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## THE UNTOUCHABLES OF 2025

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# Untouchables of 2025: Principal Secretaries who survived the axe

## Staff Reporter

Every administration has its survivors, officials who, by any ordinary political logic, should have fallen. Some survive scandals. Others outlast ministers. A few appear to operate beyond consequence, insulated from accountability by power, proximity, or political convenience.

In 2025, Prime Minister Ntsokoane Samuel Matekane presided over an administration that promised discipline, professionalism, and clean governance.

However, as the year draws to a close, a small but conspicuous group of senior officials remains firmly in place despite sustained public criticism, parliamentary rebuke, and serious allegations of misconduct.

This series, Untouchables of 2025, examines those figures many believed would, or should, have been dismissed, but were not. Whether by design, indecision, or quiet political calculation, they survived.

Their continued presence raises uncomfortable questions about accountability, political will, and the true limits of reform under the Matekane administration.

The first name on that list is unavoidable.

### Untouchable No. 1: Tankiso Phapano

When one speaks of a name that dominated headlines throughout 2025, Tankiso Phapano rolls easily off the tongue.

Phapano is the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Energy, a ministry that, over the past year, has been synonymous with administrative dysfunction, controversy, and open institutional conflict. From Parliament to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), from ministerial offices to public debate, his name has surfaced repeatedly at the centre of scandal.

His relationship with the former Minister of Energy, Professor Nqosa Mahao, deteriorated sharply and publicly. What began as internal friction escalated into one of the most visible power struggles between a



political head and a senior civil servant in recent memory.

By the end of it, in 2024, the minister was gone, and the Principal Secretary remained.

Mahao had repeatedly raised alarm over Phapano's conduct, accusing him of interference in the operations of the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC).

At one point in 2025, Phapano stunned Parliament's Public Accounts Committee by stating that he owned a 50 percent stake in LEC – a government-owned entity directly accountable to the Ministry of Energy.

The controversies did not end there. Phapano was heavily criticised by the PAC for unilaterally dismissing Mokheseng Mokuoane, a project manager for the Lesotho Renewable Energy and Energy Access Project (LREAP), a World Bank-funded programme. The committee questioned both the legality and propriety of the decision, especially given the sensitivities attached to donor-funded projects.

PAC members openly expressed frustration with Phapano's conduct during his appearances before the committee. At one heated session, PAC Chairperson 'Machabane Lemphane-Letsie rebuked him bluntly: "Your problem is that you want to do as you please, and I will not allow that. This does not make you a hero, but a zero."

Another member, Dr Tšeliso Moroke, was equally direct: "MPs are sent by the people, while you were hired based on your qualifications. This behaviour won't take us anywhere. You are going to respect Basotho."

Yet even parliamentary condemnation appeared to have little effect.

Phapano is reportedly the only Principal Secretary with a government vehicle fitted with a blue light and a dedicated security detail, privileges typically reserved for political office-bearers, not career civil servants.

Questions around his political neutrality have further complicated his profile.

PSs are senior public officers and administrative heads of government ministries. In the Public Service Act, public officers, including PSs, with no stated exceptions, must not be an active member of a political party; speak in public on any party political matter; take an active part in supporting any candidate in an election; or do anything by word or deed calculated to further the party political interests of any political party.

Despite legal prohibitions on "active" politics, Phapano was recently seen attending a rally of the ruling Revolution for Prosperity (RFP), raising speculation that he may be politically

ly active in violation of the law.

Professor Mahao, before his dismissal, repeatedly complained about corruption within the Ministry of Energy and at LEC. Despite the seriousness of these allegations, no public investigation has been launched, no findings released, and no corrective action taken by the government.

Instead, it was Mahao who ultimately paid the political price. He was removed from the energy portfolio after unsuccessfully seeking Prime Minister Matekane's intervention to resolve his increasingly toxic relationship with Phapano.

As 2025 ends, the most striking fact is not the volume of allegations or the intensity of public criticism. It is the outcome. Despite repeated controversies, parliamentary rebukes, and sustained calls for accountability, Tankiso Phapano remains firmly in office.

Prime Minister Matekane's reluctance to act against the Principal Secretary is telling. Whether it reflects political calculation, institutional weakness, or quiet endorsement, the message is unmistakable: in the Matekane era, some officials are simply untouchable.

### Untouchable No.2: Principal Secretary Maphakamile Xingwana – The Environment Ministry's Iron Hand

If Lesotho's bureaucracy were a battlefield, Maphakamile Xingwana would be its unmovable fortress. In 2025, she became the epicentre of controversy, her name synonymous with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry's chaos. Staff whisper of a reign of terror; minister's plead in vain for intervention, and yet she remains firmly in place, untouchable.

The year began with a familiar pattern. Contradictory communications about her whereabouts sowed confusion not just among ministry directors, but also at the very top. In late August, Xingwana requested permission from Government Secretary Tebogo 'Mokela to be away from September 8 to 10 to attend the Second Africa Climate Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

She named her deputy, Apesi Ratšele, as acting PS.

Two days later, she sent a separate memo internally, claiming she would be away from September 1 to 12 on "other official duties" and appointed Nkuebe Lerotholi, Director of Soil and Water, to oversee her office. The minister, directors, and staff were left scratching their heads, unsure who, if anyone, was in charge.

This confusion was hard to



new.

In 2024, Minister Letsema Adontši formally requested her removal, citing obstructionist behaviour and a toxic management style that prevented him from effectively running the ministry. He reported that she barred directors from accessing his office without her permission, delayed or refused authorisation of documents, and hoarded government resources, including no fewer than four vehicles, despite being entitled to only one.

Insiders painted a picture of a ministry frozen under her iron grip. Officers who spoke up faced retaliation: transfers, stalled projects, or outright exclusion from decision-making. Requests for professional development or participation in international conferences were blocked at the last minute, sometimes without explanation. Donor-funded projects suffered when vehicles or funds were withheld, and morale plummets.

"She crushes initiative and punishes professionalism," one senior officer said, echoing the sentiments of many within the ministry.

Yet, despite repeated pleas from both the minister and senior staff, Xingwana remains firmly in her position. Prime Minister Matekane's apparent indifference, or careful political calculation, has allowed her to survive scandals that would topple most. Each act of audacity, each contradictory memo or confiscated vehicle, reinforces her image as untouchable.

By the end of 2025, Xingwana has not merely weathered controversy; she has become its defining figure within the environmental bureaucracy. Critics argue that her continued presence undermines accountability and public trust.

Supporters, or those who dare not speak, see a tenacious civil servant navigating a difficult and complex ministry in a country where political intervention is often uneven.

Whatever the truth, she remains a singular force: unbowed, unrepentant, and, for now, untouchable

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# Lesotho's missed opportunities in 2025

## ...A year of external shocks and untapped Potential

Staff Reporter

As the Mountain Kingdom wraps up a tumultuous 2025, analysts and economists have pointed to a series of missed opportunities that deepened the nation's economic vulnerabilities amid global trade disruptions, aid cuts, and sluggish reforms.

Lesotho, a landlocked enclave entirely surrounded by South Africa, faced severe external pressures, yet failed to capitalise on potential buffers like revenue windfalls and infrastructure projects.

The year was dominated by U.S. policy shifts under President Donald Trump, which effectively undermined the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Initial threats of 50 percent tariffs, the highest imposed on any country, slashed to around 15 percent after negotiations, but the uncertainty triggered factory closures, order cancellations, and massive layoffs in the textile sector, Lesotho's primary export industry employing tens of thousands, mostly women.

A key missed opportunity was accelerating economic diversification away from over-reliance on AGOA-dependent garments. Despite years of warnings about the program's impending expiration in September 2025 and calls for investment in agri-



Finance Minister, Dr Rets'elisitsoe Matlanyane

culture, tourism, and renewables, progress remained slow.

The government declared a national state of disaster amid the crisis, but earlier pivots to sectors like eco-tourism, boosted by nearly one million visitors in recent years,

or agro-processing could have mitigated job losses.

Health systems also suffered from U.S. foreign aid freezes, disrupting PEPFAR-funded HIV/AIDS programs in a country with one of the world's highest prevalence rates.

Funding cuts led to staff layoffs, halted prevention initiatives, and treatment interruptions, with at least 23 percent of support affected.

While a new five-year U.S.-Lesotho health pact in December is anticipated to offer stabilisation, the delay in building domestic funding mechanisms represented another lost chance to reduce aid dependency.

Fiscal policy drew criticism for not fully leveraging windfall revenues from Southern African Customs Union (SACU) transfers and water royalties. The IMF noted that dramatic increases in public investment were unrealistic amid capacity constraints, risking wasteful spending.

Opportunities to establish a robust stabilisation fund, enforce fiscal rules, and prioritise private-sector job creation, amid "jobless growth" and high youth unemployment, were not seized aggressively enough.

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase II provided a bright spot, with steady progress on dams, tunnels, and hydropower despite delays pushing completion to 2028/2029.

Higher royalties from South Africa bolstered revenues, but translating these into inclusive growth, such as through better SME support or infrastructure beyond the project, remained elusive.

Experts argue that 2025 highlighted structural challenges such as volatile revenues, limited private sector dynamism, and external shocks.

Proactive reforms in diversification, health self-sufficiency, and fiscal prudence could have turned vulnerabilities into strengths.

As Lesotho heads into 2026, stakeholders urge bolder action to harness resources like water and human capital for resilient, inclusive development.

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# A country that raises workers it has no jobs for

***... What the Labour Force Survey told us about work in Lesotho in 2025***

## Staff Reporter

By the end of 2025, Lesotho has clarity about one uncomfortable truth, and that is that the labour crisis is no longer a distant risk on policy papers or a projection buried in economic models. It is a lived reality in households, villages, and urban neighbourhoods across the country.

The 2024 Labour Force Survey, published in 2025, provided the most comprehensive and credible picture of employment and labour conditions in Lesotho today. When read carefully, it did far more than count jobs and unemployment.

It exposed a labour market that is structurally weak, dominated by informality, overwhelmingly hostile to young people, and increasingly incapable of absorbing its own population into stable, dignified work.

What the survey revealed is not a cyclical downturn, but a deep misalignment between Lesotho's demography and its economy.

A country of working age, but not working

Lesotho's working-age population, defined as those aged 15 years and above, stands at just over 1.51 million people. Yet only 549,722 of these Basotho are employed. In practical terms, this means that barely one in three adults has a job.

The employment-to-population ratio of 36.4 percent confirms what many families already experience daily: work is the exception rather than the norm.

While men are more likely to be

employed than women, this gender difference does not signal a healthy labour market for men. Instead, it highlights the broader failure of the economy to generate sufficient employment opportunities for anyone at scale.

Labour force participation is recorded at 52 percent, meaning nearly half of all working-age Basotho are not even classified as economically active. This group includes discouraged jobseekers who have given up looking for work, people unavailable due to care responsibilities or illness, and many others surviving through informal or subsistence activities that fall outside formal labour definitions.

In effect, a large portion of the population exists at the margins of the economy, neither fully employed nor fully counted.

Unemployment is high, but underutilisation is the real crisis

The official unemployment rate of 30.1 percent is already severe by regional and global standards. Howev-

er, the survey data showed that this figure significantly understates the depth of labour distress in Lesotho.

Once underemployment and discouraged workers are included, the scale of the crisis becomes stark. Measures of labour underutilisation show that between 44 and 46 percent of Lesotho's potential workforce is either unemployed, underemployed, or willing to work but unable to access opportunities.

In simple terms, nearly half of the country's labour potential is idle or wasted.

This situation is not the result of a temporary shock. It reflects long-standing structural weaknesses in the economy, including slow growth, limited industrial diversification, weak private-sector expansion, and an overreliance on a narrow set of sectors such as subsistence agriculture, textiles, and public employment. The labour market is not failing because people are unwilling to work, but it is failing because the

economy cannot absorb them.

Informality as the dominant reality of work

Among those who are employed, informality is overwhelming. Of the 549,722 people with jobs, 461,873 are in informal employment. This means that approximately 84 percent of all jobs in Lesotho lack stability, security, and meaningful legal protection.

Formal employment accounts for fewer than 88,000 workers nationwide. This is a strikingly small base for a country of over two million people and underscores how limited the reach of formal economic activity really is.

The dominance of informal work carries serious consequences. Most jobs are insecure and low-paid, and offer little protection against illness, injury, or economic shocks. Social security coverage is extremely limited, leaving workers and their families vulnerable.

Labour laws exist, but for the vast majority of workers they remain theoretical rather than enforceable. Informality in Lesotho is not a stepping stone toward formal employment. It is the labour market itself.

Youth: Educated, willing, and locked out

Nowhere is the crisis more politically and socially volatile than among young people. The survey data showed that unemployment among those aged 15 to 35 remains alarmingly high, with more than 145,000 unemployed youth. For those aged





15 to 24, over 204,000 are classified as not in employment, education, or training.

Even among young people who do manage to find work, informality dominates. Nationwide, only 1,272 people aged 15 to 24 are in formal employment. This figure alone captures the scale of exclusion facing the next generation.

For young Basotho in 2025, the labour market effectively offers three paths: prolonged unemployment, precarious informal work, or exit through migration, disengagement, or dependency.

This reality helps explain rising frustration, periodic protests, political volatility, and a growing sense of alienation from institutions. Youth unrest in Lesotho is not driven by ideology or impatience; it is rooted in economics and exclusion.

Gendered inequality that refuses to fade

Women continue to participate less in the labour force than men, with participation rates of 47.4 percent compared to 57.1 percent for men. They are less likely to be employed

and more likely to be concentrated in informal, low-paid, and vulnerable forms of work.

While female unemployment is slightly higher than male unemployment, the deeper issue is systemic exclusion. Women face disproportionate care burdens, limited access to childcare, occupational segregation, and weak enforcement of equality and labour protection laws.

In 2025, Lesotho still operated an economy that relied heavily on women's unpaid and underpaid labour while excluding them from secure and productive employment.

Trade unions on the margins

Trade union density stands at just 9.6 percent nationally. In a labour market dominated by informality, traditional union structures struggle to maintain relevance. Most workers simply fall outside collective bargaining arrangements and formal labour relations frameworks.

This marginalisation weakens workers' bargaining power, suppresses wages, and entrenches inequality. It also limits the ability of labour to act as a counterweight to

economic and political power, further skewing outcomes in favour of employers and the state.

A labour market out of sync with demography

Lesotho is young, labour-rich, and poor, but critically job-poor. The extended labour force, which includes those willing and able to work, exceeds 1.02 million people. Yet the economy can only absorb roughly half that number.

This mismatch between population growth and job creation is the defining economic challenge of the country. Without large-scale employment creation, productivity growth, or meaningful redistribution, employment alone cannot reduce poverty or inequality.

What we know by December 2025

The evidence leaves little room for debate. Lesotho does not face a short-term unemployment problem. It faces a structural labour market failure. Informality is entrenched rather than transitional. Youth unemployment poses a serious threat to social stability. Women remain systematically excluded from secure

work. Economic growth, as currently structured, is not inclusive. Labour law reform, without broader economic reform, will not deliver meaningful change.

The labour market is doing exactly what the economy allows it to do, and nothing more.

The policy question that can no longer be avoided

As 2026 starts, the central question is no longer whether the state must intervene differently, but how boldly it is willing to act. Public works programmes, industrial policy, youth employment guarantees, income support mechanisms, and serious investment in productive sectors are no longer ideological options. They are economic necessities.

The 2024 Labour Force Survey did not merely describe the state of work in Lesotho. It issued a warning. If employment remains scarce, informal, and inaccessible to the young, the country's social contract will continue to fray, quietly at first, and then unmistakably loudly.

By then, the data will no longer be the problem.



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# Editorial Note

## Pages 6-7 | January 2, 2026

As we step into a new year, we believe in reflecting on the stories that shaped our community, sparked conversation, and drove change. On these pages, you will find a special curation of four impactful stories from 2025, pieces that resonated deeply with our readers, captured pivotal moments, or highlighted voices that needed to be heard. This is not a repetition of old news, but a celebration of enduring journalism. We have chosen these articles not only for their relevance at the time, but for

the lasting questions, inspiration, or action they continue to inspire. *Please note: an additional featured story from 2025 will appear on Page 16 in our Sports section.* Our aim is to remind us all of where we have been, and to inform where we are going. Thank you for trusting us to tell the stories that matter. —The Newsday Editorial Team

## Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL) has been rocked by explosive allegations of gross political interference, with Commissioner General (CG) 'Mathabo Mokoko accusing Finance Minister Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane of persistently issuing unlawful instructions that undermine the integrity of the tax authority.

In a hard-hitting letter of demand dated September 8, 2025, from her lawyers Mei & Mei Attorneys Inc, Mokoko, supported by the RSL, accuses the Minister of attempting to coerce her into breaching multiple tax laws.

The grievances, also copied to RSL's board chairperson Advocate Lindiwe Sephomolo on September 9, detail what the CG describes as "intolerable" working conditions created by the Minister's conduct.

Matlanyane was, however, unreachable at the time of going to press, and this publication remains ready to publish her response once available.

According to the correspondence, Matlanyane allegedly directed the Mokoko to disclose confidential taxpayer information, manipulate tax clearance systems, and apply unlawful tax ratios, orders that directly contravene Lesotho's tax laws.

Mokoko insists that compliance with such directives would not only erode the RSL's credibility but also expose her and her staff to potential criminal liability. Among the demands the Minister is accused of making are:

Revealing the names of taxpayers who applied for refunds;

Issuing tax clearance certificates to delinquent taxpayers;

Providing details of refund amounts and payment timelines for individual taxpayers;

Forcing the adoption of an 8:1 debt-to-equity ratio for mining firms, despite the law mandating a 3:1 limit.

Producing proofs of payment for taxpayers seeking refunds.

"The Commissioner General as duty bound explained to the Minister that to disclose such information would violate the provisions of the governing legislation particularly the VAT Act in this context," reads part of the lawyers' letter.

## RSL boss unleashes explosive claims against Finance Minister Matlanyane



RSL Commissioner General Mathabo Mokoko (Left) and Finance and Development Planning Minister Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane (Right)

Mokoko further asserts that she repeatedly warned the Minister that these actions would contravene the Value Added Tax Act, the Income Tax Act, and the Lesotho Revenue Authority Act, which all carry strict secrecy clauses. Section 76 of the VAT Act, for instance, compels all RSL employees to preserve secrecy concerning taxpayer information, with breaches punishable under section 68.

Despite these warnings, the Minister allegedly continued her pressure, sometimes using informal channels such as WhatsApp messages to demand details on specific taxpayers.

This, Mokoko argues, not only violates legal protocols but also undermines the integrity of RSL's automated tax clearance system, which was specifically designed to prevent favoritism or manipulation.

"The instructions of the Minister are therefore unlawful in so far as she has sought to be provided

with a report naming individual taxpayers whose refunds are still being processed and that the Commissioner General should issue tax clearances to delinquent taxpayers," the lawyers argue in the letter.

The lawyers' letter makes clear that the CG and RSL believe the Minister's conduct has far-reaching implications.

"In the circumstances, we have been instructed to lodge a grievance with you concerning what the Commissioner General perceives to be undue interference in the operational activities of RSL by the Minister.

"The commissioner General and the RSL have taken the position that if they disclose the required information to the Minister whose net effect would be to disclose information and documents of individual tax payers, this would violate the secrecy provisions of the VAT Act;

"The Commissioner General and the RSL reasonably fear that the unlawful instructions of the Minister will expose them to criminal liability as contemplated in section 68 of the VAT Act;

"The RSL as an institution fears that it will credibility and the trust of the Basotho with serious repercussions for the economy and the financial functioning of the State;

"The RSL as an institution reasonably fears that granting tax clearance certificates to delinquent tax payers would encourage tax delinquency and in the process compromise the general efficiency and effectiveness of RSL in discharging its statutory mandate;

... "We therefore urge the Minister to cease interfering in the operations of the RSL by issuing out unlawful instructions thus rendering the workplace intolerable. In any event things being normal the Minister should be communicating with the board of Director of RSL, which in turn would communicate with the Commissioner General."

Mokoko's lawyers have demanded that the Minister immediately cease issuing such directives and restrict her communication to formal, written instructions via the RSL board of directors, in line with governance protocols.

It further cautions that should the unlawful interference persist, the RSL and its leadership reserve the right to pursue legal action, including seeking court interdicts against the Minister.

"In the premises, we have been instructed to demand, as we hereby do, that you withdraw the unlawful instructions and that in accordance with the applicable protocols you issue written instructions.

"We wish to record that the issuing of informal and casual instruction through platforms such as WhatsApp runs contrary to established State protocols and procedures in dealing with confidential and sensitive correspondence particularly at such high-powered level. Kindly note that this is a formal grievance by our Clients and they reserve their rights including the right to take legal action seeking interdicts in respect of the conduct complained of.

"However, we believe that the parties have an obligation in the national interest to resolve their differences and act in the best interests of the country particularly in these trying economic climate posed by the factors beyond the Kingdom of Lesotho."

## Constitution doesn't apply to LHWP Treaty: Tente

reflect the principles of equitable and reasonable utilisation and sustainable development of the LHWP river system. They also want both countries to adhere to internationally recognized water governance frameworks, including the Helsinki Rules (1966), the Berlin Rules (2004), the UN Convention on the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997), and the Revised SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems (2000).

The applicants further call for the harmonisation of the Treaty with Lesotho's domestic legal framework, specifically aligning it with Sections 5, 6, and 13 of the Lesotho Water Act, as well as the Environment Act.

Alternatively, they seek a declaration that the LHWP Treaty is unconstitutional for fostering a discriminatory legal regime, which they claim is expressly prohibited under Section 18 of the Constitution.

Applicants seek a declaration that Articles 5 and 18 of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project Treaty violate the Constitution of Lesotho. Their argument is that by subjecting national law to the LHWP Treaty, these Articles infringe on Section 2 of the Constitution, which declares the Constitution as the supreme law of the land," Tente stated.

"In other words, they argue that the Treaty should be subject to the Constitution, not the other way around," he added.

Tente said he was advised, and believes it to be correct, that this argument collapses when considered against Lesotho's theoretical approach to the relationship between international and national law.

Lesotho, he explained, adheres to the dualist approach, which views the national and international legal systems as distinct and separate. Under this doctrine, international law cannot become effective within a national legal system unless it is expressly incorporated, and national law cannot override in-

ternational legal obligations.

"Generally, a state may not invoke its own national law, as the applicants have attempted to do, as a basis for repudiating an international legal obligation," he said.

Citing legal advice, Tente referenced a principle of international law expounded by the Permanent Court of International Justice, which held: "It is a generally accepted principle of international law that in the relations between contracting parties to a treaty, the provisions of municipal law cannot prevail over those of the treaty."

Tente also referred to Section 35 of Order No. 23 of 1986, which exempts the application of the Water Resources Act No. 22 of 1978 (later replaced by the Water Act of 2008) and the Electricity Act No. 7 of 1969 from the operations of the LHDA.

This, he argued, means these laws do not apply to the LHDA. "These Acts are not enforceable against the LHDA because they are expressly excluded from the Treaty framework. The applicants' case rests on the enforcement of the Water Act and possibly the Environment Act No. 10 of 2008—neither of which has been incorporated into the Treaty."

Due to this exemption, Tente noted, Sections 36 to 44 of Order 23 of 1986 establish a separate legal regime applicable to the LHDA in place of the Water Act.

"We will endeavour to highlight the crucial elements of this litigation, which cannot proceed without being thoroughly addressed in affidavits. Each of these key issues will be discussed seriatim," he said.

LHWP is a multi-phased project to provide water to the Gauteng region of South Africa and to generate hydroelectricity for Lesotho.

It was established by the 1986 Treaty signed by the governments of Lesotho and South Africa.

The project entails harnessing the waters of the Senqu/Orange River in the Lesotho highlands

through the construction of a series of dams for the mutual benefit of the two countries. Phase I of the project was completed in 2003 and inaugurated in 2004, and Phase II is currently underway.

Tente also sharply questioned the standing of the applicants, particularly the organisation Equal Rights and Justice – 1st Applicant.

"At this stage, it may prove necessary to interrogate the standing of the legal practitioner to seek the necessary reliefs and by extension whether a voluntary organisation equally has the standing to impugn a bilateral treaty between two states," he said.

He further contended that Equal Rights and Justice was non-compliant with both the Societies Act and Societies Rules, and as such, should not enjoy standing before the courts due to its failure to meet legal requirements.

"I have been advised and believe the same to be true that when once it is illustrated that the 1st Applicant is non-compliant as we shall endeavour to illustrate in the succeeding paragraphs, the court shall be urged to accord it no audience to be heard as it has come to court with unclean hands," he submitted.

He stressed that a voluntary organisation that does not meet its legal obligations cannot expect protection or a hearing in a court of law.

"The following point is worth highlighting in order to illustrate that the 1st Applicant is non-compliant with Societies Act read with Societies Rules and worth mentioning: There is no evidence before the Registrar General of Societies pointing to the fact that the 1st Applicant has ever rendered its returns within six months from the expiration of its financial year since its formation in tandem with Regulation 9 of the Societies Rules Government Notice No. 75 of 1967," Tente asserted.

"The 1st Applicant is challenged to present this evidence and absent this evidence, the court is urged to dismiss its claim. The long-standing principle of 'coming to court with unclean hands' – this principle is the fulcrum of the rule of law and aims to give a court of law the discretion to give no remedy to a party/litigant who is in breach of the law irrespective of whether it is a criminal or civil litigation," he added.



Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), Tente Tente

## Staff Reporter

The Constitution of Lesotho, despite being the supreme law of the land, does not apply to the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) Treaty of 1986, according to Tente Tente, Chief Executive of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA).

Tente further asserted that the Water Act and the Environment Act are also inapplicable to the LHDA, a statutory body established to manage the portion of the LHWP within Lesotho's borders.

The LHDA is responsible for the construction, operation, and maintenance of dams, tunnels, power stations, and associated infrastructure, as well as secondary developments such as relocation, resettlement, compensation, village water supply, irrigation, fish hatcheries, and tourism.

He made these statements in an answering affidavit in opposition to a lawsuit filed by the local human rights group, Equal Rights and Justice, together with activist and lawyer Lemohang Nsuzi.

The applicants approached the High Court in February this year, seeking an order compelling the governments of Lesotho and South Africa, the LHDA, the Lesotho Water Commission, and others, to amend, or facilitate the amendment of, the LHWP Treaty and its annexures.

They argue that the Treaty should be revised to

# America 'terminates' over M5 billion project

## Staff Reporter

The administration of United States President Donald Trump has ordered the closure of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a U.S. agency that funds billions in development projects, primarily in Africa, including Lesotho, *Newsday* has learned.

The decision follows a directive from the State Efficiency Department (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, which announced a significant "reduction" in the number of the agency's programme staff.

"DOGE came in and shut it down. Our colleagues found out last night. Everyone is shocked. We were not expecting this," sources told this publication yesterday.

The closure comes less than three months after the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA)-Lesotho II instructed contractors on February 1, 2025, to halt work on the \$300 million Lesotho Health and Horticulture Compact.

MCA-Lesotho II cited a U.S. government review of foreign aid programs for "programmatic efficiency and alignment with U.S. foreign policy."

"Accordingly, effective from 1 February 2025, please cease to perform any work under or related to your contract until further notice. In addition, you should take all reasonable steps to minimise incurring costs allocable to your contract," said Limpopo Maema, deputy CEO of MCA-Lesotho II.

Maema noted that an update, potentially resuming work, extending the stoppage, or cancelling the project, would be provided by April 20, 2025. "We understand this work stoppage may have operational implications and we thank you for your understanding," she said.

When contacted yesterday, Maema said MCA-Lesotho had not received formal notice

of MCC's closure. Efforts to obtain comment from Lesotho's Finance Minister, Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, Lejone Mpotjoane, were unsuccessful, as both were unreachable by phone.

MCA-Lesotho II is an independent entity established to implement the Lesotho Health and Horticulture Compact, a \$322 million initiative funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), an independent U.S. government development agency.

MCC was founded in 2004 to reduce global poverty through economic growth by providing time-limited grants that pair infrastructure investments with policy and institutional reforms. These grants are awarded to countries that demonstrate strong governance, a commitment to fighting corruption, and respect for democratic rights.

In April last year, MCC, represented by its Deputy Chief Executive Officer Chidi Blyden, celebrated the official launch of the Compact in Lesotho. The initiative consists of a \$300 million investment from MCC, complemented by an additional \$22 million from the Government of Lesotho. The Compact aims to improve access to quality healthcare, create equitable opportunities for business development, and promote high-value crop production.

Additionally, the Compact seeks to boost profits and formal employment, and provide women and youth with skills training, business development opportunities, and improved legal protections in land tenure," MCC stated.

At the launch event, Blyden highlighted the 20-year partnership between MCC and Lesotho, commending the government's dedication to achieving this milestone.

"Together, we will embark on the implementation phase of the Compact to achieve our



shared vision of growing the Lesotho economy with a healthy workforce and sustainable jobs," she said.

During her three-day visit, Blyden met with Prime Minister Sam Matekane, Deputy Prime Minister Nthomeng Majara, and Minister of Finance Dr. Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane to express appreciation for their support and recognise the government's commitment to the program.

She also visited project sites and engaged with stakeholders in the health and agriculture sectors to better understand the program's potential impact.

"We have just accomplished a major milestone that ushers in the implementation of the second compact funded by the Governments of Lesotho and the United States of America," Prime Minister Matekane said.

"The job creation potential of the horticulture project alone is estimated at 4,000 jobs, not counting the indirect employment opportunities in packaging, logistics, cold chain operations, and processing."

### Three core projects

The Lesotho Health and Horticulture Compact comprises three major projects:

#### 1. Health Systems Strengthening Project

This project aims to improve primary healthcare services and standards of care, enhance financial and management systems in healthcare, and modernise health data systems in

collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

#### 2. Market-Driven Irrigated Horticulture Project

Designed to increase rural incomes, this project will invest in climate-smart irrigation infrastructure and encourage partnerships between commercial and smallholder farmers. It also supports government reforms and capacity-building to promote inclusive, sustainable growth in the horticulture sector.

#### 3. Business Environment and Technical Assistance Project

This initiative seeks to boost profits for high-growth potential firms, especially those owned by women, youth, and entrepreneurs in rural areas. It targets key sectors such as agriculture, creative industries, manufacturing, and tourism, providing technical assistance, business development services, and access to finance. Grant funding will also support selected women- and youth-owned businesses in acquiring equipment, goods, and executing their business plans.

#### Building on past success

This new Compact builds on the achievements of MCC's first \$362.5 million Compact with Lesotho, which concluded in September 2013. That investment funded one of Lesotho's largest infrastructure projects, the Metolong Dam, significantly expanding access to clean water.

It also improved healthcare access for an estimated 752,000 people by constructing and rehabilitating 138 health facilities and 14 outpatient departments, covering about 90 percent of the country's health infrastructure.

These facilities now serve as a crucial platform for the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to combat maternal health challenges, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other diseases, thereby mitigating their economic impacts on Lesotho.

## M3.4 billion spent without approval

... 'Urgent' six months later, parliament asked to rubber-stamp the expenditure

### Ntsoaki Motaung

The government has admitted to spending more than M3.4 billion without prior approval in the last financial year and is now asking parliament to retroactively legalise the expenditure.

Last week, Finance and Development Planning Minister Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane tabled the *Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill, 2025*. The Bill seeks approval for M3,452,226,578.44, already withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund, to cover unbudgeted recurrent and capital expenses for the 2024/2025 fiscal year.

According to the Bill, M539 million was advanced from the Contingencies Fund, which had initially been capitalised at M300 million and later topped up by M328 million through reallocation.

M1.18 billion was raised through Treasury Bonds to finance projects including the construction of the Petroleum Fund Headquarters, Lesotho Highlands Water Commission (LHWC) operations, subventions to the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) for 'Muela Hydropower Works, Mohale access roads, the Oxbow Hydro II Project, settlement of government arrears, and a loan to the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) to pay Eskom.

M784 million was allocated under centralised items for salaries, arrears, youth and public works programmes, support for the Lesotho Millennium Development Agency (LMDA), official travel, and "critical initiatives" in agriculture, education, and security.

On the capital side, M180.9 million was shifted within the existing budget to prioritise key

investments, while M65.1 million from the Contingencies Fund was used for electricity connections and road projects.

Donor disbursements worth M372.4 million, initially unbudgeted, were also channelled into development projects.

The Constitution of Lesotho requires that no money be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund unless authorised by parliament through an appropriation law.

However, it makes provision for supplementary estimates or statements of excess when government spending exceeds approved allocations or when new needs arise mid-year.

The Bill was, according to the government, introduced in accordance with section 112 (3) (a) and (b) and section 114 (1) and (2) of the Constitution of Lesotho.

When the Bill was tabled, Democratic Congress (DC) leader Mathibeli Mokhethu immediately stood on a point of order, questioning whether it was proper for a supplementary appropriation bill of the previous financial year to be introduced in the next.

Mokhethu implied that the Constitution was violated by spending first and seeking approval months later. The Speaker of the National Assembly, Tlohang Sekhamane, reserved his ruling on the matter.

On the surface, the bill appears to be a routine exercise of financial housekeeping, aligning past expenditures with parliamentary authority. However, the Constitution of Lesotho sets out clear conditions under which the government may spend money in advance of appropriation.

Section 114 establishes the Contingencies Fund and permits the Minister of Finance to make advances only where an urgent and unforeseen need arises for which no other provi-



The Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr. Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane

sion exists. More importantly, the Constitution directs that where such advances are made, a supplementary estimate and appropriation bill must be presented "as soon as possible" to replace the amount withdrawn.

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

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

This is where the government's actions appear constitutionally questionable. The 2024/2025 financial year ended on 31 March 2025. Yet the bill was only presented to parliament in September 2025.

More than six months had elapsed, during which the money had already been spent without legislative oversight. The unavoidable ques-

tion is whether such a delay can genuinely be considered "as soon as possible," as demanded by the Constitution.

Equally troubling is the nature of the expenditures themselves. Constitutionally, the Contingencies Fund is reserved for unforeseen and urgent needs.

However, many of the listed expenditures, construction of a headquarters building, clearance of arrears, subventions to parastatals, and even official travel, do not readily qualify as unforeseen.

These are recurring or planned commitments that should ordinarily be included in the annual budget, rather than financed under the guise of emergency spending.

The effect of this practice is twofold. First, it weakens parliamentary oversight by allowing the executive to spend first and seek approval later, long after the financial year has closed.

Second, it undermines the constitutional principle of accountability in public finance, where the power of the purse is vested in parliament on behalf of the people.

Furthermore, the sheer size of the supplementary bill relative to the national budget suggests that government has normalised overspending on a massive scale.

A supplementary bill of over M3.4 billion cannot credibly be presented as a mere adjustment as it represents a significant reconfiguration of national finances, conducted outside parliament's scrutiny until long after the fact.

To put this into perspective, Lesotho's annual national budget usually averages around M27 to M30 billion. The supplementary bill therefore represents more than 10 percent of the entire national budget, a staggering figure to be presented after the money has already been spent.



# Newsday Feature

## Lesotho's inheritance revolution has a hidden casualty

Kananelo Boloetse

In April 2024, the Kingdom of Lesotho did something remarkable.

With a single statute, the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act, 2024, it swept away centuries of male primogeniture, abolished the Laws of Lerotholi's rule that only the eldest male heir could inherit the family house, and declared that every child, boy or girl, born inside or outside marriage, would share equally in a deceased parent's estate.

The civil society in general, and women's rights organisations, in particular, celebrated quite rightly. For the first time in the country's history, daughters became visible heirs in the eyes of the law.

### Marriage, intestacy, and who the law protects

Despite its progressive thrust, the Act preserves a crucial element of traditional inheritance norms as only legally married partners receive automatic protection when a spouse dies without a will.

The Act does not define "spouse" explicitly but ties it to valid marriages under Lesotho's Marriage Act, 1974 (civil) or customary law, both of which recognise only opposite-sex unions.

There are no provisions extending intestate rights to non-marital partners, cohabitants, or de facto relationships. The Act does not address same-sex relationships at all, nor does it recognise them as qualifying for intestate inheritance.

Section 66 establishes a structured system in which the surviving spouse and descendants inherit first, according to detailed rules that allocate shares depending on the marital property regime.

If there is no spouse and no descendants, the estate passes upward to parents and then sideways to other blood relatives through representation. Only in the absence of any surviving relatives does the State ultimately acquire the estate.

Because the Marriage Act of 1974 still defines marriage as a union between one man and one woman, a same-sex partner – and other couples barred from marrying, such as a trans man and a woman – remain legal strangers at the moment of intestacy, no matter how many years they have shared a home, raised children, pooled finances, or built a life together.

This exclusion applies even if the couple presented as a family unit. The Act prioritises formal marital status and biological/legitimised kinship over de facto arrangements for intestate purposes.

### Constitutional rights and social silence

Advocate Rethabile Mathealira-Molapo said the exclusion of same-sex partners from intestate protection reflects deep-rooted social attitudes.

"I cannot say the omission is deliberate. There are many factors at play, religion-influenced culture and societal homophobia among them. Lawmakers are politicians, and they do not want to lose popularity by pushing for laws they consider controversial," Mathealira-Molapo said.

Mathealira-Molapo noted that same-sex couples already enjoy several constitutional protections, even if these are not fully reflected in statutory law.

"They have the right to form relationships under the right to respect for private and family life, freedom of conscience, expression, association, and assembly, as well as freedom from discrimination and equal protection of the law," Mathealira-Molapo explained.

Mathealira-Molapo argued that these rights extend to political participation, including the right to influence laws that affect them.

"The fact that they cannot marry is unconstitutional. If we recognise their rights in pieces, why deny them marriage? And because inheritance is based on blood or marriage, same-sex couples cannot inherit from one another except through a will," Mathealira-Molapo added.

### When mourning comes with dispossession

The consequences are already measurable, even if they remain largely invisible in public. That silence is not evidence of equality but is evidence of surrender.

Survivors, fearing violence or further dispossession, simply walk away from the homes they helped pay for rather than endure a public legal battle they



are almost certain to lose.

A woman who lost her same-sex partner said her experience exposed the vulnerability of couples whose relationships are not legally recognised.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, she recounted how the couple's shared life was erased the moment her partner died.

"We lived together for years, and everyone knew us as a family. We shared everything. But when my partner passed away, her relatives came and claimed ownership of things they believed were hers simply because she had formal employment and I did not," she said.

She added that both families had long been aware of their relationship and had never objected while her partner was alive.

"The problems only started after my partner's death. If the Constitution says every person is entitled to equality before the law and equal protection of the law, why does the law still prevent us from marrying whom we choose?" she asked.

Another person who identifies as gay described how the lack of legal protection left them vulnerable after their partner's death.

"We lived together and bought household items as a couple. It never mattered who paid for the microwave or the TV stand. We understood these were things we owned together," they said.

They recalled the experience of watching their shared home being dismantled.

"It was incredibly painful. I was mourning my partner, and at the same time, I had to divide our belongings with my partner's family, people I barely knew. If I took the bed, they took the couch. If I took the fridge, they took the TV. In the end, a house that was fully furnished was left half-empty."

They said they considered going to court but quickly realised it was not a realistic option.

"I could have fought for these items, but the cost of litigation is too high for most people in this country. At least in South Africa, they have that programme X-Rero; sometimes I wish we had something like that here."

### Comparative law and a missing remedy

Lesotho has no statutory doctrine of universal

partnership, nor any presumption of joint contribution similar to the remedies that South African courts have occasionally applied to protect opposite-sex cohabitants.

As a result, surviving same-sex partners have no automatic claim to the deceased partner's jointly accumulated assets.

Legal experts say an equitable claim for unjust enrichment is, in theory, available. However, pursuing such a claim requires civil litigation, which is prohibitively expensive for most people in Lesotho.

In South Africa, in the Butters v Mncora (2012) ZASCA 29 case, the Supreme Court of Appeal held that a universal partnership can exist between unmarried partners, even without an express agreement, if the conduct of the parties shows that they pooled their efforts and resources for their joint benefit.

In this case, the couple lived together for nearly 20 years, the man accumulated substantial business wealth, and the woman contributed by running their household and supporting his business ventures, though she had no formal stake in the companies.

The court recognised that they had formed a universal partnership of all property. This meant she was entitled to a share of the assets, despite not being married and despite the property being registered in his name.

The court emphasised that domestic contributions are real economic contributions capable of creating legally enforceable rights.

The case confirmed that South African courts can protect cohabitants through the common-law doctrine of universal partnership. It has been used repeatedly to protect opposite-sex cohabitants, a remedy not available under Lesotho law, where universal partnership is not recognised.

The Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act, 2024, offers what appears to be a workaround. Section 14 encourages both married and unmarried couples to execute mutual wills.

"A person aged 18 years and above owning property and being mentally capable of appreciating the nature and effect of his act may make a will," the Act states.

It goes on: "A married or unmarried couple may make a mutual will."

LGBTIQ+ rights advocates say that while the provision is well-intentioned, it remains painfully inadequate. In a country where stigma still forces many same-sex couples to live partially or wholly closeted, asking a notary to record a will naming a same-sex partner as sole beneficiary can amount to self-exposure, and for many, that is risky.

### Named to inherit, barred from control

A second, largely unnoticed discriminatory barrier in the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act, 2024, one that is even more insidious than the intestate succession silence, is that the executor clause quietly excludes same-sex partners again.

Even when a same-sex couple does the responsible thing and writes mutual wills, the surviving partner is still not automatically eligible to be appointed executor of the deceased partner's estate.

Section 21 lists eligible executors, including the surviving spouse, attorneys, notaries, authorised officers of financial institutions, and certain family members working with qualified agents.

"For same-sex couples, and for other couples who cannot legally marry, such as a trans man and a woman whose union is not recognised under current law, this means that although a partner may be named as a beneficiary in a will, they cannot automatically act as executor," an advocate said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of backlash.

"They must still satisfy the Act's eligibility criteria. Where they do not, they face an added layer of legal and administrative hurdles that potential leave the management of their deceased partner's estate in the hands of outsiders rather than the person they shared a life with," the advocate added.

The advocate indicated that while being named as a beneficiary in a will guarantees that a surviving partner may receive assets, it does not give them legal authority over the estate.

They explained that acting as an executor, however, allows a person to manage the estate, pay debts, safeguard property, and ensure that the distribution follows the will.

"For same-sex couples in Lesotho, who must rely on wills rather than statutory intestate rights, being appointed executor can be crucial. It provides control and legal standing, and helps protect their inheritance from potential disputes with the deceased partner's family or other relatives," the advocate said.

### A tentative hope for the future

There is, however, a faint possibility of reform. In November 2025, the Senate — Lesotho's upper house — reopened debate on the Act, criticising its provisions for "fuelling family conflicts" and calling for a review.

Although the Senate is predominantly composed of principal chiefs, many of whom are conservative and primarily concerned with protecting male-centred chieftainship succession, the review process, if it proceeds, could still open a narrow but meaningful avenue for change.

One practical avenue would be a simple regulatory amendment creating a voluntary "permanent life partnership" register for inheritance and maintenance purposes only, without amending the Marriage Act. Such a mechanism would align Lesotho with emerging SADC practice and could be implemented with minimal political risk.

"Any potential amendment package must fix both problems together. It must create a voluntary 'permanent life partnership' registration (for inheritance and executor purposes only), and amend Section 21 to add 'registered permanent life partner' to the list of persons eligible to act as executor without special leave," the advocate said.

Lesotho has already shown, through this very Act, that it can modernise centuries-old discriminatory inheritance rules when political will aligns with constitutional values. Daughters and children born outside marriage are proof of what determined reform can achieve.

The question that remains is whether the same political courage can be extended to families who love differently. Until that day arrives, every same-sex couple in Lesotho must live with the knowledge that the law, which finally remembers daughters, has, for now, forgotten them.

However, the prospect of reform offers reason to believe that this exclusion may not be permanent.



# How Lesotho can fix its youth unemployment crisis

***Youth unemployment can be reduced when investment in tourism, agriculture, and public-private collaborations is prioritised.***

**Lipuo Mokhesi**

In July 2025, the government of Lesotho declared a national state of disaster due to the socio-economic effects of the high youth unemployment rate. The declaration reflects the painful reality confronting the country, where vast numbers of young people, whether educated or uneducated, remain locked out of the labour market.

Youth unemployment is not only an economic challenge in Lesotho but also a crisis that threatens the human rights of young people by limiting their right to work, human dignity, and equal opportunities.

To address this problem, the government must empower young people to safeguard their culture and heritage, maximise agricultural investments for them, and strengthen collaborations between the government and the private sector.

Today, approximately 30.5 per cent of Lesotho's youth are unemployed. Some spend years job hunting without success, while others take on low-paying, informal jobs that barely cover their basic needs. Educated graduates compete fiercely for a handful of government or private sector positions, while non-formally educated youth struggle at the margins.

This widespread frustration deepens poverty cycles, mental disorders, and decreases hope among the generation that should power the nation forward. Youth unemployment not only threatens the economy but also undermines social stability by fueling crime, increasing poverty rates, and eroding national identity.

Lesotho's culture and heritage hold enormous potential for job creation. The country possesses cultural assets such as Basotho blankets and traditional dances that most other countries cannot replicate. If young people are empowered to run cultural villages, design heritage trails, and host music and fashion festivals, these could create meaningful sources of employment.

Investing in cultural activities will not only generate jobs but also strengthen Lesotho's cultural identity. For example, Rwanda's and South Africa's music festivals attract thousands of tourists and generate a steady income for young people and artisans.

Lesotho's proximity to South Africa can be used to Lesotho's advantage, as tourists from South Africa can cross over to Lesotho on weekends of music and fashion festivals. When the gov-



ernment supports youth-led tourism cooperatives with training and seed funding, the sector creates accessible and profitable jobs.

Agriculture has been the cornerstone of the Basotho economy since the reign of King Moshoeshoe I, the founder of the Basotho nation, yet existing governments often overlook it. By investing in modern techniques, irrigation, and agribusiness training, the government can unlock agriculture's full potential and equip youth to turn farming into sustainable employment opportunities.

Greenhouses, hydroponics, and processing plants enhance productivity and foster the development of value-added industries. Empowering young farmers by investing in the necessary infrastructure can boost local production and increase crop yields, reducing the nation's dependence on food imports.

No strategy will succeed without stronger collaboration between government, private companies, non-governmental organisations, and

parastatals. As the Sesotho proverb says, "Kopano ke matla," i.e., "unity is strength."

Tackling youth unemployment requires unity; that is, authorities must unite to bridge the gap of "no job without experience." Paid trainee programs benefit youth by providing a salary to sustain their lives and hands-on experience to stand out to employers.

The government of Lesotho must lead the way by institutionalising structured trainee programs across all sectors. It should set clear standards to be followed by all the sectors and ensure that young people gain practical experience that matches market needs.

The private sector can absorb recent graduates and should jointly fund their stipends with the government, so that neither partner bears the sole burden of paying stipends.

Furthermore, companies must commit to turning internships into real jobs and increasing productivity within their companies. The government must track how many youths are employed through the trainee programs.

Declaring youth unemployment a national state of disaster due to its socio-economic effects may be the first step, but authorities in Lesotho must act with urgency. Youth unemployment can be reduced when investment in tourism, agriculture, and public-private collaborations is prioritised.

These solutions demand no miracles but only leadership, action, and commitment. The youth of Lesotho does not represent a burden; they represent the greatest asset waiting to be unlocked.

**This op-ed was originally published by The Chanzo.** Lipuo Mokhesi is a writing fellow at African Liberty, a U.S.-based think tank focused on advancing individual freedom, peace, and prosperity in Africa. She's available at [lmokhesi@studentsforliberty.org](mailto:lmokhesi@studentsforliberty.org) or on X as [@lipuomokhesi](https://twitter.com/lipuomokhesi). The opinions expressed here are the writer's own and do not necessarily reflect those of The Chanzo. If you are interested in publishing in this space, please contact our editors at [editor@thechanzo.com](mailto:editor@thechanzo.com).

# 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, Leric 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 [nleutoa@cafi.org.ls](mailto:nleutoa@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, Leric 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**  
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# Meet the master of stories: Chris Theko, your best entertainment reporter



## Staff Reporter

In a world where every story matters, some voices rise above the rest, not just to inform, but to inspire, to connect, and to celebrate the vibrant tapestry of human experience.

Meet Chris Theko, the newly crowned Best Entertainment Reporter, honoured at the prestigious MISA Lesotho/RSL Journalism Excellence Awards in November 2025.

But Chris is more than an award winner. He is a storyteller with purpose, a communicator with heart, and a voice that turns moments into movements.

With a career spanning journalism, radio hosting, and strategic communications, Theko has consistently used his platform to shine a light on the stories that move us, whether on the sports field, in the music studio, or

within communities driving change.

His recent recognition as the Best in Sports & Entertainment Journalism is a testament to his ability to blend insight with emotion, analysis with artistry.

A former senior journalist at Newsday Newspaper and an award-winning sports radio host, Theko brings depth, integrity, and a genuine passion for people to every piece he crafts.

As the Founder of TheKO Communications, he continues to elevate narratives that matter, helping organisations and audiences connect through powerful, purpose-driven storytelling.

Beyond the bylines and broadcasts, Theko served as a Development & Communication Coordinator at Rise International, where he championed youth entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and social impact in Le-

sotho.

He is also an active member of the UN Lesotho SDGs Youth Advancement Program, weaving media excellence into the fabric of national progress.

From receiving the Best Music Journalist award at the Lesotho Music Awards to being a finalist for Sports Journalist of the Year, Theko's accolades reflect a career built on excellence, empathy, and enduring impact.

So here's to Chris Theko, a reporter who does not just cover entertainment, but creates it through every word, every interview, and every story told.

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# Can you reach Manchester without a stadium at home?



## Staff Reporter

Earlier in December, during a press conference outlining the implementation model for the newly launched Inclusive Growth Facility (IGF), Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, urged young Basotho to abandon the pursuit of government tenders and instead focus on "creating and producing."

She encouraged them to imagine themselves excelling on global stages, from business to sport, even suggesting that young people picture themselves playing football in Manchester.

On the surface, the message is inspiring. It speaks to the ambition, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit that every society needs to thrive. It encourages young people to imagine themselves beyond the limitations of immediate circumstances.

Yet beneath the rhetoric lies a deeper conversation, one that examines the economic and structural realities that shape ambition, and the contradictions young Basotho navigate when leaders talk about aspiration without building the pathways to achieve it.

The infrastructure gap: Can you reach Manchester without a stadium at home?

Minister Matlanyane's example of Manchester United is aspirational, but ambition requires conditions. Lesotho has produced talented footballers — Lekoane Lekoane played for Kaizer Chiefs, Lehlohonolo Seema for Orlando Pirates, and countless others have shown promise on local pitches.

But for a young Mosotho dreaming of an international career, the journey is fraught with structural obstacles. Lesotho does not have FIFA-standard stadiums, fully developed youth academies, competitive national leagues, or robust scouting networks.

Talent exists, yes, but talent cannot mature in a vacuum. Without proper facilities and institutional pathways, the dream of playing professionally abroad risks remaining symbolic rather than practical.

This challenge extends far beyond football. Aspiration in business, arts, or technology faces similar systemic barriers. Entre-

preneurs need reliable internet, access to finance, mentorship, and markets; creative talents need platforms to showcase their work locally before scaling globally; scientists need laboratories and research funding.

To tell young people to "create and produce" while the country's infrastructure and support systems remain underdeveloped is to give them an inspirational slogan without a roadmap.

Ambition must be matched by investment. Lesotho cannot rely on sheer ambition to fuel progress. Policymakers can inspire, but inspiration alone is insufficient. For ambition to translate into tangible outcomes, it must be accompanied by strategic investment.

This includes upgrading sports infrastructure, nurturing youth talent programs, fostering entrepreneurship through accessible financing, and building institutions that connect local talent to global opportunities. Otherwise, young Basotho are encouraged to look outward while the very foundations they stand on remain unstable.

The responsibility of leadership

Leaders have a responsibility not only to motivate but to equip. Telling youth to dream big without acknowledging the systemic hurdles risks creating frustration, disillusionment, and a sense of exclusion. Visionary leadership must combine aspiration with pragmatism, crafting policies that turn inspiration into action, slogans into skills, and dreams into feasible opportunities.

Dr Matlanyane's message is not without merit; it is vital that Basotho youth dare to imagine themselves achieving excellence on the global stage. But inspiration must be tethered to reality.

If we truly want young people to excel, whether in football, business, or science, we must ensure that ambition is supported by infrastructure, access, and opportunities. Manchester may be the horizon, but we must first build the runway at home.

Ambition is the engine of progress. But in Lesotho, that engine requires fuel, tools,

and direction. Young Basotho deserve leaders who not only inspire them to dream but also equip them to turn those dreams into reality.

Until then, exhortations to "create and

produce" risk being empty rhetoric, however well-intentioned. If we are serious about empowering the next generation, we must commit to the hard work of building the pathways that make ambition achievable.

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# The allure of local football to foreign coaches

**Sebata Mahao**

The Vodacom Premier League (VPL) is increasingly becoming a lucrative destination for South African (SA) coaches, who are leading some of the country's top clubs and sometimes using the platform as a stepping stone to bigger things.

This notable trend has this year alone, seen at least three of the country's elite Premier League clubs appointing SA tacticians at the helm, drawn by competitive packages and the promise of international exposure that can enhance their coaching credentials.

The most recent of these appointments came just last week, when Linare Football Club unveiled former Mamelodi Sundowns and Moroka Swallows midfielder Jabulani 'S-Curl' Mendum as their new head coach.

The 48-year-old Mendum, who holds a CAF A Licence, brings with him a reputation for tactical discipline and a long-passing style that made him a household name during his playing days. Linare expressed their confidence in Mendum's leadership in an official statement:

"We are excited to introduce our new head coach, Jabulani 'S-curl' Mendum, with experience and a proven track record of success. Coach Mendum brings a wealth of knowledge and passion to our team," the club said.

"Under coach Mendum's leadership, we are committed to developing talented players, building a strong team culture, and achieving victory on the field."

Linare's decision to invest in a South African coach follows a precedent set in November 2020, when they appointed former Orlando Pirates tactician Tebogo Moloi, signaling the club's willingness to offer competitive packages to attract quality foreign expertise.

This growing trend, driven by clubs' financial capacity to offer attractive terms, also saw Lioli FC appoint Bongani Maseko last month, who immediately made his mark by guiding Tse Nala to victory in the inaugural T.J. Nthane Foundation Tournament, beating Linare 2-0 in the final.

Similarly, Lijabatho FC has recently appointed former Bantu FC head coach James Madidilane, another SA coach, who previously tasted success in Lesotho's top flight by winning back-to-back league titles and participating in



**James Madidilane**

continental competitions.

These success stories continue to attract more South African coaches seeking both career advancement opportunities and to some extent financial rewards.

For other SA coaches, Lesotho is emerging as a strategic launching pad that offers better recognition than development leagues back home. After gaining experience and building their profiles here, some move on to more prestigious roles elsewhere, having enhanced their market value through international experience.

One example is Morena Ramoreboli, who once coached Lioli FC and now serves as the interim head coach for Botswana's senior national team, The Zebras. His current mission is to qualify for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

Prominent sports journalist Tebalo Lebajoa explains this dynamic: "Most of the SA coaches in Lesotho come here to build their CVs. They usually come from development leagues in

South Africa, and if they perform well here, they gain the international exposure they need to return home or move to other leagues with better opportunities."

Lebajoa further highlighted that the local league offers fewer barriers to growth and better financial prospects for foreign coaches compared to South Africa's cutthroat environment, where even a CAF A licence may not guarantee recognition or adequate compensation.

"In South Africa, coaches with CAF A licences often compete with unqualified ex-players. It is easier for them to stand out and get noticed in Lesotho," he said, adding that the financial packages available in Lesotho often exceed what these coaches could earn in South African development leagues.

**Implications for homegrown coaching talent**

While the influx of foreign expertise brings new perspectives, it also raises questions about the opportunities afforded to local

coaches who cannot compete with the attractive packages offered to their South African counterparts.

The Secretary General of the Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) acknowledged this concern in an exclusive interview with Newsday.

"We have trained many local coaches under CAF licensing, but very few have shown the strength to handle big clubs. It is no surprise that club bosses are increasingly turning to foreign coaches," he said.

The LeFA official admitted that while foreign coaches have improved discipline and competitiveness in clubs, there are risks of marginalising local coaches, especially with the growing trend of appointing foreign assistant coaches who command higher salaries.

"If we are not careful, local coaches will find themselves completely sidelined. We must regulate this trend before it takes an unpalatable turn."

## Balancing benefits with integrity

Foreign coaches have played a role in improving professionalism and discipline among local players, justifying the financial investment clubs make in their services. According to Lebajoa, their distance from players allows them to enforce stricter standards—something local coaches often struggle with due to personal ties within teams.

However, concerns are growing about system manipulation, with accusations of foreign coaches influencing club bosses to illegally register ineligible players as locals, potentially compromising the integrity that makes these lucrative opportunities possible.

"We have had cases of players allegedly born in hospitals that never existed, or with dual birthplaces. These abuses must be curbed before they damage the integrity of our game," warned the LeFA SG.

## A call for sustainable development

While foreign coaches undeniably bring value that justifies their attractive packages, stakeholders agree that the long-term growth of Lesotho football requires a dual approach, leveraging international experience while uplifting local coaching talent to eventually compete for these lucrative positions.

"Our local coaches must improve their professionalism and learn from these expatriate mentors. Football is a continuous classroom, and our coaches must be willing students."

Lebajoa echoed these sentiments, urging LeFA to facilitate partnerships between international and local coaches, increase the number of foreign players allowed per club, and create pathways for local players to gain international exposure.

"The presence of foreign coaches and players creates healthy competition. Our players need to fight for their place, and that will naturally raise the level of our football," Lebajoa concluded.

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