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'WHAT HAPPENED TO UNEMPLOYMENT?'

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'What happened to unemployment?'

Mbeki criticises policies that enrich a small elite while ignoring unemployment, inequality and human welfare

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Former South African president Thabo Mbeki has invoked the legacy and words of the late King Moshoeshoe II to deliver a powerful critique of Africa's development path, warning that decades after independence, many African countries, including Lesotho, remain trapped in poverty because they ignored early warnings against trickle-down economics.

Mbeki was delivering a public lecture in Maseru to mark 30 years since the death of His Majesty King Moshoeshoe II, one of Lesotho's most prominent post-independence leaders. The lecture focused on social policy, development and poverty eradication, among others, drawing heavily on the late King's 1989 address on development.

Recalling that speech, Mbeki said King Moshoeshoe II had sharply criticised the idea that economic growth alone would automatically improve the lives of ordinary people.

"That narrow emphasis has led to a situation whereby only a very thin layer of the population has prospered, while the vast majorities have continued to sink further and further into the backwaters of under-development," the King warned in 1989.

Mbeki told the audience that the King's assessment remains disturbingly relevant today, as inequality deepens across the continent despite decades of economic reforms and development programmes.

"One result of this," the King had said, "is that developing nations, like Lesotho, came to reflect the current international unjust world economic order, with its vast and increasing gaps between rich and poor nations, and between citizens of the same nation, in spite of its serious implications for world peace and economic stability."

According to Mbeki, King Moshoeshoe II challenged African leaders and policy-makers to confront fundamental questions that remain unanswered.

"He argued that all of us in the devel-



Former President Thabo Mbeki

oping world must answer the questions: 'Development for what? And for whom?' Mbeki said.

To underscore the point, Mbeki quoted development economist Dudley Seers, whom King Moshoeshoe II cited in his address.

"The questions to ask about a nation's development are as follows: what has happened to poverty? What has happened to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality?" Seers argued. "If all three of these have decreased from high levels, then there has been development. But if one or more of these central problems of under-development have been getting worse, especially if all three have, it would be very strange indeed to call the result 'development', even if per capita incomes had doubled."

Mbeki linked this critique to recent continental data. He cited the 2024 African Sustainable Development Report, which shows that less than six percent of Africa's measurable Sustainable Development Goal targets are on track to be achieved by 2030.

"This means that four years from now, our continent will not have met the targets mentioned by Dudley Seers," Mbeki said, despite the existence of ambitious

frameworks such as Agenda 2063.

"The actuality we face is a very disturbing reality concerning the quality of life of the overwhelming majority of more than a billion Africans, and our escape from poverty and under-development," he said.

Mbeki said King Moshoeshoe II believed that economic growth should be treated not as an end in itself, but as a tool for human development.

"Economic growth must be understood as an instrument of human development which, firstly, sets out to meet the basic human needs of all the people, and then moves on to quality of life," the King said. He advocated a shift "from a decided and acceptable programme of national austerity, to national prosperity, via a more self-reliant, human-needs-oriented national philosophy of development."

Mbeki outlined eight key principles the late monarch believed were essential for successful development, including legitimate political leadership, public participation, the empowerment of women, rural development, education aligned with national needs, a capable developmental state, cultural renewal and African unity.

He quoted King Moshoeshoe II's insistence that development must be partici-

patory.

"Plan with the people, not for the people; and we must act with the people, not for them," the King said.

On education, Mbeki recalled the King's view that institutions such as the National University of Lesotho (NUL) must serve society directly through relevant skills development and research.

"What is required," the King said, "is the kind of education that creates not only academic skills, but which also creates awareness of what is needed to transform the nation socially and economically for the good of all the people."

Mbeki also highlighted the King's belief that development strategies must respect African culture and institutions, rather than discard them in favour of imported models.

"We must look for our own version of democracy for people's participation, taking into account our own culture, our own history, our own time-honoured institutions," the King observed, "and see them not as an obstruction, but as the living base from which modernisation and change can and must take place."

Turning to accountability, Mbeki quoted the King's view that public authority must be subject to scrutiny.

"It is absolutely important to ensure that civil servants, public offices, local leaders, and anyone exercising authority are all subject to review procedures regarding their performances," King Moshoeshoe II said.

Mbeki concluded that the late monarch's ideas remain relevant and unfulfilled.

"Clearly, he was correct in this assessment," Mbeki said.

King Moshoeshoe II, born Constantine Bereng Seeiso in 1938, was the son of Paramount Chief Seeiso Griffith. He ascended to the throne in 1960 and became Lesotho's first King at independence in 1966.

His reign was marked by political turbulence, including tensions with successive governments, periods of exile, and temporary removal from the throne. Despite these challenges, King Moshoeshoe II emerged as a vocal advocate for constitutionalism, national unity and people-centred development.

He died on January 15, 1996, in a car accident at the age of 57. His death shocked the nation and ended a life defined by both political struggle and intellectual engagement with Lesotho's future.

Three decades on, Mbeki said the King's legacy should not be reduced to symbolism.

Newsday (+266) 2231 4267/ 5945 8983

Carlton Centre
3rd Floor
Room 302
Kingsway
Maseru

PUBLISHER
Newsday Media (Pty) (Ltd)
Maseru

MANAGING EDITOR
Lerato Matheka
managingeditor@newsdayonline.co.ls

NEWS EDITOR
Kananelo Boloetse
editor@newsdayonline.co.ls

SUB EDITOR
Bereng Mpaki

NEWS ROOM
Nisoaki Motaung
Seabata Mahao
Thoboloko Ntšonyane

CONTRIBUTORS
Theko Tlebere
Motsamai Mokotjo

PRODUCTION
Bolokang Mahlo
Bataung Monaheng

VIDEOGRAPHER
Tumelo Taole

DISTRIBUTION
Lehlohonolo Mantsoe

MARKETING
Tefah Sello
Tumelo Ramotsoane
marketing@newsdayonline.co.ls

WEBSITE
www.newsdayonline.co.ls

FACEBOOK
Newsday Newspaper LS
X
@LsNewsday

INSTAGRAM
Newsday Lesotho

PRINTER
Thabure Media Group

LHDA reiterates resolve to deliver water to Basotho

Staff Reporter

The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) has reaffirmed its resolve to ensure that water from the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) increasingly benefits Basotho communities, stressing that inclusive access to water within Lesotho is now a strategic priority rather than a secondary consideration.

This commitment is firmly anchored in the Authority's 10-year strategic plan, which was officially launched in March 2024. The strategy identifies inclusive access to water and electricity as its first and most important strategic goal, signalling a deliberate policy shift to ensure that, while Lesotho continues to honour its international obligations to supply water to South Africa, tangible water benefits are also realised within the country, particularly by communities directly affected by the project.

Against this backdrop, LHDA is steadily advancing Phase II of the LHWP, which centres on the construction of the Polihali Dam and the 38-kilometre Polihali-Katse transfer tunnel. The transfer tunnel is expected to be substantially complete by 2028, while the Polihali Dam is projected to reach the same milestone a year later, in 2029. By the end of September 2025, construction progress stood at 37 percent for the dam and approximately 46 percent for the tunnel.

LHDA Public Relations Manager, Mpho Brown, told Creamer Media's Engineering News that Phase II will unlock multiple long-term benefits for both Lesotho and South Africa. These include increased water transfers to South Africa, expanded hydropower generation for Lesotho through higher flows at the existing Muela Hydropower Station, and the planned Ox-bow Hydropower Scheme, which is



currently at the detailed design and engineering stage.

Brown noted that these developments will significantly reduce Lesotho's dependence on imported electricity while strengthening domestic energy security.

He further explained that water stored in the 5 053-hectare Polihali reservoir will be transferred by gravity through the tunnel into the Katse reservoir. From there, the water will pass through existing infrastructure, including tunnels and the Muela Hydropower Station, before ultimately reaching South Africa's Gauteng region.

At the same time, the project allows for an incremental increase in water availability for domestic, agricultural and industrial use within Lesotho, rising from the current 780 million cubic metres per year to a maximum of 1 270 million cubic metres annually.

Significant construction milestones had already been achieved at the Polihali Dam site during the third quarter of the 2025/26 financial year. Excavation of the main dam abutments, saddle dam, intake tower and plinth had been completed, while spillway exca-

vation continued to advance steadily.

Rockfill placement at the main dam was proceeding at an average rate of nearly 18 900 cubic metres per day, equivalent to about seven and a half Olympic-size swimming pools of material daily. By the end of November, more than 4.88 million cubic metres of rock had been placed in the main dam, while the saddle dam had recorded over 100 700 cubic metres of rockfill.

Internal plinth consolidation grouting on both the main and saddle dams has been completed, enabling the commencement of curb extrusion and upstream rockfill placement. These works required the excavation of approximately 2.5 million cubic metres of hard rock. Once complete, the spillway approach, chute tunnel and permanent roadway bridge over the dam crest will require the pouring of about 95,300 cubic metres of concrete.

Progress has also been recorded on the dam's bottom outlet tunnel, which measures approximately 9.25 metres high, six metres wide and 500 metres long. Excavation of both the top and bottom headings is nearing

completion, with the top heading advancing at an average rate of 2.7 metres per day using the drill-and-blast method.

Construction of the Polihali-Katse transfer tunnel is similarly progressing. Tunnel boring machines (TBMs) are being used to excavate the main tunnel, while drill-and-blast techniques are applied to access adits and gate shafts.

At the Katse end, excavation of the TBM access removers was completed in early October, allowing the TBM to advance more than 170 metres into the main tunnel.

At the Polihali end, assembly of the second TBM has been completed, with its entry into the tunnel expected to precede a formal launch early this year, marking the start of full-scale excavation from that side.

Looking ahead, Brown said Phase II will not only deploy modern construction technologies but will also place strong emphasis on environmental compliance, including properly designed wastewater and sewage treatment systems.

The project is also contributing to livelihoods through job creation, with Phase II having generated employment for 3 791 unskilled workers, 12 226 skilled and semi-skilled workers, and 68 young professionals to date.

He stressed that these socio-economic gains align directly with the LHDA's new strategic direction. "A key tenet of the ten-year strategy, and the first of the five strategic goals, is inclusive access to water and electricity," Brown said.

"The word 'inclusive' reflects a deliberate effort by the LHDA to ensure that, without undermining the project's obligation to deliver water to South Africa, the LHWP also delivers water within the borders of Lesotho, especially to communities most affected by the project."



High Court reserves judgment in Monapathi case

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The High Court, sitting as the Constitutional Court, has reserved judgment in a case involving retired High Court judge Tšeliso Monapathi, who is challenging the decision to withhold his terminal benefits.

Justice Monapathi retired in August 2024 after reaching the statutory retirement age of 75. However, Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane has withheld his terminal benefits on the basis that Monapathi has a substantial backlog of outstanding work, including about 128 part-heard cases.

Monapathi has approached the Constitutional Court seeking an order declaring the Chief Justice's decision null and void, and directing the release of his withheld terminal benefits.

He is the applicant in the matter, while the respondents are the Chief Justice, the Prime Minister, the Judicial Service Commission (JSC), the Attorney-General, and the Defined Contribution Pension Fund, cited as the first to fifth respondents respectively.

Chief Justice Sakoane has maintained that Monapathi's benefits can only be released once he completes his outstanding judgments. It was revealed in court that some of the cases presided over by Monapathi date back as far as 1994 and remain unresolved.

Monapathi, on the other hand, has argued that he can only complete the outstanding work if he is reinstated with the full support afforded to serving judges, including a salary, office space, a vehicle, a



driver, and other benefits.

The matter is being heard by a panel of judges from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), comprising Justice Mankhambira Mkandawire of Malawi, Justice Sylvester Salufu Maingu of Namibia, and Justice David Mangota of Zimbabwe.

Arguing on behalf of Monapathi, Advocate Mocheta Makara submitted that judges in Lesotho operate under severe resource constraints and heavy workloads. He told the court that no judge leaves the bench having completed all matters allocated to them.

Makara further argued that upon reaching retirement age, a judge has the option to either retire fully or request an extension to finalise outstanding work.

He added that where judges die, resign, or retire, cases are routinely reallocated and reheard.

He criticised the Chief Justice for failing to pursue disciplinary processes against Monapathi if his performance was in question. Makara said his client is willing to complete the outstanding work, provided he is properly resourced and remunerated as a sitting judge. However, he noted that the Chief Justice considers granting such benefits to be tantamount to rewarding "incompetence."

Makara also pointed out that the law is silent on how outstanding judicial work should be handled at the point of retirement.

In support of his argument, Makara referred the court to the case of Dr Likoti, in which the court declared it unconstitutional for the government

to withhold pension benefits to recover debts. The court held that pensions are a right, not a discretionary benefit, and ordered the release of the withheld pension, emphasising equal treatment of public officers in financial matters.

Advocate Rudie Cronje, appearing for the Chief Justice and the Attorney-General, argued that the case is not about resources or workload but centres on the constitutional oath taken by judges to dispense justice and uphold the Constitution.

"A judge is constitutionally obliged to complete their work," Cronje submitted.

He told the court that Monapathi has access to the court library to write judgments and that the Chief Justice had undertaken to provide a clerk to assist with typing. Cronje accused Monapathi of shifting his position, stating that the retired judge had previously agreed to complete the outstanding work under the conditions set by the Chief Justice but later imposed additional demands.

Cronje further informed the court that the Chief Justice had introduced rules requiring judgments to be delivered within three months after the close of submissions. He said the rules were adopted in response to criticism from the Court of Appeal regarding delays in judgment delivery by some High Court judges.

He added that the Chief Justice had reminded Monapathi, three months prior to his retirement, to complete the work under his responsibility, but this was not done.

The court has reserved judgment, which will be delivered on a date to be announced.

Africa begs US as continent pins hopes on AGOA finalisation

Staff Reporter

The African Union (AU)'s appeal to the United States (US) Senate to pass the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Extension Act has revealed the continent's continued reliance on preferential access to the US market as a pillar of trade and employment especially for export-dependent economies such as Lesotho.

This week, the US House of Representatives approved a three-year extension of AGOA, renewing hope across Africa that a programme which has anchored US-Africa trade relations for more than two decades will not be allowed to lapse.

The bill now awaits consideration by the US Senate before further consideration by the President of the US.

Welcoming the House's decision, African Union Commission Chairperson H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf said the vote reflected enduring bipartisan support in Washington for economic cooperation with Africa.

"For over two decades, AGOA has served as a cornerstone of U.S.-Africa economic relations, supporting industrialisation, job creation, regional

value chains, and inclusive growth across the continent," said Mr Youssouf.

His remarks underscore how deeply AGOA has become woven into Africa's trade architecture. Since its enactment in 2000, the programme has granted eligible sub-Saharan African countries duty-free access to the US market for thousands of products, encouraging export-led growth in sectors ranging from apparel and footwear to agriculture and manufactured goods.

With the bill now before the Senate, the AU has openly appealed for its swift approval.

"As the bill proceeds to the United States Senate, the Chairperson appealed to the Senate to give favourable and timely consideration to the extension, in a spirit that upholds partnership, and shared strategic interests," the AU said.

For the African Union, AGOA is more than a trade scheme, it is a diplomatic and economic bridge.

"The African Union Commission reaffirms its commitment to working closely with the Government of the United States, Congress, and all stakeholders to ensure that AGOA continues to serve as a bridge for economic cooperation and a symbol of the enduring friendship between Africa and the Ameri-

can people," Mr Youssouf said.

AU's surprising fixation on AGOA throws into doubt the continent's true intentions about intra-African trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other envisaged goals.

Displaying similar sentiments, the government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development, confirmed that its Trade minister is currently in the US where he is actively lobbying for AGOA's renewal.

The World Bank data indicates that at its height, about one third of Lesotho's total exports were tied to AGOA, with the apparel and textile sector accounting for the bulk of these exports. The industry employed about 45,000 workers, the majority of them women, making it one of the country's largest private-sector employers and a critical source of household income.

"The Basotho nation is informed that the Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry and Business Development is currently in the United States of America to continue engagements with key stakeholders, including members of the Senate, buyers, and other relevant stakeholders, regarding the renewal of AGOA," the statement reads.

The government welcomed progress on the bill, describing the House vote as a positive signal for Lesotho's export-driven economy.

"The Government of Lesotho warmly welcomes and strongly commends the decisive bipartisan move towards the passage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Extension Act, H.R. 6500. As Basotho, we look forward with hope to a sustainable decision from the administration of the United States of America," the statement said.

The AGOA Extension Act (H.R. 6500) seeks to extend trade preferences through December 31, 2028, providing continued duty-free access to the US market for most exports from eligible sub-Saharan African countries. Currently, 32 countries qualify for AGOA benefits. The bill also extends customs user fees and merchandise processing fees through December 31, 2031, ensuring continuity in the administration of US trade imports.

The bill maintains AGOA's special provisions for apparel. These include duty-free treatment for certain clothing exports and the third-country fabric provision, which allows lesser-developed countries to use imported fabrics, while still qualifying for duty-free access to the US market.

This flexibility has been central to the survival of Lesotho's garment factories, which largely rely on imported textiles. The bill also provides for the refund of duties on qualifying goods that entered the US after September 30, 2025, but before the bill's enactment, offering relief to exporters caught in any interim uncertainty.



Seabata Mahao

Alcohol abuse remains a major driver of road crashes in Lesotho, with festive season data once again exposing the deadly consequences of drinking and driving, authorities have warned.

This emerged during the presentation of the evaluation of the 2025/26 Road Safety Campaigns (RSC), where officials revealed that despite intensified enforcement and awareness efforts, alcohol-impaired driving continues to endanger lives on the country's roads.

Senior Vehicle Inspector 'Malitšiso Ntlama from the Department of Road Safety said findings from festive roadblocks pointed to alarming levels of drunk driving, particularly in Leribe.

Out of 16 drivers tested for alcohol consumption in the district, eight were found to be above the legal alcohol limit, while only three drivers were confirmed sober.

The figures, she noted, paint a troubling picture

Drunk driving casts long shadow over festive road carnage

of widespread disregard for traffic laws during the festive period, a time traditionally associated with increased alcohol consumption and heightened road risk. She stressed that the results clearly demonstrate how drinking and driving remains an entrenched behaviour that requires urgent and sustained intervention.

While there were some encouraging signs, they were limited. Ntlama said Maseru Urban recorded better results during morning operations on December 31, 2025, when 62 drivers were tested, and 59 registered a zero alcohol level. However, authorities cautioned that isolated improvements do not outweigh the broader national trend of alcohol-related risk on the roads.

According to data shared by the Ministry of Public Works through the Director of Road Safety, Dr Kinini Mathews, the 2025 festive campaigns recorded a marginal decline in fatalities, from 39 deaths in 2024 to 38 in 2025. The operations were conducted with support from the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) and the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF), which provided tactical security.

Dr Mathews said the 2025 Road Safety Christmas Campaign was launched in response to the grim statistics of the 2024 festive season, which saw 399

accidents, 256 injuries and 38 fatalities.

She said these figures underscored persistent non-compliance by road users and highlighted that technical measures such as vehicle inspections alone were insufficient, particularly when drunk driving and speeding remained common.

As a result, she explained, the 2025 campaign marked a strategic shift towards tackling human behaviour, with a strong focus on personal responsibility. The theme "Road Safety begins with me" sought to instill individual accountability, especially in relation to alcohol use behind the wheel.

She added that the campaign broadened public awareness through digital platforms, strengthened collaboration with private sector partners and mobilised additional resources. The involvement of the LDF Military Police and LMPS, she said, reinforced the message that road safety is a shared responsibility, while the "365 Days Arrive Alive" philosophy encouraged year-round vigilance beyond the festive season.

Senior Inspector Mpeoane Ntsitsi from the LMPS warned that negligence, including drunk and distracted driving, remains a major contributor to road crashes. She urged motorists to obey speed limits, wear seatbelts and avoid reckless overtaking, stress-

ing that alcohol impairment significantly reduces reaction time and judgement.

Addressing public concerns, Ntlama dismissed claims that a single breathalyser is used unsafely on multiple drivers, explaining that each motorist uses a new disposable paper straw. She said the department is working to standardise alcohol testing procedures to strengthen accountability in dealing with drunk driving cases.

Meanwhile, Deputy Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Advocate Lesimole Moletsane, said reducing drinking and driving remains a top priority, as alcohol-fuelled crashes continue to rob families of loved ones.

In his remarks, Minister of Public Works and Transport Matjato Moteane said road fatalities have shown an upward trend over the past five years, rising from 4,001 in 2024 to 4,028 in 2025. He said pedestrians remain the most affected victims, many losing their lives in crashes linked to drunk driving and excessive speeding.

The minister urged drivers to respect the rights of all road users and warned that alcohol abuse on the roads continues to exact a devastating toll on communities, despite ongoing campaigns and enforcement efforts.



Newsday
Business

Tsekela drives off in new Toyota Starlet courtesy of Econet

Seabata Mahao

The atmosphere was electric last Friday when Nka-moheleng Tsekela, a resident of Qacha's Nek district, officially became the first big winner of a brand-new Toyota Starlet in the ongoing Hoa Khonahala festive campaign by Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) and its sister company, Sasai Econet Financial Services (SEFS).

Upon her massive win, an emotional Tsekela de-scribed the win as life-changing, saying she never imagined that everyday transactions could result in owning a brand-new vehicle.

"This campaign has truly changed my life for the better. I never imagined that by simply transacting with EcoCash and purchasing the campaign voice and data bundles, I could own a brand-new car. I am truly grateful to ETL and SEFS. Indeed, hoa khonah-ala (it is achievable)," she said.

The handover follows a string of significant wins since the campaign's launch on October 10, 2025.



It adds Tsekela to a growing list of Basotho whose festive season has been transformed, including Moeketsi Senokoanyane (M20,000 winner) and Likhapha Lehlabaphiri (M50,000 winner).

Speaking at the ceremony, ETL's Acting General Manager for Products and Services, Ketja Nhlapo, emphasised that Tsekela's win is a testament to the nationwide reach of their financial inclusion efforts.

"The numbers behind the Hoa Khonahala cam-paign tell a very powerful story. Since the campaign began, 44 customers have won daily cash prizes, 16 have taken weekly cash prizes, and 24 customers have walked away with smart devices, including 12 smart TVs and 12 smartphones," Nhlapo said.

Nhlapo further noted that the M6 million prize pool represents a massive investment in the so-cio-economic well-being of their subscribers. With district activations already awarding over M30,000 in cash and dozens of smartphones, the momentum is only growing.

"These are not just statistics; they represent real lives being changed in communities across Lesotho. Today's handover of this Toyota Starlet is further proof that we are truly #CruisingNicely with our customers. Importantly, there are still more prizes to be won until February 2026. We encourage our customers to continue transacting and stay engaged, because Hoa Khonahala is now in full swing."

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Delays, broken equipment and foreign referrals continue to undermine cancer care in Lesotho

Ntsoaki Motaung

Cancer patients in Lesotho continue to face long delays in diagnosis and treatment, largely due to backlogs at district facilities, broken diagnostic equipment and limited local treatment options, health professionals have warned.

Clinical Radiation Oncologist Dr Kabelo Mputsoe says delays at district hospitals are directly contributing to late-stage cancer cases seen at the national oncology clinic.

“The situation at the district level reflects what we eventually see at the national oncology clinic,” Mputsoe said. “The biggest challenge facing Lesotho is delays at every level of care.”

Patients often wait months for test results after initial screening. Mputsoe said patients screened in November 2025 are only being confirmed as cancer cases in early 2026 due to laboratory backlogs.

“Because of these delays, we are unable to get a real-time picture of the cancer burden in the country,” she said.

On average, patients wait about four months to begin treatment after being referred from district facilities. Diagnostic capacity remains limited, with key equipment out of service. At Maseru District Hospital, the telepathology system is non-functional due to a broken tissue processor, while access to CT scans remains limited, slowing cancer staging.

Lesotho also relies on private laboratories for some diagnostic services. Mputsoe said delayed government payments often result in laboratories withholding results.

“This is the most frustrating part of the work,” she said.

While surgery and chemotherapy are available locally, Lesotho does not yet offer radiotherapy services. Patients requiring radiation

treatment are referred to South Africa. In cases where chemotherapy and radiotherapy are required concurrently, patients are often transferred entirely to South Africa after surgery in Lesotho.

Despite these challenges, Mputsoe said there has been progress in strengthening cancer services through staffing and partnerships. In 2025, Lesotho appointed a second oncologist, ending a four-year period during which a single specialist served the country. Three more doctors currently undergoing specialised training are expected to return starting this year.

The health system has also expanded technical capacity, with two specialists in nuclear medicine and two in medical physics now in place.

International partnerships continue to support local services. The Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, through Partners In Health (PIH), provides technical mentorship and biannual in-person support visits. Bio-Ventures Global Health has trained local teams in breast cancer management, while the Mark Foundation has provided medication for leukemia patients.

At district level, the Ministry of Health has focused on training public sector health workers to improve screening and early detection. This programme, supported by the National University of Lesotho, aims to build local capacity amid fluctuating donor support.

Cultural barriers also affect screening efforts. In Sehonghong, Nurse Midwife Mamokhoabo Notoane said many elderly women decline screening.

“Women aged 70 and above often believe they are no longer at risk once they stop being sexually active,” Notoane said. “Some also refuse to be examined by younger healthcare



Dr. Kabelo Mputsoe, a Clinical Radiation Oncologist

workers.”

Mputsoe said improved funding in the 2026 financial year would be critical to replacing broken equipment and speeding up diagnosis. She stressed the importance of multidisciplinary care, noting that recent training and private-sector engagements have improved coordination.

In 2025, Lesotho registered 719 cancer patients, with cervical cancer leading at 265 cases, followed by breast cancer (98), prostate cancer (97), lymphoma (18) and colon cancer (13).

She said accurate cancer mortality data remains unavailable, as many patients are treated as outpatients and deaths often go unreported.

“To get accurate mortality statistics, we

would need a comprehensive study,” Mputsoe said.

Health Minister Selibe Mochoboroane has repeatedly raised concern about the rising cost of foreign treatment. He said government spending per patient increased from about M145,000 in 2015 to M220,000 in 2023. Lesotho currently spends an estimated M12 million per month, or M144 million annually, on transporting and treating patients in South Africa.

Mochoboroane is leading the construction of Lesotho’s first Comprehensive Cancer Centre, expected to be completed by 2027. The facility will offer radiotherapy services locally.

He has also acknowledged the country’s heavy reliance on foreign aid and overseas hospitals, proposing a national health insurance system to improve sustainability and support local palliative care initiatives such as the Starlight Houses of Hope.

“A fence at the edge of a cliff is always better than the ambulance at the bottom,” Mochoboroane said, emphasising prevention, early screening and diagnosis.

Cancer continues to rise as a major cause of death in Lesotho. According to GLOBOCAN data, the country recorded 2,027 new cancer cases and 1,411 deaths in 2022. Clinical records show cases increased from 625 in 2023 to 750 by early 2024.

Cervical cancer remains the leading cancer, accounting for nearly 30 percent of cases and causing an estimated 360 deaths annually. Breast and prostate cancers are also prevalent.

Despite these challenges, prevention efforts have shown success. Lesotho has achieved high Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination coverage, reaching between 93 and 97 percent of girls aged 9 to 14.



The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

Ntsoaki Motaung

A global public health crisis is deepening as sugary drinks and alcoholic beverages become increasingly affordable across the world, prompting the World Health Organisation (WHO) to call for urgent government action.

New reports released this month show that low and poorly designed taxes are failing to keep pace with inflation, effectively making these products cheaper in real terms. This trend is driving higher consumption and contributing to rising rates of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

The WHO is urging governments to strengthen so-called health taxes, describing them as one of the most effective tools available to prevent disease and save lives. By raising the prices of tobacco, alcohol and sugary drinks, countries can curb harmful consump-

WHO calls for higher taxes as harmful products stay affordable

tion while generating much-needed revenue for strained health systems.

“Many countries still have weak tax systems that allow these products to remain affordable even as health systems face growing pressure from preventable illnesses,” the WHO said.

In Lesotho, the situation reflects these global challenges. According to the WHO data, Lesotho is among the countries that apply excise taxes to alcoholic beverages and sugary drinks to help manage public health.

However, like many of its neighbours, the real value of these taxes is often eroded by rising costs of living. For instance, while Lesotho has a tax on sugary sodas, it does not yet extend these health taxes to other high-sugar products like 100 percent fruit juices or sweetened milk drinks, which are often perceived as healthier but still contribute to disease.

Furthermore, alcohol in the region remains highly affordable. While Lesotho does levy taxes on beer and spirits, the total tax share, the portion of the price that goes to the the government is relatively low compared to the health costs associated with alcohol use.

The WHO highlights that when alcohol is cheap, it leads to higher rates of violence and injuries, placing a heavy burden on the public and the economy.

To address these issues, the WHO has launched the 3 by 35 initiative. This plan aims to help countries like Lesotho redesign their tax systems to ensure that the prices of tobac-

co, alcohol, and sugary drinks increase steadily through 2035.

By making these products less affordable over time, the initiative seeks to protect the next generation from the long-term effects of noncommunicable diseases.

Health officials emphasise that the goal is

not just to raise money, but to create a healthier society.

For Lesotho, strengthening these taxes and potentially earmarking the revenue specifically for healthcare could provide the funds needed to treat the very diseases these products cause.



GOVERNMENT OF LESOTHO
District Procurement Unit - Mchale's Hoek
TENDER NOTICE

Tender #: FC-26-MOA/01

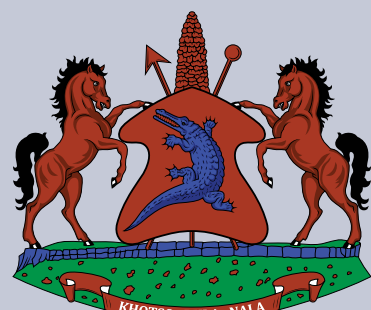
District Procurement Unit Mchale's Hoek hereby invites tenders from suitably qualified and registered security companies, for provision of 24hrs **security services** in the **Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security Mchale's Hoek**, for the fiscal year **2026/2027**.

Tender documents will be obtainable at Ministry of Agriculture and food Security Mchale's Hoek, at a non-refundable fee of **M2000.00**

Work Description: Supply of security services: Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition- Mchale's Hoek

Bidders' qualification:
To tender for the proposed contract, bidders must be companies **WHO** have registered with **Ministry of Home Affairs and Public Safety and Parliamentary Affairs**.

The closing time and date for the receipt of tenders is **10:00hrs**, on the **17th February 2026**. Tenders will be opened on the same day at **12:05 noon** in the presence of Tenderers or their representatives.



PROJECT RESERVOIR CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS



Ha Lesiamo Reservoir

Ha Lesiamo Reservoir - Z2R21

The 1 megalitre reservoir will be servicing the communities of Ha Lesiamo, Ha Setene, Ha Lobiane, Ha Moseli, and surrounding villages.



Tsifa-li-Mali Reservoir

Tsifa-li-Mali Reservoir - Z2R3

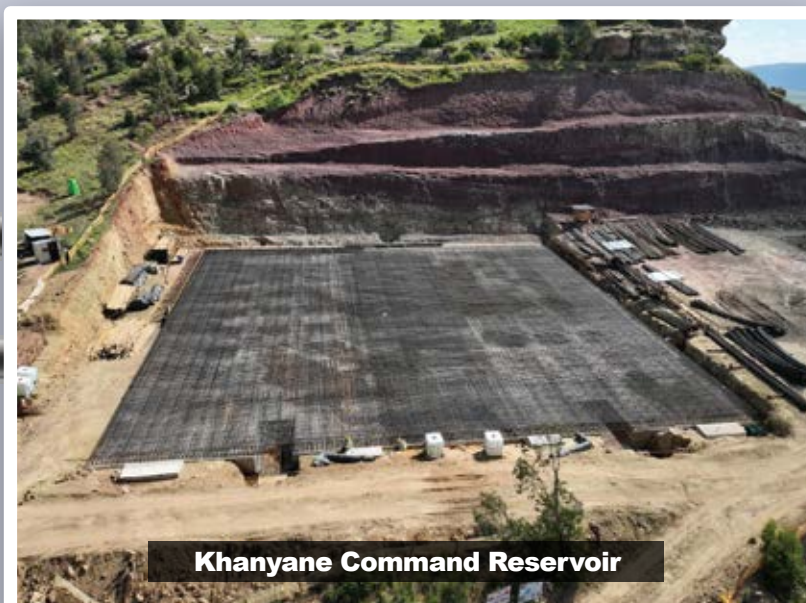
5ML Reservoir will supply water to Hlotse town, Tsifa-li-Mali, Lisemeng I & II, Ha Tlailai and surrounding villages.



Water Treatment Plant

Water Treatment Plant - Ha Setene

The Water Treatment Plant at Ha Setene is designed with a treatment capacity of 25 million litres per day. Once treated, potable water will be pumped to five (5) newly constructed reservoirs for storage and distribution. Construction works are currently 58% complete.



Khanyane Command Reservoir

Khanyane Command Reservoir - Z2R1

This 12ML Reservoir located at Khanayne is the Command reservoir which will supply treated water to ALL newly constructed Reservoirs in the Project Area.



Matukeng Reservoir

Matukeng Reservoir - Z2R4

Z2R4 is a 1 Megalitre concrete reservoir. This reservoir is serving communities at Matukeng, Ha Malimatle, Tsikoane, and surrounding villages.



Maputsoe Reservoir

Maputsoe Reservoir - Z2R5

Z2R5 is a 8 Megalitres concrete reservoir. This is terminal reservoir serving communities in Maputsoe, Industrial area and surrounding areas including Mpharane, Ha Nyenye.



Khanyane Reservoir

Khanyane Reservoir - Z2R2

Press Steel 200 kilo litre serving Khanyane area



LESOTHO
LOWLANDS
WATER
DEVELOPMENT
PROJECT PHASE II

PROJECT CONSTRUCTION WORKS PROGRESS



Pressure Break Tank at Khanyane

Overall progress on the reservoir works currently stands at 86% completion. Based on the contractor's approved programme tracking, overall project progress is 86%, compared to the planned 79%, indicating that the contractor is 7% ahead of schedule.



Pipe laying at Maputsoe

WORKS BY CONTRACT:

W/03A – Water Treatment Works

- Construction under Contract W03A (Water Treatment Works) is currently 58% complete.

W/04 – Transmission Systems and Reservoirs

- A total of 28.7 km of transmission pipelines has been completed, with overall project progress currently at 92%.

W/05 – Distribution Network & House Connections

- Under Contract W05, pipeline laying has been fully completed, and overall construction progress currently stands at **99.5%**, exceeding the estimated time projection.
- In terms of house connections, **161** household connections have been completed with an additional **213** connections for potential customers.

W/06 – Distribution Network & House Connections

- Under Contract W06, a total pipeline length of **221 km** has been laid, with overall construction progress currently standing at **99.6%**.



Raw Water Pumping Station at Hlotse River, Ha Setene

- In terms of house connections, **296** household connections have been completed, with an additional **105**
- connections for potential customers installed up to the point of the water meter.

Rising Main & WASCO Pump Station Refurbishment

- The rising main pipeline has reached a total installed length of **4.52 km**, with overall construction progress currently at 58.1%.
- Refurbishment works at the pump station is 10% complete, while temporary pump installation is underway to support ongoing operations.



THE WORLD BANK



European Investment Bank Global



European Union



Lesotho Football Association (LeFA)
VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Coach Education Officer

The Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) invites applications from suitably qualified and experienced individuals for the position of **Coach Education Officer**. This is a strategic technical role responsible for strengthening the quality, consistency, and professionalism of coaching across all levels of football in Lesotho.

Key Responsibilities

- The Coach Education Officer will:
- Lead the planning, delivery, and evaluation of LeFA coaching courses in line with CAF Coaching Convention standards.
 - Develop and implement national coaching pathways, curricula, and certification structures.
 - Train, mentor, and supervise coaching instructors and course facilitators.
 - Ensure alignment between grassroots, youth, and elite coaching methodologies.
 - Maintain accurate records of coaching licenses, renewals, and compliance.
 - Support technical development programmes, including youth academies and regional structures.
 - Represent LeFA in CAF/FIFA technical development initiatives when required.

Minimum Requirements

- Applicants **must** meet the following criteria:
- **CAF A Licence** (mandatory).
 - **Recognised Coach Instructor Qualification** (CAF/FIFA).
 - **Experience coaching a National Team** (Head Coach).
 - **Experience coaching in a Senior League** (Premier League or equivalent).

- Strong understanding of modern coaching methodologies and player development models.
- Excellent communication, presentation, and facilitation skills.
- Ability to work collaboratively with regional structures, clubs, and technical departments.
- High levels of integrity, professionalism, and commitment to football development.

Added Advantages

- Experience as a Coach Educator in CAF/FIFA courses.
- Experience in curriculum design or technical development programmes.
- Strong administrative and reporting skills.

Contract Type

Fixed-term contract, renewable based on performance and organisational needs.

How to Apply

- Interested candidates should submit:
- A detailed CV
 - Certified copies of qualifications
 - A cover letter outlining suitability for the role
 - Contact details of three referees

Applications must be emailed to: ntatemohapi@yahoo.co.uk OR ntatemohapi@lefa.co.ls

Deadline: **28th January 2026**
LeFA is an equal opportunity employer. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.



Lesotho Football Association (LeFA)
VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Procurement and Compliance Officer

The Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) invites applications from suitably qualified, disciplined, and highly ethical individuals for the position of **Procurement and Compliance Officer**. This role is central to strengthening transparency, accountability, and value for money procurement across the Association.

The incumbent will serve directly under the **Secretary General** and will ensure that all procurement and compliance processes meet national regulations, CAF/FIFA standards, and LeFA's internal governance frameworks.

Key Responsibilities

- The Procurement and Compliance Officer will:
- Manage and coordinate all procurement processes in line with LeFA policies and national procurement regulations.
 - Prepare and issue requests for quotations, tenders, and supplier evaluations.
 - Maintain accurate procurement records, contracts, and supplier databases.
 - Ensure compliance with financial controls, audit requirements, and governance standards.
 - Monitor supplier performance and enforce contractual obligations.
 - Advise the Secretary General on procurement risks, compliance gaps, and mitigation strategies.
 - Support internal audits and ensure timely implementation of audit recommendations.
 - Promote transparency, fairness, and ethical conduct in all procurement activities.

Minimum Requirements

- Applicants **must** meet the following criteria:
- Qualification (Diploma), Degree will be an added advantage) in Logistics, Procurement, Supply Chain Management, or a related field (mandatory).
 - Demonstrated experience in procurement,

- compliance, or supply chain operations.
- Proven ability to uphold extremely high levels of integrity, honesty, and ethical conduct.
- Strong understanding of procurement regulations, financial controls, and compliance frameworks.
- Excellent organizational, analytical, and reporting skills.
- Ability to work under pressure, meet deadlines, and maintain confidentiality.
- Strong communication skills and the ability to engage suppliers and internal stakeholders professionally.

Added Advantages

- Experience in procurement within a sports organization, NGO, or public sector environment.
- Knowledge of CAF/FIFA governance and compliance requirements.
- Experience supporting audits or risk management processes.

Contract Type

- Fixed-term contract, renewable based on performance and organisational needs.

How to Apply

- Interested candidates should submit:
- A detailed CV
 - Certified copies of qualifications
 - A cover letter demonstrating suitability for the role
 - Contact details of three referees

Applications must be emailed to: ntatemohapi@yahoo.co.uk OR ntatemohapi@lefa.co.ls

Deadline: **28th January 2026**

LeFA is an equal opportunity employer. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.



Lesotho Football Association (LeFA)
VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Handyman

The Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) invites applications from suitably qualified and reliable individuals for the position of **Handyman**. The successful candidate will support the upkeep, functionality, and safety of LeFA facilities and assets.

The position reports directly to the Facilities and Assets Manager.

Key Responsibilities

- The Handyman will:
- Perform routine maintenance and minor repairs across LeFA facilities.
 - Conduct basic carpentry, plumbing, painting, and electrical tasks within scope of competence.
 - Assist in the upkeep of buildings, grounds, and equipment.
 - Support the Facilities and Assets Manager in inspections and maintenance planning.
 - Respond to repair requests promptly and professionally.
 - Ensure safe use of tools, equipment, and materials.
 - Maintain cleanliness and order in maintenance areas and workshops.
 - Assist with logistical tasks, including movement of equipment and event setup.

Minimum Requirements

- Applicants **must** meet the following criteria:
- Recognised Trade Certificate in a technical field (e.g., carpentry, plumbing, electrical, building maintenance).
 - Valid Driver's Licence (mandatory).

- Demonstrated experience performing minor repairs and routine maintenance.
- Ability to work independently and follow instructions.
- Strong reliability, honesty, and attention to detail.
- Basic understanding of workplace safety practices.

Added Advantages

- Experience working in facility maintenance or asset management.
- Ability to operate maintenance tools and small machinery.
- Experience in a sports facility environment.

Contract Type

- Fixed-term contract, renewable based on performance and organisational needs.

How to Apply

- Interested candidates should submit:
- A detailed CV
 - Certified copies of qualifications
 - A cover letter outlining suitability for the role
 - Contact details of two referees

Applications must be emailed to: ntatemohapi@yahoo.co.uk OR ntatemohapi@lefa.co.ls

Deadline: **28th January 2026**

LeFA is an equal opportunity employer. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.



VACANCY

APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL

The Independent Electoral Commission is empowered by law to appoint a Tribunal to hear and determine complaints concerning contravention of the Code of Conduct subscribed to by Political Parties registered with Commission.

Commission invites interested Lesotho Nationals, who are registered as electors in terms of the National Assembly Electoral Act, 2011 to submit their applications and comprehensive Curriculum Vitae (CV) to fill the vacant position of the Chairperson of the Tribunal mentioned below on or before the 19th January 2026.

The terms of reference for the Chairperson of the Electoral tribunal

The Chairperson of the Electoral Tribunal shall chair and oversee the proceedings of the Tribunal and the Tribunal terms of reference are to:

1. Assess complaints instituted in terms of section 123 of the Act;
2. Schedule hearings;
3. Ensure adherence to the cardinal principles of natural justice;
4. Produce reports upon completion of each matter;
5. Produce end of elections period reports;
6. Table the reports before the Commission with recommendations;
7. Set rules of procedure for the Electoral Tribunal;

Minimum Qualifications

Interested candidates must possess at least LLB with a minimum of five years working experience in the private sector.

OR
A university degree in Public Administration, Political Science or related fields with a minimum of 5 years working experience.

Applicants should have and demonstrate an integrity and a well-established traceable record.

IEC IS A GENDER SENSITIVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Interested candidates must submit their applications accompanied by up-to-date Curriculum Vitae with three referees, copies of certified qualification certificates, send via email to recruitment@iec.org.ls under the subject line; **THE CHAIRPERSON ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL**

OR
hand delivered to IEC Headquarters (Registry) or Respective districts head offices in a sealed envelope labelled.

The Director of Elections
Corner Maluti and Caledon Road
Maseru West
P.O. Box 12698
Maseru 100
Lesotho.

Closing date: 19TH January 2026 at 12:00 noon.

Applicants should be registered as an elector.

Only Short-listed candidates will be contacted.



Specific Procurement Notice

Request for Bids

Small Works

(Two-Envelope Bidding Process)

Procurement of:

DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACTOR FOR
SEAKA IRRIGATION SCHEME QUTHING DISTRICT, LESOTHO

Employer: Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, SADP II Project
Project: Tsikoane Irrigation Scheme
Contract title: Design-Build of Seaka Irrigation Scheme
Country: Lesotho
Loan No. /Credit No. / Grant No.: P165228
RFB No: LS-MAFS-530022-CW-RFB
Issued on: 24th December 2025

1. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, SADP II Project has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the SADP II Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for Design-Build of Tsikoane Irrigation Scheme.
2. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, SADP II now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for Design-Build of Tsikoane Irrigation Scheme, construction period Four months, Seaka, Quthing No margin of preference applicable, etc.] .
3. Bidding will be conducted through **open international competitive procurement** using Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers February 2025 Procurement Regulations edition as per legal agreement ("Procurement Regulations"), and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.
4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition,

SADP II Project, and procurement@sadpii.org.ls and inspect the bidding document during office hours 0800 to 16:30 hours or download the bid document at the address given below ;
<https://www.sadpii.org.ls/procurement/>

5. Bids must be delivered to the address below [state address at the end of this RFB] on or before **30th January 2026 at 12:00hrs**. Electronic bidding **will not** be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. The outer Bid envelopes marked "ORIGINAL BID", and the inner envelopes marked "TECHNICAL PART" will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend, at the address below [state address at the end of this RFB on [Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Livestock offices SADP II , Moshoeshoe II Maseru 14:00hrs and 30th January 2026]. All envelopes marked "FINANCIAL PART" shall remain unopened and will be held in safe custody of the Employer until the second public Bid opening.
6. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of LSL400,000.00.
7. The address(es) referred to above is :

Procurement Office
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Livestock offices, SADP II Project, Moshoeshoe II
P.O.Box 24, Maseru 100, Lesotho
procurement@sadpii.org.ls, +266 22312578
www.sadpii.co.ls



Specific Procurement Notice

Request for Bids

Small Works

(Two-Envelope Bidding Process)

Procurement of:

DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACTOR FOR
TSIKOANE IRRIGATION SCHEME LERIBE DISTRICT, LESOTHO

Employer: Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, SADP II Project
Project: Tsikoane Irrigation Scheme
Contract title: Design-Build of Tsikoane Irrigation Scheme
Country: Lesotho
Loan No. /Credit No. / Grant No.: P165228
RFB No: LS-MAFS-530019-CW-RFB
Issued on: 24th December 2025

Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, SADP II Project, and procurement@sadpii.org.ls and inspect the bidding document during office hours 0800 to 16:30 hours or download the bid document at the address given below ;
<https://www.sadpii.org.ls/procurement/>

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Procurement Office
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Livestock offices, SADP II Project, Moshoeshoe II
P.O.Box 24, Maseru 100, Lesotho
procurement@sadpii.org.ls, +266 22312578
www.sadpii.co.ls



NATIONAL
MARKET
DAY

EBA KAROLO EA PHETOHO!

Eba karolo ea phethoho ka ho fetola moruo oa Naha! Letsatsi la
'Maraka la Naha ke Lena, sebelisa Matla a ho reka ho fetola maphelo.

For more information regarding registration please contact:

Mr **Raliengoane; +26658015256**, Ms **Thabana; +26658752620** or Mr **T'sabo; +26662300414**

Friday 2026
JAN 30
Pitso Ground
(Maseru)
06:00-1700



SADPII



World Vision



LESOTHO

STARLINK
BUSINESS

T-CONNECT

WHAT IS A **STARLINK** **RESELLER?**

A Starlink reseller does more than sell hardware.

We deliver a complete, business-ready internet solution – designed, professionally installed, and supported for ongoing operations, especially outside fibre networks.

Retailers (Hardware Only)

- Usually sell Starlink kits intended for home or casual use
- Large upfront payment for the terminal
- Hardware only – no business service beyond the equipment
- Self-installation required
- Support limited to online resources, with no local assistance
- Not designed for reliability in rural or remote areas

The Bottom Line

Retailers sell hardware.

Official Resellers like T-Connect

- Starlink Business solutions for operations that cannot afford downtime
- Custom-designed connection, installed on site
- Terminal included in your monthly plan – no large upfront cost
- Priority data for consistent performance, even during peak hours
- 24/7 local support, real people, real help
- Flexible, scalable solutions for remote locations and growing businesses

T-Connect, an authorised Starlink reseller, ensures Starlink works for your business – wherever you operate. It's not just internet. It's a business advantage.



+266 5901 6704



connect@tconnect.africa



+266 2232 5243



ETL Acting General Manager for Marketing Communications and Customer Experience, Puleng 'Mathabo' Masoabi

Seabata Mahao

Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL) has once again underlined its commitment to the country's creative industry by injecting M1.5 million into the 7th edition of the All People in Culture and Arts (APICA) festival, coordinated by Global Events.

The substantial sponsorship package, unveiled at a colourful media launch this week at Baduza Park, Maseru Mall, reinforces Econet APICA's standing as one of Lesotho's biggest and most sustainable lifestyle and cultural festivals.

Industry stakeholders, artists and members of the media attended the launch to officially kick off the countdown to Econet APICA 2026.

This year's festival is scheduled to take place from February 27 to March 1, at the iconic Ramabanta Trading Post, renowned for its dramatic mountain scenery and immersive outdoor experi-

Econet injects
M1.5 million in
APICA 2026

ences that blend music, culture and tourism.

ETL's Acting General Manager for Marketing Communications and Customer Experience, Puleng 'Mathabo' Masoabi, said Econet's M1.5 million injection reflects the company's long-term commitment to nurturing the creative sector and expanding opportunities for Basotho artists and entrepreneurs.

"Our investment in Econet APICA goes beyond entertainment. It is about supporting local talent, creating opportunities, and contributing meaningfully to Lesotho's economic growth while remaining steadfast in our vision of a digitally enabled future," said Masoabi.

She added that Econet has consistently invested in APICA since its inception in 2019, with the 2026 edition introducing a paid VIP section on the second day, designed to offer a premium experience for valued customers and festivalgoers.

Global Events officially unveiled some of the headline acts, with representative Montoeli 'Moleli' revealing a powerful blend of international and local performers. The lineup includes South African music legend Sipho 'Hotstix' Mabuse, amapiano

and R&B stars Kelvin Momo and Mawhoo, alongside local favourites such as Mookho Moqhali and Sannere, among others.

'Moleli stressed that the M1.5 million sponsorship is not just about entertainment, but about economic impact.

"Econet APICA is a powerful economic catalyst. From local vendors, security personnel and transport operators to accommodation providers and SMMEs, the festival creates real opportunities and livelihoods while showcasing the best of Lesotho," he said.

Phomolo Lebotsa, the Head of Marketing and Acting Chief Executive at the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC), described APICA as a flagship event on the national calendar, noting that Econet's continued financial backing has helped the festival grow in scale and regional appeal.

"Econet APICA has become critical in positioning Lesotho as a compelling tourism destination for both regional and international visitors, while celebrating our rich heritage and natural beauty," Lebotsa said.

On her part, local musician Mookho Moqhali



Global Events representative, Montoeli 'Moleli

paid tribute to ETL for its consistent financial and institutional support of the creative industry.

"Econet APICA is more than a festival, it is a movement. Fans can expect unforgettable performances, energy and moments that celebrate who we are," he said.

Launched in 2019, Econet APICA was created to provide a platform for local artists while blending music, culture and tourism. Beyond live music, Econet's APICA 2026 promises a fully immersive programme, including a comedy night, camping under the stars, hiking through Lesotho's majestic mountains, and horseback riding adventures culminating in a soulful R&B session, activities that showcase the Kingdom in the Sky's natural beauty.

Tickets are available via Econet's EcoTicket platform at ecoticket.co.ls, ensuring convenient access for music lovers across Lesotho and the region.

Miss Born a Star
Africa coming
to Lesotho

Chris Theko

In a historic development, Miss Born a Star Africa (MBASA), a continental beauty and cultural pageant celebrating African identity, talent and advocacy, is set to make its debut in Lesotho under the leadership of Maipato Frangeni Mohloai, popularly known as Sphe.

Her appointment as National Director of the MBASA Lesotho Chapter marks a significant milestone for the country's creative and youth development sectors.

MBASA is a registered pan-African pageant exclusively for African models, designed to go beyond traditional beauty contests. The platform celebrates beauty alongside talent, confidence, cultural heritage and social consciousness.

Contestants from across the continent are given an opportunity to showcase their national costumes, cultural expressions and talents, while also engaging in meaningful dialogue around critical issues such as youth empowerment, mental health, education and cultural preservation.

Sphe brings to the role a strong background in youth development, arts education and programme management. She currently serves as Director of the Lesotho Academic Arts and Modelling School, where she has worked extensively with young people across the country, equipping them

with skills in modelling, personal development and creative expression.

She is also the Director of Mr & Miss Tradition Lesotho, a platform dedicated to promoting cultural pride and traditional values.

Speaking on her appointment, Sphe described Miss Born a Star Africa as more than a beauty pageant, but rather a transformative platform for African youth, particularly young women, to embrace their identity, confidence and purpose.

She emphasised that hosting the pageant in Lesotho for the first time carries deep symbolic meaning.

"Bringing Miss Born a Star Africa to Lesotho is not only history in the making, but a clear statement that Basotho girls belong on international stages," she said.

"This platform affirms that dreams are valid, and that the world is ready for Lesotho's stars."

Under her leadership, the Lesotho chapter aims to position local talent within continental and global creative spaces, while fostering confidence, leadership and cultural pride among participants.

"My goal is to ensure that we place Lesotho on the continental stage, I believe this will catapult us to even bigger stages and global recognition," Sphe said.

The initiative is also expected to strengthen continental collaboration and expand opportunities for young women in modelling, arts and advocacy.



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Connecting classrooms to the world: T Connect impact ushers in a new digital era for Lesotho

Keiso Mohloboli

From Botha-Bothe to the global stage, a bold new initiative is transforming education, healthcare, and community empowerment through meaningful connectivity.

On Wednesday, 15 January 2025, T Connect Lesotho officially launched its subsidised social impact wing, T Connect Impact, at Soofia International School in Botha-Bothe. The initiative aims to deliver measurable social, educational, and economic impact through digital infrastructure, energy solutions, education, digital skills development, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

At the heart of the launch was the introduction of the T Connect Impact Account, powered by Starlink Priority Connectivity solutions. Designed specifically for schools, clinics, and community centres, the account provides reliable, high-speed internet, capable of supporting education, healthcare, administration, and innovation, even in areas traditionally left behind by conventional infrastructure.

Speaking during the connectivity hotspot handover, Advocate Phelane Phomane, Managing Director of T Connect Lesotho, emphasised that the initiative represents a shift from access alone to impact-driven transformation.

"This is not just about providing internet," said Advocate Phomane. "It is about creating opportunity. When we connect a school, we are not merely connecting buildings; we are con-



necting minds, dreams, and futures. Through T Connect Impact, Basotho students can access advanced e-learning platforms, global knowledge systems, and competitive skills that allow them to stand shoulder to shoulder with learners anywhere in the world."

A School Transformed

Soofia International School, which hosted the launch, demonstrates the potential when education and technology intersect. The school currently enrolls approximately 1,400

students across Early Years, Primary, and Post-Primary levels. The Post-Primary stream follows the Cambridge curriculum, including Lower Secondary, Upper Secondary (IGCSE), and Advanced Levels (AS & A Levels).

The school employs 60 teachers, has three computer laboratories with 120 computers, and maintains a robotics hub while offering more than 20 academic and enrichment courses. Notably, the school has maintained a 100 per cent pass rate, reflecting its commit-

ment to academic excellence.

"Reliable, high-speed satellite connectivity changes everything for us," said Mr Jayant Vijayakumar, Academic Advisor at Soofia International School. "Starlink enables uninterrupted access to digital learning platforms, virtual laboratories, online assessments, and global educational resources. Teachers can plan smarter lessons, and students can learn beyond the limits of textbooks and classrooms. The benefits extend to parents, who can save on printing costs while their children access digital libraries and resources. It is a sustainable and cost-effective solution for the future."

Impact Beyond Classrooms

T Connect Impact prioritises schools, clinics, and community centres, recognising that connectivity is a foundational service underpinning education, healthcare, and community participation. By reaching remote and underserved areas, the initiative strengthens local communities and helps Lesotho engage fully with the digital economy.

"Internet access, when delivered with purpose, becomes a catalyst for social change," said Advocate Phomane. "We are not merely connecting devices; we are connecting Lesotho to its potential."

With T Connect Impact, Lesotho's classrooms, clinics, and communities are no longer left behind. They are connected to a digital future full of opportunity.

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Lijabatho back on top as VPL race heats up



Vodacom Premier League action

Seabata Mahao

Lijabatho Football Club continue to assert their growing influence in the Vodacom Premier League (VPL) after dismantling Maroala FC 6-1 in a catch-up match played on Wednesday at Morija Ground.

The emphatic victory sent a clear message to the rest of the league, confirming Lijabatho's credentials as serious title contenders and underlining their emergence as one of the season's three rising underdogs, alongside Li-fofane FC and Majantja FC.

Once considered outsiders, the trio have injected new energy into the title race and are challenging the traditional powerhouses with fearless and consistent performances.

Lijabatho's commanding display helped them reclaim top spot on the log and highlighted their attacking depth and growing confidence as the season gathers momentum. Their rise has added fresh intrigue to a tightly contested championship, where margins remain

razor-thin at the summit.

On the same day, defending champions Lioli FC kept pace with the leaders after edging struggling Limkokwing University (LU) FC 2-1, ensuring the pressure at the top remains intense.

Elsewhere, LCS FC were held to a goalless draw by Majantja FC in a rescheduled VPL fixture played in Maseru on Sunday. The match, originally postponed before last year's Christmas break, was carried over into the 2026 calendar.

Majantja once again demonstrated why they are now regarded as one of the league's most difficult opponents. Playing at home, LCS had hoped to begin the new year with a victory, but Majantja proved disciplined and resilient.

After the match, LCS coach Leslie Notši said his team had gone into the game determined to collect maximum points, particularly in front of their supporters.

"This is a match we really expected to win.

Majantja are a very strong side. Their players are young, energetic, quick and physically strong"

Notši reflected on LCS's recent run, noting that the team had recovered well after a difficult spell late last year.

"We finished the year in good spirits. We were no longer losing matches, and we managed to win our final game."

That win was a 2-0 victory over Machokha FC, which boosted confidence heading into the new year. Despite settling for a draw, Notši admitted LCS had missed a chance to claim all three points.

"We created many chances but failed to score. Although we came prepared for a tough match, as the game progressed we believed we could win it."

He also praised the quality of football on display.

"The quality of football we saw today was very high. This is good not only for LCS, but for

Lesotho football as a whole."

Notši revealed that LCS were without key player Nkhabu Maisa, who is currently in South Africa for family reasons.

"This is the reality of amateur football. If this were professional football, a player would understand that this is a job and would be expected to return. However, we understand family matters."

The team has also been unsettled by the recent resignation of assistant coach Tšepo Hlojeng. Despite this, Notši commended his players' discipline.

"My players showed great patience. They stood firm against a very strong team."

Majantja coach Bafokeng Mohapi said fatigue affected his side after a demanding schedule.

"As with every match, we wanted a win and all three points," he said.

Mohapi explained that Majantja had resumed training on January 2 and played a physically taxing midweek match against Matlama.

"We did not have enough time to rest and train after the Matlama match. We focused mainly on allowing the players to rest and recover."

He admitted his side struggled to maintain concentration in possession.

"We lost the ball too often due to a lack of concentration. The players seemed to forget what they normally do well, and we need to go back to training to remind them."

Despite late pressure from Majantja, LCS held firm, with defender Tankiso Chaba delivering a standout performance to earn the Man of the Match award.

Meanwhile, Lijabatho's growing stature was further underlined off the field after Matlama FC striker Jane Thabantšo played his final match for the club. His farewell ended in disappointment as Matlama were held to a draw by bottom-placed Members FC.

Thabantšo, who served Matlama for more than 15 years, has now joined Lijabatho FC, a significant boost to the league leaders and further evidence of their rising influence.

Matlama coach Shalane Lehohla said his team's issues were largely mental.

"We seemed slow to start in all halves of the game. Sometimes you think the team is progressing well, but sometimes you see a sluggish performance, and this shows the problem is in their heads."

Members FC head coach Tšehla said concentration remains his team's biggest challenge.

"Our problem is mental endurance. We start well, but later we lose concentration. We need to play the full 90 minutes with the same focus."

After 14 matches, Lijabatho lead the VPL standings with 29 points, followed closely by Lioli FC and fellow underdogs Lifofane FC on 28 points each. LU FC and Members FC remain at the bottom with nine and seven points respectively.



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