



# Newsday

...pacing standards

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# 2024'S MASTERS OF THOUGHTLESS SPEECH

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# 2024's masters of thoughtless speech

## ... The hall of shameless recklessness

### Staff Reporter

As the year comes to a close, it's customary to reflect on moments of progress, triumph, and resilience. But this year has also given us something else—a collection of mind-boggling statements that left many citizens in disbelief. These remarks were not mere gaffes; they were a reflection of a worrying trend: influential leaders and officials making thoughtless, reckless, or even dangerous public declarations.

Here, we present our roundup of the Reckless Speakers of the Year, highlighting statements that veered from merely out-of-touch to outright alarming.

### 1. Prime Minister Matekane: "The Right to Food Controversy"

**Title:** Master of Callous Rhetoric

Prime Minister Sam Matekane, often celebrated as a successful entrepreneur and visionary, made an astonishing statement in an affidavit submitted to the High Court. He asserted that people do not have a constitutional right to food.

In a nation where over 700,000 Basotho face hunger due to food insecurity exacerbated by drought and systemic poverty, this state-

ment was not only insensitive but deeply disheartening.

For a leader tasked with upholding the welfare of his citizens, this remark struck a jarring chord.

While Matekane may have intended to emphasise the importance of self-reliance, his words dismissed the government's moral and constitutional obligation to alleviate hunger and address economic disparities. Food insecurity is not a matter of personal failing but a systemic issue requiring targeted government interventions. The Prime Minister's statement will remain a bitter reminder of how easily leadership can stray from empathy and responsibility.

### 2. LDF Deputy Commander Matela Motobakele: "A Suggestion Too Far"

**Title:** Champion of Disturbing Proposals

Deputy Commander Matela Motobakele of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) sparked national outrage with his chilling suggestion that criminals should "visit" human rights defenders, lawyers, and judges who represent or rule in favour of alleged perpetrators.

Matobakele claimed that these professionals, by defending the accused, were indirectly enabling crime at the expense of victims. He argued that subjecting them to criminal acts might help them understand the pain victims endure.

This bizarre and alarming proposal undermined the very fabric of the justice system. It suggested that due process – a cornerstone of democracy – should be replaced by vengeance and intimidation. Such a statement not only disrespected legal professionals and human rights advocates but also posed a direct threat to the rule of law.

Instead of advocating for stronger crime prevention strategies, Matobakele's words revealed a worrying disregard for constitutional principles and human rights, tarnishing the credibility of the security forces he represents.

### 3. Acting Commissioner of Police Dr. Mahlape Morai: "Policing Playlists"

**Title:** Cultural Censor of the Year

In a year when Lesotho grappled with rising crime rates, the then Acting Commissioner of Police, Dr. Mahlape Morai turned her attention to an unlikely culprit: music. She declared it a crime to listen to Famo songs associated with banned Famo groups,

sparking widespread confusion and concern.

Music, often a medium for cultural expression and storytelling, became a scapegoat in Morai's misguided approach to crime prevention. While addressing the link between certain Famo groups and violence is necessary, criminalising music consumption blurred the line between fighting crime and encroaching on personal freedoms.

The police later clarified that their concern was with vulgar language in songs – but who defines vulgarity?

Such vague statements failed to inspire confidence and revealed a worrying willingness to overstep boundaries. Instead of addressing the root causes of crime, Morai's approach risked alienating citizens and trivialising the complex dynamics at play.

### 4. Prime Minister Matekane (Again): "Militarizing Crime Control"

**Title:** Author of Misguided Militarism

As if one controversial statement was not enough, Prime Minister Matekane doubled down with yet another shocking remark. He directed the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) to adopt the military tactics used in Cabo Delgado – a region in Mozambique dealing with terrorism – to tackle crime in Lesotho.

Calling for the use of "everything" to eradicate crime, Matekane appeared to disregard the fact that Lesotho is not a war zone. Such rhetoric, while dramatic, reflected a dangerous misunderstanding of how to address crime in a civilian context.

Instead of focusing on strengthening police capacity, addressing socio-economic factors contributing to crime, or reforming the judiciary, Matekane's call for militarisation risked unnecessary escalation and further eroded public trust in state institutions.

### 5. Government Spokesperson Thabo Sekonyela: "The Apologist's Creed"

**Title:** Defender of the Indefensible

As if Matobakele's comments were not shocking enough, Government Spokesperson, Thabo Sekonyela, decided to defend them. In an official statement, Sekonyela claimed that the Deputy Commander was merely expressing frustration over the justice system's perceived leniency.

This defence was not only tone-deaf but



also an implicit endorsement of Matobakele's alarming rhetoric. Rather than distancing the government from such reckless remarks, Sekonyela's statement further undermined public trust in leadership.

A government that respects itself and its citizens would never condone, let alone justify, calls for violence against human rights defenders and judges. Sekonyela's attempt to normalise such dangerous rhetoric revealed a troubling disregard for democratic values and constitutional integrity.

These individuals, through their words, have shown us the power of reckless speech to erode public trust, endanger democratic principles, and alienate citizens.

Leaders and officials are entrusted with the responsibility of inspiring confidence, upholding the rule of law, and addressing societal challenges with wisdom and care.

Yet, as this year has shown, many have fallen short of these expectations. Their statements should remind Basotho of the importance of holding public figures accountable – not just for their actions but for their words, which often carry equal weight.

Let us hope that in the coming year, our leaders choose their words with greater care and demonstrate the compassion, foresight, and responsibility that their roles demand. Basotho deserve nothing less.



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As the year draws to a close, it is time to reflect on the stories that defined 2024 and the moments that shaped Lesotho's collective consciousness.

At Newsday, we believe journalism is a catalyst for change, a mirror reflecting societal truths, and a bridge connecting people with the information they need to navigate their lives.

Throughout 2024, our mission has been clear: to create a positive, lasting impact through courageous and purposeful reporting.

Sometimes, this has meant keeping the public informed – shedding light on critical issues, from policy changes to community triumphs, that directly influence everyday lives.

At other times, it has required diving deep into the undercurrents of society, uncovering truths that others may seek to hide, and demanding accountability from those in positions of power.

Our commitment to investigative journalism has revealed injustices, amplified marginalised voices, and sparked critical conversations.

Whether exposing systemic corruption, celebrating stories of resilience, or chronicling the events that demanded collective action, we have strived to uphold the principles of truth, fairness, and public service.

As we revisit some of our most impactful stories of 2024, we invite you to journey

# Reflecting on a year of impactful journalism

through the moments that challenged, inspired, and united us.

These stories are not just a reflection of the year gone by – they are a testament to the power of journalism to inform, empower, and transform our society for the better.

## 1. Mohlomi Mental Hospital under scrutiny:

Newsday uncovered harrowing accounts of human rights violations at Mohlomi Mental Hospital, where patients seeking refuge from their struggles faced physical, verbal, and emotional abuse at the hands of staff. Through the voices of survivors, shared under strict anonymity, the investigation revealed how the hospital—meant to heal—had become a source of trauma, exacerbating mental health conditions rather than alleviating them.

## 2. Minister's priorities questioned:

In an explosive exposé, Newsday revealed how Natural Resources Minister Mo-

hlomi Moleko traveled to Brussels with his wife to meet Gem Diamonds officials, mere months after disregarding a damning environmental report on Letšeng Diamonds Mine. The Department of Water Affairs' report, which highlighted severe pollution of the Maloraneng stream, was ignored as the minister prioritised international visits over local accountability.

## 3. Alarming reality of food insecurity:

As Lesotho faced an unprecedented food insecurity crisis, Newsday reported the grim revelation that M1.2 billion was urgently needed to assist nearly 700,000 citizens on the brink of starvation. This dire situation, unveiled by the Disaster Management Authority CEO, underscored the growing vulnerability of the nation—a crisis that prompted Prime Minister Matekane to declare a state of disaster after significant public pressure.

## 4. Controversial statements on the right

### to food:

Prime Minister Matekane sparked national outrage by denying the fundamental right to food and dismissing its impact on life-threatening conditions. Newsday highlighted his remarks and the subsequent backlash, culminating in his declaration of a state of food insecurity disaster—a move many viewed as a response to public uproar rather than proactive governance.

## 5. Hidden toll of corporal punishment:

Newsday's investigative reporting brought to light the often-overlooked impact of corporal punishment in Lesotho. By exposing its damaging effects on children and communities, the coverage reignited debates about the need for reform and better protection of children's rights.

These stories, and many more, reflect the essence of Newsday's mission: to hold power to account, spotlight the struggles of the vulnerable, and catalyse meaningful dialogue and action.

As we revisit these impactful narratives, we reaffirm our commitment to journalism that informs, empowers, and inspires positive change for Lesotho.

Together, we continue to tell the stories that matter.

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SEAHLOLO - WE GROW TOGETHER.

# Mohlomi hospital

## Lerato Matheka

A litany of human rights violations, coupled with physical, verbal, and emotional violence, clouds Mohlomi Mental Hospital as patients recount their traumatic experiences at the hands of nurses and staff.

Patients suffering from mental health illnesses and seeking help by checking into the hospital have shared their harrowing experiences with Newsday, but have requested anonymity for fear of victimisation.

Some even claim that their mental health conditions were worsened by the inhumane treatment they received at the hospital.

Established in 1965, Mohlomi Mental Hospital is a national referral hospital that provides care for patients transferred from the mental and treatment observation units within the ten (10) district hospitals.

But in the harrowing accounts shared by the patients who spoke to this publication, the ingredients of their 'treatment' were nothing short of a cruel concoction: a hearty dose of neglect, a sprinkle of abuse, and a dash of intimidation.

Far from receiving the compassionate care they desperately needed, they found themselves engulfed in a nightmare where the very place meant to heal them became their tormentor, leaving them battered and broken, with wounds that cut deeper than any physical affliction.

### Reitumetse's Encounter

"They threw me into that squalid seclusion room for five agonising days. My hunger was so unbearable that I resorted to eating the pages of my own passport.

"It became my only edible possession since, for the first two days, I was denied both food and a blanket.

"It was only on the third day that they reluctantly provided me with some food. When nature called and I pleaded to use the bathroom, my pleas fell on deaf ears. Forced to improvise, I used a plate for relief and the remaining slice of bread to clean myself.

"I did what I had to do, driven by desperation. In the previous days, I had no choice but to urinate on the floor, as access to a toilet was still denied," recounts Reitumetse\*, revealing the harrowing experiences that worsened her already fragile mental health.

A patient with Schizoaffective disorder, Reitumetse\* despises her check-up appointments to collect her medication at Mohlomi Mental Hospital.

She was initially diagnosed with the condition when she was a fourth-year student at 21 years old and has been a regular patient at Mohlomi ever since. She describes her relationship with the hospital as consistent but "abusive".

She recalls being placed in the seclusion room only during relapses resulting from her failure to adhere to her treatment.

She attributes these relapses to the side effects of her various prescribed treatments, which she claims are debilitating and leave her feeling lifeless and mentally foggy.

"I have no doubt that the room is used as a form of punishment, and my mother confirmed this for me in April 2022 when she was instructed not to visit me for a week after my admission. After spending five days in seclusion, I saw a doctor on the 6th day, and two days later, I was discharged."

Now 37 years old, Reitumetse\* explains that most of her episodes are vivid, so she usually recognises her surroundings during these episodes. She has never been described as violent, but she describes herself as manic.

"During my episodes, I am either excessively excited, energetic, or extremely irritable. Therefore, it is difficult to fully realise that I am having an episode because, at that moment, I feel excited and at my peak functionality. I can go for a day without sleep, but if people try to control me or make me feel violated, I will respond," she explains.

She says that during her last episode in 2022, she left home thinking she was going to a wedding, all dressed up and ready to dance.

She notes that upon their arrival at the hospital, she was met with hostility and immediately responded.

"They approached me, grabbed me, and began dragging me towards the seclusion room. Although it was not my first time in seclusion, it was definitely the worst experience I had."

Reitumetse\* describes waking up from an episode to find herself being harshly beaten by a nurse.

"The slaps were severe and left marks. I looked at the nurse, and she had so much anger in her eyes. Her power as she pushed and shoved me outside made it feel as though I was being punished for something huge. Yet, I am told that I climbed on top of a table and started saying I am Jesus and preaching.

"She certainly slapped me back to reality because the last thing I remembered was sitting and having a conversation with other patients, and suddenly I found myself ducking slaps and punches," Reitumetse\* recalls.

She emphasises

## ...as patients narrate their horrors



es that despite being aware of the abuse she was enduring, she was hauled to the seclusion room and left there for a few days.

"Spending time in that room has left me traumatic scars. I can't sleep in a dark room, and shadows remind me of the scary moments when I was trapped in there," she says, revealing previous episodes where she was admitted at private hospitals, she was merely sedated and was later released when she woke up.

"With Mohlomi, it seems that seclusion is their algorithm protocol regardless of one's condition, and it is definitely their punishment tool," she alleges.

She claims that at Mohlomi, individuals with mental illness are unfairly judged and mistreated, while those experiencing depression and suicidal thoughts are placed in a private special ward near the offices.

### Liteboho's Days Without Food

Like Reitumetse\*, Liteboho\*, a mother of two and an HIV patient who is also battling with depression and psychosis, has gone days without food and has experienced various forms of abuse.

She asserts that the staff is aware of her health conditions and her need for antiretroviral therapy, yet she often goes without her medication for days.

While recognising the necessity of seclusion for patient safety, Liteboho is concerned that even well-behaved and peaceful patients are subjected to the seclusion room.

"In 2023, I checked into Mohlomi because I felt my condition was deteriorating. I was almost fine when I arrived until the next day when I woke up in the seclusion room. I don't remember what happened, but other patients told me I was fine one minute and suddenly started undressing. They say I was walking around naked when I was thrown in there.

"If I was not violent towards myself and others, it doesn't make sense why I was thrown in there.

"They treat that room as a naughty cor-

ner for patients who actually need medical attention or those they want to punish," Liteboho says.

She recalls that on the second day in the seclusion room, a nurse threw her medication on the floor and instructed her to pick them up and take them.

"This is the floor that every secluded patient uses to urinate and defecate."

"When she came back before her shift ended, she did the same thing and even threatened that they would lock me in there longer if I didn't take my medication, the same medication she threw on the dirty floor."

Liteboho\* says her memories of Mohlomi hospital are worse than her mental health illness and the untimed episodes.

"One time, they left me in there for days without food and a blanket. When they eventually came to check up on me, I was motionless. I was so cold, shivering, and couldn't stomach food or even liquids.

"Instead of helping me, they started beating me, saying I am intentionally acting and refusing to eat. They beat me so much that I had wounds."

"I hate that place. I hate getting to a point where I have to go back to that place."

Liteboho\* narrates that her strong character turns her into public enemy number one, saying she refuses to take on extra cleaning chores assigned to recovering patients.

"They ask recovering patients to clean up after ailing patients. I always, and will always, refuse to wash another patient's faeces or even change diapers. That stance has subjected me to being given my medication on an empty stomach and being forced to go for days without food. Hear me, all recovering patients are asked to clean up after others."

She recounts being admitted for three months, and during that time she would relapse as though she was not on her medication.



# l's reign of terror

## and scars in the hands of nurses



"I never relapse because I stopped my treatment, but when my mental health strikes, it cares not where I am or if I have taken my medication. It seems as if the medication doesn't work and there is no one willing to explain why I keep failing on the same waggon despite being on treatment," she says.

### The Seclusion Room

The seclusion room at Mohlomi's is approximately a 2x2 room with a cement bed and no mattress.

There are no toilet facilities available for patients' natural needs.

The room has a partially broken rectangular window with barbed wire, which allows all weather conditions in, including the freezing winter cold.

The heavy steel door closes from the outside and has a small hole for delivering food.

### The Damning Ombudsman's Report

The Ombudsman's Special Report on the Inspection of Mohlomi Mental Hospital in 2023 pointed out that Mohlomi is neglected and that the conditions under which patients live are worsened by a lack of resources. Additionally, the Ministry of Health does not seem to prioritise it.

The report emphasises that many human rights violations are a result of the long-standing and systematic neglect of mental health facilities during policy implementation.

"The living conditions at Mohlomi are inhumane and violate the fundamental human rights of the patients, as outlined in various domestic and international standards and agreements. The Ombudsman has found that these dire conditions hinder the improvement of their mental health due to the poor quality of care they receive," the report states.

It further reveals that the facility is generally under-resourced, lacks professional expertise, and suffers from systemic failures that perpetuate human rights abuses.

"The hospital remains the only psychiatric hospital in the country; however, it currently operates without any resident psychiatrists. It has been determined that the sole psychiatrist who previously worked at the hospital left in 2016/2017 for similar reasons."

According to the report, the hospital has been without a psychiatrist for the past seven (7) years. The facility currently relies on three (3) general medical officers, four (4) psychologists, and seven (7) social workers. The report also identified a need for occupational therapists, which the hospital currently lacks.

During the inspection visit, the Ombudsman was informed that the hospital now receives assistance from one (1) psychiatrist from Partners in Health (PIH), a partner of the Health Ministry.

This psychiatrist visits the facility once a week, and this arrangement has been in place since December 2022. However, the Ombudsman discovered that the psychiatrist's scope of work is limited to general patients.

### Outpatient Treatment Still Poor

Lieketso\*, an outpatient who has had an on-and-off relationship with the hospital, narrates that she relapsed twice due to a misdiagnosis.

Diagnosed in South Africa while still a student, she returned home with confidence that the country's only mental health hospital would be a safe haven. Little did she know that her progress would be derailed multiple times over.

"That hospital should just shut down because it causes more harm than good.

"I am one of those patients who are aware of their conditions and know their treatment regimen, so when I was misdiagnosed, I tried to reason. But the last time I was there, I was chased out of the consultation because 'I knew too much,'" Lieketso\*

recalls.

She says that the two times she agreed to take medication prescribed at Mohlomi, she experienced severe relapses and was admitted to a hospital in Bloemfontein.

"I was lucky, and I am still fortunate to be able to afford a psychiatrist and receive the correct medication. However, what happened to me is happening to a lot of people because patients are seen by healthcare providers who refuse to listen and learn. I mean, patients are referred to Mohlomi by general practitioners from different health facilities, only to be treated by other general practitioners. That is a recipe for disaster," she says.

### Concerns by the Mental Health Association

'Mathabang Manamolela, a former nurse and current president of the country's Mental Health Association, pointed out that the hospital building is very old and dilapidated.

She stressed the need for the health ministry to take intentional action to help improve the hospital.

When asked if she was aware of allegations of human rights violations at the hospital, Manomolela said that as a former employee of the hospital, she knows that the seclusion room is used to ensure the safety of patients and staff.

"What you have told me is terrible. We have a close relationship with the ministry and I promise you that we are going to take this up and demand that an investigation be lodged because the hospital is supposed to be helping mental health patients get better and not worse."

She quickly pointed out that since leaving, the situation at the hospital has worsened.

"We continue to hear that the hospital is severely understaffed and lacks the specialists needed to adequately assist patients.

"What one can infer is that, given the poor working conditions, the workers may also be experiencing depression. There is much work to be done, and with the help of the stories you share as the media, our advocacy efforts will be strengthened."

Manamolela emphasised that while they advocate for policy changes and improved services, they strongly disapprove of any abusive acts towards patients.

### Management Shocked

When Maholi Rampeta, Senior Nursing Officer, was interviewed about the condition of the hospital, they explained that the procedures for seclusion are clear. Only highly disturbed patients who pose a danger to themselves, other patients, and staff are placed in these rooms.

"The rooms are specifically for certain types of patients, and it is protocol to

check on them regularly and provide their medication while they are in the seclusion room.

"If a patient is highly disturbed, they receive attention from multiple staff members and are given sedatives to help them sleep. They are placed in the seclusion room to allow them to rest away from other talkative patients in the wards. Prior to being placed in the room, the patient is searched to ensure they do not have anything harmful on them.

Rampeta mentioned that once a patient has calmed down, it is expected that they will be taken out to bathe and be monitored.

"It is very rare for a patient to remain in a seclusion room for more than a week because they need regular medication to help calm them down. They are given injections, and if they complain of pain, they are encouraged to take tablets, which they usually do."

She noted she would not refute the allegations labelled by patients. While she tries to regularly visit the wards, she finds herself buried in other work.

"There are a lot of departments here, and as much as I visit the wards, I can't say whether what the patients have told you is true or not. I am very shocked at what is said to be happening."

Rampeta said that while all her patients know her by her name and often tell her their grievances, most of the abuse that patients are subjected to, exposed by this paper, were all new.

She noted she tries to make her patients feel comfortable enough to open up.

"I guess I still have a lot to do so that they open up more and are free to tell me their problems."

She confirmed that the hospital has one psychiatrist who sees patients once a week, citing that patients are seen by General Practitioner doctors.

She was quick to stress the need for improved infrastructure, citing that the state of the seclusion rooms is devastating and perpetuating inhuman treatment on their own.

"The rooms are very old and in devastating condition. The beds don't have mattresses, forcing us to always have a mattress ready for when a patient is sent to the seclusion rooms."

Rampeta concluded that all allegations would be investigated.



# Moleko's Belgium visit raises questions amidst Letšeng's environmental crimes

*This investigation was produced in partnership with the Pulitzer Centre.*

Pascalinah Kabi

Natural Resources Minister Mhloimi Moleko and his wife travelled to Brussels, Belgium, in June 2023 to meet with Gem Diamonds officials.

Their visit to Belgium took place five months after Moleko disregarded a damning report calling for decisive action against Letšeng Diamonds Mine for environmental crimes in Mokhotlong.

A January 2023 report compiled by the Department of Water Affairs emphasised the need for serious measures against Letšeng Diamonds Mine for intentionally polluting Maloraneng stream, which contradicted their quarterly reports.

Despite this recommendation, Moleko has not taken any action against the mine. Instead, he and his wife, Mamohaneng, flew from Johannesburg to Brussels on July 3, 2023.

During their time in Brussels, Moleko visited Gem Diamonds' offices. Gem Diamonds holds 70 percent of the shares in Letšeng Diamonds Mine, with the Lesotho government owning the remaining share. Gem, listed on the London Stock Exchange, conducts its [sales and marketing operations](#) from Antwerp, Belgium.

Moleko adamantly refutes any suggestion that his meeting with Gem Diamonds was an attempt to downplay environmental crimes.

"My answer to question four (allegations that your Brussels tour influenced your decision to disregard water pollution findings) is BS (bulls\*\*t)," said Moleko on March 19, 2024.

This is despite that two months and two days after his return from Belgium, Moleko hosted a public mining dialogue, seemingly aimed at diverting public scrutiny from the mining industry.

"Mines are among the largest contributors to our country's economy. However, there are issues where they exploit Basotho and fail to operate ethically. This is shameful considering their significant contribution to the nation," Moleko said on August 14, 2023 during the public dialogue on mining in Lesotho.

Moleko drew a parallel between criticism of the mining industry and national grievances regarding the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) – a multi-billion Maluti water deal between Lesotho and South Africa.

"Given that these projects fall under my Ministry of Natural Resources, which also oversees water resources, let us address these concerns. It is embarrassing that the industries that provide significant benefits come under attack. For example, the Lesotho Highlands Water Project generates approximately M1.6 billion annually, yet it faces numerous unfounded criticisms."

## Moleko's Brussels itinerary

As of today, Minister Moleko's journey to Belgium has not been covered by the local media, despite the announcement made by the [Flanders Chancellery and Foreign Office](#) on July 10, 2023, regarding Moleko's presence in Belgium.

"Today (July 10) Minister-President Jambon received Mhloimi Moleko, the Lesotho Minister of Natural Resources. Minister Moleko is responsible for the mining, water and energy sectors," read the Belgium website.

Meanwhile, Moleko's itinerary, seen by this journalist, shows that he and his wife, Mamohaneng Moleko, departed from OR Tambo International Airport on July 3, 2023, bound for Dubai.

On July 4, 2023, they endured an eight-hour flight from Dubai to Brussels, where they were transported by John Daelemans from Brussels airport to Antwerp. Antwerp, where [Gem Diamonds Marketing Services](#)



BVBA, a subsidiary of Gem Diamonds, is located, was the destination of Minister Moleko's visit.

On July 5, 2023, Minister Moleko participated in a series of introductory meetings, process walkthroughs, and toured Gem Diamonds' tender and valuation facility. His engagements began at 9 a.m. and lasted until his lunch break at 12 noon.

Following this, on July 6, Minister Moleko and his wife travelled by train from Brussels to Paris for a casual meeting with the VCA team at Place Vendome.

The itinerary further reveals that Gem Diamonds' chief executive officer, Clifford Elphick, departed from Paris to London, Britain, placing Moleko and Elphick in the same location simultaneously.

Contacted for comment on March 19, 2024, Minister Moleko asked this journalist to come to his office the following day – March 20.

"I have a report I can share with you regarding my Antwerp trip Ms. I suggest you come to my office tomorrow morning at 8 or Thursday whichever suits you," Moleko said.

Upon arrival, Moleko explained that he had forgotten about a prior commitment for a meeting, which conflicted with the scheduled 8 am interview with this journalist, rendering him unable to proceed with the interview.

However, when he provided his Brussels report to this journalist, he emphasised that the Department of Water Affairs had mishandled the investigation report concerning Letšeng Diamonds Mine.

"They (Department of Water Affairs) made a mistake by not providing and discussing the report with Letšeng. The normal thing is that once you have audited someone, you must give them the audit report for them to answer. So that process began in January this year," Moleko said.

## 'You are being unfair to me' – Moleko

When questioned about the lack of implementation regarding the Department of Water Affairs' recommendation for decisive action against Letšeng Diamonds Mine, Moleko stated that he was unaware of the report until it surfaced in the media.

"They (Water Affairs) did not give the report to Letšeng, but we knew, or they (Letšeng) knew about it (report) through the media when they were responding to media questions," explained Moleko.

He then disclosed that Letšeng Diamonds

Mine and the Department of Water Affairs have established a technical team, which has convened approximately four times since January 2024.

"They formed a technical team comprising members from the Department of Water Affairs and Letšeng to address these issues. They informed me that they have agreed to conduct another test sometime in April to determine whether there has been any improvement or assess the current situation," Moleko stated.

When asked if this technical team was a government's strategy to address Letšeng Diamonds Mine's water pollution, which violates both the Environment Act of 2008 and the Water Act of 2008, Moleko responded, "No, how would they do that?"

"They (Letšeng) have an obligation to respond. That's why I believe that once an audit is conducted fairly, and the issues are identified, they must be held accountable."

When queried about Letšeng Diamonds Mine's response or whether conducting water tests was the mine's reaction to the Department of Water Affairs' findings, Moleko expressed frustration, deeming the journalist's line of questioning unfair.

"You're interviewing me now when I've clearly stated that I have another meeting. This is unfair to me. Take this report, and I will schedule another appointment with you or send me your questions."

Moleko then suggested that the journalist interview Maseatile Motoho, Director of the Department of Water Affairs. When informed that Motoho had not responded to questions emailed on January 25, 2024, and had ignored multiple follow-up requests, Moleko requested that the questions be sent to him instead. Upon receiving them via WhatsApp, Moleko assured: "We will respond, Ms."

The next day, he shared a video on World Water Day, to which the journalist responded with thanks. Moleko promptly replied, "I will make time, Ms, after this busy parliamentary session."

Meanwhile, Letšeng Diamonds Mine said people needed to understand that the mine was not given an opportunity to comment or address the report or its findings prior to media reports.

"It is also to be understood that as much as the report was compiled in February 2023, it was only published several months later in

November 2023, thus not reflecting the pertaining situation at the time of publication.

"As such subsequent meetings have since been held between Letšeng Diamonds and DWA on this matter, and an understanding has been reached on matters of concern. Therefore, Letšeng Diamonds does not offer any comments for public consumption on the January/February 2023 report, being referred to. We will be happy to engage on the revised report when it becomes published," read Letseng's emailed responses.

## 'I was invited to Brussels by Letšeng, EU'

On the other hand, the report handed over by Moleko to this journalist outlined that the minister was invited to Brussels by Letšeng Diamonds Mine and the European Union Delegation. However, it is not clear to whom the report was presented.

"The mission was undertaken due to invitations from Letšeng Diamond mining company and the European Union Delegation," read the report.

It also indicated that the delegation consisted of Moleko and Dr. Albert Butare, described as the Project Lead providing support for energy sector reforms in Lesotho and serving as an advisor to the Minister of Natural Resources on Energy.

Dr. Butare, a former Minister of State for Infrastructure in Rwanda, was reportedly relieved of his duties alongside his superior, Linda Bihire, in December 2009.

According to a 2014 article by [Rwanda Today](#), Rwandan President Paul Kagame justified the reshuffle by stating that changes were necessary when results were lacking.

The article suggested that the duo, Butare and Bihire, had failed to meet expectations in the energy and infrastructure sectors, which were crucial for Rwanda to achieve its development goals. Top of Form

Meanwhile, Moleko's report concluded by stating that "the mission was a success in terms of managing the schedule which was generally very tight."

"The meetings' environment was very friendly and welcoming and more so, the discussions went very well with positive outcomes. The team in Lesotho directly and through the Embassy in Brussels as well as EUD (European Union Delegation) in Lesotho shall make a close follow-up on all the agreed upon deliberations to ensure implementation of the outcomes," concluded Moleko's report.

# Lesotho faces severe food insecurity crisis

**Ntsoaki Motaung**

Lesotho is grappling with an alarming food insecurity crisis, requiring an urgent M1.2 billion to address the growing needs of its population, disclosed Reatile Elias, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the Disaster Management Authority (DMA).

This critical need was revealed during the closing ceremony of the Africa CDC's African Volunteer Health Corps initiative, Strengthening and Utilising Response Groups for Emergencies (AVoHC-SURGE) training in Leribe on Sunday.

Elias painted a grim picture of the country's food security situation, indicating that the results of the latest annual vulnerability assessment report, soon to be presented to the Cabinet, were dire.

He disclosed that the number of people who would be in a food insecurity crisis had gone up significantly. By October this year, he said, close to 700,000 people across the country would be in a food insecurity crisis.

"There are five most affected districts with severity of food shortage including Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthing, Qacha's Nek, and Maseru and they are on a crisis stage," he said.

Elias noted that the worsening food insecurity could have direct implications for Lesotho's health system.

The resources needed to combat this crisis have surged dramatically. "Last year, the required resources to address food insecurity were around M300 to M500 million, but this year we need at least M1.2 billion," Elias said.

The annual Vulnerability Assessment Report is produced by the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC), a multi-agency committee that consists of government ministries, NGOs, and UN agencies.

LVAC is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the DMA, while the secretariat is made up of DMA staff.

The technical core team led by DMA is made of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Department of Crops, Department of Nutrition, Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office (FNCO), Bureau of Statistics (BOS), World Vision, Lesotho Red Cross Society, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Acute Food Insecurity analysis, from July to September 2023, approximately 245,000 people in rural Lesotho (16 percent of the analysed population) were experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above - Crisis or worse).

The findings highlighted an urgent need for action to reduce food gaps, protect and restore livelihoods, and prevent acute malnutrition.

During this period, out of the 10 districts analysed in Lesotho, five were classified as IPC Phase Two (Stressed), while the remaining five were in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis).

Additionally, in December 2022, excessive rains resulting in waterlogging destroyed crops in many parts of the country, exacerbating the food insecurity situation.

In response to the food insecurity crisis, several interventions and appeals have been launched.

On May 20, this year, the extraordinary summit of the heads of state and



*Chief Executive for Disaster Management Authority (DMA) Reatile Elias*

government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on El Niño Induced Drought and Floods, was held virtually.

Prime Minister Ntsokoane Samuel Matekane attended the summit.

The summit received an update on the recent climate and weather situation in the region, and their impacts on its socio-economic development including their effect on basic commodity prices.

It urged member states to continue to monitor the situation and provide an enabling environment for agricultural stakeholders including farmers with surplus grain and vegetables to facilitate access to those in need.

Further, the summit noted the multifaceted and cascading impact of the El Niño induced drought and floods across multiple sectors, including agriculture and livelihood security, food security, nutrition, health, water, and energy, and called for coordinated, integrated, and harmonised interventions to address the adverse impact of El Niño.

"Summit received a report on the impact of disasters in the region and expressed concern over the humanitarian situation brought about by El Niño-induced drought and floods, which has affected over 61 million people," read the summit communique.

It added: "Summit launched the SADC Regional Humanitarian Appeal of at least US\$5.5 billion, aimed at augmenting domestic resources of the affected Member States, including efforts for resource mobilisation from national, regional, and international partners in response to the impacts of El Niño induced drought and floods."

In April, the Advocates for the Supremacy of the Constitution, popularly known as SECTION 2, a legally registered NGO in Lesotho dedicated to advocating for the marginalised and the

impoverished masses wrote an open letter to Matekane requesting him to consider the implementation of a food subsidy program for Basotho, "in response to the exorbitantly high prices that a significant portion of our population cannot afford".

SECTION 2 stated that according to the World Food Program (WFP)'s Lesotho Annual Country Report 2023, published on 2 April 2024, Lesotho remains one of the most unequal countries globally.

"Nearly half of our population (49.7 percent) lives below the food poverty line, with a stark rural-urban divide in poverty distribution, affecting over 80 percent of the poor residing in rural areas," it said.

"Of particular concern are our children, as highlighted in the same report, where 65 percent are classified as multi-dimensionally poor, and over a quarter are orphans," it added.

The group further told Matekane that Lesotho faces the adverse effects of climate change, leading to increased frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts, soil erosion, and reduced soil fertility, significantly impacting livelihoods, incomes, food security, and the country's agriculture-based economy.

It explained that food insecurity persists as a significant challenge, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups such as children, women, individuals living with HIV/AIDS, persons with disabilities, unemployed youth, and rural dwellers, as emphasised by the WFP.

"We firmly believe that implementing a food subsidy program would offer much-needed relief to the hundreds of thousands of Basotho grappling with poverty, albeit belatedly," SECTION 2 said.

"Despite the monumental challenges facing our national finances, providing affordable food to the impoverished masses would be a profound and welcomed relief, regardless of potential impacts on other sectors," it added.

In a bid to provide immediate relief, the European Union (EU) earlier this month announced a contribution of €200,000 (approximately LSL 4,030,000) in humanitarian funding to support the most vulnerable and affected families in Lesotho, which have been severely impacted by El Niño-related drought and parched crop fields.

EU said this funding would be used by the Lesotho Red Cross Society to deliver critical assistance to over 2,500 families across four of the hardest-hit districts: Maseru, Mohale's Hoek, Qacha's Nek, and Quthing.

The assistance includes cash grants to 2,500 vulnerable families to alleviate the impact of soaring food prices, agricultural inputs and seeds, such as maize and beans, for planting in the summer, and training for community-based farmer groups on food preservation and climate-smart agriculture.

It also includes the rehabilitation and/or construction of water facilities within affected communities and an awareness campaign to educate communities on water treatment techniques and effective water management practices.

"This funding is part of the EU's overall contribution to the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)," the EU said.

"The EU's support aims to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the severe drought and promote resilience in the face of climate-related disasters," it concluded.

# OPINION

## Matekane denies that people have right to food

- *Denies that the lack of food poses a threat to life*
- *Says the government has no duty to provide food for its people*

Ntsoaki Motaung



Samuel Matekane, Prime Minister of Lesotho

There is no right to food and the government has no duty to provide food for its people, Prime Minister Ntsoakoane Samuel Matekane told the High Court.

"It is denied that there is a right to food. I further deny that the right to life is inclusive of emotional, intellectual, or spiritual needs. The right to life literally pertains to non-deprivation of one's life, which I must add may be deprived as captured in Section 5 of the Constitution," Matekane stated in an answering affidavit.

He was responding to a constitutional challenge initiated by the Christian Advocates and Ambassadors Association, which aims to compel the government to implement food subsidies following the recent price increases of maize meal.

According to the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the right to food, people indeed have the right to food.

The right to food is defined as the right to have regular, permanent, and unrestricted access—either directly or by means of financial purchases—to adequate and sufficient food corresponding to cultural traditions and ensuring a fulfilling and dignified life free of fear.

This definition aligns with General Comment No. 12 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which states that "the right to adequate food is realized when every man, wom-

an, and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement."

The committee further emphasises that "the right to adequate food should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense equating it with a minimum package of calories, proteins, and other specific nutrients."

"The right to adequate food will have to be realised progressively. However, States have a core obligation to take the necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger even in times of natural or other disasters," the Special Rapporteur explains.

States have an obligation to fulfill (provide) the right directly when individuals or groups cannot, for reasons beyond their control, enjoy the right to adequate food by their means. This also applies to victims of natural or other disasters.

In his answering affidavit, Matekane also denied that the lack of food poses a threat to life.

"Life is not dependent only on food as there are other contributory factors," he said. "I vehemently deny that a person who has access to food leads a healthy life. One can have access to food and still live an unhealthy life," he added.

Matekane further "vehemently" denied that the government has a duty to

provide food for its people.

"It is noted, however, that Section 25 indeed realises that the government, depending on or subject to the limit of its economic capacity and development, may progressively realise the principles as appear under Chapter III," he said.

He added that he was also not aware of any law which provides that food prices cannot in law be permitted to rise.

Chapter III of the Constitution lists principles of state policy which form part of the public policy of Lesotho.

These principles, however, are not enforceable by any court but, subject to the limits of the economic capacity and development of Lesotho, guide the authorities and agencies of Lesotho, and other public authorities, in the performance of their functions with a view to achieving progressively, by legislation or otherwise, the full realization of these principles.

Matekane informed the court that around November 2023, the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) predicted poor rainfall performance attributable to El-Nino, which affected most of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

Because of these predictions, the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) invited relevant stakeholders like the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security,

and Nutrition, Ministry of Health, and some international organisations to discuss the predictions to reduce risks involved and emerging ones, and as an early warning tool to the country pertaining to various shocks like droughts, heavy rains, and snow.

"DMA, therefore, convened a plenary meeting to address interventions to curb the situation as predicted by the LMS. It was during this meeting that the plenary agreed that the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) conducts an assessment," he said.

He narrated that this committee conducts its study or assessment every year during the last week of May, but the study was conducted earlier due to the predictions by LMS.

"It is also important to highlight to the Court that this study is conducted in three phases. The first phase is the collection of data and this is where LVAC goes to the communities wherein the Chief, Community Councillor, and other prominent people are interviewed to solicit information about the livelihood of the people, and the said households being interviewed as a means of corroboration follows this," he said.

The second phase involves analysing the collected data, and the third and last phase is issuing a report to the government with recommendations.

"It is equally important to inform the court that the basis of this study is to determine the prevailing situation, that is, to ascertain the livelihood of the people, the level of shock, hazards, or occurrences. This study informs the direction that the government has to take, which may include food subsidies, food parcels/items, or the declaration of a state of emergency," he said.

He told the court that phase one has been completed and that LVAC is on phase two, which is the analysis stage, and LVAC, as its mandate, is analyzing the data which will be followed by the report.

"As stated earlier again, it is only after the issuance of the report that the government can elect to subsidize, declare a state of emergency, or give food parcels depending on the situation that is backed by the report.

"The position is clear, therefore, that before the said process, the government cannot make any decision regarding either subsidizing maize meal or declaring a state of emergency. It has to make an informed decision based on empirical evidence.

"Lastly, I want to be candid with the Honourable Court and contend that as of now, I am not in a position to state clearly whether the government will subsidize food or not. This will be dependent on the report, which I must hasten to add will determine if the government will be in a position to subsidize or not," Matekane concluded.



# FEATURE

## Silent scars: Surviving school punishment

*"He stepped on my chest and neck... He said, 'Because I love you.'"*

**Mpho's story sheds light on the painful reality of corporal punishment in Lesotho.**

**Nicole Tau**

Winter mornings in Lesotho bite deep. That August day, the cold crept into 12-year-old Mpho's bones as he rose at 5:30 am, preparing for school like any other day. He boiled water for his bath, wolfed down a quick breakfast of homemade bread and Oros, of course, and set out into the morning chill, unaware that this day would mark a painful turning point in his young life.

As the 7th-grade class buzzed with early morning chatter, Mpho's classmate taunted him, "Halala," he teased. "You didn't finish your notes. I wonder what Sir's going to do to you..."

Mpho's right hand still throbbed from a previous punishment, making it difficult to complete his notes, but he knew his classmate was right. The teacher's wrath was unforgiving. He had every reason to worry.

When the teacher called for notebooks, Mpho, desperately, scribbled down as much as he could, hoping to escape attention, but it was no use. The teacher demanded Mpho bring him his notes.

Trembling, Mpho walked to the front of the class. The teacher compared his incomplete work with another student's and then called Mpho to follow him.

Quietly, the teacher led him to the computer lab where grade one students were busy with their lesson, now watching.

"He asked me to bend down and hold a metal rod-like object on the floor," Mpho said.

Mpho hesitated. The rod was too low. Instead, he reached for the wall, but the teacher barked at him again. Reluctantly, Mpho bent down and grasped the rod. The two blows came quick and sharp, the red hosepipe stinging his back. He yelped in pain, pleading for mercy, but it only fueled the teacher's fury.

"He demanded that I put my head between his thighs," said Mpho.

Mpho refused, gripping the wall, until two slaps landed on his face, forcing him to comply. Humiliated, he crouched between the teacher's thighs, trying to breathe through the panic. But that was not enough, as he pushed Mpho down on the floor and whipped him again across his buttocks.

The teacher then forced him to the floor, pinning him down with his shoe, and pressing hard on Mpho's neck and chest.

With other students out at lunch, the teacher remained, standing over Mpho like a shadow. He picked up the stick again, and asked, "Do you know why I'm doing this?"

"No, sir," Mpho whispered.

**"It's because I love you. If I didn't love you, I wouldn't do this."**

The twisted words hung heavy in the air as the teacher ordered Mpho to crouch between his legs once more. But this time, something in Mpho snapped. When the teacher reached for the hose-

pipe, Mpho wrenched free, grabbed the pipe, and hurled it toward the chalkboard. His defiance earned him two sharp slaps across the face, and just like that, the fight drained out of him.

Falling to his knees, Mpho waited for the next strike, for the blows to rain down, but they never came. The teacher, seemingly satisfied with his domination, left him alone.

**"Our children are our greatest treasure. They are our future. Those who abuse them tear at the fabric of our society and weaken our nation." - Nelson Mandela.**

When the incident reached social media, headlines focused on the teacher. However, public reactions revealed deeper divides in attitudes toward corporal punishment.

A post titled "Look at the Teacher that Assaulted the Child" generated over 200 comments, with most condemning the abuse. Some called for the teacher's dismissal, with one commenter writing, "I think the teacher should be behind bars... or he will kill children."

While 84 percent of comments condemned the teacher, calling for dismissal, a small but vocal 16 percent sympathised, suggesting mental health issues or blaming the child.

Even among those critical of the teacher, many still supported corporal punishment in general, only drawing a line between discipline and outright abuse.

Reports from parents and former students revealed that this teacher's behaviour was not an isolated incident, revealing a culture of silence and complicity in schools where such violent outbursts had long been ignored.

**"The child is not a vessel to be filled, but a flame to be ignited." - Maria Montessori.**

A 2024 UNICEF survey revealed that 76 percent of children aged 1-14 in Lesotho have experienced violent discipline, including physical punishment or psychological aggression.

Despite Lesotho having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1992) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999), which mandate protection from all forms of violence, corporal punishment remains entrenched in schools, defended as a cultural norm.

After the brutal beating, Mpho was forced to sit through the rest of the school day in excruciating pain. His suffering went unnoticed, or worse, ignored. By the time the final bell rang, he could barely carry his school bag. His hour-long walk home stretched even longer as he walked under the weight of his injuries.

His mother, \*Maneo, noticed the lash marks running down his back to his buttocks.

"The teacher had beaten him so badly," she said, her voice trembling. "I didn't know what I was supposed to do."

When Mpho complained of chest pain and difficulty walking the following day, \*Maneo rushed him to the hospital, where shocked nurses immediately called doc-

tors to assess the severity of his injuries. Mpho was admitted for monitoring, placed on a drip, and fitted with a catheter.

**"The most important thing we can do is instill in our children a sense of hope and possibility." - Michelle Obama.**

Psychotherapist \*Makamohelo Malimabe explains that corporal punishment can have lasting effects on a child's brain development.

During critical developmental years, children may normalise such abuse, internalising violence as part of their reality.

"Corporal punishment and physical abuse are two sides of the same coin," Malimabe says. "No matter the intention behind it, the harm is the same."

She challenges the cultural defence of corporal punishment, drawing a powerful comparison to domestic abuse.

"If a spouse slapped their partner, we'd call it abuse. So why, when a teacher beats a child for being late, is it called corporal punishment?"

Malimabe argues that terms like "corporal punishment" soften the harshness of the act, making it harder to grasp the real harm.

"We need to stop calling it 'corporal punishment' and start calling it what it really is, violence. Adults are taking out their frustrations on defenceless children."

**"I raise my voice not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard." - Malala Yousafzai.**

Lesotho's legal community is growing increasingly concerned about the gap between law and practice when it comes to corporal punishment.

Advocate Thato Seheri, a human rights lawyer, points out that the **Education Act of 2010** and the **Children's Protection and Welfare Act (CPW) 2011** remain vague on the issue, leading to widespread confusion.

"The law is silent on corporal punishment, so people interpret it in various ways. We need a clear court directive to establish whether it's prohibited or not," advocate Seheri says.

A local prosecutor echoes this sentiment, explaining that the courts are left to interpret what constitutes "reasonable chastisement."

"It can be argued both ways, and the best argument wins... The burden falls on the shoulders of the courts to interpret what the reasonable chastisement is."

The prosecutor also wishes parents would file civil claims against teachers who assault their children.

"In criminal cases, even if the teacher is fined, the money goes to the government, not the victims. In civil matters, families can claim compensation for the emotional and physical damage they've endured."

Advocate Seheri stresses that the solution begins with a clear legal **prohibition** of corporal punishment.

The Ministry of Education and Training seems disconnected from the ongoing reality of corporal punishment in schools.



Principal Secretary Ratšiu Majara, however, offers a progressive stance, advocating for a shift in how children are disciplined.

"We need to engage students when they perform poorly, not beat them," he said. Majara believes the ministry must focus on sensitising parents to non-violent forms of discipline and holding schools accountable for teacher behaviour.

Parents' stories highlight systemic issues. Most only report corporal punishment when their children suffer visible injuries, and many cases stall at the police station. Some families, lacking funds, cannot even gather proper documentation, while others face delays in the courts, with cases dragging on for months or even years.

In Mpho's case, the teacher charged with assault was released on bail for M1,500. The case, which began in August, is not set to proceed until 2025. Although the teacher eventually resigned, most teachers in similar cases remain in their positions.

Human rights bodies have repeatedly called for action, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its 2018 report. While corporal punishment is banned in Lesotho's schools, the Committee urged the government to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all environments and establish safe reporting mechanisms for children.

The Committee also recommended training programs for parents and teachers to promote non-violent discipline, along with public awareness campaigns to shift societal attitudes.

Advocate Seheri concludes with a call for stronger punishment for those found guilty of corporal punishment.

"The penalties should be severe enough to send a clear message that corporal punishment is indeed prohibited."

**\*Names have been changed to protect the identity of children involved.**

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**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.



Transafrica Life Insurance Company Ltd

### VACANCY

#### Applications are invited for the position of Chief Executive Officer of Transafrica Life Insurance Co. Ltd. in Maseru.

##### Qualifications and Experience:

- In depth sales experience with the aim to drive sales at all levels as a main objective.
- A degree in business administration or relevant qualification and experience in the Insurance industry will be an advantage.
- Knowledge of Insurance policies, procedures and systems.
- Central Bank requirements of Insurance companies.
- Knowledge of the Insurance act.
- Personnel/Staff management at all levels.
- Performance driven.

##### Duties/Responsibilities:

- Report to the board of directors and other executives to establish short-term objectives and long-range goals, and related plans and policies.
- Presents regular reports on the status of the company's operations to the board of directors.
- Reviews the financial results of all operations, comparing them with the company's objectives and taking appropriate measures to correct unsatisfactory performance and results.
- Ensures the company's compliance with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and standards.
- Serves as the company's representative to the board of directors, shareholders, employees, customers, the government, and the public.

Interested candidates should send their applications along with a CV and certified copies of certificates to [gerhard@transafricagroup.co.za](mailto:gerhard@transafricagroup.co.za) or [buddy@transafricagroup.co.za](mailto:buddy@transafricagroup.co.za) before 31st December 2024.



NALEDI FUNERAL PLANNERS

### VACANCY

**Position Title:** Sales Officer  
**Reports to:** Sales Manager  
**Location:** Botha-Bothe

##### Job Overview

We are looking for a motivated and results-driven Sales Officer to join our growing team. The individual in this role will be responsible for selling company's products and services, including acquiring new customers, managing client relationships and meeting sales targets. We are seeking a candidate who is persuasive, energetic, and ready to go the extra mile to ensure customer satisfaction.

##### Roles and Responsibilities

- Identify and pursue new business opportunities through prospecting, cold calling and networking
- Monitor and analyse sales metrics, performance, and market trends
- Work hand in hand with the marketing team to ensure that the company has a strong presence and is reaching the targeted client base
- Work with a team of sales representatives and assist in selling products and services to prospective customers and advise on purchase options
- Establish and maintain strong relationships with clients and key stakeholders
- Attend trade shows, and networking events to generate leads and promote brand awareness
- Recruit, train and supervise the sales team
- Provide sales and expense reports on sales performance

##### Minimum Requirements

- Degree in Marketing and/or Sales or related field is preferred with a minimum of

2 two years proven work experience as a sales representative.

- Diploma in Marketing and/or Sales or related field with a minimum of 5 years proven work experience as a sales representative
- Excellent knowledge of MS Office
- Highly motivated and target driven with a proven track record in sales
- Excellent selling, communication and negotiation skills
- Valid driver's license with a minimum of two years driving experience
- Prioritizing, time management and organizational skills
- Ability to create and deliver presentations tailored to the audience needs
- Relationship management skills and openness to feedback

##### Application/Reply Instructions

- Application letters accompanied by detailed CV's, certified copies of academic certificates and transcripts in PDF format are to be e-mailed to [applications@naledifp.co.ls](mailto:applications@naledifp.co.ls)
- Applications received after the closing date will not be considered
- Only short-listed candidates will be responded to,
- Selection interviews will be held at the date, time and place to be determined by NFP
- Short listed candidates will be required to authenticate information provided in their application
- If you have not received communication within 14 days from the closing date, kindly consider your application unsuccessful.

**Closing Date:** 8th January, 2025 at 13:00 hours.



TSEBO SOLUTIONS GROUP

### VACANCY

#### Catering Supervisor (Lesotho) talent pool

##### Duties and Responsibilities

- Setting and management of service delivery standards.
- Lead, motivate, train and develop a team of staff.
- Implement and maintain operational controls in line within budgetary requirements.
- Ensure quality of food preparation, presentation and service is up to Tsebo Catering standards by meeting all quality star grading standards.
- Ensure all Tsebo Catering Solutions policies and procedures are complied with.
- Daily HR and IR issues (including training, development & performance management).
- Analyse and pre-empt client needs and possible complaints.
- Take responsibility for all functions by organising, preparing & co-ordinating.
- Management of all administration, finances, debtors, budgets, etc.
- Process paperwork.
- Monthly P & L.
- Relationship building with the client and customers on a daily basis (essential).
- Must be able to work long hours and over weekends should there be a need.
- Stay abreast of latest food trends and best practices.

##### Skills and competencies

- Attention to detail
- Client service orientated
- Business management principles
- Excellent people skills
- Strong judgement and problem-solving skills

##### Qualifications

- 1-2 years previous experience within a commercial / mining establishment.
- A minimum of 2 years management experience in catering.
- National Senior Certificate (Matric) and relevant qualification relating to Hospitality Management
- Computer literacy MS Excel and MS Word
- Financial acumen
- Drivers licence & own vehicle

To apply please visit: <https://tsebo.erecruit.co/candidat.../Jobs/View/TSE241204-10>

Closing date: 29 December 2024



REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST  
 (CONSULTING SERVICES - INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT)

#### Development of the Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy for Lesotho Country Coordinating Mechanism

##### Background

The Lesotho Country Coordinating Mechanism (LCCM) was established in response to requirements and recommendations of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS and Tuberculosis "Global Fund") as a governance and oversight mechanism for the mobilization and use of grants from the Global Fund.

The purpose of the Global Fund is to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (herein referred to as The Global Fund) is to attract and disburse additional resources through a new public-private partnership that will make a sustainable and significant contribution to the reduction of infections, illness and death, thereby mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis

In line with this commitment, LCCM seeks to develop a robust Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy to protect its staff, members and the stakeholders that they interact with from sexual exploitation, Abuse and Harassment.

##### Deliverables

The Consultant is expected to deliver the following outputs:

- A comprehensive PSEAH policy tailored to the specific needs and context of the LCCM.
- Guidelines and procedures for the implementation of the PSEAH policy include reporting mechanisms and support services for survivors of abuse.
- A final report documenting the process of developing the PSEAH policy, including a summary of key findings and stakeholder feedback.

##### Timeline

The consultancy is expected to be completed within 10 working days with regular check-in meetings with the Secretariat to track progress.

##### Qualifications

The consultant should possess the following qualifications and experience:

- Extensive experience in developing PSEAH policies for non-governmental organizations or civil society Organizations.
- In-depth knowledge of international best practices and standards related to PSEAH
- Strong communication and facilitation skills with the ability to engage effectively with a diverse range of stakeholders.

##### How to Apply:

All those interested in applying for this consultancy should submit the following by 14:30hrs, 10th January 2024 to the following email address; [ccmsec@ecoweb.co.ls](mailto:ccmsec@ecoweb.co.ls) cc [ccmoso@ecoweb.co.ls](mailto:ccmoso@ecoweb.co.ls) or hand deliver to:

LCCM Secretariat  
 4th Floor, MGC Office Park Corner Pope John Paul II and  
 Mpilo Boulevard,  
 P.O. Box 7178, Maseru 100  
 Tel: (+266) 22325544

For further information, including the responsibilities of the Consultant to develop PSEAH Policy can be obtained on the LCCM Website: <https://ccm.org>

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.**



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

**Payments methods:** | **Account: Standard Bank, Mpesa : 3551 & Ecocash: 92669 9080001310220 | Newsday Media**

**Contact details: 50920676 OR 62425157 (WhatsApp)**

**Newsday**  
...pacing standards

Sorry, we're  
**CLOSED**

As the festive season approaches, we at **Newsday** would like to express our deepest gratitude for your unwavering support throughout the year. You are the heart of our journey, and it's been a privilege to keep you informed, inspired, and connected.

Please note that our team will be on Christmas holiday from **20th December 2024** and will resume all services on **6th January 2025**.

We wish you a joyous Christmas and a prosperous New Year! See you in 2026 with more stories that matter.

**Warm regards,**  
The Newsday Team

**More to share**  
**with our tasty treats**

Select something delicious with our iconic Champion Toffees, Manhattan, Mister Sweet, Super C Sweets, and Candy Tops Eclairs. Packed full of flavour and perfect value for money.



# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



# Remembering Lesotho's fallen stars

Staff Reporter

His music painted vivid pictures of life's harsh realities, resonating deeply with those who identified with his raw, unfiltered depictions of the Basotho experience.

A devoted father and husband, Khopolo's personal life often bled into his artistry. His songs were peppered with references to his daughter, Mahali, and his wife, 'Mamahali, demonstrating his love and devotion to his family.

In an industry often criticised for glorifying toxic masculinity, Khopolo stood out as a proud and present father figure, even if this side of him was overshadowed by the controversies surrounding his

ing his music. One of his latest songs, "Let-satsi la Botlokot-sebe", transcended the Famo genre, going

viral on platforms like TikTok and earning him invitations to mainstream events such as Cleketseng in March.

His performance there symbolised a rare moment of unity, bridging cultural divides and bringing Famo closer to mainstream audiences. Tragically, Khopolo was gunned down in Masowe I, Maseru, alongside Pulane Macheli, a radio presenter, on July 20, 2024. He was 42.

**Malome Vector: A Rising Star Dimmed Too Soon**

Bokang Moleli, known to the world as Malome Vector, embodied a differ-

ent kind of artistry, one that seamlessly blended afro-pop, R&B, soul, and afro beats. Born and raised in Roma, Mase-Malome Vec-

began his journey as boy before international In 2020, he South Africa's entertainment, and his debut album, "Kara-bo", catapulted him to stardom, debuting at number one on iTunes South Africa. His 2024 EP, "1964", showcased his versatility, cementing his place as one of the most sought-after artists in the region.

Despite his South African fame, Malome Vector's roots in Lesotho remained central to his identity. His untimely death in a car accident on July 24, 2024, while traveling back to Lesotho, shocked fans across the continent.

At just 32, his passing was a devastating reminder of life's fragility. His influence extended far beyond his music, as evidenced by Google's 2024 Year in Search, where he topped South Africa's list of most-searched musicians.

The deaths of Khopolo and Malome Vector represent not only personal tragedies but also significant cultural losses for Lesotho.

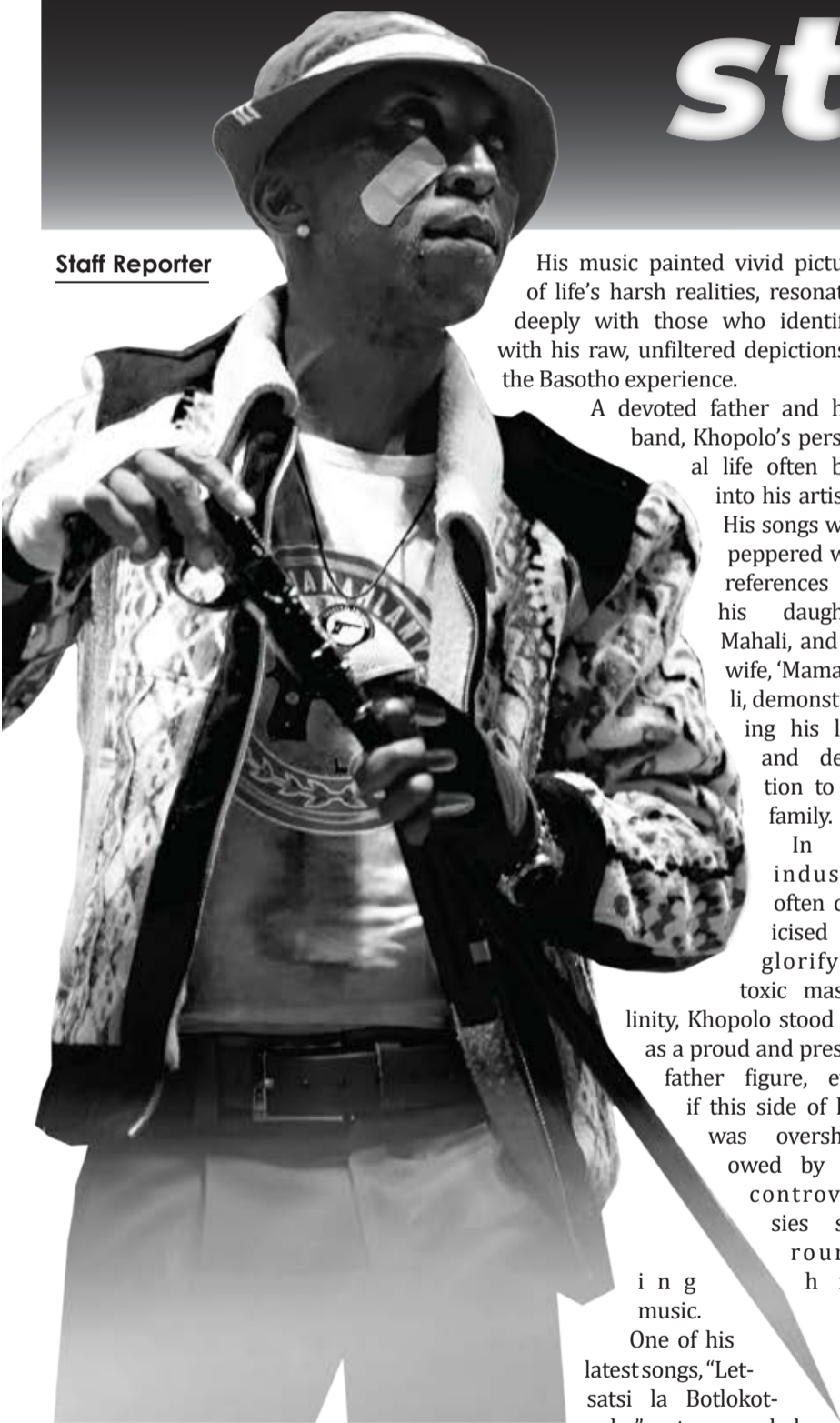
These artists were more than entertainers; they were symbols of the resilience, creativity, and unique spirit of Basotho. Their legacies will continue to

inspire future generations of artists to tell their stories, push boundaries, and connect with audiences in profound ways.

As we bid farewell to 2024, we remember these stars and others we lost in the arts community. May their contributions to music and culture never be forgotten, and may their stories inspire a renewed commitment to nurturing and celebrating the incredible talent that Lesotho has to offer.

**Rest in Power, Khopolo and Malome Vector.**

Your voices may be silenced, but your melodies will echo through eternity.



As the curtain falls on 2024, we reflect on a year marked by immeasurable loss for Lesotho's music and arts scene. Two of the country's most beloved artists, Khopolo Kholuoe and Malome Vector, passed away in tragic circumstances, leaving an indelible void in the hearts of fans and the broader creative community.

**Khopolo Kholuoe (Lisuo): A Voice of the People**

Khopolo Kholuoe, affectionately known as Lisuo, was not just a Famo musician; he was a storyteller, a cultural icon, and a voice for the struggling masses of Lesotho.

# Celebrating Vodacom Lesotho's enduring commitment to entertainment

## Arts

sotho a chance to connect with their culture while enjoying world-class entertainment.

Then there's the Vodacom All White Fashion Festival, a December tradition that has grown into one of Lesotho's most glamorous events. Held at the iconic Taba Bosiu Cultural Village, the festival celebrates the creativity of Basotho designers and the elegance of local fashion enthusiasts.

This year's fifth edition showcased Voda-



VCL All White Fashion Festival

Over the years, Vodacom Lesotho has proven to be more than just a telecommunications provider. It has become a cornerstone of Lesotho's entertainment landscape, supporting and uplifting local talent, events, and cultural experiences.

Through its unwavering commitment to fostering creativity, Vodacom Lesotho has not only entertained but also inspired generations of Basotho.

The journey began with Vodacom's quiet yet impactful backing of the iconic Miss PC FM beauty pageant, a staple of Lesotho's cultural calendar.

From 2005, Vodacom remained a key sponsor behind the scenes. However, in 2009, the brand took center stage as the pageant was rebranded to Miss Vodacom-PC FM.

This collaboration injected significant funds into the competition, elevating its stature and providing a platform for young Basotho women to showcase their beauty, intelligence, and ambitions.

The 2009 winner, Karabelo Mokoallo, became a symbol of what could be achieved when corporate sponsorship aligned with local aspirations.

Although the pageant was discontinued over a decade ago, its legacy remains etched in the memories of many, and Vodacom's role in that legacy is undeniable.

Vodacom's contributions to the entertainment industry extend far beyond beauty pageants. Who could forget the electrifying Vodacom Summa Feva?

This festival, once Lesotho's biggest musical extravaganza, brought together leading local and international performers. For

years, it was the highlight of the summer, uniting music lovers in an unparalleled celebration of artistry and culture.

Though the event ended in 2017, its echoes still resonate as a testament to Vodacom's dedication to fostering musical expression. It wasn't just about music; it was about creating an experience that united communities and gave Basotho an event they could be proud of.

In 2012, Vodacom launched the M1 million Vodacom Lesotho Superstar competition, an initiative that gave talented Basotho singers and dancers the opportunity to step into the spotlight.

Later rebranded as Vodacom Lesotho Superstar Step-Up, this competition was more than a contest, it was a chance for young performers to dream big and take their first

steps toward professional careers.

The initiative was a lifeline for many aspiring artists, offering them a platform to hone their craft and gain the recognition they deserved. Through this competition, Vodacom reinforced its belief in the power of art to transform lives and communities.

While some initiatives have come and gone, Vodacom Lesotho has not slowed down. Today, it sponsors two major events that have become annual highlights.

First is Cleketseng, an outdoor extravaganza held every March at the foot of Majara Plateau in Berea. This unique event combines the magic of camping with live music, delicious food, and an unforgettable atmosphere under the stars.

It's a testament to Vodacom's ability to blend tradition and modernity, offering Ba-

com's ongoing commitment to elevating the arts and empowering local creators.

What sets Vodacom Lesotho apart is its understanding of the power of entertainment to shape society. Even when others have turned their backs on the industry, Vodacom has stayed the course, supporting initiatives that bring joy, nurture talent, and strengthen community bonds.

From beauty pageants to music festivals, from dance competitions to fashion showcases, Vodacom has been a consistent ally to Basotho artists and audiences alike. This support is not just financial; it is a statement of belief in the potential of Lesotho's entertainment industry.

Vodacom's involvement has provided a platform for artists to shine, given audiences unforgettable moments, and built bridges between creativity and opportunity.

As we reflect on this legacy, it's clear that Vodacom Lesotho is more than a sponsor, it is a partner in progress. By investing in Lesotho's creative industries, Vodacom has helped unlock potential, nurture dreams, and create unforgettable memories.

These contributions are not merely acts of corporate responsibility; they are acts of faith in the spirit of Basotho and their ability to innovate and inspire. Vodacom has shown us that entertainment is not just about enjoyment—it is about empowerment, connection, and the celebration of who we are.

Here's to Vodacom Lesotho: a brand that not only connects us through technology but also through the universal language of entertainment. May its contributions continue to enrich our lives for years to come.



VCL Summa Feva

## SPORTS

# A year to remember, a legacy restored

## Staff Reporters

As 2024 draws to a close, Lioli FC stand tall as the reigning champions of the Vodacom Premier League, a title that eluded them for nearly a decade.

Their extraordinary triumph this year has not only revitalised the pride of the Bera-based club but also provided football fans with a season of drama, tension, and unmatched excitement.

Lioli's road to glory was anything but straightforward.

From a lackluster ninth-place finish in the previous season to a title-deciding draw against Matlama FC on the final day, this was a tale of resilience, strategy, and belief.

Under the astute leadership of Motheo Mohapi, Lioli proved that championships are won not just by star-studded squads but by teams with heart, grit, and unity.

Matlama FC deserve credit for pushing the new champions to the brink, keeping fans on the edge of their seats until the final whistle of the season.

The neck-and-neck battle between the two giants showcased the vibrancy of Lesotho's premier football competition. But in the end, it was Lioli who mastered the art of tactical football, leveraging their strengths and outsmarting their rivals.

Coach Mohapi's philosophy of molding "ordinary players" into a cohesive unit with a shared purpose is a blueprint for success that goes beyond football. His unconventional approach, urging players to "give me their bodies so that I give them my football intelligence," proved transformative.



The team's ability to maintain composure under pressure and execute their game plan with precision was the hallmark of their campaign.

Lioli's success in 2024 has restored a sense of pride not only to their fans but also to Basotho football as a whole. For a club of their stature, a nine-year championship drought was an anomaly.

This victory signified a return to the elite and cemented their legacy as one of the country's football powerhouses.

Looking ahead, 2025 will undoubtedly bring fresh challenges and opportunities.

Will Lioli defend their crown and establish a new era of dominance?

Or will another team rise to dethrone them?

For now, as we reflect on the year, one truth stands undisputed: 2024 was the year of Lioli, a year when perseverance, teamwork, and tactical brilliance were rewarded with the ultimate prize.

Congratulations to Lioli FC, the kings of the Vodacom Premier League!

## Michelle Tau's Paris journey: Foundation for greater triumphs



## Staff Reporters

As 2024 winds to a close, we pause to celebrate not only the victories but also the valiant efforts that fuel our dreams.

Among these stories is the inspiring journey of Michelle Tau, Lesotho's taekwondo star, who gave her all at the Paris Olympic Games.

While she may have fallen short of clinching a medal, her performance in the women's -49kg category was a testament to resilience, determination, and the unyielding spirit of Basotho.

Making her Olympic debut at 27, Tau

stepped onto the grandest stage in sports and faced formidable competition. Her encounter with Iran's Nematzadeh Mobina in the round of 16 showcased both her skill and her courage.

Though the match ended in defeat, Tau's presence among the world's best taekwondo athletes is a triumph in itself, reminding us of the vast potential that lies within our athletes.

It is easy to view Olympic campaigns through the lens of medals alone, but Tau's journey symbolises much more. She carried the hopes of a nation, competing against the odds and proving that Lesotho belongs on the

global sporting stage.

Her participation in Paris was not the end of a story but the beginning of a new chapter.

The experience gained at this level is invaluable. Every match, every opponent, every setback serves as a stepping stone toward future success. Tau's resolve to set her sights on the Los Angeles Games in 2028 reflects the optimism and perseverance that define great athletes.

With the support of the Lesotho National Olympics Committee and the nation at large, she has four years to refine her craft, build on her strengths, and emerge even stronger.

Michelle Tau's story is one of progress, a reminder that success is not always measured by the podium but by the journey and the lessons learned along the way. Her presence in Paris ignited a spark, inspiring young Basotho to dream big and pursue their passions relentlessly.

As we close 2024, let us celebrate Michelle Tau not just for her performance, but for the hope and pride she brought to Lesotho.

Her journey reminds us that every step forward, no matter how small, brings us closer to greatness. Here's to a future where our athletes not only compete but triumph on the global stage.

Onward to Los Angeles, Michelle! Lesotho stands with you.

## A game of goals and goalposts

Ah, 2024, a year where our beloved Sports Minister Motlatsi Maqelepo took the beautiful game off the field and into the realm of corporate jargon.

He issued a noble challenge to Likuena's administrators: "Enhance the value of our national football team to attract sponsors." A call to action, or perhaps just a polite way of saying, "You've got some explaining to do."

The timing was impeccable. Likuena, buoyed by a glimmer of improved form, had ambitions of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup. But the team's impressive efforts on the field seemed to be offset by their off-field struggles, no sponsors, no stadium, no budget.

If the national football team were a reality show, this year's tagline would surely be, "Dream Big, Budget Small."

The Minister's solution? A corporate fairy tale: make Likuena so attractive that every company would beg to slap their logo on the team's kits.

Simple enough, except for one minor detail: how does one create value when the only home matches are away in South Africa? Setsoto Stadium, Lesotho's footballing mecca, remains exiled from FIFA's good graces, leaving Likuena to roam like nomads, their performances echoing in foreign lands.

But let's not forget the real star of this story: the Ministry of Sports' mighty M40,000 subsidy to LeFA. Yes, that's right, Lesotho's entire footballing future rests on a sum that might cover a decent buffet for a corporate luncheon.

Meanwhile, LeFA is burning through over M4 million hosting matches, essentially playing a game of financial limbo: how low can we go?

And what of Setsoto Stadium? Well, it's a little like that one cousin who's "working on themselves." Everyone is rooting for them, but the progress is... let's just say... glacial.

No approved facilities meant the domestic league winners missed yet another CAF tournament, a tradition so entrenched it's practically part of our sporting culture now.

Still, the Minister was optimistic. With his motivational pep talk to the administrators, he painted a picture of a future where corporates queue up to sponsor Likuena. But one can't help but wonder if his vision includes some actual investment or just well-meaning speeches.

As we wrap up 2024, we salute Likuena, not just for their grit on the field, but for their ability to navigate a footballing ecosystem that's as chaotic as a last-minute goal scramble.

Perhaps next year, the goals won't just be scored on the pitch but also in boardrooms and, dare we dream, in the heart of Setsoto Stadium.

Here's to 2025, may it bring fewer speeches, more funding, and maybe, just maybe, a home game.

27 December 2024 - 02 January 2025

ISSN: 2453-5311



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# The saga of Setsoto Stadium: A national embarrassment

## Staff Reporters

As 2024 draws to a close, Setsoto Stadium remains a glaring symbol of governmental inefficiency and unfulfilled promises.

Nearly four years after FIFA's humiliating ban rendered the facility unfit for international matches, Basotho football fans are still forced to endure the indignity of watching their national team play in foreign lands.

The unrelenting cycle of bureaucratic stalling and hollow reassurances is a shameful indictment of the priorities and capabilities of those in power.

In March, Parliament made an impassioned plea for the government to expedite the refurbishment of Setsoto, citing the need to restore national dignity.

Yet, despite an estimated budget of M4.9 million and the involvement of a reputable Netherlands-based company, progress has been virtually nonexistent.

Edel Grass, contracted to revamp the stadium, has seemingly become another victim of the government's characteristic inertia.

Prime Minister Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane's July pledge to fast-track the renovations is just the latest in a string of empty promises. Matekane's rhetoric about cooperation and urgency rings hollow against the backdrop of stalled progress and uncoordinated efforts.

Telling ministers to "report back" is no substitute for tangible results. If anything, this directive felt more like an abdication of responsibility than the decisive leadership the country

desperately needs.

Advocate Salemane Phafane (KC) of the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) has voiced his frustration, and rightly so. The government's negligence has forced LeFA to shoulder the financial burden of hosting international

matches abroad, a cost that should never have been theirs to bear.

Adding insult to injury, the Ministry of Sports delivered only 35 of the promised 50 t-shirts to LeFA, a comically inept gesture emblematic of the broader dysfunction.

The excuses are wearing thin.

For years, the government has trumpeted the socio-economic potential of sports while doing the bare minimum to nurture it.

The Finance Minister's declaration earlier this year that five sporting codes will be developed alongside tourism initiatives now seems like little more than lip service.

How can a robust sports ecosystem be built when the crown jewel of national sports facilities lies in ruins?

Setsoto Stadium debacle is not just about football, it's a microcosm of a broader failure to prioritise public needs over political posturing. The absence of accountability, coupled with a blatant disregard for timelines, has eroded trust and tarnished Lesotho's reputation on the international stage.

Basotho deserve more than broken promises and symbolic gestures. They deserve action, competence, and a government that delivers on its commitments.

As we approach 2025, the question remains: Will Setsoto Stadium ever be more than a monument to squandered opportunities? Or will it continue to stand as a testament to a nation held back by its leaders' inability to get the basics right?



Setsoto Stadium

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