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# Over M300k for Matekane's Maldives holiday

**Staff Reporter**

More than M300,000 will be withdrawn from the Contingencies Fund to cover Prime Minister Ntsokoane Sam Matekane's international travel expenses for his upcoming holiday in the Maldives, according to official government financial records.

A report on the management of the 2025/2026 Contingencies Fund shows that on November 10, 2025, the Prime Minister's Office requested M393,768 to finance "international travel costs for the Prime Minister's annual leave trip to the Maldives from 7th to 14th December 2025."

The request was approved on November 18, 2025.

The approval means funds meant strictly for emergencies will now be used to finance a personal holiday for the Head of Government.

The Contingency Fund, created under Section 114(1) of the Constitution, allows the Minister of Finance to authorise expenditure "if satisfied that there has arisen an urgent and unforeseen need" for spending where no other provision exists.

However, the same section demands that every advance from the fund must be followed by a supplementary estimate and a supplementary appropriation bill, to be tabled in Parliament "as soon as possible" to replace the withdrawn amount.

Section 114 explicitly states: "Parliament may make provision for the establishment of a Contingencies Fund and for authorising the Minister for the time being responsible for finance, if satisfied that there has arisen an urgent and unforeseen need for expenditure for which no other provision exists, to make advances from that Fund to meet that need.

"Where any advance is made from the Contingencies Fund, a supplementary estimate shall be presented and a supplementary Appropriation Bill shall be introduced as soon as possible for the purpose of replacing the amount so advanced."

However, the 2025/2026 Contingencies Fund Management Report reveals that the fund has increasingly been used for expenditures that raise questions about whether they meet the constitutional threshold of urgency and unpredictability.

The report provides a detailed picture of how advances were approved, the ministries involved, and the cumulative amounts withdrawn.

**Initial Appropriation**

On April 2, 2025, the fund was established for this financial year with an allocation of M955,684,354, the total amount available to respond to unforeseen emergencies.

Expenditures approved from the Contingencies Fund

Below is a comprehensive account of each withdrawal, the ministry involved, and the amount approved.

**Energy – M40,703,843**

Approved on July 23, 2025, the Ministry of Energy requested additional funding to complete the Belo Substation in Botha Bothe under the Lesotho Renewable Energy and Energy Access Project.

**Foreign Affairs and International Relations – M61,243,903**

Approved on July 23, 2025, this allocation covered the purchase of a vehicle for missions in Brussels and Rome and costs associated with posting and returning diplomats.

**Defence – M65,608,357**

Approved on October 2, 2025, the Defence Ministry requested funds to complete the rehabilitation of Makoanyane Military Hospital's Physiotherapy Centre and construct boot camp dormitories.

Refunds to erroneous receipts – M2,238,535

Approved on October 20, 2025, this allocation addressed shortfalls caused by the transfer of long-held retention monies.

**Law and Justice – M8,218,980**

Approved on October 20, 2025, funds were used to establish a tribunal under Section 141(a) and (b) of the Constitution to inquire into the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

**Natural Resources – M1,400,000**

Approved on October 16, 2025, for hosting celebrations in honour of His Majesty King Letsie III on October 24, the anniversary of the Lesotho Highlands Water Treaty.

**Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police – M30,640,140**

Approved on October 16, 2025, this allocation covered additional passports, ID cards, and consumables.

**Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition – M95,000,000**

Approved on October 16, 2025, the ministry required "additional funds to support intensive crop production through the provision of agricultural inputs."

**Disaster Management Authority – M12,000,000**

Approved on October 16, 2025, this was one of the few expenditures that clearly aligns with the fund's intended purpose, providing reconstruction support after severe September 2025 windstorms.

**Education and Training – M90,900,000**

Approved on October 24, 2025, consisting of M79,000,000 for school feeding (due to arrears and suspension of donor aid) and M11,900,000 for school construction and weather-damage repairs.

**Finance and Development Planning – M200,000,000**

Approved on October 31, 2025, these funds extended the Lesotho Post Bank Credit Guarantee Facility, including procurement of tractors and farm machinery.

**Independent Electoral Commission – M8,382,176**

Approved on October 31, 2025, covering local government by-elections caused by resignations, death, or councillors vacating office.

Public Works and Transport – M14,000,000

Approved on October 31, 2025, for the production of number plates and security features, stemming from delays in privatisation.

**Public Service – M436,070**

Approved on October 31, 2025, to restore Public Service Day celebrations last held in 2018.

**Prime Minister's Office: COP30 travel – M1,087,468**

Approved on October 31, 2025, to support the Deputy Prime Minister Nthomeng Majara's participation in COP30 in Brazil.

**Prime Minister's Office: World Children's Day travel – M1,185,043**

Approved on November 11, 2025, covering travel to Gaborone for the Regional World Children's Day celebration and other official travel.

**Prime Minister's Office: Prime Minister's Maldives holiday – M393,768**

Approved on November 18, 2025, for "international travel costs for the Prime Minister's annual leave trip to the Maldives from 7 to 14 December 2025."

While many of these expenditures relate to government operations, they do not meet the threshold of being unforeseen or urgent.

The use of the Contingencies Fund for a Prime Minister's private holiday marks one of the clearest departures from its constitutional purpose, and raises concerns about transparency, accountability, and adherence to public finance laws.

According to the last entry in the report, dated 18 November 2025, total advances approved to date: M531,490,537. This represents the total amount already withdrawn from the Contingencies Fund since the beginning of the 2025/26 financial year.

The report also shows the remaining balance after the latest withdrawal, which is M424,193,817. This is the amount still left in the Contingencies Fund as of 18 November 2025.

These figures show that more than half of the Contingencies Fund has already been spent, with four months still remaining before the financial year ends on 31 March 2026.

*Prime Minister Ntsokoane Sam Matekane*

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# Matlanyane warns of deepening economic strain

**Thoboloko Ntšonyane**

Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, delivered a sombre assessment of Lesotho's economic outlook this week as she tabled the 2025/2026 Mid-Term Budget Review before a sparsely attended joint sitting of Parliament.

Matlanyane presented a frank account of stalled capital projects, declining revenues, and widening service delivery gaps, warning that the country was failing to convert its investments into tangible development, jobs, and improved livelihoods.

Dr Matlanyane revealed that government capital spending has collapsed, largely due to the withdrawal of support from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and USAID, which has halted billions of maloti in infrastructure investments.

"The most significant contraction has occurred in capital spending. Out of the M10.69 billion allocated for capital projects, only M2.34 billion, or 5.1 percent of GDP was spent by mid-year due to the suspension of the MCC and USAID projects," Matlanyane said.

"This delayed infrastructure rollout in key sectors such as health, water, and agriculture, sectors crucial for long-term economic growth and job creation," she added.

The minister continued to report that the government funded projects performed well below the target, with only 18 percent which is M772.4 spent against the M4.28 billion.

She noted that although projects like rural electrification and major road networks progressed, many of those recorded "minimal to zero expenditure reflecting challenges in project readiness and execution that hinder development goals".

At the start of the current financial year, the government was praised for significantly improving the allocation of funds to the capital budget. But despite this progress on paper, the minister noted that implementation has remained deeply disappointing.

Capital projects, which should be driving employment and improving livelihoods through expanded electrification, new roads, clinics, classrooms, schools, bridges and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, have failed to record the milestones expected.

"Low capital budget execution represents a failure to convert investment into jobs and infrastructure," Dr Matlanyane said. "We must be transparent about underperformance in this area and take decisive action to strengthen capital project execution, accountability, and transparency. We must address projects that are lagging behind."

Every Thursday in parliament, the executive faces a barrage of questions from backbenchers frustrated by collapsing service delivery in their constituencies. Many of these concerns relate directly to capital projects that remain stalled.

Meanwhile, communities continue to endure challenges in accessing basic services such as healthcare, schools, electricity, proper road networks, footbridges and clean water.

The minister reported "increased spending" in construction activities under Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase II (LHWP II), which she said is expected to provide some stimulus to the economy. She stressed that LHWP II remains the "main engine" of economic growth due to its extensive construction works.

"The sector is performing strongly and sustaining the high growth rates projected in the first quarter of 2025, driven by continued development of the dam, tunnels and associated road networks," she said.

Earlier this year, Dr Matlanyane reported that the economy grew by 2.5% in 2024/2025, buoyed by a 22.5% expansion in construction, a 3.7% increase in services, and a 3.5% growth in animal farming.

However, several sectors performed poorly. Mining contracted by 5%, manufacturing declined by 2.3%, and the textiles, clothing and footwear subsector suffered an 8.2% collective decline. Crop production also fell by 5.1%.

A 3.4% growth rate had been projected for 2025/2026 when the budget was tabled, but the minister now said the economy was under far more strain than anticipated.

"At the time of approving the budget in February 2025, our outlook was cautiously optimistic. Growth was expected to be driven by construction expanding over 30 percent and steady performance in services and agriculture."

Revenue collection is also lagging. Of the total revenue projected for 2025/2026 — equivalent to 67.2% of GDP, only M12.87 billion (43.1%) had been collected by mid-year. The year-end projection now stands at M27.53 billion, or 92.3% of the target.

Tax performance remains under pressure.

"Tax revenue, while showing resilience at mid-year, will remain under stress for the remainder of the fiscal year given the subdued macro environment. At mid-year, M5.21 billion had been collected against an annual target of M11.23 billion, representing 46.4 percent performance," she said.

Dr Matlanyane reiterated government's commitment to a private sector–led economy.

In an interview with this publication following the minister's presentation, Public Works and Transport Minister Matjato Moteane, whose ministry oversees most capital projects, blamed excessively long procurement processes for the delays. Moteane added that the ministry was severely understaffed, which was compounding the slow rollout of projects.

Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) MP Dr Tšeliso

Moroke expressed deep frustration with the government's poor performance. Moroke said parliamentary committees had identified inefficiencies and corruption, but the government continued to show little urgency in addressing them.

He criticised the executive for failing to attend the recent SADCOPAC conference and AGM, where governance and corruption were key themes.

He warned that the government must "get its act together" and genuinely partner with Parliament in combating corruption.

Opposition Democratic Congress (DC) MP Katleho Mabeleng also condemned the persistent delays and staff shortages, arguing that the government must urgently fix these problems if national development is to progress. He vowed to continue holding the executive accountable.

Matlanyane also warned that manufacturing, one of Lesotho's most important industries, was facing severe pressure, particularly due to the uncertainty surrounding renewal of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

"The most significant threat is the uncertainty related to AGOA, which would remove the sector's vital duty-free access to the US market," she said.

Recent U.S. media reports indicate that Senator John Kennedy has introduced a bill to renew AGOA for two years, though the outcome remains uncertain.


# LHDA rolls out One-Stop Shop Integrated Services platform

**Staff Reporter**

The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) has launched the One-Stop Shop Integrated Services platform, an initiative designed to bring project teams closer to communities affected by the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP).

According to LHDA, the LHWP is "a diverse, multidisciplinary project whose work touches every aspect of community life, from the environment and human settlements to livelihoods and local development."

Because of this wide scope, the Authority says delivering services to affected and beneficiary communities "is equally multifaceted, often requiring close collaboration across many LHWP departments."

LHDA said the new platform is part of its efforts to strengthen direct engagement with communities.

"In line with our commitment to integrate with communities and deliver services that reflect their needs, we introduced the One-Stop Shop Integrated Services platform," it said.

"This initiative brings LHWP teams directly to the people, creating accessible spaces for information-sharing, service support and meaningful engagement," it added.

The latest sessions were held in Popa and Malingoaneng, Mokhotlong, on November 18 and 19. The gatherings included LHWP teams and key project partners such as ZUTARI, WRES JV, Concor–Nthane Brothers JV, Lima–Thaha JV, Sixty-15 JV, MAM JV, SUN JV, MSKC JV and Kopano ke Matla JV.

LHDA reported that community members raised issues related to resettlement planning, livelihoods, catchment management, compensation, business participation, and both skilled and unskilled labour opportunities.

The Authority said the community members received "real-time responses from the responsible teams, reaffirming our commitment to transparency, accessibility and responsiveness."

The initiative responds to concerns raised during LHDA stakeholder conferences and the 2024 reputation research, which highlighted the need for stronger, compassionate engagement, especially on community education, grievance handling and service responsiveness.

LHDA said the ongoing campaign is helping it "deepen our understanding of community information needs and gather feedback on ongoing concerns."

Insights gathered through the platform will be used to strengthen communication and improve service delivery, "ensuring that our engagements continue to be meaningful and create sustainable value for the communities we serve."

LHWP is a major bi-national infrastructure programme established under a 1986 treaty between Lesotho and South Africa. It was created to meet two core objectives: to transfer water from Lesotho's highlands to South Africa's economic hub in Gauteng, and to generate hydroelectric power for Lesotho.

The project is widely regarded as one of Africa's largest and most complex water-transfer schemes.

It is being developed in phases. The first phase, completed in the early 2000s, delivered Katse Dam, Mohale Dam, an intricate network of tunnels and the Muela Hydropower Station, which remains a key contributor to Lesotho's electricity supply.

The project is now in Phase II, which centres on the construction of Polihali Dam and the Polihali–Katse Transfer Tunnel, along with extensive supporting infrastructure such as major roads, bridges and community facilities.

When Phase II is finished, the volume of water transferred to South Africa is expected to rise significantly, increasing royalty revenue for Lesotho while expanding the country's long-term energy potential.


LHDA is the institution responsible for implementing the Lesotho components of the project. Created by the same treaty that established LHWP, LHDA oversees all planning, construction, operations and maintenance of LHWP infrastructure.

Its mandate also covers environmental protection, resettlement and compensation, livelihood restoration, stakeholder engagement, and compliance with social and environmental standards.

LHDA's latest work reflects the scale and complexity of Phase II. Construction of the Polihali Dam is advancing, and development of the transfer tunnel that will connect the new reservoir to Katse is underway.

The Authority is also rolling out major advance infrastructure, including bridges, access roads and utilities, that enable construction and support surrounding communities.

Alongside engineering work, LHDA continues to carry out resettlement planning for households affected by the Polihali reservoir area, while compensation, housing development, grazing management and livelihood support programmes are being implemented across Mokhotlong.

Environmental and catchment management has become another central focus. LHDA is working on erosion control, biodiversity monitoring and sustainable land-use initiatives to protect the delicate highland ecosystem that underpins the project.

Community engagement has also intensified, with LHDA expanding its information-sharing efforts, improving grievance-handling systems and increasing direct outreach through platforms such as the newly launched One-Stop Shop Integrated Services initiative.

These efforts are linked to LHDA's broader strategic direction, which emphasises transparency, stronger communication, environmental stewardship and long-term social and economic value for communities affected by the LHWP.

# 'Lives and sight in danger'

## ... Visually Impaired Community speaks out on eye specialist suspension

**Ntsoaki Motaung**

The suspension of Maseru District Hospital's only eye specialist, Dr. Wenjun Fan, has drawn strong criticism from the Lesotho National League of the Visually Impaired Persons (LNLVIP), which warns that the decision has placed hundreds of vulnerable patients at serious risk.

Dr. Fan was suspended for three months with pay on October 24, 2025, over allegations of disclosing confidential information to the media. While investigations continue, his absence has triggered mounting anxiety among patients whose treatment has stalled, and LNLVIP says the situation has now reached an unacceptable point.

LNLVIP Chairperson, Jeremane Teele, said the organisation is deeply concerned by the rapid deterioration in care for visually impaired Basotho who depend on public health services.

"We are afraid that the conditions of patients are worsening while there is no one with the expertise to attend to them," Teele said. "Many of our people cannot afford private hospitals. Suspending the only specialist without securing an alternative has put lives and sight in danger."

He confirmed that the league had already received a complaint from 'Mamolemohi Ramokotjo, a parent whose child requires lifelong specialised care. Mokotjo's case, he said, is likely just one example of the "damage that will be huge" if patients continue to wait months without proper treatment.

Patients interviewed by Newsday described long delays, cancelled operations and consultations handled by staff who openly admitted lacking specialised training in eye care.

One patient explained that they only learned about the doctor's suspension when they arrived for a scheduled check-up on November 8.

"I did not get the services I expected or the way I would usually do with Dr. Fan," the patient said.

The patient said they were supposed to undergo a minor eye operation. "This is now impossible without Dr. Fan," the patient said, adding that the next available surgery date offered elsewhere was in February 2026.

"I feel it is too far because I can tell my eye has a problem," the patient lamented, emphasising the need for a doctor's check-up, not just a nurse, because an operation is required.

They urged the management to bring Dr. Fan back. "For the short time he is away, we are really suffering."

Another long-time patient, who followed Dr. Fan from the LDF clinic to Queen II because of his consistent service, said the suspension has left them "stranded" and struggling as their condition worsens.

The patient described the care they received during a check-up scheduled for November 5 as "what I did not expect or at least what I think Dr. Fan would have given me."

The impact of Dr. Fan's suspension is felt most acutely by parents whose children require specialised eye care. Ramokotjo, whose child is one of his patients, shared a distressing account of what has happened since his removal.

Her child had already undergone an operation on one eye performed by Dr. Fan. During a follow-up visit, he advised that the other eye would also need to be removed in the future. However, when she returned for the next scheduled check-up, she learned that the doctor had been suspended.

According to Ramokotjo, the staff who attended to them openly admitted that they did not have in-depth knowledge of eye conditions. They were unable to assess the child's progress and simply renewed the previous prescription.

The mother was told to return for the third check-up once Dr. Fan had resumed duty.

Feeling desperate and uncertain about her child's care, Ramokotjo took her concerns to the media and contacted Member of Parliament (MP) for Tsolo constituency, Mathiba Malothoane, which prompted an intervention from the Minister of Health.

She was invited to Queen II to meet a panel of doctors. During the meeting, she expressed her lack of confidence in the hospital, noting that her child's blindness had not been detected at birth despite being delivered at the same facility.

She proposed either reinstating Dr. Fan or arranging for her child to be transferred to Bloemfontein for specialised treatment. Ultimately, she agreed that her child would first undergo a full assessment at Queen II, as the referral hospital.

Fortunately, on the day of the appointment, she was satisfied with the care provided. Her child received attention using the same specialised equipment Dr. Fan had relied on, and she was informed that the remaining eye was stable and did not require removal at this stage, although close monitoring would be necessary.

The hospital also provided an artificial eye for the eye previously operated on by Dr. Fan.

Maseru District Hospital's Public Relations Officer, Kekeletso Motanyane, said she wished to clarify that no patient was being turned away without receiving attention. Motanyane explained that, in Dr. Fan's absence, trained nurses in the eye department were continuing to see patients and manage cases within their scope.

However, she noted that when a patient presented with a condition beyond the nurses' expertise, the hospital had put alternative measures in place.

"In such cases, we refer patients to facilities where there are eye doctors, including our tertiary hospital, QMMH (Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital), where most of our patients are referred," she said.

Dr. Fan, however, disputed the adequacy of this arrangement during an interview with Public Eye. He maintained that he was the only clinician able to perform eye operations in the public sector and that QMMH was currently unable to conduct such surgeries.

This means all patients who had been scheduled for operations during his suspension will not undergo their procedures as planned.

He said that for November alone, four children were booked for operations, one per week, and none of these surgeries can now take place.

"I think we have more than 1,000 patients, adults and children, who had appointments but cannot be properly examined because the essential eye machinery at the hospital, including the microscope, is broken," he added.

# Mahase's fight against suspension hits first hurdle

**Thoboloko Ntšonyane**

The High Court has struck from the urgent roll the high-profile case in which suspended Judge 'Maseforo Mahase sought to halt her suspension and stop a tribunal from investigating her fitness to remain on the bench.

Acting Judge Sekake Malebanye dismissed the urgency this week, finding that Judge Mahase had failed to file the application with the speed required for matters of this nature. The court held that she did not move the application immediately after learning of her suspension and therefore could not later claim urgency.

Her lawyer, Advocate Katiso Nhlapo, argued that the delay was due to consultations and the need to brief her legal team. The explanation was rejected.

Representing the Chief Justice, Advocate Rudie Cronje countered that Judge Mahase had been afforded an opportunity to be heard before the suspension was effected. He insisted that the case raises constitutional issues that "cannot be rushed," adding that "the facts are against the applicant."

On November 7, the Registrar of the High Court, advocate 'Mathato Sekoai, issued a circular notifying the judiciary that Judge Mahase had been suspended with effect from November 4.

She faces serious allegations that may have compromised her professional conduct. These include assigning to herself matters in which she allegedly had a personal interest; and failing to deliver judgments within the 90-day period prescribed by the High Court rules issued by the Chief Justice in 2023.

*Judge 'Maseforo Mahase*

Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane subsequently suspended her and recommended that a tribunal be established to inquire into her conduct.

His Majesty King Letsie III has appointed a tribunal under Section 121(5) of the Constitution to investigate whether Judge Mahase should be removed from office. The tribunal comprises international judges, Justice Mankhambira Charles (Chairperson), Justice Sylvester Mainga and Justice David Mangota.

Their appointment took effect on October 13, 2025, as published in Gazette Vol. 70, No. 88. It remains unclear when the tribunal will begin its work. However, the court challenge filed by Judge Mahase is expected to have a direct bearing on its progress and may stall its commencement.

In her papers, Judge Mahase argues that she was suspended without prior notice and without being informed of the allegations against her. She claims she was denied the right to be heard, violating principles of natural justice and undermining judicial independence.

She is challenging the constitutionality and lawfulness of her suspension; and the legality and impartiality of the tribunal appointed to investigate her.

This is not the first time Judge Mahase has faced possible impeachment proceedings. In 2019, while serving as Acting Chief Justice, there were attempts to establish a tribunal against her, though it never materialised.

Then Minister of Law and Justice, Lebohang Hlaele, accused her of bias. In an affidavit, Hlaele alleged that she had colluded with then Prime Minister Motsoahae Thabane in a manner that threatened the integrity of the Court of Appeal. He wanted her recused from cases involving him during tensions within the All Basotho Convention (ABC).

Lesotho has a history of judicial controversies that ended before tribunals could be completed. Former Court of Appeal President Judge Michael Ramodibedi resigned in 2014 before impeachment proceedings commenced. Judge Keketso Moahloli resigned in 2023 before a tribunal could begin its inquiry.

If the tribunal ultimately finds against her, Judge Mahase would become the first judge in Lesotho to be impeached, a dramatic fall after more than three decades in the legal profession.

The constitutional case challenging her suspension is yet to be allocated a hearing date or a panel of judges. Until then, both the tribunal and the judiciary remain in a holding pattern as the unprecedented matter continues to unfold.

Newsday Business

# Weak manufacturing, mining performances haunt Lesotho's economy

**Staff Reporter**

Weak performance in the manufacturing and mining sectors continues to cast a long shadow over Lesotho's economic prospects.

Economic activity slowed down in the third quarter of 2025 and is expected to remain subdued over the medium term, according to a statement made by the Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL)'s Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) during a media briefing earlier this week.

The apex bank did not, however, specify the exact contraction rate.

The economic downturn reflects lingering external shocks, among them, the global fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic; uncertainty over the renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) by the United States; and a weakening global demand for diamonds, exacerbated by a rise in lab-grown alternatives.

*Central Bank of Lesotho Governor, Dr. Maluke Letete*

The combined effect has forced many manufacturing and mining firms to scale back operations, triggering widespread job losses in Lesotho.

"On the domestic front, economic activity slowed down in the third quarter of 2025. This was mainly underpinned by weak manufacturing and domestic demand, particularly private spending," said CBL governor Dr Maluke Letete.

Letete added that growth was expected to be modest over the medium term due to weaker exports and mining output, but partially offset by the expected stronger textile exports to South Africa.

The Q3 contraction in Lesotho contrasts sharply with improving performance in neighbouring South Africa, the country to which the Lesotho loti is pegged, and whose economic fortunes are closely tied to those of Lesotho.

Recent data show South Africa's economy gained pace in Q3, 2025, supported mainly by household spending, even as investment remained weak. Lower oil prices, stabilising food costs and a stronger rand led the South African Reserve Bank to cut its policy rate by 25 basis points to 6.75 percent per annum.

"Recent data indicate that South Africa's growth improved in the third quarter of 2025, mainly supported by household spending, although investment remained weak. While the inflation rate rose to 3.6 percent in October 2025, the outlook remains positive, mainly supported by stabilising food prices, declining oil prices and a stronger rand. As a result, the South African Reserve Bank reduced the policy rate by 25 basis points to 6.75 percent per annum."

On the positive side, Letete indicated that the rate of inflation moderated to 4.5 percent in October 2025, dropping from 4.7 percent the preceding month.

"This was mainly due to lower food prices reflecting increased supply of vegetables, lower fuel prices and a stronger rand. In the medium term, inflation is expected to remain moderately higher if food prices remain persistently elevated."

The public debt as a percent of GDP also continued to decline, "reflecting timely repayments and the favourable exchange rate, which together reinforce fiscal sustainability and support domestic liquidity under the peg.

"The current account deficit moderated in the third quarter, mainly due to stronger exports. The SACU receipts and investment income from abroad continued to be critical buffers despite the persistent trade account deficit."

The overall fiscal balance remained relatively stable at a surplus of 10.0 percent of GDP. This was mainly supported by water royalties amid accelerated infrastructure development.

Meanwhile, the MPC, therefore, resolved to revise the Net International Reserves (NIR) target floor to US$830 million from US$840 million. This amount is deemed adequate to underwrite the peg.

The MPC further reduced the CBL rate by 25 basis points to 6.50 percent per annum.

"This adjustment maintains close alignment with monetary conditions in South Africa and reinforces market confidence in the exchange rate parity between the loti and the SA rand.

The CBL reaffirms its unwavering commitment to maintaining adequate NIR to defend the peg and ensure that domestic inflation remains broadly in line with that of South Africa."

The committee said it will continue to monitor global and regional economic developments and stands ready to take necessary measures to safeguard the credibility of the loti-rand peg.

# Opportunities platform for the youth unveiled

**Lungile Maseela**

The government, in partnership with UNICEF, has launched a new digital platform aimed at tackling youth unemployment by linking young people to training and job opportunities.

The platform, known as the Youth Agency Marketplace (YOMA), was officially unveiled on Wednesday in Maseru.

YOMA is designed to help young people across Lesotho access learning programmes, skills training, and pathways to employment or entrepreneurship. It connects users to online courses, internships, social impact projects, and opportunities in the private sector.

The platform is especially useful for young people who are out of school, giving them alternative routes to gain skills and improve their chances of finding work.

During the launch, speakers highlighted YOMA's potential to equip young Basotho with digital, entrepreneurial, and practical life skills needed to compete in both local and international markets.

The Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development, Pitso Lesaoana, said YOMA comes at a critical time, as youth unemployment in Lesotho has become what he described as a "global pandemic."

With youth unemployment officially declared a national disaster for two years starting July 2025, he said the platform will play a key role in helping young people move "from learning to earning."

He urged young people to make use of the platform and directed that awareness campaigns be extended to rural communities where many young people struggle to access information.

Lipalesa Lesenyeho, Director of Youth in the Ministry, called the launch a major milestone in the country's youth development efforts. She said YOMA offers free certified online courses, scholarships, internships, social impact projects, and spaces for young people to connect and work together on community initiatives.


*The Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development, Pitso Lesaoana*

She praised the strong partnership with UNICEF and encouraged youth across the country to join the platform and help drive positive change.

UNICEF Lesotho Representative, Deepak Bhaskaran, said the launch marks the start of a national movement to empower young Basotho, describing them as "the resourceful heartbeat of the nation."

He said YOMA helps remove long-standing barriers in education, employment, and entrepreneurship by offering life-skills training, internships, social impact challenges, and digital CVs with verified credentials.

Bhaskaran noted that YOMA aligns with the Prime Minister's Sebabatso initiative and the Youth Power Hub. He also highlighted the platform's global success, with more than 930,000 young people registered worldwide.

A panel discussion titled "Youth Empowerment in Action: From Learning to Earning" brought together Vodacom Lesotho, UNICEF, a young entrepreneur, and officials from the Ministries of Gender and Education.

Vodacom Lesotho highlighted how digital connectivity can expand opportunities for young people. Rorisang Motlomelo, the company's Solutions Delivery Manager, announced that YOMA will be integrated into Vodacom's zero-rated Connect You platform to make it more accessible, especially in underserved communities.

Connect You, which is available through the My Vodacom and M-Pesa apps, already reaches more than a million users, helping to extend YOMA's national reach.

Dr. Jone Marole, CEO Secondary at the Ministry of Education and Training, said the launch comes at a critical moment as youth unemployment remains an emergency. He described YOMA as a flexible, evolving marketplace that responds to the needs of young people while supporting local innovation by linking government, the private sector, and youth talent.

# Schoolgirls tear bedding to manage periods

Ntsoaki Motaung

In one of the starkest illustrations of deepening poverty in Lesotho, some schoolgirls are ripping a part the mattresses they sleep on to make improvised sanitary pads during their periods.

Teachers and community leaders say this desperate practice, a last resort for girls who cannot afford menstrual products, is driving repeated absenteeism and, in many cases, permanent dropout from school.

The crisis has prompted the launch of a national programme aimed at restoring dignity to thousands of adolescents.

At the centre of this crisis is a distressing account from Senkoase High School. Teacher 'Mampho Mathaba revealed that when her students cannot afford or access sanitary pads, they tear pieces off the very mattresses they sleep on, using the foam and fabric as makeshift menstrual products.

This desperate act, deeply humiliating and unsafe, speaks to the severity of deprivation these girls face. A mattress, meant to provide rest and comfort, becomes a tool for basic survival. This underscores a crisis that threatens their health, dignity, and fundamental right to education.

While menstrual products are taken for granted in many developed countries, in rural and impoverished communities across Lesotho, the lack of access fuels what is known as "period poverty."

Its effects ripple through every aspect of a girl's life.

The most immediate and damaging consequence is on schooling. Without adequate materials to manage their periods hygienically and securely, girls miss classes, often staying home for the entire duration of their menstruation.

As Mathaba explained, this absenteeism is not always temporary. In the most tragic cases, girls never return to school, creating a persistent cycle of disadvantage that follows them into adulthood.

"Missing several days of school every month, sometimes up to a fifth of their instructional time, causes girls to fall behind their peers. Over time, this learning gap becomes impossible to bridge, leading many to drop out entirely and limiting their future job prospects and economic independence," Mathaba said.

The Member of Parliament for Hloahloeng, Katleho Mabeleng, confirmed that this crisis is widespread. Mabeleng explained that in many remote areas, women and girls rely on torn pieces of old clothing or even blankets to manage their periods.

"Even when families manage to scrape together money for pads, the logistics alone, walking long distances to shops in rural areas, create an almost insurmountable barrier. Ultimately, poverty is the primary driver, turning a normal biological function into a catastrophic hurdle," he said.

This is not merely a health or education issue; it is, as the World Bank Group emphasizes, a matter of human rights and dignity.

Globally, an estimated 500 million women and girls lack access to menstrual products and adequate facilities.

Effective Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) requires three essential components: reliable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities; affordable and adequate menstrual materials; and a supportive environment free of stigma.

When any of these elements is missing, the dignity and well-being of the girl child are compromised.

In Lesotho, the challenges faced by girls are further deepened by entrenched stigma and widespread misinformation. Menstruation is often surrounded by silence, shame, and harmful myths that isolate girls and discourage open discussion.

The newly launched national programme acknowledges that providing products alone is not enough. It integrates a strong educational component designed to dismantle these myths and build knowledge.

Mathaba welcomed this shift, noting that although sexuality education is part of the curriculum, the new programme, delivered by trained experts, will greatly enhance understanding.

"Importantly, the programme teaches both girls and boys about menstruation. For boys, this education clears up the widespread misconception that menstruation is linked to a girl becoming sexually active. By explaining that menstruation is a natural biological process, the initiative promotes respect for women and girls and helps create a more informed, supportive community," she said.

According to 'Maseretse Ratiea, National Programme Analyst for Adolescents and Young People at UNFPA, the education element is essential. It includes teaching what menstruation is, how to maintain hygiene during periods, and also involves parents. The goal, she said, is that by the end of the pilot phase, communities will have a significantly stronger understanding of menstrual health and hygiene.

Ratiea explained that the National Programme on Menstrual Hygiene is a coordinated initiative between the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The pilot phase is being implemented in the districts of Mokhotlong, Mafeteng, and Maseru over a one-year period, after which it will be handed over to the government for nationwide scale-up.

She said the distribution model was deliberately designed to maximise impact and prevent diversion of products. Every girl aged 10 to 19 receives disposable pads, regardless of whether she is in school, lives with parents, or not, ensuring that vulnerable and out-of-school adolescents are fully included. Women aged 20 to 24 receive reusable pads, an approach that is both cost-effective and environmentally sustainable.

To reduce the risk of pads being sold or used by others in the home, distribution is done quarterly. Although each eligible girl is entitled to 16 packets of pads per year, she only receives three packets every quarter.

"This staged delivery is a practical measure to ensure the products serve their intended purpose—keeping girls clean, healthy, and in school," she said.

Ratiea added that UNFPA is initially handing over 4,900 packets of sanitary towels, enough to meet the annual needs of 2,275 girls.

She emphasised that the programme's goals reach far beyond sanitation. Improved menstrual management, she said, means girls can attend school consistently, avoid feelings of hopelessness, and reduce the likelihood of early marriage or pregnancy driven by prolonged absence from school.

"By understanding the link between menstruation and reproduction, and by remaining in supportive learning environments, girls gain the foundation to become resilient and capable individuals who can shape their own futures," she said.

UNFPA Representative John Mosoti issued a strong call for cultural change beginning at home.

"We do not discuss these issues within the family. We do not educate the boys, and sometimes we do not even educate the girls about these things," he said. "Boys need to understand menstruation—they will marry these girls, be their friends, their fathers, their brothers."

The Minister for Gender, Youth, and Social Development, Pitso Lesaoana, expressed deep appreciation for the government's long-term commitment to the programme. He highlighted the political will and sustained effort required to launch an initiative of this scale, stressing that the government has a responsibility to address one of the most fundamental barriers to girl-child empowerment.

# Cancer centre construction project audit shows fair financial reporting

Ntsoaki Motaung

The financial statements for the Construction of the Cancer Treatment Centre (CTC), a flagship project under the Ministry of Health (MoH), have been audited and found to "present fairly, in all material respects" the project's financial position for the year ending March 31, 2025.

The audit, conducted by Mosito and Associates under the authority of the Auditor-General, confirms that the project's statements, covering financial performance and cash flows, comply with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), using the cash basis of accounting.

According to the Statement of Receipts and Payments, the CTC project received M28,674,912 during the financial year, while total payments amounted to M28,674,715, leaving a closing cash balance of M3,579.

Payments comprised M27,245,368 for civil works and M1,426,645 for consultancy services under the Government of Lesotho (GoL) funding.

Importantly, the Auditor-General reported no key audit matters, meaning no significant risks or irregularities were identified.

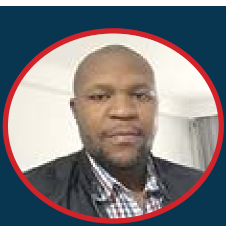
The Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Health and the Director of Finance confirmed that the project complied fully with government regulations and financing agreements, and that all funds were used strictly for eligible purposes.

The financial statements were formally approved and signed on September 29, 2025 and tabled in parliament this week.

The report provides comparative figures for the previous financial year ending March 31, 2024, and presents values in both Lesotho Maloti (M) and United States Dollars (USD).

In a related development, the Auditor-General has also issued clean audit opinions for two other major Ministry of Health programmes. These are the Tuberculosis (TB/GOL) support programme, and the Southern Africa Tuberculosis & Health Systems Support Project (SATBHSS), components IDA 58220 and IDA 66950.

The audits, covering the same financial year ending March 31, 2025, concluded that the financial statements of these projects also "present fairly" the money received and spent.



Theko Tlebere

Common Concern

# "When you come back from the river, carry water"

I have made an observation in recent times about high-profile people in Lesotho engaging in their personal capacity or otherwise on social media. This trend has seen many leaders who one never thought would be on Facebook or X actively posting their pictures after attending workshops, either locally or internationally.

In essence, today I want to talk about what young people expect from a post about a workshop or a bilateral meeting. What first comes to my mind when I see such a picture is "a productive engagement with partners on development" or "a successful workshop on collaboration."

The images are often of a high-quality and dignified nature; however, the conveyed messages lack specificity. While these images may elicit approval, they seldom afford the requisite clarity or guidance for the demographic that requires it most: the youth.

There is a wise saying in our culture: "When you come back from the river, carry water." This serves as a reminder that leadership is not merely about attendance, it is about delivery. Workshops should not be ceremonial; they ought to generate knowledge that can address local problems. That is why public reporting is essential. When officials return without clear information, strategy, or opportunities for citizens, especially young people, public money and trust are quietly squandered.

Government officials do not attend workshops as private individuals; they represent the nation. Whether funded by taxpayers or international partners, their presence signifies that our country is part of global conversations. However, workshops should not end at the airport. They should convey ideas back to the villages, clinics, universities, and youth organisations seeking direction.

If the goal is national development, then the flow of information should be public, not private. The youth should not have to guess what was discussed; they should be informed in clear language of the challenges addressed, the lessons learned, and the opportunities available for participation. When this does not occur, our workshops risk becoming mere exercises in "protocol participation," where attendance replaces action.

The younger generation is no longer politically distant or uninformed. They follow global trends, join webinars, study online, and volunteer in community initiatives. What they lack is not motivation; it is access to updates, opportunities, and pathways to participate. A useful workshop report could be structured around four simple questions:

1. What was discussed, and does it affect us locally?
2. What solutions were presented, and can they work in Lesotho?
3. What are the next steps, even if small?
4. How can youth, civil society, or professionals get involved?

This reporting does not necessitate lengthy speeches; it requires intent and an understanding that leadership is most effective when information flows outward, not solely upward.

Consider any high-profile figure in Lesotho attending an Africa Youth Day celebration, or workshop, or whatever it can be called. And returning to host a brief discussion with youth representatives either online or in person, wouldn't that be great?

Envision a minister at a health summit producing a concise report summarising insights from Rwanda, Kenya, or Mauritius, asking: "Can we adapt these here?" Such actions incur no cost yet foster significant trust.

Workshops should inspire the nation rather than merely populate social media. When reports lack substance, youth quickly disengage. As interest fades, participation declines, creating a disconnect in governance, even with good intentions.

Our elders taught us that a river serves those who draw from it, not merely those who stand beside it. In this vein, workshops should be perceived as sources of knowledge rather than mere gatherings. Withholding information denies opportunity.

If officials embrace a culture of post-workshop transparency, many young Basotho would feel acknowledged and included in shaping the future. Lesotho has a wealth of capable youth; what is lacking is a bridge connecting policy discussions and public engagement. That bridge is constructed through feedback. When feedback is abundant, innovation follows; in its absence, hope diminishes.

This is not a critique of attendance; it is a call for inclusion. Our nation benefits from its officials' presence on the global stage, but attendance must lead to accessibility, initiated through effective communication. When officials attend workshops on health policy, debt restructuring, climate resilience, entrepreneurship, or skills migration, the youth are attentive, silently asking: What did you learn? What does it mean for us? How can we participate?

When responses to these questions become ingrained in our public culture, workshops will be regarded as national investments, not diplomatic tourism. Thus, upon returning from the river, may you carry water. The future is NOW!

Newsday Opinion

# 'Positive Masculinity' is changing the game in Africa

*Cynthia Amanda Lungu*

*Tapiwa Uchizi Nyasulu*

***Joint Opinion Piece by UN Regional Gender Advisers for Eastern and Southern Africa: Gaia Chiti Strigelli, UNICEF; Tapiwa Uchizi Nyasulu, UNFPA and Cynthia Amanda Lungu, UNAIDS.***

***Wordcount: 880***

"Where do you learn to be a man?"

That's the question 24-year-old Nkosikhona Fakudze is grappling with in Eswatini, as he navigates his relationship with his girlfriend and daily life while his father is away as a migrant worker.

Amid growing concerns globally about young men opposing women's rights, a new concept is rising across Africa: Positive Masculinity. Research from the Joint UN Regional Programme 2gether 4 SRHR shows it's sparking important conversations in the media, communities, and policy - and it's helping young men like Nkosikhona who want to do the right thing.

So, how's this playing out in practice? From Nkosikhona's personal journey to regional policies, here are five initiatives that are changing the narrative around masculinity across Africa.

**1. Eswatini's club for young men**

With his father out of the house, Nkosikhona found the answers he was looking for on how to be a man at Kwakha Indvodza. It's a community initiative in Eswatini that meets men and boys in the places men traditionally congregate, such as gyms. In the past five years, more than 4,100 adolescent boys and young men have enrolled in the programme. Supported by UNAIDS and UNFPA, men and boys come together to talk about taboo issues, often concerning the sexual and reproductive health rights of the women in their lives. The shifts have been tangible: 65% have since accessed health services, including for HIV testing, condom usage and referrals for sexually transmitted infections. "I get my sex education here, at Kwakha Indvodza," says Nkosikhona. "I remember the things I learn when I am with my girlfriend… like how important it is to use condoms so that we don't get HIV. She said to me, 'I love you because you want to keep me safe and make me happy'."

*Gaia Chiti Strigelli*

**2. Uganda's 'male engagement strategy'**

The East African country was the first in the region to develop a male engagement strategy, back in 2019, with UNAIDS support. The strategy involves high-profile men, including the Kabaka of Buganda Kingdom, championing successful health campaigns. Take Ugandan Reverend Canon Gideon Byamugisha. He had just been ordained when he was widowed, left to raise a baby, and tested positive for HIV. Rather than hide his diagnosis, he co-founded Inerela+, a network of HIV positive faith leaders who use their respected position in society to help end stigma and promote treatment. Since that initial pilot, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Kenya have followed suit with their own male engagement strategies, championing more positive male role modelling.

**3. Lesotho's dramatic reduction in intimate partner violence**

Young people, especially young mothers, have shared that older health workers are often judgmental, discriminatory, and that services are not confidential. But when health information is shared by similarly-aged peers, the impact is stronger, not only for mums and babies but for male partners too. Peer networks, which include men and boys, offering support, home visits and safe spaces to discuss health and services in Lesotho, led to increased testing and treatment and reduced transmission rates of HIV, along with reduced postnatal depression by 30%. Crucially, this package of peer support saw intimate partner violence reduce by 44%. These programmes are now being rolled out in a number of countries in the region, including Zimbabwe and South Africa.

**4. Reduced child marriage in the Horn of Africa.**

The majority of those displaced in emergencies are women and girls, increasing their risk of sexual violence. Girls are forced into child marriage or transactional sex, both last resorts when food is scarce. UNICEF found that child marriage and female genital mutilation increased due to drought in the Horn of Africa, affecting girls as young as 12. So humanitarian response teams have developed a toolkit of teaching materials, focusing on self-esteem for adolescent girls and positive masculinity for boys. First piloted in Mozambique, rates of child marriage have reduced, and the programme has since expanded to Somalia and Ethiopia.

5. Better laws for initiation rites in Southern Africa

Rites of passage preserve traditional cultures, but some coming-of-age initiation ceremonies can reinforce the subservience of women to men, minimising consent and increasing HIV risk. But UNFPA's analysis found that working with elders and involving young people in taboo discussions reduces harm. We looked at four countries in Southern Africa: Malawi, Eswatini, South Africa and Zambia. The good news is that all four countries have laws that are designed to protect adolescents from harmful cultural practices. This is partly thanks to the work done by advocates over many years, ultimately protecting young women AND men.

**Going forward**

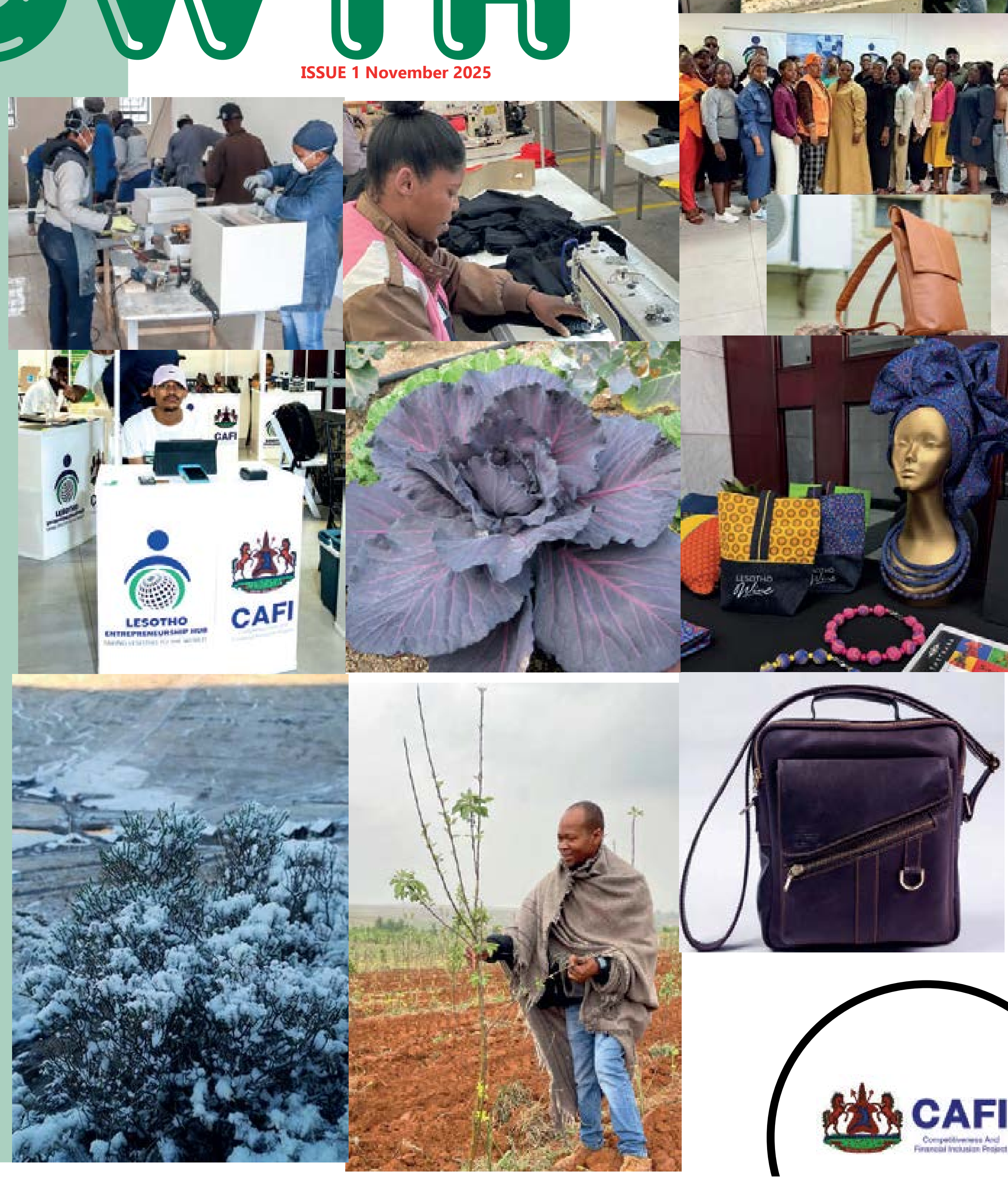
This month, leaders from across Southern Africa are meeting in Cape Town for the SADC Regional Consultative Forum (25th–28th November) to engage more men and boys to get involved in advancing human rights. The goal: to drive gender equality, prevent GBV, and reduce HIV infections across the region.

As the SADC forum kicks off, the conversation about positive masculinity is just the beginning. Leaders across the continent are working to shift social norms, with efforts that extend from government policies to local communities. For young men like Nkosikhona, this shift means finding safe spaces to talk about important issues like consent and HIV prevention. It's through these conversations that we can create lasting change, where men and boys are key partners in building healthier, more equal communities for everyone.

**END**


# GROWTH

ISSUE 1 November 2025




The official CAFI Newsletter

CAFI
Competitiveness And Financial Inclusion Project

# Shared prosperity

**Apart from creating an enabling legislative and regulatory framework for businesses to thrive, it also seeks to nurture businesses by supporting both start-ups and existing enterprises with skills development, funding and equipment acquisition.**

## Minister's Note

LESOTHO's economy is at a crossroads, facing both perennial and emerging challenges. Unemployment, particularly among the youth and women, has worsened in recent years. Climate change, inadequate farming practices, insufficient funding, and a lack of skills have left our agriculture in doldrums.

Manufacturing, particularly in textiles, is struggling due to tariffs in the United States and competition from other markets.

Our micro, small and medium enterprises have to contend with limited access to finance, red tape, poor support structures and a lack of management capacity.

Large companies face similar challenges. Bureaucratic hurdles in both the setting up and running of businesses have frustrated domestic and foreign investors.

Meanwhile, emerging technological trends sweeping across the globe have shaken our fragile economy to the core.

Yet it's not all doom and gloom. I am proud to say that our government has been taking these challenges head-on.

The Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) project, funded by the World Bank and led by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development, bears testimony to the government's commitment and drive to resolve those challenges.

Based on the main pillars of the National Strategic Development Plans (I and II), the project comprehensively addresses the structural issues hindering economic growth.

Apart from creating an enabling legislative and regulatory framework for businesses to thrive, it also seeks to nurture businesses by supporting both start-ups and existing enterprises with skills development, funding and equipment acquisition.

It also sets the foundational legislative and institutional pillars to unlock access to finance.

At the time of this is edition, dozens of companies have been supported to acquire modern equipment to boost their production capacity.

Some 150 enterprises, primarily owned by young people and women, have received incubation and funding. The majority are thriving, with periodic reports showing exponential growth in production, employment numbers and market penetration.

Over 100 farmers nationwide have participated in an intensive pre-incubation program to enhance their skills.

As we share this edition, we celebrate the progress of seven fruit farmers who, through the support of the Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Center and with continued training, assessment and funding, are thriving and shaping a brighter future for horticulture in Lesotho.

The project's efforts to build strong value chains have put the textile sector on the path to recovery.

Critically, all these initiatives are being implemented with a strong focus on environmental sustainability.

This newsletter features inspiring stories of Basotho seizing opportunities offered by CAFI to enhance their businesses and contribute to the economy.

The success of their businesses will create jobs and business opportunities for others.

You will read about start-ups launched with nothing but dreams and passion.

Some businesses rose from proverbial deathbeds to holding their own in the economy. We have stories of backyard and rudimentary operations transformed into sustainable businesses with strong management, financial, production, quality control and human resources systems.

Plots once considered merely sources of basic sustenance have been turned into commercial fruit and horticulture farms employing dozens of permanent and seasonal workers.

Textile companies that had outdated and unreliable machines have acquired modern equipment, enabling them to supply regional retailers more efficiently. These stories not only demonstrate CAFI's impact but also inspire others to relentlessly pursue their dreams.

They show that Basotho are capable of building their own businesses to compete both locally and globally.

I hope these stories inspire everyone to take their destiny into their hands as we strive to build a future of shared prosperity.

As you read these stories, let's remember to acknowledge the dedication of the CAFI team, funders, ministry officials, Project beneficiaries and implementing Agencies who make this project a success.

I appreciate their support and urge them to continue working on initiatives that transform our economy.

Mokhethi Shelile

**The Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry and Business Development**

# For greater good

## Principal Secretary's Memo

THE milestones of the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) project over the past three years are a vivid illustration of the great things we can achieve through commitment, hard work and collaboration.

They are a clear indication of the great strides we can make when projects are in sync with the government's national development agenda. Funded by the World Bank, the CAFI project speaks to the mandate of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development.

At the core is the drive to stimulate economic growth that creates sustainable jobs and achieves shared prosperity.

The government understands that it cannot continue to dominate the economy and should focus on its role of creating an enabling environment for the private sector to thrive.

The government is implementing reforms to eliminate barriers to private sector growth.

I am proud to say the regulatory reforms implemented over the past few years have improved Lesotho's environment. We have cut both red tape and the time it takes for businesses to comply with regulations.

The Lesotho Enterprise Hub and Seed Financing Facility has so far funded and incubated 150 enterprises, which include a significant number led by women and youth. The fourth cohort has been successfully onboarded and is progressing well, while ESOs for the fifth cohort have been identified and enterprise selection is currently underway.

The Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre, which is set to transform our agriculture, is incubating seven fruit farmers and has capacitated 190 farmers.

The Lesotho Enterprise Support Programme (LEAP) has been revamped to provide equipment support to enterprises.

At the same time, we are building mechanisms to support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to withstand climatic shocks and disasters.

And more importantly, all these interventions are being implemented with a strong commitment to Environmental and social sustainability.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that the CAFI project remains unwavering in its commitment to transparency and accountability.

The World Bank has praised the project's work.

The Auditor General has also consistently issued unqualified audit opinions since the project started in 2022. CAFI is thus a shining example of good governance and astute financial management.

It is a reputation earned through hard work and discipline.

Palesa Matobako

**Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development**

# Sowing the mustard seed

## Managing Director's message

AS we reach the midterm milestone of the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project, I am proud to reflect on the significant strides we have made in strengthening Lesotho's business environment and private sector.

Funded by the World Bank and led by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development, the CAFI Project remains a cornerstone of private sector development. The project is driving transformative change and laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and competitive economy.

Our goal is to increase access to business support services and financial products for MSMEs and entrepreneurs, especially women and youth. We pursue this by improving the overall business environment, strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem and MSME competitiveness, and enhancing SME participation in high-potential value chains.

The focus of the project in levelling the playing field is to improve Government-to-Business (G2B) digital services, making processes such as business registration, licensing, and trade facilitation more efficient and transparent.

By utilising technology, we not only reduce business time and costs but also promote an ecosystem of trust and accountability.

The successful deployment of the Lesotho Single Window for Business Facilitation and the Lesotho National Single Window (LNSW) for Trade Facilitation, both to be fully operational by early 2026, exemplifies our dedication to this goal.

In addition to streamlining G2B services, the CAFI project recognises the critical importance of financial access for individuals and enterprises. By enhancing our credit infrastructure, including improvements in credit reporting, the secured transactions regime and the insolvency landscape, we are paving the way for greater financial inclusion.

Our focus on supporting youth and women entrepreneurs through the establishment of an entrepreneurship hub, a seed financing facility, and a matching grant scheme has already yielded positive outcomes, empowering many to pursue and realise their business aspirations. These achievements are reflected in the inspiring, down-to-earth stories of entrepreneurs featured in this newsletter.

Moreover, as we navigate the challenges posed by climate change, our commitment to building resilience among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is unwavering. The development of a Disaster Risk Financing Strategy, and a resilience fund , is a vital step toward safeguarding our businesses against climate-related shocks and disasters.

In parallel, we are intensifying efforts to unlock opportunities in high-potential value chains. We aim to enhance the participation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in commercial horticulture, specifically focusing on high-value crops like deciduous fruits.

Our targeted support is designed to boost competitiveness, increase export potential, and create sustainable livelihoods in rural areas.

This includes investments in agribusiness capacity building, value addition, and improved market access.

Additionally, the CAFI project is responding proactively to global market shifts that have adversely affected Lesotho's textiles and apparel sector, particularly the impact of the new US tariffs.

In collaboration with industry stakeholders, we are pursuing a revitalisation strategy that supports product diversification, promotes regional market integration, and upgrades skills and technology within the sector to preserve jobs and drive future growth.

The CAFI project also emphasises the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Through our Public-Private Dialogue initiatives, we are actively identifying and removing obstacles to investment, ensuring a conducive environment for growth.

The investment climate action plan is a testament to our proactive approach in fostering a supportive business landscape.

Our achievements to date would not have been possible without the strong collaboration with implementing agencies and beneficiaries, whose partnership and dedication have been central to the project's success.

We are equally proud of our consistent compliance with the World Bank and Government of Lesotho fiduciary rules and regulations, as well as our adherence to social and environmental safeguards.

Above all, the CAFI project maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and all forms of malpractice, reinforcing our commitment to transparency, integrity, and responsible project implementation.

As we reflect on our accomplishments at this midpoint, I would like to express my gratitude to all stakeholders involved in this transformative journey.

Your dedication and support have been instrumental in advancing the CAFI project.

We are on a promising path, and I am excited to see what we will achieve together in the coming months. Thank you to all our stakeholders for your unwavering dedication to driving Lesotho's economic growth forward!

Chaba Mokuku

**Managing Director**

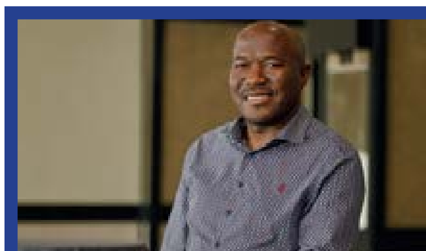
DIRECTOR Implementation, 'Makali Nathane

MONITORING and Evaluation Specialist, Lehlohonolo Mpholle

ACCESS to Finance Specialist, Thabo Monyane

PROCUREMENT Specialist, Tanki Mohejane

FINANCIAL Management,Thato Mokhutšoane



ENVIRONMENTAL and Social Safeguards Specialist, Mathoka Khaile

LHITC Manager, Nthako Supu

LEHSFF Acting Manager, 'Mamoriti Phanngoa

LEAP Manager, Lehlohonolo Chefa

MSME RESILIENCE Coordinator, Molehe Mokone

MAMORITI Phangoa

# Hub of hope

THE Lesotho Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing Facility (LEHSFF) has funded and incubated 150 enterprises under three cohorts. The fourth cohort has been successfully onboarded and is progressing well, while ESOs for the fifth cohort have been identified and enterprise selection is currently underway..

Twenty-seven Enterprise Support Organisations (ESOs) were engaged.

Mamoriti Phangoa, the hub's Acting Manager, says the first three cohorts have created 1250 permanent and temporary jobs.

Phangoa says 59 percent of the enterprises incubated so far are women-led, while 20 percent are youth-led. She says most of the incubated enterprises have significantly improved their revenues.

"Fourteen percent of those incubated have increased their revenues and 32 percent have increased their employment numbers," Phangoa says, adding that some enterprises are still "work in progress, but they are on course to increase their revenues".

"Some of the benefits of the incubation are yet to kick in because some were start-ups while others are still in recovery mode."

"What is, however, clear is that the enterprises have immensely benefited from the incubation in terms of skills and capital."

Phangoa says the past three cohorts have resulted in critical lessons for both the hub and the ESOs.

"We keep refining the system as we gain more insights from the incubation."

**CAFI Project**

**Performance Data by Component 2**

**Lesotho Entrepreneurship Hub & Seed Financing Facility (LEHSFF)**

| LEHSFF | |
|---|---|
| Number of Enterprises completed incubation | 150 |
| Number of Enterprises on current incubation | 46 |
| Of which are woman-led enterprises | 54% |
| Of which are youth-led enterprises | 43% |
| Of which have increased revenue in real-terms | 56% |
| Of which have increased employment in real-terms | 45% |
| Value of Investment to these enterprises *(LSL)* | 19,375,012 |
| Number of sustainable jobs created *(month-to-month)* | 1,250 |
| Number of Enterprise Support Organizations capacitated | 27 |
| Number of ESOs Engaged to date | 18 |
| Value of Funding to the ESOs | 7,362,507 |

Table 1: General Statistics on the LEHSFF

# Counting beads

**Maseru**

STARTING a business was the last thing on Paballo Tlhaole's mind when she completed her Tourism Management degree at Limkokwing University of Creative Technology.

Tlhaole wanted a job, and she set out to find one.

But after a few freelancing jobs, she realised she was fighting a tough battle. "Companies were just not hiring permanent staff. I could not make ends meet from what I earned as a freelancer," Tlhaole says.

"I started looking for something to keep myself busy while I waited for another freelancing opportunity."

So when she wasn't working, Tlhaole would help her sister make earrings, bracelets and necklaces as a hobby.

It wasn't long before she realised that her sister's past time had the potential to be transformed into a business.

"I had always believed that you start with the little you have and grow it. And here I was, doing something that I really enjoyed and could be turned into a business."

Over the next few months, Tlhaole and her sister registered I Do Beads and opened a studio-cum-shop in Maseru West.

"The start wasn't great, but we were getting some orders that kept the lights on."

But when I Do Beads was only two years old, disaster struck. One morning in 2017, the sisters woke up to find their shop empty.

It had been robbed the previous night. "They (thieves) stole everything. The little cash we had, the stock and our tools were all gone." After years of toiling, Tlhaole and her sister were back to square one.

"We had been struggling to build the business, and that robbery knocked us out."

"We knew resuscitating the business would be a long and painful journey." Indeed, the next five years were tough. Without capital, they could not make enough accessories to keep the business going.

Desperate, they shifted back to hobby mode.

"We were getting occasional orders, but truly speaking, we could not call it a business. I Do Beads existed only in name."

They, however, kept on the corporate doors for orders.

They were also trying to convince shops to take their products. Their perseverance eventually paid off in 2022 when they landed a huge order for awareness ribbons from two local companies.

"Those orders were so big that we opened our shop and studio," Tlhaole says. Then, in February 2024, they saw an advert inviting businesses to pitch for a grant and incubation under the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) project.

Tlhaole says once they were accepted, she knew this was the breakthrough they needed.

She says while the financial grant helped the business buy raw materials to boost their stock, it is the training, mentorship, technical and psychosocial support during the six-month incubation that transformed their business.

Over the next six months, I Do Beads implemented financial, administration and quality control systems.

"We now had clear systems to manage the business and operations. We had a financial structure, as well as policies to guide us."

She says that these systems and policies simplified tracking growth, making financial projections, and meeting tax obligations on time.

The result, Tlhaole adds, has been a 100 percent growth in business over the past year.

Their staff complement has also increased from four to eight.

They have a new payment system which includes a Point of Sale machine. Tlhaole and her sister are now giving back to communities and dreaming big. They now have an art and entrepreneurship mentorship and training project in Lithabaneng. The main target is young people and small businesses. When resources permit, they make donations to local charities. I do Beads is also farming out the manufacturing of its products to small groups in the districts.

"We are training them to make our products but the main goal is to equip them with the skills to make a living from art and crafts."

"So far, we have done training in Sehlabethebe and Polihali". Their products are now in Semonkong Lodge, Milco, Curio Shop, Lifestyle Books and Shipa.

I Do Beads is now making forays into the regional and international markets.

"We aim to establish shops in the districts before expanding regionally and globally."

With their best-selling culturally-inspired earrings performing well, the sisters are now designing new products such as travel souvenirs and trivia games.

In May this year, they started an event where parents bring their children to make their own earrings and other crafts.

Tlhaole says the events, which happen on weekends, are "always fully booked".

# and Seed Financing Facility

# Gifted Hands

**Sea Point**

GIFTED Hand is a customised furniture manufacturing company owned by twin sisters Lerato Mampiti Thamae and Thato Matlotla Morojele.

Having both studied Political Science and Administration at the University of Lesotho, none of the sisters ever dreamt of owning a furniture business.

None of them has ever made any wood product.

Morojele worked at a telecommunications company while Thamae spent her free time making small crafts that she sold to friends and relatives who fancied them.

One day, Thamae came across a YouTube video of someone making furniture. She showed it to Morojele, who was also intrigued. A seed had been planted.

Over the next few months, the sisters bought used wood pallets and started experimenting with different furniture designs.

When they got stuck, they watched YouTube videos for knowledge and inspiration. Then, in 2019, someone asked them to make a study desk for him.

"We were not really sure if we could pull it off but we said we could do it," Thamae says.

"We delivered the desk a few days later and the customer was thrilled. And from there the word spread."

Within a few months they had made ten study desks.

"That might sound small, yet for people coming from zero production like us, that was huge."

"Each time we made a desk, we would post it on Facebook and there would be more orders."

Thamae says the fact that people worked from home during the Covid pandemic increased the demand for their desks.

They operated from a garage for four years before being selected for incubation through CAFI's Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing Facility.

Thamae says the biggest lesson from the six-month incubation was marketing and brand positioning.

"After interacting with our coach and technical experts, we began to understand that our business model was geared for the top end of the furniture market," Thamae says.

"It's one thing to say what your business is and quite another to write it down and articulate it."

"Our Enterprise Support Organisation (ESO), Iggle Consulting, helped us refine and better understand our business models."

"They took us through the entire process of building a successful furniture business.

Gifted Hands has used the grant from CAFI to move from the garage into a spacious building in Sea Point, where they have offices, a workshop and a display room.

Morojele, however, says there are already signs that the building could soon be too small for them.

"We have been here for a few months, but we are realising that we need a bigger workshop and display room because we are getting some big orders," says Morojele, who quit her job to work full-time at Gifted Hands. They also bought machines and hired marketing staff. Gifted Hand employs 15 people.

Only two of the nine in the workshop are trained carpenters.

"The rest were hired because of their passion and willingness to learn. Because we started with no experience, we believe we should give people without training or experience a chance to prove themselves," Thamae explains.

The company is targeting a monthly turnover of about M350 000 within the next six months. "So far, we are doing between M150 000 and M300 000. We can, however, see the potential to reach M350 000 soon."

"Because of help from CAFI, the brand is growing while our marketing team is making some headway in the market."

Thamae says their success so far should inspire young people to be brave enough to start their own businesses.

"Learn the skill and perfect it. Teach yourself every day. And don't be afraid of failure."

# The park in Ramabanta

**Ramabanta**

On the banks of the Makhaleng River lies Ramabanta Park, a resort that is still a work in progress.

Bosiu Lehlohonolo, the 50-year-old owner, has been slowly growing the resort since he started it in 2012 after selling his taxis.

Today, Ramabanta Park has six rooms. In addition to camping and picnic facilities, the park offers horse riding and hiking.

The pristine stream just beneath the park is excellent for swimming.

Ask Lehlohonolo what else he wants to do with the park and he will tell you of water sports, a water fun park, a huge braai area and Quad bikes. His immediate ambition is, however, modest.

He wants to add more rooms and build a modern kitchen. He says he realised the possibilities of what more he could do at the park when he participated in CAFI's Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing Facility in 2024.

"At first, I was doubtful when I saw the advert inviting entrepreneurs to apply for incubation. At 50, I thought I was too old for incubation. My business had been running for the past 12 years," Lehlohonolo say.

"I now realise I was wrong because the incubation is just what I needed to open my eyes to the kind of legacy I can build for my family".

For years, he managed the facility primarily as a park, focusing on day visitors who wanted to have picnics and attend events.

"The incubation showed me that this could grow from being just a park to a full-fledged resort. I now understand what it means to be in the hospitality sector."

With the grant, he started building six more rooms which he expects to complete by December, just in time for the influx of visitors.

The rooms, which will accommodate 12 people, have been roofed and work is about to start on the bathrooms. Beds and other fittings have been ordered.

He says because the park is off the grid, he has acquired solar lights and geysers. The incubation, he adds, has helped him gain a better understanding of hospitality, landscaping, marketing and financial management. They have spruced up their Facebook page with fresh content.

Last year, he launched the Bona Lesotho Festival after his Enterprise Support Organisation (ESO) encouraged him to organise events beyond just the festive season.

"It was a good start and we are hoping to keep the festival going," Lehlohonolo says, adding that business has been growing steadily since the incubation.

He has added three more people to his staff and five temporary employees who come in when the park is busy.

# The star from Mt Moorosi

**Maseru**

"BEFORE the incubation business was tough," says Thomello Pokola, the owner of Simpok Suppliers, a textile company.

"We were running the business like a spaza shop. We could not track our revenue growth."

Pokola is a typical example of a man who started from humble beginnings.

Between 2007 and 2009, he was selling clothes in Mt Moorosi.

He would travel to Johannesburg every three days to get new stock.

"I was making enough to sustain myself, but it was a tough business. There was also competition from other traders who were slashing their prices to get ahead."

In 2009, Pokola enrolled for a Fashion and Apparel Design degree at Limkokwing University of Creative Technology.

He graduated in 2012 and immediately partnered with friends to start a textile manufacturing business.

"When things did not work out, I decided to start my own."

Today, Simpok Suppliers manufactures workwear, Personal Protective Equipment and uniforms for schools and churches.

Pokola, 39, credits the six months he spent under CAFI's incubation for helping him understand marketing and financial management.

"I can now trace profitability in the business and have a clear executable business strategy."

After completing the incubation, he increased his staff from two to five. The business has also increased the number of its sewing machines from three to ten.

"There is a market difference in sales," he says.

Simpok Suppliers has also opened a retail shop. The business is now getting bigger orders from corporates. Pokola says participating in the incubation has enhanced his business goodwill and credibility.

**Companies are now listening to our story and looking at our product. It has improved our reputation and we are getting good orders**

"Apart from teaching us new skills and giving seed funding, the incubation has also marketed our business."

"Companies are now listening to our story and looking at our product. It has improved our reputation and we are getting good orders." Pokolo says his dream is to get a factory shell to start a Cut, Make and Trim business before going into design.

He is now saving to buy more apparel printing machines.

As for what the business has done for his life, Pokola says it has given him a career and financial stability.

"It's a legitimate business that attracts legitimate customers."

He says it's a business that can inspire other young people in Mount Moorosi.

"I want them to know that if I could make it, so can they. I am not running a conglomerate but Simpok Suppliers is something that should inspire them to start their own businesses."

# Back with a bang

**Maseru**

KHOBOSO Matsoakeletse, 45, thought the Covid-19 pandemic would last a few weeks and she would soon be back in business. Bozo Design, a textile company she had started after completing her Fashion Design degree at the Natal Technikon in 2008, was her source of pride and livelihood.

"I just could not believe a business I had built over more than ten years would just collapse because of a pandemic," Matsoakeletse says.

"I thought we had survived bigger crises". But as weeks turned into months, she realised that her business was going under. She retrenched her three employees, closed the shop and started working from her home.

"Things kept getting worse until I stopped working because I was not getting any orders."

For the next two years, Matsoakeletse didn't do much work. She also sold some of her sewing machines to raise money for food.

"The pressure was terrible. My mental health suffered." When the lockdown eased, Matsoakeletse started picking the pieces.

The recovery was slow. The economy had suffered during the lockdown, and her customers were struggling.

"The customers were focused on buying food instead of fashion. Clothes were not on their list of priorities."

"At 45, the future looked bleak. Fashion design was the only business I knew and it didn't look like I would be able to revive it."

Matsoakeletse says she struggled for the next two years until she was selected for the incubation.

The incubation, she says, taught her to manoeuvre through crises.

"I understood that the only way to deal with a business crisis is to be prepared."

Since completing the incubation, Bozo has recalled the three employees she had retrenched.

The studio has reopened and orders are trickling in.

Matsoakeletse says apart from the technical knowledge and the grant, the incubation also came with the psychological support she desperately needed to cope with the challenges of running a business that has just survived a crisis "

The session with the psychologist under the incubation helped me through the most difficult time in my business."

Bozo Design is also rejigging its business model to include ready-to-wear fashion because relying on orders is not sustainable. Although business has been picking up, Matsoakeletse is cautious about hiring more staff.

"Before going through the incubation, I would have simply hired more people. I now understand that you have to be strategic."

"You have to watch if the growth is sustainable and justify more hands before you bring in more people. We will hire more people as the orders increase."

For now, Matsoakeletse is hiring on short-term contracts. She has developed Bozo Home Lux, a high-end brand of kitchen aprons.

With CAFI's help, she had been attending international expos to open new markets and find opportunities to collaborate with other brands.

"I want us to understand that fashion is not just about dressmaking but telling stories. I would like our fashion designs to tell our stories locally and internationally".

# From boardroom to the farm

**Korokoro**

FIVE years ago, Mohau Mofoka was an officer at a business consultancy firm in Maseru.

"I was happy using the knowledge acquired during my B.Com Marketing degree at the National University of Lesotho to help businesses," Mofoka says.

Yet every time he asked some of his clients what business they would rather be doing, he kept getting the same answer.

"Most of them would say go into agriculture because the start-up costs are low and it's easy to learn." So in 2019, Mofoka left his job and started a small horticulture business in Korokoro.

Mofoka Agri Projects is now a thriving eight-acre farm supplying cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli to Pick 'n Pay, Maluti Fresh Produce, Stadium Food Court, and Galittos. He was selected for CAFI's incubation programme in March this year. "The most important lesson from the past six months of incubation is financial management," Mofoka says.

The grant that came with the incubation has been used to drill a borehole, fence the farm and acquire a shed net for a seed nursery.

Mofoka Agri Projects has 13 employees, five permanent employees and nine temporary. Mofoka believes many young people don't consider agriculture a business because "it doesn't have the glamour they thought they would have after completing their studies".

**Most of them would say go into agriculture because the start-up costs are low and it's easy to learn**

"They don't want to get their hands dirty and I would say that is unfortunate because there is so much potential in agriculture."

He says he used his savings to start the farm.

"You don't have to buy land because you can lease it.

"Although the returns are not exceptional, you can earn a decent living from the land."

"If it were up to me, agriculture would be a compulsory subject in high school," he says.

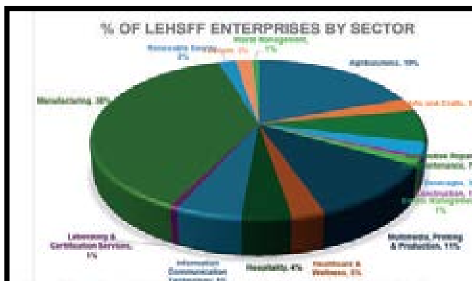



Figure 1: Percentage of Enterprises engaged under the incubation programme by Sector

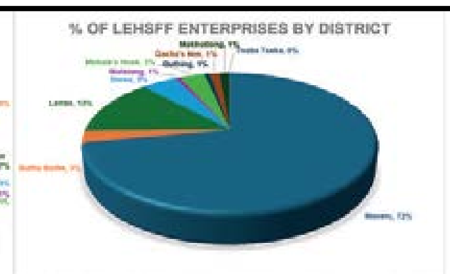



Figure 2: Percentage of Enterprises engaged under the incubation programme by District

**Lesotho Enterprise Assistance Programme (LEAP)**

| LEAP | |
|---|---|
| Number of Enterprises assisted | 143 |
| Of which are woman-led enterprises | 59% |
| Of which are youth-led enterprises | 20% |
| Of which have increased revenue in real-terms | 14% |
| Of which have increased employment in real-terms | 32% |
| Value of Investment directly to enterprises *(LSL)* | 7,671,531 |
| Value of investment to through Associations *(LSL)* | 1,872,547 |
| Number of jobs created *(month-to-month)* | 2,040 |

Table 2: General Statistics on LEAP

Maseru

# LEAPing

THE Lesotho Enterprise Assistance Programme (LEAP) has been transformed to broaden its scope beyond support for marketing and capacity building for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In addition to skills development, access to markets, technology adaptation and standards, the revamped LEAP now supports equipment acquisition.

Lehlohonolo Chefa, the LEAP Manager, says the pilot for equipment acquisition support began with the textile sector last year.

This, Chefa says, is a direct response to the challenges faced by locals who wanted to break into the textile sector dominated by foreign investors.

The few locally owned textile companies are struggling to compete for large orders that drive the production levels necessary for survival.

Chefa states that the intervention was critical because most medium and large textile companies are owned by foreign investors.

Chefa explains that the success of the pilot program laid the foundation for LEAP to expand its support to MSMEs in manufacturing, agriculture, and the tourism and creative industries, which are all priority areas under the National Strategic Development Plan II.

The main goal, Chefa says, is for the companies to improve their productivity or growth while also building their resilience to climatic shocks. The impact of LEAP support is already visible among the beneficiaries. So far, LEAP has supported 143 enterprises, of which 59 percent are women-led and 20 percent are youth-led.

At least 14 percent of beneficiaries have increased their revenues, while 32 percent have expanded their workforce.

Just over M5.1 million has been invested directly in enterprises and M1.1 million has been channelled through associations. The support has sustained over 200 jobs. Chefa believes this is just the beginning of what MSMEs could achieve if they are assisted with equipment.

"Most of them have big ambitions and plans but lack the tools to move to the next level that could enable them to contribute to the economy and create jobs," Chefa says.

LEAP is also assisting local training providers to develop short courses to prepare for entrepreneurs to compete in the ever-changing business environment. The plan is to support 10 train programmes by 2028.

Chefa says LEAP is currently working with training providers to develop content and train instructors. This started with a beneficiary, which is implementing an ICT Training Programme focusing on Artificial Intelligence, Fin-Tech and Cyber Security.

The second beneficiary is being assisted to implement specialised welding. The institute already has six instructors being trained in South Africa.

Chefa says Lesotho companies are spending millions to hire foreign companies for specialised welding jobs.

"Trained instructors will help the country bridge the skills gap and keep the money within the local industry," Chefa says.

LEAP is finalising an assessment with the third beneficiary to develop tourism training programmes focusing on hospitality, events management, tour guiding, and tour operating.

He says the training programme will help enterprises develop their products so that the country reaps maximum benefits from the sector.

"If we want to build a strong foundation for our economy to grow, we have to get the training and skills right," he adds.

LEAP Manager Lehlohonolo Chefa

> **Most of them have big ambitions and plans but lack the tools to move to the next level that could enable them to contribute to the economy and create jobs**

## LEAP Beneficiaries

# Skills for the future

THE Principal Katleho Technical Training Institute was started in 2016 when practical courses seemed to be going out of fashion.

Makhoana Qhotsokoane, the Principal says the mission was to "give those who are not academically gifted a chance to earn a living with practical courses".

The institute offers automotive, electrical installation, carpentry and joinery, welding and metalwork courses.

It also has bricklaying, panel beating and spray painting courses. Graphic and signwriting, plumbing, catering and leather works courses will be offered once accredited in the next year.

Earlier this year, the institute successfully applied for LEAP to implement specialised welding courses specifically for MSMEs in Lesotho.

"We are the few institutes offering welding courses in Lesotho. Now we are upgrading to specialised welding," says Qhotsokoane.

Supported by LEAP, the institute's six instructors are currently attending specialised welding courses in South Africa.

Two are studying boiler making, two are doing arc welding, and two are in Nick and Tuck.

The institute is now a full member of the Southern African Institute of Welding, which opens opportunities for training and collaboration.

Qhotsokoane says the instructors will receive instructors' courses to equip them to train other practitioners upon their return. This will eliminate any need for specialised welding practitioners to go to other countries.

The institute is also working on its full membership in the International Institute of Welding which will broaden the horizons of their specialised welding graduates to world in over 53 countries in the world.

The support from LEAP has given the institution the urgency to build its own campus at Ha Bua Sono, Berea which will be ready to house students when the instructors return home.

# ahead

# Stitched for success

**Ha Tikoe**

TSEPO Johane's journey in the textile industry began at the gates of a textile firm where he worked as a security guard.

Sensing a business opportunity, his aunt in Thaba Tseka would send him seshoeshoe dresses to sell to factory workers.

"People were bringing their own styles for me to give instructions to my aunt. It was difficult to communicate their specifications to my aunt. Sometimes I would get in trouble with the customers when she gets their designs wrong," Johane recalls.

One weekend, in 2007, he travelled to Thaba Tseka to deliver cash to his aunt.

"As I watched my aunty sewing those dresses, I instantly knew I could do it. I asked my aunty to teach me," Johane recalled.

And so for the next three days, Johane learned how to make the dresses.

He returned to his security job in Maseru and started saving to buy his own sewing machines. Soon, he had three machines and was operating as a sole trader working from his kitchen table.

Within a few months, Johane left his job and employed three people.

"Within three years, I was making dresses for weddings and funerals."

Although business was good, he felt he needed to enhance his skills.

He enrolled for a Fashion and Apparel Design degree at Limkokwing University of Creative Technology.

"I had two grand ideas in my mind: to start a factory or open a vocational fashion design school".

While in college, he reduced his business to one sewing machine that he would use after classes.

"One person would take the orders and I would make the dresses at night."

Johane says getting back to full production after graduating was difficult "because there were now so many people making seshoeshoe dresses".

Struggling to make rent, he moved his business from the main station to his house in Thetsane.

Yet those difficult times did not dim his passion.

While working from home, he registered Johane Garments as a full-fledged corporation.

Things would start looking up when he won the contract to make 200 graduation gowns for Limkokwing University of Creative Technology. "That order gave me the push I needed to get back to business. In 2018, he moved into a Lesotho National Development Corporation factory shell to launch his own FOB business.

However, everything collapsed when Covid-19 hit.

"By 2023, there was no market. Everything had collapsed and I had hit rock bottom."

To save jobs and still generate some income, he partnered with a Taiwanese businessman who agreed to bring orders and use his machines.

"I wanted to understand the business and learn about the FOB market."

A business disagreement would end that relationship for just over a year. Johane was disappointed but felt he could now stand on his own. The trouble was that he didn't have enough sewing machines.

"That is when LEAP came in. They helped me acquire the first 16 machines."

His application for a grant to acquire a boiler, ironing tables, irons and motors for the machines and the cutting machines was approved a few months later.

"That is when I was able to start this Cut, Make and Trim business."

He makes garments for the South African market.

"Things are looking up for us. It is all because of the machinery from LEAP. Buyers would not be even listening to me if I didn't have this equipment."

Johane is also an Enterprise Support Organisation under CAFI's Lesotho Enterprise Hub and Seed Financing Facility.

His cohort started in June 2024 and ended in December.

"The training as an ESO also shaped me as a businessman. I was being trained to incubate textile enterprises, but I was also acquiring critical skills that I am applying to my business."

"Most of those in my corhot are doing well. In fact, some of them are doing much better than I am."

**As I watched my aunty sewing those dresses, I instantly knew I could do it. I asked my aunty to teach me**

# New beginnings


**Mafeteng**

NEW Era Pharmacy is owned by Masontaha Dlamini, a trained nurse.

After working as a nurse for 15 years, Dlamini became frustrated by having to renew her contract at a nongovernmental organisation every two years.

"There was so much uncertainty every time the contracts were due for renewal," Dlamini says.

"At some point, I just could not handle the anxiety."

She had two options: to start a clinic or a pharmacy.

"A pharmacy looked easier because I didn't need much space".

She started New Era Pharmacy in 2021 in Mafeteng.

The business was good, but she didn't have a billing system to file medical aid claims. "We had spent everything we had to start the business and we were not making enough to acquire the point of sale and the billing system."

LEAP assisted the pharmacy acquire a computer and a billing system.

Dlamini says there is significant revenue growth since entering the medical aid market.

"We could service our retail customers and also submit our claims on time."

"We are now able to track our inventory in real time and make new orders from suppliers." Dlamini has quit his nursing job to concentrate on the pharmacy. She is now working on starting her own medicines and supplements business.

"The long-term goal is to go into the wholesale market because."

**We are now able to track our inventory in real time and make new orders from suppliers**

# Dreaming big


**Mafeteng**

MOJAKI Noosi says she started his textile business, Garments Dealer, with a rudimentary screen printer she bought from a friend for M200 in September 2004.

Garments Dealer was the first company that benefited from LEAP's equipment acquisition programme.

LEAP assisted him in buying nine sewing machines.

Now with seventeen machines, Garments Dealer has increased its production from 300 pieces per week to 1200.

He has also increased his staff from eight to 14. Located in Mafeteng, the company specialises in school uniforms, freezer suits and security uniforms.

Since acquiring the new machines, the company has moved into a bigger space at Mafeteng's BEDCO centre.

Noosi says the focus now is quality assurance and reducing turnaround times.

"Once we get the quality and efficiency right, we can then start going after big orders," Noosi says.

Noosi says the machines have transformed his business.

"We are still a small player compared to other textile companies yet we can hold our own."

He says LEAP's assistance came when the company was struggling to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns.

Some of his machines were long overdue for services, while others had completely broken down. "Our old machines were becoming too expensive to run. Sometimes they would break down during the peak of production."


# Shining in Maputsoe

**Maputsoe**

IT'S a Friday afternoon at M&N Enterprise's factory in Maputsoe, and sewing machines are singing.

Neo Fekefeke, the 34-year-old owner, is making rounds on the factory floor that has 95 employees.

Garments are piled in one corner, ready for ironing before they get price tags and are packaged.

"You would not believe it if I told you that all this was not there a few weeks ago," Fekefeke says as he points at the factory floor. "There was no business to talk about." Earlier this year, Fekefeke was forced to close the business due to cash flow problems.

He surrendered some of his orders to another company while he tried to revive the business.

In addition to cash flow challenges, Fekefeke lacked sufficient machines to handle large orders.

The machines were old and cranky, he says.

A strike had also brought his already patchy production to a standstill. Frustrated but undeterred, Fekefeke, who holds a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering, began searching for new machines.

The cost of buying new machines, he says, was prohibitive.

Banks were reluctant to fund a struggling business in a sector already wobbling due to tariffs that had just been imposed. In May, Fekefeke applied for a LEAP grant to buy 30 machines.

Those machines arrived in June and he set out hunting for orders.

In the past three months, Fekefeke has landed sizable orders with four South African retail outlets.

As orders increased, he moved into a bigger building to accommodate more production lines.

He now has day and night shifts to meet deadlines. Yet, even then, so huge are some of the orders that he has subcontracted other factories to meet deadlines.

Fekefeke's journey with CAFI didn't start with the recent assistance from LEAP.

Last year, he was incubated under the Lesotho Enterprise Hub and Seed Financing Facility. His Enterprise Support Organisation was Johane Garments. Fekefeke says the past three months have been so good that he has farmed out parts of his orders to Johane Garments. Tšepo Johane, the owner of Johane Garments, says Fekefeke is a shining example of what young enterprises can achieve with ample support. "

I have watched his trajectory, his fall and his rise, and I can say he has a fighting spirit that will take him far in this industry," Johane says.

Fekefeke says he is not allowing the recent influx of orders to get to his head.

"The focus remains on building a sustainable business that can survive shocks in both the sector and the economy."

# Breaking barriers

> We are looking at creating a financial product tailored for the agriculture sector's challenges and opportunities. It'll facilitate an end to end link with all players involved in the value chain and/or transaction, thereby collateralizing the transaction

**Maseru**

THABO Monyane

THE Access to Finance department is at the heart of CAFI's objectives. For the past three years, the Project has been working to improve access to financial services for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises as well as businesses owned by women and youth.

The main initiatives in this regard include strengthening the credit infrastructure system, facilitating the development of innovative business financing products that are responsive to the financing needs of MSMEs and women owned businesses, financial literacy and linking MSMEs with financiers outside of the CAFI project.

Stakeholder mobilization and collaboration with financial sector (including regulators), and the entrepreneurship ecosystem players has been central to the realization of these initiatives. Thabo Monyane, Access to Finance Specialist says there has been tremendous progress over the past three years.

The department is working with the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) to create a supply chain financing product, centred around a digital transaction tracking platform, for the textile industry. The platform is a response to the perennial cash flow problems that bog down textile companies.

"Banks are reluctant to fund the local textile sector because, in its current form, its transactions are highly exposed to external factors and the margins are low," says Monyane.

The platform, he says, promotes access to transaction information for all participants, including built-in collateral, thereby providing assurance that textile companies that borrow will repay their loans. With this platform, a bank can monitor a customer's process from the acquisition of raw materials after an order to the final payment.

Monyane states that a digital lending platform, which addresses the information gap faced by banks when lending to MSMEs, is currently undergoing product approval processes.

The platform will form an information depository where MSMEs can submit voluntarily, allowing banks and other financial institutions to access their information more readily and easily when assessing loan applications.

The department is also supporting the development and implementation of a formal group lending product for small and informal businesses. Monyane says the product leverages on stokvels in which individuals lend to each other.

"Banks generally don't lend to informal and small businesses that lack track records, reference points and collateral."

"But it has been found that in the group models, people lend to each other small amounts without much default in this relationship based and collateralized model". So a member of a group can get a loan from a bank if the group vouches for them and also acts as a guarantor, as it holds their savings, which can be used to settle the debt in case of a default. Monyane explains that the product leverages these features of the informal group lending system designed to reduce risk for formal lenders.

The department is currently also facilitating the development of an Agriculture Value Chain Financing product.

"We are looking at creating a financial product tailored for the agriculture sector's challenges and opportunities. It'll facilitate an end to end link with all players involved in the value chain and/or transaction, thereby collateralizing the transaction," Monyane says.

The department is also providing financial literacy training to businesses incubated by both the Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing Facility (LEHSFF) and the Lesotho Horticulture and Training Centre (LHITC).

He says this training is "particularly urgent because there is a general lack of financial literacy". To date, financial literacy workshops have been conducted for all the ten fruit farms and the two vegetable farms under the LHITC, and the 150 enterprises under the LEHSFF.

Monyane, however, says the department is also going beyond teaching financial literacy to helping the business se-

cure loans with banks.

"As a pilot, we have taken three horticulture and two other businesses to banks after conducting baseline and fundability assessments.

"Two have been approved for loans, one cancelled the approval, one withdrew the application, one was declined while the one is still in progress," Monyane says.



# Steeled for the future

**Maseru**

THE Covid-19 pandemic might be over, but its economic lessons remain fresh.

Governments are seeking ways to strengthen their economies against potential global disasters similar to Covid-19.

The designers of CAFI created a component to enhance MSMEs' resilience against the adverse effects of climate change and other natural disasters.

Molehe Mokone, the MSME Resilience Coordinator, says a diagnostic study conducted by the World Bank found that MSMEs are extremely vulnerable to climatic shocks.

He says the study also found that there were little or no support mechanisms to help enterprises withstand the shocks.

In response to that void, CAFI provided technical support to the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MoFDP) for development of the Disaster Risk Financing (DRF) Strategy which helps the Government to better manage the costs of response, ensuring predictable and timely access to needed resources, and ultimately mitigating long-term human, economic and fiscal impacts. The strategy has since been finalised and approved by the Cabinet. Mokone says the strategy is already being implemented.

For instance, there is a grant under CAFI that is meant to build resilience of climate affected MSMEs. To guide disbursement of this fund, a handbook that outlines step by step processes and selection criteria has been developed.

All MSMEs affected by climatic shocks and disasters such as drought, hailstorm, snow, frost, heavy rains and strong winds are eligible to apply for a grant. CAFI will embark on a nationwide campaign to raise awareness on the disaster risk financing and on how the grants application system works.

MOLEHE Mokone

**Table 2: Project Ratings**

| Project Ratings | Previous | Current |
|---|---|---|
| Progress towards achievement of PDO | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Overall Implementation Progress (IP) | Moderately Satisfactory | Moderately Satisfactory |
| Overall Risk Rating | Substantial | Substantial |
| *Component 1* | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| *Component 2* | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| *Component 3* | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Financial Management | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Project Management | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Procurement | Moderately Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Monitoring and Evaluation | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Environment | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |
| Social | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

**Mahobong**

# Scaling up

THE Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre has an ambitious plan to scale up Lesotho's commercial farming.

Based at the former Mahobong Campus of the Institute of Extra Mural Studies (EIMS), the centre is building on the success of the three pilot deciduous fruit farms now in full production.

The programme seeks to address gaps in the horticulture value chain in access to suitable land, infrastructure, extension services, skills, finance, and markets while promoting climate-smart agricultural practices. Over the past two years, the centre has trained 190 farmers across the country in a pre-incubation programme to build their capacity in the agriculture sector.

The farm's establishment is nearing completion, with irrigation systems being installed and preparations in progress for the erection of netting structures.

Most had installed irrigation systems.

Weeding and deflowering were in progress.

Each farm has an average 9500 apple trees on five hectares.

Nthako Supu, the centre's manager, says the farms are now implementing their work plans under close supervision from the centre's experts. Supu says the farmers expect to have their "first small harvest in the next season".

"Our assessment this month shows that almost all the 60 800 trees on the seven farms have survived," Supu says. The numbers illustrate the impact of the incubation programme in their communities.

Hundred and seventy jobs were created during land preparation and planting of trees, and at least 7 permanent jobs per farm are created for daily running of the farms.

Of the 190 farmers who participated in the pre-incubation programme, 24 percent are women and 28 percent are youth.

Some 43 percent of the seven farms in incubation are led by women.

Over M14.4 million has been invested in the seven farms. The impact, however, goes beyond the seven farms because the 183 farmers who did not make it to the final incubation are using the skills acquired during pre-incubation to start their own farming projects.

Supu says the centre is providing ongoing training and technical support to the seven fruit farms and two vegetable farms.

Mountain Fruit Grower, in Machache, is one of the seven farms under incubation. Mothiba Thamae, the owner, says his father started the farm in 1999. Thamae says before incubation, the farm already had 6000 apple trees and 5000 peach trees.

He says the incubation has been critical in enhancing his skills in orchard management and financial management. "Although I have been in this business for years, there was a lot I did not know about the business side of fruit farming," Thamae says, adding that his record-keeping had improved since he started the incubation.

The farm has hired nine people from local villages and plans to employ more during the harvest season. Mathabiso Tlelai, who owns Healthwise Farm in Thaba Bosiu, says she applied for the incubation because she was already dehydrating fruits.

"We were dehydrating peaches but we could not get enough fruits," Tlelai says. She says the centre helped with the initial assessment, orchard design, soil testing, ploughing, the trees and planting.

"The visits to fruit farmers really opened my eyes. The ongoing technical support from the centre keeps up on track in terms of managing the farm." The farm has six permanent employees.

Before incubation, Botle Farm, in Thuathe, used a large portion of its land for maize production. Five hectares are now under 9500 apple trees, and the number of employees has increased from nine to 16.

Tsepang Masenyetse, the farm manager, says the orchard has the potential to transform the farm's fortunes.

"We are still producing cabbages, potatoes, maize, butternuts, milk and eggs. But we can see that there will be an exponential growth in our revenues when we start harvesting the apples."

Nala Farmlands, just four kilometres from Botle Farms, has 9200 apple trees. Masekonyela Tsekana, the farm supervisor, is also upbeat about the orchard's future. "This means more people from local communities would be hired and there are also opportunities to start selling the fruits," Masekonyela says.

**NTHAKO Supu**

# Growing sustainably

THE Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion Project ensures that growth must be inclusive, responsible and sustainable. Thus, CAFI fully adheres to the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework, which directs the implementation of all World Bank-funded projects to ensure compliance with environmental and social standards.

Mathoka Khaile, CAFI's Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist, says the first step was to develop the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan, which then guides the design, adoption and implementation of various environmental and social instruments. The plan also guides the adoption of environmental and social standards in the project-context.

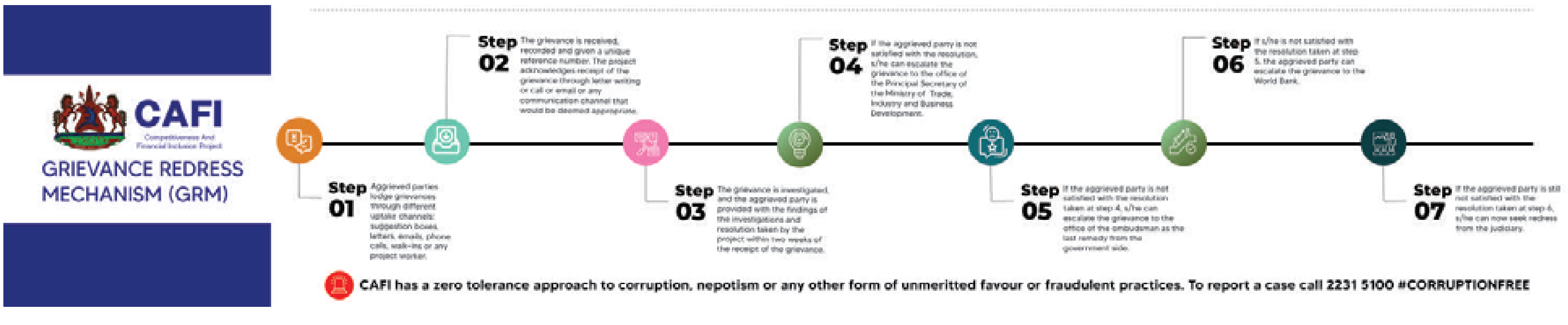
"The goal is to ensure that every CAFI activity is environmentally and socially sound, thereby promoting sustainable development," says Khaile. "This is important because previously, some projects left the environment and communities negatively impacted. There have been grievances and disputes that could have been avoided".

To achieve this goal, the CAFI Project has developed and is implementing the following key environmental and social safeguards tools:

- Environmental and Social Commitment Plan which sets the foundation for all safeguards actions.
- Environmental and Social Management Framework (It has integrated Labour Management Procedures, Integrated Pest Management Plan, Waste Management Plan and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Action Plan) guides how environmental and social risks and impacts are identified, assessed and managed when the specific project sites are not yet fully known.
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan ensures that project-affected parties, including vulnerable and marginalised groups and other interested parties are meaningfully involved in the project to foster sense of ownership of the project by stakeholders.
- Grievance Redress Mechanism enables stakeholders to provide feedback, lodge grievances and the Project to resolve grievances timely.
- Specific Environmental and Social Management Plans for the Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre and seven newly-established commercial deciduous fruit farms have been prepared to ensure compliance with environmental and social standards in horticulture.

The CAFI Project has trained and sensitised project stakeholders, including implementing agencies and project beneficiaries under the Lesotho Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing Facility and Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre about environmental and social safeguards, including the CAFI Grievance Redress Mechanism. As a standard, contractors and consultants implementing various aspects of the projects are also sensitised about the environmental and social compliance to promote a shared culture of environmental stewardship and social accountability. Moreover, Grievance Redress Committees have been established and trained to resolve grievances linked to newly established commercial deciduous fruit farms at the village, community and district levels. Khaile says, "To date, 21 grievances have been received and successfully resolved, thus, ensuring that stakeholders voices are heard and acted upon."

MATHOKA Khaile



Newsday Opinion

# Mojapela's SR on the question of the "conquered" territory ... A thumbs up or political fumble?

## *"Political necessities sometimes turn out to be political mistakes" - George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950)*

Nkopane Mathibeli

On the background of its commendable 2022 electoral performance, Socialist Revolutionaries (SR) instantly became a force to be reckoned with in Lesotho politics. Out of the 65 political parties that entered the race, it not only became one of the 16 to enter parliament, but it was also one of only two first-time participants to do so by winning a constituency.

Overall, it emerged in the eighth spot, having acquired a total of 10,738 votes, putting it ahead of two older parties (BNP and PFD). Both appeared in the ninth and tenth spots, respectively. Registered in January 2018, Socialist Revolutionaries had been established two months earlier (October 2017) by Teboho Mojapela (alias JP), owner of a microfinancier of considerable size (JP Finance) operating both in Lesotho and South Africa.

Before establishing his own party, he was known to be among the All Basotho Convention's top sponsors/financiers. Unfortunately for him, his relations with the party reportedly soured following the alleged assassination (June 2017) of the estranged wife of its then leader, which somehow explains the timing of his direct entry into the space of political contestation.

It may be true that his personal financial muscle enabled his party to spread its wings further and wider than most. It was, however, his sharp, fearless, highly accurate and sometimes humour-laced criticism of previous governments and the general wickedness and mediocrity of the country's political class that made him widely relatable.

After all, his angry public attacks mirrored the sentiments expressed privately by members of the public in their private conversations. The people were now much more conscious. To many, he came across as a breath of fresh air to the national political space that had become heavily polluted by deception, vengeance, corruption and impunity; a space in which political power was seemingly pursued as an end in itself.

The national standards of living dropped gradually, yet those of politicians and their cronies rose significantly. This in itself was a direct reflection of words once spoken by the 33rd president of the USA (Harry Truman): "No man can get rich in politics unless he is a crook".

In his speeches, Mojapela does indeed routinely and fearlessly describe our political class as a pack of soulless thieves, crooks and killers. The basis of this bravado is, however, not only divine protection; the man is well-guarded and justifiably so; he has had a brush with death because of his outspoken assertiveness.

### A fitting comparison

Contrary to how sometimes some people get tempted to compare him to Julius Malema, I often see him in the same light as Robert Kyagulanyi, a much younger Ugandan politician (aged 43) popularly known by his stage name (Bobi Wine). Before venturing into politics (April 2017), he was a highly acclaimed Ugandan musician, a superstar to be precise.

Unlike Malema, who is in the league of men who got rich in politics, both JP and Bobi Wine are cut from the same cloth. Both were thrust to the political front line by their dissatisfaction with the deception, vengeance, corruption and the impunity with which the political class operates. They then proceeded with clean hands to draw from their clean wealth the funds through which to fight dirty systems in their respective countries.

It is no wonder both became instant draw cards. After all, many people love a hero. In Uganda, Bobi Wine's 2021 presidential aspirations were unfortunately violently crushed through state-sponsored terrorism. In the process, many of his supporters were fatally shot on his campaign trail, including his personal driver. Bobi Wine himself was later abducted, transported to military barracks, and severely tortured, after which he sought medical attention in the USA.

Unfazed, he returned to continue campaigning. The 14th January 2021 elections were likely rigged to his disadvantage.

As I write this piece, he is on a campaign trail, stronger and much popular than ever. Watching him from Lesotho in 2020/21, I instinctively saw JP in him: a brave man who sacrificed his clean wealth, not in any way acquired through political connections, to fight a dirty system.

My perception of him, however, changed abruptly when one day in March 2021, Kyagulanyi tweeted that he had just emerged from a fruitful meeting with Juan Guido, whom he referred to as the president of Venezuela. To me, that revealed his political naiveté. As a result, I have never trusted him from that day, given that Guido's "presidency" was primarily the USA's crooked attempt at regime change.

Does this then make Kyagulanyi a risk to his country's sovereignty? Yes, it does. It made it clear that he is obviously too naive for the position he is vying for. This now brings me to my interpretation of JP's Socialist Revolutionaries on the issue of the so-called conquered territory.

I describe it as such because it is common knowledge that it was not lost through conquest but fraud, which possibly implies that it is best described as stolen, not conquered territory.

### A thumbs up or political fumble?

On the 16th of September 2025, Socialist Revolutionaries held a press briefing where they publicly stated their position regarding the territory Lesotho lost to the Afrikaners. Three points were presented as the agenda of the briefing.

What, however, dominated headlines thereafter was the party's unprecedented position that Lesotho must be converted into South Africa's 10th province. A follow-up briefing was held on the 14th of November, in which three other smaller parties participated. In both press briefings, the overall position remained for Lesotho to become the 10th province of South Africa.

There were two main reasons submitted in support of this position. The first was that Basotho jobseekers are constantly harassed in South Africa. The second one was that Lesotho was surrounded by South Africa with zero access to the sea. Given that the leader of the Socialist Revolutionaries is in no way a simpleton, these simplistic reasons cast serious aspersions on the political integrity and wisdom of both him and the party's inner circle.

This is because there is absolutely no way in which they would not know that the so-described, persecuted/harassed Basotho are actually in South Africa, contrary to the South African immigration act. As a result, what is done about them is not persecution/harassment but enforcement of the law.

Secondly, Lesotho is not the only country in the world completely surrounded by a single country, but one of only three such countries. The other two are San Marino and the Vatican City. Both are inside one country, Italy. Not even once in their existence has any of these countries ever sought to hand its sovereignty to Italy.

Have the Socialist Revolutionaries ever wondered why? Might it be because their respective leadership (San Marino's & Vatican City State's) lacks this new wisdom that suddenly became SR's guiding light? I doubt so because this does not look like wisdom at all. If it were, here is how I think JP would have applied it to his business, but has not. For the obvious reason, of course.

In the context of their operational space and legislative framework, any of Lesotho's four commercial banks and JP Finance exist in one financial universe. They mirror the parallel and intertwined existence of Lesotho and South Africa, which exist in a universe of states. Just as Lesotho and South Africa compete in their universe for survival, JP Finance and these banks do the same in theirs. By virtue of their subscription to the Common Monetary Area (CMA), Lesotho and South Africa fall under the ambit of the Trilateral Monetary Agreement, i.e. the CMA's legislative framework. In the same way, JP Finance and these banks fall under the ambit of the Financial Institutions Act as overseen by the Central Bank of Lesotho.

Given the many challenges of thieving employees, he often narrates regarding his business journey, he did not seek to make JP Finance a subsidiary of any of these banks. There also exists the challenge of unfair competition, which was countered by the Competition Act of 2022. Instead of giving up on his business despite challenges, he mustered all the wisdom and perseverance he could to make it what it currently is.

Did he ever think of how appearing to have zero hope for the sovereignty of a country he seeks to control might make the electorate perceive him? Before this 10th province talk, the only obstacle to SR's bigger electoral numbers was that his uncompromising straight talk led people to misunderstand him as arrogant and disrespectful.

However, his regular radio slot went a long way in rectifying it. If he does not revisit and revise or discard it, this new position is a definite act of unprovoked political self-mutilation; a political mistake committed in confidence.

Ministry of Trade, Industry & Business Development

COMPETITVENESS AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION (CAFI) PROJECT

## INVITATION FOR BIDS

## SUPPLY, DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION OF HAIL NETTING FOR SEVEN (7) FARMS FOR LESOTHO HORTICULTURAL INCUBATION AND TRAINING CENTRE

1. The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project. The Government intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for the **Supply, Delivery and Installation of Hail Netting for seven (7) farms for Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and training Centre (CAFI-WB-G-06).**

2. The Ministry of Trade, Industry & Business Development through the CAFI Project Implementing Unit now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the ***Supply, Delivery and Installation of Hail Netting for seven (7) farms for Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre***.

3. Table 1

| Ref | Farms | Delivery and Installation Sites | Estimated Completion Period (Weeks) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Majaheng Farm | Mapoteng Majaheng, Berea District | 4-6 |
| 2. | Peka Fresh Produce | Peka, Leribe District | 4-6 |
| 3. | Botle Farms | Sehlabeng sa Thuathe, Berea District | 4-6 |
| 4. | Nala farmlands | Sehlabeng sa Thuathe, Berea District | 4-6 |
| 5. | Healthwise Farm | Thaba Khupa, Thaba Bosiu, Maseru District | 4-6 |
| 6. | Ts'akholo Farm | Ts'akholo, Mafeteng District | 4-6 |
| 7. | Mountain Fruit Growers | Ha Ntsi (Nazareta), Maseru District | 4-6 |

4. Bidding will be conducted through national competitive procurement using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" *Sixth Edition, February 2025* ("Procurement Regulations") and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.

5. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from *Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project Management Unit from following email Address:* tmohejane@cafi.org.ls and copy nleutsoa@cafi.org.ls and ltsoinyane@cafi.org.ls and inspect the bidding document during office hours *Procurement Unit from* ***09h00 to 16h00 hours*** at the address given below.

6. A complete set of bidding documents in English may be purchased by interested eligible bidders upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of LSL1,000.00. The method of payment will be direct deposit to the ***Nedbank Account Name is: Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion Project Maloti Account (Ministry of Trade and Industry), Account Number is: 11990167259 and Branch Name is: Maseru Branch.***

7. A **mandatory site visit** will be conducted on the dates below to allow suppliers to familiarize themselves with the scope of work.

| Farms | Sites | Site Visit Date |
|---|---|---|
| Peka Fresh Produce | Peka, Leribe District | 11/12/2025 at 09h00 |
| Majaheng Farm | Mapoteng Majaheng, Berea District | 11/12/2025 at 11h00 |
| Botle Farms | Sehlabeng sa Thuathe, Berea District | 11/12/2025 at 14h00 |
| Nala farmlands | Sehlabeng sa Thuathe, Berea District | 11/12/2025 at 15h00 |
| Ts'akholo Farm | Ts'akholo, Mafeteng District | 12/12/2025 at 10h00 |
| Mountain Fruit Growers | Ha Ntsi (Nazareta), Maseru District | 12/12/2025 at 12h00 |
| Healthwise Farm | Thaba Khupa, Thaba Bosiu, Maseru District | 12/12/2025 at 14h00 |

8. Bids must be delivered to ***Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion Project, 1st Floor 'Matanki House, Corner Balfour and Kingsway Road on or before January 15, 2026, at 10h00.*** Electronic Bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend at the address below on ***January 15, 2026, at 10h15***.

9. All Bids must be accompanied by Bid Securities as follows

| Ref | Farms | Amount (LSL) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Majaheng Farm | 10,000.00 |
| 2 | Peka Fresh Produce | 10,000.00 |
| 3 | Botle Farms | 10,000.00 |
| 4 | Nala farmlands | 10,000.00 |
| 5 | Healthwise Farm | 10,000.00 |
| 6 | Ts'akholo Farm | 10,000.00 |
| 7 | Mountain Fruit Growers | 10,000.00 |

10. Attention is drawn to the Procurement Regulations requiring the Borrower to disclose information on the successful bidder's beneficial ownership, as part of the Contract Award Notice, using the Beneficial Ownership Disclosure Form as included in the bidding document.

11. The Ministry of Trade, Industry & Business Development through CAFI Project reserves the right to cancel the procurement process at any stage before the bid opening, during the bidding process, or prior to awarding the contract without incurring liability or obligation to any bidder. Cancellation may occur due to changes in project requirements, budget constraints, administrative or technical challenges, irregularities, non-compliance with regulations, or if the process no longer aligns with project objectives or funding availability.

**Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion Project**
**1st Floor 'Matanki House, Corner Balfour and Kingsway Road**
**P.O. Box 747, Maseru 100, Lesotho**
**Tel: 22 315 100**

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# PETROLEUM FUND

## EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI):

## IMPLEMENTATION OF USED OIL MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING PROGRAMME IN LESOTHO
## PF/EOI/2025/2026-01

**Background**

The Petroleum Fund (referred to herein as the Fund) is a statutory organisation under the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, which was established through Legal Notice No. 96 of 1997 under the Finance Order of 1988. The organisation is further delegated, under the Fuel and Services Control (Delegation Notice) Number 32 of 2021, the powers to set the price and time at which Petroleum Products may be adjusted. It is managed by the Board of Directors, while day-to-day activities are administered by the Secretariat, headed by the Chief Executive Officer, and its operations are guided by the Lesotho (Petroleum Fund) Regulations of 2021.

Guided by its 2025 - 2030 Strategic Plan, Petroleum Fund actively implements initiatives that drive economic growth, foster job creation, and advance environmental sustainability.

In 2023, the Fund commissioned a Feasibility Study on the Management and Recycling of Used Oil in Lesotho, which estimated that over 1.1 million litres of used oil are generated annually across the country. The study identified significant environmental hazards associated with improper disposal and presented an investment case for a nationally coordinated used oil collection, recycling, and re-refining system based on Vacuum Distillation Technology. The proposed system demonstrated strong economic viability, with a Net Present Value (NPV) of LSL 42 million and an Internal Rate of Return (IRR) of 24.8% over a 25-year horizon.

**Objective of the EOI**

The Fund seeks Expressions of Interest from qualified and experienced organisations, companies or consortia to implement the Used Oil Management and Recycling Programme recommended in the Feasibility Study. The objective is to establish an environmentally sound, financially sustainable, and circular system for used oil management in Lesotho.

**Scope of Work**

The selected partner(s) will be expected to:

a. Design and operationalise a national used oil collection and transportation network across all regions to ensure efficient and environmentally sound handling;
b. Establish a used oil re-refining facility, preferably employing Vacuum Distillation Technology as recommended in the feasibility study;
c. Develop and implement an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework in collaboration with relevant ministries and industry stakeholders, and communities to promote producer accountability and sustainable practices;
d. Support policy, regulatory, and institutional strengthening, including the domestication of Basel Convention principles;
e. Implement awareness, monitoring, and reporting programmes to ensure compliance and environmental protection.

**Eligibility Criteria**

Interested organisations should demonstrate:

a. Proven experience in hazardous waste management, petroleum recycling, or environmental infrastructure projects;
b. Technical expertise in used oil re-refining technologies (e.g., distillation, solvent extraction, or similar);
c. Financial capacity to mobilise capital and sustain project operations;
d. Strong partnerships with local entities, government institutions, or international development partners;
e. Commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles.
f. Proven track record of successful project management and execution;

**Submission Requirements**

Interested applicants must submit:

1. A cover letter indicating interest and understanding of the assignment;
2. A company profile detailing relevant experience and track record;
3. Project concept outlining the approach and technology;
4. Preliminary financial model or investment concept;
5. Details of key experts and consortium partners (if applicable);
6. Valid business registration and tax clearance certificates.

**Submission Instructions**

Proposals must be submitted in sealed packages clearly marked:

**"PF/EOI/2025/2026-01 – USED OIL MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION"** to the following address:

**Petroleum Fund of Lesotho**
**LCCI Building**
**Orpen Road, Old Europa**
**Maseru 100, Lesotho**

Online submissions may be made by sending password-protected PDF documents to supplier@petroleum.org.ls by the set deadline. The e-mail subject must be **"PF/EOI/2025/2026-01 – USED OIL MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION"**

**Deadline for submission:** Friday, 16th January 2026 at 12:00 hrs (Lesotho time).
**Late submissions will not be considered**.

**DISCLAIMER**

Only shortlisted applicants will be invited to participate in the subsequent Request for Proposals (RFP) stage. The Petroleum Fund reserves the right to accept or reject any submission without assigning reasons.

CAFI
Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion Project

LESOTHO ENTREPRENEURSHIP HUB
TAKING LESOTHO TO THE WORLD

# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: 5th Incubation Cycle – Lesotho Entrepreneurship Hub & Seed Financing Facility

Are you an innovative entrepreneur ready to scale your business and create a lasting impact? The future of business in Lesotho is YOU! If you plan to and have potential, or are a high-growth, high-impact innovative SME or startup, this is your chance to take your enterprise to the next level.

The Government of Lesotho has received a loan from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank to implement the **Lesotho Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project**. The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to "increase access to business support services and financial products targeted at MSMEs and entrepreneurs, especially women and youth".

The **Lesotho Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing Facility (LEHSFF)** under the CAFI Project invites innovative **SMEs and startups** to apply for the **5th Incubation Cycle**, running from **February 2026 to August 2026**.

This program, a key component of the **CAFI Project**, is designed to empower high-growth, high-impact enterprises, particularly in **agriculture, tourism and hospitality, construction, manufacturing and green energy, creative industries and technology & innovation**, in alignment with the **Second National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II)**.

**Why Apply?**

This six months incubation program will benefit selected enterprises as they will receive:

- Needs assessment for **tailored mentorship, coaching, and industry expertise**
- **Product or service refinement** for market readiness
- **Business model refinement** and technical assistance
- **Networking opportunities** with investors and market stakeholders
- **Digitization support** for enhanced efficiency
- Training on **financial management, marketing, HR, and operations**
- Facilitation of **access to finance and investment opportunities** for the enterprises by linking them with investors and other sources of financing
- Assistance in developing a **scalable two-year business plan**

**Who Can Apply?**

- ✓ **Enterprises with high growth potential and are innovative**
- ✓ **Operational businesses with market-ready products**
- ✓ **Full-time entrepreneurs committed to the six-month incubation**
- ✓ Businesses demonstrating **scalability and job creation potential**
- ✓ Enterprises addressing **developmental challenges through technology, science, or innovation**
- ✓ You are **not a one-person (permanent staff) company.**
- ✓ Enterprises ready to abide by **environmental and social safeguards**

**How to Apply**

Visit www.cafi.org.ls to complete your application and select your preferred **Enterprise Support Organization (ESO)**.

**Deadline: December 12, 2025**

**Women- and youth-led enterprises are strongly encouraged to apply!**

**Please note: As an enterprise you are not allowed to apply to more than one ESO**

**Need More Info?** Join our virtual information sessions every **Monday, Wednesday, and Friday** from **November 24 to December 12, 2025** (details on the CAFI website). Call the Hub at 22315800 or email entrephub@cafi.org.ls

(INFORMATION SESSION LINK) TEAMS https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/34108454834516?p=X3aSa8iRJQFy0aSeEt,

Meeting ID: 341 084 548 345 16

Passcode: XD68Vn6h

Prime Cubate - 09:00am - 09:45am

Sky Business Inc (SBI) - 09:45am - 10:30am

Development Solutions - 10:30am - 11:15am

Relationships Inspiring Social Enterprise (rise) - 11:15am - 12:00pm

Girls Coding Academy - 12:00pm - 12:45pm

Impact School - 12:45pm - 13:30pm

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For inquiries, please contact: incubation@impactschool.org.ls or call +266 5836 4611 / +266 5048 9097

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For inquiries, please contact: info@girlscodingacademy.org or call +266 59076504/ +266 6229 6071

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For inquiries, please contact: tlhalosompopo@gmail.com and rose@tekaneledimo.com in copy or contact +266 56649013.

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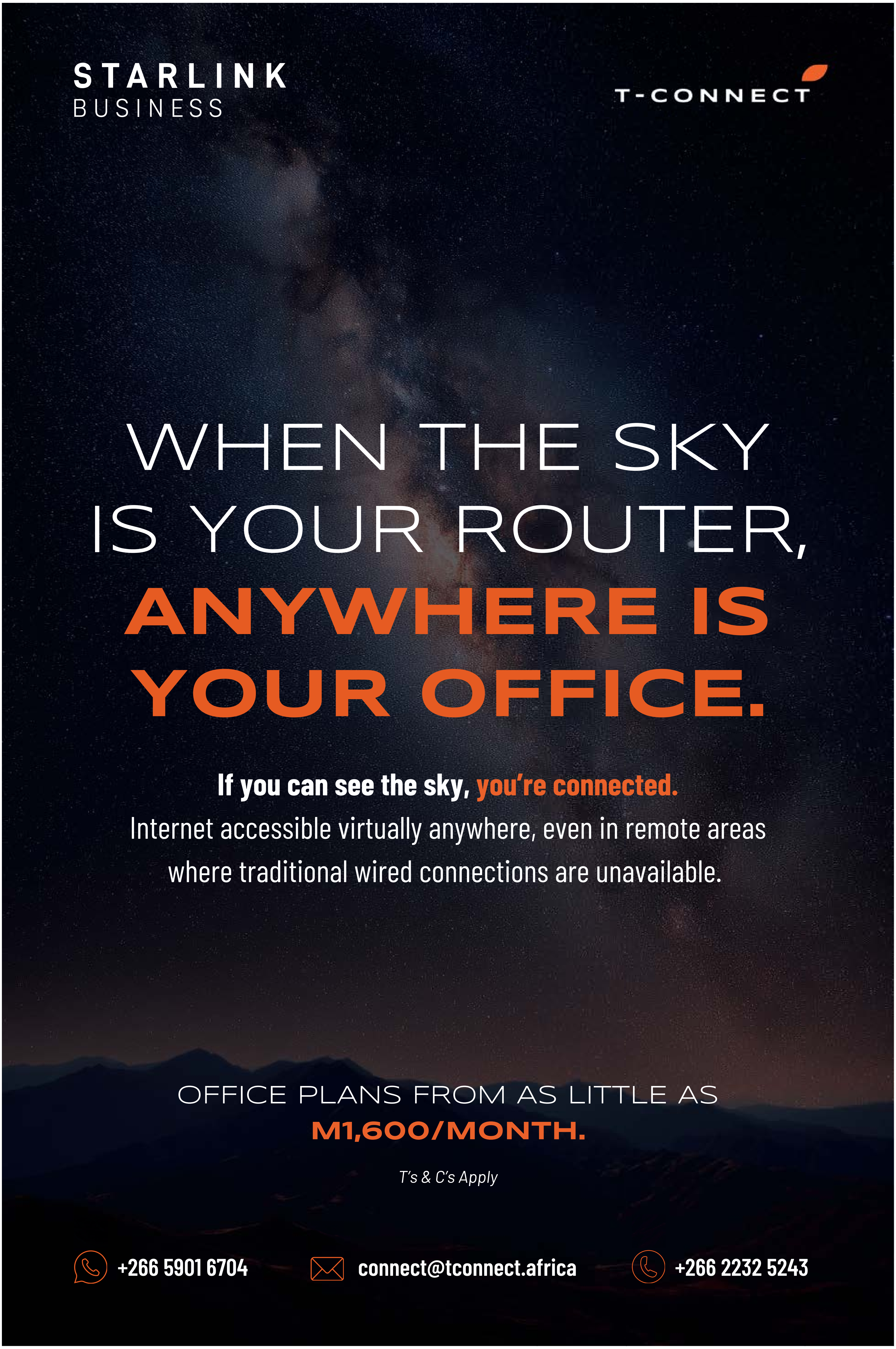
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# The return of Leruo

## • Lehlohonolo Mayeza back for Outlaws sophomore season

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Lesotho-born actor Lehlohonolo Mayeza has returned to the spotlight with the return of the blockbuster Showmax series Outlaws, reprising his character, Leruo Tšeole.

Season 2, which officially began streaming on November 17, 2025, marks a powerful continuation of the actor's rise in the regional entertainment industry and reaffirms his position as one of Lesotho's brightest acting exports.

Returning to the world of Outlaws feels both familiar and revitalising for Mayeza: "Coming back to a character you have already lived with is always special," he said.

"I felt more grounded this time, more connected to Leruo's inner battles and growth. And returning to a cast and crew that feel like family made it even more powerful."

His words reflect a deep emotional bond not only with the character but with the story itself, a world marked by high tension, moral dilemmas, and complex loyalties.

Since his breakout performance in 2023, the Thaba Tseka star has captured the hearts of viewers across Southern Africa. Season 1 introduced him to a wider audience, but Season 2 offers him the opportunity to take the character further than ever before.

"Leruo's journey this season is much more complex; he is faced with choices that test his loyalty, his strength, and even his identity. There is more action, more tension, and definitely more emotional depth," Mayeza explained.

This season, Leruo is no longer the reactive young man navigating the chaos around him. He has transformed into someone who makes intentional choices and faces the consequences with a newfound sense of awareness.

"We see a more confident, more self-aware Leruo. He's carrying the weight of everything that happened in Season 1, and that forces him to make tougher, more intentional decisions," Mayeza said.

It is this evolution that allows viewers to connect with the character on a deeper emotional level, as he steps into the responsibilities and challenges that come with growth.

One of the most compelling aspects of Mayeza's portrayal this season is the emotional depth he brings to the role. Though careful not to reveal plot details, he hints at scenes that pushed him further than he has gone before.

"There is a moment where Leruo is torn between his duty and his heart, and the emotional stakes were incredibly high. It required a lot of vulnerability."

The physical demands of the role were equally intense. With action scenes requiring precision, stamina, and trust in the stunt team, the actor describes them as challenging but ultimately rewarding.

"Those days were tough, but they were some of the most fulfilling."

The intense demands of Season 2 also taught him more about himself as an actor.

"I learned I'm capable of going deeper emotionally than ever before. The season demanded honesty and vulnerability that pushed me out of my comfort zone. I also learned to trust my instincts more, to stay present, and to allow the character to guide me."

Preparing for such a layered character is no small feat. He starts by studying Leruo's backstory, the unseen aspects of the character that inform how he moves through the world.

Emotionally, he connects Leruo's struggles with universal human experiences. Mentally, he keeps himself grounded through routines that allow him to transition in and out of character without losing himself.

Working alongside some of South Africa's most respected actors has also been instrumental in shaping his craft.

"Seeing their dedication and depth pushes you to elevate your own performance," he says. "It taught me the importance of listening and reacting authentically."

This collaborative environment strengthens the storytelling of Outlaws, allowing each actor to contribute depth and authenticity to the narrative.

Despite the intensity of the storyline, the atmosphere on set was a blend of professionalism, deep emotional work, and unexpected moments of joy. Mayeza recalls a moment during the filming of a particularly emotional scene where even members of the crew struggled to hold back tears.

These are the moments that remind him of the power of storytelling. Off-camera, the cast shared countless moments of laughter and inside jokes that helped them navigate the long and demanding shooting days.

"That balance of professionalism and friendship made the experience unforgettable," he says.

Beyond the craft and the production, Mayeza's presence in Outlaws carries significant meaning for the Mountain Kingdom. As one of Lesotho's leading acting exports, he is acutely aware of what his success means for aspiring Basotho actors.

"It is an honour to represent the Mountain Kingdom. I hope it inspires young actors back home to believe in their dreams. Our stories matter," he said proudly.

He believes the success of Outlaws has helped shift perceptions about Basotho talent in the regional entertainment landscape.

"The show has shone a spotlight on Basotho talent in a way that hasn't happened before. It shows we can compete at the highest level."

Looking back, Mayeza said Season 1 was a turning point in his career. It exposed him to a broader audience, earned him critical recognition, and opened doors to new roles and collaborations.

The experience of playing Leruo has strengthened not only his confidence but also his sense of artistic direction.

As he looks beyond Outlaws, Mayeza hopes to explore roles that challenge him emotionally and psychologically, particularly those that deal with human struggles and complexity. He is also working on two deeply personal documentaries and a film, projects that he says are close to his heart, though he cannot yet share the details.

His advice to young Basotho actors is grounded in experience and humility.

"Stay dedicated. Keep honing your craft. Take every opportunity to learn, whether it is classes, workshops, or community theatre. Be patient, be resilient, and most importantly, believe in your own story."

# Minister Spokes promises greater glory in 2026

**Fusi Hlaoli**

Gospel star Poloko Mohlapiso, affectionately known as Minister Spokes, has officially set the wheels in motion for his 2026 spiritual calendar, with the launch of "The Latter Glory" as the next chapter in his annual worship chronicles.

Hosted at the City Pride Guest House this week, the launch marked the official continuation of 'The Genesis' initiative, a spiritual journey he began in 2018.

Building on the foundation laid years ago, the highly anticipated 2026 edition is scheduled for March 14, 2026, at the Lehakoe Club.

Mohlapiso revealed that the upcoming worship experience is anchored in the prophetic promise of Haggai 2:9, which declares, *"The glory of this latter house will be greater than the former, says the Lord Almighty."*

The event is billed not merely as a concert, but as a prophetic worship encounter promising peace and spiritual elevation for the nation.

Living up to the promise of a "greater glory," the event will feature a heavy-hitting lineup of industry giants. Minister Spokes announced that the stage will be shared with renowned worshippers including TebohoMoloi, SidiNtombela, KhethangKonese, and Rorisang Motsamai.

Adding a dynamic flair to the event, Dj-Thizozo has also been confirmed on the bill, alongside other supporting acts.

Addressing the vision behind this continuation, Minister Spokes emphasised that his mandate transcends denominational boundaries.

"My calling is to unite the church to Christ. I am not called for a specific church," he told the gathering.

He explained that the title "The Latter Glory" was born from a divine instruction where God promised to use him mightily in this generation to heal and unite His people through new sounds and anointing, regardless of their church affiliation.

To ensure the production matches the magnitude of the vision, the event has secured Jam Session Sound, renowned for technical excellence in the entertainment industry, as a primary sponsor.

Promising a better and improved experience with ample space for the expected capacity crowd at Lehakoe, Mohlapiso noted that the stage will feature a mix of local and international acts. He further extended an open invitation to other corporate partners to join this caravan of glory as sponsors for the March 2026 spectacle.

# Milestone for Maseru City Run

**Staff Reporter**


Nedbank Maseru City Run has reached a significant milestone following the successful World Athletics route measurement exercise conducted recently in the capital.

The development does not only seek to professionalise the event but also elevate it to the level of internationally recognised qualifiers.

The certification means the race's flagship 42.2-kilometre marathon is now an official qualifying event for South Africa's Comrades Marathon and the Two Oceans Marathon. Both races are among the continent's most prestigious long-distance events, attracting thousands of runners from across the world each year.

According to Comrades Marathon Association guidelines, athletes must qualify on a marathon measured and certified under World Athletics standards, which places the local event in esteemed company.

Thabo J. Tšoeute, the Marketing Director of the Maseru City Run, said the achievement reflects the organisers' deliberate efforts to enhance the technical quality and competitiveness of the race.

"We are intentional about improving the status and standards of the race to deliver a world-class athletics event," he said, noting that the certification was a major leap in that direction.

The certification process was overseen by Norrie Williamson, a highly respected Scottish-born endurance expert now based in South Africa. Williamson is renowned for his decades-long experience as an ultra-distance runner, coach, and author and course measurer.

With his guidance, all race categories from 42.2km, 21.1km, 10km, 5km and the 1.6km fun run, were measured to stringent international standards. Tšoeute said the organisers have since received formal certification.

"We engaged the services of renowned race measurer Norrie Willemsen, and we have since received the races certificates from the World Athletics, which confirms that our routes are now formally measured and certified."

He added that the certification immediately positions local athletes seeking to enter the Comrades or Two Oceans marathons to qualify without having to travel outside Lesotho.

"This certification has helped our race to be the Comrades and Two Oceans marathons qualifier, meaning if one wants to participate in the two ultra marathons, they can qualify by running in our 42 kilometre marathon."

Tšoeute further revealed that the organisers are in the process of applying to have the Maseru City Run included in the annual World Athletics calendar. Such a listing elevates a race's visibility globally and attracts elite and recreational runners from multiple countries.

Being recognised as a qualifier and pursuing calendar inclusion, he explained, will boost international confidence in the event. The race aims to attract at least 400 international runners in its next edition, an ambitious yet attainable target given the growth of regional road-running tourism.

Earlier this month, Nedbank Lesotho renewed its commitment now as title sponsor, through signing a three-year deal worth M1 million. The bank's continued support has been credited with helping to stabilise and expand the race's operations.

Participation numbers continue to rise steadily. To date, over 1,256 runners have registered, closing in on last year's total of just over 1,400. Organisers expect the 2026 edition to draw up to 4,000 participants overall, a reflection of growing public confidence on the annual showpiece.

Moreover, the next race comes with enhanced safety measures. For the first time, every registered runner will be covered by a race day accident insurance, while the medical team has been expanded to provide rapid response and on-site care throughout the course. Such measures mirror global best practices in major city marathons.

Monthly training sessions have also gained popularity, offering participants fitness guidance, wellness discussions and technical tips in preparation for race day.

Behind the scenes, a robust Local Organising Committee (LOC) that brings together stakeholders from the corporate sector, tourism industry, Maseru City Council, the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, medical professionals, the Maseru Athletics Academy and the media has been set up.

This multi-sectoral approach ensures that the event upholds world-class standards while simultaneously boosting local business, hospitality and civic pride.

# LNOC seals cooperation deal with SASCOC

**Staff Reporter**

The Lesotho National Olympic Committee (LNOC), also known as the Commonwealth Association of Lesotho, has entered a landmark partnership with the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC).


The two bodies signed a cooperation agreement this week on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Sport General Assembly currently underway in Glasgow, Scotland.

The agreement marks a major step forward in strengthening bilateral relations between the neighbouring National Olympic Committees, laying the foundation for coordinated collaboration in several priority areas.

These include high-performance sport development, technical capacity building, athlete support, and improvements in sports administration.

LNOC officials described the signing as a strategic milestone that aligns with both countries' ambitions to elevate the standard of Olympic and Commonwealth sports in the region. In a statement issued after the ceremony, the leadership emphasised the importance of the partnership.

"This collaboration underscores our collective resolve to elevate sporting excellence, enhance institutional cooperation, and deepen people-to-people relations between the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa," the LNOC said.

The newly established partnership is expected to unlock meaningful opportunities for technical exchange, joint programmes, and long-term development initiatives that stand to benefit athletes, coaches, sports administrators, and national sports structures in both countries.


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# “The figures are scary”- Letswaka

**Staff Reporters**

A critical shortage of qualified football coaches in Lesotho has once again been thrust into the spotlight following the official launch of the CAF A Diploma coaching course hosted by the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) at Bambatha Tšita Sports Arena this week.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, South Africa-based instructor Serame Letswaka said Lesotho’s struggles to keep pace with more advanced footballing nations can be traced directly to the limited number of trained coaches operating from the grassroots level upwards.

While a comprehensive assessment of the country’s amateur coaching structures is still being compiled, preliminary indicators point to Lesotho lagging significantly behind.

Letswaka addressed the 23 coaches enrolled in the programme, one of the most advanced coaching courses available on the continent. Of the cohort, 19 trainees are Basotho, while four come from neighbouring countries.

The course, only the third of its kind to be delivered in Lesotho, will run intermittently in four phases until May 2026.

“We have to find out how many coaches we have in this country, and we will come back next year to release a full report on the state of amateur football in Lesotho,” Letswaka said.

“But the numbers we see are scaring us, suggesting that if we really want to do justice to the development of football, we must do more to develop our coaches.”

He highlighted the enormous influence that qualified coaches have on player development, drawing comparisons between structured European systems and the fragmented approaches seen in parts of Africa.

Citing global studies, Letswaka noted that countries such as Spain have benefited from the deliberate long-term investments in technical development.

“European countries are far ahead of us. For instance, a study that was conducted in 2011 revealed that in Spain, the ratio of coaches to players is 1:23. In comparison, the ratio in South Africa is such that one coach has to train 3000 kids! Spain is not at the top by default, but because of the deliberate actions it took to advance its football.”

He stressed that Lesotho must be prepared to produce an “over surplus” of coaches if it is to meaningfully improve its player-to-coach ratio, which is widely regarded as one of the key foundations for sustainable football progress.

“We really have to make sure that if we have to have an over surplus of coaches, so be it. We can reduce the ratio of coaches to players in Lesotho through such initiatives as this one of developing the coaches. This is key; it is the most important thing that we must do because we have talented kids but do not have enough coaches.”

Letswaka also expressed concern over the reluctance of former players to pursue formal coaching qualifications, often under the false assumption that their playing experience alone is sufficient preparation for coaching responsibilities.

“The mentality to say ‘I played football and therefore cannot take the course’ does not work. The former players still need to get equipped with the emerging changes within the game.”

Also attending the training was Helman Mkhalele, assistant coach of South Africa’s senior national team, Bafana Bafana. Mkhalele commended LeFA for prioritising technical development by hosting high-level coaching courses, saying such efforts are essential for building a competitive football culture.

However, he warned that coaching development alone will not elevate Lesotho’s football standards unless it is supported by parallel investment in infrastructure.

Lesotho currently lacks a CAF- or FIFA-certified stadium, forcing national teams and clubs to host official international and continental matches in South Africa.

Mkhalele told Newsday Sports that bridging this infrastructural gap is essential if Lesotho is serious about competing at the highest levels of African football.

“The authorities must continue developing coaches, and also acquire other necessary basic resources, particularly improving the football facilities. I do not doubt that they can compete against the best in the world. More initiatives like this need to happen more often since developing coaches is very key, and a good starting point for developing football.”

He added that African football often suffers not from a lack of planning, but from ineffective execution; an issue Lesotho must guard against.

“Implementation is key because in most African countries we have beautiful plans, but the problem usually lies in implementation, and if they can do that, I have no doubt that Lesotho can and will be a strong footballing nation,” Mkhalele said.