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Storm erupts over US–Lesotho M6.2 billion health deal

Ntsoaki Motaung

A broad coalition of civil society organisations (CSOs) has expressed deep concern over a five-year bilateral health cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the Government of Lesotho and the United States on December 10, 2025.

The agreement, valued at \$364 million (approximately M6.2 billion), includes up to \$232 million from the US and a \$132 million commitment from Lesotho.

It aims to support HIV/AIDS response efforts, strengthen the health workforce, improve data systems, enhance disease surveillance, and promote innovations such as internet connectivity for clinics and advanced medical logistics.

The partnership builds on nearly two decades of US assistance through PEPFAR and seeks to advance Lesotho's progress toward greater national ownership of its health system.

Lesotho has achieved notable success against HIV/AIDS, surpassing the global 95-95-95 targets.

However, in a press statement issued this week, the coalition said a stakeholder meeting held in Maseru on March 12, 2026, exposed deep unease among CSOs and media representatives over issues of sovereignty, transparency, consultation and constitutional compliance.

The civil society groups stated that they are "seriously concerned" about the MOU. They argued that its language and structure appear "to place Lesotho in a subordinate position and risk undermining the dignity and sovereignty of the country."

"Participants emphasised that Lesotho is a sovereign and independent nation with a proud national identity and history of self-determination. Any international partnership must therefore be grounded in mutual respect, transparency, and equality between partners."

The groups raised alarm over the lack of meaningful consultation with civil society, development partners, and other national stakeholders before the agreement was signed.

They also criticised the absence of full public disclosure, particularly Annexes 4 and 5, which reportedly deal with data sharing and biological specimen sharing.



"Equally concerning is the absence of critical documentation, such as Annexes 4 and 5, which have not been made publicly available. Stakeholders stressed that agreements with national governance implications must be transparent and accessible to citizens. Basotho taxpayers have a right to know the full terms and conditions of agreements entered into on their behalf."

A key concern is the reported 25-year commitment to data and specimen sharing, which participants described as too long-term to be decided solely by an administration with a five-year term.

They warned of potential risks to data privacy, national security, and Lesotho's legislative framework, including constitutional privacy rights.

They questioned whether a significant portion of "technical assistance" funding would truly strengthen local systems or primarily benefit foreign institutions.

The CSOs pointed to the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of Lesotho, specifically provisions requiring that international agreements be tabled in and approved by Parliament, commonly referenced in relation to Section 153A.

They noted that the executive may sign agreements for expediency, but such agreements should not take full effect without parliamentary approval and an explanatory memorandum. Failure

to follow this process, they argued, could render the agreement inconsistent with the Constitution.

While acknowledging potential benefits, such as financial support for health programmes, laboratory infrastructure, and technical expertise, the groups stressed that these must not come at the expense of sovereignty, constitutional order, or democratic governance.

The statement called for urgent actions, including immediate public disclosure of the full MOU and all annexes, formal tabling of the agreement in parliament for debate and approval, a comprehensive legal review of its compatibility with the constitution and national laws, and meaningful engagement with civil society.

The CSOs warned that if the government, through the Ministers of Finance and Health, fails to address these demands, they would maintain their position that undisclosed elements may be detrimental to the Basotho nation and reject them outright.

The statement was issued with the support of 19 organisations, including the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (LCN), Lesotho Network of AIDS Service Organisations, Transformation Resource Center, and others.

It concluded by affirming civil society's commitment to constructive engagement while insisting that all partnerships must respect Lesotho's Constitution, sovereignty, and democratic

institutions.

The MOU is scheduled for implementation starting in April this year.

The controversy has spilled into parliament, exposing sharp divisions among lawmakers.

Member of Parliament (MP) Paul Masiu has sought to introduce a motion to reverse a previous decision halting the MoU, arguing that maintaining the suspension could have "serious adverse implications for the country."

However, another MP, Remaketse Sehlabaka, leader of the Mpulule Political Summit, insisted yesterday in a press release that parliament has already taken a decisive stance.

"It is crucial that as a Member of Parliament and a member of the Social Cluster Portfolio Committee, I make it known to the media houses and the public at large that the Parliament of Lesotho has accepted and adopted the recommendation of the Social Cluster Portfolio Committee to ANNUL the recent G2G MoU between the Kingdom of Lesotho and the USA in the Committees Report pertaining to the MoH Budget allocation for 2026/2027."

Sehlabaka argued that the decision effectively nullifies the agreement and accused the executive of attempting to push it back through Parliament using its majority.

He said: "However, the Minister of Health -and the whole cabinet- wishes to bring the matter back into Parliament for reconsideration. All efforts are made to have a motion to debate the matter to overturn the Parliament decision through a majority vote, which they enjoy. PREPOSTEROUS!"

While acknowledging the life-saving role of international partnerships in the fight against HIV/AIDS, Sehlabaka warned against blind acceptance.

"Evidence presented in Parliament raises serious concerns that the current structure of this agreement may unintentionally, and maybe intentionally so, create long-term dependency, weaken national systems, and expose the country to significant risk should external funding change or decline," he said.

He called for full public disclosure of the agreement, an independent "Health Sovereignty Audit," a clear transition plan toward domestic health financing, and stronger integration of donor-funded programmes into national systems.

Unregistered "doctor" disappears amid investigation over patient death

Ntsoaki Motaung

A Zimbabwean national, Makwambeni Sheu, who was employed as a doctor at Mafeteng District Hospital, has reportedly disappeared after learning that he was under investigation by the Lesotho Medical, Dental and Pharmacy Council (LMDPC) over allegations linked to the death of a patient.

Sources close to the council allege that Sheu was hired irregularly, without proper procedures being followed, and was deployed to Mafeteng District Hospital, where he worked in the gynaecology department.

He is said to have fled the country before appearing for a scheduled hearing by the council.

According to the sources, Sheu performed a surgical procedure on a 26-year-old woman under non-emergency circumstances. Following the operation, the patient reportedly experi-

enced continuous bleeding.

It is further alleged that the woman returned to the hospital, where Sheu operated on her a second time and removed her uterus in an attempt to stop the bleeding. However, the procedure allegedly failed to control the haemorrhage.

Junior doctors at the hospital later transferred the patient to Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital (QMMH), where she subsequently died due to excessive blood loss. She is reported to have left behind a newborn baby.

Sources claim that Sheu had been summoned by the LMDPC for questioning, but left the country before the process could be concluded.

They further allege that he was recruited by the ministry of health without all regulatory requirements being fully met, including verification of his credentials by the council.

Mafeteng District Medical Officer, Dr Thapelo

Ramatseka, neither confirmed nor denied the allegations. Ramatseka said he was not authorised to comment on matters concerning the ministry of health but acknowledged that he knows Sheu.

When contacted for comment, the Director of Clinical Services in the ministry of health, Dr Lucy Mapota, confirmed that Sheu had been hired following interviews conducted by the ministry and the public service.

Mapota stated that the ministry had verified that he obtained his medical qualification from a recognised university, but his registration process with the LMDPC had not been completed.

"And what was left was for the medical council to finalise its processes. We work together with the council to ensure doctors are registered before practising in the country. In this particular case, the outstanding issue was a letter of good standing. When it took longer than expected, we

had to release him because he could not continue working without registration," she said.

On the alleged patient death, Mapota declined to comment, citing the absence of a formal complaint or incident report.

"In cases where there are concerns relating to patient care, there should be an incident report or a formal complaint lodged," she said.

Meanwhile, LMDPC President Dr Makamole Lelimo said he could not immediately recall the case, noting that the council is handling multiple matters.

"I am unable to confirm or deny the allegations at this stage," Lelimo said.

He, however, emphasised that all foreign doctors intending to practise in Lesotho are required to register with the council and undergo verification of their credentials before commencing work.

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U.S. embassy confirms Basotho must pay up to M250,000 to visit America

Staff Reporter

The United States has imposed a steep new financial barrier on Basotho seeking visitor visas, requiring them to pay a refundable bond of up to \$15,000 (over M250,000) before a visa can be issued, a move likely to shut out many ordinary travellers.

The requirement, which takes effect on April 2, 2026, forms part of the Trump administration's expansion of its Visa Bond Pilot Programme to 50 countries in a bid to curb visa overstays.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy in Maseru confirmed the policy applies across the board.

"Any citizen or national travelling on a passport issued by Lesotho, who is found otherwise eligible for a B1/B2 visa, must post a bond for \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000."

The bond amount will not be known in advance. "The amount is determined at the time of the visa interview," the spokesperson added.

Lesotho applicants must still travel to the U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg, South Africa, for their interviews, as the Embassy in Maseru offers only limited non-im-

migrant visa services.

This is not an individual risk assessment but a blanket country-level rule.

Every otherwise eligible Lesotho passport holder will face the same requirement, regardless of personal circumstances.

The embassy warned applicants not to pay anything prematurely. "Applicants should submit Form I-352 to post a bond only after a consular officer directs them to do so," the spokesperson stressed.

Payment must be made online through the official U.S. Treasury platform Pay.gov using the provided direct link. "Never pay before receiving official instructions, and do not use third-party sites."

The U.S. government takes no responsibility for money lost to scams.

The bond is fully refundable if the traveller complies. "Visa bonds will be refunded to travellers after they depart the United States or their B1/B2 visa expires, if they never travelled," the Embassy explained.

"Returning the visa bond demonstrates that the B1/B2 visa holder travelled legally within the terms of the visa."

If problems arise with refunds, applicants will receive contact information at the inter-

view. The program is authorised under Immigration and Nationality Act Section 221(g)(3) and the Temporary Final Rule establishing the pilot, which runs through August 2026.

The Trump Administration is expanding the program "based on a range of immigration risk factors," according to the spokesperson. "The Visa Bonds have proven effective in deterring illegal immigration, enforcing compliance with visa regulations."

Officials point to early success. Nearly 1,000 bonded travellers have shown a 97 percent compliance rate in returning home on time.

By contrast, visitors from the 50 countries in the program have generated tens of thousands of overstays in recent years, costing U.S. taxpayers an average of over \$18,000 per removal.

The embassy referred questions on specific Lesotho overstay rates to the Department of Homeland Security's Entry/Exit Overstay Report.

The Embassy also declined to detail diplomatic consultations with the government of Lesotho prior to the country's inclusion in the program.

Looking ahead, the spokesperson said the

Department of State "may update the country list throughout the Visa Bond Pilot" and "is constantly reviewing and evaluating screening and vetting procedures worldwide and overstay rates to ensure that our visa process upholds the highest standards for U.S. national security and public safety."

Details of the program, including the full list of 50 affected countries, are now public on the State Department website.

For many ordinary Basotho hoping to visit family, attend conferences, or explore the United States, the bond represents a significant barrier; thousands of dollars tied up for months, even if fully refunded later.

Critics see it as punishing an entire nation for the actions of a minority who overstay, while supporters argue it is a necessary tool to protect American borders and resources without banning travel outright.

Lesotho nationals are urged to review the official State Department and U.S. Embassy Maseru websites before scheduling interviews in Johannesburg.

The Embassy stressed that the bond does not guarantee visa issuance and is required only after an officer finds the applicant otherwise eligible.

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Government parks M11.7 Million in mobile money accounts

... Auditor General finds it flouted its own financial laws

Bereng Mpaki

The government has been flagged by Auditor General Mathabo Makete for operating mobile money accounts outside the country's legal financial framework, raising serious concerns about public finance management, transparency and accountability.

In her recently published audit report on the consolidated financial statements of the government of Lesotho for the year ended 31 March 2023, Makete revealed that over M11 million was held in mobile money platforms despite existing laws prohibiting such arrangements for government transactions.

The government is widely known to use mobile money platforms to pay old age pensioners, vulnerable populations and youth apprenticeship programme beneficiaries, among others, reflecting a growing reliance on digital financial services to reach citizens more efficiently and conveniently.

The audit established that the government held 13 mobile accounts with Vodacom Lesotho's M-Pesa platform, eight accounts with Econet Telecom Lesotho's EcoCash, and two accounts with Chaperone's C-Pay as at March 31, 2023.

However, the report did not provide a breakdown of how much was held in each of the 23 accounts.

"Under Note 15 on the consolidated financial statements on the analysis of bank accounts, the Accountant-General has included a total amount of M11.7 million held by three mobile network operators," Makete said in the report.

"The audit concern is that there is currently no legal provision for the operation of mobile accounts under Mobile Network Operators, as Treasury Regulations, 2014, Section 74 (1)(a), only provides for the use of official bank accounts," Makete said.

The Auditor General's findings point to a direct violation of the Treasury Regulations, 2014, which restrict government financial transactions to officially designated bank accounts.

By using mobile money accounts, the government is effectively operating outside established controls



meant to safeguard public funds.

Financial experts have warned that such practices weaken transparency and expose public resources to potential abuse. Mobile money platforms, although efficient and widely used, are not fully integrated into government oversight systems, creating gaps in audit trails, increasing the risk of misappropriation and complicating reconciliation processes.

This also raises broader concerns about compliance with public financial management laws, which require that all government revenues and expenditures be properly recorded and monitored.

Transactions conducted outside formally recognised banking structures risk being underreported or inconsistently captured in official accounts.

The development comes against the backdrop of

a rapidly expanding mobile money ecosystem that has transformed Lesotho's financial landscape over the past decade.

According to the Lesotho FinScope Consumer Survey 2021, mobile money has become a critical driver of financial inclusion, with 87 percent of adults now accessing formal financial services.

Mobile money platforms provide the closest and most accessible financial service for many Basotho, particularly in rural areas, effectively bridging the gap left by limited banking infrastructure.

Since its introduction in 2012, mobile money usage has grown significantly. Econet Telecom Lesotho launched EcoCash in October 2012, followed by Vodacom Lesotho's M-Pesa in July 2013, while C-Pay and other non-telecom-based platforms entered the market at a later stage.

The FinScope report said these platforms have evolved from simple money transfer services into

broader financial ecosystems supporting payments for goods and services, remittances and even small business transactions.

It highlighted that mobile money has become the primary financial tool for the underbanked, reducing geographical barriers and enabling a shift towards a more cashless economy. It is increasingly used by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which form the backbone of Lesotho's economy.

The 2023 MSME survey estimated over 107,000 small business owners in the country, many of whom rely on digital payments to sustain operations and improve financial resilience.

The government itself has been moving towards digitising public services, including the disbursement of social grants through mobile money platforms. This has improved efficiency, reduced queues and lowered the cost of distributing funds, particularly in remote areas.

However, the Auditor General's report underscores a critical mismatch between policy and practice. While mobile money is clearly embedded in everyday economic activity and increasingly within government service delivery, the legal and regulatory framework has not kept pace with these developments.

At the same time, the Auditor General acknowledged the practical advantages of mobile money, particularly in improving access to services and speeding up transactions, especially in rural and underserved areas.

To address the anomaly, the Auditor General recommended that the Accountant-General move swiftly to formalise the use of mobile network operators in government financial transactions. This would involve amending existing regulations to accommodate digital financial services within a controlled and accountable framework.

"The Accountant-General should formalise the approval for the use of mobile network operators for financial transactions of the Government. Use of MNOs provides easier speed and access to financial transactions for the public," Makete advised.

Matsoso warns killers, woman abusers

Refloe Molise

The Commissioner of Police Advocate Borotho Matsoso has issued a stern warning to criminals amid a surge in killings, abuse and sexual violence against women, girls and children, declaring that offenders will face the full force of the law.

Speaking during a media briefing held at the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) headquarters in Maseru this week, Matsoso raised serious concern over the escalating cases, warning that the trend is fast becoming a national crisis.

"Recent reports show a disturbing rise in gender-based violence, and women account for the majority of the victims," Matsoso said.

Matsoso said cases of sexual abuse and killings involving girls, elderly women and children are becoming more frequent, describing the situation as alarming and unacceptable.

"These cases are becoming more frequent, and the situation is both alarming and unacceptable," he said.

Recent incidents have been reported in the Mafeteng district at Ha Motlere and in Ha Mohlakaso in Maseru, where women were allegedly murdered by their intimate partners.

In some cases, suspects are reported to have abused the victims, killed them and buried their bodies in an attempt to conceal the crimes.

According to Matsoso, investigations have led to the discovery of burial sites and the arrest of suspects linked to the killings. He said perpetrators often exploit trust, luring victims into relationships

or promising employment before committing the crimes.

"Some perpetrators gain the victims' trust by pretending to be in loving relationships or by promising them employment opportunities before abusing and killing them," he said.

He also expressed concern over the sexual abuse of elderly women and children, noting that most reported cases involve male perpetrators, acts he described as shameful and contrary to Basotho values.

"These acts are shameful and contrary to the values of Basotho society," Matsoso said.

In a strong warning, he stressed that those found guilty would face imprisonment, with strict bail conditions and heavy penalties imposed under the law.

"Individuals found guilty of such crimes will face imprisonment, as the law provides heavy penalties and strict bail conditions," he said.

He further highlighted the need for improved policing resources, including additional vehicles and horses, to enhance the ability to track suspects and respond swiftly. He also underscored the importance of continuous training to strengthen the fight against violent crime.

"We need more resources, including vehicles and horses, and continuous training of officers to strengthen the fight against violent crime," Matsoso said.

Despite the challenges, he noted improvements in law enforcement efforts in recent years and urged officers to maintain momentum. He also called on the public to support police efforts, stressing that

community cooperation remains critical in tackling crime and protecting vulnerable groups.

"There has been noticeable improvement in law enforcement efforts, and I encourage officers to continue working hard. Community cooperation remains essential in addressing crime and protecting vulnerable groups," he said.

He reiterated the police's commitment to ensuring perpetrators are brought to justice.

"We remain committed to ensuring that perpetrators of violence against women and children are brought before the courts and held accountable," Matsoso said.

LMPS spokesperson, Superintendent Thabo Mohai, outlined several recent criminal cases handled by police.

"I have a Maseru report where a 27-year-old man, Thabo Nkesi from Qobosheaneng, Ha Lehloba, Roma, appeared before the Maseru Magistrate's Court on March 23, accused of stealing state funds by making himself a chief and performing a chief's duties," Mohai said.

He explained that the suspect was the right-hand man of Morena Lehloba and failed to report the chief's death.

"After the chief's death, he continued receiving the chief's salary and continued using the chief's stamp. The money that he received was M5,900. He was granted M500 bail, which he paid. He will appear before the court on April 7, 2026," Mohai said.

Mohai further reported that a 50-year-old man from Roma, Ha Lehloba, was arrested on March 23,



2026, after being found in possession of an illegal 9mm firearm and eight bullets, as well as a suspected fake licence. He will appear in court once the investigations are complete.

"In another report from Maseru town, four members from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport were arrested by police on March 22, 2026, accused of crime and acceptance of a bribe," he said.

The report states that the suspects allegedly impounded a vehicle, claiming it lacked a fire extinguisher, and demanded M5,000 in exchange for returning the driver's documents.

Mohai said the driver reported the matter to the police, who set up a trap by providing the money. The suspects were arrested after receiving the cash.



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Newsday

Business

Alliance Insurance subsidiary launches Lesotho's first crematorium

Mamello Rakotsoane

New Dawn, a subsidiary of Alliance Insurance, has introduced Lesotho's first cremation service, offering an alternative to traditional burial practices and signalling a shift in the country's funeral services market.

The crematorium is located within Lehae Funeral Services premises in Ha Tikoe, in the south-west of Maseru.

The facility was unveiled this week during a live demonstration attended by community members, religious leaders and funeral industry stakeholders. The session outlined the cremation process and its potential alignment with Basotho cultural practices.

During the demonstration, officials explained that cremation involves placing the deceased in a high-temperature furnace, reducing the body to bone fragments which are later processed into ash.

"The body is placed in a special furnace that burns at very high temperatures. After the burning, the remaining bones are ground into fine ash, which is then handed to the family," explained a New Dawn technician during the demonstration.

Officials noted that some bone fragments, particularly parts of the skull, require additional mechanical processing after the initial cremation stage. Metal implants, such as surgical plates or rods, are removed before the final ash is prepared.



Inside New Dawn's crematorium, showing the high-temperature furnace used to cremate bodies.

The cremation process takes approximately two hours, after which the ashes are placed in an urn and returned to the family.

Speaking at the launch, Lehae Funerals' Chief Executive Officer Mokhathi Motjope emphasised that the service is optional and not intended to replace traditional funeral practices.

"This service is not meant to take away our culture. Families are still free to hold funerals, slaughter

animals, and perform all the rituals they believe in. Cremation is simply another option," he said.

He added that families have flexibility in how they incorporate cremation into funeral arrangements, either conducting cremation prior to memorial services or after traditional funeral rites.

Some attendees shared personal experiences reflecting changing attitudes toward burial practices. Kabelo Mollo said his family honoured his father's

wish to be cremated.

"Before my father passed away, he told us clearly that he wanted to be cremated and that his ashes should be scattered in his yard. As a family, we respected his wish and carried it out," Mollo said.

Cultural commentator Ratokelo Nkoka observed that burial practices among Basotho have evolved over time, influenced by shifting social and economic conditions.

"In the past, Basotho buried their loved ones in family land and homesteads. But today, with changing lifestyles and limited space, we are beginning to see new ways of handling burials," Nkoka explained.

Urbanisation and land constraints are also emerging as key drivers of change. Vuyane Monyake highlighted the growing pressure on burial space, particularly in urban centres.

"In places where land is limited and housing developments are expanding, families sometimes struggle to find suitable burial sites. Cremation may become a practical solution in such situations," she said.

New Dawn indicated that the cremation service is priced at M15, 000. Families may choose to keep the ashes in an urn or scatter them in a location of personal significance to the deceased.

The introduction of cremation services marks a notable development in Lesotho's funeral services industry, with potential to reshape market offerings and consumer choices.

However, it is also expected to fuel ongoing public debate as communities navigate the balance between long-standing cultural traditions and evolving socio-economic realities.



Nthatsi Sephaka, the third winner of Toyota Starlet from Hoa Khonahala campaign

Seabata Mahao

A life-changing moment has arrived for Nthatsi Sephaka of Ha-Abia, who said winning a brand-new Toyota Starlet through Econet Telecom Lesotho's 'Hoakhonahala' campaign will significantly improve both her personal and professional life.

Sephaka, a promoter and merchandiser working with various companies and organisations, said the vehicle will ease the challenges she previously faced in executing her daily duties.

"This motor vehicle is going to make a great impact in my life, especially in my work. I will now be able to move around conveniently and reach places that were difficult before," she said.

Originally from Sefikeng in Berea, Sephaka now

lives in Ha-Abia, Maseru, with her family. She noted that the timing of her win is particularly meaningful, as she is expecting her first child.

"I use EcoCash to pay my bills, and almost every day I bought promotional bundles while working. I am very happy to be crowned the winner. This is a huge achievement for me, as I am the first in my family to own and drive a motor vehicle," she added.

Sephaka said the car will significantly improve her mobility, enabling her to carry out work-related errands more efficiently.

"The days of walking to different areas for my work are now over. I will be driving myself to places I was not able to reach," she said.

She recalled learning about the campaign during

New chapter for Sephaka after car win

a promotional activation in Ha-Matala, Maseru.

"I saw the campaign being promoted and decided to buy bundles for my daily work. Fortunately, I got lucky," she said.

Expressing her gratitude, Sephaka described the win as transformative.

"Winning this new Toyota Starlet is more than just a dream come true for me. I never imagined that simply being part of ETL and SEFS would change my life in such a big way. On behalf of all the winners, we are truly grateful to the ETL family for rewarding us and bringing real opportunities to our communities," she said.

Sephaka is the third and final winner of a Toyota Starlet in the 2025/26 summer campaign run by ETL and Sasai Econet Financial Services (SEFS), dubbed 'Hoakhonahala'.

The campaign concluded today at Sefika Complex in Maseru, where the vehicle was officially handed over during a ceremony led by ETL's Chief Executive Officer, Dennis Platjies.

Over the four-month campaign period, more than

650 customers were rewarded, with over M6 million distributed in prizes and cashback incentives.

"What makes this moment truly special is not just the prizes ETL has been handing over, but the real impact behind them," said Platjies.

"Beyond the numbers, we have seen lives touched from musicians and dancers to small businesses and enterprises. Communities across the country have been energised through this campaign," he added.

He emphasised that each winner represents a story of possibility, underscoring the company's commitment to rewarding customer loyalty.

The grand finale event, which also featured performances by award-winning musicians and comedians, marked the culmination of a campaign that has strengthened ties between the telecommunications giant and communities across Lesotho.

The 'Hoakhonahala' initiative demonstrated how customer engagement, supported by innovative services, can deliver meaningful impact, uplifting livelihoods from urban centres to rural districts while rewarding loyalty.

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Notice of Change of Company Name

Notice is hereby made to inform the public that BISHIVE (PTY) LTD (of registration number 98196) has decided to change its name to BIZHIVE (PTY) LTD. Anyone with an objection to this change may lodge their concerns with the registrar of companies at One-Stop Business Facilitation Centre Ministry of Trade & Industry P.O. Box 747, Kingsway, Maseru Telephone: 22310893 or directly contact the director of the company Mr Tumelo at 68758875



Endometriosis emerges as silent health crisis in Lesotho



Molumaela Lepeli, a health administrator, nurse educator, and community health specialist

Ntsoaki Motaung

The growing prevalence of Endometriosis in Lesotho is raising alarm among health specialists, who warn that the condition is frequently overlooked until it reaches advanced stages.

Molumaela Lepeli, a PhD candidate, health administrator, nurse educator, community health

nurse and public health specialist, said the disease has become an increasing concern across the country's health facilities.

While public awareness has largely focused on Cervical Cancer, Lepeli cautioned that endometriosis is equally serious. It affects a significant number of adult women and, in severe cases, can lead to

life-altering outcomes such as hysterectomy.

One of the biggest challenges, he noted, is that symptoms are often dismissed or misdiagnosed. The intense abdominal pain associated with the condition is frequently mistaken for hormonal imbalances, irregular menstruation, or uterine fibroids.

As a result, Lepeli urged women to take persistent pelvic pain seriously.

"The disease manifests through severe pain during menstruation and ovulation, as well as chronic lower abdominal pain that may radiate to the back. Other symptoms include pain during or after sexual activity, discomfort during urination or bowel movements, and in some cases, excessive bleeding that may have an unpleasant odour," he said.

Beyond physical suffering, the condition can have devastating long-term consequences. Lepeli explained that endometriosis is a leading contributor to infertility. Data from the World Health Organisation (WHO) indicates that up to half of women struggling to conceive globally may have the condition.

Despite its severity, diagnosis remains complex. Lepeli said confirming the disease often requires specialised imaging or invasive procedures such as laparoscopy, where a camera is used to examine internal organs.

In Lesotho, the challenge is compounded by limited data on prevalence, making early detection even more difficult and leaving many women to en-

dure years of untreated pain.

The financial burden further deepens the crisis. While some treatments are available locally, Lepeli said supply is extremely limited. Many patients are forced to seek medication abroad at high cost, effectively restricting proper care to those who can afford it.

He has called on the ministry of health to ensure that effective treatment is accessible nationwide, including in remote areas.

Without improved access to healthcare and early diagnosis, Lepeli warned that Lesotho risks a surge in women losing not only their quality of life but, in some cases, their lives, echoing the trajectory seen with cervical cancer.

Although the exact cause of endometriosis remains unclear, it is believed to be linked to genetic and immune system factors. Lepeli stressed that the most effective defence is awareness and early medical intervention.

According to the WHO, endometriosis affects an estimated 10 percent, around 190 million, women of reproductive age worldwide.

The organisation describes it as a chronic condition characterised by severe menstrual pain, heavy bleeding, chronic pelvic pain, infertility, abdominal bloating and nausea.

"Endometriosis most commonly occurs in the pelvis, but in some women it can occur elsewhere in the body, including the abdomen and chest. It can affect sexual intercourse, bowel movements, urination, and mental health. There is currently no cure, and access to early diagnosis and effective treatment remains limited in many settings. Treatment focuses on managing symptoms and reducing long-term impact," the WHO states.



Kingdom of Lesotho

Ministry of Education and Training

Expression of Interest for short term Consultancy of Procurement Record Keepers (2)

COUNTRY : Kingdom of Lesotho
PROJECT : Lesotho Education Improvement Project (LEIP)
SECTOR : Education
LOAN # : 7587-LS
PROJECT ID NO. : P500587

The Government of the Lesotho (GOL) signed Loan with World Bank to support implementation of the Lesotho Education Improvement project (P500587) (LEIP) for a total value of US\$ 20 million in August 2024. The project aims to improve basic education service delivery and student retention in targeted schools. Mainly construction of classrooms and pit latrines in primary schools, and workshop, science laboratory blocks and latrines in secondary schools is included in the project. MoET intends to apply part of the proceeds to payments for goods, related services and consulting services to be procured under this project.

The three components of the project are:

Component 1: Improving the quality of teaching in primary and secondary schools

Component 2: Enhancing physical learning conditions in targeted primary and secondary schools, (I) Improving basic infrastructure in targeted primary schools, (II) Constructing laboratories and workshops in targeted secondary schools with the total allocation of US\$ 15 Million.

Component 3: Strengthening project management, and governance of education system.

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) now wishes to recruit a **Two (2) Procurement Record Keepers** to be part of the Project Facilitation Unit (PFU) which is responsible for facilitating the implementation of the project.

Objective:

The principal objective of this assignment is the provision of consulting services for procurement record keeping using Systematic tracking Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) to record all procurement activities in real time.

Qualification and Experience:

Interested candidates must have:

a. **Educational qualifications:** at least diploma in Office Management or Business Management or Diploma In

Procurement and Supply or related field.

b. **Work Experience:** minimum of 2 years working in an office environment. Past experience in projects funded by development partners such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Union, the USAID, and the Millennium Challenge Account will be an added advantage and must have at least completed one (1) similar assignment in the past Seven (7) years.

Selection Criteria:

The selection of the suitable candidate will be based on the qualifications and experience as follows: (i) qualifications (30%), (ii) experience (professional, specific and general) (60%); and (iii) other relevant attributes (10%) consistent with the requirements of the Terms of Reference pursuant to the relevant requirements of the World Bank's applicable Guidelines: Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers' **Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers** July 2016 and **updated February 2025** (Sixth Edition), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest available on www.worldbank.org/procurement.

Duration:

The duration of this assignment will be approximately from 6 months with possibility of extension subject to satisfactory performance.

Details:

Detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) can be attained from the following address between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on working days: **Procurement Unit, EFU, Site 130 Fokothi, Off Moshoeshoe Road, P.O. Box 1279, Maseru 100, Lesotho. Tel (+266) 22324968. Attn: Mr. Relebohile Nkalai** Email: relebohile.nkalai@gov.ls with a copy to nthabi.hleoheng86@gmail.com.

Submission:

Interested consultants should submit their detailed expression of interest and updated Curriculum Vitae (CVs), indicating names and contact details of at least two (2) referees, and should enclose certified copies of educational certificates. The Expression of interest must be hand delivered to the address indicated above on or before **April 13th, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. (local time)**.

Submissions must be clearly titled (including on the submission envelope where applicable):

"Expression of Interest for Procurement Record Keeper"



EXTERNAL ADVERT

DEPARTMENT : Electoral Operations
JOB TITLE : Senior District Electoral Officer
GRADE : H
NUMBER OF POSITIONS : 1
DUTY STATION : Mafeteng
RESPONSIBLE TO : Manager Electoral Operations

Under the general supervision of the Manager Electoral Operations, the Senior District Electoral Officer will be responsible for management of elections in the District, general administration of IEC at all levels but not limited to all Electoral operations matters, electoral education in order to ensure compliance with international standards in conducting elections. The incumbent will coordinate implementation of voter registration at district level to ensure clean voters roll, supervise and monitor implementation of Civic and Voter Education during and after elections. The incumbent represents Director of Elections at district level in district stakeholder's initiatives and meetings.

MAIN DUTIES

1. Conducts and supervises management and administration of Elections (National Assembly, Local Government, referendum, By – Elections, fresh elections) at district level.
2. Coordinates implementation of Voter Registration at District level to ensure clean voters roll.
3. Coordinate establishment of District management structures to facilitate effective voter registration.
4. Supervises and monitor implementation of Civic and Voter Education during and after elections through periodic inspections throughout the constituencies.
5. Develops plans and strategies in alignment with organisational strategies and goals at district level.
6. Provides periodic reports on general administration of district office and identifies and advises management on any challenge that may arise from time to time.
7. Conducts research on electoral matters in the district and prepares comprehensive report.
8. Identifies suitable places for registration, polling, Electoral Divisions and Constituency Boundaries.
9. Ensures effective implementation of Conflict prevention and dispute resolution during elections.
10. Gathers and maintains data on boundaries, mapping

information and population and demographic changes.

11. Maintains workplace discipline for all staff at district level.
12. Maintains sound image of IEC at district level.
13. Maintains staff welfare and all matters at district level.
14. Ensures sound financial planning, management and accountability of IEC funds.
15. Takes responsibility of all IEC assets in the district and including IEC vehicle that is assigned to him/her.
16. Maintains office fixtures and furniture at all times.

JOB SPECIFICATION

Master's Degree in Political Science, Electoral Policy, Administration or equivalent plus two (2) years related working experience.

OR

Bachelor's Degree in Political Science, Business Administration or equivalent, with five (5) years related working experience.

Knowledge and Skills

- Strong written and oral communication skills
- Leadership skills
- Good organisation skills
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Administration skills
- Conflict management skills

Interested candidates must submit their applications accompanied by up-to-date Curriculum Vitae with three referees, copies of certified qualification certificates and transcripts, send via email to recruitment@iec.org.ls under the subject line; Senior District Electoral Officer

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: 10TH April 2026 at 12:00 noon.

Only Short listed candidates will be contacted.

Sovereignty is not a side clause

The controversy surrounding the US–Lesotho M6.2 billion health cooperation agreement is not, at its core, about rejecting international assistance. It is about something far more fundamental: whether Lesotho is negotiating as an equal partner or drifting into dependency dressed up as cooperation.

There is no dispute about the value of the partnership itself. For nearly two decades, programmes such as PEPFAR have helped transform Lesotho's HIV/AIDS response. Lives have been saved, systems strengthened, and the country has even surpassed global 95-95-95 targets. These are not small achievements. They are the result of sustained collaboration and, crucially, trust.

But trust cannot be sustained in the absence of transparency.

The concerns raised by civil society organisations are not ideological. They are constitutional, practical and, frankly, unavoidable. When key annexes of a binding international agreement, particularly those dealing with data sharing and biological specimens, are not made public, suspicion is not only natural, it is justified. No democratic government can expect citizens to endorse what they are not allowed to see.

The issue becomes even more serious when viewed through the lens of the Constitution of Lesotho. International agreements that carry national implications are not the sole domain of the Executive. They must be subjected to parliamentary scrutiny, debate and approval. This is not bureaucratic red tape but is a safeguard against overreach and a guarantee of accountability.

If, as alleged, the agreement binds Lesotho to long-term commitments, including a reported 25-year framework on data and specimen sharing, then the stakes are even higher. A government elected for five years cannot quietly sign away obligations that will shape national policy for decades. That is not governance. That is generational decision-making without generational consent.

Equally troubling is the broader question of balance. Partnerships of this scale must empower local systems, not entrench reliance on external actors. When large portions of funding are categorised as “technical assistance,” legitimate questions arise: who benefits most? Are Basotho institutions being strengthened, or are foreign systems being sustained through Lesotho's health sector?

This is not an argument against cooperation with the United States or any other partner. It is an argument for recalibrating the terms of that cooperation. Development assistance must evolve from dependency to durability, from donor-driven priorities to nationally owned systems.

Parliament's apparent move to annul the agreement, and the executive's attempt to revive it, exposes a deeper governance tension. It is not simply a political contest; it is a test of institutional integrity. If Parliament's role can be overridden or diluted in matters of this magnitude, then constitutional safeguards become symbolic rather than substantive.

At the same time, outright rejection of the agreement without engagement would be equally short-sighted. Lesotho's health system still relies heavily on external support. Walking away without a viable alternative risks undoing years of progress, particularly in HIV/AIDS programming and service delivery.

The path forward is neither blind acceptance nor reckless rejection. It is a rigorous renegotiation.

Government must place the full agreement — including all annexes — before Parliament and the public. It must subject the MoU to legal scrutiny to ensure alignment with constitutional provisions and national laws. It must engage civil society not as an afterthought, but as a partner in shaping policy that affects the nation.

Above all, it must insist on terms that reflect equality.

Lesotho is not merely a recipient of aid. It is a sovereign state. Its partnerships must reflect that reality, not obscure it.

If this moment is handled correctly, it could mark a turning point: a shift from opaque agreements to transparent governance, from dependency to self-determination. If mishandled, it risks setting a precedent where critical national decisions are made behind closed doors, with consequences that outlive those who signed them.

The question, ultimately, is simple: will Lesotho assert its sovereignty in practice — or surrender it in fine print?



No Comment



Dr. Tšeliso Moroke

Common Concern

How the country moves

Reclaiming vision in policy and budgeting

We have never truly committed ourselves to a national course.

As a nation, we drift. We adjust principles depending on who is in charge, and in doing so, we weaken the very foundation meant to guide us. A constitution is not supposed to be a flexible tool of convenience, bent and reshaped to accommodate those in power. It is meant to be the supreme expression of our collective will, firm, respected, and above individual ambition. Yet in our case, it often appears negotiable.

This raises a difficult but necessary question: do we govern by principle, or by personality?

We lack a coherent and visionary outlook for the country. Our politics is not anchored in long-term national interest but in short-term political survival. Petty interests dominate serious discourse. Decisions that should shape generations are reduced to calculations of who benefits today, who gains power tomorrow, and who must be appeased in the moment.

In such an environment, leadership becomes transactional rather than transformational.

We have cultivated a political culture in which personal interests often take precedence over national duty. Public office is treated less as a responsibility and more as an opportunity, an opportunity to secure influence, reward loyalty, and, in some instances, accumulate wealth. The result is a state that appears active on paper yet fails to deliver meaningful, sustained change in the lives of ordinary Basotho.

And then comes the budget.

A national budget is more than a financial statement. It is a moral document. It reveals priorities. It tells us who matters and who does not. It should be the clearest reflection of a government's commitment to its people.

But whose interests does Lesotho's budget serve?

This question is even more pressing when one considers our structural economic realities. We are heavily dependent on Southern African Customs Union (SACU) revenues. External receipts that we neither fully control nor

can reliably predict. When SACU revenues fluctuate, our entire fiscal framework trembles. Yet, year after year, our budgets are crafted with a level of optimism that borders on denial.

Instead of using SACU windfalls to build a resilient and diversified economy, we have used them to sustain government consumption.

Our wage bill continues to consume a disproportionate share of national resources. A significant portion of the budget goes toward salaries, allowances, and administrative costs, leaving limited fiscal space for capital investment and economic transformation. We are essentially running a government that is expensive to maintain but limited in its developmental impact.

At the same time, we outsource critical state functions, technical know-how, construction, and project management, often at great cost. This creates a paradox: a government that is both oversized and incapable of delivering. We pay heavily for expertise that should, over time, be developed internally. Instead of building institutional strength, we perpetuate dependency.

What does this mean for the ordinary Mo-sotho?

It means unemployment remains stubbornly high, particularly among the youth. It means rural economies remain underdeveloped despite their agricultural and agro-processing potential. It means small businesses struggle to access markets, finance, and meaningful state support. It means inequality deepens, even as we speak the language of inclusivity.

Even in sectors where Lesotho has a comparative advantage, such as textiles under AGOA or water exports through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), the linkages to the broader domestic economy remain weak. These sectors operate almost in isolation, with limited spillover into local enterprise development or job creation at scale.

So again, whose budget is this?

It does not convincingly speak to the urgent

need for economic diversification. It does not decisively confront the structural barriers to private sector growth. It does not reflect a bold strategy to transition from a consumption-driven public sector to a production-driven economy.

Instead, it appears structured to sustain the machinery of government itself, administration over transformation, maintenance over innovation.

Government, in this instance, seems to be budgeting for its own comfort rather than the country's progress.

We must be honest about this: a budget that prioritizes the state over the citizen delays development. It maintains the status quo while presenting the illusion of movement.

If we are to change how the country moves, we must first confront how we think.

We need to return to principle-based governance, where the constitution is respected rather than manipulated. Stability and policy certainty are not luxuries, but are prerequisites for investment, growth, and national confidence. Without them, even the best economic plans will fail to materialise.

We need leadership that is anchored in a clear, long-term vision. One that transcends political cycles and personal ambitions. A vision that recognizes Lesotho's unique position within the regional economy, particularly its deep integration with South Africa, and uses that reality strategically rather than pretending it does not exist.

We need to invest deliberately in key sectors, including water, agriculture, manufacturing, renewable energy, and tourism. Not through rhetoric, but through targeted policy, infrastructure development, technical know-how, and institutional reform.

And above all, we need a budget that speaks directly to the lived realities of Basotho: jobs, dignity, opportunity, and equitable growth.

Until then, we will continue to move, but without direction.



Moshoeshoe's spirit lights Beijing, strengthens Lesotho-China friendship

Theko Tlebere

On March 14, 2026, very far from the mountain of Thaba-Bosiu, the spirit of Morena Moshoeshoe I was commemorated in Beijing as the Embassy of the Kingdom of Lesotho hosted an engaging Moshoeshoe's Day event. This occasion not only honoured the founding father of the Basotho nation but also conveyed a diplomatic message: the values of unity, peace, compassion, and alliance-building that shaped Lesotho's inception continue to influence its international relationships today.

Approximately one hundred and thirty (130) guests attended, including around thirty (30) members of the Basotho diaspora residing in China. Individuals traveled from Wuhan, Jilin, Hangzhou, and Hebei provinces, with the majority coming from Beijing. Their participation infused the celebration with warmth, pride, and a sense of belonging, reaffirming the diaspora's role as a vital link between Lesotho and its international partners.

This event transcended a conventional national day function; it was a thoughtfully curated celebration of heritage and friendship. The program commenced with the national anthems of Lesotho and China, followed by a video presentation on Morena Moshoeshoe I, cultural performances, speeches from the Ambassador of Lesotho to China and a representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in China, cake cutting, a toast, and a special musical tribute. Performances of Mokhibo and Litolobonya diffused the event with a distinctly Basotho essence, while Chinese performances underscored the spirit of cultural exchange.

Central to the event was the address delivered by Lesotho's Ambassador to China, Her Excellency 'Mapaballo Lydia Mile, which provided both political depth and moral clarity. She commenced with a poignant statement, describing the celebration as "both deeply personal and profoundly communal." This framing was significant, as Moshoeshoe Day embodies not only remembrance but also nationhood. Ambassador Mile reminded attendees that Morena Moshoeshoe I was the leader whose "vision and humanity stitched together different clans into one nation."

In an increasingly divided world, her speech connected Morena Moshoeshoe I not as a distant historical figure but as a guiding force for contemporary diplomacy. She recalled how, at Thaba-Bosiu, he offered refuge to those displaced by war and famine, teaching that "strength lies in unity and that compassion is a form of leadership."

This is not merely history; it is the essence of Moshoeshoe-ism. In Beijing, this

philosophy found modern expression in Lesotho's relationship with China.

Ambassador Mile contextualised the bilateral relationship within a broader moral and diplomatic framework. She noted the special significance of this year's Moshoeshoe Day, coinciding with the celebration of 60 years of independence later in 2026. She emphasised that independence is "not just a date but a testament to the resilience of a people who have navigated challenges with courage and hope."

Furthermore, she asserted that sovereignty must be safeguarded through "good governance, solidarity, and an unshakable commitment to peace." Her message resonated powerfully, linking Lesotho's past, its sovereignty, and its role in a changing global landscape.

The Ambassador also spoke warmly about the enduring friendship between Lesotho and China, highlighting that for over three decades, the two nations have stood together, united by shared values such as "respect for human rights and equality for all." She cited tangible cooperation in health, education, agriculture, and cultural exchange as evidence that the relationship is not merely rhetorical but practical and people-centered.

One of the most impactful parts of her speech connected the recent diplomatic momentum between the two nations to the legacy of Morena Moshoeshoe I. Referring to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's recent visit to Lesotho, she

highlighted commitments to enhance zero-tariff treatment for African countries, deepen trade and industrial cooperation, increase access for Lesotho's products in the Chinese market, and strengthen governance exchanges and multilateral coordination.

She then continued by delivering one of the most striking lines of her speech. She stated that these commitments, were "not empty rhetoric; they were a promise of solidarity and a recognition of our aspirations." More importantly, she added, they "echo Morena Moshoeshoe I's own approach of forging alliances and standing by those who seek justice."

This encapsulated the true essence of the message. Moshoeshoe-ism, as articulated by Ambassador Mile, transcends mere remembrance of a founder; it involves applying his principles to contemporary challenges. It advocates for dialogue over hostility, alliances over isolation, and justice over domination.

In this light, the Moshoeshoe's Day event in Beijing also represented the foreign relations Lesotho aspires to establish: respectful, peaceful, mutually beneficial, and rooted in shared humanity.

The program reinforced this message throughout. The inclusion of both Basotho and Chinese performances underscored the theme of people-to-people diplomacy, aligning with the 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges, which the Ambassador deemed an appropriate backdrop for Moshoeshoe Day.

The day was not solely about state-to-state relations; it also emphasised community-to-community connections. Symbolic moments added weight to the celebration. The cake cutting and toast united the Ambassador, Chinese guests, and other dignitaries in a visible expression of friendship. The toast succinctly stated: "To friendship, cooperation, and the continued prosperity of the Kingdom of Lesotho."

As she concluded her remarks, Ambassador Mile returned to the deeper lesson of Morena Moshoeshoe I. History may remember him as a warrior when necessary, she said, "but more enduringly as a peacemaker." She noted he "chose dialogue over revenge, alliances over isolation, and education over ignorance."

She invoked one of his most lasting teachings: "Na u ka nketsang, ha e ahe motse, motse ho ahoa oa morapeli Thesele" explaining that aggression can never build a society or mend relationships. That wisdom is more relevant today than ever.

Then there was music. A special performance of a choral song composed by legendary nate JP Mohapeloa "Moshoshailane" by Ambassador Mile, Chinese soprano Ms. Carmen, and I provided a human touch that no formal communiqué could replicate. Diplomacy is built not only through official speeches and policy documents but also through song, symbolism, shared experiences, and mutual respect.

In a world where conflict, unilateralism, and economic uncertainty threaten development, the Beijing celebration discreetly but resolutely promoted a different message: Peace is not weakness. Diplomacy is not passivity. Alliance-building is not dependency. These principles helped Moshoeshoe I build a nation, and they continue to guide Lesotho in forging meaningful partnerships abroad.

For the Basotho diaspora in China, the event served as a reminder of their integral role in Lesotho's national journey. Their presence from diverse provinces enriched the celebration's national character, demonstrating that Basotho abroad can be ambassadors of culture, unity, and friendship. Ultimately, Moshoeshoe's Day in Beijing was about more than commemorating the past. It was about perpetuating a philosophy. It showcased that the values of Moshoeshoe I remain relevant today, and in the relationship between Lesotho and China, those values have found fertile ground.

If Moshoeshoe built a nation through wisdom, unity, and strategic friendship, then Beijing provided a glimpse of how his legacy continues to thrive and evolve. The future is NOW!





**Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP II)
Matching Grant Programme**

4th Round Call for Applications

Background: The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security of Lesotho, with the support of the World Bank has established within the SADP II, a Matching Grants Programme (MGP) to support investment by small and medium agriculture-related businesses, farmers, farmer groups, cooperatives and rural youth seeking to increase climate resilience, raise productivity, improve commercialization and increase production and consumption of high nutrition food products.

Priorities: The MGP invites applications for investment projects, with a maximum duration of one year, which focus on the adoption and use of appropriate technologies and business initiatives by smallholder farmers and small and medium-scale private agri-business enterprises in Lesotho. These investments should: increase climate resilience, raise farm productivity and improve commercialization among smallholder farmers; increase competitiveness and profitability, increase value-added to local products among agri-business enterprises and increase market opportunities for smallholder farmers; and increase the production, consumption and availability of high nutrition food products.

Eligible investments include:

- Improved seed and seedling varieties for vegetables under shade nets, tunnel houses, drip irrigation, water storage equipment, boreholes and pumps
- Improved piggery production
- Improved broiler production.
- Product collection, storage, post-harvest handling, processing, grading/sorting, marketing, packaging, labelling, brand development, presentation and promotion of agricultural products
- Diversification and introduction of high value-added and niche products.

Grant financing: Two grant windows will be available to applicants: (i) grants for smallholder farmers and farmer groups to support investment in climate smart agricultural technology and other productivity enhancing technology up to a maximum of \$US 30,000 (M400 000.00); (ii) grants for small and medium size agri-businesses up to \$US 100,000 (M1 500 000.00), to support investment in value added activities including small-scale processing and marketing as well as provision of inputs and services

Eligible Applicants: Applicants with farms and/or agri-business activities operating in all ten districts of Lesotho are eligible for grants. Eligible applicants include a) farmers or farm groups; b) registered cooperatives or associations; c) registered small and medium size agri-businesses; d) registered local, district and national associations and cooperatives; e) sub-groups of registered associations and cooperatives; rural youth; and f) partnerships between the above categories and registered processing/trading businesses in Lesotho. Smallholder farmers, members of farm households, rural youth and small and medium-scale agri-business enterprises will receive priority for grant support but non-farm applicants with demonstrated farming experience and a strong knowledge of the proposed investment will also be considered. Eligible applicants may also submit joint proposals up to the maximum grant stipulated above. Youth under 35 and women are particularly encouraged to apply. Employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and Nutrition, Project Financing institutions (IFAD and World Bank Group) and their direct beneficiaries are not eligible. Persons with an annual income of more than 600 000.00 Maloti and having access to more than 0.1 ha of irrigated land are not eligible to the Smallholder grant window, but only to the Agribusiness window.

Partnership with Service Providers: The potential applicants will be required to form partnerships with a qualified service provider(s). The service provider(s) will (i) provide technical and financial assistance and advice to the applicant to develop the business idea and prepare the application, (ii) work with the applicant to clarify different technical and financial aspects of the activity and prepare an activity implementation plan; (iii) provide technical and financial assistance to the applicant during project implementation and provide the products and services to be delivered according to an agreed schedule; (iv) support the applicant in managing grant funds, including keeping the necessary accounts and collecting contributions from beneficiaries; (v) supervise the inputs of beneficiaries/applicants and sub-contract technical assistance as necessary; (vi) monitor the progress of activities; (vii) support the applicant in the preparation and submission of the required financial

and technical reports. Eligible service providers include a wide range of specialists such as private sector technical specialists and business consultants, traders, associations, NGOs and on-going international-funded projects and programs present in Lesotho, as well as university and college faculty, and public extension and research staff outside of normal working hours. Employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security are not eligible to work as Service Providers.

Service Providers will need to show that they have successfully completed a training program on the preparation and technical and financial analysis of investment projects approved by the PMU or the MGC.

Beneficiary contribution: In all cases, successful applicants will be required to make a co-finance contribution in cash to engender ownership and demonstrate commitment. The larger grants for agri-business enterprises will also be conditional on their willingness and ability to generate employment and build effective supply agreements with smallholder producers. Co-finance cash contributions will vary according to the grant sub-program as follows: (i) Improving smallholder production grants for farmers or farmer groups: grants up to \$US 30,000 will require a 20% co-finance contribution; (ii) Agri-business grants for registered agriculture-oriented and privately-owned enterprises, associations and cooperatives: grants in this program will require a 30% co-finance contribution. 100% of the needed matching contribution for both grant categories must be available upfront.

The participation and contribution from different partners should be confirmed by written agreement reached between the principal applicant, the service provider and/or other partners.

Eligible Expenditures under Grant: Of the grant amount, the indicative types of financial support are:

Investment Acquisition, Installation and Operation: This category must comprise at least 60% of the grant amount and may include costs associated with the purchase of improved seed, seedling and livestock varieties; the purchase and installation of equipment for cultivation, harvesting, post-harvest handling, processing, preservation, storage, grading, packaging etc; the construction of necessary buildings for livestock production, storage, processing, marketing; the purchase and installation of tunnel houses, shade nets, irrigation equipment, pumps, boreholes, tanks etc; product development; alignment with national and international food and safety standards; and marketing campaigns. Where the investor is making substantial physical investments, the costs of land surveys will be covered for smallholder farmers in order to ensure that they have secure land ownership as a means to secure the benefits of investment. Agri-businesses will not be eligible for support for land surveys. Land survey costs may not be more than 10% of the grant amount, up to a maximum of \$US 2000 equivalent. The costs of land purchase, land lease or land rental will not be covered for any grants.

Non-Eligible Expenditures under Grant: The following items would not be covered out of the grant amount: (a) Salaries or payment for works and services provided to the project by the grant applicants or its members; b) any expenditures made prior to the date of signature of the Grant Agreement or after closure date of the project; c) purchase, rent or leasing of land and existing buildings; d) any expenditure related to operating costs, which are expected to be the direct responsibility of the applicant; e) any expenditure made in territories of any country that is not a member of the World Bank for goods produced in or services supplied from such countries; f) any expenditure with a hazardous impact on the environment.

Deadline and Place for Submission of Applications: The deadline for submission of applications is not later than 17 April 2026. Applications should be submitted in four copies (one original plus three photocopies) and delivered by hand at the District Agricultural Offices in the 10 districts of Lesotho at 12:00 noon. Applications submitted after deadline will not be considered.

Evaluation of the Applications: All applications received within the deadline will be screened by the MGP Secretariat for compliance with the above rules. The successful applications will then be evaluated by specialized Technical and Financial Reviewers and submitted to the MGC review and field verification. The list of successful applicants will be published in SADP II website and social media pages. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed and their original project documents could be returned to them on request.



**LESOTHO COMPETITIVENESS AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION PROJECT
(LESOTHO HORTICULTURAL INCUBATION & TRAINING CENTRE)**

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
FOR
INCUBATION OF LESOTHO DECIDUOUS FRUIT FARMERS**

The Government of Lesotho, through the World Bank financed Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project, is supporting the establishment of Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre (LHITC), located at Mahobong in Leribe district, with the objective of scaling and replicating existing deciduous fruit commercial orchards and attracting new investments into the horticulture sector. The pilot farms established under the first and second World Bank financed Private Sector Competitiveness and Economic Diversification projects (PSCEDP) have successfully demonstrated the commercial potential to produce deciduous fruits in Lesotho for both the domestic and export markets, and there is already significant interest from investors in commercial horticulture. However, these investments can only be realized with a coordinated effort to address land administration challenges including the availability of land parcels of adequate size for commercial scale production and adopting a transparent leasing system to achieve a credible land ownership. There is also a need for coordinated infrastructure investments in irrigation, electricity, roads, packhouses, phytosanitary inspection systems and grading, and private-public partnerships to deliver effective training and skills, and impactful extension services. It is against this background that the Government of Lesotho has established the Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre.

The LHITC is in an existing facility which is owned by the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and it is adjacent to the two existing pilot commercial farms. The Centre is operated in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, and the National University of Lesotho (NUL).

The objective of LHITC is to provide support for scaling commercial horticulture farming in Lesotho, building on the experience of the current pilot commercial farms and addressing gaps in the value chain, access to suitable land, infrastructure, extension services, skills, finance, and markets while promoting climate smart agricultural practices.

The LHITC is currently incubating the first cohort of 7 deciduous fruit farmers.

The CAFI Project Management Unit, now invites farmers and companies to indicate their interest to participate in the second cohort of the full horticultural incubation program of deciduous fruit. Interested farmers should provide information demonstrating that they meet eligibility criteria below.

The selection criteria will be based on the following key requirements:

Applicants (individual farmers or registered companies) must have:

1. Access to suitable land minimum of **3 ha** and maximum of **5 ha** owned or rented for a period of at least 30 years if rented, **with a proof of land ownership documents in the name of**

the farmer or registered entity. The required acceptable documents are Form Cs, Leases, or subleases (if the land is rented). The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition must confirm the land size in hectares.

2. The site must be close to a reliable source of quality irrigation water that will provide adequate water to irrigate an orchard of **3ha to 5ha** depending on availability of site.
3. Access road linking the site with the main road and should be in a good condition and not longer than 2 km.
4. The orchard site must be less than 0.5 km to electricity supply or other sustainable sources of power for irrigation and other functions of the orchard.
5. The company must have a formally registered entity for the application process.
6. The registered company must submit a CV of the Managing Director of the entity.
 - Experience in commercial farming will be an added advantage.
 - Suitable sites that are located within 50 km radius from LHITC at Mahobong, in Leribe district will be prioritized.

Format of EOI submissions

The applicants should include at least the following information in their submissions to enable objective assessment of the expressions of interest:

- Entity information including name, address, cell phone, working e-mail, website (if any), names of a Project Manager (if different from applicant).
- Certified copies of land ownership documents.
- Proof of hectareage from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.
- Description of the location of the site where the orchard is intended to be established.

Further information and suitability maps can be obtained at the address below during office hours [08h00 to 16h30 local time].

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form, in sealed envelopes labelled **"Incubation of Lesotho Deciduous Fruit Farmers"** to the address below in person or by e-mail on or before **April 16, 2026, at 16h00**. E-mail submissions should be sent to tmohejane@cafi.org.ls with a copy to nleutsoa@cafi.org.ls and ltsoinyane@cafi.org.ls

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**Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition
WaMCoP
P.O. Box 24
Maseru 100**



Investing in rural people

**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
(Consulting Firms)**

LESOTHO

WOOLAND MOHAIR VALUE CHAIN COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT

Assignment Title: **Establishment of the WMF-WME**

Reference No: **LSO-2000003942-0138-CS-QCBS**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition has received a financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) towards the cost of Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the recruitment of consulting services.

The use of any IFAD financing shall be subject to IFAD's approval, pursuant to the terms and conditions of the financing agreement, as well as IFAD's rules, policies and procedures. IFAD and its officials, agents and employees shall be held harmless from and against all suits, proceedings, claims, demands, losses and liability of any kind or nature brought by any party in connection with Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project.

The consulting services ("the services") include establishment of Corporate Management System (CMS) that complies with international standards for the Lesotho WMF-WME Consortium: Solution Architecture, Corporate Governance System Framework, a befitting business model and strategy for the WMF-WME Consortium: Business Plan, etc., as stated in the PTORs.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition ("the client") now invites eligible consulting firms ("consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the services. Interested firms should submit their expressions of interest to the address indicated below.

The attention of interested consultants is drawn to IFAD's Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Policy and the Revised IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption its Activities and Operations. The latter sets forth IFAD's provisions on prohibited practices. IFAD further strives to ensure a safe working environment free of harassment, including sexual harassment, and free of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in its activities and operations as detailed in its IFAD Policy

to Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. By entering in this document, you certify to have read, understood, and agreed to be bound by the Privacy Policy of IFAD.

The consultant shall not have any actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest. A consultant with an actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest shall be disqualified unless otherwise explicitly approved by the Fund. A consultant including their respective personnel and affiliates are considered to have a conflict of interest if they a) have a relationship that provides them with undue or undisclosed information about or influence over the selection process and the execution of the contract, b) participate in more than one EOI under this procurement action, c) have a business or family relationship with a member of the Purchaser's board of directors or its personnel, the Fund or its personnel, or any other individual that was, has been or might reasonably be directly or indirectly involved in any part of (i) the preparation of this REOI, (ii) the shortlisting or selection process for this procurement, or (iii) execution of the contract. The consultant has an ongoing obligation to disclose any situation of actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest during preparation of the EOI, the selection process or the contract execution. Failure to properly disclose any of said situations may lead to appropriate actions, including the disqualification of the consultant, the termination of the contract and any other as appropriate under the IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Projects and Operations.

The following conflict of interest rules shall apply with respect to recruitment of government/client staff within the consultant's proposed team:

- a. No member of the client's board of directors or current employees of the client (whether part time, or full time, paid or unpaid, in leave status, etc.) shall be proposed or work as, or on behalf of, any consultant.
- b. Except as provided in sub-clause 8.6(d), no current employees of the government shall work as consultants or as personnel under their own ministries, departments or agencies.
- c. Recruiting former client or government employees to perform services for their former ministries, departments or agencies is acceptable provided no conflict of interest exists.
- d. If a consultant proposes any government employee as personnel in their technical proposal, such personnel must have written certification from the government confirming that: (i) they will be on leave without pay from the time of their official proposal submission and will remain on leave without pay until the end of their assignment with the consultant and they are allowed to work full-time outside of their previous official position; or (ii) they will resign or retire from government employment on or prior to the contract award date. Under no circumstances shall any individuals described in (i)

and (ii) be responsible for approving the implementation of this contract. Such certification shall be provided to the client by the consultant as part of its technical proposal.

- e. In the case where a consultant seeks to engage the services of any person falling under ITC sub-clauses 8.6(a) – 8.6(d), who may have left the client within a period of less than twelve (12) months of the date of this RFP, it must obtain a written "no-objection" from the client for the inclusion of such a person, prior to the consultant's submission of its proposal.

A consultant will be selected in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method set out in IFAD's project procurement handbook that can be accessed via the IFAD website at www.ifad.org/project-procurement.

The shortlisting criteria are:

Criteria #	Description	Allocated Marks
1	General Experience of Firm/Company	20
2	Specific Experience of a Firm in Similar Assignment	50
3	Organisation and availability of technical staff & supporting staff	10
4	Financial Capacity	20

Consultants may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub-consultancy to enhance their qualifications.

Any request for clarification on this REOI should be sent via e-mail to the address below no later than 16:00hrs, **08 April 2026, Lesotho time**. The client will provide responses to all clarification requests by 16:00hrs, **10 April 2026, Lesotho time**.

Expressions of interest must be delivered in written form using the forms provided for this purpose. EOIs shall be submitted to the address below no later than 12:00hrs, **17 April 2026, Lesotho time**.

Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project

Attn: Procurement and Contracts Manager

P.O. Box 24

Department of Livestock Services

Old Airport Road, Moshoeshoe II

e-mail: procurement@wamcop.org.ls and cc: mlejota-thakong@wamcop.org.ls

1. The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/document-detail/as-set/41942012>.
2. The policy is accessible at www.ifad.org/anticorruption_policy.
3. The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/document-detail/as-set/40738506>.
4. The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/privacy>.

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Elegance meets identity at Lady M collection unveiling

Chris Theko

Maseru's fashion scene took centre stage on Tuesday night as renowned designer Georges Malelu unveiled the latest Lady M Collection under Lady M Foundation, founded by businesswoman 'Mamotake Matekane.

Launched during an exclusive private viewing at The Market restaurant, the event brought together a curated audience for an intimate evening celebrating design, elegance and creative expression.

The showcase featured a live presentation of the collection, with a standout moment marked by the appearance of Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso, who was adorned in one of Malelu's signature pieces, an embodiment of the evening's refined aesthetic.

Princess Senate Seeiso and Deputy Prime Minister Nthomeng Majara were also among the high profile attendees.

More than a conventional fashion showcase, the event signalled growing confidence in Lesotho's creative industry, positioning local design within a broader narrative of identity, craftsmanship and global relevance.

The Lady M Collection, characterised by rich textures, a bold yet elegant colour palette and precise tailoring, reflects a deliberate fusion of contemporary fashion with deeply rooted African inspiration. Guests experienced not only garments, but a carefully curated expression of story, symbolism and personal vision.

Speaking at the event, philanthropist and multi-award-winning businesswoman



Matekane shared the personal journey behind the brand, describing it as both an extension of identity and a platform for purpose.

"Lady M came from my name, but it became something deeper, it became a brand I had to define. What defines me is the God that lives in me, and that shapes who I am," Matekane said.

For her, the concept of a "Lady M woman" extends beyond appearance and is rooted in character and intentionality.

"A lady is a woman who is not found in drama or gossip, who is grounded, who knows exactly where she is going and how to get there. She stands her ground, but does so with elegance and pride."

Matekane further emphasised that the ex-

clusivity of the collection is both a strategic and symbolic choice. By limiting the pieces, the brand preserves its integrity and aspirational value while highlighting the distinctiveness of Malelu's work.

"I have the best designer by far. George is yet to be known all over the world, and I wanted this collection to reflect his uniqueness," she noted.

"This will give birth to other Georges. We want to be known not just for talent, but for specialised, anointed talent that can reach the ends of the world," she added.

For Malelu, the creative process behind the collection was deeply narrative-driven, rooted in personal history and cultural exploration. He described the collection as a story of

reconnection, with heritage, identity and inspiration drawn from the African landscape.

"I wanted to tell a story of reconnecting with my roots. The collection is inspired by strength, patience, and boldness, qualities I saw reflected not only in nature, but also in the woman this collection represents," he explained.

Drawing from imagery of the African savannah, Malelu incorporated elements reminiscent of wildlife and natural textures into the designs. Prints evoked animal patterns, while the colour palette, dominated by warm browns, earthy tones and seasonal hues, aligns with the transition into autumn.

Despite these rich influences, the silhouettes remain clean, modern and globally relevant.

"It's about a modern African woman who takes on the world," he said, underscoring the balance between tradition and contemporary design.

Addressing prospects for global expansion, Malelu expressed confidence in the growing appetite for authentic African narratives within the international fashion space.

"The world has always taken reference from Africa. What they are looking for now is authenticity, our stories told from our own point of view," he said.

He emphasised that success in international markets lies not in imitation, but in originality and evolution.

"We have to continue telling our story, but also evolve, experiment with textiles, reinterpret prints, and push boundaries while staying true to who we are," Malelu said.



System failures drive youth mental health crisis - Makhalanyane

Refiloe Molise

A multi-stakeholder push to confront Lesotho's growing youth mental health and substance abuse crisis recently took a stand through a national workshop in Maseru calling for stronger co-ordination and faster implementation of solutions.

Held at Victory Hall on 19 March, the workshop brought together government officials, educators, civil society organisations and mental health professionals under a shared goal to shift the country's response from fragmented interventions to a unified, prevention-focused strategy.

The initiative, spearheaded by Sunrise Rehabilitation Center, forms part of efforts to establish the Lesotho Coalition for Prevention of Substance Use and Mental Health Promotion. The coalition is expected to prioritise prevention, early intervention and awareness campaigns in schools and communities.

Mokhothu Makhalanyane, the Chairperson of National Assembly committees, speaking at the gathering questioned the country's approach to tackling the crisis. While welcoming the initiative, he stressed that Leso-

tho's challenges stem less from a lack of funding and more from inefficiencies in execution.

"The nation is struggling not because there is no money but because of how we implement our systems. Government must focus on putting strong laws and standards in place while allowing organisations and communities to deliver services more efficiently," he said.

Makhalanyane argued that government's role should be to create an enabling legal and policy environment, while empowering civil society and communities to drive delivery on the ground, a model he suggested would accelerate impact.

He further revealed that Parliament is working on a public participation bill designed to strengthen the role of civil society in shaping national policy.

The proposed law is expected to ensure that community voices are more meaningfully integrated into decision-making processes, particularly on mental health and social development.

His remarks underscored a recurring theme throughout the workshop that coordination gaps and slow systems continue to undermine otherwise well-resourced interventions.

Sunrise Rehabilitation Center's advisor, Chaba Makuku, reinforced the urgency of treating mental health as a national development priority, warning that economic progress would remain constrained without a healthy population.

"There is no business or economy that can grow with people who are unstable or sick. That is why we must take illness seriously. It cannot be left to the Ministry of Health alone but every Mosesotho has a role to play," he said.

Makuku also called for a shift in societal attitudes, stressing that stigma remains a major barrier to care.

"Mental health is not a luxury. It is everyone's right to be healthy in both body and mind. We must stop stigmatising people and instead support them so they can live dignified and safe lives," he said.

Echoing these concerns, Sunrise Rehabilitation Center's Executive Director Sekhoane Kolobe highlighted the silent struggles facing many young people.

"Many young people in our communities are quietly drowning not in water, but in pain they cannot put into words," Kolobe said.

He explained that the workshop

aimed to align efforts across sectors and lay the foundation for a coordinated national response integrating education, healthcare, policy and community-based support systems.

Evidence of impact from such collaboration was shared by Idzai Muchabaiwa of Machabeng College, who pointed to tangible improvements following the school's partnership with Sunrise Rehabilitation Center.

"In the past, Machabeng College was often associated with drug and substance abuse, but because of the support from Sunrise, we have seen a very big change," she said.

She noted a significant decline in cases of vaping, smoking and alcohol use among students, attributing the progress to sustained support and awareness initiatives.

Muchabaiwa also emphasised the need for schools to create safe, supportive environments where learners can openly discuss their struggles.

"It is very rare for a child to raise their hand and say, 'I am not okay.' Sometimes learners who misbehave or bully others are actually asking for help, so instead of only reprimanding them, we must offer solutions and support," she said.

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Balancing goals on and off the pitch: The story of young Kulehile

Seabata Mahao

In Lesotho's evolving football landscape, where talent alone is no longer enough, 22-year-old MolefiKuzayaKulehile is emerging as a powerful example of what it means to succeed both on and off the pitch.

Hailing from Thabana-Morena in Mafeteng, Kulehile is not just a promising footballer, he is a student, mentor, and aspiring coach whose journey reflects discipline, resilience, and ambition.

His relationship with Kick4Life began nearly a decade ago. In 2016, he attended the academy trials in Mohale's Hoek, eventually making it to the final selection stage in Maseru. Though he was not selected at the time, the experience left a lasting impression.

"I carried that dream for years, to one day wear the Kick4Life badge," Kulehile recalls.

That dream became reality in February 2025 when he officially joined the club, initially on loan from Majantja FC before securing a permanent move. Encouraged by Juventude assistant coach MonyaneSeeiso, Kulehile embraced the opportunity at a time when he was also preparing to begin full-time studies in Maseru.

Since then, he has made an immediate impact. With eight goals to his name, Kulehile has established himself as a key figure in Kick4Life's Juventude side, competing in the country's national lower division league.

But his influence stretches far beyond matchday performances.

A recently qualified Certified Accounting



Molefi balances life as a footballer, accounting student, and emerging coach

Technician, Kulehile is currently pursuing his General Accounting qualification,

an academic path he balances alongside his football commitments.

This dual focus reflects Kick4Life's philosophy of developing student-athletes equipped for life beyond sport.

Off the field, Kulehile dedicates his time to coaching within the club's grassroots structures. He works with children aged four to fifteen in the football school programme, as well



Molefi Kulehile

as with Under-15 and Under-17 development squads, critical pipelines for the club's competitive teams.

Through coaching, he has developed skills that extend well beyond football.

"It has helped me grow in confidence, especially speaking in front of groups and working with different personalities," he explains. "It's also taught me discipline and responsibility."

Those qualities have not gone unnoticed. In January

2026, head coach MuketeMboh appointed Kulehile as one of the vice-captains of the senior team, citing his leadership and commitment.

"His discipline in training and his ability to guide younger players stood out. He has grown into a leader both on and off the field," Mboh said.

Interestingly, coaching was never part of Kulehile's original plan. Today, however, it has become a central part of his vision for the future. He now aspires to become a professional coach while continuing his career in accounting, a dual pathway he believes will provide long-term stability.

His motivation is rooted in impact. Kulehile dreams of helping young Basotho players secure international scholarships, particularly in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom.

"For me, seeing them succeed would mean everything," he says. "It would show that their dreams are possible."

To that end, he actively engages with Kick4Life's Scholar-Football Academy programme, connecting with peers abroad and learning how best to guide his players toward similar opportunities.

Today, Kulehile's daily routine is a balancing act training sessions, competitive matches, academic assignments, and mentorship responsibilities. Yet, he embraces it all with a clear sense of purpose.

In many ways, his journey mirrors the mission of Kick4Life itself: using football not just as a game, but as a vehicle for education, leadership, and lasting social change.

Seabata Mahao

Reigning champions Kick4Life Ladies lost ground in the Women's Supper League (WSL) title race after suffering a narrow 1-0 defeat to Bokamoso in a tightly contested encounter at Ratjomose Ground last Sunday.

The second-round clash of the 2025/2026 season delivered on its promise, with both sides showing attacking intent from the outset. Kick4Life, winners of the 2024/2025 title, entered the match seeking to maintain their dominance, but were met by a resolute Bokamoso side determined to upset the odds.

Despite an end-to-end contest marked by several promising attacking moves from both teams, Bokamoso proved more clinical, netting the decisive goal that ultimately separated the sides. After taking the lead, they adopted a disciplined defensive approach, effectively neutralising Kick4Life's push for an equaliser.

Bokamoso held firm until the final whistle to secure a vital three points, dealing a significant blow to Kick4Life's title defence.

The defeat sees Kick4Life slip to fourth place on the standings with 26 points, while Bokamoso move up to fifth on 22 points. LDF Ladies continue to lead the pack with 35 points, strengthening their status as favourites for this season's crown.

With only six matches remaining, Kick4Life now face a daunting task to keep their title hopes alive.

Kick4Life head coach Shalane Lehohla admitted his side fell short of expectations, citing their failure to control possession as a major concern.

Bokamoso stun Kick4Life as title race tightens



Kick4life women fc in women super league action - Picture courtesy Kick 4 Life

"Losing a match does not mean it is the end. Our job is to help these players grow and guide them. However, we did not perform satisfactorily in this game," Lehohla said.

He added that while his team had dominated and created numerous chances in their previous outing against Lijabatho, they failed to reproduce that level of performance against Bokamoso.

Lehohla emphasised the need for improvement, urging his side to regroup, ad-

dress their shortcomings, and prepare thoroughly for the remaining fixtures.

On the other bench, Bokamoso head coach Rorisang Makoetlane praised his team's preparation and execution, revealing that a well-studied game plan proved decisive.

"We studied how Kick4Life play and adopted a similar approach, making use of wide players. That strategy worked well for us, and we managed to win the match," said Makoetlane.

He explained that his side intentionally

kept play in Kick4Life's half to limit their attacking threat, a tactic that paid off.

Makoetlane welcomed the result as a significant boost in Bokamoso's push for a top-four finish, noting that the team, still in a rebuilding phase, is steadily evolving into genuine title contenders.

Weekend Results: Bokamoso C Ladies 1-0 Kick4Life Women; Mphaki HS Ladies 0-0 Villa Ladies; LMPs Ladies 3-1 Mawes Ladies; Lijabatho Ladies 3-0 Berea Ladies; LDF Ladies 6-0 FC Stoko.



Likuena misfire in AFCON opener



Likuena squad - Picture Courtesy - LeFA

Staff Reporters

Likuena were held to a disappointing goalless draw by lowly Seychelles in the first leg of their 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) preliminary round clash played in Bloemfontein, South Africa, yesterday, leaving their progression and a lucrative incentive hanging in the balance.

In what was coach Bob Mafoso's first official match in charge, Lesotho dominated possession for long periods but failed to convert their superiority into goals against modest opposition.

Seychelles, widely considered underdogs, proved resilient at the back, frustrating Likuena in what was technically their home fixture. Seychelles is ranked number 203, while Lesotho is in position 143 in the January 2026 FIFA rankings.

Despite controlling the tempo and pinning Seychelles in their own half, Likuena lacked cutting edge in the final third, with their few clear chances going begging. The islanders' defence coped comfortably; raising concerns about Lesotho's attacking efficiency ahead of the decisive return leg.

The stalemate leaves Likuena with

everything to play for in Sunday's second leg at the same Toyota Stadium, where they must secure victory to advance to the next round or risk an early and embarrassing exit.

Beyond qualification, failure to progress could also cost the players a significant financial reward. The Lesotho Football Association (LeFA), in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture, has tabled a combined M300, 000 incentive for the team to overcome Seychelles.

The package, equally funded by government and LeFA, was designed to boost morale and underline the importance of the tie. However, the reward now hangs in the balance following the underwhelming first-leg performance.

Speaking ahead of the fixtures, LeFA president Lijane Nthunya emphasised the urgency of the assignment, insisting Lesotho should not be competing at the preliminary stage of major continental tournaments.

"Likuena should not be playing in the preliminary qualifiers of any competition. The team must win this tie by hook or crook," he said.

Nthunya added that the M300,000 pledge is only a starting point, with potential for

further incentives should corporate partners come on board.

"We have made requests to companies, and while we have not yet received responses, any additional support will be added on top of this amount," he noted.

Heading into the tie, Mafoso had opted for continuity, naming a largely unchanged squad from recent selections under former coach Leslie Notsi. The approach signalled a cautious start to his tenure, with the technical team placing trust in familiar combinations, particularly in defence and midfield.

Preparations for the clash had spanned three weeks, with the coach expressing confidence in his players' form and fitness. The squad has been largely made up of locally based players, with only a limited number of foreign-based reinforcements expected to join camp closer to matchday.

Mafoso and his technical team had also undertaken detailed analysis of Seychelles, studying their previous AFCON qualifying matches and COSAFA Cup performances in an effort to gain a tactical edge.

However, that preparation did not translate into a winning start, as Likuena struggled to break down a disciplined Seychelles side.

Likatola draw Eswatini, Mauritius in WC qualifiers

Kananelo Mokhele

Lesotho has been drawn in Pool D alongside Eswatini and Mauritius for the opening round of the 2031 Rugby World Cup qualification campaign, set to kick off in July 2026.

The draw signals the start of what is expected to be a demanding and lengthy qualification journey for the national rugby side, stretching from 2026 to 2028. The multi-stage process will feature group matches, cross-pool play-offs and knockout rounds before the final representative secures a place at the global showpiece.

In the first round, teams have been divided into four pools. Pool A features Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Ghana, while Pool B comprises Botswana, Zambia and Madagascar. Pool C includes Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Egypt. Lesotho, placed in Pool D, will battle Eswatini and Mauritius for progression to the next stage.

A strong start in the group phase will be crucial for Lesotho's hopes of advancing. Teams progressing from the pools will move on to the second round in November 2026, where cross-pool play-offs will determine who advances further.

In these fixtures, the fourth-placed team in Pool A will face the winner of Pool C, while the fourth-placed side in Pool B will take on the winner of Pool D.

The competition will intensify in July 2027 with an eight-team knockout phase, featuring quarter-final-style matches leading into semi-finals, a third-place play-off and a final to determine the stage winner.

In July 2028, the qualification campaign enters a decisive phase with the introduction of some of Africa's top-ranked rugby nations, including Senegal, Morocco, Uganda and Tunisia. These sides will compete against teams advancing from earlier rounds for places in the semi-finals and ultimately the final that will determine the leading challenger from Division 2.

Further decisive fixtures are scheduled for November 2028, where the Division 2 runner-up will face the third-ranked team from the 2025 Rugby Africa Cup, while the Division 2 champion will meet the fourth-ranked side from the same competition.

The final stage will take the form of a round-robin tournament featuring heavyweights such as Zimbabwe and Namibia, along with two additional qualifiers. The winner will secure direct qualification for the 2031 Rugby World Cup, while the runner-up will proceed to an intercontinental play-off against teams from other regions.

Lesotho Rugby Federation's Secretary General, Litsitso Motseremeli, said preparations for the qualifiers are already underway. He revealed that plans are in place to organise national team training camps and international friendly matches to ensure the squad is competitive.

Motseremeli highlighted that clashes against Eswatini are expected to be highly physical due to the long-standing regional rivalry, while Mauritius could prove to be the toughest opponent in the group, recalling Lesotho's narrow defeat in a previous meeting.

"This time we are ready to avenge ourselves," he said.

He added that while Lesotho has a realistic chance of progressing, success will depend heavily on the level of support provided for preparations and training camps.

"Countries will soon be informed about where the matches will be played, and the names of the players will be announced once the coach has selected the squad," Motseremeli said.



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