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[www.newsdayonline.co.ls](http://www.newsdayonline.co.ls)

Vol 07 No 44

**M6.00**

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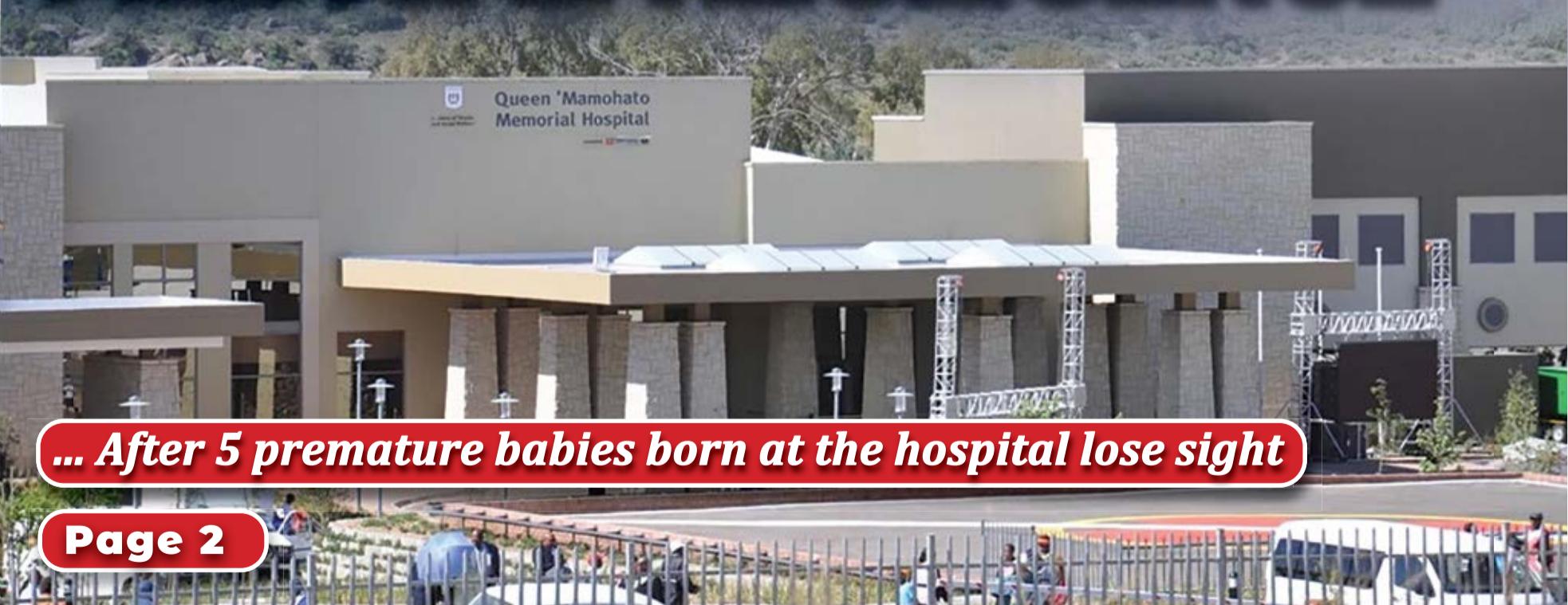
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# QMMH under fire for medical negligence

**... After 5 premature babies born at the hospital lose sight**

## Ntsoaki Motaung

A group of mothers whose premature babies were born at Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital (QMMH) in 2020 have come together to demand answers after all five children were later diagnosed with permanent blindness.

The women suspect serious medical negligence and are calling for transparency, accountability, and access to their children's medical records, documents the hospital has yet to release more than a year after being requested.

The mothers first bonded inside the hospital's neonatal nursery, where they were all admitted after delivering preterm infants around the same period. They now believe the similarities in their children's diagnoses are too striking to dismiss.

'Mamolemohi Ramokotjo, one of the mothers leading efforts to uncover what happened, has said that even a child can see this was not a coincidence.

Ramokotjo recounted that all mothers were assured their babies were fine at discharge. The truth emerged only after they returned home. One mother noticed her baby's eyes were not following movement, prompting the others to check their children as well.

"Then we started monitoring our babies more closely, and the reality became impossible to ignore, they simply could not see," she said.

The women, all admitted to the nursery after delivering premature babies just days apart, turned to their WhatsApp group, originally meant for sharing the everyday struggles of raising preemies, to piece together the disturbing pattern unfolding before them.

Another mother, 'Mareboloke Mamotanyane, confirmed the same experience. She realised something was wrong when her child reached three months and still could not follow a finger passed in front of their eyes, a basic milestone every parent watches for.

When she saw her child's eyes remain fixed, she contacted Ramokotjo, only to learn that she, too, had noticed the same frightening sight.

Mamotanyane's worst fears were confirmed at the hospital: her baby was visually impaired and "will never ever see."

She expressed her anguish, saying she firmly believes the hospital should have communicated the condition while the babies were still under its care.

The mothers insist that QMMH should have identified and disclosed the problem before discharge, especially given the established risks of Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), a condition closely associated with premature birth and time spent in an incubator.

"In my view, before we were released, the doctors did not examine our babies' eyes, even though they knew an incubator can affect a preemie's eyesight," Ramokotjo said.

Adding to their distress, the mothers say



their concerns about swelling in the babies' eyes, hands, and feet while in the incubators were brushed off as "normal" by staff.

Ramokotjo lamented that these so-called normal cases "left our children, and us, with a permanent scar."

They continued taking their babies for routine check-ups, but, according to Ramokotjo, "they did not see anything wrong until we discovered it ourselves after three months."

"Had this been detected as early as two months after birth, our children could have been helped, they would be able to see," she added, citing information later provided by specialists. "But we kept trusting the wrong people when they told us nothing was wrong."

The women claimed they were also struggling to obtain their children's medical records from QMMH. Despite requesting the documents more than a year ago, they have still not received them, they said.

"We even approached the hospital for a report explaining what happened, but we are still struggling to access it. We were told the reports would be made available," Ramokotjo said. She added that the quoted fee has shifted from M200 to M50, creating further confusion.

The emotional and financial toll on their families has been overwhelming. Ramokotjo described the profound effects her daughter's visual impairment has had on their household.

"Firstly, my other children are affected. My eldest son's performance at school has dropped," she said, explaining that he has been distressed by his sister's repeated surgeries and the need for artificial eyes.

She added that her work life has also suffered, explaining that her employer has complained that she now spends "more time away from work" than performing her assigned duties.

Mamotanyane, who is currently unemployed and whose husband is also without

work, said she cannot send her child to a special needs school because none exist in Quthing, where they live.

The mothers remain determined to uncover the truth. "If we are satisfied with the findings once the reports are given to us, we will be relieved. But if we are not satisfied, we will take further steps to show our dissatisfaction," Ramokotjo said.

The five women remain unwavering in their pursuit of accountability from the hospital, which they believe is responsible for the medical negligence that left their children permanently disabled.

Another mother, who requested anonymity, described a deeply troubling discovery about her own child.

"Three months after we were discharged, I realised my baby's eyes were not moving, even when I passed an object right in front of them," she said.

"Because the baby was born pre-term, I initially assumed their development might simply be delayed. But as time went on, my concern grew. I would position them where sunlight reflected into their eyes to see if there was any reaction, but there was none. I even noticed a white layer beginning to form in one of the eyes."

Alarmed, she rushed the baby back to QMMH, where she had given birth. What she was told left her shattered.

"The doctor told me I was 'late,' that I should have brought the baby back within three months of birth," she recalled.

"What hurt the most is that we were still in that same hospital for most of those three months, and no one ever detected anything. We were simply sent home, devastated, without any counselling or support."

At the time of the incidents in 2020, QMMH was operated by the private healthcare group Netcare under a management agreement with the government. That agreement has since been terminated, and the hospital is

now fully managed and administered directly by the government.

The QMMH Public Relations Officer (PRO), Thakane Mapeshoane, said she had never received any request for medical reports from the mothers, even after the matter surfaced in the media.

"Requests for medical reports are made through the public relations office, and we have not received any from these mothers. I advise them to come to the hospital, and upon arrival, they should ask to be directed to the PR office, where they will be informed of the documents required. Once they submit them, they will be assisted," she said.

Mapeshoane added that she could not comment further on the allegations, as she did not yet have the facts before her.

Adv. Nkhasi Sefuthi, Director General of the Persons with Disability Advisory Council and Executive Director of the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD), confirmed that they are aware of the mothers' claims and have already advised them to file a formal complaint with the council.

"Once a formal complaint is submitted, we will investigate the matter to determine whether the allegations are accurate. After that, we will engage the hospital, depending on what the mothers want," he said.

A 2019 ResearchGate study highlighted the global scale of Retinopathy of Prematurity. The global age-standardised prevalence rate was recorded at 86.4 per 100,000 people, with an estimated 2.17 million individuals living with blindness or vision loss caused by ROP.

According to the same study, three African regions, Southern sub-Saharan Africa, Western sub-Saharan Africa, and North Africa and the Middle East, ranked among the highest globally for ROP prevalence. Southern sub-Saharan Africa had the highest rate, at 131.8 per 100,000.

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# Lesotho moves from Trump's punchline to priority

## ... Secures over M6 billion health pact

Staff Reporter

Just months after former U.S. President Donald Trump joked in Congress that Lesotho was a country "nobody has ever heard of" while defending his administration's drastic cuts to global humanitarian aid, the United States made a dramatic pivot.

On Wednesday this week in Maseru, U.S. Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Tom Hines and Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, signed a five-year bilateral health cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), committing \$364 million (about M6.143 billion) to bolster Lesotho's health system.

The deal, spanning 2025 to 2030, includes \$232 million from the United States and \$132 million from the Government of Lesotho, aimed at saving lives, strengthening frontline healthcare, and finally giving Lesotho full ownership of its HIV/AIDS response.

For a nation Trump once brushed off in jest, the investment is monumental.

Lesotho has already outpaced global expectations by exceeding the 95-95-95 HIV/AIDS epidemic control goals, achieving 97-97-99, a feat reached by very few countries worldwide.

The MOU seeks to consolidate that progress through targeted investment in health infrastructure, workforce development, disease surveillance, and outbreak response.

The bilateral health agreement will put Lesotho on an accelerated path to a durable, responsive, and sustainable health system, resulting in Lesotho taking full control of its HIV/AIDS response," the U.S. said in a statement.

The partnership, according to the U.S., also helps further American commercial interest in Lesotho and Africa more broadly, encouraging



health-related commercial cooperation.

"From satellite internet that provides clinics connectivity to advanced robotics delivery of life-saving medical products, the agreement opens the door to innovations that mutually advance healthcare and the local economy.

"Today's signing highlights the strong U.S.-Lesotho bilateral relationship, and both countries' commitment to safeguarding health gains and supporting a health assistance architecture that eliminates dependency, ideology, and waste — delivering better and more durable health outcomes," the U.S. said in a statement.

It added that it will continue to sign multi-year bilateral agreements on global health cooperation with dozens of countries receiving U.S. health

assistance in the coming weeks to advance the America First Global Health Strategy.

"The MOU will be a blueprint for the next five years of our partnership. It is five years of joint commitment to building a resilient, self-reliant, and durable health system for the Basotho people," Hines said at the signing ceremony.

"It builds on 18 years of U.S. support, which has saved hundreds of thousands of lives and strengthened Lesotho's health system."

Hines emphasised that these investments and these partnerships with the Ministry of Health and others have achieved a remarkable record — attaining 97-97-99, making Lesotho one of only a handful of countries around the world to achieve those marks.

"This MOU is more than a continuation, however; it is a transformation anchored in clear, measurable goals. Our signatures will commit us to reducing maternal and child mortality, strengthening the country's ability to detect and respond to infectious diseases. And this will be achieved with and through Lesotho's leadership," he said.

The United States has been a key partner in Lesotho's fight against HIV/AIDS for nearly two decades. Since the early 2000s, U.S. programs, primarily through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), have provided financial, technical, and operational support to scale up HIV prevention, treatment, and care services across the country.

Through PEPFAR, the U.S. has contributed to expanding access to antiretroviral therapy (ART), strengthening laboratory and diagnostic capacity, and supporting HIV testing and counseling services.

U.S. assistance has also targeted prevention efforts, particularly among high-risk populations, including youth, women, and key populations vulnerable to HIV infection.

Capacity building has been another critical area of U.S. support, focusing on training healthcare workers, improving data systems for monitoring and evaluation, and enhancing disease surveillance to respond to outbreaks and ensure treatment continuity. This investment has helped Lesotho achieve remarkable outcomes, including surpassing the 95-95-95 targets for HIV epidemic control.

The U.S. has also encouraged Lesotho to assume greater ownership of its HIV/AIDS response, shifting from reliance on international NGOs to building sustainable, locally led health systems.

Investments have extended to strengthening health infrastructure, such as clinics and laboratories, and providing strategic guidance on health policy and program management.

Overall, the U.S. partnership has been instrumental in saving lives, reducing HIV transmission, and building a foundation for a resilient, self-reliant health system in Lesotho.

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# Lesotho has sent the equivalent of 10 full Katse dams to SA

Staff Reporter

Lesotho has delivered an extraordinary volume of water to South Africa, amounting to the equivalent of ten completely full Katse Dams, according to figures released by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA).

The data, published on October 23, 2025, and covering transfers up to March 2025, shows that Lesotho has exported a cumulative 19,580 million cubic metres (MCM) of water to its neighbour since the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) began operating.

To put this in perspective, Katse Dam, Lesotho's largest reservoir and the centrepiece of Phase I of the LHWP, stores about 1,950 MCM when full. This means the total water exported so far is equal to draining, filling, and re-draining Katse Dam ten times over.

In simple terms, about 306 Metolong Dams would be needed to hold the same amount of water as 10 full Katse Dams.

The LHWP was conceived as a mutual-benefit scheme. Lesotho provides South Africa with high-quality water from the Orange-Senqu Basin, and in return receives royalties that contribute significantly to the national purse.

Transfers began cautiously in the late 1990s but accelerated over the years as infrastructure was completed and water demand in Gauteng, South Africa's economic heartland, increased.

What began as a bold binational engineering vision has evolved into one of the most transformative undertakings in Lesotho's modern history.

The latest LHDA report confirms that by March 2025, the cumulative delivery had reached its highest milestone yet, demonstrating the long-term consistency and reliability of the project's engineering and operations.

Billions earned for Lesotho

Alongside the water volumes, the data shows that Lesotho has earned over M19 billion in royalties since the start of the transfers. These payments remain a crucial

revenue stream for the country, supporting national development priorities from infrastructure to public services.

Economists often highlight the LHWP as one of Lesotho's most stable sources of foreign income, especially during periods of economic uncertainty.

A strategic asset amid climate pressure

The milestone comes at a time when climate variability continues to pressure water security across southern Africa. South Africa's reliance on Lesotho's high-altitude catchment areas, which receive more consistent rainfall and snowmelt, has only grown.

Experts have noted that as South Africa experiences more frequent drought cycles, the LHWP acts as a buffer that protects millions of households and industries from severe water shortages.

For Lesotho, the achievement also underscores the strategic value of its water resources. With Phase II of the LHWP under construction, including Polihali Dam, the volume of water exported is expected to increase in future years and boost royalty revenues even further.

While the image of "ten full Katse Dams" captures the scale in simple terms, the milestone is also a reminder of Lesotho's unique hydrological position in the region. The Mountain Kingdom, despite its modest size, plays a massive role in sustaining water supply to Africa's most urbanised and industrialised corridor.

Katse and Mohale's dam reach rare simul-

taneous full capacity very early

Meanwhile, in a rare hydrological event for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), both Katse and Mohale dams simultaneously reached or exceeded full supply capacity in November, several weeks earlier than is typical even in wet summers.

According to the latest figures released by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) on December 7, 2025, Katse Dam, the larger of the two reservoirs, stood at 100.84 percent while Mohale Dam registered exactly 100.00 percent.

Newsday has learned that the last time both reservoirs were simultaneously full this early in the summer rainy season was more than a decade ago.

In most years, even during above-average rainfall periods, Katse Dam, with its 1.519 billion m<sup>3</sup> capacity, tends to lag behind the smaller Mohale Dam (843 million m<sup>3</sup>) and only reaches 100 percent from mid-December onward.

In 2022, after years of severe drought that left Katse Dam critically low, dipping below 15 percent capacity at times between 2015 and 2021, the reservoir finally filled enough to begin overspilling on December 15, 2022, the first such event in over a decade, marking the end of the prolonged dry spell's grip on the system.

This came as a relief for both hydropower generation in Lesotho and water transfers to South Africa, though levels had fluctuated in the intervening wetter years without quite reaching spill point until then.

This year, the dam started spilling on November 15.

"The management of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority - LHDA Katse, informs the public of the spilloage of Katse Dam that started on 15th November 2025 due to current rains," LHDA said in a statement.

"The spilloage will likely keep happening while the heavy rain continues. We therefore encourage people to use bridges at all times when crossing these rivers within this period," it added.

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project was originally conceived as a way to monetise Lesotho's comparative advantage, abundant high-altitude water, while providing South Africa with a reliable source of clean water to support its economic powerhouse, Gauteng.

For Lesotho, the project was also designed to deliver long-term dividends through royalties, infrastructure upgrades, local job creation and the construction of roads, bridges and electricity systems in areas that previously had little access to development.

Over the decades, the LHWP has reshaped the physical and economic landscape of the highlands. Entire communities gained road networks where there had been none.

Hydropower generation at 'Muela strengthened Lesotho's energy security, and reduced dependence on imports. Royalty flows became one of the country's most stable sources of revenue, and cushioned the economy during downturns and supporting national development priorities.

While the project has not been without controversy, including displacement, resettlement challenges, environmental impacts and governance questions, it remains one of the few large-scale initiatives that consistently brings in foreign income while strengthening cross-border cooperation.

As Phase II progresses, with the construction of Polihali Dam set to expand both storage and delivery capacity, the next chapter of the LHWP promises even greater regional integration and potentially higher financial returns for Lesotho.



# GBV remains urgent national crisis, stakeholders say

## Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Lesotho's annual 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence (GBV), observed from November 25 to December 10, concluded this year with a sobering consensus that GBV in the country remains an urgent national crisis, requiring both robust legal enforcement and sustained societal change to protect the most vulnerable.

The campaign this year was held under the theme: "UNiTE to End Digital Violence against All Women and Girls."

According to UN Women, one in three women globally experiences physical or sexual violence, highlighting GBV as a critical human rights emergency.

This week, Nairasha Legal Support convened a stakeholder dialogue, bringing together representatives from civil society organisations, law students, police, and legal practitioners to deliberate on ending GBV in Lesotho. The dialogue, held on the final day of the 16 Days of Activism against GBV, concluded that the crisis demands urgent, coordinated action.

"The continuous violation of women's and children's rights cannot be ignored," said Advocate Joanna Jonas, Nairasha Executive

Director. "Our organisation champions justice for women, children, and marginalised groups. We provide legal support to GBV victims, and we highlight the tireless work of women who spread awareness and empower communities."

Afrobarometer data shows that 56 percent of respondents in Lesotho believe women are at risk of victimisation if they report GBV, while across 39 African countries, 38 percent perceive GBV as "somewhat common" or "very common."

Advocate Motlatsi Mofolo, Interim Country Director of GenderLinks Lesotho, urged everyone to participate in the fight against GBV, starting from their own communities.

The suspended Counter Domestic Violence Act, 2022, was also scrutinised for its limitations, including delays in establishing Family Courts intended to hear domestic violence cases. Section 16 mandates that Family Courts "deal with problems arising out of family matters and hear cases of domestic violence," yet implementation has been slow.

Winile Sakoane, Coordinator of the One Billion Rising Movement in Lesotho, stressed the need for survivor-centered support.

"Shelters, counselling, and medical care must be accessible, adequately funded, and survivor-centered," she said. "On Human Rights Day, we are reminded that the effectiveness of justice is measured not in legislation but in lived experiences. When governance fails, rights fail."

Sakoane called for reforms, including mobile legal clinics, community paralegals, well-equipped police posts, specialised prosecutors, gender desks, and fast-tracking of GBV cases. "Rural survivors must not face barriers to justice," she added.

During the debate, one side argued that Lesotho faces an urgent national crisis where children witness abuse and families live in fear. While social norms evolve slowly, the law can provide immediate, uniform protection. Speakers highlighted the High Court Civil Litigation Rules (Legal Notice 65 of 2024) and the Sexual Offences Act, 2003, as tools to empower survivors, issue protection orders, remove abusers, and compel police action.

Opponents countered that legal reform alone is insufficient without societal change. The discussion laid out two perspectives:

law as an urgent, enforceable shield, versus the need for broader social transformation to prevent abuse.

Advocate Mosoeunyane emphasised the importance of legal literacy.

"The law is meant to protect people," he said. "Without knowing their rights and responsibilities, survivors remain silent. Legal literacy empowers communities to challenge harmful practices, report abuse, and demand accountability. It transforms the law from words on paper into a living tool for justice."

The dialogue also highlighted elder abuse, noting that vulnerability grows with age. Paralegal officer 'Mathuso Khoete of Thabana-Morena, Mafeteng, shared a case where relatives neglected an elderly woman, withholding food. Following the intervention, the family resumed proper care.

Detective Sub-Inspector 'Matšoeu Petlane of the Children's and Gender Protection Unit in Mafeteng explained that children are also included in investigations. "Sometimes, mothers themselves abuse their children, which affects the children's behaviour and safety," she said.

# EU Pledges M57 million to fight gender-based violence

## Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The European Union (EU) in Lesotho has unveiled €2.87 million (approximately M56.9 million) to bolster civil society organisations (CSOs) in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV) and to drive inclusion across the country.

Among the recipient organisations are GenderLinks, Sesotho Media and Development, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

Speaking at this week's handover ceremony, EU Head of Delegation Mette Sunnergren expressed grave concern over the persistent scourge of GBV in Lesotho.

"Sexual offences and crimes resulting from gender-based violence remain alarmingly persistent," Sunnergren said. "We recognise the imperative to continuously address GBV—from prevention and prosecution to providing comprehensive support for survivors."

Citing the OECD Lesotho Country Profiles, she highlighted that at least 40% of

women aged 15–49 have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner at least once in their lifetime.

"Ending GBV and promoting gender parity is a shared goal with the Government of Lesotho, civil society, and international partners. Joint campaigns like the 16 Days of Activism are vital, and we warmly welcome initiatives that bolster sector coordination," she added.

Sunnergren further stressed the EU's commitment to strengthening public institutions, including the judiciary, the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the legal aid unit, through initiatives such as the Support for the Reform and Strengthening of Governance in Lesotho.

"We are supporting communities via the work of civil society, the focus of our media brief today," she said.

GenderLinks will spearhead the project Local Action for Gender Justice in Lesotho, covering all districts across 30 community councils. Advocate Motlatsi Mofolo, GenderLinks Interim Country Director, said the initiative includes a nationwide follow-up to the 2015 GBV Indicators Study, mapping the

prevalence, patterns, and drivers of violence, including technology-facilitated abuse, emotional, and economic violence.

"The project promotes gender justice through local action to end gender violence and empower women. Beneficiaries include women, girls, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons, and even herd boys," Mofolo said.

Sesotho Media and Development will implement Transforming Gender Norms and Strengthening Domestic Violence Laws for Inclusive Protection Across Lesotho, a 36-month programme launched in September. Thakane Sello of Sesotho Media and Development said the project seeks to ensure the Counter Violence Act, 2022, is effectively implemented and widely known, particularly in hard-to-reach communities.

Catholic Relief Services will lead Strengthening Public Participation Towards Inclusive and Climate Smart WASH and Clean Energy Developments in Lesotho, aiming to empower CSOs, community-based organisations, and local structures to influence and monitor equitable WASH and clean energy policies. Ntione Tšehlana stressed the urgency.

"The country is continuously facing gaps in

access to safe water, sanitation, and clean energy, especially in rural areas. Our goal is to ensure communities are meaningfully involved in shaping and monitoring these policies."

The International Commission of Jurists, partnering with the People's Matrix and Seinoli Legal Centre, will roll out Reform for Inclusion, Support and Empowerment (RISE) from July 2025 to June 2027. Lerato Caroline Khutlang highlighted that the programme targets persistent discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and LGBTIQ+ individuals, aiming to strengthen CSOs to influence legal reforms and promote women's land and property rights.

"The programme will also produce a comprehensive report on challenges to accountability for GBV against women and LGBTIQ+ persons in four districts," Khutlang said.

Through this €2.87 million investment, the EU aims to empower civil society as a frontline driver of change, promoting inclusion, justice, and accountability in Lesotho's ongoing battle against gender-based violence.



Newsday

# Business

## New banknotes combine improved security, durability and inclusivity features



The Governor of the Central Bank of Lesotho, Dr. Maluke Letete

### Seabata Mahao

The Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) this week unveiled upgraded Maloti banknotes, marking a significant milestone towards curbing counterfeiting and

extending the life of the bills.

The launch, held at Lehakoe in Maseru and attended by key stakeholders, is part of the global central banking practice of periodically reviewing and

enhancing national currency for security, durability, and public confidence.

CBL's Governor Dr Maluke Letete, described the development as a historic step in Lesotho's financial journey.

"This is more than a change in design it is a reaffirmation of our commitment, security and trust," he said, noting that the upgrade aligns Lesotho with international standards in currency management.

Letete highlighted enhanced security as a driving motivation for the new series. With technology rapidly transforming counterfeiting techniques, he said the CBL has integrated state-of-the-art features into the notes, including advanced watermarks, machine-readable elements, and tactile features for visually impaired users.

"These features are designed to protect both consumers and businesses. In this era, counterfeit activity increases quickly, and we must stay ahead," he said.

The Governor further emphasised the improved material composition of the upgraded notes. The new series is expected to remain in circulation for

up to four years, approximately double the lifespan of current notes.

"If your note was taking roughly two years in circulation, this new note launched today will take probably double that. That fundamentally reduces printing costs because a note will take longer before it is damaged," Letete explained.

Beyond technical upgrades, the new banknotes incorporate design elements that reflect Lesotho's heritage and identity. Letete stressed that currency is a national symbol of sovereignty and stability, urging Basotho to handle money respectfully.

"No citizen should write on or tear currency, as that threatens our sovereignty," he cautioned, adding that torn notes should be returned to the CBL for replacement.

He also underscored the importance of inclusivity, highlighting new tactile features enabling visually impaired individuals to identify notes by touch.

"Money does not belong to the wealthy it belongs to all," he said.

Letete assured the public that old banknotes remain legal tender until further notice. He urged businesses not to refuse them, saying both old and new notes will circulate concurrently. Those uncomfortable handling old notes may exchange them at nearby banks.

To support the transition, the CBL will roll out nationwide public awareness campaigns from January 2026, ensuring communities in all districts understand the new features and best practices for handling the upgraded notes.

CBL's First Deputy Governor, Lehloimela Mohapi, said the upgrade aligns with global standards in currency management.

"This does not affect only the financial sector but the entire population of Basotho and those across the borders," he said.

Mohapi noted that central banks worldwide periodically refresh banknotes to counter evolving counterfeit threats. Environmental considerations were also key to the redesign, with new materials aligning to modern sustainability standards.

## New push to strengthen accountability in cooperatives

### Staff Reporter

With a view to bolster accountability within Lesotho's cooperative movement, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development's Cooperatives Department is forging a strategic partnership with media practitioners.

The alliance aims not only to spotlight deep-seated challenges undermining the growth of cooperatives but also to amplify success stories that can shift public perception and inspire confidence in this pivotal sector of the economy.

Cooperatives are far from marginal. Globally, they represent a powerful economic force, providing work opportunities to around 280 million people and contributing to sustainable economic growth in countless communities across the globe.

They account for roughly 10 percent of global employment, with 300 large cooperatives reporting a total turnover of around \$2.409 trillion, illustrating their substantive economic reach and resilience.

In Lesotho, cooperatives have long been recognised as engines of inclusive growth, poverty reduction and local job creation. Yet, despite their potential to transform livelihoods and underpin community development, many societies are beset by governance failures, weak financial reporting and compliance issues.

These systemic problems have spurred the Cooperatives Department to seek a more outward-looking approach, bringing media into the fold as a partner in accountability and public education.

This week, government hosted a two-day training workshop for journalists, designed to deepen their understanding of the cooperative movement and equip them to report on it constructively.

The goal is to promote accurate, balanced media coverage that holds cooperative leaders accountable while highlighting models of good practice that can be replicated.

Acting Commissioner of Cooperatives Kothalang Ramoerosi said this partnership represents a crucial step toward more transparent and effective cooperatives.

"This relationship is going to help us address many of our challenges in the cooperative movement, including information dissemination across the country, and issues of conflicts among cooperative members," Ramoerosi said.

"Other major challenges include misuse of funds in cooperative enterprises. So we are going to use the

media as a platform to highlight these issues in the hope of resolving them before they get out of hand."

Ramoerosi went on to describe how unresolved financial disputes can stifle the movement and delay economic activity that could have otherwise contributed to national development.

He said it is unfortunate that some cooperative members have run to the courts of law in disregard of the internal conflict resolution mechanisms provided for by the cooperatives legal framework, in order to go against the system.

Ramoerosi said there were pending cases in the courts of law that have dragged on for more than 20 years with no finality in sight.

"It is a very sad situation when cases that involve huge financial resources drag on for years in the courts of law. This not only frustrates the development of the cooperatives movement but undermines the economic development of the country, because the economic activity that would be driven by the cooperatives is held back by the pending court cases," he said.

The department is even considering publishing names of cooperative members who default on loan repayments, drawing a parallel with past practices where shopkeepers would display names of debtors.

"So, in the same way, we are contemplating doing something like that about cooperative members who do not pay back their loans," Ramoerosi said, underscoring the emphasis on public transparency as a deterrent to misconduct.

The reform agenda does not end with misuse of funds. Non-compliance with cooperative laws, weak financial disclosures, and lack of audited statements have been listed among factors eroding confidence among members and stakeholders.

Cooperatives with delayed or incomplete financial reporting, limited member engagement on income and expenses, and unilateral decision making by leaders are often the ones caught in cycles of inefficiency and distrust.

In this context, the media alliance is expected to act as both a spotlight and amplifier: drawing public attention to misconduct when it occurs, while also elevating stories of successful leadership, proper governance and community impact.

Meanwhile, the media practitioners participating in the training noted that the cooperative sector's growth in Lesotho needs more nuanced storytelling, stories that do not shy away from problems but that frame them within pathways to solutions.

## Econet elevates Mafeteng's digital reach with new store

### Seabata Mahao

Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) has strengthened its presence in Mafeteng with the opening of a modern flagship shop, a move that underscores the company's continued investment in customer experience, digital accessibility and network modernisation across the district and the wider country.

The new outlet was launched during a ceremony attended by ETL's General Manager of Products and Services, Ketja Nhlapo, Mafeteng District Administrator Bonang Moranye, representatives of the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Mafeteng Chapter, and the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPs).

Speaking on behalf of the ETL Chief Executive Officer, Nhlapo said the relocation of the Mafeteng shop reflects ETL's commitment to bringing advanced digital services closer to its customers.

"Relocating our Mafeteng Econet shop to Patsa Building allows us to serve our customers in a more accessible, modern, and efficient environment," Nhlapo said.

"This forms part of ETL's broader strategy to bring world-class digital products and services closer to Basotho."

He emphasised that the redesigned facility creates a seamless and integrated customer journey, offering SIM support, EcoCash services, device sales and contract solutions in one centralised space.

Nhlapo also used the platform to caution residents against vandalising fibre infrastructure, stressing that fibre cables contain no copper and therefore hold no value for scrap-metal thieves.

Mafeteng District Administrator Bonang Moranye applauded the investment, saying it will not only improve access to essential digital services but also stimulate local economic activity.

"This investment supports Mafeteng's economic ambitions and enhances public access to essential



digital services," he said.

Representing the LCCI Mafeteng Chapter, Mathoatha Sithole commended ETL for bolstering the district's business environment, noting that connectivity remains the backbone of modern commerce.

"SMEs and local traders rely heavily on reliable connectivity to operate efficiently. ETL's presence here strengthens the Mafeteng business environment and supports growth," she said.

LMPs Superintendent Thato Ramarikoane welcomed ETL's continued expansion but raised concern over the increasing vandalism and theft of telecommunications infrastructure. He urged communities to work with law enforcement to protect critical national assets.

"Reliable communication is the backbone of safety, security and community coordination," he said. "I call upon the community to work closely with law-enforcement agencies to protect these vital installations, because such crimes disrupt essential services, compromise safety and slow down socio-economic progress."

By relocating to Patsa Building, one of Mafeteng's busiest commercial zones, ETL has positioned the new store at the heart of customer activity, offering a convenient and revitalised retail experience aligned with the company's nationwide transformation agenda.

### NOTICE

Notice is hereby made that a correction is made for the following arrangement of official names for Mr Abdul. The current documentation shows the names as MAHMOOD AMBERKAR as first names whilst ABDUL AZIZ as the surname. Notice is therefore made that the correct order is ABDUL AZIZ MAHMOOD as given names and AMBERKAR as the surname.



# TB fight in Thaba-Tseka crippled by budget shortfalls



## Ntsoaki Motaung

The fight against tuberculosis (TB) in Thaba-Tseka District is buckling under a severe budget deficit, high rates of HIV co-infection, and the immense challenge of delivering health services across some of Lesotho's most difficult terrain.

These concerns dominated a high-level engagement convened by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), bringing together Members of Parliament (MPs), the District Health Management Team (DHMT) and local stakeholders.

Lesotho is among the countries with the highest TB burden globally, and Thaba-Tseka's crisis starkly reflects the national struggle.

The DHMT's financial constraints were laid bare by Assistant Finance Officer Khoeli-E-Sele Motene, who revealed that the district's M15 million budget is almost entirely swallowed by staff costs.

"More than M12 million goes to salaries and M865,464 to allowances," she said. "We are left with only M2 million to run the entire district and six facilities."

The remaining M2 million must cover operations for Sehonghong, Linakeng, Katse and other facilities,

leaving little room for strengthening TB detection, treatment or outreach.

The financial deficit is mirrored by stark programmatic challenges. Nteseng Mabote, the Thaba Tseka TB Programme Adherence and Psychosocial Support Officer, pointed to the high prevalence of HIV as a major driver of the TB epidemic in the district.

According to Mabote, 73 percent of TB patients in Thaba Tseka are also living with HIV. This aligns with the country's status as a high co-infection burden area and an alarming 29.9 percent of diagnosed patients are classified as "missing".

The primary reason for these missing patients is a logistical and socioeconomic one as people do not wait for the long hours required for TB testing results, as they face long hours walking back home and often do not return to check for results and start treatment.

Nationally, tracing these "invisible patients" who live in difficult terrains is a major programmatic gap.

Adding to the diagnostic challenge, the district lacks a public hospital. Screening tools like the X-ray are only found in private hospitals where patients

are forced to pay for the service, meaning those who cannot afford the fee cannot be referred for diagnosis.

For a district characterised by remote, rugged terrain, the allocation of health resources has been fundamentally misaligned with community needs.

Mabote expressed frustration that resources, though funded by various partners, including development agencies like UNFPA, which co-funded the national Demographic and Health Survey, are not always based on district-specific requirements.

"Staff had requested horses to reach remote communities, but were instead given cars, which became less useful on the village roads. The essential X-ray equipment intended for outreaches has to be transported in a delicate travelling bag (touch case) using a donkey to access areas inaccessible by road. Widespread poverty and poor living conditions further expose residents to TB and make them difficult to reach for intervention," Mabote explained.

District Administrator (DA), Tlali Mphafi, acknowledged the severity of the situation, confirming that TB is indeed a "huge challenge for the district".

Furthermore, Member of Parliament Mohloinyane Tota emphasised the need for health professionals to actively engage community leaders to ensure that messages about outreaches are effectively spread, improving patient attendance on designated dates to reach those missing patients.

New data from the Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey 2023–2024 shows how limited TB knowledge is in the district. Only 85.2% of women aged 15–49 have heard of TB, below the national average.

Just 68.8% of women know TB can be cured. 72.2% of men incorrectly believe TB is caused by mining.

Only 11% of men and 5.6% of women correctly identify microbes as the cause.

Despite the misinformation, symptoms are widespread. 23.2% of women report having experienced weight loss since age 15, one of the highest rates nationally, yet many do not seek care.

# M1.4 million for cancer hospice expansion



## Chris Theko

The Starlight Oasis of Hope Cancer Hospice has received a major boost after the Standard Lesotho Bank Corporate Golf Day raised a record M1.4 million last Friday, funds that will finance the long-awaited second phase of the facility.

The hospice, founded by Tebello 'Malichaba' Lepheane, is emerging as one of Lesotho's most important palliative-care initiatives at a time when cancer continues to devastate families across the country.

According to GLOBOCAN 2022, Lesotho recorded 2,027 new cancer cases and 1,411 deaths in a single year. Cervical cancer remains the leading cancer among women, with 541 new cases annually and 362 deaths, while breast and prostate cancers also dominate diagnoses.

Many of these cases are detected late, and this reduces the chances of successful treatment.

Against this backdrop, the M1.4 million injection represents not just money, but access to care that thousands desperately need.

Phase II of the hospice, now under construction, will house a fully equipped in-patient unit, one of the most urgent needs identified by families and caregivers.

The unit will allow patients who are too ill to remain at home to receive round-the-clock care, while giving exhausted caregivers a temporary reprieve.

"Sometimes caregivers just need a break," Lepheane said. "They may need to attend a funeral, a graduation, or simply rest, but they cannot leave someone who is gravely ill. Our in-patient unit will give families that peace of mind."

Once complete, the centre will offer medical reviews, counselling, pain management, wound care, and home visits for patients unable to travel. It will also support families through structured conferences designed to prepare them emotionally and practically for the challenges of caring for someone with cancer.

The success of the SLB Corporate Golf Day marks the third consecutive year that the bank and its partners have backed the hospice's mission. Engineers have offered their services for free, while construction teams have agreed to work at cost, stretching every loti raised.

"It is incredibly humbling," Lepheane said. "This support shows that we don't have to wait for the government alone. As a community, we can lead the change."

The hospice has a long-standing partnership with the Ministry of Health, which is being updated to include support for staffing and sustainability. Discussions with the Ministry of Social Development are also underway as part of a broader push to protect families from the economic hardships that often come with a cancer diagnosis.

Lepheane returned to Lesotho after witnessing the transformative power of holistic cancer care in the United Kingdom (UK). She founded Starlight Oasis of Hope to ensure patients here receive not just medical attention, but emotional, social, and spiritual support.

"Cancer can plunge families into poverty," she said. "Often, the breadwinner is the patient. Without holistic support, the entire family suffers."

Her team of nurses, counsellors, social workers, pharmacists, and volunteers aims to provide care rooted in dignity and compassion. The centre's name reflects its mission: in the darkest times, even a small light can guide someone through.

With the construction of Phase II nearing completion, and boosted by the historic M1.4 million raised, the hospice hopes to open doors in January.

For families facing cancer's harsh realities, that milestone represents more than a building. It is a promise that no one must suffer alone.

"Palliative care is a basic human right," Lepheane said. "And we are committed to providing it with love, respect, and compassion."

# Youth-led mobile journalism project targets low childhood vaccination rates

## Ntsoaki Motaung

In a fresh push to improve childhood vaccination uptake, especially among children born to young parents, the organisation Paballo-ea-Bophelo is turning to peer influence and mobile journalism as tools for change.

The initiative directly addresses the complex challenges and societal stigma young mothers and fathers face when trying to access health services for their children.

According to the Lesotho Demographic Health Survey (LDHS) 2023–2024, only 63 percent of children aged 12–23 months are fully vaccinated against all basic antigens, falling short of the Ministry of Health's 80 percent target in some areas.

This concerning data highlights the urgent need for new strategies to reach under-immunised and "Zero Dose" children, those who have not received their first vaccine.

To bridge this gap, Paballo-ea-Bophelo, under a UNICEF-funded project, has trained five young people as citizen reporters.

These reporters were selected from the districts of Mokhotlong, Leribe, Berea, Maseru, and Mafeteng, which were identified as areas of concern due to high numbers of under-immunised children.

Pascalina Kabi, the Secretary General of Paballo-ea-Bophelo, explained the rationale behind the program. "We are fully aware that there are teenagers or young people who have children and who may be facing challenges that prevent them from taking their children for vaccination," Kabi said.

Instead of recruiting seasoned journalists, the organisation chose five young people, three girls and two boys, with no prior media background.

The goal is for them to use their newly acquired basic journalism and mobile journalism training

to produce compelling Facebook and TikTok videos that resonate with their peers.

"For us, the main reason why we did not take people with a journalism background is that we have young children as young as 13 who are teenage mothers, hence we needed to train these ones who understand really the challenges teenagers face. They relate easily," Kabi stated.

The young reporters are encouraged to use their stipends of M1000 to produce stories from their own communities about the importance of vaccines, using the skills they learned to pursue future interests in content creation and mobile journalism.

Kabi highlighted the significant obstacles young parents encounter, which contribute to the low vaccination uptake. She said: "Falling pregnant at a young age on its own is challenging with a lot of stigma and discrimination." "Going to the clinic is hard because they feel judged harshly by the system." This feeling of being "out of place" often discourages repeat visits.

She further indicated that, for some, the geographical distance between their homes and the health facilities remains a major barrier.

"That is why we want them to feel welcome, appreciated and not judged. And the better people to do that are their peers," Kabi emphasised.



The newly trained citizen reporters say shared lived experiences will help them connect with young parents who feel isolated or ashamed.

Letlotlo Khali, 15, from Mokhotlong, said: "Because we are of the same age, when it is us encouraging them, they will feel more comfortable to share their challenges about why they do not want to take their children to health facilities. My role will be to speak about the benefits of vaccines."

Karabo Busi, 17, from Maseru, sees her role as both educational and empowering.

"My role is to encourage young mothers and tell them that even though they think they will be judged, vaccines are more important," she said.

Busi added that the training also opens personal opportunities:

"I'm interested in content creation, so this is a first step for me while I focus on vaccine promotion."



Theko Tlebere

# Common Concern

## From campaign manifesto to government policy

In Lesotho, as in many democracies, the journey from campaign promises to actual government policy is often complex and gradual. The commitments made by political parties during their campaigns lay the groundwork for future government actions. But how do these pledges evolve into concrete policies? Furthermore, how can citizens hold the government accountable for fulfilling these promises? My writing for this week wishes to examine the intricate process of converting a party's manifesto into actionable government policy, explore how citizens can hold their government accountable, and provide a realistic assessment of the timeline and challenges involved in actualising these promises.

First, let us start by defining what a manifesto is. According to Suiter, J., and Farrell, D.M. (2011), in their book, *The Parties' Manifestos*, the common definition of a manifesto is that it represents the policy package a party puts to the voters at election time. A peculiar element that is picked from this definition is that research shows that voters use the parties' policy positions as a guide to their voting intentions, while at the same time, parties tack and change their policy positions in their efforts to woo voters. Manifestos are also a crucial component in the government formation process. Generally, we find that the content of manifestos forms the basis for government coalition programmes and that parties are more likely to form a coalition if the policies expressed in their manifestos are similar.

Therefore, it is prudent to showcase that a party's manifesto is more than just a political document. It acts as a social contract between the government and the electorate. It articulates the vision, priorities, and commitments the winning party makes to the public. Although these promises are not legally binding, they significantly shape public expectations regarding government performance, which is where the issue of accountability comes into play. However, the transition from manifesto promises to actual policies is rarely straightforward. Several stages exist between a political party's victory and the implementation of its pledges. This process involves not only translating campaign rhetoric into action but also navigating various economic, political, and administrative challenges.

Once a political party wins an election, the manifesto becomes the

foundation of the new government's policy agenda, outlining what the party intends to achieve during its term. This document is vital for the public as it reflects the new administration's priorities. However, it serves only as a starting point. In the office, the government must develop a comprehensive policy framework that aligns with the manifesto while addressing the realities of governance.

After the election, the new government faces the challenging task of turning its manifesto promises into practical policies. While the manifesto offers a roadmap, adjustments are often necessary to reflect economic conditions, political realities, and the state's capacity to implement certain initiatives.

The process of forming a government requires balancing campaign promises with the practicalities of governance. Factors such as budget limitations, political negotiations, and coalition-building can compel the government to revise, delay, or abandon certain commitments. For instance, a pledge to increase public sector wages may be scaled back if budget shortfalls arise, and large infrastructure projects may be postponed due to unforeseen financial or political obstacles.

Additionally, it's important to highlight at this very stage that the government must engage in negotiations with its stakeholders, including coalition partners and interest groups, when turning its manifesto into government policy. These discussions can lead to changes in the timeline or priorities outlined in the manifesto. Some promises may be delayed, others may be re-prioritised, and some may even be dropped altogether due to shifting circumstances.

Once the government establishes its agenda, the implementation of manifesto promises enters the bureaucratic stage. This involves creating detailed policy documents, drafting new laws or amending existing legislation, and securing the necessary funding to execute the programs.

This bureaucratic process can be time-consuming, requiring coordination among various government ministries and agencies. Each ministry has its own priorities, which must align with the broader government agenda. Moreover, policies cannot be implemented without securing funding, often derived from domestic revenue and external loans or aid. The development and implementation

of these policies can take months or even years.

Apart from financial constraints, legislative hurdles can impede the implementation process. New laws must be passed by Parliament, and existing policies must be adjusted to reflect the new government's priorities. This process is typically slow, necessitating significant negotiations and debates.

A major challenge in moving from campaign promises to real policy is the transition time needed. There can be considerable delays between the election and the visible results of campaign commitments. This adjustment period may last several months to even a year, depending on the complexity of the promises and the government's ability to deliver on them.

For instance, significant infrastructure projects like roads, hospitals, or schools require long-term planning, substantial funding, and careful execution. While citizens may anticipate immediate changes, such projects demand time for conceptualisation, funding, and completion. The public must recognise that while some promises may be addressed in the initial months of governance, others will require years to materialise.

Certain campaign promises are aimed at addressing long-term issues requiring systemic reforms, particularly in sectors like education, healthcare, or economic policy. Reforms to modernise the education system or enhance healthcare infrastructure are complex initiatives that demand significant investment and time.

These reforms are typically phased in over several years, each stage building on the previous one. While immediate changes can be anticipated, true transformation in these areas takes time. Some promises may become integral components of broader national development plans or long-term reform programs that span multiple government terms. Even with a clear plan, adjustments must be made along the way, depending on new information, changing circumstances, or shifts in national priorities.

For long-term reforms to succeed, they require visionary commitment from the government. Citizens must exercise patience, understanding that while changes may take years, they contribute to a larger, more sustainable future vision.

While transitioning from manifesto to policy is challenging, citizens need to hold the government accounta-

ble for its promises. Prime Minister Matekane's inaugural speech and Speech from the Throne are key documents outlining the government's priorities and provide benchmarks for accountability. These speeches represent formal commitments by the government to the nation and should serve as a basis for holding the administration accountable.

The Prime Minister's 100-day action plan is a practical tool for tracking the government's short-term progress. Basotho can assess whether the government is making tangible advancements on specific issues, such as reducing wasteful spending, enhancing public service delivery, or combating corruption. These are concrete actions that the public can measure and monitor. However, Basotho need to maintain realistic expectations regarding the pace of change. While immediate improvements are anticipated, fulfilling long-term promises will take time. The government must be transparent and provide regular updates on the progress of its initiatives.

The transition from campaign promises to actual policy is not a single event; it is an ongoing process, not merely a means to an end. This journey requires patience, realistic expectations, and continuous citizen engagement. Manifesto promises are just the starting point, but the real measure of governance lies in the bureaucratic process that transforms those promises into actionable policies.

The reality is that policy implementation is a journey, not a quick fix. While it is critical for the government to be held accountable for its promises, we must acknowledge the challenges inherent in governance. The inaugural speech and Speech from the Throne provide concrete commitments, and it is against these documents that we should assess progress. As Lesotho's government navigates the complexities of policy development and implementation, citizens must remain engaged, patient, and vigilant in ensuring that the commitments made on the campaign trail lead to meaningful change.

I therefore conclude by indicating that transitioning from party manifesto to real government policy is not an end but a continuous process of engagement, adaptation, and accountability. This process will require time, but it is one that we, as Basotho, must actively shape and hold our leaders accountable for at every step. The Future is NOW!



# RFP already a beneficiary of the better devil syndrome, but for how long?



## Nkopane Mathibeli

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" – 1 Peter 5:8-9

Politics in Lesotho has successfully conditioned Basotho to believe that progress is a slow process. This, however, is not true at all despite having been legitimised by a Sesotho expression some of us first heard when used by Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili in one of his speeches. The expression is: "Muso ha o tate," which literally translates to: "The government does not hurry". However, given his linguistic elegance, it may be possible that the expression was his creation to explain the reality as he saw it. From then to date, Basotho have been forced to accept the little that the government does towards their welfare. That notwithstanding, they still exercise their minds to conclude as to what is reasonably possible to achieve in a five-year term, hence when election time comes, incumbents are removed, and new ones come in.

But as things currently stand, elections have merely served the purpose of facilitating the constitutionally sanctioned circulation of elites because both the country and the majority of its population remain poor. For instance, it is classified as a Least Developed Country (LDC). Out of 193 countries, it is ranked 167th on the Human Development Index (HDI); 143rd on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index and 132nd on the Global Innovation (GII) Index. In much explicit terms, the 49.7% of the population living below the poverty line implies that many Basotho live a hand-to-mouth existence. This effec-

tively makes hope for a better tomorrow a rare commodity for a very large portion of the population. There are many more worrying signs of long-term neglect across the board, which have still not improved since RFP came to power.

Shortly before the 2022 general elections, in the health sector, there was one health facility for every 11,276 people; one doctor for every 10,000 patients, while the nurse-to-patient ratio stood at 10:10,000. The road infrastructure was such that overall, the combined length of available roads was 6,906.26 kilometres, wherein 1,798.76km were tarred, 3,830.52km were gravel, and 1,276.98km were earth tracks. In the energy sector, only 39% of all households were electrified. The mining sector presented an equally worrying picture. This is because, as per 2004 estimates, Letšeng and Kao diamond mines had remaining economic lives of 31 and 20 years, respectively. In 2022, they were left with 16 and 5 years, respectively. Today, they are left with 13 and 2 years, respectively.

It was based on some of these issues that the RFP was preferred by a large portion of those who cast votes in the last general election. However, the party itself is proving to be a den of all sorts of unscrupulous characters, as per weekly newspaper reports and daily radio broadcasts. Many of these reports involve brazen cases of conflict of interest where lucrative tenders are dished out to cabinet ministers, nepotism, embezzlement, and various other forms of thievery commonly committed by politicians in power. In late October, the Government Assets Search and Recovery Task Team (GASARTT) meant to recover state land and property illegally acquired, was abruptly shut down, reportedly temporarily. The biggest suspicion was that cabinet ministers were annoyed that it was on

their heels. One of the most shocking moments in the history of corruption in our Kingdom came when a cabinet minister bought a 70% stake in a mine at a price (M 121,995) that an ordinary civil servant could easily afford, even if it meant acquiring a loan.

All of these shockers notwithstanding, RFP remains lucky because many people still seem to believe in its virtue as a political party. Testimony to this is the weekly loss of membership by opposition parties, including those in a coalition government with it. All political roads seem to be leading to the RFP; there is absolutely no doubt about that. Of course, opinions may differ as to what the cause is. Some may argue that it gives them hope for a better Lesotho. Some may argue that they also want to get their hands into the feeding trough. The bottom line here is that this exodus from other political parties is a serious threat to their future viability. This, therefore, calls for an urgent change of political tactics, or else, they will soon become extinct in the space of political contestation. What is, however, problematic about most of these parties in the opposition is how minimal their remaining appeal is. In the minds and hearts of the electorate, much of that appeal was lost by what they did while in power, which, of course, is not much different from what RFP is doing.

In the not-so-distant past, it was with so much pomp and arrogance that many of today's opposition political parties soiled their own image and dignity without a second thought. The record of their past bears irrefutable testimony, and it is on that testimony that the RFP is still viewed as the better devil. Much of this evidence is spread out from the advent of coalition governance. Leading the charge was an unsustainable electoral expenditure, which obviously qualifies to be described

as wasteful. For example, within the first term of Lesotho's first coalition government (2012–2017), the country held two more general elections (2015 & 2017), both of which produced coalition governments at a combined cost of around M 540 million. At the centre of this was outright political pettiness, not ideological differences. To include every coalition partner in core government business, Lesotho witnessed a 37% rise in the number of cabinet ministers and government ministries, from nineteen (19) to twenty-six (26) in eight years (2012 – 2020).

As a political strategy to maintain loyalty, smaller coalition partners appease their unemployed diehards by creating job openings beyond the needs of their ministries. As a result of this, the wage bill grew by an unsustainable 372% from M3.3 billion in 2012 to M15.6 billion in 2020. As a direct consequence of the increased number of ministries and employees, Lesotho's recurrent budget rose by an alarming 136%, from M7.2 billion (2012) to M17.1 billion (2020), making the 16% rise in the capital budget, from M5.3 billion (2012) to M6.2 billion (2020), insignificant.

Due to a failure to raise the capital budget and invest in building Lesotho's domestic production capacity both for consumption and export purposes, between 2012 and 2020, the country's trade deficit rose by 17% from M7.5 billion in 2012 to M8.8 billion in 2020. Due to an expanding wage bill, a ballooning recurrent expenditure and a widening trade deficit, Lesotho's budget deficit grew by 814% in eight years from M194.4 million in 2012 to M1.7 billion in 2020.

As the state failed to afford its own budget, as attested by an ever-widening budget deficit, it turned to borrowing. In 2012, total debt made up 38.5% of GDP. In eight years, it rose by nine percentage points to become 47.9% of GDP. In 2012, the NIR amounted to 4.7 months of import cover. In 2022, they had declined by 19% to 3.8 months of import cover.

To those who continue to rush to the RFP, this is probably the charge sheet they judge the opposition with. At the moment, it makes RFP look innocent, probably because its own charge sheet is still in the making. It is on this background that the opposition must at least be content that RFP is also digging its own grave. As a result, instead of throwing too many stones at it, it must at least focus on political consolidation with much emphasis on grassroots mobilisation.

In that regard, radical politicisation through a well-formulated programme of political education must be their weapon of choice. Unfortunately for them, the bulk of these parties have fairly weak political foundations as their rise to prominence was largely based on highly sensationalised propaganda disseminated by syndicated journalists and columnists. This notwithstanding, they have no other option but to go back to the drawing board because the more they criticise the rot of the RFP government, the more the electorate remembers their shenanigans. Unfortunately, this is the bed they made themselves.



# How the country moves: A nation busy rewriting its own collapse

Dr Tseliso Moroke

Lesotho's problems did not fall from the sky. They did not arrive on our soil disguised as fate, nor did they break through our borders like an invading force. Our stagnation — economic, political, and moral — is a consequence of choices we have made, tolerated, or ignored. We are not simply victims of a failing state; we have become active participants in its decline.

#### The distortion of truth

For years, we have witnessed — with shocking calmness — how those in positions of influence have twisted the narrative to protect those in power. Leaders no longer defend themselves with facts; instead, they reshape truth itself, bending public memory until crimes become "misunderstandings," failures become "circumstances," and incompetence becomes "a work in progress." The most astonishing part is that we, the public, accept this manipulation with barely a whisper.

Those who see the truth have gone silent. Many citizens, aware of the campaign to disinform our nation, sit in the front row as the story of our country is rewritten, line by line, lie by lie. Disagreement is now treated as disloyalty, so people nod along, accepting deception because resistance demands courage — a rare national resource.

#### Silencing our voices

Our news media have decided to trade professionalism for the distorted narrative of the highest bidder. It takes only a few payments or favours, and suddenly the most critical voices soften. Narratives shift overnight. Stories that once held leaders accountable turn into public relations pamphlets. The watchdogs of democracy have turned themselves into well-fed pets of political power.

Civil Society in Lesotho has completely collapsed. NGOs, church leaders, and opinion-makers have not been immune to the lures of money and quick gains. Their silence is not accidental; it is engineered. Public statements from these once-respected voices have become a rarity, and when they do appear, they are no longer the nation's moral compass, but extensions of political influence masquerading as neutrality.

#### The human cost of betrayal

We have become a nation where crimes are committed openly, yet those affected by them rush to defend the perpetrators. Lives are lost in the process — real human lives, Basotho lives — and they are often dismissed as mere details, quickly swept aside to protect the image of the powerful.

So we must ask: What kind of people are we becoming when we allow those destroying the country to rewrite history right before our eyes? Their behaviour is sometimes disguised as ambition, but ambition that comes at what cost to the rest of the nation? Is the cost silence, dishonesty, and self-betrayal in the form of control? Our news outlets and online commentators have perfected the act of loyalty-as-control, choreographing our outrage and shaping our forgiveness.

#### A call for genuine revolution

And so we should change how we operate if Lesotho is ever to rise. We must show our children a different kind of nationalism — one not rooted in political colours or false heroes, but in truth, integrity, and courage. A nationalism that places the country above its leaders and values principle, even when inconvenient. Our children must learn that patriotism is not obedience or silence but the refusal to surren-

Malaika Mahlatsi further argues that "we deem women as victims of GBV not because women themselves are incapable of meting out violence but because we understand GBV is a systematic and structural construct. The institutional power that men wield in heteronormative patriarchal society facilitates unequal power dynamics that inform different forms of violence that women experience. In this systematic set-up, women are not dominant." Unlike women, men retain institutional power that is physically, politically, socially and economically sustained.

der their minds to propaganda.

Yet today, many young people are lured into party loyalty with promises of economic opportunities — jobs, scholarships, visibility. Economic hardship has weaponised desperation, and youths are told that their futures depend not on their competence but on the political networks they can attach themselves to. In this scenario, survival overshadows dignity; the nation is already in crisis.

#### A vision for the future

Let us reflect on a vision for a stronger Lesotho, where the youth can thrive based on their talent and hard work rather than political strings. Imagine a society where leaders prioritise the welfare of their citizens, where the truth is upheld as a national value, and where our collective memory serves as an archive of lessons learned rather than manipulated narratives.

Those who have influence often preach sacrifice loudly and confidently because the sacrifices they demand are rarely theirs. They send the youth to the frontlines of political battles while they negotiate benefits behind closed doors. When power speaks of honour, it is almost always asking someone else to pay the price.

Lesotho is aching for a genuine revolution — one not of guns and chaos, but of consciousness. A revolution where people finally see through the fog of misinformation, where truth becomes a national demand rather than an optional luxury. History has taught us a consistent lesson: revolutions ignite when the oppressed recognise themselves as a powerful collective.

In this spirit, let us reclaim our narrative together. The country will move when we engage in constructive dialogue and build a future rooted in honesty and respect for those who dare to speak the truth. The path to change starts with each one of us. We must move, not just for ourselves, but for the generations yet to come.

Essentially, GBV is a manifestation of men abusing their power and privileges to torment women, and it can be prevented. We must abandon misogynistic cultural practices that impede the growth of women and be mindful of our language. We learn that women and girls are just capable thinkers and human beings, just like men, and unlearn everything that says otherwise. We must further equalise economic opportunities for both genders as well as their political power. Strong legislation that punishes GBV predators scares most.

# 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign: Is it enough?

Liteboho Motšekalle

Often, the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) perpetrators are characterised as monsters and dogs, but they are not. They are men in our families, workplaces, as well as in community spaces. They are men in our lives whom we trust and love dearly. Rethabile Mofolo was brutally murdered by her husband, Qamo Matela, and not a monster that appears in movies. Lisebo Letjama's life was viciously taken by her husband, Lepota Natsoane, and not by a stray dog. The young girls who were raped by the Litšoane brothers were not strangers to them.

For 16 days, annually, the world runs a campaign against Gender-Based Violence (GBV). It starts on November 25 as #16 Days of Activism against GBV and ends on December 10, Human Rights Day. Globally, governments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), as well as corporations, always devote resources to this campaign, and so does Lesotho. The efforts are intended to raise awareness, support victims and foster the actions that eradicate it. As GBV continues to become every woman's most feared nightmare, the question hangs around my mind: are 16 Days of Activism against GBV enough?

#16 Days of Activism against GBV remains more of a performative campaign. The violence continues to proliferate against women and girls in the communities, at the schools, homes, churches and as workplaces. For this campaign to generate tangible results on the ground, we must shift our perception about GBV. Firstly, we must have a conversation where men as a group appreciate that they are beneficiaries of patriarchy and must be willing to relinquish their male privilege.

Our societies are shaped by history. And today in the post-colonial epoch, we exist as products of colonialism as well as persist in clinging to its constructs, one of them being the embedded patriarchal structure in our societies. The introduction of colonialism to societies significantly corrupted our culture, and men's accusing finger always finds a woman, as Khaled Hosseini aptly notes. Gender relations have

now been polluted. It has invented the structure that privileges men, subjugates women, begets GBV and further justifies the violence we experience. For instance, it contaminated the purpose of "mahali." At the core of "mahali", it used to be about unifying two families, but today, it is about putting a price tag on the value of a woman. Is she worth the money that is demanded? At the heart of it, it is men.

Secondly, in an interview with Ntsiki Mazwai on Moya Podcast, Gogo Aubrey Matshiqi aptly remarked that the colonial matrix of power condensed human beings into bodies and erected a hierarchy. He reiterated that just like in racism, black bodies are inferior to white bodies; in gender, women's bodies are inferior to men's bodies. The hierarchy of superiority ranks white men's bodies first, followed by white women's bodies, whereas black men's bodies rank in third place and black women's bodies at the bottom.

This amounts to what Tichere Pule posted on Facebook. He reasoned that a woman's value depends on her youth, beauty, as well as purity and does depreciate, whereas it is the opposite with men. His views do represent the rest of men, as a group. Also, society does absurdly consider women as sexual objects rather than equal human beings to men, and men can violate them as much as they please. Men and boys must unlearn and relearn their perception of women and girls. The value of women's bodies should neither be sexualised nor commodified. They must learn to respect them as human beings, know that they are not entitled to torture their bodies, and that they bleed just like they do. Also, both genders must unlearn the gender roles.

Thirdly, we must respond to the political and economic power attached to the GBV. Women are just made "honorary men" with political empowerment. They still bow to decisions made by men. Poverty and unemployment force women and girls to endure all kinds of violence directed at them. In her fundamentally thought-disturbing and a must-read book, Rape: A South African Nightmare, Professor Pumla Dineo Gqola precisely argues that rape is about power.

## PETROLEUM FUND.



#### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

#### INSURANCE BROKERAGE SERVICES

PF/RFP/2025/2026-08.

The Petroleum 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.

To ensure effective and efficient management of insurance covers for its staff, assets, and operations, Petroleum Fund invites reputable and experienced Insurance Brokerage Service Providers to submit proposals for the provision of brokerage, advisory, and insurance administration services. The aim is to secure comprehensive, cost-effective, and reliable insurance solutions while ensuring effective risk management, claims handling, policy monitoring, and advisory support.

Interested, eligible bidders may obtain the Terms of Reference from the Petroleum Fund Website (<https://petroleum.org.ls/procurement/>) from Monday, the 01st December 2025. Requests for clarifications should be made in writing on or before 17:00hrs on Friday, the 19th of December 2025, to the following e-mail address: [supplier@petroleum.org.ls](mailto:supplier@petroleum.org.ls).

The Proposals must be submitted to Petroleum Fund offices in sealed packages clearly marked 'PF/RFP/2025/2026-08 INSURANCE BROKERAGE SERVICES', containing Technical Proposals and Financial Proposals sealed in separate envelopes. The deadline for submission of proposals is 12:00hrs on Wednesday, the 14th of January 2026, with a public opening of Technical Proposals at 12:15hrs on the same day, the 14th of January 2026.

Online submissions may be made by sending encrypted Technical and Financial proposals to [supplier@petroleum.org.ls](mailto:supplier@petroleum.org.ls) by the set deadline.



Ministry of Trade, Industry & Business Development  
COMPETITIVENESS 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, Lericbe 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 pro-

curement 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](mailto:tmohejane@cafi.org.ls) and copy [nleutsoa@cafi.org.ls](mailto:nleutsoa@cafi.org.ls) and [itsoinyane@cafi.org.ls](mailto:itsoinyane@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 non-refundable 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, Lericbe 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
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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  
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Tel: 22 315 100



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and/or

- More than 10 years in senior IT leadership with demonstrated experience in IT governance providing oversight on cybersecurity, digital transformation, and emerging technologies.
- Experience and or relationship dealing with government, parastatals and developmental agencies.

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### Knowledge & Skills

- Advanced BI development (Power BI, Tableau, e.t.c), data modeling, and query building.
- Deep understanding of data architecture, governance, and enterprise reporting frameworks.
- Strong analytical and quantitative skills with attention to detail.
- Strong communication and presentation skills to relay complex insights to non-technical audiences.
- Leadership and mentoring ability with a track record of training or supervising junior analysts or interns.
- Excellent stakeholder management skills and ability to juggle multiple requests and deadlines.
- Solid grounding in statistical analysis and data storytelling.

## Critical Deliverables/Core Accountabilities and Responsibilities

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- Risk management: Work with management to identify, assess, and mitigate legal, financial, and reputational risks.
- Governance framework: Ensure establish and monitor the internal governance policies, processes, and controls that guide executive behaviour and decision-making.
- Strategic guidance: Advise on the legal implications of major strategic decisions, such as mergers, acquisitions, and major contracts.
- Compliance monitoring: Oversee compliance with laws and regulations, and ensure that reporting processes are in place.
- CEO and executive oversight: Participate in the selection and evaluation of the CEO and senior executives, ensuring they act in the company's best interest.
- Stakeholder accountability: Help the board understand how management engages with stakeholders and ensure the company is acting in accordance with its stated purpose.

Or

- Cybersecurity and Risk Management: Provide oversight on cybersecurity issues, ensuring the company is protected from cyber threats and data breaches.
- Digital Transformation: Guide the organization through digital transformation, including implementing new technologies and modernizing systems.
- Technology Oversight: Advise on the selection, implementation, and management of technology infrastructure, systems, and projects.
- Regulatory Compliance: Ensure the company complies with data protection, privacy, and other relevant regulations.
- IT Budget and Resources: Contribute to the IT budget and advise on staffing needs to ensure IT can meet the organization's objectives.
- Emerging Technology Integration: Provide expertise on new technologies.



## How to apply:

Suitably qualified and experienced candidates should submit their application letter, curriculum vitae and copies of educational certificates to: [ls.recruitment@letshego.com](mailto:ls.recruitment@letshego.com) or hand deliver at Executive Building, Opposite LPPA along Pioneer Road, Maseru, Lesotho on or before **26th December 2025 at 1700hrs**.



## Disclaimer

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted. Letshego Financial Services Lesotho reserves the right to appoint the suitable candidates that meet the application requirements. No late applications will be accepted.

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# Beauty icon honoured with lifetime achievement award



## Chris Theko

Renowned beauty queen and industry pioneer Mojabeng Senekal Ndebele received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Beauty Pageant Association of Lesotho (BPAL), an honour that left both the audience and the recipient deeply moved.

The unexpected moment took place on Saturday evening in Maseru, during Mr & Miss Teen Lesotho 2025 coronation.

Widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Lesotho's beauty and creative industries, Senekal Ndebele was seated among the judges when BPAL announced her name.

The hall erupted in applause, celebrating a woman whose contributions have shaped pageantry, modelling, youth development and humanitarian work across the country and beyond.

Reflecting on the moment, she said the recognition holds profound meaning for her at this stage of her journey.

"This recognition is incredibly meaningful, not just because of the title, but because it represents something that is still so rare: being seen and celebrated while still actively doing the work," she shared.

"We are often not given our flowers until much later in life, and for me, this moment feels like exactly that, a bouquet

of acknowledgment, encouragement, and love."

For her, the award is more than an accolade, it is a reminder that purpose-driven work leaves footprints. "And mine are being seen," she added.

The award came as a complete surprise, and she admitted she was overwhelmed when she heard her name.

"I was deeply moved by the people who made this happen, who believed I was worthy of this honour and took the time to make it real. It has been such a demanding year, full of work, service, travel, and very little pause. This moment felt like the universe saying, 'We see you. Keep going.'

She described it as the perfect, affirming ending to a year defined by relentless commitment to community and industry.

Though widely celebrated for her titles, Miss NUL, Face of Lesotho, Mrs Grand Africa, Senekal Ndebele said her proudest achievement has nothing to do with a sash or crown.

"The moment that will always stay with me is receiving the Humanitarian Award at the Face of Beauty International pageant in Taiwan," she said.

The award recognised a free medical camp she hosted in Semonkong, offering specialised healthcare to a remote community with limited access.

"For me, that moment brought everything full circle. It wasn't about crowns or gowns, it was about using visibility to serve humanity. That is my life's purpose."

With more than a decade of influence, Senekal Ndebele has helped redefine what the beauty industry means for young Basotho. She has mentored models, inspired queens, judged major competitions, and pushed for higher standards across the sector.

She believes the future is bright, but calls for greater national support.

"Pageantry is far more than aesthetics, it's an empowerment platform, a leadership incubator. We need policy-level recognition. Government should support national pageants the same way they do sports and national teams," she noted.

Corporate support is beginning to rise, she added, and SMMEs are increasingly investing in pageants, signaling a promising shift.

To the young kings and queens who look to her for guidance, Senekal Ndebele's message is simple but profound:

"Let your purpose be your compass. Beauty fades, trends evolve, but purpose is timeless. Excellence is not about the title, it is about how you use the platform.

Shine so others can find their way, too."

Despite receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award, she insists her journey is only beginning.

"Not even close. I'm only getting started."

In the past year alone, she published Lesotho's first-ever pageant manual, *Pagent Compass*, which inspired the launch of Confidence Camp - a development program teaching leadership, emotional intelligence, public speaking and resilience to children and teens.

"My mission is to build systems that empower, whether in health, youth development, or beauty with purpose. This award is a milestone, but my mountain is still ahead. And I am climbing with more fire than ever before."

All this she does while being an advocate of education, as she holds a Master's in Public Health, and is the Senior Development Officer at Partners In Health. She also serves on a number of boards including International Human Rights Lab.

But even amid the coronations and celebrations, one truth radiated through the room: Senekal Ndebele stands not only as a queen of titles, but as an architect of purpose, a woman whose influence continues to shape generations.

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# New teen royalty crowned at Mr & Miss Teen 2025

**Chris Theko**

The Mr. & Miss Teen Lesotho pageant lit up Maseru last Saturday evening, showcasing some of the country's brightest young leaders in a celebration of talent, purpose and youthful excellence.

By the end of an electrifying night, Poelo Mosobela and Katleho Matetoa were crowned the new Miss Teen Lesotho 2025 and Mr Teen Lesotho 2025, stepping into roles that extend far beyond beauty and charisma.

The event blended glamour with social impact, reflecting the evolving nature of youth pageantry in Lesotho. Contestants were evaluated not only on stage presence and creativity, but also on leadership, public speaking, advocacy and community-driven initiatives.

This year's edition stood out for its sincerity, depth and the maturity of its young participants.

Seventeen-year-old Mosobela, born and raised in Khubetsoana Boinyatso, captured the judges' attention with her authenticity, intelligence and strong sense of mission. Awaiting her Grade 11 results from ECOL, she is passionate about creative arts and youth empowerment, values she carries with humility and conviction.

Reflecting on her crowning, she shared, "The moment my name was announced felt surreal. It was a mix of joy, gratitude, and deep responsibility. Being crowned Miss Teen Lesotho 2025 means more than a title; it is a platform to serve, to represent young Basotho voices, and to rise as a role model for others."

Determined to uplift vulnerable youth, Poelo plans to use her reign to promote self-reliance through creative skills.

"I want to champion youth empowerment through self-reliance. My main project involves teaching orphans and vulnerable youth how to crochet, a skill they can use to generate income and gain confidence."



She believes creativity is a powerful weapon against unemployment, hopelessness and the limitations young people face.

Preparing for the pageant came with challenges, from self-doubt to balancing school and Taekwondo.

"I overcame it through discipline, prayer, and the support of my family and friends, who reminded me of my purpose. I want to leave behind a legacy of action, not just inspiration, young people who are proud to create, lead and stand for something. You do not need much to change lives, just passion, purpose, and the courage to rise... because I

rise to inspire."

Eighteen-year-old Matetoa, a proud Mosotho from Maseru, is no stranger to leadership. A model, youth advocate, and second-year Computer Networking student at Botho University, he earned his crown with confidence, emotional intelligence and a deep commitment to serving teenagers.

"It feels like finally my dream came true," he said.

Recounting the moment he was announced as Mr Teen Lesotho 2025, he said, "It felt so unreal, like a dream come true. I was overwhelmed with gratitude that everything I

sacrificed, all the efforts, and my relentlessness finally worked out. This was my second time competing, and now I truly believe that everything happens in God's timing."

Katleho enters his reign with a powerful mission: opening conversations around teen mental wellbeing.

"We cannot pour from an empty cup. I advocate for mental health awareness because so many teenagers smile on the outside while battling anxiety and depression inside. Healing starts with a conversation."

He hopes to remind teens that seeking help is strength, and that guidance, faith and self-awareness can transform lives.

One of his biggest challenges was the fear of failing again after not winning the previous year. But instead of giving up, he turned that pain into purpose.

"I used it to build me, my confidence and my goals. A crown doesn't define my worth; I am a king beyond owning a sash."

He continued to lead through his projects, including #NoToPeriodPoverty, where he collaborated with former Miss Lesotho Runner-Up Tlhokomelo Sepetla and received support from Hon. Teboho Mojapela to deliver sanitary towels to learners in Botha-Botha.

"By the time my reign ends, I want a generation of teens who are confident, committed, and not afraid to seek help. Teens with purpose and the right guidance can change their lives, uplift others, and build a stronger community."

The judges praised this year's cohort as one of the most inspiring to date. The event also featured a historic moment as industry icon Mojabeng Senekal Ndebele received a Lifetime Achievement Award from BPAL, honouring her decade-long contribution to Lesotho's pageant and creative sectors.

The combination of young talent and industry excellence made the night a powerful celebration of leadership, identity and ambition.

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# LSRC slashes debt from M1.4m to under M150k in 4 months

- Says governance reforms are restoring trust and stabilising the sports sector**

## Sebata Mahao

The Lesotho Sports and Recreation Commission (LSRC) has achieved what many insiders describe as one of the most significant financial turnarounds in its recent history after reducing its debts from M1.4 million to under M150,000 in just over four months.

The Commission's president, Baba Malephane, revealed this notable progress during a consultative meeting with sports journalists and media practitioners in Maseru this week.

The session, hosted by LSRC's Public Relations Officer Advocate Jobo Raswoko, was designed to strengthen the relationship between the Commission and the media while providing a transparent update on the state of sports and recreation administration in Lesotho.

But the headline-grabbing revelation was the Commission's dramatic financial recovery, which Malephane described as "a turning point in restoring trust, credibility, and stability within the LSRC."

When the current leadership assumed responsibility, the LSRC was facing mounting pressure from creditors, a backlog of unresolved audit queries, strained supplier relationships, and internal governance gaps.

The M1.4 million debt had reached a level that threatened operations, partnerships, and even the Commission's credibility with government stakeholders.

"Where we were a few months ago was deeply concerning," Malephane admitted.

"We inherited a financial situation that could have crippled our ability to deliver on our mandate. Suppliers had lost confidence, audit processes were lagging behind, and the general perception was that the Commission was not functioning effectively."

In response, the LSRC developed a recovery strategy that included; Direct negotia-



tions with creditors; Restoration of supplier relationships; Introduction of stricter financial controls; Strengthening internal audit systems; Enhancing the separation between Commissioner oversight and operational management; Implementing new remuneration and HR structures; and Developing a revised Financial Management and Control Policy.

The Commission's leadership traveled to several suppliers in person, held difficult negotiations, and established new repayment agreements. The approach, Malephane said, was necessary to repair broken trust.

"It required uncomfortable conversations, transparency, and humility," he said. "But we came out with renewed relationships and a shared understanding that the LSRC is rebuilding. That has made all the difference."

By November, just four and a half months

after the recovery plan was implemented, the LSRC had brought the outstanding creditor debt down from M1.4 million to M147,000, a reduction that many observers did not believe would be possible in such a short timeframe.

Malephane attributed the success to "honesty, discipline, and putting systems before personalities."

"We needed to prove that the Commission could be trusted again. It wasn't just about settling amounts owed. It was about demonstrating that the LSRC is capable of responsible stewardship."

This restoration of financial stability has opened new doors for the Commission to engage sponsors, government departments, and international partners with renewed legitimacy. Another major area highlighted in the engagement was the clearing of long-standing audit queries.

According to Malephane, previous audit cycles revealed issues related to documentation, procurement processes, unclear expenditure patterns, and weak financial oversight. The Commission has now resolved these issues and implemented corrective measures intended to prevent recurrence.

"We have strengthened internal controls and updated policies to align with expected corporate governance standards. Audit concerns that were repeatedly flagged in the past have now been addressed," he explained.

A new Organizational Realignment Plan was recently approved, designed to modernise how the Commission operates and to ensure clear separation between policy, oversight, and operational execution.

Despite the financial recovery, the LSRC continues to grapple with underfunding. The Commission disclosed that its annual activities require a budget of over M20 million, yet it often receives only a quarter of that amount.

Last year's allocation was approximately M12 million, with quarterly disbursements of about M2.2 million, far below what is needed for athlete development, facility upkeep, or national team preparations.

Upcoming international commitments, including the Africa Games, Commonwealth Games, and World Championships, require more financial stability.

"In January, we will appear before the Ministry of Sports to present a motivated budget," Malephane said. "We can no longer plan major national programs on insufficient allocations. We must be honest with the government about what it takes to build a competitive and functioning sports sector."

He added that part of the strategy is to prioritise development and capacity-building over excessive travel or cosmetic activities.

"Our approach is to prioritise knowledge-building and long-term growth. Financial prudence must guide every decision we make as we rebuild."

The Commission's leadership emphasised that the reforms are about more than fixing numbers; they are about rebuilding public trust, stabilising administration, and ensuring that future generations of athletes and recreation groups inherit a functional system.

"With this turnaround, we want people to know that the LSRC is no longer in crisis mode. We are becoming a transparent, accountable, people-centered institution," said Malephane.

He concluded by calling for continued collaboration with the media, noting that the pen truly remains "mightier than the sword," especially in shaping public confidence and national pride.

"As we rebuild, we need storytelling. We need the truth. We need accountability. And we need you, the media, to walk this journey with us."

## Financial strain overshadows Lesotho's African Youth Games campaign

### Sebata Mahao

Severe financial constraints have cast a shadow over Lesotho's participation in the 2025 African Youth Games, forcing the Lesotho National Olympic Committee (LNO) to send one of its smallest delegations yet to a major continental event.

The four-member team, set to compete in Luanda, Angola, from December 10-20, marks the country's fourth appearance at the Games.

What should have been an opportunity to expose a wider pool of young talent has instead become a painful reminder of chronic underfunding that continues to undermine the development of youth sport in the country.

Initially, the LNO wanted to send more than seven athletes. However, mounting budget pressures forced the committee to drastically scale down participation to only four codes namely Boxing, Cycling, Tennis, and Taekwondo.

Lesotho's trimmed delegation includes boxer Sentsane Mokhehle, cyclist Seutloali Morie, tennis player Phuthi Leshoel, and taekwondo athlete Katleho Molibeli. They will be guided by coaches Velaphi Snyman (Boxing), Malefane Morie (Cycling), Seapei Senatla (Tennis), and Marumo Moloisane (Taekwondo). LNO Vice President Makatile Rammotang leads the group as Chef de Mission.

The opening ceremony takes place on December 13, with Team Lesotho beginning its campaign on December 14 in the Cycling events.

LNO's representative Fetang Selialia acknowledged the financial barriers that restricted Lesotho's overall participation. He also underscored the importance of unity within the small contingent, highlighting how

the lack of team events would increase emotional pressure on the athletes.

"Ideally, we were to have more than seven athletes to represent the country in the African Youth Games, but we could not due to finances. We are here urging our Ministry of Sports for their support in growing and investing in sports," he said.

Selialia added that the Games are crucial for grooming athletes ahead of the 2028 Olympic Games. Yet, without adequate investment, Lesotho risks falling behind continental competitors whose youth development systems are strongly supported.

Chef de Mission Rammotang Makatile echoed these concerns, admitting that the financial crunch affected the scope of the delegation and the country's medal prospects.

"When we have a large team representing the country, the possibility of acquiring medals is high. But due to financial reasons, we were forced to have this limited team that will travel to Luanda," he said.

On his part, Cycling coach Malefane Morie highlighted the struggle to secure adequate training time due to school calendars, an issue magnified by the lack of resources to arrange extended camps or specialised training.

"Looking at the school calendar, we are facing a tough encounter... other nations will have more time to prepare for these games. Despite the challenges and limited preparation time, we have done our best to get the team ready," Morie said.

For first-time Games participant and tennis player Phuthi Leshoel, the mood remained upbeat despite the circumstances.

"I promise that we will work hard and try our best to have good results in our games," she said, adding that the team feels honoured to carry the national flag.



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# The rise of the underdog



## Seabata Mahao

The 2025 Vodacom Premier League (VPL) season is shaping up into being one of the most unpredictable and refreshing title races in recent memory.

For a change, the script has flipped. Instead of the traditional giants, Lioli, Bantu, Matlama dictating the early tempo, a new trio of fearless challengers has shot up to the summit, shaking up the status quo.

Lijabatho FC, Majantja FC and Lifofane FC have stormed up the table into unfamiliar territory, occupying positions once jealously guarded by the country's football royalty.

Lijabatho currently lead the charge with 24 points, closely shadowed by Majantja and Lifofane in second and third positions, respectively. Both Majantja and Lifofane are sitting on 23 points.

This past weekend, Lijabatho ascended to the top in emphatic fashion, hammering Members FC 4-0 with the swagger of a team that fully believes its name belongs among title contenders. Their rise was

boosted by Majantja's weather-disrupted clash against Matlama, abandoned before it could influence the standings.

Lifofane, meanwhile, continued their blistering run of form. Their 3-1 triumph over Linare at the energetic Saxophone Thejane Ground in Maputsoe was another statement of intent.

Fresh from a 3-1 win over LCS, the Botha-Bothe side played with confidence and composure, showing the kind of maturity expected from seasoned giants, not rising challengers.

Linare, who had recently held Members to a draw, went toe-to-toe in physicality and determination, but Lifofane's organisation and clinical finishing proved decisive.

With the first leg of the 2025/2026 campaign approaching conclusion, the rise of these underdogs is not just a feel-good subplot; it is fast becoming the season's main storyline.

Whether they can sustain the momentum remains to be seen, but the footprint they have left so far is impossible to ignore.

Elsewhere, traditional powerhouse Matlama FC finally rediscovered their spark on Wednesday this week, grinding out a much-needed 0-1 victory over Manonyane FC in a catch-up match at Nyakosoba Ground.

Initially scheduled as part of a triple-header on November 23 at Bambatha Tšita Sports Arena, the match was postponed due to the call-up of several Matlama stars to Makoanyane XI. Ironically, the delay may have worked in Matlama's favour. It gave the Sea Point outfit time to regroup after a worrying run of three winless games, and adjust to the absence of head coach Shalane Lehohla, who is currently occupied with Mehalalitoe duties.

Tse Putsoa played with a renewed sense of urgency, attacking from all angles and showing the resilience fans had been missing. Their persistence finally paid off when Charlie converted a clever assist from Freddie, sealing the victory.

The win lifts some pressure, but they will need sustained consistency to revive

their championship credentials.

In other action, defending champions Lioli FC survived a tense encounter against Machokha FC, scraping a narrow 1-0 win to recover from their goalless stalemate with Manonyane. Machokha fought bravely, but Lioli's experience once again proved the difference.

At the bottom end of the table, Maroala remain anchored with 8 points, while Members continue to struggle, sitting 16th on just 5 points.

## Past weekend results at a glance:

Lioli FC 1-0 Machokha FC, Manonyane FC 2-2 LMPS FC, LU FC 0-0 LDF FC, Lifofane FC 3-1 Linare FC, Bantu FC 2-1 Maroala FC, Liphakoe FC 1-1 LCS FC, Lijabatho FC 4-0 Members FC.

## Upcoming fixtures:

**Saturday:** LMPS FC vs Machokha FC (13:00), LCS FC vs Manonyane FC (15:00), Majantja FC vs Lioli FC (15:00), Maroala FC vs Members FC (15:00).

**Sunday (15:00):** LDF FC vs Bantu FC, Matlama FC vs LU FC, Lifofane FC vs Liphakoe FC, Lijabatho FC vs Linare FC.

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