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# Apollo Hospital bans Basotho patients over unpaid millions

...PS health shuns the ban saying they last referred a patient in 2022

## Lerato Matheka

India's prestigious Apollo Hospital has officially banned Basotho patients from accessing its services due to the Lesotho government's failure to settle medical bills totalling millions of Maloti over the past two years.

This development exposes the cracks in Lesotho's healthcare system, highlight its reliance on foreign medical facilities and the mounting pressure of an escalating cancer burden.

The partnership between Lesotho and Apollo Hospital dates back to 2015 when agreements were established to provide advanced treatments for Basotho patients, particularly in oncology.

The collaboration included patient referrals and medical training for professionals, cementing a mutual relationship that promised improved healthcare outcomes for Lesotho.

However, this relationship began to unravel after the most recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed in September 2022, failed to be honoured.

Sources within the Lesotho Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed that the current government has refused to engage Apollo Hospital to discuss the unpaid debts or renew the agreements.

"The government's stance is that the MOU signed by former Minister Sekatle and Apollo's Dr. Harinder Singh Sidhu lacked cabinet approval, rendering it invalid," said a senior official.

Consequently, efforts to rekindle discussions have been stymied, leaving patients without access to Apollo's advanced medical care.

In 2023, a senior official revealed that a young child in dire need of a liver transplant was denied treatment at Apollo.

"The child's case became a bureaucratic nightmare, with the government ministries and the embassy in India at odds over who should bear the costs because the hospital demanded upfront payment for the treatment required. Eventually, the embassy paid upfront with a promise of reimbursement, a promise yet to be fulfilled. This incident underscores the government's inability to navigate life-saving healthcare needs effectively," the source said.

Apollo's blacklist of Lesotho stems from more than just unpaid medical bills.

According to an official at the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Lesotho has accumulated grievances with multiple suppliers, tarnishing its reputation globally.

"It is not just Apollo that has stopped doing business with the country. They have a reputation of not paying suppliers and as an organisation, we have also placed it on the red. With our role of looking for opportunities for the country's business community, Lesotho and Some SADC countries I cannot mention have serious problems of corruption and incompetence, so they have been placed on the blacklist and any Indian company that does business with it is at their own risk," the official revealed.



Lesotho has spent approximately M130 million (\$7 million annually) to send patients to South Africa and India for treatments in the previous years, with Apollo offering significantly lower costs compared to South African hospitals.

The health ministry had previously revealed that a patient's treatment in South Africa costs between M300 000 to M500 000 while each patient was charged between M70 000 to M100 000 at Apollo Hospital.

Despite this, the government's unwillingness to resolve the financial dispute with Apollo now means even higher costs for referrals to South Africa, exacerbating the strain on an already overburdened health budget.

The MOU between Lesotho Apollo was predominantly around cancer treatment with special cases of illnesses that require technology not available in Lesotho.

Since the existence of the MOU over 100 Basotho Cancer patients have been treated in Apollo.

Maneo Molieli Ntene, Principal Secretary (PS) for the Ministry of Health, shunned the allegations of medical debt saying the hospital needs to contact the ministry.

"I have no information of a pending debt with Apollo nor the fact that we have patients who are banned.

"We haven't referred any patient to Apollo since 2022 because we simply can't afford their referrals. We are still battling with a huge medical bill from South Africa, we are trying by all means to save costs," Ntene said.

She explained that the liver patient was not a government's referral, however, the government ended up being involved because the patient was in a foreign land.

Cancer remains a leading cause of death in Lesotho.

According to the Global Cancer Observatory (2022), the country recorded 2,027 new cancer cases and 1,411 deaths.

Cervical cancer alone accounts for nearly 30 percent of these cases, with an incidence rate of 56.8 per 100,000 women. The lack of comprehensive cancer care within Lesotho's borders has forced thousands to seek treatment abroad.

While the Senkatana Oncology Clinic, which opened in 2022 with support from the Bris-

tol-Myers Squibb Foundation, provides chemotherapy services, it is ill-equipped to handle the rising cancer burden, and with Apollo's ban, the situation becomes even dire, leaving Basotho patients with fewer options and longer waiting periods in South Africa.

Dr. Harinder Singh Sidhu, Apollo's Vice-President for Corporate Development, expressed disappointment over the breakdown in relations but emphasised the hospital's willingness to resolve the matter.

"We have attempted numerous times to engage Lesotho's new government, but the lack of response has left us no choice but to halt services. Our doors remain open for dialogue," he said.

Despite these overtures, the Lesotho government has shown little urgency to revive the partnership. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lejone Mpotjoane, deflected responsibility, citing procedural constraints.

Mpotjoane stressed that his ministry's role was to link ministries with the world but is never part of implementations, directing this paper to the ministry of health.

"I may have details of whether there is a debt of how much, but I am not at liberty to speak and provide thorough details. The minister of health is better suited to answer all these questions, more so because the MOU between Lesotho and Apollo is with the ministry," Mpotjoane said.

Deputy Ambassador to India, Thabang Kholumo, on the other hand, confirmed that Apollo now demands upfront payments for Basotho patients, effectively barring access for those who cannot afford the costs.

Lesotho's reliance on South Africa for healthcare has created additional strain on the latter's medical system.

Thousands of Basotho patients continue to flood South African hospitals annually, adding to the pressure on their infrastructure and resources. Without access to Apollo, the demand on South African facilities is set to increase, further complicating the region's healthcare dynamics.

Last week, however, marked a historic moment for the country as the construction site for Lesotho's first-ever cancer centre was officially handed over. The ground-breaking ceremony, held on Wednesday, was attended by government officials, health-

care professionals, and members of the public.

Speaking at the event, Maneo Molieli Ntene, Principal Secretary (PS) for the Ministry of Health, highlighted the financial strain caused by referring cancer patients to South Africa citing... "Our country's funds are being eroded to South Africa through cancer treatment for Basotho," Ntene said.

"South African hospitals are even proud to state that Lesotho plays a key role in helping them reach their monetary targets, thanks to the payments made by the Lesotho government for cancer patients referred there."

She indicated that in 2015, Lesotho paid at least M145, 000 for the treatment of one cancer patient.

By 2023, this figure had risen to M220, 000.

"Due to the burden of appointments for treatment in South Africa, some of this money was paid for patients who had already passed on before they could attend their scheduled treatments," Ntene noted, underlining the urgent need for a local cancer treatment facility.

The tender for the construction of the centre has been awarded to a joint venture between Plem Construction and G.L Civils and Construction.

Dr. Kabelo Mputsoe, Clinical and Radiation Oncologist, expressed gratitude on behalf of cancer patients, calling the new centre a significant breakthrough in the country's healthcare system.

"Once the centre is completed, patients will be treated in their own country by people who better understand them," Mputsoe said.

She acknowledged that current facilities, such as the Senkatana Oncology Clinic, are inadequate for cancer treatment.

"We are currently using buildings that are not suited for cancer treatment, and it has been an ongoing struggle for years," she explained.

The idea of establishing a cancer centre in Lesotho dates back to 2012, and while progress has been slow, the centre's realisation represents a long-awaited milestone. Mputsoe also shared alarming statistics: 625 cancer cases were reported in 2023, with 750 new cases already recorded in 2024. "All types of cancers are found in Lesotho, but the most prevalent are cervical cancer, breast cancer, and prostate cancer," she said.

Experts have suggested that Lesotho's healthcare crisis requires immediate intervention with a need to prioritise domestic capacity-building to reduce dependency on foreign medical institutions.

This includes expanding oncology services, training specialists, and ensuring sustainable financing for healthcare.

Failure to address these systemic issues means, experts note, that Basotho patients will be left with dwindling options and worsening health outcomes.

As the Apollo ban highlights the fragility of Lesotho's health system, it serves as a wake-up call for policymakers to act decisively. The stakes are high, and the lives of countless Basotho depend on urgent reforms to secure a healthier future for the nation.



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# Storm over M7 million for airport refurbishment

... LSP construction under fire

**Ntsoaki Motaung**

A growing controversy has erupted surrounding the M7 million allocated for the partial refurbishment of the country's main airport, Moshoeshe I International Airport.

The project, which is intended to improve infrastructure and modernise the airport to meet international standards, has come under intense scrutiny amid claims of mismanagement and lack of transparency.

A leading construction company in Lesotho, LSP Construction, now finds itself facing scrutiny over the expenditure of M7 million on the modernisation of the airport.

The Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC), led by MP Montoeli Masoetsa, recently visited the construction site to investigate concerns about the lack of visible progress despite the significant funding.

Following a closed-door meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Public Works and LSP Construction, the PAC decided to inspect the site due to inconsistencies in the reported progress.

The committee aimed to determine how the already-approved M7 million was utilised before authorising the release of an additional M3 million.

Masoetsa expressed concern that the Principal Secretary (PS) had already issued a certificate for the M7 million and was about to approve another for M3 million. He demanded that LSP Construction demonstrate the work completed to justify the need for further funding.

Masoetsa pointed out that parliament initially approved M50 million for the airport project, but subsequent assessments

revealed a significantly higher cost of approximately M184 million. He questioned what would be the source of the additional funding.

In an interview, Masoetsa revealed that their on-site investigation found no evidence of work being performed despite the expenditure of M7 million.

He explained that parliamentarians understand that the only work undertaken was the mobilisation of construction equipment to the site, which, in their view, should be a cost borne by the contractor.

Masoetsa emphasised the need for close oversight of LSP to ensure project completion within the allotted timeframe.

He drew a concerning parallel between this situation and the delayed construction of the Palace, which, despite ongoing parliamentary funding, remains incomplete after nearly 15 years.

Masoetsa attributed this delay to the same construction company's apparent reluctance to proceed with the project.

Parliamentary Portfolio Committees Chairperson, Makhwanyane Mokhothu, stressed the need for parliamentary oversight of all stakeholders, including the Ministry of Public Works department of BDS, in all government projects.

He advocated for the establishment of a monitoring team to conduct bi-weekly progress checks, ensuring the airport modernisation project, which has been delayed since 2018, is treated with the seriousness it deserves.

Mokhothu lamented the missed economic opportunities resulting from these prolonged delays.

Turning to the Palace project, Mokhothu announced that the Committees would inves-



tigate the matter upon receiving the Auditor-General's report.

He expressed deep disappointment over the 15-year delay in constructing the Palace for the sole King of Lesotho, warning of potential damage and escalating costs.

He noted that the initial budget of M136 million has blown up to over M345 million.

Mokhothu concluded by emphasising that the funds wasted on these stalled projects could have been utilised to support service providers and create employment opportunities for Basotho.

Letsema Letela, a supervisor on the airport project, explained that the design specifications call for a two-story expansion of the existing structure. He assured parliamentarians that the original design accounted for this expansion, addressing concerns about structural stability.

On the expenditure of M7 million, Letela outlined completed tasks, including an environmental impact study, site preparation, equipment mobilisation, partial scrubbing of roof waterproofing, and preparatory reinforcement work.

Meanwhile, Motheba Letsoela, Director of Public Works BDS, informed Parliament that LSP Construction was responsible for the project's design, supervision, and construction. This arrangement, she explained, arose from the Ministry's lack of independent supervision capacity.

Letsoela further detailed the tender process that led to LSP's selection.

Of three bidders, one was disqualified for a conflict of interest involving a ministry official, while another submitted tender documents in both English and Chinese, despite the requirement for English-only submissions. This left LSP as the sole eligible bidder.

# Can local farmers keep egg-ban alive?

**Kabelo Masoabi**

The government implemented a ban on egg imports on January 1, 2025, in an effort to boost local production and ensure food security.

So far, the country has successfully met its egg demands, but concerns are growing about whether local producers can sustain this level of production, especially given the challenges they face.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, through its Department of Marketing, has assured the public that there is enough local supply to meet current needs.

However, prior to the ban, Lesotho heavily relied on egg imports from South Africa, with importers allowed to source only 30 percent of their supply from abroad, while domestic producers were expected to cover the remaining 70 percent.

Makwane Lekau, from the Department of Marketing, recently confirmed that local egg production has been sufficient for now but warned that challenges remain.

"Market indications suggest that Basotho farmers are producing eggs on a large scale; however, the issue lies in identifying these farms, as many remain unregistered," Lekau explained during a recent workshop in Thaba Bosiu for lay farmers.

The workshop was organised by the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (II).

Without accurate data on the number of active layer farmers, she explained that it had been difficult to measure production levels and ensure a consistent supply.

Local producers have been encouraged to augment their production capabilities to secure continued participation in the domestic market. Concerns persist regarding the nation's ability to maintain self-sufficiency in egg production. Specifically, a minimum of 700,000 trays of eggs per month is required for the country to be

considered self-sufficient.

The critical question remains: Are local producers sufficiently equipped and competent to sustain this level of production over the long term?

Lekau expressed a cautious outlook on the situation, emphasising a major obstacle: the lack of a comprehensive database detailing the number of active layer farmers in the country. In the absence of this essential data, accurately assessing the actual volume of eggs produced within any given timeframe becomes increasingly difficult.

To gauge the quantity of eggs available in the market, the department currently relies on data collected from businesses that procure eggs from local farmers. Lekau noted: "Market indications suggest that Basotho farmers are producing eggs on a large scale; however, the challenge remains in identifying these farms, as many are not officially registered in our systems."

She continued: "This complicates our ability to source eggs precisely when needed. At present, we do not possess the assurance required to reliably maintain the ban on egg imports."

In this context, Lekau emphasised the urgent need to establish a national database of layer farmers. She announced that by the end of February this year, the department will launch a farmer registry program requiring annual renewals.

Producers will be required to register their agribusinesses at their respective District Agriculture Offices.

Accessing the market at the appropriate time presents additional challenges for layer producers such as Mpati Matete. The farmer from Sehlabeng sa Thuathe in the Berea district expressed frustration over the substantial amount of eggs available for sale, yet lacking viable market opportunities.

Matete lamented: "Some of my eggs have begun to spoil due to extended storage and excessive heat," highlighting the critical situation many producers face.

In response to these challenges, Lekau underscored the importance of establishing egg collection centers nationwide, a project aimed at significantly enhancing the structure of the poultry sector. At these centers, she explained, producers will be able to sell their eggs to the department, which will then categorize them by grade and facilitate resale to buyers, streamlining the distribution process.

"This initiative, led by the government, is currently in progress," she affirmed.

Furthermore, Lekau pointed out another potential challenge to sustaining the import ban during school opening periods when thousands of children require eggs for the school feeding program. Typically, increased demand during this time has been supplemented by imports from South Africa.

The World Food Programme (WFP) and the government of Lesotho provide school meals consisting of maize meal, pulses, vegetables, and cooking oil. The meals, which include grains, cereals, leafy green vegetables, and eggs sourced from local farmers, are provided for lunch.

Additionally, the WFP provides technical assistance to enhance food production and quality.

Lekau noted that production irregularities among local farmers present a significant concern in the agricultural sector. She pointed out that when the window for egg importation opened in May of last year, no imports occurred during that month. However, June saw the importation of 700,000 eggs, followed by one million in July, and a total of up to six million eggs imported from August to December.

"Again, only a limited number of local producers are equipped to fulfill large orders from major retailers. For example, Pick n Pay Lesotho has been sourcing expensive organic eggs from South Africa due to high demand. This situation



presents a unique opportunity for Basotho farmers to also focus on the production and supply of organic eggs within the country," she elaborated.

Moreover, it became clear during the workshop that that local producers were not yet approaching complete self-sufficiency in egg provision.

Participants identified several operational challenges that hinder productive output.

Issues cited included a lack of an organised industry structure, informal contractual agreements, high feed costs, expensive medications, insufficient knowledge of vaccination protocols, inadequate diagnostic laboratories for disease testing, limited research in pre-production stages, and ineffective technical support from extension officers.

To address these challenges, further comprehensive planning and support are needed, according to SADPPI Matching Grants Specialist Relebohile Khathibe.

# Matlanyane calls for formal conversations to address educational opportunities in India



Dr Retselisitsoe Matlanyane Minister of Finance and Development Planning.

## Lerato Matheka

Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Retselisitsoe Matlanyane, has called for the Indian government to prioritise engaging in formal discussions with the government of Lesotho to address educational opportunities, this follows the growing issue of Basotho students stranded in India due to unmet tuition fees.

In July 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations revealed the distressing plight of around 3,000 Basotho students who were unable to continue their studies because of financial constraints.

The minister's call comes amidst the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, which was established to strengthen international cooperation between India and other nations, including Lesotho.

Matlanyane expressed her concern during the ITEC Day celebrations held at Lancers Inn over the weekend underscoring that while Lesotho has benefited

greatly from its cooperation with India, especially in sectors such as healthcare, green agriculture, and sustainable energy, the current situation surrounding Basotho students studying in India without formal support from the government requires urgent attention.

She urged the Indian government to collaborate with Lesotho in formalising the educational opportunities available to Basotho students, ensuring that the programs are both beneficial and manageable for both students and their families.

"There are a number of issues involved, including uncertainties toward educational continuity facing the students in your country. As the minister of Finance, I request that we should fine-tune that component of our relationship," Matlanyane emphasised, recognising the importance of fostering a more structured and supportive educational exchange between the two nations.

The issue of stranded students has escalated into a significant concern for Lesotho, as many students have pursued studies in India without the government's

knowledge or support, leading to difficulties in meeting financial obligations for their education.

Matlanyane made it clear that these students, while pursuing educational opportunities in good faith, have become a challenge for the government.

"Basotho students who go ahead to study in India without the government's knowledge have become a problem to us," she stated.

She further elaborated that the government seeks to understand which programs are available to Basotho students and to address the financial challenges that many students face while studying abroad.

Matlanyane also expressed gratitude to India for its longstanding support through the ITEC program, which offers training, scholarships, and various capacity-building initiatives across a wide range of sectors, such as agriculture, healthcare, information technology, and education.

The ITEC program, initiated by India in 1964, has been instrumental in sharing India's developmental expertise and technical skills with partner countries. The Indian High Commissioner to Lesotho, Shri Prabhat Kumar in his address, noted that over 250,000 people across more than 160 partner countries have benefitted from ITEC initiatives.

"Today marks the 60 glorious years of the ITEC program," he remarked, highlighting its success in fostering mutual development through South-South Cooperation.

Lesotho has been a notable beneficiary of the ITEC program, with many of its professionals attending training courses in India to enhance their skills in various fields.

The High Commissioner further revealed that India offers a range of scholarships for Basotho students, ensuring their admission to top educational institutions in India.

"We make sure they are admitted to the best schools in our country. And we ensure that when the scholars return to Lesotho, they are of great use to your country," he said, emphasising the long-term benefits of these educational exchanges for Lesotho.

Matlanyane acknowledged India's con-

tinued support in fields such as green agriculture, education, and health, praising the Indian government's efforts to assist Lesotho in sustainable energy initiatives and security. However, she also stressed the importance of expanding cooperation into new sectors, particularly technology.

"Lesotho can use the already existing technology to leapfrog and take advantage of improving different sectors," she remarked, suggesting that technology could play a key role in advancing Lesotho's economic development.

In his speech, Major General Matela Matobakele, representing the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF), highlighted the significant role that India has played through the ITEC program in strengthening the country's defence capabilities.

"ITEC has played an immense role in strengthening our defence capability," Matobakele noted, explaining that the program has provided training in leadership, modern defence strategies, and technological advancements. Currently, 21 members of the LDF are undergoing training in India, further reinforcing the value of the program in enhancing the country's security forces," he said.

Matobakele also called on the Lesotho government to continue supporting the LDF's partnership with India, noting that while the Indian government fully funds the programs, the Lesotho government should provide additional support to the participants to ensure their immediate needs are met.

"We value the relations and trust we have built over the years and we appeal to our government to support LDF in the partnership to further strengthen this relationship," he said.

Minister Tšelisio Mokhosi, the Minister of Labour, also weighed in, recognising the immense value of India's contributions through the ITEC program in empowering Lesotho's workforce.

"It is through well-designed programs and technical assistance that our workforce is capacitated to meet the evolving global workforce needs," Mokhosi said.

He emphasised that ITEC has gone beyond skills transfer, fostering cooperation and solidarity between Lesotho and India.

# All set for first-ever justice needs survey

## Ntsoaki Motaung



Palesa Mabea Senior Statistician Bureau of Statistics and Project Coordinator

The inaugural Lesotho Justice Needs Survey 2024 is set to take place from January 20 to February 10, this year, spanning all ten districts of the country.

This ground-breaking initiative is part of the Project for Reforms and Strengthening of Governance in Lesotho, a European Union (EU)-funded effort to promote the rule of law, good governance, human rights, and gender equality.

The project aims to enhance the efficiency and quality of justice service delivery, improve access to justice, especially

for women, children, and marginalised groups, and increase accountability, transparency, and integrity within justice and governance institutions.

The survey will deploy 21 enumerators and seven supervisors, organised into seven teams, to conduct interviews with over 2,300 households, targeting diverse groups, including women, men, inmates, and vulnerable populations.

According to team leader, Chimwemwe Mangeni, vulnerable groups include persons with disabilities, the elderly, sex workers, orphans, prisoners, and victims of abuse.

The survey will assess people's experiences with and access to justice, aiming to identify key challenges and needs.

Mangeni emphasised the use of international standards in conducting the survey.

He said: "This study ensures access to justice for everyone, including those in vulnerable situations. The findings will provide critical support to the government, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders in developing policies and laws to address identified issues."

Palesa Mabea, senior statistician at the Bureau of Statistics (BoS) and project coordinator for the Justice Needs Survey, called on Basotho to welcome enumerators and

cooperate with them, emphasising that the survey aims to improve Lesotho's justice system and benefit the country as a whole.

Mabea highlighted that Lesotho is the first country to conduct a Justice Needs Survey, underscoring its significance in addressing the challenges faced by people in accessing justice.

"We will examine all aspects of justice, involving all stakeholders in dispute resolution, such as chiefs, community policing personnel, and families—not just the courts," she explained.

She further noted that Lesotho's justice system has faced numerous challenges, drawing international attention. This, she said, prompted the European Union to include the survey as part of its funded project for reforms and governance strengthening.

"The primary issue is the lack of data on our cases, how long they remain in court, the timelines for resolution, and how cases handled by the police are prosecuted or concluded. This study aims to gather opinions and experiences of the Basotho Nation in accessing justice," Mabea said.

In December 2022, a Service Contract was awarded to International Consulting Expertise (ICE), a Brussels-based company, under the 11th European Development

Fund (EDF).

The contract entailed establishing a Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) to oversee the project. The PCU includes two key technical assistants, a Team Leader and a Senior Governance Expert, along with support staff and a facility for 1,500 short-term expert assignments to support program implementation.

The project was officially launched in September 2023 by Deputy Prime Minister, Justice Nthomeng Majara, at Leshoboro Stadium in Mafeteng.

The survey and broader project aim to benefit a range of institutions, including: the judiciary, Master of the High Court, Attorney General, Legal Aid Unit, Director of Public Prosecutions, Lesotho Correctional Services, Probation Unit, and Law Faculty at the National University of Lesotho (NUL).

It will also benefit the Human Rights Unit, Office of Parliamentary Counsel, Law Reform Commission, Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO), Ombudsman, Auditor General, and National Assembly and Senate

This survey is expected to provide valuable insights and data to support reforms, enhance access to justice, and improve governance in Lesotho.

# Obituary: Farewell to 'Musu Thomas Mapesela

**Kabelo Masoabi**

The media community in Lesotho is in mourning following the untimely passing of a beloved figure, former MISA-Lesotho National Director, 'Musu Thomas Mapesela, who departed this life on January 3, 2025, after a brief illness.

Born on May 29, 1976, Mapesela dedicated his early life to championing media freedom, freedom of speech, and diversity in Lesotho's media landscape. His passing leaves an irreplaceable void in the hearts of his family, friends, and colleagues, and in the media industry as a whole.

A funeral service to honour his remarkable life and contributions will be held at Maseru LEC Primary School tomorrow, beginning at 7 am.

Mapesela's journey in the media began with the Media Institute of Lesotho (MILES), where he initially served as Pub-

lic Relations Officer before ascending to the role of National Director in 1996. His tenure was marked by a pivotal period of transformation as the organisation became a chapter of the regional Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).

Under his leadership, MISA-Lesotho made significant strides in promoting press freedom, advocating for the rights of journalists, and fostering media diversity. Mapesela's passion and commitment laid a strong foundation that continues to guide the organisation today.

Reflecting on his impact, current National Director of MISA-Lesotho, Lekhetho Ntsukunyane, shared heartfelt sentiments: "His commitment to these vital causes has left an indelible mark on the organisation and the broader media landscape. As current leaders of MISA-Lesotho, we are committed to ensuring that the legacy Mr. Mapesela built lives on. He will be remem-



'Musu Thomas Mapesela

bered alongside other giants of the industry, with the echoes of his contributions resonating throughout our community."

Mapesela's mother, 'Mathabo, recounted the events leading to his passing, sharing that he had experienced severe stomach pain prior to his admission to Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital. Despite undergoing surgery and receiving intensive care, he succumbed to his illness two days later.

In a statement this week, MISA-Lesotho expressed deep sorrow: "The board of governors, management, staff, and members of MISA-Lesotho mourn the loss of our dear colleague. While our hearts are heavy with grief, we celebrate the impactful legacy he leaves behind and strive to emulate the goodwill and dedication he embodied. His memory will continue to inspire us."

Mapesela's profound contributions will forever be remembered in the annals of Lesotho's media history. His tireless efforts helped shape the media landscape, paving the way for future generations of journalists and media advocates.

He is survived by his wife and daughter, his mother, and two siblings.

## Court chronicles: From murder to a rescued newborn

**Lesotho Correctional Service employees face charges**

**Relebohile Makhetha**

Sargent Molukuo Thamae (46) and Tšepang Mothepu, both employees of the Lesotho Correctional Service (LCS), appeared before the court on charges of murder and malicious damage to property.

The prosecution revealed that on December 2, 2023, near the LCS premises, the accused allegedly fatally shot Thabang Phosholi using a rifle. They also stand accused of deliberately shooting and damaging a vehicle valued at M27,000, belonging to one Mokete. Both men remain in custody and are scheduled to return to court on January 28, 2025.

**Former LDF member faces assault charges**

Lehlohonolo Mohono (62), a former Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) member and private secretary to a former Deputy Prime Minister, appeared in court on charges of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm against his ex-wife, Sophia Katsana.

The court heard that in October 2024, Mohono stabbed Katsana in the chest and hands and choked her during an argument.

Despite the severity of the allegations, the court granted him bail on his own recognisance. His next court appearance is scheduled for February 10, 2025.

**Unauthorised use of property**

Tšilisehang Mokete was charged with unauthorised use of property under the Penal Code Act No. 6 of 2010.

On January 5, 2025, Mokete unlawfully used a Golf 5 vehicle belonging to 'Masera Khaka without consent. When questioned, Mokete admitted to the charge, explaining that he had taken the vehicle to return home and change his shoes. The court acknowledged his guilty plea and explanation but emphasised the gravity of the offence. It noted that unauthorised use of property could easily escalate into theft, a crime with serious societal implications.

In delivering judgment, the court imposed a fine of M4,000.00 or, alternatively, a sentence of four years' imprisonment should the fine remain unpaid. The court highlighted that such actions undermine property rights and trust, warranting strong deterrence to prevent similar offences.

**Triple murder charges**

In Maseru Urban, 34-year-old Mongoli Ranyali from Lesobeng Ha Peterose, residing at Lion Rock, Ha Matala, appeared in the Maseru Magistrate's Court on January 13, 2025, charged with murdering three men.

The first victim, whose identity remains unknown, was discovered on June 13, 2024, at Fika-lea-oa with severe mutilations, including facial skin removal and a severed neck bone. Witnesses described him as a frequent drinker in the area. Despite wearing a "Mapetla High School" T-shirt, no family has come forward to identify him.

The second victim, Sello Raselo (67) from Lekhalong Lithabaneng, was found on August 1, 2024, with similar injuries. The third victim, Tumo Telamo (57) from Marakabei, was discovered on August 20, 2024, stabbed with a spear and bearing a severed neck bone.

Investigations revealed that two victims were last seen drinking with the accused, who allegedly attacked them later. The third victim reportedly followed the accused from the same drinking spot.

The suspect, described as a casual labourer known by a nickname, claims to have been driven by an uncontrollable force. The motive behind the murders remains unclear. He remains in custody and is scheduled to reappear in court on January 28, 2025.

**Matricide charges in Ha Mojela**

In Maseru Rural, a 33-year-old woman and her 21-year-old son from Ha Mojela face charges of murdering her 12-year-old son.

On January 8, 2025, the woman assaulted the boy with a stick and whip, accusing him of stealing M100. Her elder son joined the assault, beating the child with a belt. Afterwards, they left him unattended and went to bed. Early the next morning, they found the boy unresponsive. Before his death, the child had denied stealing the money.

**Newborn rescued in Qacha's Nek**

In Qacha's Nek, a newborn baby was rescued after being abandoned in a toilet on January 7, 2025. At around 4:50 a.m, a 59-year-old man from Ha Mosiuoa heard faint cries from a toilet and discovered the baby wrapped in paper. He alerted his wife, and together they rescued the infant.

A 21-year-old woman, employed at a local home business, was identified as the mother. She admitted to abandoning the baby out of fear of societal judgment for having a child out of wedlock. The local chief instructed her to care for the baby until authorities arrived.

Police transported the mother and child to Machabeng Hospital, where the baby, a boy, received medical care and was found to be in stable condition. The case is under investigation.

## Magistrate court sees fiery drama

**... From arson to stabbing, no bail for most**

**Relebohile Makhetha**

On Tuesday this week, the Maseru Magistrate Court, presided over by Magistrate 'Mamorolele Qoo, heard different cases involving serious charges of rape, aggravated assault, and arson.

Prosecutors Moeketsi Tšolo and Chopho represented the state in the proceedings.

In the first case, Rethabile Masila, a 26-year-old from Ha Tšiu, Maseru, is charged with two counts of rape. It is alleged that on December 31, 2024, Masila coerced two 19-year-old women into non-consensual acts. The court denied him bail, stating that he must provide compelling reasons for bail during his next appearance on January 28, 2025.

In the second case, Polao Shao, aged 30 and from Ha Maama, Roma, Maseru, faces charges of aggravated assault. The court heard that on January 12, 2025, Shao stabbed Leeto Makhetha in the chest with a knife during an altercation at Ha Thetsane. Prosecutor Chopho strongly opposed bail, citing the victim's critical condition. The court agreed and remanded Shao until January 28, 2025.

The third case involved Qeto Mafatlane, who faces charges of arson for allegedly setting fire to two houses belonging to 'Makananelo Mashabesha on January 11, 2025, at Ha Paki, Mazenod. Prosecutor Chopho informed the court that Mafatlane is receiving treatment for mental



illness at Scott Hospital and that the hospital had requested his immediate return for continued care.

Given this, the court granted Mafatlane

Own Recognisance (OR) bail, with the condition that he appear on February 10, 2025, for an update on his condition and fitness to stand trial.

# BUSINESS

## Polihali construction reaches key transfer tunnel milestone



The Minister of Local Government and Police, Lebona Lephema

### Seabata Mahao

The boring of the 38-kilometre Polihali Transfer Tunnel officially began this week, marking a significant milestone in the implementation of Phase II of the bi-national Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP).

The commencement follows the assembly and naming of two Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs), which arrived in Lesotho in September 2024.

Manufactured by CCCC Tianhe of China, the double-shielded TBMs were specifically designed to excavate the tunnel from both ends, enabling the gravity-driven transfer of water from the Polihali reservoir to the Katse reservoir.

Speaking at the launch and naming ceremony of the TBMs held at Ha-Bereng in Leribe this week, Lesotho Highlands Development Authority's (LHDA) Chief Executive, Tente Tente, shared the project's achievements thus far.

The TBMs were named "Khoiti-ea-ngoaha-kholopeli" following a national call for public suggestions. The name, which translates to "wild rat" symbolises the TBM's underground drilling capability and commemorates Basotho's 200-year bicentennial celebration.

Tente revealed that LHWP II has created over 11,000 jobs for Basotho, with 7,491 skilled and 3,772 unskilled positions. Additionally, M120 million has been paid in com-



Tunnel Boring Machine launch and naming ceremony.

pensation to 1,736 households.

He further highlighted other key developments, including the completion of housing and office facilities, significant progress on access roads connecting Leribe, Thaba-Tseka, and Mokhotlong, and the construction of the Senqu Bridge.

He also noted that a major milestone was reached in December with the completion of all 15 piers of the Senqu Bridge, while excavation and rockfill placement at the Polihali Dam are ongoing.

"Progress on the transfer tunnel has been remarkable," Tente said. "In August, we achieved a breakthrough with the connection of the upper and lower intake tunnels of Polihali."

"We believe that all Phase II contractors and consultants and the men and women who are toiling in the harsh conditions of the highlands, will continue to make us proud as they work towards making sure that we achieve our timelines to deliver this important project for the two nations," Tente emphasised.

Tente also acknowledged the challenges faced but praised the efforts to collaborate with local communities and implement livelihood activities. He announced the launch of the Skills Testing and Accreditation Programme, which will certify the skills of candidates and open up employment opportunities across Lesotho and the SADC region.

I am sure you will be pleased to note that this year after months of planning we will be launching the Skills Testing and Accreditation programme which evaluates, accredits, and certifies the skills of candidates, thus opening new employment opportunities in semi-skilled categories in Lesotho and across the SADC region," Tente added.

On behalf of Kopano Ke Matla Joint Venture (KKM-JV), contractor representative Lei expressed gratitude to the Lesotho government, local communities, and the Chinese Embassy for their support.

He highlighted the employment of over 1,000 villagers from surrounding areas and the contributions of workers from Lesotho, South Africa, and 13 other countries.

"This has enabled the project to proceed smoothly and efficiently. Once again, we are grateful for the strong support from the Chinese Embassy. During the project implementation, the embassy has been closely following the project progress, providing us with many valuable suggestions and a solid backup, creating a favorable external environment for the successful implementation of the project. Secondly, we must not forget the support from the surrounding communities.

"More than 1,000 villagers from the surrounding areas have been employed, making



indelible contributions to the achievements of the project so far. I would like to pay the highest tribute to the hard work of all employees. Most of our construction employees are from Lesotho and South Africa. With their eager anticipation for the development of their hometowns, they have dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to the project construction. At the same time, there are also management personnel and technicians from thirteen countries," Lei explained.

During the ceremony, Minister of Local Government, Chieftainship, and Police, Lebona Lephema, speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister, emphasised the importance of the LHWP in bolstering economic development for both Lesotho and South Africa.

"At the heart of the project is the improvement of the livelihoods of our citizens. It is crucial for LHWP to never overlook the significance of restoring the lives of individuals directly impacted by this project. It is imperative that these individuals are treated with the utmost respect and compassion,"

"Neglecting to safeguard their human rights would not only undermine the dignity of those affected, but will also tarnish the reputation of both countries on the global stage. Such a failure could lead to a serious moral judgment from the international community, putting into question the integrity and values we uphold," Lephema explained.



Tunnel Boring Machine launch and naming ceremony.

### NOTICE OF COMPANY RELOCATION

Notice is hereby made by TISETSO JUSTICE RABOLINYANE that the company SURFACE SYSTEM CIVIL CONSTRUCTORS PTY LTD of company number 50032 is relocating from MAJARA SEEISO, THABANA-MORENA ROAD, near BEDCO MAFETENG, LESOTHO, to new address at THABANA MORENA ROAD, OLD CASH BUILD BUILDING MAFETENG(PO Box 8116 Mafeteng 900). Anyone with queries can direct their objections or queries to Tisetso Justice Rabolinyane on 59452730.

### ESTATE NOTICE

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

#### ESTATE LATE MATHATO MOKOATLE

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 61 (b) of the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act No. 2 of 2024 calling upon all creditors of the deceased to lodge their claims with the administrator of the deceased 's estate within thirty-five (35) days of this publication.

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

HA PENA-PENA	(+266) 58008098
HA ABIA	THEBE MOKOATLE
MASERU	(THE ADMINISTRATOR)

## HEALTH



# Addressing systemic barriers to abortion care



## Ntsoaki Motaung

A comprehensive study on abortion care in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, and Namibia, conducted by Rhodes University, the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has unveiled significant gaps in reproductive health services.

Despite commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), complications arising from unsafe abortions remain a major cause of maternal mortality, contributing to nearly 20 percent of pregnancy-related deaths in these countries.

The findings underscore an urgent need for policy reforms, resource allocation, and public education to dismantle systemic barriers, combat societal stigma, and address the deficiencies in healthcare infrastructure that hinder access to safe and legal abortion services.

Although abortion is legally permissible in these countries under specific circumstances, such as rape, incest, or fetal abnormalities, restrictive policies and bureaucratic hurdles often limit access. Survivors of sexual violence face significant barriers, including mandatory police reports and judicial approvals, which act as strong deterrents.

The study also highlights systemic weaknesses within healthcare systems that exacerbate these challenges. In Botswana, fewer than 5 percent of healthcare providers are trained in post-abortion care.

Namibia struggles with critical staff shortages, particularly in rural areas, while Eswatini's heavy reliance on do-

nor funding for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programs raises concerns about the sustainability of these services.

Lesotho faces significant challenges in providing safe abortion services due to limited infrastructure and a lack of health facilities equipped to offer comprehensive care. These systemic gaps leave women, especially those in underserved rural areas, highly vulnerable.

The study further highlights the complex reproductive health landscape in these countries, shaped by the pervasive impacts of gender-based violence (GBV), high HIV prevalence, and deeply entrenched gender inequalities. These issues disproportionately affect women in rural areas, economically marginalised groups, and adolescents.

An unmet need for contraception, ranging from 15 to 17.5 percent, exacerbates the problem, while pervasive societal stigma surrounding abortion and early pregnancy creates additional barriers to healthcare access. Abortion is often viewed as immoral, with women seeking services stigmatised as irresponsible. Young people, in particular, face judgmental attitudes from healthcare providers and inadequate privacy during consultations.

This stigma drives many women to seek unsafe abortion procedures, significantly increasing their risk of severe complications or even death.

The study identifies a critical barrier to improving access to comprehensive abortion care in the four countries: the absence of comprehensive national

guidelines.

The analysis highlights the detrimental impact of over-reliance on donor funding, particularly in Eswatini and Lesotho, which leaves sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programs vulnerable to financial instability. Additionally, outdated and poorly integrated data collection and management systems hinder the ability to analyse and interpret health information effectively.

To address these systemic challenges, the study advocates for a multi-sectoral approach, emphasising key recommendations such as the development of national comprehensive abortion care (CAC) guidelines, ensuring adequate training for healthcare providers, improving equitable resource distribution, strengthening data collection systems, implementing public education campaigns, and addressing gender inequities.

Improving access to comprehensive abortion care requires strong political will, sustained funding, and a commitment to reproductive justice. These reforms align with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of reducing maternal mortality and have broader implications for gender equality, education, and economic development.

Framing reproductive health as a human right is a vital step toward transformative policy and practice changes. The study's reparative health justice framework offers valuable tools for policymakers to identify and address these barriers, providing actionable insights for Southern African nations and beyond.

By prioritising the reproductive rights and health of women, these nations can make strides toward more equitable and inclusive healthcare systems.

In Lesotho, induced abortion is criminalised under Section 45 of the Penal Code Act of 2010; however, it is permitted under specific circumstances as a legal defence.

This includes situations where the abortion is necessary due to instances of rape, incest, forced sexual relations, or when continuing with the pregnancy poses a risk to the physical or mental health of the mother or threatens her life or the life of the fetus.

Additionally, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) on the Rights of Women in Africa, also known as the "Maputo Protocol," which Lesotho ratified in 2004, provides for state parties to authorise access to medical abortions under similar conditions.

Article 14 of the protocol emphasises the need for legal access to abortion under specific circumstances to protect women's health and rights.

Recent data from the Bureau of Statistics' 2022 Health Statistics Report highlighted a concerning trend: incomplete abortions accounted for 24.3 percent of the leading reasons for women's hospital admissions, underscoring a significant health burden.

This statistic not only impacts the well-being of the women involved but also places added strain on the country's already overburdened healthcare system.

## Call for self-sufficiency and immediate reform

The recent ban reportedly imposed by India's renowned Apollo Hospital on Basotho patients due to unpaid medical debts serves as a stark reminder of the systemic flaws plaguing Lesotho's healthcare sector.

While the ban might be a direct consequence of financial mismanagement, it reflects a much larger issue: Lesotho's deep-seated dependence on foreign healthcare services and the government's chronic inability to adequately address the health needs of its citizens.

It is with a heavy heart that we acknowledge the courage and resilience of those who have persevered through the labyrinth of bureaucracy and resource scarcity. To the patients who have made the painful journey to Apollo for life-saving treatments, your bravery should not go unnoticed.

To those who have not been as fortunate, we extend our deepest sympathies, your struggles are not a reflection of your efforts, but of a system that is failing you.

However, amid this heartbreak, we must ask: how long will Lesotho continue to rely on foreign medical facilities for critical care?

The unfortunate truth is that, despite ongoing efforts, the country's healthcare system is in dire straits, and this crisis is compounded by a reliance on foreign institutions that now view Lesotho as an unreliable partner. The ban by Apollo is not an isolated incident but a symptom of a broader issue that demands urgent attention and reform.

Yes, no country is fully self-sufficient, and global interdependence is a reality we all must accept. But Lesotho must strive toward a more sustainable future, where its healthcare system is resilient, self-reliant, and equipped to handle the needs of its people.

This is not an unrealistic goal. The construction of Lesotho's first-ever cancer centre is a hopeful step forward, and the establishment of local oncology services offers a glimmer of promise. This is only the beginning. More must be done, and more urgently.

We must not allow this situation to devolve into a cycle of dependence that drains resources and endangers lives. Rather than seeking immediate solutions from foreign entities, Lesotho must invest in its own healthcare infrastructure, build capacity, train specialists, and ensure that treatment options are available domestically.

The government must prioritise healthcare financing and work toward eliminating inefficiencies and corruption that plague the sector. While international partnerships remain important, they should not be relied upon as crutches, but rather as complementary to a robust, self-sustaining system within Lesotho.

A key part of this process must be the expansion of local healthcare services, especially in the realm of cancer treatment. The need is undeniable, with an alarming increase in cancer cases reported each year.

The government's focus on developing local facilities like the cancer centre is a step in the right direction, but the question remains; will this be enough, or will it take another disaster, another patient denied care, to push the government to take further action?

In the interim, Basotho must demand more from their government and hold them accountable for the promises made and the public funds allocated. There must be an unwavering commitment to securing a future where no citizen is forced to seek life-saving treatments abroad because their own country lacks the capacity to provide them.

Lesotho's future, its health, its economy, and the well-being of its people, depends on the government's ability to recognise the urgency of these issues and take decisive, bold action.

The time for complacency is over. Lesotho must rise to the challenge, not just for the sake of its healthcare system, but for the future of its citizens. The lesson is clear: self-sufficiency is not just an option; it is an imperative. Let this be the call to action that sets Lesotho on a path to a healthier, more resilient future.



# NO COMMENT



Kananelo Boloetse

# COMMON CONCERN

## NGOs and corporates, it's time to acknowledge the media's sacrifices

In December last year, MISA Lesotho, with the generous support of the Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL) and the Network of Early Childhood Development of Lesotho (NECDOL), hosted the inaugural Journalism Excellence Awards. It was a truly remarkable and inspiring event, though I must admit there is room for improvement, as is always the case with any new initiative.

The journalism profession in Lesotho remains one of the most underappreciated and under-rewarded vocations. Every time I mention this, I am often met with the observation that this is the case globally. While that may be true in other countries, I cannot definitively speak to their realities. What I do know, however, is that in Lesotho, journalists work tirelessly, often without the recognition or support they deserve.

The awards ceremony was more than just a formal recognition of excellence in journalism. For many journalists, it became a rare moment of celebration—a year-end party of sorts, a Christmas gift for those who dedicate their lives to informing and empowering society.

In Lesotho, many media houses lack the financial capacity to organise Christmas parties for their employees. For this reason, the Journalism Excellence Awards have taken on a dual purpose, not only do they celebrate outstanding contributions to journalism, but they also serve as a much-needed year-end celebration for journalists.

I cannot overemphasise the importance of such gatherings, as they have been proven to boost morale and foster a sense of unity and appreciation among staff.

Imagine the disheartening reality for journalists who, year after year, watch employees in other sectors enjoying Christmas parties, while their own tireless efforts go unrecognized and unrewarded. This disparity dampens their spirits and serves as a stark reminder of the struggles within the journalism profession.

It is for this reason that the Journalism Excellence Awards must become an annual tradition, held in December. This event serves more than one purpose: it honours excellence, uplifts spirits, and provides an opportunity for the media fraternity to come together in celebration.

MISA Lesotho has already confirmed its commitment to making this an annual event, with the second edition scheduled for December this year.

I am making this call to action in January because it is crucial to start preparing early. Organisations and individuals have ample time to step

forward and contribute to making the second edition of the Journalism Excellence Awards bigger, better, and more impactful.

To be honest, it was disappointing to see a critical sector like the media manage to secure only two partners for such an important event last year. While some organisations initially pledged their support, they withdrew at the eleventh hour, leaving several award categories without sponsorship. This was a significant letdown, especially considering the indispensable role that journalists play in our society.

Take NGOs, for instance. They frequently rely on the media to amplify their programs and activities and leverage media coverage to secure funding and raise awareness. When NGOs need to expose wrongdoing or shed light on critical issues, they turn to journalists.

Yet, when the time comes to acknowledge these journalists, who often sacrifice weekends and family time to travel and report on NGO activities, many NGOs are conspicuously absent. While it is true that some NGOs struggle with funding, not all are in dire financial straits. Why, then, did only NECDOL step up last year?

The private sector, too, must reflect on its role. Corporations regularly hold press conferences to promote their initiatives, from launching new products to distributing shoes or sanitary pads as part of their corporate social responsibility programs. These events receive extensive media coverage, often at no cost to the corporations.

Under normal circumstances, such publicity should be accompanied by paid advertising, yet our media absorbs the costs. However, when it comes to supporting journalism awards, many of these corporations are silent. This silence is not just disheartening, it is a missed opportunity to give back to a sector that tirelessly promotes and supports their activities.

Some may argue they were unaware of last year's awards. This may be true, which is why I am writing this now to ensure no one can claim ignorance this time. December may seem far away, but in reality, it is not.

Supporting the Journalism Excellence Awards is not about doing Kananelo Boloetse, Chairperson of MISA Lesotho, or its National Director Lekhotho Ntsukunyane a favour. Nor is it about benefiting MISA Lesotho as an organisation.

It is about acknowledging the journalists who are always there when you need them, the humble servants who work tirelessly to inform, educate, and empower society.

This year, let us come together to make the

Journalism Excellence Awards a resounding success. By supporting this initiative, we reaffirm our commitment to a free and vibrant media sector, which is the cornerstone of any thriving democracy.

I reiterate that the silence from NGOs and the private sector during last year's Journalism Excellence Awards was not just disappointing, it was an indictment of how little value we place on those who dedicate their lives to informing the public. We cannot claim to support democracy, accountability, and transparency while simultaneously ignoring the plight of the very people who make these principles possible.

Journalism is the lifeblood of a functioning society, and without it, corruption flourishes, ignorance prevails, and democracy withers.

To those who turned their backs on this initiative last year, I ask: Where would your causes, your products, your profits, and your reputations be without the media?

Would your campaigns succeed without journalists spreading your message? Would your donations resonate without the coverage that amplifies them? The answer is clear. You need journalism. But journalism also needs you.

This is your chance to be part of something meaningful. Supporting the Journalism Excellence Awards is not just a gesture, it is a statement. It says you stand with those who fight for truth, who expose injustice, who amplify voices, and who hold power to account. It says you understand that a strong media is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

To NGOs, to businesses, to government bodies, and to every individual who values freedom and progress: step up. Be bold. Be generous. And above all, be fair. If the media can work tirelessly to support you, the least you can do is stand by them when it matters most.

December is coming, and with it, an opportunity to show where your priorities lie. Will you stand with journalism, or will you stand by, silent and absent, as it struggles alone?

The choice is yours. History will remember which one you made.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the author, Kananelo Boloetse, in his personal capacity. Kananelo Boloetse serves as the Chairperson of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Lesotho. However, this article does not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of MISA Lesotho or its affiliates. Any opinions, positions, or statements made are solely those of the author.



# INTERVIEW

## Maternal health through the eyes of a medical anthropologist

**In this interview, we sit down with Marry Beth Knipper, a scholar and researcher whose unique dual expertise in medicine and cultural anthropology is shedding new light on maternal health in Lesotho. With a deep commitment to understanding the intersection of health, culture, and community, Marry's work focuses on the complex and evolving ways in which Basotho women navigate the risks of pregnancy and early infancy, shaped by both traditional practices and modern biomedical interventions. Her ethnographic research, conducted in the eastern highlands of Lesotho, explores the enduring legacies of epidemics like HIV/AIDS and their profound impact on how these communities approach perinatal care. In this conversation, Marry reflects on her journey into medical anthropology, the cultural nuances of maternal healthcare in Lesotho, and the importance of integrating local knowledge into global health efforts.**

**Newsday: What inspired you to pursue a dual degree in medicine and cultural anthropology, and how these disciplines intersect in your work?**

Marry Beth Knipper: Nearly 17 years ago, early in my undergraduate education, I was lucky to stumble upon an opportunity to join a medical aid team that was providing primary healthcare to rural communities, outside Pisac, Peru. Witnessing the structural inequalities of health within those Andean communities radically altered my career trajectory. I became fascinated by "medical anthropology" – that is, by understanding how the health and wellness of individuals, communities, and environments are affected by local events and histories (like the emergence of viral epidemics); by interrelationships between various species and actors; by social norms and political institutions; and by broader cultural forces (like globalisation, Western feminisms, or capitalism). Ultimately, that and subsequent experiences working abroad in "global health" solidified my desire to merge anthropological research with my passion for clinical medicine.

**Newsday: Your project examines Basotho women's concepts of risk and protection during the perinatal period. What led you to focus on this particular aspect of maternal health in Lesotho?**

Marry Beth Knipper: As in many cultures and places, bo-Mme understand pregnancy and early infancy as incredibly vulnerable moments in the human life-course. Early life is inherently precarious. As women would often remind me, "Ngoana joalaka ke metsi." I was often struck by this hypervigilance and attunement to perinatal risk and "exposures." In highlands communities, modern-day mothers still speak of age-old threats to their newborns: muti, witchcraft, impure persons, jealous neighbours... But unlike their own mothers, they also engage biomedical language and metaphors to understand their experiences; they are incredibly knowledgeable about CD4+ cell counts and childhood immunisation schedules; and they wistfully remember the ways that childhood and the village community were different – somehow safer for children – long ago. In this work, I explore these transforming experiences of motherhood and perinatal risk as (partial, but not exclusive) by-products of viral epidemics (HIV, HPV, COVID), and the global health responses that were erected to prevent their spread.

**Newsday: How do you define the "afterlife" of epidemics like HIV/AIDS in the context of Lesotho, and what are some of the enduring**

**impacts you've observed?**

Marry Beth Knipper: This is an incredibly astute question! It's one that I ultimately hope to fully answer in my doctoral dissertation. Ultimately, I am interested in the lives that emerge in the wake of the epidemic... What are the ways that health events, like HIV or COVID, continue to live on with us into the future? How do they transform the way that we relate to other kinds of bodies and environments? How does growing up in a perpetual state of "epidemiological emergency" alter the way that Basotho mothers imagine perinatal risk and engage with diverse forms of perinatal care? For me, the "afterlife" of the epidemic is not only a question of population health metrics; it is also one of bodily experience and orientation. It is a question best explored by delving into the everyday life-worlds of Basotho mothers, who are increasingly forced to navigate "new" viral threats and social changes, alongside age-old concerns about witchcraft, muti, and social well-being. As I move forward in analysing the data gathered over the past year of ethnographic fieldwork, I'm looking at historical changes in social networks and material methods of care. I'm interested in women's decision-making around everything from vaccines to muti to "prayer water." I'm examining how women make meaning out of perinatal deaths and illnesses.

**Newsday: Based on your findings, how can global health interventions be tailored to better respect and integrate local cultural practices in maternal and child healthcare?**

Marry Beth Knipper: As an anthropologist and future physician, I believe in the power of storytelling and education. Ultimately, I hope that this ethnographic work sheds light on the everyday experiences of mothers in highlands Basotho communities. Among global health professionals and policymakers, I hope that it generates richer conversations about the (occasionally unintended) consequences of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and epidemiological interventions. I believe it is important for Lesotho to continue investing in the education of native, Sesotho-speaking, Basotho physicians and health policy makers. High-quality medical education, ideally combined with native cultural literacy (Basotho physicians treating Basotho patients), will be central to the ability of healthcare providers to understand and meet the needs of Basotho patients. It could be as simple as a Sesotho-English mistranslation in the clinic. It could be as complex as the ability to understand your patient's cultural norms or belief system because you were raised in it yourself. Ultimately, culturally competent medical care is the key to reducing healthcare disparities and ensuring high-quality maternal and child healthcare in Lesotho.

**Newsday: How have the communities in the eastern highlands of Lesotho responded to your research, and in what ways have their perspectives influenced your study?**

Marry Beth Knipper: I cannot say enough about the incredible hospitality of every Basotho community I have ever had the privilege to live or work in. Even from my early days as a Peace Corps Volunteer, the warmth and kindness of batho ba Basotho always made Lesotho feel like "home" to me – in fact, this past year my husband and two young sons were also able to move with me to Lesotho! With regards to the research study, the communities I worked with were always very supportive. On an individual level, my experiences have been similarly positive... I often found bo-Mme incredibly willing to teach

and share their lives with me. It is a profound honour; an act of trust that I take very seriously as a researcher. Of course, people also each approached my questions and presence with their own histories and life experiences – of encounters with medical professionals, Americans, and lekhooa. I respect that immensely. If they were willing to share – even from a place of grief, mistrust, or anger – that is incredibly valuable and valid. Those experiences are all part of a broader story of maternal life and health in Lesotho.

**Newsday: What are some of the challenges you've encountered during your ethnographic fieldwork in Lesotho, and how have you addressed them?**

Marry Beth Knipper: I would say that the most significant challenges of ethnographic fieldwork were logistical in nature. My husband, Jacob, and our two young sons (ages 2 and 4 years) were thankfully able to join me in Lesotho for the year. Moving our entire family from America to Lesotho was obviously an adventure for us! In addition, my research field site in the eastern highlands of Botha-Bothe District was incredibly remote. Ultimately, we decided that our family would split our time between Maseru and the highlands, which meant that I spent a lot of time driving mountainous dirt roads, juggling family and work. Throughout it all, however, I relied immensely on my Basotho friends and family for support. I could never have completed this research without the daily help and endless support of my long-time research assistant and friend, Thabang Sekitla. Whenever I travelled to the highlands without my family, I left them in the care of my Basotho family in Maseru. I am so grateful for the wealth of the community that

made this year of work possible.

**Newsday: In your view, how have past global health interventions during epidemics shaped current healthcare practices and perceptions among Basotho women?**

Marry Beth Knipper: In my experience, Basotho women are incredibly knowledgeable about and invested in neonatal and pediatric health issues. Overall, bo-Mme are very aware of infectious and other threats to their children. In clinical encounters, they are often engaged and agentic participants. This sense of responsibility and deep commitment to the health of children is absolutely a testament to the centrality and importance of children within Basotho society. However, in the wake of 30 years of Prevention-of-Mother-to-Child-Transmission (PMTCT) intervention to curb the spread of HIV, the forms of care solicited by mothers, and the meanings they attach to them, have understandably altered. In the research study, Basotho mothers ubiquitously expressed a desire to act in the best interest of their children's health. This attunement to perinatal risk often led them to draw upon a diverse landscape of medical systems and practitioners. As an anthropologist, I try to avoid imagining these medical systems as discreet or bounded entities. Traditional Basotho medicine is not counter to clinical biomedicine. They don't necessarily contradict or threaten one another. Rather I imagine them as interrelated and co-evolving systems of knowledge and thought. They share space in a community, mutually building upon one another. Basotho mothers understand that, but sometimes biomedical clinicians may struggle to see value in all forms of health practice and belief. This bias - which

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**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - GOODS AND SERVICES PROCUREMENT**
**15 January 2025**
**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) - EOLS01/2025 FOR GOODS AND SERVICES PROCUREMENT**
**CLOSING ON 07th February 2025 AT 13:00HRS HRS (Lesotho Time).**
**A. BACKGROUND**

- The World Food Programme (WFP) through its office located at 11 United Nations Road, Opposite Maseru club, P.O. Box 301 Maseru 100, Lesotho, intends to find suitable and eligible Service Providers under different categories with relevant expertise to express interest in providing such services to WFP office Lesotho.

Category	Goods and Services
General Supplies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fumigation Services for both office and warehouses</li> <li>Cleaning materials and garbage bags</li> <li>Stationery</li> <li>Tissue</li> <li>Printing</li> <li>Mineral water supply</li> </ol>
Printing, Marketing and Branding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video/photography/ documentary Production Services</li> <li>Printing services i.e. bulk printing, bulk photocopying, bulk binding, bulk scanning, T-shirt printing</li> <li>Language Editing, Graphics Design and Lay-outing Services for Publications, manuals etc.</li> <li>Design &amp; Branding of promotional materials; banners, brochures</li> <li>Roadshow Management &amp; Activation</li> <li>Social Media Management Service</li> </ol>
IT Equipment & Maintenance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supply of Computers, laptops, printers, scanners, photocopiers, Projectors, cameras &amp; IT related accessories and equipment</li> <li>Office toners &amp; cartridges</li> <li>Supply and installation of communication equipment</li> <li>Security Equipment &amp; Spares (CCTV &amp; Access Control)</li> <li>Provision of Internet and Web Hosting Services</li> <li>Computer Hardware &amp; Maintenance</li> </ol>
Logistics and Travel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of Freight, Clearing and Forwarding Services</li> <li>Provision of Courier and Mail Delivery Services</li> <li>Relocation Services/ Household removals</li> <li>Accommodation (Lodges and Hotels)</li> <li>Catering Services (Events and Meetings)</li> <li>Conference/Workshop facilities</li> </ol>
Property maintenance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building Maintenance – plumbing, electrical, carpentry, painting, and interior finishes</li> <li>Office fumigation</li> <li>Office Cleaning Services</li> <li>Servicing of Air Conditioners</li> <li>Servicing of Fire Extinguishers</li> <li>Pest control</li> <li>Provision of Garbage Collection Service</li> </ol>
Vehicle maintenance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supply of Motor Vehicle Accessories &amp; Repairs</li> <li>Provision of Fleet Management Systems including Vehicle Tracking Services</li> <li>Vehicle Servicing and Maintenance</li> </ol>

Office Equipment Supply & Maintenance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supply and Maintenance of Air-Conditioning installations and services</li> <li>Generator and Invert servicing and repairs</li> <li>Supply and maintenance of batteries,</li> <li>Office Equipment Repairs and Maintenance – Printers, photocopiers etc</li> <li>Civil Engineer/construction supervisor</li> </ol>
Construction Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office building Maintenance</li> <li>Civil Works</li> <li>Supply and delivery of construction related items e.g bricks</li> </ol>
Polypropylene woven bags	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production of polypropylene woven bags</li> </ol>
Logistics Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stevedoring/Handling Services – Loading/offloading of food and non-food items.</li> <li>Customs Clearing Services – Food and Non-Food Items</li> <li>Pest Management - Fumigation, Spraying and Rodent Control Services</li> <li>Milling service – Toll milling, fortification, and packaging</li> <li>Warehouse Storage space – at least 500m2 per location. The service providers should be located within a 5km radius of the town/city centre.</li> <li>Transport Services 2ton, 5ton, 7ton 10ton, 15ton,20ton, 30ton</li> </ol>
Agriculture Equipment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weighing Scales (Digital &amp; Mechanical)</li> <li>Sieves</li> <li>Tarpaulins</li> <li>Plastic Silos</li> <li>Rippers</li> <li>Rain Gauges</li> <li>Moisture meters</li> </ol>
HR Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driving Schools</li> <li>Recruitment Agencies</li> </ol>

- WFP invites eligible suppliers to express their interest in providing the requested [goods and/or services].

**B. THE PURPOSE OF THIS EOI**

- The purpose of this request for EOI is to identify suppliers with verified technical and financial capacity to provide the goods or perform the services required by WFP. Eligible suppliers will be shortlisted as WFP vendors to participate in future tenders once they fulfil the requirements.
- Eligibility to be shortlisted as a WFP supplier will be based on meeting and submitting the following requirements:
  - Company profile
  - Company registration certificates – legal documents
  - Tax clearance certificate/VAT Registration Certificate
  - Confirmation letter from the bank endorsing your banking details
  - Recommendation letters from 3 major clients with the last 5 years
  - Duly completed WFP questionnaire.
- All supporting documentation listed above must be prepared according to the provided instructions and sent to the following email address to receive a questionnaire from WFP: [maseru.procurement@wfp.org](mailto:maseru.procurement@wfp.org).
- WFP will not consider incomplete or unsigned submissions. All responses and supporting documentation received will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be made available to the public.
- This request for EOI does not constitute a solicitation. WFP reserves the right to change or cancel this procurement process or any of its requirements at any time during the process; any such action will be communicated to all participants.
- After the deadline for submission of responses has passed, WFP will evaluate the responses received and notify eligible participants of the outcome of the evaluation.
- If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at [maseru.procurement@wfp.org](mailto:maseru.procurement@wfp.org).

Yours sincerely,  
WFP Procurement



## KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

 MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
 LESOTHO LOWLANDS WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT PHASE III


## VACANCY FOR THE POSITION OF HYDROLOGIST

The Lesotho Lowlands Water Development Project Phase III (LLWDP III) invites applications from suitably qualified Lesotho nationals for the position of Hydrologist.

**1. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT.**

The Hydrologist will work for the PIU to oversee ground water resources Assessment, Development and Management.

**2. PERFORMANCE AREAS**

1. Assess the availability and sustainability of water supplies.
2. Evaluate water demand and allocation in the project area.
3. Undertake data collection and analysis to measure water levels, flow rates, and quality parameters in rivers, lakes, groundwater systems, and other water bodies.
4. Participates in the development of water management plans and policies.
5. Undertake modelling and forecasting for the behaviour of water systems.
6. Assess the potential impacts of construction activities, effects of land use changes, and possible pollution of water resources and the surrounding environment.
7. Examine the interactions between water and ecosystems.

8. Contribute towards assessing vulnerabilities, developing adaptation strategies, and mitigating the impacts of climate change on water resources in the project area.
9. Develop the catchment management plan for Hololo catchment including all its sub-catchments.
10. Undertake bi-annual biophysical monitoring of Hololo River and all its tributaries
11. Participate in development of the budget for the LLWDP III
12. Establish and train community catchment structures
13. Develop monthly and quarterly hydrology reports.

**3. CORE COMPETENCIES**

1. Ability to work independently with limited supervision.
2. Effective communication and negotiation skills
3. Stakeholder Management skills
4. Conflict resolution skills
5. Ability to work under-pressure

**4. GENERIC COMPETENCIES**

- Honesty, Integrity and good work Ethic
- Citizen/Customer Orientation
- Computer Literacy

**5. DURATION**

The duration of the assignment is **THREE (3) YEARS.**

**6. QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE**

1. Master's degree in Hydrology or Water Resources Engineering or related field with a minimum of three (3) years' experience in the water resources management field

**OR**

2. Degree in Hydrology or Water Resources Engineering or related field with a minimum of five (5) years' experience in the water resources management field.

**7. SUBMISSIONS**

*Applications including a covering letter, CV and certified copies of certificates and transcripts must be addressed to: The Human Resources and Administration Manager, Lesotho Lowlands Water Development Project Phase III, LNDC Development House Block D Level 6 & 9, P.O. Box 13250, Maseru 100. Interested candidates must hand-deliver their applications to the Human Resources and Administration Office, at Level 6 or email them to [humanresources@llwdp3.org.ls](mailto:humanresources@llwdp3.org.ls) by **Friday, 24 January 2024 at 12:00 noon**. For further enquiries, please contact the Human Resources and Administration Office, Level 6 or call **(+266) 58861111**.*



## Kingdom of Lesotho

 MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY  
 SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT II  
 MATCHING GRANTS PROGRAMME

 REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST  
 (CONSULTING SERVICES- INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS SELECTION METHOD)

**LOAN NO:** P165228  
**CREDIT NO:** IDA -64220 -LS  
**ASSIGNMENT TITLE:** TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL REVIEWER  
**DURATION:** THREE (3) MONTHS  
**REF NUMBER:** LS-MAFS-465836-CS-INDV  
**DUTY STATION:** MASERU

**1. 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.

**2. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT**

The technical and financial review process is central to the concept of a Matching Grants Program, as it is meant to provide the technical and financial oversight during the selection of the portfolio.

**3. RESPONSIBILITIES AND TASKS**

Technical and financial reviewers are responsible to:

1. Review in detail and evaluate the applications against the designated criteria and weighting-scoring system and procedures provided by the MGP Secretariat.
2. Meet with the applicant(s) and service provider to assess their knowledge and competence and consequent ability to implement the investment.
3. Complete an evaluation report for each application reviewed, using the forms provided by the MGP Secretariat.
4. Assign criteria scoring and provide detailed comments when judged necessary for further consideration by the applicant, the MGP Secretariat and the MGC.
5. Assign, at the end of the evaluation report/form, a level of recommendation to the application for consideration by the MGP Secretariat and MGC during the next steps of

the selection procedure.

6. Support scoring and recommendations with any further detailed comments that may be judged important to be communicated to applicants.
7. Submit all completed review documentation, including the evaluated application and the evaluation report/form, to the MGP Secretariat within a maximum of 10 calendar days.
8. Participate, if invited to do so, in the MGC meeting to defend his/her evaluation or provide additional comments related to any of the evaluated applications in front of the MGC members.
9. Declare any interest relation or other relation with the participants linked (directly or indirectly) with the application proposed for evaluation and withdraw from the evaluation for which a potential conflict of interest may arise.
10. Keep the confidentiality of the evaluation from any participant or person related to the applicant of the service provider.

**4. DURATION**

- Contract duration is three (3) months.

**5. FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED BY THE CLIENT •**

- Forms to be used for evaluation of proposals
- Proposals from Beneficiaries.

**6. DELIVERABLES AND FINAL OUTPUT**

- Written report on the results of the evaluation including their recommendation on the proposals reviewed and scored.

**7. QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE**

- University degree in Agricultural economics or Degree in Agriculture.

**SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE**

1. At least 5 years of experience in the field(s) and the specialty(ies) that are (is) priorities of the MGP and for which he/ she may be invited to play the role of the technical evaluator.
2. Successful completion of a training program in the technical and financial review of investment proposals, as approved by the PMU and the MGC.
3. To have successfully accomplished a few activities on the

field of his/her specialization and have a good knowledge of Lesotho agriculture sector (production, processing and marketing issues). A good knowledge of international agriculture would be desirable.

4. To have a good grasp of the financial management issues associated with subproject design and implementation.
5. To be a well-known person, progressive and objective, have good communication skills with colleagues and partners as well as experience of multi-partner activities.
6. To have experience on the projects/programs of agriculture development and contacts and international experience on technology transfer would be an advantage.

**8. CLIENT ASSIGNMENT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS.**

Project Director assisted by Matching Grants Manager will coordinate implementation of activities under this contract, agreeing timing of services and for acceptance and approval of the reports and for receiving and approving the Consultant's invoices for the payment.

9. The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to Section III paragraph 3.14 to

3.17 of the World Bank's Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers dated November 2020 and revised in September 2023, setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest. A consultant will be selected in accordance with selection of Individual Consultants Method set out in Procurement Regulations.

**10. SUBMISSION**

Expressions of interest accompanied by detailed CV must be delivered in a written form to the address below in person by **14:30hrs Harare, Pretoria time on 31st January 2025** clearly marked "**Expression of Interest for Technical and Financial Reviewers**" For further clarifications contact:

To: Project Director-SADP II  
 Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security  
 Department of Livestock Services -Moshoeshoe 11  
 P.O. Box 24  
 Maseru 100 Lesotho.  
 Email: [procurement@sadpi.org.ls](mailto:procurement@sadpi.org.ls) cc [rkathibe@sadpi.org.ls](mailto:rkathibe@sadpi.org.ls)



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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



## It's back to the forest with another 'Muru' experience



DJ Allegro Africa performing during the previous Muru show in December 2024

### Staff Reporter

Riding on the wave of a successful inaugural Muru show that was recently hosted at The Caff, soulful DJ Allegro Africa is back with another explosive instalment of the show slated for February 1 at the same venue.

Designed to create an intimate and immersive outdoor experience filled with good vibes, heartfelt interactions, and exceptional music, it is safe to say the first instalment of the show lived up to its very billing as fans have called for a follow-up hardly two months on.

"The return of the show is by popular demand," Allegro told Newsday this week.

"Those who attended and those who missed out have demanded that we do it again. So, we had to be quick about it."

The previous line-up featuring the likes of El Part El, Phiz DJ, Khebza, Fivo and Mr Beekay will once again join Allegro on stage to deliver yet another unforgettable experience for the revelers.

The accompanying artists were carefully selected from a wider pool of "friends of Allegro"—a group of close friends and industry associates who share his vision of a supportive and harmonious creative environment.

The venue for Muru—a forest setting—

makes the name a natural choice, as Muru means forest in Sesotho, and Allegro believes that its ambience will enhance the audience's connection with both the music and nature, adding to the magic of the evening in the forest.

"The choice of the venue is a refreshing one; the people invited are very chilled; and the music to be delivered is going to add on to the experience of a life time."

The idea behind the show is to give Allegro's followers a chance to unplug with him and like-minded people while taking a break from their busy life schedules.

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

When he is not organising Muru, Allegro can be found hosting an online podcast, The Allegro Africa Podcast, which is fast gaining traction.

Allegro, whose real name is Nthethe Sekoli, is former member of the now disbanded house group, Zagro DJs comprising him, DJ Skizo and DJ Khebza.

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

**Date: 1-2 April 2025**

**Venue: Lavender Kontrei Market, Pretoria North, Gauteng.**



**Package 1: 6000**

**Includes:**

- Event Entry
- Transport
- 3 x nights
- 50+ Exhibitions
- 6 + Masterclasses
- Funding Opportunities

**Package 2: 10 400**

- Entry and Exhibition  
Limited to **ONLY 5 farmers.**  
**NO perishable goods will be allowed**
- A table on the Exhibition floor
- Transport
- 3 x nights
- 6 + Masterclasses
- 50+ Exhibitions -Funding Opportunities

**Food is NOT included**

**Non-Refundable registration: M500**



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## SPORTS

# Matlama ink kit deal with Joachim

## Seabata Mahao

In a groundbreaking move aimed at boosting local employment and curbing counterfeit merchandise, Matlama Football Club (FC) has partnered with local clothing brand and retailer Joachim Garments.

The collaboration, sealed with a historic five-year agreement, appoints Joachim Garments as the exclusive manufacturer of all Matlama off-field apparel, including supporter and player with plans to expand to on-field kit soon.

The initiative marks a significant milestone for Matlama as it becomes the first local football club to wear apparel produced by a Basotho-owned brand. Beyond football, the partnership underscores economic development, community pride, and cultural celebration.

Speaking during the signing ceremony earlier this week, Matlama's Communication and Marketing Manager, Ramafahla Thamae, highlighted the dual mission of the collaboration: reducing unemployment and combating counterfeit goods.

He announced that authentic Matlama jerseys will be sold exclusively at Joachim Garments for M600.00 each. Thamae urged fans



Matlama FC and Joachim Garments collaborate for off-field gear

to support the local brand, emphasising that the partnership would create jobs for Basotho and discourage counterfeit production, with strict legal measures promised against offenders.

The Creative Director and Founder of

Joachim Garments, Katiso Joachim Tsoho, expressed his excitement and pride in the project. Tsoho, a passionate football supporter and former player himself, described the opportunity to design and manufacture Matlama's kit as a personal and professional

honour.

"Designing and sewing these jerseys was a challenging but fulfilling journey," Tsoho said. "I wanted to create something that reflects Matlama's history, Basotho culture, and the legacy of King Moshoeshoe I.

"The jersey incorporates significant elements from the club's logo, such as the image of King Moshoeshoe I, his warriors' stake and shield, and even the laces on his shoulders. The stripes on the shoulders are a tribute to these laces, connecting the team's identity to our heritage."

Matlama's president, Moeketsi Khojane, praised Joachim Garments for their creativity and willingness to collaborate. He emphasised the importance of supporting local talent and fostering economic growth within Lesotho.

"This jersey is a testament to the exceptional artistic talent of Basotho," Khojane said. "As Matlama, we are committed to seeing our country's economy rise through the creativity and innovation of our people. We urge our supporters and all Basotho to back local businesses and celebrate the incredible talent within our nation," Khojane added.

# Makatiles dominate cycling competition



Road Race 2025 Champion, Kabelo Makatile

## Seabata Mahao

The Makatile family solidified their legacy in Lesotho's cycling history as Kabelo and Pontšo Makatile claimed victories in the recent Road Race 2024/25 for the fourth consecutive year.

The annual competition, organised by the Federation of Cycling Lesotho (FCL), took place at Thota-Moli in Mazenod last Saturday. The 100-kilometer event featured four categories: Elite, Women, Under 23, and Under 17.

Kabelo emerged as the champion in the 100km elite category, while Pontšo triumphed in the 60km women's category. Both winners walked away with gold medals and the opportunity to represent Lesotho in upcoming international competitions.

Following the race, the FCL's spokesperson Malefane Morie expressed satisfaction with the event, noting that the turnout was impressive, with a significant number of riders participating.

He however, observed a need to educate Basotho about competitive cycling. Morie said the FCL plans to host future competi-

tions in the highlands to expose riders to different terrains and challenges.

In his category, Kabelo outperformed the National Mountain Bike (MTB) Champion Phetsetso Monese to lead the race to the finish line. Kabelo, who began riding at the age of three and competing at ten, credited his father for inspiring his love for cycling.

Kabelo said he had participated in numerous races, including the African Championship, where he consistently ranked among the top 10. He explained that the 100km race was particularly challenging due to its lap format but noted that his determination and preparation helped him secure victory.

He is currently training with the World Cycling Center as he prepares for an upcoming competition in Rwanda.

Meanwhile, veteran rider Phetsetso Monese faced several challenges during the race, including falling off his bike. Despite finishing in third place, Monese expressed pride in his performance and emphasized that this race served as part of his preparation for future competitions in Cape Town, South Africa.

In the women's category, Pontšo Makatile delivered a stellar performance to win the

60km race. Pontšo's efforts and determination further highlighted the Makatile family's dominance in the competition.

In the Boys Under-23 category, Khotsofalang Rakaota emerged victorious, followed by Mahooana Makatile in second place and Thato Tlouoe in third. The Boys Under-17 category was won by Tšaba Sefali, with Seutloali

Morie taking second place, while Kefuoe Tolo was unable to finish the race.

The event was not without its challenges, as some riders struggled with the tough course, and a few did not finish their races. Despite this, the competition was hailed as a success, with organisers and participants looking forward to more events in the future.

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MALUTI MOUNTAIN CEMENT THE Lehakoe CLUB



17 JAN - 23 JAN 2025

# Likuena, Mehalalitoe unveil stylish kits



Chris Theko

In a move that promises to ignite pride among football enthusiasts, the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) officially unveiled the new kits for the national teams, Likuena (men's) and Mehalalitoe (women's), on Wednesday this week.

The much-anticipated event took place at LeFA's headquarters in Maseru, showcasing the latest designs crafted by renowned sportswear manufacturer Umbro.

The new kit lineup features a comprehensive collection of on-field and off-field attire, including supporter replicas tailored for home, away, and friendly matches. With bold designs and innovative materials, the kits aim to combine style, performance, and comfort for players and fans alike.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by players, LeFA Executive officials, and key

stakeholders who celebrated the modern look of the kits.

Speaking at the event, LeFA President Advocate Salemane Phafane emphasised the importance of aligning the national teams' image with their ambitions on the global stage while keeping the identity.

"These kits are more than just uniforms; they symbolise our national pride and the spirit of football in Lesotho. With Umbro's expertise, we are confident our teams will stand out both in appearance and performance," said Phafane.

The relationship between LeFA and Umbro started in 2019 with the first edition of the striped kit which was revised in 2023 though still keeping a similar design. The continued relationship over the years is said to be due to integrity and respect that

the company has for the Lesotho Football governing body.

"We are proud that we have established a relationship with a company that respects us and not only take us for a ride, which also helps us because they do not only supply us with jerseys but whenever we run out of match balls, we tell them and they immediately provide us a consignment of match balls for free. They help us a lot."

Umbro's designs incorporate cutting-edge fabric technology to ensure players remain comfortable and agile during intense matches. The home kit features white colours with Lesotho's iconic blue and the green colours striped on the chest, paying homage to the nation's flag.

The away kit has a similar design with the iconic blue that has white and green

stripes and friendly kits explore a similar design with the dominant green with blue and white stripes colour combinations that bring a contemporary flair to the national teams' look.

The unveiling of the new kits marks a significant milestone in LeFA's efforts to elevate the national teams' profile on and off the field. As Likuena and Mehalalitoe gear up for their next competitions, the new kits serve as a powerful reminder of the unity and passion that football brings to the nation.

The new kit is expected to be active for two years before it can be replaced by a new design. With the inclusion of replicas that cater for kids under 12, this new kit launch has catered for all Basotho with sizes from extra small to extra-large.



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