's history.

Beyond the ROA, his accolades include victories at Hell's Gate in Italy, King of the Hill, Extreme XL Lagares in Portugal, and the Red Bull Romaniacs in Romania.

International Riders Shine

Bulgarian rider Teodor Kabachiev delivered an impressive performance, securing second place in the Gold category

in his debut race in Africa.

"This was an adventure I will never forget. The landscape, people, and atmosphere were incredible. The competition was fierce, but I'm thrilled to finish second. This race is like nothing I've ever experienced," Kabachiev remarked.

Lesotho Riders Make Their Mark

Lesotho's riders also demonstrated their mettle despite the formidable challenges posed by their home terrain. Competing in the Silver category, local rider Basia 'Maseatile reflected on the growth of Lesotho's off-road community.

"We may not have won, but each year we get stronger and more experienced. ROA is helping us build a robust off-road community in Lesotho, and we hope to continue improving," Maseatile said.

The country's riders, including Basia Maseatile, Shabeer Moosa, and Ulrich Pop in the Silver category, and David Sallee, Timello Tšolo, Peter Andrews, and Katleho Tlaole in the Bronze category, showcased their determination and skill.

Looking Ahead

Lehlohonolo Taelé, Public Relations Officer for the Lesotho Off-Road Association, commended everyone involved in making this year's event a success despite minor setbacks.

"Everything went smoothly for the most part, though there were a few hiccups that need to be addressed for next time. The Roof of Africa continues to grow in popularity and stature, and we aim to build on this momentum," Taelé said.

He added that the official results are still under review due to discrepancies involving riders potentially going off-route. The race crew is working to ensure the final standings are accurate.



06 Dec - 12 Dec 2024

Liqhomane, Mabote Beavers face-off in rugby showdown



Seabata Mahao

Liqhomane Rugby Club have advanced to the finals of the Econet Rugby League (ERL) 2024 season after an electrifying 24-23 victory over Lesotho Rugby Academy last weekend at Mejametalana Ground in Maseru.

The thrilling semifinal encounter saw Liqhomane edge out their opponents by a single point, securing their first-ever finals berth.

They will now face the formidable Mabote Beavers in the championship game this coming Saturday at Mejametalana Airwing ground, while Lesotho Rugby Academy will battle Maseru Warriors for third place.

The game was a testament to the competi-

itive spirit of the ERL. Liqhomane, known for their consistent performance throughout the season, clashed with a determined Lesotho Rugby Academy, a team that recently rebranded from TY Academy.

The match captivated fans as both sides fought relentlessly for a spot in the finals under an electric atmosphere as Liqhomane opened strongly, showcasing their tactical acumen and teamwork.

However, Lesotho Rugby Academy retaliated with renewed vigour, narrowing the score gap with a spectacular try that brought their supporters to their feet. The game was a nail-biter until the final whistle, with both teams demonstrating grit and determination.

Reaction to last weekend's result, Liqhomane's head coach Maruping "Semethe"

Mosoeu, expressed pride in his team's performance and resilience.

"It was not easy for the players to accept the decision to replay the game after a protest, but I encouraged them to focus on the importance of this match," Mosoeu said.

He credited his team's mental readiness and strong selection for the victory, emphasising their determination to excel in the finals against Mabote Beavers.

On the opposing side, Lesotho Rugby Academy coach, Bokang Ncheke, praised his young team for their spirited performance despite the loss.

"I am proud of how our players competed. This was a tough game, but it shows that we have a bright future ahead," Ncheke remarked.

He also highlighted the team's progress

compared to their debut season and vowed to focus on claiming third place.

As Liqhomane prepares to face Mabote Beavers in the final, rugby fans can anticipate an exhilarating showdown as the ERL 2024 season has been a remarkable journey for both teams.

Meanwhile, following their loss, Lesotho Rugby Academy will now shift their focus to securing third place and building on the solid foundation they have established in just their second year in the league.

This season has set a high standard for the league, highlighting the growing talent and passion for rugby in Lesotho. Both teams have demonstrated the true spirit of the sport, and their performances will inspire future competitors in seasons to come.



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