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LESOTHO RANKED AFRICA'S HEAVIEST-SMOKING NATION

- *Half of men in the country smoke*
- *Women join the habit*

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Lesotho ranked Africa's heaviest-smoking nation

• Half of men in the country smoke
• Women join the habit

Two cigarettes placed on a table suitable for smoking or addiction concept - Picture Coutesy : Freepik

Ntsoaki Motaung

Lesotho has emerged as one of Africa's heaviest-smoking countries, with new data from the World Health Organisation (WHO) showing alarmingly high tobacco use rates, especially among men.

According to the WHO's 2024 global tobacco prevalence estimates, 49.4 percent of Basotho men aged 15 and older use tobacco, compared to the African regional average of just 16.6 percent.

This means nearly one in every two men in Lesotho smokes or uses tobacco, placing the country alongside the continent's worst offenders, including, Algeria (44.2 percent), Madagascar (41.8 percent), South Africa (39.0 percent), and Botswana (29.4 percent).

When both sexes are combined, Lesotho's age-standardised prevalence rate stands at 28 percent, nearly three times higher than the African average of 9.5 percent. It is the highest in Africa, followed by Madagascar with 25.6 percent, South Africa with 23.7 percent, and Algeria with 22.4 percent.

Among women, the rate is 6.6 percent, similar to global levels (6.6 percent) but much higher than the African female average of 2.5 percent, a worrying sign of increasing tobacco use among Basotho women.

Lesotho not only ranks high in tobacco prevalence but also has a significant absolute number of tobacco users relative to its population. According to WHO 2024 estimates, the country has approximately 391,000 tobacco users, of whom 343,000 are men and 47,000 are women. Among these, an estimated 323,000 are tobacco smokers, with 311,000 men and 12,000 women actively smoking.

Despite its modest population of just over 2.1 million, Lesotho exhibits a per capita tobacco use rate that surpasses most African nations.Nearly half of adult men in the country smoke, highlighting a substantial public health challenge.

In comparison, Eswatini, a neighbouring country of similar size, has only 84,000 tobacco users, while Botswana, which has a larger population, reports fewer smokers at 241,000.

This stark contrast underscores Lesotho's unusually high tobacco burden for its population size and points to the urgent need for targeted interventions to curb smoking and its associated health risks.

The WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco use 2000–2024 and projections 2025–2030 is a timely update to the last edition published two years ago, and a valuable companion to the recently released WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2025.

Together these reports demonstrate that nearly all countries are advancing in the adoption and implementation of effective tobacco control measures, with many already reaping the benefits through notable reductions in tobacco use and as a consequence direct health and economic benefits.

"We are especially encouraged that the global average prevalence of current tobacco use among adults dropped below 20 percent in 2023, a level sustained in 2024," said Dr. Jeremy Farrar, Assistant Director-General for Health Promotion, Disease Prevention, and Care.

"Despite the good news, this trend needs to accelerate if we are to meet the 30 percent reduction target set by Member States under the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases," Farrar added. He indicated that progress was lagging, with only a 27 percent average reduction among Member States.

As one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets, implementing the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is one of the most effective approaches toward the success of the SDGs.

"WHO and the Secretariat to the WHO FCTC work together as co-custodians of the SDG indicator 3.a.1. This report contributes to global monitoring of SDG target 3.a, which calls for strengthening implementation of the WHO FCTC in all countries, as appropriate," Farrar explained.

He added: "We must remain vigilant against an industry that will fight to protect and even rebuild its customer base. While 61 countries are now on track to achieve the 30 percent reduction in prevalence target, over the past two years, three countries have slipped back from the on-target group, and another 11 countries that achieved earlier declines in tobacco use have stalled or reversed."

In total, according to Farrar, 12 countries are now seeing tobacco use prevalence rise. "These reversals are not just numbers, they represent millions more people at risk of disease, disability, and premature death in the years to come. Unless action is reinforced, today's stalled progress will translate directly into tomorrow's preventable deaths."

According to WHO, the source data behind the trend analysis in the report are nationally representative population-based surveys in the field between 1990 and 2024 that collected data on one or more forms of tobacco use.

The population of interest is people aged 15 years and older, but the source surveys covered varied age ranges. Only one in three surveys completed by countries and gathered for the analysis were designed to be representative of the population aged 15 years and older.

WHO also said that it gathers the surveys from multiple key sources.

These include reports from Parties to the WHO FCTC submitted to the Secretariat of the WHO FCTC biennially, surveys completed under the aegis of the Global Tobacco Surveillance System (in particular, the Global Adult Tobacco Survey), other WHO-supported surveys including WHO STEPwise surveys and World Health Surveys, and surveys undertaken by cross-national organisations, such as the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.

"WHO regional offices and WHO country offices made efforts to identify surveys conducted independently by countries. Some data are made available by countries expressly for use in this global estimation exercise. No published nationally representative population-based surveys were excluded from the analysis.

"Among the national surveys, varying approaches exist to asking people about their tobacco use, as well as the types of tobacco products they use. Different age ranges are surveyed, and the breadth of topics covered by the survey can differ," WHO said.

It further said that all this variety makes a global analysis of tobacco use as reported in national surveys challenging.

"Prevalence" is defined as the proportion of the population of interest who report that they use the product.

"Current use" of a product is defined as using the product at the time of the survey on a daily or non-daily basis. Some surveys restrict this definition to use in the past 30 days.

"Any tobacco use" is defined in this report as use of any type of tobacco – smoked and/or smokeless tobacco. "Any tobacco use" does not include the use of products that do not contain tobacco, such as electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), referred to in the report as e-cigarettes.

Heated tobacco products are classified as smoked tobacco products. Oral and nasal tobacco products are classified as smokeless tobacco. Nicotine pouches are classified as non-tobacco products and are not addressed in the report.

Lesotho has long struggled with high rates of tobacco consumption. In response, and to bolster national revenue, the government introduced the Tobacco and Alcoholic Products Levy (TAPL) in 2023. The levy aims to reduce consumption of these harmful substances while generating funds for development initiatives.

The TAPL was enacted through the Tobacco and Alcoholic Products Levy Act, No. 1 of 2023, which came into effect on October 1, 2023. Under this legislation, a 30 percent levy was imposed on tobacco products, and a 15 percent levy on alcoholic beverages.

These rates were later reduced to 15 percent and 7.5 percent, respectively, to allow businesses time to adjust. The primary objectives are to discourage excessive consumption and increase government revenue for developmental programs.

When presenting the budget speech for the 2025/2026 financial year, Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr. Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, noted: "Noting that government made a commitment to implement Alcohol and Tobacco levies incrementally to allow the administrative changes and business adjustments, government proposes increases of alcohol and tobacco levies by 2.5 percent and 5 percent, respectively."

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Insurance heavyweights brawl over unremitted premiums

Staff Reporter

LNIG Hollard has terminated its broker agreement with Insurecare Insurance Brokers following what it described as "unresolved administrative issues," particularly concerning premium remittance.

The insurer said the decision, which took effect yesterday October 8, 2025, was reached after several months of unsuccessful efforts to resolve the matter with Insurecare.

"This decision was not taken lightly," LNIG Hollard said in a notice to brokers this week.

"Over the past several months, we have engaged with Insurecare in good faith, offering multiple opportunities to resolve this issue. However, no meaningful action was taken to honour the commitment, and unfortunately the relationship reached a point where it could no longer be sustained in a manner that aligns with our values and operating standards."

The company said the termination follows a prolonged period of "unresolved administrative issues" despite repeated attempts to reach an amicable resolution.

LNIG Hollard Insure emphasised that the decision was taken "in the spirit of discipline, accountability, and trust," and did not reflect its general approach to broker relationships.

"We are sharing this update with you proactively so that you hear it from us first, not through speculation or third parties and to ensure it is not misinterpreted. This decision does not reflect our general approach to broker relationships but rather a necessary step to uphold discipline, accountability, and trust in our ecosystem

The insurer assured its partners that it remains "fully" committed to working closely with other credit brokers and to "delivering quality service to clients and driving sustainable growth" in the insurance industry.

LNIG Hollard Chief Executive Officer, Mpho Vumbukani

"We value the role you play in delivering quality service to clients and driving sustainable growth in our industry," it said.

Insurecare has not yet issued an official response. When contacted yesterday, the company requested that this publication contact it again today. LNIG Hollard requested written questions via email but had not responded at the time of going to print.

LNIG Hollard, one of Lesotho's largest and oldest insurers, trades as LNIG Hollard Insure and LNIG Hollard Life. Established in 1977, the company has provided both short-term and long-term insurance products for over four decades.

It says it was "the first insurer to protect Lesotho's emerging economy when no one else was around," positioning itself as "the biggest protector of Lesotho's economy from all stages of life."

Insurecare Insurance Brokers, on the other hand, describes itself as a 100 percent Basotho-owned firm with more than 25 years of experience in the insurance brokerage business. The company claims to have achieved "a phenomenal growth rate of over 100 percent per annum" in recent years.

Sources familiar with the dispute told this publication that Insurecare allegedly failed to remit about M2.3 million in insurance premiums collected from clients on behalf of LNIG Hollard.

They said as a broker, Insurecare was not authorised to collect premiums directly from policyholders, but reportedly did so and failed to transfer the funds to the insurer as required under the law.

Under Lesotho's Insurance (Licensing of Insurance Intermediaries) Regulations, 2016, the law sets out clear rules on how insurance brokers and agents should handle client premiums to ensure accountability and protect policyholders.

The regulations state that an insurance intermediary is not permitted to collect, hold, or in any way deal with premiums unless there is a written agreement with an insurer authorising them to do so. Even when such authorisation exists, the intermediary cannot delegate this responsibility to another person.

When an intermediary does receive premiums, they are required to remit the full amount to the insurer, deducting only any agreed service fees. Importantly, the law emphasises that all premiums collected from policyholders must be held in a fiduciary capacity, meaning the broker holds the money in trust on behalf of clients and the insurer.

To safeguard these funds, the intermediary must either transfer the premiums to the insurer or deposit them into a separate trust account designated for policyholder funds within one business day of receiving them. They are also obliged to maintain proper financial records and remit the premiums to the insurer within 30 days, along with a detailed statement of the payments made.

The law further provides that once a policyholder pays a premium to an authorised intermediary, that payment is legally considered as having been made directly to the insurer. This protects clients from being penalised if the intermediary later fails to transfer the funds.

However, the regulations also make it clear that insurers who authorise intermediaries to collect premiums remain personally liable for those funds as if they had received them themselves. If an intermediary fails to pay over the premiums as required, the insurer must report the default to the Commissioner of Insurance within 30 days.

Failure by an intermediary to remit premiums in accordance with these requirements is a serious offence under section 118 of the Insurance Act, and could lead to regulatory or criminal action.

Appeal Court questions Letsoepa's VIP treatment

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The Court of Appeal this week heard the unusual bail hearing of former Commissioner of Police (COMPOL) Molahlehi Letsoepa, who faces charges linked to the murder of Police Constable Mokalekale Khetheng. The deceased's family is calling for Letsoepa's immediate arrest.

A full bench of five judges, Court President Professor Kananelo Mosito, Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane, Judge Petrus Damaseb, Judge Philip Musonda, and Judge Van der Westhuizen, presided over the matter, which has drawn national attention.

Letsoepa, who fled Lesotho in 2017 following Khetheng's murder, recently returned after seven years abroad. Upon his return, he reportedly met with Minister of Justice and Law Richard Ramoeletsi, Commissioner of Police Borotho Matsoso, and the investigating officer, meetings that the Court sharply questioned.

"What does the Minister of Justice have to do with someone who is facing criminal charges?" questioned Judge Petrus Damaseb.

The bench expressed serious concern over the Minister's involvement, questioning why an ordinary murder suspect would be afforded such privileged access to top government officials.

The Court also criticised the manner in which the High Court initially handled the matter, in chambers, citing that bail proceedings, particularly in criminal cases, must be held in open court to ensure transparency and public confidence.

This unprecedented situation has raised fundamental questions about judicial integrity, political interference, and the equality of all citizens before the law.

The Khetheng murder trial continues in the High Court. The accused — Thabo Tšukulu, Mabitle Matona, Haleokoe Taasoane, and Mothibeli Mofolo, are facing charges under section 4 of the Penal Code No. 6 of 2010. Former Police Minister Tšeliso Mokhosi, initially among the accused, was later released on bail and turned state witness.

Police Constable Mokalekale Khetheng was last seen alive on March 26, 2016, at Ha-Mokhalinyane on the outskirts of Maseru. His body was later exhumed at Lepereng, months after he was reported missing in what investigators described as a gruesome killing.

In their court application, Khetheng's family, who are appellants, complained of what they described as the "honourable" treatment accorded to Letsoepa, who they argue was admitted to bail under "questionable circumstances." "Therefore, it appears that the bail application was heard in chambers under circumstances which require considerable explanation," they stated.

"This Honourable Court has deprecated the habit of handling controversial cases in chambers in a number of instances. I [Thabo Khetheng] understand the approach of this Honourable Court to be that public hearings are open to media coverage so that proceedings are not shrouded in secrecy. In any event, I am satisfied with the decision of the Court a quo [High Court] in terms of which Mr. Molahlehi Letsoepa was granted bail in chambers.

"Transparency connotes openness, frankness, honesty, absence of bias, collusion, and consideration of any sort," reads Khetheng's father's affidavit.

Khetheng's family lawyer, Advocate Christopher Lephuthing, argued that, given the viva voce evidence, evidence by word of mouth, presented during the habeas corpus application filed by the deceased's family following his disappearance, questions remain over the Director of Public Prosecutions' (DPP's) stance in not initiating extradition proceedings.

"For reasons known to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, no effort was made to secure the appearance of Mr. Letsoepa, who had evaded justice by hiding in the Republic of South Africa, but the DPP opted to apply for separation of trials," the affidavit reads.

Advocate Lephuthing submitted that individuals who "acquired specialized knowledge of the system and became skilled and sure-footed in defeating the ends of justice continue to exploit means of releasing proven flight risks on bail," adding that this practice is at odds with the law and public expectations of the administration of justice and a criminal justice system based on constitutionalism.

The deceased's father further accused Letsoepa in his affidavit of "undermining and jeopardising" the objectives and proper functioning of the criminal justice system while serving as COMPOL. He said this was evident when Letsoepa opposed the habeas corpus application following the deceased's disappearance. He further pointed out that Letsoepa was supported by the Crown to the extent that taxpayer money was used to furnish the court with "false information," regardless of the circumstances in which the deceased was killed and the public outrage those events induced.

The family also criticised Judge 'Mafelile Ralebese for granting Letsoepa's bail without providing reasons. "More particularly, the basic enquiry remains to ascertain where the interests of justice lie in a situation where the ringleader is admitted to bail while his operatives are refused bail."

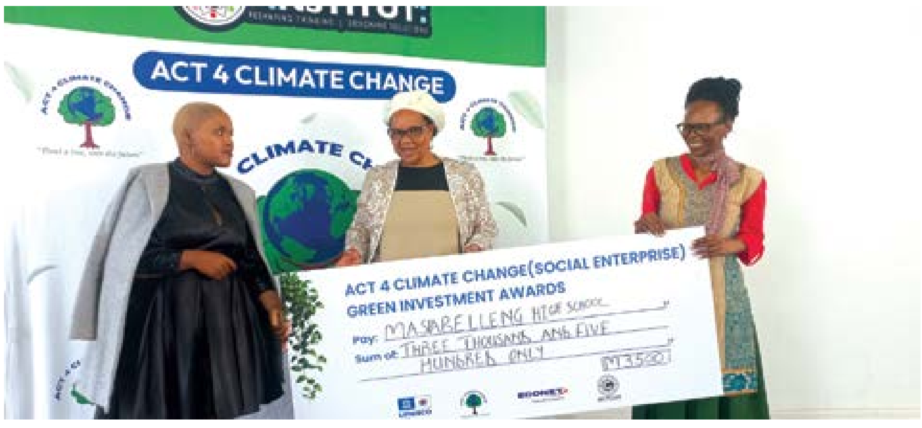
They also accused the Crown of filing the affidavit of Inspector Tankiso Lethoko, which "they did not commission by design," pointing out that this move was intended to give Letsoepa an "unmerited advantage," resulting in a default judgment in his favour.

"I am considering section 12 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 1981 in the circumstances of this case. The Crown's conduct in not pursuing the extradition process suggests that they harboured or assisted him [Letsoepa] to evade justice, as they did in opposing the habeas corpus application, while proceeding with the trial for the same joint offence of killing my son," the affidavit further reads.

The judgment is expected to be handed down on November 7.

Students empowered to lead climate action projects

Thoboloko Ntšonyane



In a move to foster sustainability, twelve schools across the country have recently secured funding to implement eco-friendly projects as part of climate action programmes. The recipients are expected to develop initiatives that promote environmental awareness and generate income.

According to GemInstitute Director Mpho Letima, the initiative aims to integrate sustainability into education and nurture socially responsible young people. "We are investing in this initiative because we believe in education. We are investing because we believe in the young person," she said.

The schools, representing nine districts, are the first group in the second phase of the Arts, Culture, Technology (#ACT4ClimateChange) Social Enterprise Green Investment Venture. Each will implement projects that, if successful, will contribute to combating climate change and enhancing local ecosystems.

In total, M129,185 has been allocated to the schools, with funding provided by UNESCO through the National Commission for UNESCO and implemented by GemInstitute.

The beneficiaries and their allocations include:

- Mutlanyana Primary School – M20,000
- Masiabelleng High School – M3,500
- Cana High School – M15,000
- Lilala Future Veges – M20,000
- Masitise High School – M20,000
- St James High School – M16,320
- Lesotho High School – M9,000
- Mabathoana High School – M9,000
- Hermitage High School – M8,000
- Thabana Morena Primary and High School – M13,630
- Pitseng High School – M23,735

Letima noted that recipient schools were also provided with fruit trees, many of which have already flourished. She urged schools to become centers of excellence for sustainability and community development.

Previously, schools ran successful agricultural projects, including raising pigs and chickens for sale. Letima challenged the new recipients to be "disruptors" and build on existing resources to create green hubs that others can emulate.

Hermitage High School plans to engage in cuniciculture, selling rabbits for meat, fur, and medicinal urine. Lineo Ntaitsane described the funding as a "game changer," noting the rabbits' fast growth and low maintenance costs.

Masiabelleng High School Principal 'Mantsane Makhetha expressed excitement over the support, saying it will extend sustainable projects to students. Partnering with a local youth farmer, the school will buy nets and sell seedlings and vegetables to surrounding communities.

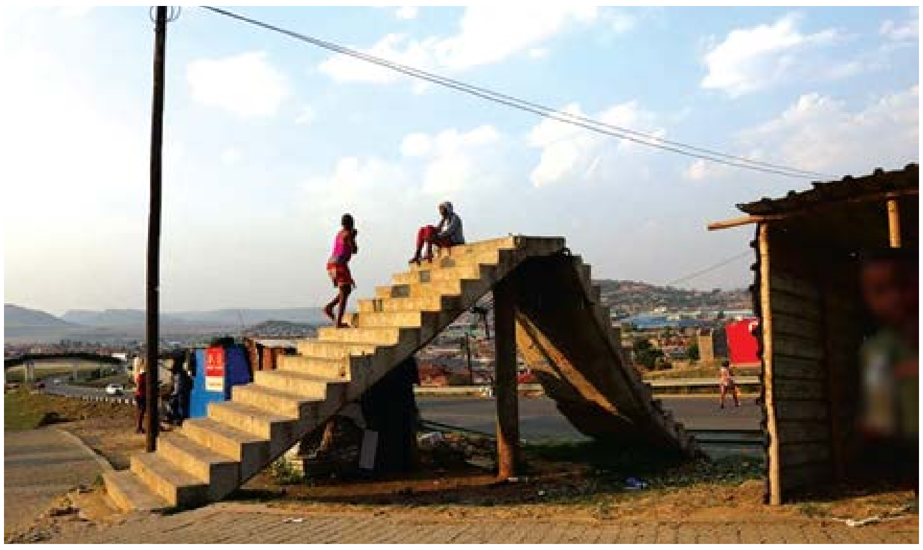
Thabana Morena Primary and High School students, Tšireletso 'Matli and Thabiso Moorosi, will launch a dried fruit venture using a dehydrator, sealers, and packaging materials. They plan to process apples, peaches, and pears from the school and surrounding areas, with guidance from Agriculture and Commercial Studies teachers.

The initiative emphasises stakeholder collaboration and discourages the "silo mentality." Mankopane Nkomo from the National Commission for UNESCO urged the schools to serve as beacons of hope and inspiration. She stressed that hands-on involvement fosters responsibility, encourages practical skills, and ensures students continue contributing to society beyond their studies.

"You have to grow these funds," Nkomo said, encouraging schools to leverage their resources for maximum impact.

AfDB report exposes Lesotho's deep-rooted poverty and economic stagnation

A new African Development Bank report reveals the stark reality facing Lesotho as the Mountain Kingdom struggles with persistent poverty, inequality, and a failing transition to higher-value economic activities



Maseru, Lesotho

Staff Reporter

Behind Lesotho's picturesque mountain landscapes lies a sobering reality that has been laid bare in the new African Development Bank's (AfDB) newly released Country Strategy Paper for 2025-2030.

The comprehensive report published in September 2025,paints a troubling picture of a nation trapped in a cycle of poverty, inequality, and economic stagnation, where half the population lives below the poverty line and the promise of development remains frustratingly out of reach.

The report presents the Bank Group's Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Lesotho for the period 2025-2030. It analyses recent political and socio-economic developments and outlook, presents the lessons learned, and defines the strategy that will guide the AfDB's support to Lesotho during that period.

The report revealed that Lesotho's overarching development challenge "has remained unchanged since the previous CSP 2020-2024," the slow progress towards higher value-added economic activities.

This fundamental weakness has held back economic diversification and structural transformation, leaving the kingdom vulnerable and its people struggling.

The report's statistics speak to a nation deeply divided along urban-rural lines. While overall poverty has declined from 56.6 percent in 2002 to 49.7 percent in 2017, this modest progress masks a stark disparity.

Urban poverty has fallen significantly to 28.5 percent from 41.5 percent, driven by increased formal employment linked to higher education attainment and expanded social protection programs.

Rural Lesotho, however, tells a different story. Rural poverty has barely budged, dropping only marginally to 60.7 percent from 61.3 percent over the same period. The report attributes this stubborn persistence to "high dependence on rainfed subsistence agriculture and falling remittances from South Africa," a double blow that has left rural communities trapped in poverty.

Inequality in Lesotho is striking. The report said Lesotho ranks as the eighth most unequal country out of 76 nations, with a Gini Index score of 44.9. This places the kingdom among the world's most economically divided societies, where wealth and opportunity remain concentrated in the hands of a few while the majority struggle to make ends meet.

A youth population awaiting economic opportunity

Another troubling statistic is youth unemployment. With young people aged 15-35 making up about 60 percent of the total population, Lesotho should be capitalising on this demographic dividend. Instead, the unemployment rate among youth stands at a staggering 38.9 percent in 2024.

"The labour market continues to offer limited formal job opportunities, especially for unskilled and rural youth, resulting in a significant skills mismatch," the report states.

The education system bears much of the blame, struggling to equip young Basotho with market-relevant skills. Only 30 percent of students transition from primary to secondary education, hampered by factors including poverty and long travel distances to schools.

For young men, the crisis is particularly acute. They face persistently high unemployment with limited opportunities in the domestic economy to replace the loss of mining jobs in South Africa. Many returning migrants lack the skills demanded by Lesotho's labour market, contributing to long-term joblessness.

Young women face their own set of challenges. Despite Lesotho achieving full parity in education attainment, the kingdom has closed only 49.4 percent of the wage gap for similar work. Women constitute almost half (47.4 percent) of the labour force but are relegated to unsecure, low-paying jobs in the informal sector, with an unemployment rate of 30.7 percent.

The disconnect between education and employment opportunities represents one of Lesotho's most critical failures. Despite a high adult literacy rate of 82 percent, the education system remains poorly aligned with labour market needs. Limited vocational and technical training contributes to a significant skills mismatch that leaves young people educated but unemployable.

Underutilised ICT sector

The report identified a glimmer of hope in an unexpected sector. The underutilised ICT sector, with internet penetration at just 31 percent, offers strong potential for job creation, skills development, and digital entrepreneurship.

Targeted investments in digital literacy and ICT infrastructure could unlock new opportunities, particularly for youth and underserved communities.

Lesotho's health indicators paint a grim picture of a healthcare system under strain. Life expectancy stands at just 57.8 years, maternal mortality reaches 566 per 100,000 live births, and the doctor-to-population ratio is a meager 0.9 per 10,000 people.

There have been notable successes, particularly in combating HIV/AIDS. By 2022, 94 percent of the population living with HIV knew their status, and 86 percent were receiving treatment, achievements that deserve recognition in a region devastated by the epidemic.

However, the nutrition crisis threatens to undermine future generations. Stunting affects 34.6 percent of children under five – higher than the African average of 30.7 percent. The economic cost is devastating: Lesotho loses USD 161 million annually (5.3 percent of national income) due to malnutrition, with stunting alone costing USD 137 million (4.6 percent of national income).

The government is pursuing Special Economic Zones and a national industrial policy to revive declining industrial performance, but the challenges are formidable. Poor road connectivity, unreliable electricity and water supply, outdated regulations, a small domestic market, low export diversification, and dependence on trade preferences have all contributed to industrial stagnation.

South Africa's economic slowdown has reduced remittances and foreign investment, while increased competition in garment exports has caused factory closures. The linkages between Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises and large exporters remain minimal, limiting opportunities for local businesses to participate in export markets.

A private sector struggling to thrive

The private sector, which should be the engine of economic growth and job creation, remains small and faces structural challenges. Dominated by SMMEs, it operates in a weak business environment. The informal economy contributes about 30percent of GDP and employs over 50 percent of the workforce, mainly in subsistence agriculture under precarious and unregulated conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these vulnerabilities, leading to the closure of many foreign-owned factories. Foreign direct investment net inflows declined sharply from 1.4 percent of GDP in 2020 to -1.2 percent by end-2023, reflecting the deteriorating investment climate.

According to the World Bank's October 2024 Business Ready assessment, Lesotho performs well in Business Entry (76 percent), Labor (63 percent), and International Trade (61 percent) but scores poorly in Market Competition (26 percent), Business Solvency (37 percent), and Business Location (46 percent) due to lagging digital procurement, limited case management systems, and lack of energy efficiency standards.

Neglected agricultural sector

Agriculture remains key to poverty reduction, providing subsistence to 80 percent of the population. Yet the sector is constrained by poor farming methods and climate extremities. The El-Niño induced dry spells during the 2023/24 agricultural season reduced the area planted by 32 percent compared to 2022/23, leading to the lowest yields since 2018/19. About 33 percent of the total population is estimated to be food-insecure for the 2024/25 consumption year.

The cancellation of the USD 300 million Millennium Challenge Corporation compact in May 2025, which was meant to invest in rural irrigated high-value crop horticulture, has dealt a significant setback to the agriculture sector, stalling anticipated progress in productivity and rural transformation.

Meanwhile, the AfDB's new Country Strategy Paper for 2025-2030 aims to support Lesotho in accelerating progress towards high value-added production. The strategy focuses on two priority areas: developing sustainable and quality infrastructure to promote industrialisation, and strengthening institutional and human capacities for improved public sector efficiency and enhanced competitiveness.

"The objective of the Bank's new CSP 2025-2030 for Lesotho is to support the country accelerate progress towards high value-added production. This is expected to facilitate economic diversification and lay the foundation for private sector led inclusive and resilient growth, and structural transformation.

"To achieve this, the CSP focuses on two Priority Areas: (i) Developing sustainable and quality infrastructure to promote industrialisation; and (ii) Strengthening institutional and human capacities for improved public sector efficiency and enhanced competitiveness. The CSP selectively covers four sectors: energy, ICT and water, added at the request of the government following the cancellation of Millennium Corporation Challenge Compact II support in May 2025, under Priority Area I, and economic and financial governance under Priority Area II.

"Under Priority Area I, the Bank will support Lesotho's ambition of expanding access to sustainable and quality infrastructure. To maximize developmental impact, and in response to CODE's guidance, the Bank will prioritize integrated development operations to focus Lesotho's limited ADF resources on catalytic multi-sectoral interventions. Under Priority Area II, the Bank will consolidate its previous and ongoing work in strengthening public service delivery and enhance institutional and human capacities for effective to implementation of NSDP II.

"Bank support under Priority Area II will aim to improve the institutional and regulatory environment for a more effective public sector and an enabling private sector environment for a competitive private sector, thereby complementing Bank support under Priority Area I, which aims to reduce the cost of doing business."

Meanwhile, the Board of Directors of the African Development Bank Group has since approved $209 million (about M3.70 billion) for the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Lesotho, to accelerate the country's transition toward economic diversification, resilience, and inclusive growth over the next five years.

"Lesotho stands at a critical juncture," said Moono Mupotola, the Bank Group's Deputy Director General for Southern Africa and Country Manager for Lesotho in announcing the funding.

"This comprehensive strategy leverages the country's abundant water resources, strategic location, and demographic dividend to unlock new pathways for inclusive growth and economic diversification."

Newsday Business

PostBank and Lesotho Housing in low-income housing deal

Seabata Mahao

In a major step toward addressing Lesotho's housing challenges, Lesotho PostBank (LPB) and the Lesotho Housing and Land Development Corporation (LHLDC) have signed a landmark agreement to make home ownership more accessible, especially for low-income earners.

The two institutions officially recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), pledging joint efforts to deliver affordable housing to financially constrained Basotho.

The agreement outlines collaborative efforts to provide standard two-bedroom houses in selected areas, with LPB offering relaxed home loan terms and competitive interest rates.

The MoU was signed by LPB's Chief Executive Officer, Mokhachane Mopeli, and LHLDC's Managing Director, 'Malesekela Matekane. The initial rollout will cover housing developments in Linakotseng (Maseru), Manobo (Mafeteng), and select locations in Qacha's Nek, though development in the latter is still pending.

The project offers more than just walls and a roof. The standard units will include two bedrooms, open-plan kitchen and living areas, and will be connected to essential infrastructure including electricity, piped water, roads, and internet-ready provisions.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mopeli stressed the cultural and emotional significance of home ownership for Basotho.

"It is cultural for us as Basotho, when introducing ourselves, to mention our name and where we come from, meaning where we live. That embodies who we are," he said.

"Building a home instils pride and dignity. Every Mosotho deserves that."

He explained that the initiative aligns with LPB's broader mission to improve lives by providing financial products that empower the nation's citizens.

"Our role is not just to give out loans, but to enable clients to access homes that come with all necessary amenities. We also offer additional financing for furnishings or even car loans to improve their standard of living," said Mopeli.

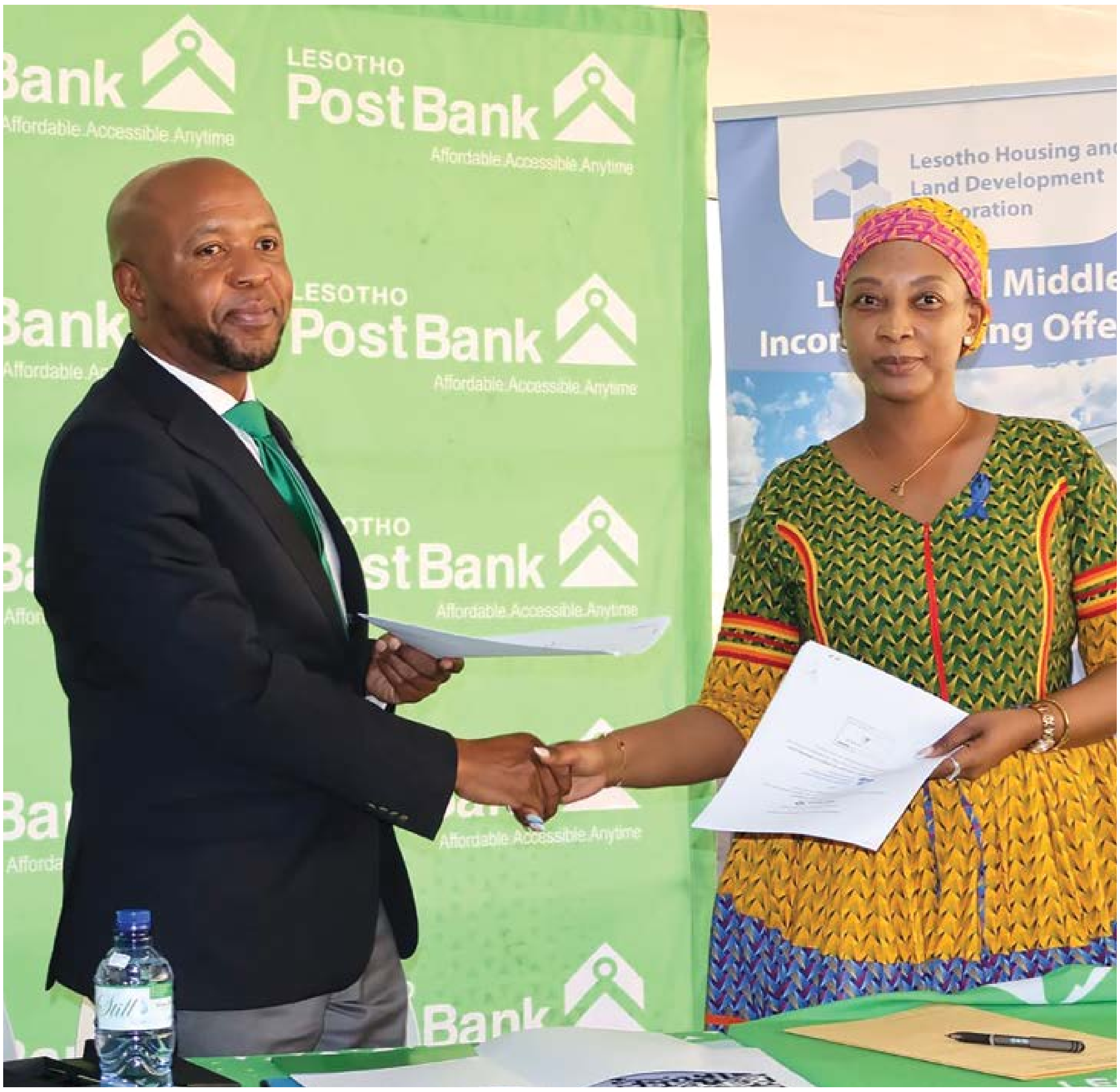
LPB's Senior Branch Manager, 'Mamahanetsa Mahanetsa, highlighted the accessibility of the loan offerings, emphasising that even young professionals and low-income earners can qualify.

"Even clients earning as little as M3, 000 per month may qualify for these loans, depending on their financial profiles," she said.

She noted that LHLDC's lowest-priced houses are valued at approximately M300, 000 and come fully equipped with showers or bathtubs, electricity, and sanitation, making home ownership a viable alternative to renting.

"It makes more sense for someone renting a bachelor flat to consider this opportunity, the rent they pay monthly could easily become a loan repayment for a home they actually own," she explained.

For younger clients, the bank is offering repayment periods of up to 30 years, designed to keep monthly instalments manageable and within reach of those just starting their careers.



Lesotho Post Bank (LPB) and the Lesotho Housing and Land Development Corporation (LHLDC) have signed a landmark agreement to make home ownership more accessible especially for low-income earners

Interested individuals are encouraged to visit LPB branches nationwide for consultation and eligibility assessments to begin their journey toward home ownership.

For her part, Matekane said the partnership responds directly to Prime Minister Sam Matekane's vision of home ownership for all Basotho.

"LHLDC's mandate is to provide housing for low-income earners and allocate sites for development. However, one of our biggest hurdles has always been access to funding," she said.

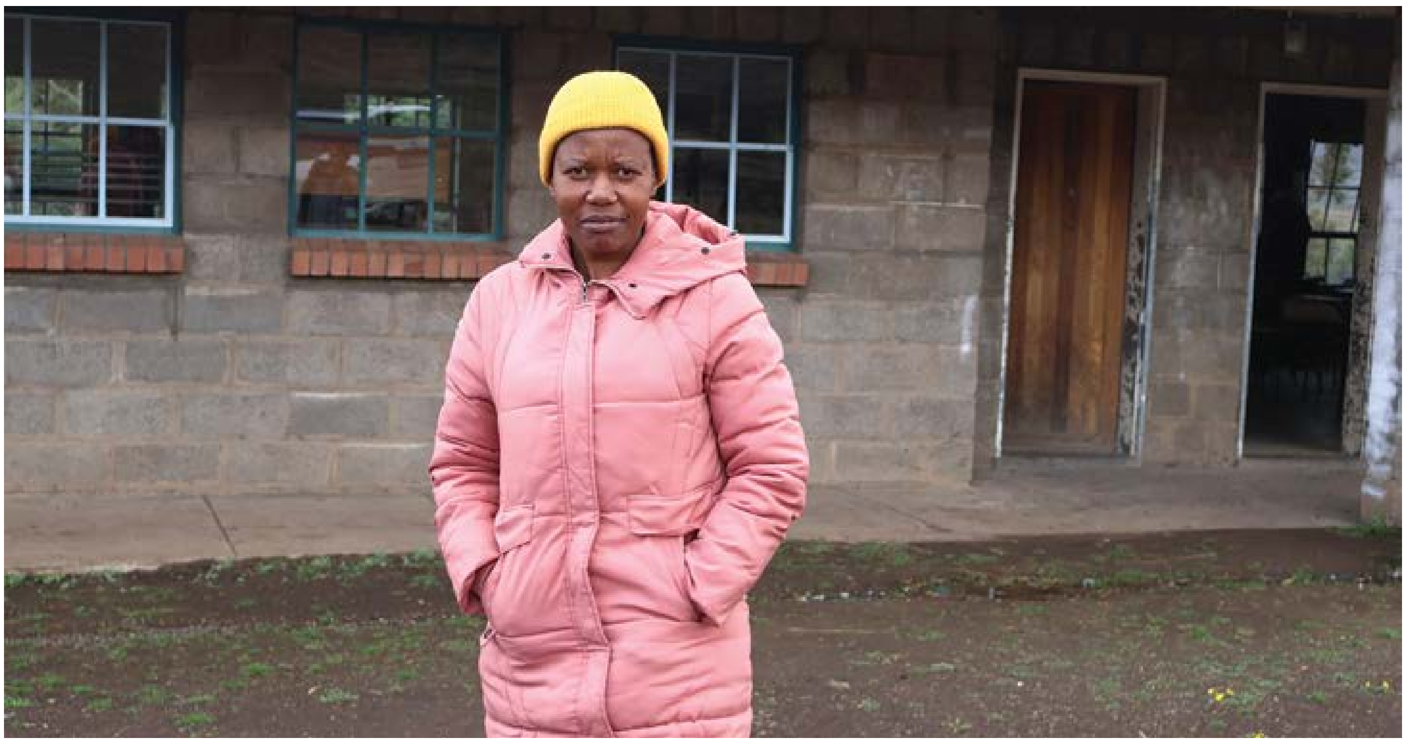
"This partnership with Post Bank allows us to relax stringent lending criteria that have excluded many deserving Basotho from accessing home loans."

She added that beyond standard homes, the partnership would introduce 'off-plan' construction options, allowing clients to build homes tailored to their individual needs and designs, yet still within the financial frameworks of the programme.

The partnership between LPB and LHLDC is being hailed as a timely intervention that addresses multiple challenges simultaneously. Beyond tackling the national housing deficit, the initiative is expected to inject growth into the construction and financial services sectors while promoting long-term investment and wealth creation among citizens.

The collaboration represents a shift toward inclusive financial services, removing barriers that have historically prevented low-income Basotho from achieving home ownership. By combining LHLDC's infrastructure expertise with LPB's flexible financing options, the partnership creates a sustainable pathway to dignified living for thousands of families.

Teacher's sacrifice helps girls stay in school, one pad at a time



'Matumisang Mafitoe a teacher Bokong Community School

Ntsoaki Motaung

When payday comes, most teachers think about groceries, rent, or transport money. But for 'Matumisang Mafitoe, a teacher at Bokong Community High School, her thoughts go first to her girls, the ones who might miss class this month because they cannot afford sanitary pads.

Mafitoe's mission is to end the cycle of missed education caused by period poverty.

Her initiative was born out of a stark realisation. An increasing number of girls became absent from school, and the reason was always the same. "I would find out from other students that a certain student did not come to school because they are on their periods and do not have pads. This broke me," she recalled.

Initially, she started by offering pads from her personal supply. However, the need quickly outgrew her own stock.

"I realised the numbers were increasing and that's when I realised that I have to have pads meant for school girls every month," she said.

She understands that even a few days of absence can have a cascading effect, leading to a student being left behind, struggling with their studies, and eventually performing poorly.

While she has reported this critical issue to the principal, who occasionally assists with buying pads from the school's budget, the financial struggles of the school mean that this vital initiative is now primarily funded from Mafitoe's own pocket.

Her commitment remains unwavering, driven by an empathy that was deeply cemented by a pivotal, heartbreaking incident.

She vividly remembers the moment when one schoolgirl, caught off-guard by the start of her period, did not have any pads at school. "I noticed her because of a huge blood stain on her uniform," Mafitoe explained.

She immediately and discreetly called the girl over, gave her pads, and instructed her to use her jersey to cover herself before sending her home to clean up and change.

"That was the most heartbreaking incident for me," she shared, making the fight against period poverty personal.

Mafitoe's commitment stems from her deep understanding of the far-reaching consequences of period poverty, which extend well beyond a few missed days of school.

She warned that this lack of access to sanitary products not only causes girls to miss school but also results in them dropping out altogether. The shame and anxiety associated with menstruation without proper protection severely affect their self-esteem.

Perhaps most tragically, Mafitoe noted that the desperation for essential sanitary products can push girls into having affairs with older men, a transactional relationship where the men provide for them, often leading to early and unintended pregnancies.

It is a vicious cycle of poverty and vulnerability that stunts a young woman's potential before it even has a chance to blossom.

Before she started her personal project, Mafitoe counted the cost of this crisis every week, at least three girls would miss school because they were on their period and did not have sanitary pads.

Today, her efforts have completely reversed that trend. "Now, not even a single learner misses school because they did not have pads, it may be because of other reasons," she announced with palpable relief.

The impact is immediately visible in the school environment. Principal 'Manthatisi Jobere is a firm believer in Mafitoe's work.

"Girls are more focused, less anxious, and more confident," the principal says. "What Mafitoe has done may seem 'small' to some people, but to these students, it has made a world of difference." This renewed confidence and stability translate directly into improved attendance and better academic performance.

Bokong Community High School is not an isolated case, the challenge of period poverty is a national crisis that requires systemic solutions.

Recognising this, the nation has seen the rise of powerful initiatives dedicated to addressing the problem at scale.

Among these is the Hlokomela Banana initiative, spearheaded by Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso. Launched in 2017, the program is committed to a massive undertaking, providing sanitary products to all female secondary and high school learners in Lesotho.

The necessity of such comprehensive initiatives is underscored by sobering statistics. Mpeake Sekhibane, the Project Manager for Hlokomela Banana, reported that an estimated 1,400 girls dropped out of school across the country in 2023 alone.

He attributed these dropouts to a combination of factors, including period poverty, early marriages, pregnancies, and the financial constraints of parents unable to pay school fees.

The global community has also stepped in to stress the urgency of the matter. The UNFPA emphasises a guiding principle: "Menstruation should never be the reason a girl is left behind." The agency promotes a holistic approach that includes not only access to menstrual products but also proper hygiene facilities in schools, education to normalise menstruation, and policies that dismantle harmful stigma.

In a major step toward a long-term, national solution, the UNFPA, in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, recently convened a five-day workshop on menstrual health and hygiene.

This gathering brought together government representatives, civil society organizations, and local groups to validate sustainable, cost-effective, and community-driven models for the universal distribution of sanitary pads in Lesotho.

The workshop was part of UNFPA's ongoing commitment to supporting the Government of Lesotho in tackling Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) challenges, including period poverty.

During the collaborative sessions, stakeholders meticulously reviewed proposed supply chain models for pad distribution, considering both school-based and community-level mechanisms.

They also worked on developing educational messages and a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure the program's long-term impact is sustained and measurable.

The foundation for these large-scale interventions was a thorough study. The 2022 Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) Situational Analysis for Lesotho, conducted by the Ministry of Health with UNFPA support, was instrumental in diagnosing the key challenges.

It confirmed that limited access to sanitary products, fear of soiling, misconceptions about menstruation, and menstrual pain were the primary culprits leading to high school absenteeism among girls.

Based on this comprehensive analysis, the government has made a strategic decision to pilot universal MHH delivery models. This two-year pilot program, starting in the Maseru and Mokhotlong districts, is specifically targeting girls and young women between the ages of 10 and 24.

While these large-scale government and NGO initiatives are critical for national change, the immediate, tangible impact is felt in schools like Bokong Community High School, where the personal sacrifice of a dedicated teacher ensures that no girl has to choose between her education and her dignity.

Mafitoe's daily act of kindness is a powerful testament to the difference one committed individual can make in ensuring the future remains open for every young woman.

Lesotho's smoking epidemic

Lesotho has earned the unenviable distinction of being Africa's heaviest-smoking nation. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) 2024 global tobacco prevalence estimates, nearly half of Basotho men, 49.4 percent, smoke or use tobacco, a rate far above the African regional average of 16.6 percent.

While women smoke at lower rates, the trend is rising, with 6.6 percent of Basotho women now using tobacco. Combined, Lesotho's tobacco prevalence is a staggering 28 percent, the highest on the continent.

The government has taken steps to curb this trend. The Tobacco and Alcoholic Products Levy (TAPL), introduced in 2023, was designed both to discourage excessive consumption and raise revenue for national development. Initially set at 30 percent on tobacco products, the levy was later reduced to 15 percent to allow businesses to adjust.

However, despite these measures, the country's smoking rates remain alarmingly high. This is partly because the TAPL affects only legal, branded cigarettes such as Courtleigh, Dunhill, and Stuyvesant. Smuggled cigarettes, often costing as little as M1 per stick, remain widely available, making it easy for Basotho to bypass official prices.

In this sense, the government's levy has only made legal brands more expensive while leaving cheap, illicit alternatives untouched.

However, the problem cannot be reduced to price alone. Neighbouring countries like Eswatini and Botswana, which face similar challenges with cheap, smuggled cigarettes, have managed to maintain lower smoking prevalence rates.

The real challenge lies in Lesotho's social attitude toward smoking. In many Basotho communities, smoking is normalised and highly visible. It is not unusual to see a man waiting for a taxi buying a cigarette openly, lighting up immediately, extinguishing it when a taxi appears and slipping it into his pocket before boarding.

Within homes, ashtrays are placed prominently on lounge tables, often signaling acceptance or even tacit encouragement of smoking. In some households, smoking is considered a cultural or social marker rather than a harmful habit.

This social normalisation reinforces the habit across generations. Children grow up seeing smoking as ordinary behaviour, without understanding its dangers or societal disapproval. Public health campaigns may warn about the risks, but unless societal norms shift, these warnings have limited impact.

For taxes and levies to work effectively, they must be combined with a cultural push that discourages public smoking and actively stigmatises tobacco use.

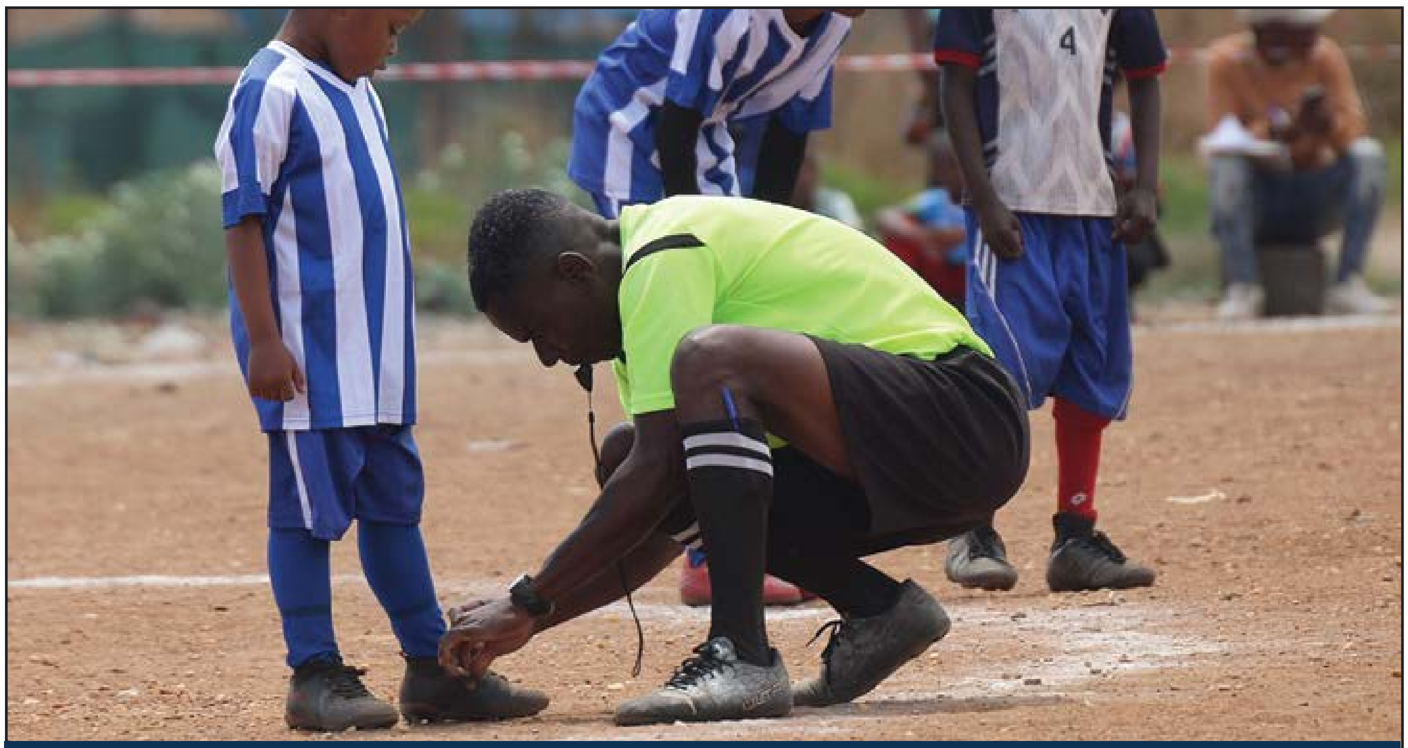
Addressing Lesotho's smoking epidemic requires a multifaceted approach. Schools, communities, and media must intensify campaigns that explain the health risks of smoking and promote smoke-free lifestyles. Smoking should no longer be seen as socially acceptable. Public smoking bans, visible disapproval, and social campaigns can help reshape public perception.

Efforts to curb illicit tobacco trade must be strengthened to complement taxation policies. Parents must model non-smoking behaviours. Ashtrays should not be ornaments signaling acceptance; homes should actively discourage smoking.

Young people should be encouraged to embrace smoke-free lifestyles as aspirational and modern.

Unless these cultural and social shifts occur, levies alone will fail. Lesotho can impose taxes, raise prices, and introduce regulations, but as long as smoking is tolerated and normalised in everyday life, we will continue to see high rates of tobacco use, preventable illnesses, and early deaths.

The fight against smoking in Lesotho is not simply a fiscal or legislative challenge, it is a societal one. Changing the country's attitude toward smoking, making it socially unacceptable, and actively discouraging its practice is the only way to reverse this epidemic and protect future generations.



No Comment

Kananelo Boloetse

Common Concern

The silent barrier to progress

One of the most overlooked and yet pervasive challenges in Lesotho is our collective reluctance to support progress when it is led by someone we perceive as an opponent, rival, or even simply "other."

This phenomenon is not a reflection of incompetence or lack of ambition among our leaders or innovators; rather, it is rooted in an attitude that prioritises ownership of success over the success itself.

If someone outside our immediate circle is driving a project forward, whether it is an economic initiative, a community program, or a national policy, we often instinctively resist it, not because it is flawed, but because we do not want the credit, influence, or recognition to go to anyone else.

This cultural tendency manifests in subtle but powerful ways across society. Basotho may collectively express a desire for a thriving economy, improved public services, or social development, yet when these benefits are tied to someone we do not personally endorse, our support is hesitant, conditional, or even absent.

A development project that could transform a community may be quietly ignored, a policy that could create jobs may be dismissed in public conversation, or a social program that benefits children may receive lukewarm backing, all because the person leading it is not "one of us." In short, progress is often measured not by its impact, but by who is driving it.

The consequences of this mindset are significant. Promising initiatives are slowed, derailed, or co-opted by factions more interested in personal positioning than national benefit. Innovation is stifled, and talented individuals are discouraged from pursuing bold ideas for fear that they will encounter passive resistance or active obstruction.

Even when programs succeed, the broader society often struggles to rally around them, and this leavs achievements fragmented and their full potential unrealised.

This reluctance to support others' achievements is not limited to politics. It extends to business, education, agriculture, and community life.

A neighbour's successful business, a colleague's innovative business idea, or a student-led environmental project attracts skepticism or covert resistance if it is seen as elevating someone else's status. In some ways, the issue is psychological: the human desire for recognition, control, and influence becomes a lens through which all progress is evaluated.

What makes this challenge particularly insidious is how rarely it is acknowledged in public discourse. It is easier to attribute failure or stagnation to structural inefficiencies, limited resources, or government mismanagement than to confront the social attitudes that resist others' success.

Yet this dynamic shapes the nation profoundly, influences how policies are implemented, how communities organise, and how public initiatives are received. By silently undermining effective leadership and collaboration, society itself becomes a barrier to development.

The manifestations of this mindset are visible in everyday life. In politics, even policies that could improve livelihoods or infrastructure may be opposed or ignored if they are perceived as enhancing someone else's profile. Even within families and communities, the same dynamic operates, support is offered selectively, loyalty is conditional, and collective good is often subordinated to personal or group advantage.

Addressing this challenge requires more than policy interventions or legislative measures, it requires a profound cultural shift. Lesotho's future depends on cultivating a society that values ideas, outcomes, and initiatives for what they achieve, rather than for who owns them.

Schools, families, businesses, and civil society all have roles to play in fostering this ethos. Celebrating success, supporting innovation, and rallying behind initiatives should not be acts of allegiance, but expressions of collective responsibility.

Leadership must be evaluated on effectiveness and integrity, innovation on impact, and contributions to society on tangible benefit, rather than on affiliations, loyalties, or perceived competition.

Similarly, citizens must recognise that supporting good ideas, irrespective of origin, is not a betrayal of personal or political identity, it is an investment in national progress. Only by prioritising shared outcomes over individual pride or rivalry can Lesotho unlock the full potential of its people and resources.

Until this cultural shift occurs, even the most promising policies, projects, or innovations will face invisible resistance. The challenge is not a lack of talent, resources, or ambition, it is our unwillingness to embrace the success of others and, in doing so, the success of the nation as a whole.

For Lesotho to thrive, we must first confront this silent barrier: a mindset that privileges personal ownership over collective advancement. Only then can we transform potential into reality and ensure that progress is truly shared, inclusive, and sustainable.

Newsday Opinion

Dual citizenship as a catalyst for brain circulation: Rethinking Lesotho's development strategy

Theko Tlebere

As a researcher focused on migration and development, particularly on brain drain and brain circulation in Lesotho's health sector, my current work has helped me immensely in understanding how nations can leverage the mobility of skilled citizens to drive national growth. My doctoral study investigates how Basotho health professionals in the diaspora, especially in the United Kingdom and South Africa, can significantly contribute to revitalising Lesotho's health system through structured brain circulation mechanisms. Even though brain circulation is broader than just the health sector, the recent debates in Lesotho's Parliament about dual citizenship have raised a critical question: should citizenship be viewed as a rigid legal status, or as a developmental bridge connecting the homeland and its diaspora? This article contends that dual citizenship is a strategic tool for facilitating brain circulation rather than a mere political concession. Drawing on Lesotho's Eighth Amendment to the Constitution Act of 2018, I argue that constitutional reform has established a foundation for a modern, inclusive citizenship model that can transform emigration into a sustainable source of national development.

For most of the post-independence period, Lesotho, like many African nations, has suffered from significant brain drain. Skilled workers, particularly in the medical, engineering, and education sectors, have left in search of better opportunities abroad. This exodus of human capital has weakened institutional capacity and hindered progress toward national development goals. However, the global discourse on migration has evolved. Scholars such as Meyer (2001) and Saxenian (2005) introduced the concept of brain circulation, which re-frames mobility as a reciprocal exchange rather than a permanent loss, allowing for the movement of ideas, technologies, and investments between host and home countries. Under this framework, migrants are viewed not as defectors but as transnational agents of development who can enhance both their countries of origin and their host nations.

For Lesotho, brain circulation signifies a transition from not only reliance on remittances to fostering knowledge transfer, institutional collaboration, and innovation. This transformation necessitates a legal framework that allows migrants to maintain enduring ties to their homeland, precisely what dual citizenship achieves. In 2018, Lesotho made a historic move toward embracing global citizenship with the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution Act (No. 8 of 2018). This amendment repealed the restrictive Section 41 of the 1993 Constitution and replaced it with a more inclusive provision:

Section 41(1): "A citizen of Lesotho may hold citizenship of any other country in addition to his citizenship of Lesotho."

This clause represents a paradigm shift in Lesotho's constitutional philosophy, explicitly permitting dual nationality and acknowledging that global mobility is compatible with national loyalty.

The amendment also introduced Section 41A ("Restoration of Lesotho Citizenship"), which allows Basotho who lost their citizenship by acquiring another nationality to automatically regain it. This provision was designed to "facilitate the return and reintegration of Lesotho citizens by birth or ancestry who lost their citizenship," as stated in the Statement of Objects and Reasons published in the Government Gazette on December 21, 2018.

In essence, the 2018 constitutional reform legitimised the principle that national identity and global belonging can coexist. Yet, Lesotho has not fully implemented this progressive vision or integrated it into broader migration and development policies. Dual citizenship serves as a policy enabler for brain circulation through interconnected social, economic, and institutional mechanisms that reinforce each other.

First, it facilitates knowledge and skills transfer by allowing skilled Basotho to engage freely in short-term return programs, medical exchanges, and research collaborations without facing legal or administrative barriers. For example, a Mosotho doctor working in the United Kingdom could periodically serve in Lesotho's hospitals or universities under professional exchange schemes. Retaining full citizenship ensures that such engagements occur within a framework of mutual recognition and continuity, rather than as sporadic acts of goodwill.

Dual citizenship also enhances investment and entrepreneurship by fostering a sense of permanence and trust between diaspora investors and their homeland. When individuals maintain legal ownership rights, they are more inclined to invest in property, businesses, and innovation. Empirical evidence from Ghana and Rwanda indicates that recognising dual citizenship has significantly boosted diaspora investments and enterprise creation. Lesotho could experience similar benefits through targeted incentives and investment-friendly reforms grounded in the rights guaranteed by Section 41 of the Constitution (as amended).

Furthermore, dual citizenship promotes institutional collaboration and global partnerships. Citizens who legally belong to both Lesotho and another country can act as intermediaries between domestic institutions and international networks, leading to research partnerships, university linkages, and technical exchanges that expand Lesotho's access to global expertise and funding. The experiences of returning scholars and professionals in China and India illustrate how dual belonging can drive national innovation ecosystems.

Beyond these economic and institutional benefits, dual citizenship contributes to the restoration of national identity. The inclusion of Section 41A in the Eighth Amendment acknowledges that Basotho who renounced their citizenship remain integral members of the national community. By allowing them to automatically regain their nationality, the Constitution affirms that belonging is not diminished by mobility. It recognises that migration is part of the Basotho narrative and that legal reintegration strengthens the emotional and civic bonds necessary for sustained national unity.

Critics of dual citizenship often frame it as a threat to national sovereignty or loyalty. However, as evidenced by the 2018 Amendment, sovereignty in the 21st century is exercised through strategic inclusion rather than exclusion. The Statement of Objects and Reasons in the Gazette clarifies that the Bill is aimed at "removing the constitutional prohibition on dual citizenship" and facilitating the "return and reintegration" of Basotho abroad.

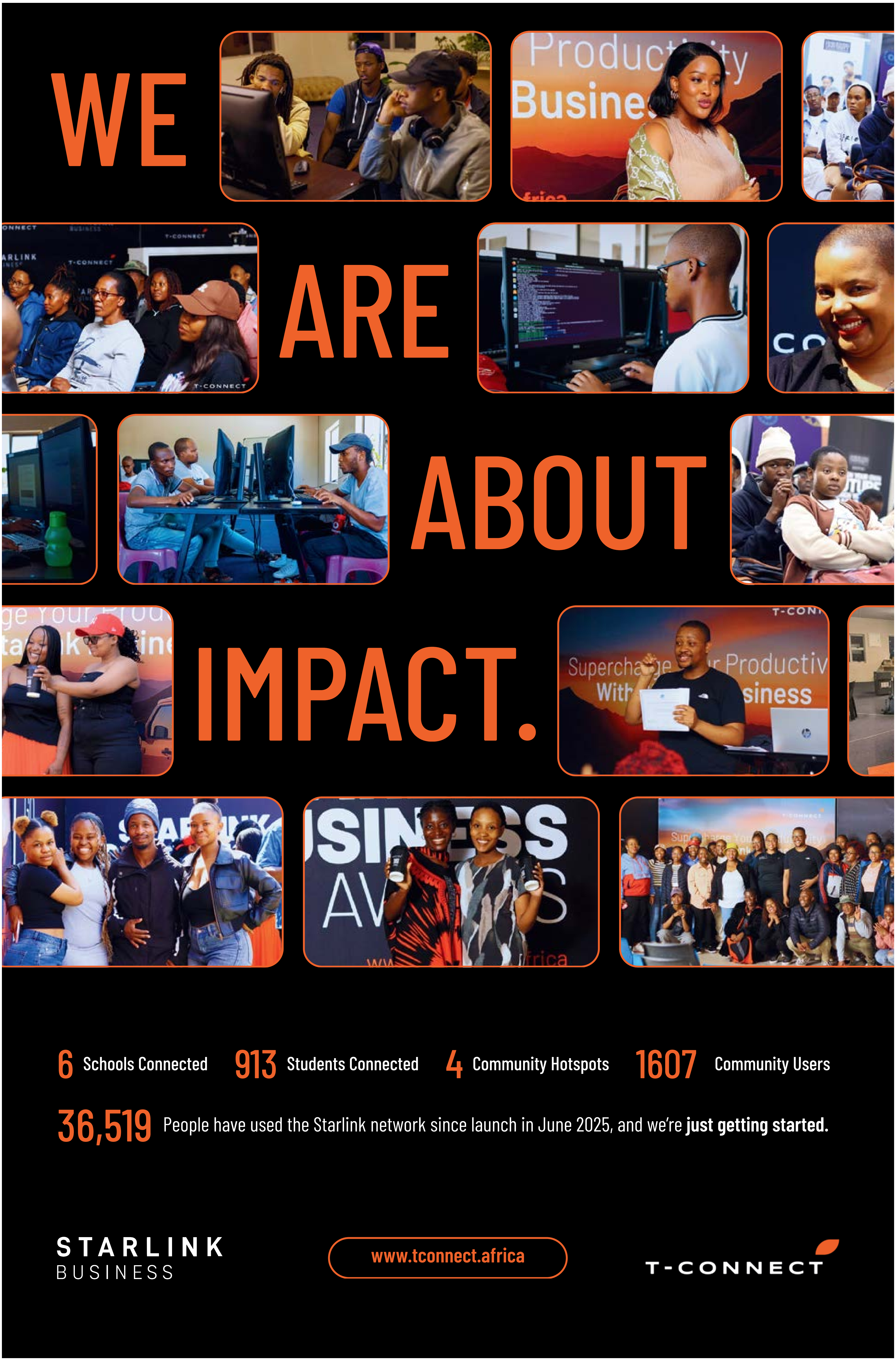
Far from undermining the state, this legal recognition enhances it by expanding Lesotho's human capital base and strengthening its soft power through citizens embedded in global networks. Moreover, the amendment includes safeguards: under Section 41(2)(b) and Section 41A(3), dual citizens are restricted from holding certain state positions, ensuring that public office remains aligned with constitutional accountability. Thus, Lesotho's law strikes a balance between loyalty and participation.

To operationalise the spirit of the 2018 constitutional amendment, Lesotho should integrate dual citizenship into a broader National Brain Circulation Strategy, aligned with the National Diaspora Policy (2021) and National Migration and Development Policy (2022). This could involve establishing a Diaspora Skills Database to map Basotho professionals abroad, creating short-term professional return programs in key sectors such as health, education, and ICT, and introducing fiscal incentives for diaspora investment and innovation.

Additionally, Lesotho should negotiate bilateral health workforce agreements with countries hosting Basotho professionals to ensure knowledge transfer through structured exchange programs. A Diaspora Innovation Fund could also be established to support collaborative research and entrepreneurship projects between local institutions and Basotho abroad. Through these initiatives, dual citizenship would become a practical mechanism for national development rather than merely a symbolic constitutional provision.

Lesotho's Eighth Amendment to the Constitution Act of 2018 signaled the nation's readiness to adopt inclusive citizenship. However, the potential of this reform remains underutilised. When properly implemented, dual citizenship is not a threat to sovereignty; it is a vehicle for national resilience.

For a country grappling with chronic human capital flight, enabling Basotho to belong legally to both their homeland and their adopted countries is the most effective way to achieve brain circulation, a dynamic exchange of skills, knowledge, and resources that propels development. As Lesotho seeks to modernise its economy and institutions, dual citizenship should be viewed not as a concession to globalisation, but as a strategic investment in its people, both at home and abroad who together constitute the nation's greatest asset. The future is **NOW!**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INVITATION FOR TENDER (ITT)

BID REF: QMMH/ITT 3 OF 2025/2026

PROJECT TITLE: Provision of Installation, Commissioning, Support and Maintenance of High-Quality CCTV Surveillance System

Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital (QMMH) invites suitably qualified and reputable companies to submit bids for the Provision of Installation, Commissioning, Support and Maintenance of a High-Quality CCTV Surveillance System for Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital and Filter Clinics (Qoaling, Likotsi and Mabote).
Tender documents are available at the Procurement Department, Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital, Botsabelo, Maseru, Lesotho, from 09th October 2025 to 03rd November 2025, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of M2,000.00 (Two Thousand Maloti only).
The compulsory site inspection will be on Monday 21st October 2025 at 10:00hrs. Bidders must assemble at QMMH Main Reception before the stipulated start time.

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

- Trader's Licence
- Tax Clearance Certificate
- Refundable Bid Security of 1% of the total bid price
- Power of Attorney for the authorised signatory
- Certificate of Bonafide (signed and stamped)
- Bid Form (signed and stamped)

KEY DATES AND ACTIVITIES

Activity	Date / Time
ITT Issued	09th October 2025
Site Inspection (QMMH Premises)	21st October 2025 at 10:00 hrs
Deadline for Clarifications	30th October 2025 at 16:00 hrs
Tender Submission Deadline	03rd November 2025 at 10:00 hrs
Tender Opening	03rd November 2025 at 10:15 hrs
Evaluation and Contract Award	06th – 17th November 2025

BID SUBMISSION

Sealed bids; one original and three copies, clearly marked:
"Provision of Installation, Commissioning, Support and Maintenance of High-Quality CCTV Surveillance System" should be deposited in the Tender Box located at the Main Reception Area, Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital, on or before 03rd November 2025 at 10:00hrs. Bids must bear no identification of the bidder on the outer envelope.

DISCLAIMER

Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital reserves the right to cancel the tender before submission or opening of bids, postpone submission or opening dates, and to accept or reject any or all tenders without providing reasons. The Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest or any bid.
For more information and clarifications contact:
Procurement Department
Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital
Private Bag A114, Maseru 100
Tel: (+266) 2222 0000
Email: procurementqmmh@gmail.com

Managing Director
Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital

THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY (MOE)

INVITATION TO TENDER (ITT)

FOR THE SUPPLY, DELIVERY, AND INSTALLATION OF HEAVY-DUTY PHOTOCOPIER MACHINE
ITT NO: MOE/ADMIN/1-2025/2026
DATE:4 SEPTEMBER,2025

1. The Ministry of Energy hereby invites tenders from eligible and qualified Bidders for the supply and delivery of one Heavy Duty Photocopier Machine. The specifications are provided in the bidding document.

2. A complete set of bidding documents, in English, may be purchased on the submission of a non-refundable fee of **Two Thousand (2000.00)** Maloti or its equivalent in any convertible currency, net of all bank charges from the **Procurement Unit, Ministry of Energy (MOE) Government Complex, Africa House 3rd Floor**. The method of payment will be by bank transfer/deposit only, payable at Central Bank of Lesotho, Account Name Main Revenue Epicor 10, Account Number 0101403715016, Reference Ministry of Energy sale of Tender document. The proof of payment must be taken to MOE Accounts Office at **Sekhametsi Building, 2nd Floor, Kingsway Maseru** where a receipt will be issued. The receipt should then be submitted to the Procurement Office where the bidding documents shall be obtained.

The Tender documents will be obtainable from the 15th September 2025 to 9th October, 2025

3. **Mandatory Documents**
   - Copy of valid Tax Clearance Certificate (certified at source).
   - Copy of Value Added Tax (VAT) Registration Certificate (certified at source).
   - Copy of valid Trader's License.
   - Company/Business Profile.
   - Reference letters from recent institutions served in the past two (2years)
   - Bid Security
   - Minimum experience of contracts of a similar nature and magnitude executed within the last two (2) years) support with one (1) copy of contract or purchase order).
   - Evidence of financial capacity (credit line from registered financial institution and audited accounts statement from registered Institution)
   - Completed certificate of bona fide tendering.

4. Sealed tenders bearing no identification of the tenderers and marked as follows **"SUPPLY, DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION OF HEAVY-DUTY PHOTOCOPIER MACHINE"** must be deposited in the tender box situated at the Foyer at the Ministry's Head Quarters, Government Complex, Africa House 3rd Floor. The closing date for submission of tenders is on/or before the **23rd October 2025**. Electronic bidding shall not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected.

5. Tenders will be opened in the presence of the tenderers' representatives who may choose to attend in person on the **23th October,2025 at 14:30hrs**. Tenders shall be submitted in one **(1) original and four (4) copies** in a sealed envelope.

Road Fund

TENDER FOR SUPPLY, DELIVERY AND ERECTION OF PARK HOME STRUCTURES AND CUSTOMISED SHIPPING CONTAINERS FOR ROAD FUND BORDER FACILITIES
Tender Reference Number: RF/2025/W01

1. Background and requirements:
The Road Fund Secretariat invites bids from suitably qualified companies and contractors with the capacity to supply, customise, deliver and erect shipping containers and park home structures for border gate facilities. The specifications are provided in Table 1 below:

Table 1:

Lot	Description of works	Type of works	Type of structure	Location
		MOKHOTLONG		
1.	2 bedroomed residential	Construction of slab, customisation and erection of shipping container	Concrete slab and customised shipping container	Sani border gate, Mokhotlong
	Pit latrine	Excavation of pit and construction of latrine	Block work	
		MAFETENG		
2.	Office space	Construction of slabs and erection of park home structure	Concrete slab and park home	Van Royen border gate, Mafeteng
		MOHALE'S HOEK		
3.	Office space	Construction of slabs and erection of park home structure	Concrete slab and customization of existing shipping container	Makhaleng border gate, Mohale's Hoek
		QACHA'S NEK		
4.	Office space	Construction of slab, customisation and erection of shipping container	Concrete slab and customised shipping container	Qacha's Nek border gate, Qacha's Nek

Contractors/suppliers are at liberty to bid for one lot/any combination of lots/all lots. However, each contractor shall submit only one Quotation for one lot/any combination of lots/all lots.

Evaluation will be carried out on a "lot by lot" basis. One contractor/supplier will be awarded maximum of 2 lots. More lots can be awarded if other contractors are non-compliant or whereby value for money won't be realized from the offers of other contractors/suppliers.

2. Interested eligible contractors/suppliers may obtain a complete set of Tender Documents in English from the Road Fund Secretariat website: procurement@roadfund.org.ls.

3. Request for clarifications may be sent in writing to this email address procurement@roadfund.org.ls not later than **5th November 2025**.

4. Bids must be delivered to the address (8) below; on or before **19th November 2025 at 11:00hrs.** Late bids will be rejected. Tenders will be opened in the presence of the Tenderers and/or their representatives who choose to attend in person at **Road Fund Secretariat Boardroom on the same date 19th November 2025 at 11:15hrs**. Telefax and Email Tenders **will not be accepted**. All bids must be accompanied by a **bid security of 2%** of the bid amount per lot, in the form Bank Guarantee valid for One hundred and twenty days (120).

5. In addition to the bid security mentioned above, it is mandatory for bidders to submit the following valid documents: (a) Tax Clearance Certificates; (b) Trader's License, (c) Certificate of Bona Fide Bidding, (d) Ministry of Public Works registration certificate. **Non- compliance with these requirements may invalidate a bid.**

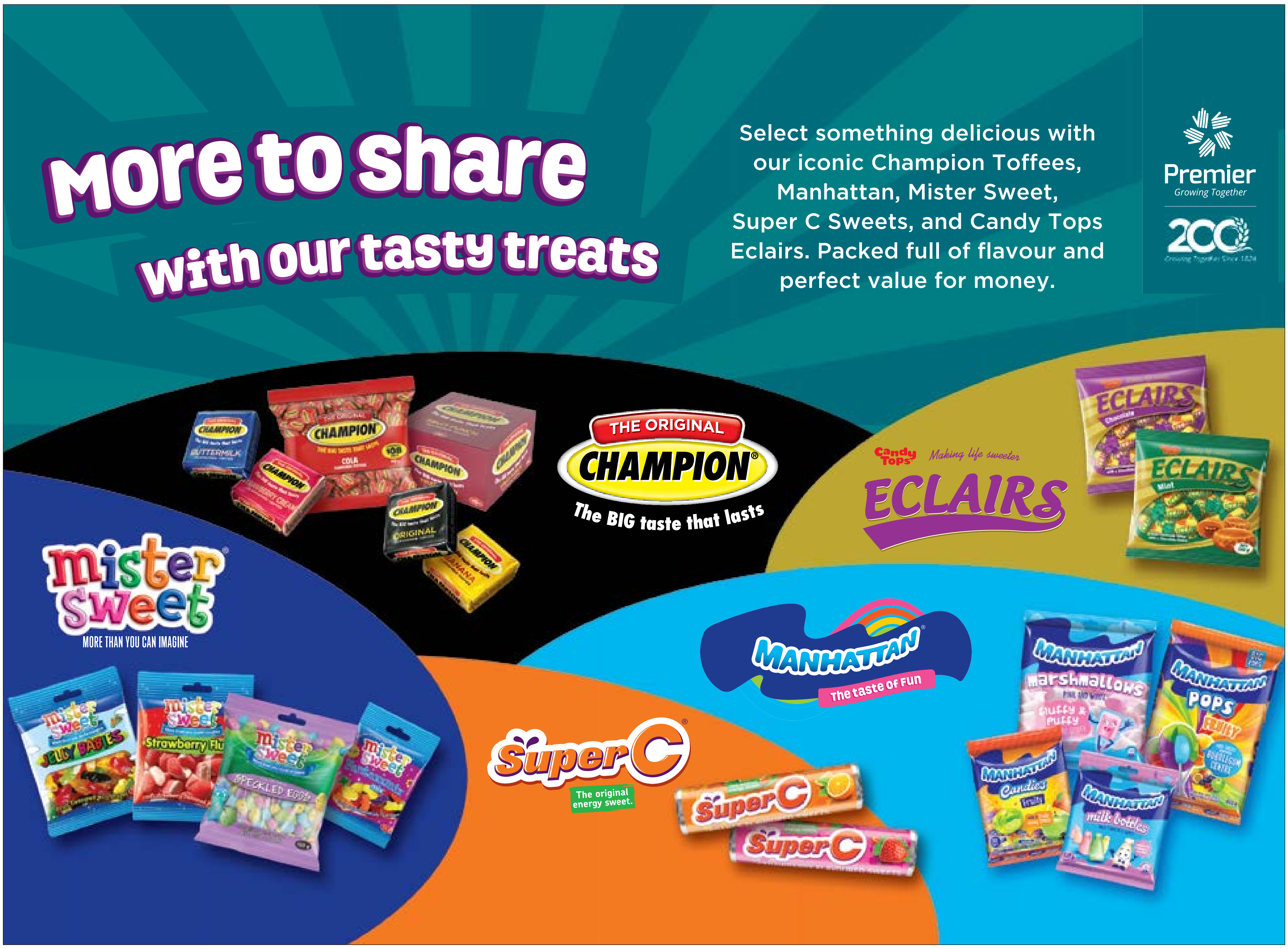
6. Qualifications requirements for award include amongst others per lot: **(a) business experience of not less than Five years in similar jobs, (b) successful completion of similar contracts of not less than a total of M600, 000.00 in the past Five years, and (c) evidence that the bidder/tenderer has capital or lines of credit of at least 50% of own bid amount (d) Other requirements of the tender document.** The margin of preference for local companies shall be applied during evaluation. Additional details are provided in the Bidding Documents.

7. A **mandatory bidder's conference/site** visit will be held as per schedule herein attached as **Appendix 1** of the tender document.

8. The address referred to above for Bid Submission and Bid Opening is:

Road Fund Secretariat,
Former Department of Rural Roads Building,
P.O. Box 14644,
Cnr Moshoeshoe & Senate Roads,
Industrial Area, Maseru, Lesotho

9. **Bidders shall ensure that the envelopes/packages containing their bids are properly addressed** as indicated under 8 above and are **CLEARLY MARKED "(Insert lot number) Construction of (insert description of works) at (insert location) – IFB No.: RF/2025/W1.**



Fees	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
Subscription	M 72.00	M 156.00	M 312.00
Delivery	M 60.00		

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Bubbly in Bloom: Bubbly Affair returns with countryside elegance at Oxhenhill

Chris Theko

Lesotho's most stylish celebration of fine living, The Bubbly Affair, returns for its fourth edition and this year, it promises a refreshing twist of elegance infused with countryside charm.

Set for November 2, 2025, the event will unfold at Oxhenhill in Matsieng, marking a graceful transition from its previous home at Maseru Club.

What began as an intimate gathering of friends and lifestyle enthusiasts has evolved into a defining highlight on Lesotho's social and entertainment calendar.

According to Seisa Tsiame, the event's Marketing and Publicity Manager, "The Bubbly Affair was born out of a love for life, sophistication, and good company."

From its humble beginnings, it has blossomed into Lesotho's premier champagne, whisky, and cognac lifestyle experience, a space where elegance meets celebration.

This year's theme, "Bubbly in Bloom," captures the essence of growth, renewal, and the beauty of shared moments. It's a tribute to life's celebratory spirit, refined yet vibrant, much like the bubbles that inspire its name.

"Our guests can expect a refined yet lively atmosphere, with a touch of countryside charm thanks to our scenic venue this year," Tsiame added.

The move to Oxhenhill signifies more than a change of scenery; it's a statement of evolution. Nestled in the royal heartland of Matsieng, the venue beautifully blends heritage with natural beauty, setting the stage for another unforgettable edition of The Bubbly Affair.

"The new venue is the heart of Lesotho's royalty and heritage. It offers a beautiful, natural canvas that matches our vision, allowing us to evolve the brand while giving guests something fresh each year," Tsiame explained.

The venue's open landscapes, picturesque sunsets, and tranquil ambience are set to elevate the experience. The team is transforming the hilltop location into a lush, elegant marquee setting with curated décor, immersive photo moments, and a welcoming atmosphere.

"The magic starts the moment guests go up the driveway onto the hill, they will feel they've stepped into something truly special," he said with pride.

But The Bubbly Affair has always been about more than location. It's about creating a complete sensory experience. Every detail, from the curated beverages and gourmet menu to the décor and live entertainment, is carefully crafted to complement the event's signature atmosphere.

"It's about striking the right balance between elegance and excitement, ensuring the music complements the mood rather than overpowering it," the Manager explained.

Fashion, of course, remains a central pillar. Each year, guests arrive dressed to impress, and 2025's dress code, "Bubbly in Bloom," encourages "stylish, refined, and chic" looks with a touch of personal flair. The theme calls for Urban Garden Cocktail Elegance, polished yet playful, timeless yet expressive. The team is even offering style inspiration through social media to help guests find the perfect outfit for the day.

The event attracts a mature, lifestyle-conscious crowd, individuals who appreciate fine beverages, gourmet cuisine, good company, and music. While the affair exudes exclusivity, inclusivity remains at its heart.

"We're intentional about creating a welcoming environment where locals, expatriates, and international visitors can come together and celebrate our shared modernity with a uniquely Basotho twist," he noted.

Safety and comfort are also top priorities.

With professional security, controlled access points, and a limited number of tickets, the organisers ensure a premium yet relaxed environment for everyone.

Over the years, The Bubbly Affair has become a symbol of Lesotho's growing luxury and lifestyle scene, helping redefine the nation's entertainment culture.

"We're not here to compete with traditional events; we're here to reposition Lesotho as a destination for upscale social experiences and inspire others to raise their standards," Tsiame said.

Behind the glamour lies meticulous planning. Organising such a large-scale event comes with its share of challenges, from logistics to weather and partnerships, but, with each edition, the team's experience has strengthened. "We leave nothing to chance. Preparation and strong partnerships are key," he affirmed.

Ultimately, The Bubbly Affair is about more than champagne glasses and fine canapés. It's about connection, joy, and shared moments of beauty.

"We want guests to feel they have been part of something unique, not just a party, but a memory that lingers long after the last toast," he concluded.

As the sun sets over Oxhenhill on November 2, and the first cork pops, guests will once again raise their glasses, not just to celebrate life, but to honor the artistry of elegance, Basotho charm, and the timeless allure of The Bubbly Affair.

Bubbly Affair Oxenhill Matsieng

Trailblazing Chaltin honoured posthumously with music award

Chris Theko

The National Music Awards (NMAs) brought their 2025 edition to a memorable close by presenting the newly introduced Tribute Achievement Award to the late Joseph Moeketsi Chaltin Tsatsanyene, a pioneer widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Lesotho's music and entertainment industry.

The award, presented posthumously, recogniSed Tsatsanyene's outstanding contribution to the growth and professionalization of the country's creative sector. His son, Mokherane Chaltin Tsatsanyene, accepted the honour on behalf of the family during the ceremony, marking an emotional highlight of the evening.

Born with a vision to elevate Lesotho's music and arts scene, Chaltin made his mark in 1978 when he founded Charisma Productions, later renamed TransAfrica Arts Productions. Through this platform, he began promoting both local and international artists, helping to bridge Lesotho's music industry with the global stage.

Among the artists he worked with were prominent names such as Letta Mbuli, Caiphus Semenya, and Kori Moraba, alongside international acts including Jimmy Cliff, Clarence Carter, The O'Jays, and The Commodores.

Chaltin was also the man behind bringing the Bossel Circus to Lesotho, a rare feat that showcased his ambition to expose local audiences to diverse forms of entertainment.

He was instrumental in managing Sankomota, one of the most celebrated musical groups ever to emerge from Lesotho. Beyond music, he demonstrated his creative versatility through theatre, notably with productions such as Mahlomo. In 1991, he founded a political music group named Setlamo, using art as a vehicle for social and political expression.

NMAs organisers with MCT

Speaking during the awards ceremony, Rorisang Motsamai, the event organiser, described Tsatsanyene as a visionary whose work had a lasting impact on Lesotho's creative industry.

"His dedication to promoting local and international talent, as well as his innovative approach, has truly cemented him as a legendary icon," Motsamai said.

"His contribution not only opened doors for artists who came after him but also laid a solid foundation for the future of Basotho music."

Representing the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture, Senior Arts and Crafts Officer Tokelo Mapena commended the NMAs for recognising Tsatsanyene's role in shaping the country's artistic landscape. She emphasized that the ministry's mandate includes creating a conducive environment for artists to thrive and make a sustainable living from their work, which in turn contributes to addressing unemployment.

"Great works deserve to be honored. Recognising figures like the late Chaltin Tsatsanyene not only pays tribute to their legacy but also inspires younger generations to build on their achievements," she said.

In an emotional acceptance speech, Mokherane, who also serves as a Member of Parliament, expressed gratitude to the NMAs for the recognition and reflected on his father's enduring influence.

"Though he may not have received his flowers while he was still with us, I am forever grateful to be his son. He was my mentor, my guide, and my inspiration throughout my life," he said.

In a touching gesture that underscored his commitment to preserving his father's legacy, Mokherane announced that he would personally sponsor the Tribute Achievement Award annually with a M10,000 contribution, beginning next year.

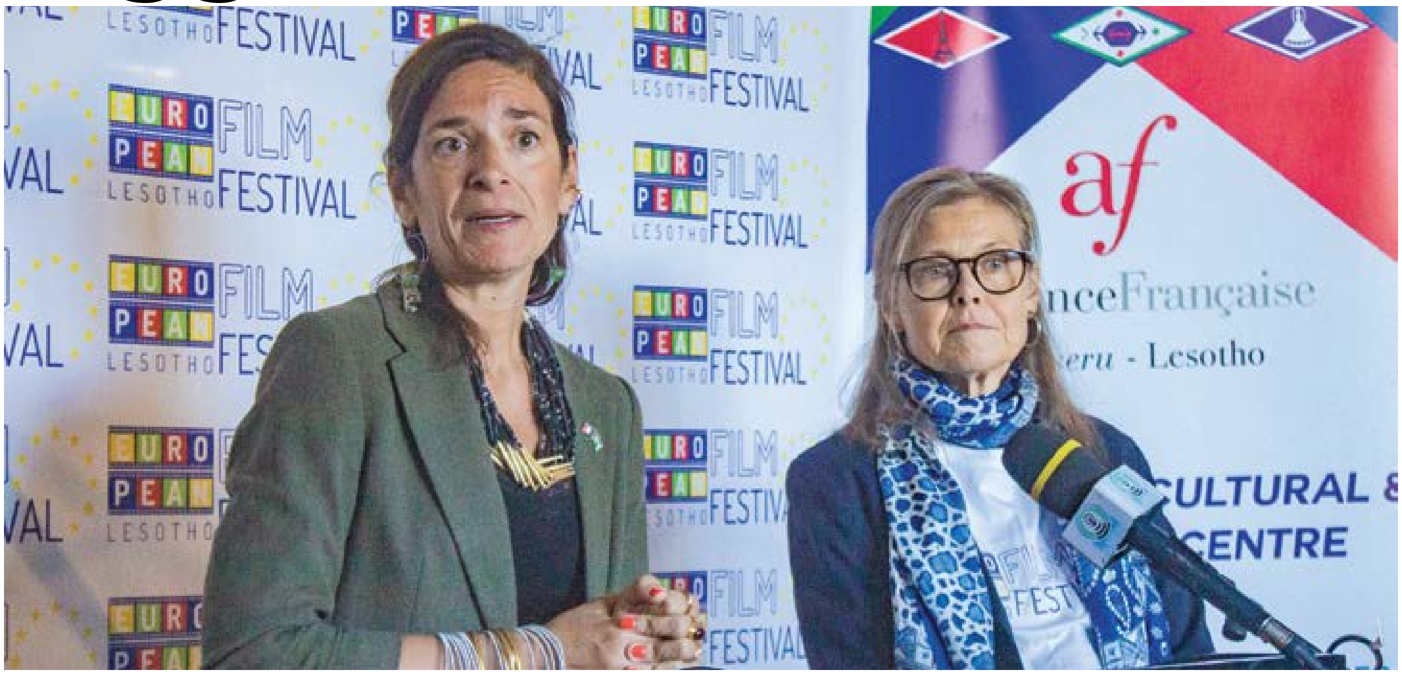
"This moment means more than words can express. As a token of my appreciation and commitment to preserving his legacy, I pledge to sponsor this category every year so that we may continue recognising those who have paved the way for Basotho music and inspired generations."

The NMAs' decision to honour Tsatsanyene was met with widespread applause from the audience, many of whom hailed him as a trailblazer whose vision helped shape the modern entertainment industry in Lesotho.

His multifaceted career, spanning music promotion, artist management, theatre production, and cultural advocacy, established a blueprint for future generations of creatives in the country.

His name now joins a distinguished list of creatives whose contributions continue to influence the country's cultural and artistic identity, ensuring that his pioneering spirit lives on through the artists and industry professionals he inspired.

EU Film Festival returns, bigger and better



Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The European Union (EU) Film Festival is set to return for its second edition this year, expanding its reach and promise of an even richer experience for film lovers in both Lesotho and Eswatini.

The EU, in partnership with the Alliance Française de Maseru, this week announced the 2025 edition of the binational EU Film Festival (EUFF 2025), which will run from October 15 to November 10, 2025.

Announcing the developments, the new EU Head of Delegation to Lesotho, Mette Sunnergren, said this year's edition builds on the success of its 2024 debut and will offer audiences a dynamic blend of European and African films.

She revealed that the festival will screen films across all 10 districts of Lesotho, with free admission at every venue.

EUFF 2025 will open with "Ancestral Visions of the Future", a docufiction written and directed by acclaimed local filmmaker Lemohang Jeremiah Mosese.

This year's lineup features 18 films, including short productions from Lesotho, Eswatini, Burkina Faso, and several European countries.

Elisabeth Douillet, Director of the Alliance Française de Maseru and Honorary Consul of France in Lesotho, said audiences can look forward not only to screenings but also to post-film discussions and workshops for emerging filmmakers.

She added that the festival's partners include the National University of Lesotho, The Hub in Morija, and Café What, which will host screenings between October 27 and 31, while the Alliance Française de Maseru will kick off the festival with screenings from October 15 to 24.

"Last year, the festival reached around 1,400 people, and we are aiming to reach even more this year," Douillet said.

EU Chargé d'Affaires Erika Pasquini said the partnerships aim to inspire dialogue between the EU and Lesotho.

"This is why we have expanded our partnerships and involved more institutions," she explained. "We are trying to go beyond the capital and reach a broader audience."

Recurring themes in this year's edition include youth, sustainable development, climate change, sports, migration, and gender.

Sunnergren described the European Film Festival as "a vibrant celebration of the European Union's dedication to cultivating cultural exchange and fostering mutual understanding through the evocative art of cinema."

"It is more than a showcase of film," she added. "It is a celebration of cultural connection. By bringing screenings to communities across Lesotho, we honour the idea that stories told on screen can inspire understanding, creativity, and friendship."

Likuena in defining week in World Cup qualifiers

Seabata Mahao

Renewed hope has swept across Lesotho's footballing landscape as the senior national team, Likuena, prepares for a crucial double-header in the 2026 FIFA World Cup African Qualifiers.

Lesotho will host continental giants Nigeria today, October 10, at 18h00, before welcoming Zimbabwe three days later on October 13, also at 18h00. Both matches will be staged at the New Peter Mokaba Stadium in Polokwane, South Africa.

The upcoming fixtures mark the final round of Group C action. For the first time in months, Likuena are mathematically back in contention for a playoff spot, thanks to a dramatic intervention by FIFA.

In a surprising development, FIFA recently sanctioned the South African Football Association for fielding ineligible player Teboho Mokoena in a World Cup qualifier against Lesotho earlier this year.

As a result, Likuena were awarded a 3-0 victory by forfeit, a decision that has transformed the Group C standings and revived Lesotho's qualification hopes.

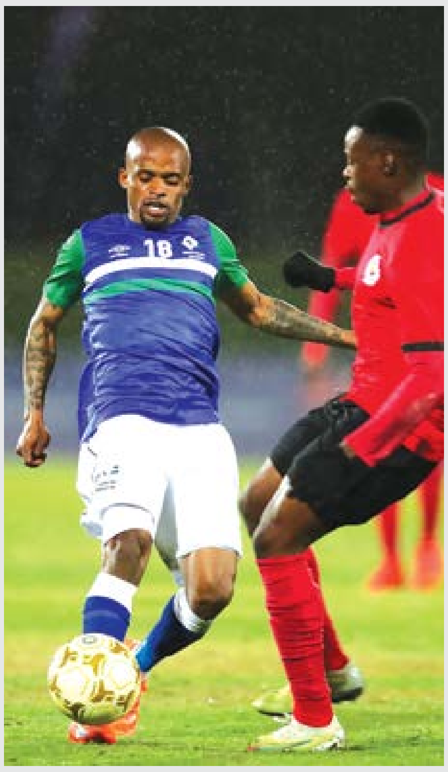
The ruling benefited Lesotho while having major implications for Nigeria, who now trail joint group leaders Benin and South Africa by three points. A defeat to Likuena on Friday could eliminate the Super Eagles from World Cup contention, making the encounter high-stakes for both nations.

Coach Leslie Notši and his technical team established camp in Polokwane earlier this week. The full squad is now assembled following the arrival of key South African-based players, including captain Sekhoane Moerane, Thabo Makhele, and Motebang Sera, all fresh from Premier Soccer League duty.

Confidence is high in the camp, buoyed by encouraging results in the reverse fixtures: a 1-1 draw against Nigeria in Uyo and a 2-0 victory over Zimbabwe at Orlando Stadium earlier in the campaign.

Likuena's provisional squad features a balanced mix of youth and experience:

Goalkeepers: Leluma Mofoka (Matlama), Sekhoane Moerane (Orbit College FC), Mosoeu Seahlolo (LCS FC)



Defenders: Mphale Mphalaole, Motlomelo Mkwanazi, Thabang Malane, and Siyabonga Manyaka among others

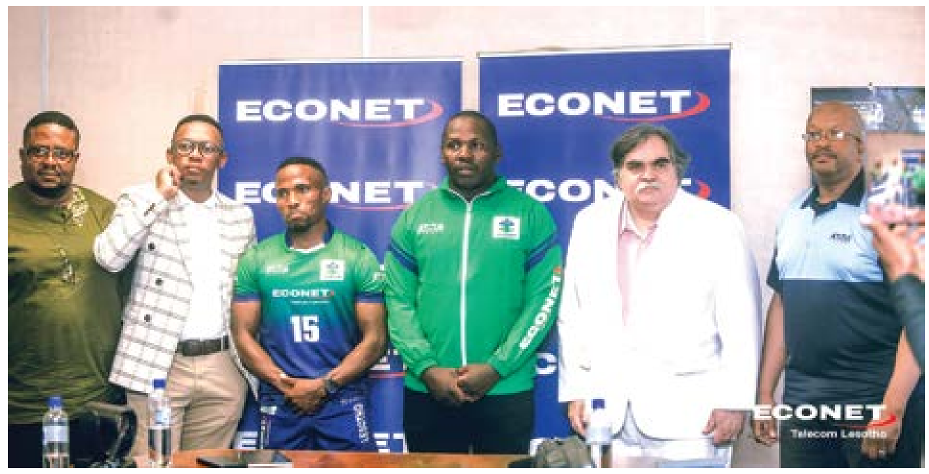
Midfielders: Kananelo Rapuleng, Neo Mokhachane, Hlompho Kalake, and Makara Ntaitsane provide creativity and control

Forwards: Motebang Sera, Jane Thabantšo, and Thabang Maphakisa lead the attack

After today's battle with Nigeria, Likuena will face Southern African rivals Zimbabwe in what promises to be another intense encounter. Lesotho hold the psychological advantage after defeating the Warriors 2-0 in the first leg and will be eager to complete the double.

This week could mark a defining chapter in Lesotho football history. With FIFA's unexpected intervention reopening the qualification door, Likuena now have a genuine opportunity to defy expectations and mount a serious push toward their first-ever FIFA World Cup appearance

Econet reaffirms commitment to rugby with new Likatola kit



Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) officially handed over a brand-new jersey to Lesotho's national senior 15s rugby team, Likatola

Seabata Mahao

Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) yesterday officially handed over a brand-new jersey to Lesotho's national senior rugby team, Likatola, in a vibrant show of support for local sports.

The unveiling ceremony took place at ETL headquarters in Maseru this week, marking another milestone in the telecommunications company's long-standing partnership with the Federation of Lesotho Rugby (FLR).

The new kit, manufactured by India-based company Stag Global, is part of a M400, 000 investment ETL made earlier this year toward rugby development in Lesotho. This brings the company's total investment in local rugby to over M2 million since the partnership began in 2012.

Speaking during the handover, ETL's Public Relations and Customer Experience Specialist Retšelisitsoe Nkhahle commended the FLR for its efforts to grow the sport and highlighted ETL's continued dedication to nurturing talent and expanding the local sporting landscape.

"We have a long journey that started in 2012, working hand in hand with rugby administrators," said Nkhahle.

"We are handing over a top-quality jersey that we believe will motivate the players during competition. Our M400, 000 investment earlier this year is meant to support the growth and development of rugby in the country."

Nkhahle emphasised that ETL's investment in rugby aligns with the company's broader mission to drive economic and social growth through sport.

"Sports can have a positive impact on livelihoods and the economy in general. The time to view sports merely as recreation is over. We must commercialize it," he said.

FLR's President Fetang Selialia expressed deep appreciation for ETL's support, describing the company as a cornerstone in the federation's ability to sustain and grow the game.

"We are grateful to ETL for walking this journey with us in developing rugby in the country. Our league has remained sustainable because of their support. This new jersey will boost our players' confidence," Selialia said

Selialia also announced that Likatola will take on Eswatini this Saturday at Mejametalana Airwing in a World Rugby-sanctioned Test Match. Botswana had originally been scheduled to participate but withdrew at the last minute due to accommodation challenges.

Stag Global representative Vivek Kohli, who attended the ceremony, pledged continued support to the FLR and hinted at long-term plans for sports development in Lesotho, though he did not disclose specific details.

Lioli cement cup pedigree with historic triumph

Seabata Mahao

Lioli Football Club (FC) proved once again why they remain a dominant force in domestic cup competitions, lifting their third consecutive Maluti Mountain Cement (MMC) Top 4 title after their recent hard-fought 1-0 victory over Matlama.

The match, held at a packed venue, had everything from tactical battles to last-minute drama and in the end, it was Lioli's resilience and championship mentality that made the difference.

Fresh from their recent exit from the CAF inter-club competitions, Lioli came into the MMC tournament with a point to prove.

The final was a tense affair, with both teams struggling to break each other down in the first half. However, ten minutes into the second half, Lioli's breakthrough came under unusual circumstances. Captain Mafa Moremoholo rose highest to meet a corner kick, heading the ball goalwards.

Matlama's goalkeeper, Leluma Mofoka, tried to clear it but instead turned it into his own net a cruel twist that would ultimately decide the game and secure Lioli's remarkable third straight MMC crown.

Matlama fought back strongly, with Jane Thabantšo coming close to levelling the score. But Lioli's goalkeeper William Huni stood firm, pulling off a spectacular save that kept his team ahead and protected their path to glory.

In the dying moments, Matlama were handed a lifeline with a chance to equalise in stoppage time. But the moment turned controversial when Huni was red-carded for a professional foul, with Matlama awarded a freekick. The incident sparked unrest among Matlama fans, who were expecting their club to be awarded a penalty kick.

For their efforts, Lioli walked away with M125, 000; Matlama walked away with M75, 000, while Semi-finalists Bantu and LDF took home M50, 000 each.

Lioli also confirmed that the prize money would be shared among the players, as part of the club's ongoing commitment to reward performance and boost morale.

Speaking after the match, Lioli's head coach Bongani Maseko was full of praise for his squad and the supporters, capping off a sensational start to his tenure that has already yielded three trophies since his arrival during the off-season.

"I am proud of the boys. What we learned in CAF is the importance of taking your chances. We showed that here," said Maseko.

"This win is for our fans who have stayed loyal throughout the ups and downs. Now, we turn our eyes back to the league and push to return to continental football."

Maseko's impact since joining Lioli has been nothing short of extraordinary. The South African tactician has transformed the team into serial cup winners, demonstrating a winning formula in knockout competitions that has now delivered three consecutive tournament victories under his guidance.

While the MMC Top 4 tournament was short and intense, it offered a crucial test ahead of the 2025/26 league season. Lioli's triumph sent a clear message that under Maseko's leadership, they have become an unstoppable force in domestic cup football.

On his part, Matlama's head coach, Shalane Lehohla acknowledged the defeat and highlighted areas for improvement.

"In both games against Bantu and Lioli, we gave our opponents too much space. We corrected that later, and it showed in our control of the game. But we need more mental sharpness from the first whistle. This tournament helped us assess where we are, and where we need to go," Lehohla said.

For Matlama, Bantu, and LDF, the tournament was both a reality check and a preview of the competition to come this season.

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Rugby body calls for govt intervention in Tri-Nations crisis

The president of the Federation of Lesotho Rugby (FLR), Fetang Selialia

Seabata Mahao

The Federation of Lesotho Rugby (FLR) has issued an urgent plea to government to rescue this weekend's Tri-Nations Rugby Cup fixture, warning that the tournament is on the brink of collapse due to lack of financial support.

FLR's President Fetang Selialia revealed on Wednesday that the government has failed to respond to requests for assistance submitted last year, leaving the rugby body struggling to meet basic hosting obligations for Saturday's match against Eswatini at Mejametalana Ground.

The government's silence has already cost the tournament one participant. Botswana withdrew last week, citing uncertainty over accommodation and logistics that raised serious questions about Lesotho's capacity to host international rugby fixtures.

"We wrote to the government through the Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission (LSRC) last year after we were confirmed as hosts," said Selialia.

"We needed help with accommodation for our visitors and other logistics, but to this day we have not received any response. We are now pleading with our government not to abandon us."

Selialia confirmed that the government's inaction contributed directly to Botswana's decision, though he acknowledged other factors were involved.

"It was not only because of us. They had their own internal reasons, but the fact that we could not give them firm accommodation assurances played a role," he explained.

With Eswatini still committed to the fixture, the FLR has appealed to the visiting team to "come with faith" that the government will not leave them stranded in Maseru.

However, Selialia's comments painted a picture of a sport starved of institutional support.

The FLR receives an annual subvention of just M40, 000 from the government, an amount Selialia described as barely enough to "keep the lights on." Rugby has been formally structured under the FLR since 2012, yet chronic underfunding continues to plague the sport.

"We appreciate the support of LSRC and the Lesotho National Olympic Committee (LNOC), but rugby is an expensive, high-impact sport. Our players lack basic things like supplements and access to proper gym facilities. These are essentials in other countries, yet luxuries here. This is a plea for help."

The funding crisis has left Lesotho without a dedicated rugby ground, forcing the national team to play at multipurpose venues. Selialia emphasised that the stakes extend beyond Saturday's match, arguing that rugby holds potential for social transformation and economic growth.

"We have young players with enormous potential. They just need the right support structure. Rugby teaches discipline, teamwork, and leadership values that go beyond the field. It deserves recognition and investment," he added.

Contacted for comment, Thabo Tsiki the Director of Sports in the Ministry of Sports acknowledged receipt of FLR's request but was not forthcoming with more details.

"I am not at liberty to talk about this issue as it is currently being processed, so I do not have full details of how far it has gone. I will ask the Principal Secretary or the Ministry's Chief Financial Officer about it," Tsiki said.

Meanwhile, in the absence of government support, the private sector has stepped in. The national team, Likatola, will wear a new playing kit donated by ETL, manufactured by Indian sportswear company Stag Global, which has expressed interest in establishing a production facility in Lesotho.

"This new jersey will give our players confidence, even in these difficult times when we face a lack of investment from our government in sport. We thank Econet. It is very difficult to secure sponsorship in this country, but they have been with us."

The new strip features Lesotho's national colours: a green shirt with blue fading toward the bottom, paired with blue shorts. For Selialia, it represents more than athletic wear it symbolises the determination of a rugby fraternity fighting for recognition.

Selialia has called on Basotho to fill Mejametalana Ground on Saturday to demonstrate that rugby has a future in Lesotho.

"It is not just about the Springboks. We have our own heroes here."

The FLR president framed Saturday's fixture as a test not only of athletic ability but of national commitment to sporting development.

"This is not just about one game. It is about the future of rugby in Lesotho," he said.