Newsday
...pacing standards
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NEWSDAY ATTACKED

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Google sucked into controversy

Staff Reporter

A single, demonstrably flawed defamation complaint was enough to briefly knock Newsday's website offline on Thursday, disrupting the newspaper's operations on the eve of publication and exposing how easily bad-faith complaints can be weaponised against independent journalism.

The temporary blackout came after web-hosting company Hostinger notified Newsday that it had received a complaint alleging that an article published by the newspaper was defamatory of "Jos Buttler."

The article does not mention Jos Buttler.

In correspondence sent to Newsday, Hostinger's abuse department stated: "Please be informed that HOSTINGER has received a defamation complaint regarding specific content on your website newsdayonline.co.ls that it is alleged to be defamatory for another person, i.e. Jos Buttler."

The complaint identified the article titled: iSwiss 'lovebirds', and Shelile …A scam-like deal collapses amid media attention.

Hostinger requested that Newsday either remove the content or justify its publication.

"We take matters of defamation seriously, as they can have significant legal and reputational implications. Please kindly take a moment to review the mentioned content and either remove it as soon as possible or provide clarification and any supporting information if you consider the content accurate and lawful."

The hosting company warned that failure to respond, or repeated complaints, could result in suspension of the website under its Terms of Service.

By the time Newsday read the email, however, the damage had already been done.

The publication's website had already gone dark.

Its email system was also inaccessible, preventing the newsroom from sending or receiving correspondence.

The timing could scarcely have been worse.

The shutdown occurred on Thursday, one day before publication, effectively cutting the newspaper off from advertisers and sources during one of the busiest production periods of the week.

Rather than capitulate, the editorial team immediately reviewed the complaint.

The Editorial Team's conclusion was unequivocal.

"The complaint is entirely without merit and appears to be fundamentally mistaken or frivolous," Newsday told Hostinger.

"Our primary and conclusive defence is as follows: The article does not mention Jos Buttler."

The newspaper said it had conducted "a complete word-by-word review" of the article and found that it concerned only Lesotho's proposed Special Economic Zones policy, former Trade Minister Mokhethi Shelile, the company iSwiss, its directors Christopher Aleo and Simona Jakstaite, and former ministry official Lesole Maleke.

"Nowhere in the article does the name 'Jos Buttler' appear," Newsday wrote.

"There is no reference to his profession, his nationality, his personal life, or any other identifying characteristic that could reasonably connect him to the content."

The newspaper further argued that the complaint collapsed on one of the most basic principles of defamation law.

"A statement cannot be defamatory to a person if it does not refer to them, either explicitly or by clear implication," Newsday wrote.

"Since Jos Buttler is not named, described or identifiable in the article, he has no legal standing to bring this complaint."

The newspaper also noted that the complaint failed to identify any allegedly defamatory statement concerning Buttler because none existed.

"The complaint appears to have been filed in error or without proper review of the content."

Newsday further defended the article as investigative journalism based on official government documents, public company records and on-the-record interviews concerning matters of significant public interest.

The editorial team requested Hostinger to reject the complaint, inform the complainant that the claim was invalid and refrain from taking any action against the publication.

"We are committed to upholding journalistic standards and legal compliance," Newsday wrote.

"However, we cannot and will not remove content based on a complaint that is demonstrably false in its fundamental premise."

At approximately 6:15 p.m., Hostinger restored the website.

But the incident did not occur in isolation.

It is the latest chapter in what increasingly appears to be a sustained campaign targeting Newsday's reporting on iSwiss and the Lesotho government's proposed Special Economic Zones arrangement.

The truth of this affair is far more sinister. The complaint about "Jos Buttler" is a smoke-

RAM PLAN LHWP Maintenance Shutdown: October 2024 - March 2025

HO CHECHA HOA RAMO HASE HO BALEHA Powering down to power up

LHDA

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News: Starlink could face over M19 million in annual fees to operate in Lesotho Page 4

News: King emphasises right to food Page 5

ISWISS, 'LOVEBIRDS' AND SHELILE

…A scam-like deal collapses amid media scrutiny

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screen.

The real target is the original October 2024 investigative report, "iSwiss 'Lovebirds', and Shelile", which laid bare the alarming speed with which the government had embraced a company that, by all appearances, is little more than a social media mirage.

The story detailed how iSwiss, supposedly a "Swiss financial group," and its principals, Christopher Aleo and his fiancée Simona Jakstaite, had been fast-tracked into Lesotho's draft Special Economic Zones policy, a document that this publication said reads more like a contract for a private takeover than a developmental framework.

The story did not just raise questions about the government's due diligence but also raised eyebrows about Aleo and Jakstaite themselves. Described as "Internet Personalities" with backgrounds in fashion and film production, rather than finance, the couple's credibility was put under the microscope. The article noted that their lavish Instagram lifestyle was a hallmark of a platform "commonly associated with influencers and, at times, scammers."

That words, a scam-like deal, in the headline is what triggered the wrath.

On April 19 and 20, 2026, Newsday received a barrage of threatening legal notices from a "Mr. Irfan Karim," purportedly representing iSwiss and Christopher Aleo.

"Your newspaper published a front-page headline calling iSwiss a 'scam-like deal'. No court. No regulator. No finding of fraud. You have no evidence of any scam – only suspicion and innuendo," the emails thundered.

They were dripping with aggression: "You have destroyed a company's reputation in an entire country with one word: 'scam'. Remove it now."

The emails demanded that the newspaper remove the article within six hours, later extending the ultimatum to twelve hours, apologise publicly, retract the story, purge archived copies, seek Google's removal of cached versions and certify compliance.

They further demanded a staggering M5 Million in damages.

The publication rejected those demands.

The threat was unmistakable. If Newsday did not comply, criminal defamation charges, which under Lesotho's Penal Code carry the threat of imprisonment, would be filed against the editor.

It is a perverse irony. Those who cloak themselves in the trappings of a "Swiss bank" but are unable to produce a credible business footprint have the gall to lecture a newspaper on truthfulness.

To call their deal "scam-like" is not defamation, but is a statement of objective fact.

Then, in May, a new front opened.

Google, the world's most powerful search engine, notified Newsday that someone had submitted a copyright complaint seeking removal of the same material from search results worldwide.

"Google has been notified that your site allegedly infringes upon the copyrights of others and violates applicable copyright laws in your region," read the notice from Google.

"It is Google's policy to remove copyrighted content when the copyright holder or their authorised representative alleges that a use is infringing. Therefore, we are in the process of removing the reported content from Google search results for users globally."

The copyright claim was yet another transparent attempt to silence the publication. Having failed to intimidate Newsday with defamation threats, the same parties had now weaponised copyright law to scrub the article from internet search results.

Newsday challenged that complaint by filing a formal counter-notice.

Now, months later, the same reporting has become the subject of a defamation complaint that temporarily disabled the newspaper's entire website, this time through its hosting provider.

The decision by Hostinger to take down the site, on a flimsy, transparently false complaint, is a chilling precedent. It demonstrates how easily global web hosts can be weaponised by the powerful to silence the press, even when the complaint is demonstrably a lie.

The progression, from legal threats, to copyright complaints, to defamation allegations directed at infrastructure providers rather than courts, raises troubling questions about attempts to suppress journalism through procedural pressure rather than judicial scrutiny.

Whether deliberate or not, such complaints exploit automated moderation systems that frequently act first and investigate later.

The consequences extend far beyond one disputed article.

When a news organisation can lose access to its website, email systems, and advertisers because of a complaint naming a person who is not even mentioned in the article, the issue ceases to be merely about defamation.

It becomes a question of whether digital intermediaries are inadvertently enabling censorship by accusation.

Newsday maintains that it stands by its reporting.

It also maintains that complaints alleging defamation should be determined on evidence and law, not on assertions so fundamentally defective that they identify a complainant absent from the publication altogether.

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Central Bank defends secrecy over bank stress test

... Says all lenders remain compliant

Kananelo Boloetse

The Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) has defended its decision not to identify a commercial bank that failed one of its liquidity stress tests, insisting that all licensed banks continue to meet regulatory requirements and that disclosing institution-specific results could itself threaten financial stability.

The clarification follows questions raised after the CBL's 2025 Financial Stability Report revealed that, under one hypothetical stress scenario, a bank would experience liquidity shortfalls if subjected to a sustained bank run.

The report stated that "under a five-day bank-run scenario, one bank faces liquidity shortfalls, indicating a decline in liquid assets compared to the previous stress test."

The disclosure prompted questions about whether the affected institution had been required to strengthen its liquidity position and whether depositors faced any risk.

In a written response to Newsday, the CBL stressed that the exercise was based on hypothetical scenarios designed to assess the resilience of the banking system rather than predict the failure of any institution.

"A stress test is a tool used for measuring and predicting the ability of a bank to respond to and withstand certain hypothetical, but plausible, negative economic events (shocks), such as a recession or pandemic," the Bank said.

"It helps the Bank to assess and determine the level of resilience in the banking sector."

The Bank said international practice varies widely on whether stress test results should identify individual banks.

"While many Central Banks publicly disclose aggregated results of stress test exercises and high-level methodology and scenario features, a sizeable minority does not publish any results at all, and very few Central Banks disclose bank-specific details or announce follow-up actions," it said.

According to the regulator, naming a specific institution could have unintended consequences.

"Publication could also be counterproductive if undue management attention is diverted towards managing public relations issues associated with stress test outcomes."

"For this reason, the Bank always exercises its discretion and is cautious that the information it publishes does not, at the same time, compromise financial stability."

No corrective action required

Despite the stress test identifying a liquidity vulnerability under the hypothetical scenario, the CBL said it had not required the affected institution to take corrective action.

"Given the nature and maturity of the current stress test framework, the Bank does not yet require any corrective measures from banks based on the stress test results," it said.

"However, the results are used as an input for prudential supervision purposes."

The regulator added that banks' liquidity positions are monitored every week.

"Banks' liquidity positions are also monitored on a weekly basis for prudential supervision purposes, and all banks continue to meet the prudential requirements."

The Bank further maintained that the banking sector remains resilient.

"As stated in the opening paragraph of Section 3.1, the stress test results indicate that the sector maintains adequate capital buffers and, in most cases, sufficient liquidity to withstand severe adverse conditions."

Insurance market concentration

The CBL also responded to questions about the insurance industry after its report revealed that the market remains heavily concentrated.

The report found that the country's three largest insurers account for 87.1 percent of all insurance premiums, while the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), an internationally recognised measure of market concentration, exceeds 6,190 in both the long-term and short-term insurance sectors.

Asked to identify the three dominant insurers, the Bank declined.

"The Bank reports industry performance and assessments in an aggregate form," it said.

The regulator also said it has not undertaken any study to determine whether such market concentration has affected competition, innovation, pricing or consumer choice.

"While literature indicates that market concentration can have positive and negative implications, the Bank has not conducted any study to determine if the level of

QMMH: A hospital in limbo

Ntsoaki Motaung

Five years ago, the government took over Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital (QMMH) from private operator Tšepong Consortium, promising Basotho better healthcare and stronger public control.

Today, the hospital itself appears to be on life support.

Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has peeled back the bandages to expose a system in distress, M79 million in debt, a salary structure that defies explanation, and an organisational framework that officials themselves cannot clearly define.

Doctors continue treating patients, but the institution is haemorrhaging money, and Parliament is demanding to know who is in charge, how it got here, and whether the government was ever prepared to run the country's flagship referral hospital.

The revelations emerged this week as the PAC intensified its inquiry into the operations and financial management of QMMH, exposing what lawmakers described as years of poor governance, weak financial controls and an incomplete transition from private to public management.

The findings have revived a question that has lingered since the government terminated its controversial partnership with Tšepong Consortium in 2021: Was the state ready to run Lesotho's most important hospital?

QMMH opened in October 2011, replacing the dilapidated, century-old Queen Elizabeth II Hospital as Lesotho's main referral hospital. The 425-bed facility was built through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) signed in 2008 between the government and the Tšepong Consortium, led by South African healthcare giant Netcare, which held a 40 percent stake, alongside local and South African partners.

The PPP was touted by the World Bank's International Finance Corporation, which advised on the deal, as a flagship model for Africa. The hospital brought clear improvements, overall mortality fell by 41 percent, and it became one of the few public hospitals in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve international accreditation.

It introduced state-of-the-art medical equipment, specialist services and management systems that were largely unavailable in Lesotho's public health sector at the time.

But the partnership soon became one of the country's most controversial government contracts.

Successive governments complained that the hospital was consuming an unsustainably large share of the national health budget.

Government payments to Tšepong ballooned as patient numbers exceeded contractual caps. By 2018/19, the hospital took up nearly 30 percent of the health budget, about M699 million.

Independent studies and parliamentary scrutiny repeatedly questioned whether the PPP offered value for money, while disputes over payments and contract obligations strained relations between the government and Tšepong.

Oxfam called it a "dangerous diversion of scarce public funds" from rural primary care.

In February 2021, nurses went on strike demanding pay parity with other government hospitals, they earned about M9,000 vs M13,000 elsewhere. Tšepong responded by firing over 300 nurses. The government, furious it had not been consulted, terminated the 18-year contract in March 2021, about five years early.

Tšepong vacated on July 16, 2021, ahead of the 31 July deadline, citing the government's failure to pay outstanding fees . The government formally took over in August 2021, appointing a new management team.

Officials argued that bringing QMMH under public management would reduce costs, improve accountability and place one of the country's most critical public institutions firmly under government control.

Five years later, parliament is questioning whether those promises have been fulfilled.

PAC Chairperson 'Machabana Lemphane-Letsie opened the inquiry by questioning the hospital's organisational identity.

The committee had previously requested QMMH's organisational structure and salary framework to determine how the institution operates as a government hospital. Those documents, however, were not produced.

"QMMH is not a private hospital, but if it is a government hospital, its structure should reflect that. Right now, it does not," Lemphane-Letsie said.

Committee members said they could not determine how positions were created, who approved them or how salaries were determined.

"We do not see where the structure emanates from or who authorised it," Lemphane-Letsie said.

One of the committee's biggest concerns was the apparent absence of a coherent salary structure.

MPs heard that employees performing different functions are paid under varying arrangements, with some support staff reportedly earning salaries significantly higher than clinical personnel.

Members questioned whether remuneration was based on qualifications, responsibilities or other considerations.

Acting Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Health, 'Matšoanelo Monyobi, admitted that although QMMH is now a government hospital, its organisational and salary structures remain largely unchanged from the Tšepong era.

"QMMH is now a government hospital, but its structure has not changed since the takeover from Tšepong. Salaries remain higher than those at other government hospitals," Monyobi said.

She said the Ministry had developed a concept note on restructuring the hospital and submitted it to government's Social Cluster. The Ministry has also sought technical assistance from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The explanation did little to satisfy lawmakers.

PAC member Tšeliso Moroke argued that officials responsible for the transition had failed to integrate QMMH into the public service.

"In government, there is a clear structure, but QMMH already had its own, which was never changed," Moroke said.

Hloahloeng Member of Parliament Katleho Mabeleng questioned whether QMMH could genuinely be classified as either a government or private institution.

"It is a different monster. What can we call it? According to my analysis, it is neither private nor government," Mabeleng said.

He also questioned why the Ministry required WHO's assistance to undertake a restructuring that government itself should have been capable of implementing.

Monyobi responded that WHO routinely provides technical support to governments.

The committee also uncovered significant financial pressures facing the hospital.

Finance Manager Tšele Sehlabo told MPs that QMMH entered the 2025/26 financial year carrying accumulated debt of M79 million, leaving much of its budget immediately committed to settling existing obligations.

"We had budgeted for salaries, but we started the year without the employer's provident fund contributions," Sehlabo said.

He said the hospital was unable to pay its employer contributions to the staff provident fund for February and March because of cash-flow constraints, although employee deductions were remitted.

According to Sehlabo, the hospital has since remained up to date with its provident fund obligations, except for the outstanding employer contributions for those two months.

QMMH received an initial budget allocation of M550 million for the current financial year, but a later reduction by the Ministry of Finance cut that figure by M22 million, leaving the hospital with M528 million.

Sehlabo said previous annual allocations had averaged between M506 million and M507 million, despite QMMH also carrying responsibility for referring patients to hospitals outside Lesotho without receiving dedicated funding.

This year, he said, M72 million was specifically allocated for overseas referrals, accounting for the larger budget.

Lemphane-Letsie warned that Parliament would not continue approving funding for the hospital unless meaningful reforms were implemented.

"We are not going to go to the next budget with QMMH as it is. If the situation does not change, I will stand before it and oppose it," she said.

She instructed the Ministry to prioritise restructuring QMMH before the mid-term budget review, warning that failure to do so could affect future funding.

The committee also expressed concern over accountability after QMMH Managing Director Dr 'Makhoase Ranyali failed to appear before the inquiry.

Monyobi told MPs that Dr Ranyali had been advised by her lawyer not to attend.

Lemphane-Letsie criticised the recurring failure of some public officials to honour parliamentary summonses, saying such conduct undermines accountability.

She further questioned reports that some officials had left senior positions within the Ministry of Health to take management positions at QMMH, where salaries are reportedly higher and financial controls less stringent.

Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital

Hidden price tag of Ramarothole Phase II

...Lesotho's M923 million energy gamble

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Energy security has become one of Lesotho's most ambitious development goals, but behind the country's push to expand renewable energy lies a growing financial obligation that will ultimately be carried by taxpayers.

The Government of Lesotho has secured a M923 million loan to finance the second phase of the Ramarothole Solar Plant in Mafeteng, a project expected to generate 50 megawatts (MW) of electricity and include battery storage capacity.

While the project promises to reduce Lesotho's dependence on imported electricity, the loan agreement means the country will remain financially committed for two decades, with repayments extending until 2046.

The financing was obtained from the Export-Import Bank of China (Exim Bank) and is classified by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning as a soft loan, because of its favourable lending conditions.

According to loan information from the ministry, the first disbursement was made on June 29, 2026, with the first interest payment scheduled for September 21, 2026.

However, the repayment of the principal amount will only begin after a five-year grace period, with the first principal payment due on September 22, 2031.

The loan will mature in 2046, meaning future governments will continue servicing the debt for approximately 20 years after the project begins operating.

The interest rate attached to the loan is 2 percent, while the agreement includes a once-off management fee of 0.25 percent.

Although the terms are considered concessional compared to commercial borrowing, the full financial impact will only become clear over the lifetime of the loan, when interest and associated costs are added to the principal amount.

The money will be repaid through government revenues, meaning taxpayers will ultimately carry the obligation.

This is not the first Chinese-backed loan for the Ramarothole Solar Plant. Phase I of the project, which was completed in 2023, was also financed through Chinese funding, with the government borrowing M667 million for the 30MW facility.

Closing Lesotho's energy gap

The investment comes at a time when Lesotho continues to face significant energy insecurity.

At peak demand, the country requires approximately 220MW of electricity. However, domestic generation remains far below this requirement.

The 'Muela Hydropower Station produces about 72MW, while Phase I of the Ramarothole Solar Plant contributes 30MW.

Together, the two facilities produce slightly more than 100MW, leaving Lesotho dependent on electricity imports, mainly from South Africa's Eskom.

Energy Minister Lejone Mpotjoane said the country spent approximately M1.2 billion buying electricity this year alone.

The second phase of Ramarothole is expected to increase domestic generation capacity and reduce the amount of electricity the country needs to purchase from outside.

Speaking during the sod-turning ceremony for Phase II earlier this month, Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane said the project represented a major step towards addressing the country's energy challenges.

"It is over M923 million," Matekane said, adding that the project was expected to take 12 months, with completion targeted for August 2027.

The government, however, has previously indicated that construction could take longer, with project timelines also referring to a period of up to three years.

Matekane said the investment was a response to persistent energy insecurity.

A renewable energy future financed by debt

The push towards solar energy comes amid a global transition away from fossil fuels.

At COP28 in 2023, countries agreed to accelerate climate action, including increasing investment in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.

The International Energy Agency's Global Energy Review has highlighted the rapid growth of solar photovoltaic technology, with solar becoming one of the largest sources of new electricity generation globally.

For Lesotho, renewable energy is viewed as a way to improve energy independence while reducing reliance on imported power.

Phase I of Ramarothole was officially handed over to government in June 2023.

The 30MW facility has a projected operational lifespan of 25 years and is expected to produce approximately 1.3 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) during its lifetime, averaging about 52.71 million kWh annually.

The agreement for Phase I was signed on September 2, 2018, between the Ministry of Energy and Meteorology and the SMO-TBEA Consortium during the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in Beijing.

A framework agreement between the Ministry of Finance and China's Exim Bank followed on January 7, 2020.

Jobs promised, communities left behind

At the Phase II launch, Finance Minister Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane said the project would create more than 400 jobs.

She also announced plans for another 40MW solar project with battery storage capacity.

But while government celebrates increased electricity generation, communities surrounding the Ramarothole solar park continue to raise concerns about whether local residents are benefiting from the investment.

Eight villages surround the project area: Ha Liemere, Ha Lempetje, Ha Ramarothole, Makeneng, Ha Sebusi, Ha Mahali, Ha Rankapu and Ha Qobete.

Despite hosting one of the country's largest renewable energy projects, some residents still do not have access to electricity.

Four villages, Ha Liemere, Ha Sebusi, Ha Mahali and Ha Rankapu, remain without electricity.

The remaining villages have electricity connections, but residents say these were not provided because of the solar plant.

The most severe challenge has been water scarcity.

In Ha Ramarothole, where the solar project is located, villagers reportedly face difficulties accessing water, with residents relying on limited communal supplies.

At the same time, a borehole inside the fenced solar facility is used to clean solar panels.

The situation has raised questions about whether communities hosting major national infrastructure projects are receiving adequate social benefits.

More projects, more borrowing

The government's renewable energy plans extend beyond Ramarothole.

Lesotho is also planning the construction of the Oxbow Hydropower Project, expected to generate 80MW.

In the same Ramarothole area, another solar project is planned despite concerns raised in Parliament in 2025 that the country risks repeating problems associated with the Fraser Solar project.

The proposed project, involving China-based Beijing Jinyuntong Technology Co. Ltd (JYT), is expected to follow a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model.

Under the arrangement, JYT would finance, construct and operate a 40MW solar plant with a 20MW energy storage system, before transferring ownership to government after a 15-year operating period.

Meanwhile, in June, Energy Minister Mpotjoane signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Convalt Energy Inc founder and CEO Hari Achuthan for a feasibility study into a renewable energy project at Kobong in Leribe.

The proposed project could eventually generate up to 1,200MW of electricity.

The agreement includes projected investment of approximately US$6 billion (about M110 billion) and a proposed US$20 billion (about M366 billion) investment for a 900MW data centre.

World Bank joins electrification push

Lesotho's energy expansion is also receiving support from multilateral lenders.

The World Bank Group recently approved a US$50 million (approximately M900 million) concessional credit facility through the International Development Association (IDA).

The funding will support the Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation in Lesotho (ASCENT-Lesotho) project.

The programme aims to expand electricity access to nearly 147,000 people and businesses, particularly in rural areas where grid connection remains limited.

The World Bank said the initiative was intended to "bring reliable, affordable electricity to nearly 147,000 residents and businesses, reduce energy poverty, and create the conditions for stronger household incomes and private sector growth."

The balancing act

For Lesotho, Ramarothole Phase II represents both an opportunity and a financial commitment.

The project could strengthen domestic electricity generation, reduce expensive imports and improve energy security.

But the M923 million loan also means future generations will inherit a long-term repayment obligation.

The central question is whether the economic benefits generated by the solar investment will outweigh the cost of borrowing, and whether communities living alongside these projects will see meaningful improvements in their daily lives.

For taxpayers, the price of energy independence will not only be measured in megawatts produced, but also in the millions of maloti committed to repaying the debt.

Apprentice stands trial on corruption, fraud and extortion charges

Lekhetho Makhanya

A 30-year-old apprentice attached to the District Education Office in Leribe has appeared before the Leribe Magistrate's Court on Monday facing multiple charges of bribery, corruption, fraud and extortion over an alleged scheme to manipulate the recruitment of teachers for financial gain.

Tšireletso Lekoetje, of Ha Raliee, is attached to the District Education Office under the Prime Minister's Lesupa-Tsela Youth Apprenticeship Programme, formerly known as Lihahala, where he serves as an Assistant Human Resources Officer.

The prosecution alleges that between April 2024 and his arrest, Lekoetje abused his position by exploiting confidential recruitment information and his access to official records to solicit and extort money from applicants seeking teaching posts.

According to evidence presented in court, the accused allegedly targeted job seekers by demanding payment in exchange for favourable placement on teacher recruitment lists.

The court heard that in some cases, candidates who had legitimately performed well in interviews and were ranked first were allegedly threatened with being removed from the shortlist or having their rankings lowered unless they paid him.

The prosecution further alleges that Lekoetje manipulated official recruitment documents, including Schedule 17, by removing original pages and replacing them with falsified versions.

Through those alterations, he allegedly changed candidates' rankings and submitted false information to the Teaching Service Commission, resulting in the appointment of less deserving candidates while qualified applicants were denied employment.

In one instance, the court heard, Lekoetje allegedly accepted M6,000 from a candidate who had initially been ranked third on the shortlist. He is accused of unlawfully elevating the candidate to first position, enabling the Teaching Service Commission to approve the appointment.

The candidate was subsequently appointed as a teacher at Thokoa Primary School, while another candidate secured employment at St Phillips Primary School.

Investigations by the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) allegedly uncovered that Lekoetje received a total of M9,500 from several candidates in exchange for manipulating the recruitment process.

Lekoetje was granted bail on July 8 on condition that he pay a cash deposit of M2,000, provide a surety of M20,000, refrain from interfering with witnesses or ongoing investigations, attend all court proceedings and stand trial.

However, he failed to satisfy the bail conditions and remains in custody.

The case continues before Magistrate Tlohang Mohanoe and has been postponed to September 7, 2026.

Health workers threaten strike over missing pension contributions

Ntsoaki Motaung

Staff at Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital (QMMH) have threatened to disrupt routine health services if management fails to account for and repay missing pension contributions by the end of August.

Newsday has seen a draft petition dated July 22, 2026, in which employees accused hospital management of deducting provident fund contributions from their salaries but failing to remit the money to the fund administrator, LNIG Hollard.

The workers were preparing to deliver the petition to the hospital's Medical Director before management convened an urgent staff meeting on Thursday afternoon to address the growing concerns.

Employees who attended the meeting told Newsday that representatives of LNIG Hollard assured staff that their pension savings remained secure, although it was acknowledged that the hospital had failed to remit contributions for two months.

"LNIG Hollard will come to the hospital again next week for one-on-one interviews," workers who attended the meeting said.

The pension controversy follows revelations made during a Public Accounts Committee (PAC) hearing on July 22, where hospital officials appeared before MPs. Staff claim that Finance Manager Tšele Sehlabo admitted that pension contributions had been used to pay hospital suppliers instead of being transferred to employees' retirement accounts.

Striking Staffers

Under their employment contracts, workers contribute between five and 10 percent of their salaries to the provident fund, while the hospital is required to make a matching contribution of five percent.

In the petition, employees described the alleged use of pension deductions for other purposes as a serious violation of trust.

"This represents a serious breach of trust," the workers wrote. "Using our hard-earned retirement savings to cover hospital debts jeopardises our future financial security."

The staff have set out a series of demands and deadlines for management.

They want a full written explanation regarding the missing contributions to be provided to all affected employees by August 1, 2026. They are also demanding that all outstanding pension contributions, together with any lost interest or investment returns, be paid into their accounts by August 31, 2026.

Some employees have further requested the option of having their accumulated pension funds paid directly into their personal bank accounts, saying they no longer have confidence in the current arrangement.

The workers are also seeking written guarantees that future pension contributions will be remitted on time.

Should management fail to meet these demands, staff warned they would take industrial action.

According to the petition, emergency and life-saving services would continue, but routine healthcare services would be suspended. The workers further warned that QMMH could stop accepting patient referrals from other health facilities across the country until the matter is resolved.

"We have remained committed to providing quality healthcare services to the people of Lesotho, often under challenging circumstances," the petition states. "We urge hospital leadership and the Ministry of Health to resolve this matter urgently."

QMMH management, through Deputy Managing Director for Human Capital Thenjiwe Dlangamandla, convened a staff meeting on Thursday afternoon.

In a notice circulated to employees, supervisors were instructed to ensure that no workstation was left unattended during the meeting, which began at 2:30pm and extended beyond 5:00pm.

Lesotho must back SEZ agenda with laws and funding

Seabata Mahao

The government must fast-track the enactment of dedicated Special Economic Zones (SEZ) legislation and commit adequate financial resources towards infrastructure development if Lesotho is to realise its industrialisation ambitions.

The call was made by Private Sector Foundation of Lesotho (PSFL) Chief Executive Thabo Qhesi following his participation at the Special Economic Zones Conference held in Durban, South Africa, from July 16 to 17, 2026.

The conference, which brought together policymakers, investment promotion agencies, zone operators and private sector representatives, explored strategies for building globally competitive industrial zones and strengthening cross-border economic cooperation within Southern Africa.

Drawing lessons from South Africa's experience and benchmarking 13 successful SEZ jurisdictions globally, Qhesi believes Lesotho must move with urgency to create an enabling environment that provides investors with long-term certainty while positioning the country as a competitive investment destination.

Central to PSFL's recommendations is the enactment of a dedicated SEZ or Free Zones Act that would provide statutory guarantees on investment incentives, land use, customs treatment and dispute resolution.

According to the foundation, legislation offers investors greater certainty than administrative incentive packages because it remains in force regardless of changes in government administrations and policy priorities.

In her budget speech earlier this year, Finance Minister Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane indicated that government would finalise the development of the SEZ Bill during the

2026/27 financial year. However, no commitments were made regarding the funding required for the development of supporting industrial infrastructure.

Meanwhile, South Africa, one of the countries highlighted during the conference, has operated under dedicated SEZ legislation since 2014, a move that has strengthened investor confidence by providing clarity on zone governance and investment incentives.

Qhesi's recommendations come at a time when Lesotho's manufacturing sector is facing mounting external pressures. While the country's industrial estates model has helped establish a manufacturing base that supports an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 jobs, principally in the textiles and garments sector, it remains vulnerable to developments in international trade policy, including tariff-related pressures and uncertainties surrounding preferential market access arrangements.

He noted that Lesotho's industrialisation model still lacks several features that distinguish high-performing SEZs globally, including a dedicated legal framework, a single empowered zone authority, secure land tenure arrangements for investors, sectoral diversification and performance-based incentives.

Beyond legislative reforms, PSFL has stressed the need for government to allocate sufficient financial resources towards the development of SEZ infrastructure, arguing that investment promotion efforts cannot succeed in the absence of serviced industrial sites.

"Commit predictable public capital to the serviced land, utilities and site infrastructure that zone designation alone cannot deliver, recognising that legal reform without infrastructure investment will not attract anchor investors," the report states.

The foundation warned that while policy reforms are necessary, they must be matched by investments in roads, utilities and industrial infrastructure capable of supporting both local and foreign investors.

PSFL has further recommended the establishment of a single, empowered SEZ authority governed by an independent board to consolidate investor registration, incentive administration and investment facilitation functions currently spread across various government institutions.

Such an arrangement, according to the foundation, would provide investors with "one front door rather than several ministries and agencies", significantly reducing bureaucratic delays and improving the ease of doing business.

The organisation has also proposed reforms to the country's land tenure framework through the introduction of secure, long-term and renewable lease arrangements tailored specifically for SEZ investors. The recommendation seeks to address challenges associated with the current citizen-only leasehold regime while drawing lessons from successful models implemented in countries such as Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

To ensure that public resources deliver measurable economic returns, PSFL is advocating for incentives linked to verified performance indicators, including exports, employment creation and local value addition, rather than being granted automatically upon investment approval.

The foundation believes such an approach would minimise the risk of incentive abuse while strengthening accountability and ensuring that investment promotion measures contribute meaningfully to national development objectives.

Recognising the opportunities presented by regional integration, PSFL has also called for the pursuit of cross-border SEZ partnerships through the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Particular emphasis has been placed on the Maluti-a-Phofung Special Economic Zone in South Africa's Free State province, which borders Lesotho.

The organisation says the neighbouring zone presents a practical opportunity for joint industrial projects, supply chain integration and investment partnerships between businesses operating on both sides of the border.

PSFL is proposing that the SADC Secretariat develop an SEZ annex under the SADC Trade Protocol to facilitate greater harmonisation of investment incentives and cross-border industrial cooperation among member states.

For the private sector, the foundation has recommended securing institutionalised representation on the board of any future Lesotho SEZ Authority while leading efforts to diversify the country's manufacturing base beyond textiles into sectors such as agro-processing, logistics and services.

Employers have also been encouraged to partner with government and training institutions to align workforce development programmes with the needs of prospective investors and to support investments in housing and essential services required to retain skilled workers and managers.

Ultimately, PSFL argues that Special Economic Zones should be viewed as strategic instruments for industrial transformation rather than merely investment incentive schemes.

Its message to policymakers is unequivocal: without urgent legal reforms and predictable public investment in industrial infrastructure, Lesotho risks missing a critical opportunity to build a more diversified, resilient and competitive economy.

M-Pesa pioneers mobile-based investment avenue

Vodacom expands M-Pesa into investment market with launch of Tsetela

Seabata Mahao

VCL Financial Services (VCLFS), the operator of M-Pesa in Lesotho, has launched Tsetela, a mobile-based investment solution developed in partnership with STANLIB Lesotho that significantly lowers the barriers to formal investing by allowing customers to start building wealth from as little as M50.

The new service marks a major step in broadening financial inclusion by making regulated investment products more accessible and affordable for ordinary Basotho, many of whom have traditionally been excluded by high minimum investment requirements, distance and cumbersome administrative processes.

Unveiled in Maseru on Wednesday, Tsetela enables eligible M-Pesa customers to invest directly from their mobile wallets into the STANLIB Money Market Fund, earn daily interest on their savings and manage their investments through their mobile phones without having to visit a bank or investment office.

Tsetela, which means "to invest" in Sesotho, extends M-Pesa beyond payments and money transfers into wealth creation, allowing Basotho to participate in formal financial markets through a platform already widely used across urban, peri-urban and rural communities.

Through Tsetela, individual M-Pesa customers can begin investing from just M50, while Mokhatlo Group Savings customers can invest from M300. Customers may top up their investments at any time with no upper investment limit, while withdrawals can be made without restriction, subject to a processing period of up to 72 hours.

The low entry threshold is expected to make investing attainable for first-time investors and low-income earners who have traditionally viewed formal investment products as being beyond their reach.

Speaking during the launch, Tsetela Product Manager at Vodacom Financial Services, Tšepiso Secker, described the product as a collaborative effort between VCLFS and STANLIB Lesotho designed to make investing accessible to ordinary Basotho.

"Today we have launched a groundbreaking new product named Tsetela. It is an investment product developed jointly by VCL Financial Services and STANLIB. It offers Basotho an opportunity to invest in the STANLIB Money Market Fund through Tsetela, which is managed by VCL Financial Services," she said.

She explained that interest on investments is calculated daily and paid monthly, with customers receiving SMS notifications once the interest has been credited to their Tsetela accounts.

"There is no limit to how much you can invest and no limit to how much you can withdraw. Once you initiate a withdrawal, it may take up to 72 hours for the funds to be credited to your account. Customers can invest anytime, withdraw anytime and continue topping up their investments whenever they wish," Secker said.

She added that the product currently invests exclusively in the STANLIB Money Market Fund and does not yet offer fixed deposit or equity investment options.

Interest calculations follow the calendar month, meaning investors earn interest based on the number of days their funds remain invested during each month. Once interest has been credited, customers are free to withdraw or reinvest it without additional paperwork.

Addressing questions on estate management, Secker said Tsetela investments would be treated in the same manner as funds held in M-Pesa accounts should an account holder pass away, with unclaimed funds handled through the Central Bank of Lesotho's established regulatory processes.

On behalf of the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Teboho Shelile welcomed the launch, describing it as an example of private sector-led innovation supported by an enabling regulatory environment.

"Product innovation is strongest when driven by the private sector, with government creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment. Tsetela is a commendable innovation that deserves support to ensure its stability, sustainability and long-term growth," Shelile said.

He noted that financial inclusion remains essential for economic development and encouraged Basotho to embrace regulated financial products as a means of building long-term wealth.

Vodacom Lesotho Chief Executive Officer Mohale Ralebitso said the introduction of Tsetela reflects the company's commitment to moving digital financial services beyond simple transactions towards sustainable wealth creation.

"Financial inclusion goes beyond access to services; it enables Basotho to participate more fully in the economy and plan more confidently for the future. Tsetela is being introduced at a level that is accessible and aligned with the means of our people," Ralebitso said.

He added that Vodacom intends to broaden the range of investment portfolios available as the product matures while continuing to provide credible alternatives to informal savings schemes and promoting responsible investment.

STANLIB Lesotho Managing Director Mohlabinyane Mohapi said Tsetela addresses longstanding barriers that have prevented many Basotho from accessing formal investment opportunities.

"Traditional investment channels have excluded many Basotho through barriers such as bank account requirements and high minimum investment thresholds, in some cases starting at M5,000. Tsetela seeks to remove these barriers and deepen financial inclusion," Mohapi said.

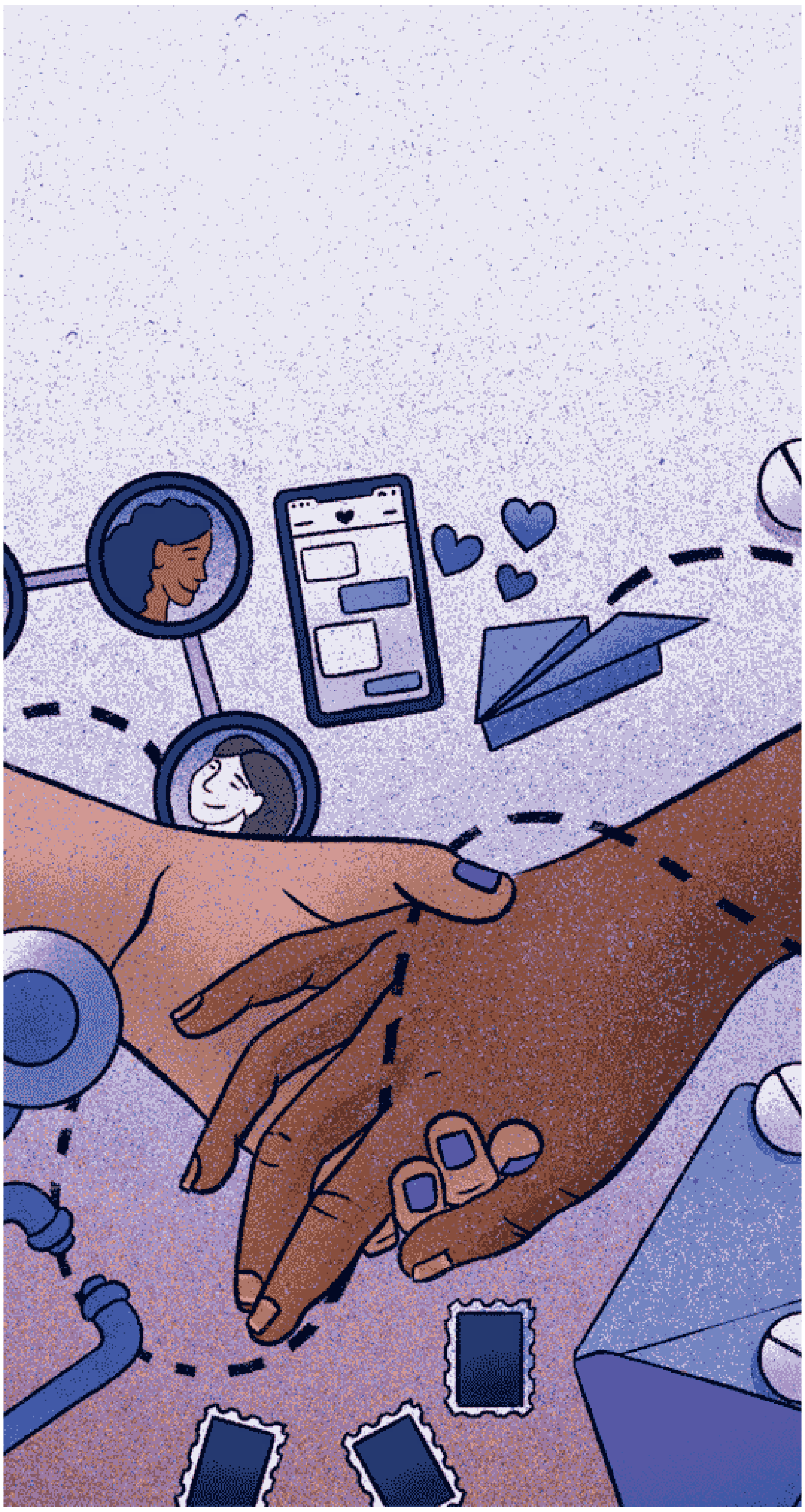
He emphasised that STANLIB operates under the supervision of the Central Bank of Lesotho, with investor funds held separately from company funds and protected through regulatory oversight, independent audits and trustee supervision.

According to Mohapi, the money market fund is particularly suited to risk-averse investors and individuals seeking short-term investment options while maintaining access to their funds.

Customers can access the service by dialling *200#, selecting Savings Account, then Tsetela Account, and following the prompts. Individual customers can begin investing from M50, while Mokhatlo Group Savings customers require a minimum investment of M300. Customers are advised to familiarise themselves with the applicable terms and conditions before investing.

Representing the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Teboho Shelile

What women endure when choice is outlawed



Picture Courtesy- Ineedana

Ntsoaki Motaung

In the shadowy corners of Maseru's shacks and backstreets, young women like "Thato," not her real name, endure a harrowing ordeal that is both physically dangerous and emotionally scarring.

In a country where abortion is largely illegal, the true cost is paid not in maloti, but in blood, fear, and lives forever changed.

For Thato, the journey began in her final year of high school. "I found it very unbearable to continue with the pregnancy," she recalled. The boy who got her pregnant had already been expelled for bad behaviour, and the future she had envisioned for herself and her family was slipping away. "I felt like I was going to break my aunt's heart," she said.

She is as an orphan.

Her story is neither unique nor rare. Lesotho's Penal Code Act of 2012 criminalises abortion except in the narrowest circumstances, when the mother's life is in danger, or in cases of rape, incest, or severe foetal abnormality. For most women, these exceptions are unreachable. The result is an underground network of unregulated abortions, where desperation drives women to risk everything.

A price paid in blood

The cost of an illegal abortion in Lesotho varies wildly. "For someone who was one month pregnant, he charged M400 and so on," Thato explained. Add another M200 if you needed to stay overnight, more if you required monitoring, and yet another fee for disposing of the foetus. For many, even these sums are out of reach, pushing them toward even riskier methods, traditional medicines, industrial chemicals, and household cleaning agents like bleach.

But money is only one part of the price. Thato's first abortion was a nightmare. Directed by a friend to a man in the shacks near the taxi rank known as Lepoqong, she received pills, likely Cytotec, a drug now infamous on social media, and was told to go home. "Even before I reached home, I felt so wet. I went home and used clothes instead of pads because the flow was too much," she recounted. The bleeding did not stop for more than a month. "I was afraid to go to the doctor or any pharmacy because I was scared of getting arrested."

When she finally reached out to her contact again, he demanded more money, then provided more pills and finally, a concoction of traditional Sesotho medicine for "cleaning the womb." "At that point, I was just praying that the Lord God would help me," Thato said.

Her second abortion was less traumatic, she credits the involvement of a nurse, allegedly part of the same underground network. But the fear lingered. "I was terrified, fearing that history would repeat itself and that this time I might not be so lucky."

The hidden epidemic

Thato's experience is far from isolated. Another woman, close to Thato and who describes herself as a born-again Christian, narrated her own ordeal: "I never thought I would commit such a sin," she confessed. But with her boyfriend earning barely enough for himself and her own wages under M1000, the decision felt inevitable.

After Thato introduced her to a man selling Cytotec, she underwent the procedure in a Lepoqong shack. When the bleeding would not stop, Thato took her to the hospital. She required a dilation and curettage and days of medical care. Later, she suffered blood clots, likely a consequence of the procedure.

Healthcare professionals see the consequences firsthand. "Women undergoing unsafe abortions take whatever they can find, without knowing the effects on their bodies. Often, they ingest excessive doses, immediately putting their lives at risk," warned 'Mamonica Mokhesi. The dangers are stark: severe bleeding, infection, uterine perforation, infertility, and death.

A report by UNFPA found that among girls aged 10 to 14, a staggering 35.71 percent of all hospital admissions were abortion-related, a chilling testament to the scale of the crisis. For women aged 15–49, 12.35 percent of hospital admissions were due to induced or spontaneous abortions, a statistic that hints at the silent epidemic of unsafe procedures hidden behind closed doors.

The weight of guilt and survival

Beyond the physical risks, the emotional and spiritual burden is profound. "I thought I was going to die and be remembered as a young, brilliant woman who killed herself trying to terminate a pregnancy," Thato admitted.

For her sister, the regret is clear: "As a dedicated person to my God, I feel very dirty. I wish I had allowed Him to take control of my situation."

Yet for others, the sense of relief outweighs the guilt. "I did it under circumstances where I felt it was worth it. I did not want to bring a life into the world that I would never be able to raise and take good care of," Thato said.

Her words echo the impossible choices women are forced to make.

A thriving underground economy

The underground abortion economy is thriving, staffed not just by shadowy figures but by nurses and even doctors, some operating out of clinics, others from backrooms behind Chinese shops.

"If abortion was legal, it could help avoid the deaths of others who are still using harmful substances like Jik (bleach), madubula (chemical disinfectant), and traditional medicines," Thato argued. "Most of them just get lucky."

Mokhesi shared concern about the nation's readiness. "Even if we woke up tomorrow and abortion was legal, are we prepared in terms of infrastructure? No. Are we ready religiously? No."

But she is unwavering in her demand for education, prevention, and compassion. "We must prioritise sexual and reproductive health education. The nation must also take responsibility for seeking healthcare services and preventing unwanted pregnancies."

According to Afrobarometer findings published on February 18 this year, in Lesotho, 17 percent of women aged 15-19 have had at least one pregnancy.

In Qacha's Nek, according to the findings, one-third of all pregnancies (162 of 486) between January and June 2025 occurred among 13- to 19-year-olds, a significant rise from the same period in 2024.

Findings further showed that Basotho overwhelmingly supported the inclusion of sexuality education in school curricula, ongoing education for girls who become pregnant or give birth, and access to contraception regardless of age and marital status.

Nearly eight in 10 citizens said women should be able to decide for themselves when and how many children to have, while an even larger share said girls and women should be able to decide for themselves whether and when to get married.

"Nearly half of Basotho say it is at least "sometimes justified" for a woman to terminate a pregnancy if her life or health is at risk or if the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest. Far smaller shares say abortion can be justified in the event of economic hardship or if the woman does not want to keep the pregnancy for any reason," Afrobarometer said.

Good service is not enough: Lesotho now needs smart government

Dr Theko Tlebere

Last week, I wrote about the need for Lesotho to modernise the way it manages job applications. The argument was simple: technology should reduce the burden placed on citizens, not merely replicate outdated administrative procedures. I could not have imagined that only a few days later I would find myself experiencing another example of why that conversation must continue. This time, it was not about employment. It was about renewing my national identity card. Like many Basotho, I recently discovered that my identity card had expired. Naturally, I visited the offices of the National Identity and Civil Registry (NICR) to apply for a new one. Before discussing what I observed, I must first commend the department for one important achievement. Efficiency has clearly improved.

The application was tendered at around 11:00 hours, and by approximately 14:30 hours on the same day, I was in possession of the newly issued identity card. In numerous jurisdictions, such an administrative process typically extends over a period of several days or even week hence my astonishment towards the efficiency I saw that day. The departmental personnel there deserve a commendation for the expeditious issuance of the document within a time-frame of mere hours.

Whilst governmental departments frequently attract censure in instances of service failure, it is equally imperative to accord recognition in instances of demonstrable service delivery. Nevertheless, the acknowledgement of progress should not serve as a deterrent to the continuous pursuit of further advancements. During my period of waiting for the processing of the application, a notable observation was made. Notwithstanding the demonstrable diligence of the officials, virtually every stage of the process remained predicated upon paper-based methodologies. Applicants were assisted manually to complete physical forms, information that is already resident within government systems was being transcribed by hand, and officials allocated significant time to the manual handling of documentation that could readily have been processed digitally.

The service, whilst expeditious, was indicative of a process belonging to a preceding era of Morena Leabua. A critical distinction exists between efficient manual systems and modern digital systems. An efficient manual process inherently remains constrained by reliance on physical documentation, the requirement for physical presence, and the execution of repetitive administrative tasks. A digital process, conversely, substantially mitigates many of these inherent constraints. Ergo, efficiency ought not to be construed merely as the accelerated processing of paper, but rather as the comprehensive reduction of superfluous paper-based procedures.

A quick but necessary observation was made. Upon exiting the NICR offices, I traversed past the passport office, where the contrast was stark. Extensive queues of Basotho were observed within the waiting areas, queues even transcended to the pavement next to the main road, but as you know we are peaceful people, Basotho patiently waited to submit their applications. Whilst the officials were demonstrably diligent, the sheer volume of Basotho awaiting service suggested that the demand had surpassed the capacity of the prevailing administrative model. A pertinent query thus arises: what proportion of said queue is attributable to genuine requirements for direct assistance, and what proportion is a consequence of the process itself mandating physical presence for the completion of documentation that could have been pre-processed prior to arrival?

Consider a scenario wherein passport applicants complete their requisite forms online, upload supporting documentation electronically, effect payments via secure digital platforms like Mpesa or Ecocash, and are only required to attend the office for the singular purpose of biometric data capture. Under such a paradigm, waiting times would experience a dramatic reduction. Officials would be able to reallocate time from the handling of paperwork to the provision of substantive public service. Citizens would incur fewer hours of absence from their professional, academic, or commercial pursuits. The benefits would accrue universally.

This issue transcends the scope of identity cards and passports. Across numerous governmental departments, paper remains the foundational element of administrative operations. Citizens continue to manually complete forms, documents are subject to repeated photocopying, information is transcribed multiple times despite its existing presence within governmental databases, files are physically transported between offices, and approval processes are contingent upon the physical movement of folders from one desk to another. None of these practices necessarily reflect a deficiency in willingness on the part of public servants; rather, they are indicative of systems that have failed to evolve in consonance with available technological advancements.

Fortuitously, Lesotho is not compelled to initiate this transformation ab initio. The nation has already demonstrated the feasibility of digital transformation. Tax administration has progressively embraced electronic services. Financial institutions have successfully migrated numerous services to mobile platforms. Mobile money has become an integral component of daily economic activity. Academic institutions conduct admissions and administrative functions electronically. Commercial entities routinely utilise digital platforms for communication.

Citizens have demonstrated remarkable adaptability; the government is equally capable of such adaptation. Modern public administration ought to be guided by a singular, fundamental principle: citizens should be required to provide information only once. If the government already possesses verified personal information through the National Identity Register, what justification exists for citizens to repeatedly get 'lengolo la Morena" all the time they need services? Governmental databases should be interoperable and capable of secure communication. This constitutes the true promise of digital government. I essence, an individual applying for a passport should not be necessitated to re-enter information already verified during the identity card registration process. Similarly, an individual applying for employment should not be required to repeatedly submit documents already certified within governmental systems. Digital integration serves to mitigate duplication, reduce administrative overheads, and enhance data accuracy.

As we discuss modernization, we must also acknowledge that digital government is not an exclusive prerogative of urban residents with high-speed internet connectivity. My agriculturalist uncle in Ha Khohopo, the merchant holder in Thamathu Qacha's Nek, the educator in Sebera Mokhotlong, the healthcare professional in Ha Seng Semonkong – they are equally deserving of efficient public services as any resident of Maseru. Digital inclusion, therefore, mandates the provision of multiple access points. Applications should be able to be rendered via computers, smartphones, community service centers, and government offices. Those who prefer face-to-face assistance should continue to receive it, whilst those comfortable with technological interfaces should not be compelled to join the long queues. Technology should expand the spectrum of choices, not diminish them. A further significant benefit, frequently overlooked, is that digital government fortifies public trust. When applications are submitted electronically, citizens receive immediate confirmation. They are empowered to monitor the progress of their applications without the necessity of repeated physical visits to offices. Institutions become more transparent due to the creation of an electronic audit trail for every transaction. The incidence of lost files is substantially reduced. Accountability inherently improves as systems record the identity of the official processing each application and the timestamp of such processing.

These are not abstract technological ambitions; they represent practical governance reforms designed to enhance daily life. The encouraging experience at the NICR demonstrates that our public institutions are staffed by capable and committed officials. The prevailing challenge is no longer whether government employees can deliver services efficiently. The challenge resides in whether we are equipping them with systems that facilitate the realisation of their full potential. Competent public servants ought not to be engaged in the daily management of voluminous paper documentation when technology is capable of automating routine administrative tasks. Their expertise should be directed towards direct public engagement, problem resolution, and the elevation of service quality.

In the preceding week, I asserted that digital government is not a luxury reserved for affluent nations. Today, having observed both commendable service delivery and anachronistic procedures within the same afternoon, I am even more profoundly convinced of this assertion. Modernisation is not about supplanting human capital with computational resources; it is about empowering individuals to execute their roles with greater efficacy. It is about demonstrating respect for citizens' time. It is about mitigating unnecessary costs. It is about constructing a public service that accurately reflects the exigencies of the twenty-first century. The celerity with which my identity card was produced unequivocally demonstrates Lesotho's capacity for delivering exemplary public service. The subsequent imperative is to advance to the next stage. Instead of merely processing paper with greater efficiency, let us now pose a more ambitious question: how can we comprehensively eliminate paper altogether? The Future is NOW!

What happens when the best stay silent, and the worst show up?

Kananelo Boloetse

Earlier today (Wednesday) I went to meet with some colleagues. It turned into a good, warm meeting. But even before we began, my eyes caught a familiar face in the corner of the room, Gabashane Masupha, a fellow compatriot and human rights defender. I waved to let him know I had seen him.

When our session ended, I made my way over to him. We exchanged greetings, shook hands, and fell into an impromptu, quiet conversation, the kind that starts casually but quickly deepens into something that lingers.

That conversation unsettled me enough to sit down and write this, my first article in a very long time.

We spoke about Lesotho's politics, but not the daily scandals or the gossip that fills WhatsApp groups, but something more serious. I reminded him that this Saturday we are travelling to Quthing, the last district on our tour of all ten, for the Youth Dialogue on Economic Independence.

After crisscrossing the country, we have listened to young people in every corner. Quthing will close the circle.

He asked whether there would be a report once the tour is done. I told him yes, but not the kind of report we are used to. Once we finish visiting every district, we plan to put together a Youth Charter, or "Youth Agenda 2066," which we hope to launch on the 3rd of October 2026, the eve of Independence Day.

I explained it this way: "Our grandparents fought for the political independence we officially gained on 4 October 1966, so that we, better prepared than they were, could pick up where they left off. Sixty years later, we can see clearly that political independence was only the first step. What we still need is economic independence, economic freedom for ordinary people, not just political freedom on paper."

"We have forty years left before Lesotho marks a full century of independence, in 2066. So the real question is simple: what kind of Lesotho do we want to see by then? If we can agree on that vision today, we have forty years to build it. That must be our generational mission."

I paused, then added: "Ours should be a generation willing to place its energy and skills at the service of the nation's economic freedom, with the same conviction our grandparents had when they believed, without doubt, that the cause of Lesotho must and will succeed."

Masupha absorbed every word, his conviction visible. But as he pondered the scale of what I had laid out, a trace of doubt crept across his features. "How will we do this," he asked, "when there is such a gulf between our youth and their politics, a distance that seems to stretch from both sides?"

That question hit home.

We spoke about how our grandparents wore their party colours with pride. Back then, being part of a movement stood for something real, liberation, development, and principle.

Today, many of us treat party politics differently, almost like something shameful, something to hide. We care about the issues deeply, but we keep our political views private. We stay, in a sense, in the closet.

But this is not laziness or indifference. It is self-protection. In a small country like ours, where everyone seems to know everyone, and reputations travel fast, being openly political can cost you a job, a client, a friendship, or an opportunity. So many capable young people choose silence instead.

But that silence has a price. It hands politics over to exactly the wrong people, those who have the least to lose.

Young people across Lesotho still care about the things that matter most: jobs, electricity, education, land, corruption, and opportunity. We are not disconnected from these issues. But when it comes to joining a party, standing up publicly, or taking a side, many of us step back.

The result is predictable. The space gets filled by those without a reputation to protect, or a career to lose. They defend leaders no matter what they do, and rotate through the same positions year after year. Meanwhile, the principled, the skilled, and the forward-thinking retreat into NGOs, private business, life abroad, or quiet, uninvolved lives.

Politics becomes a kind of theatre, performed by actors who never really risk anything.

This is not just a Lesotho problem. Across many democracies, trust in political parties and parliaments has been falling, while cynicism keeps rising. Young people everywhere tend to trust their peers and local community efforts far more than distant institutions. But when good people walk away from politics, bad incentives take over. The shameless thrive precisely because shame and reputation still mean something to everyone else.

Our grandparents entered politics with very clear stakes: independence, nation-building, and real ideological battles. Their affiliation meant something. Today, politics can feel more like a game of musical chairs among insiders, full of factionalism and broken promises. Unemployment remains young people's biggest worry, and for many, leaving the country feels more realistic than waiting for political change at home. So the question becomes: why would anyone risk their integrity in a system that seems built to damage it?

This creates a dangerous cycle. As good candidates stay away, the pool of leaders on offer shrinks. Voters are left choosing between weak options. Cynicism grows deeper. And the cycle repeats itself, generation after generation.

This cannot be the future we simply accept. Staying "in the closet" might protect us individually in the short term, but it weakens the whole nation over time. Democracy needs participation, not just spectators watching from the sidelines. We need new ways to get involved without giving up our standards.

First, politics must start rewarding integrity instead of punishing it. Stronger institutions, transparent ways of choosing candidates, real enforcement against corruption, and less patronage, would lower the personal risk of getting involved. Parties that genuinely make room for young people's ideas, rather than using them simply as dancers and cheerleaders at rallies, will be the ones that attract real talent.

Second, we should look beyond traditional party structures. Issue-based movements, youth policy charters, stronger local government, and digital civic platforms all offer ways to make a difference with less personal compromise. The recent national dialogues, and the growing calls for economic independence, show that the appetite for change already exists. What we need now is to turn that energy into something structured and accountable.

Third, those already inside the political arena need to raise the bar. Older leaders should mentor young people without demanding blind loyalty in return. And young people who do choose to enter politics should model better standards themselves, competence instead of connections, delivery instead of drama.

The shame some of us feel about politics is not misplaced, not when the standards around us are so low. But shame without action is just surrender. Our generation must refuse to let the shameless keep defining the rules of the game. We can rebuild politics into a space built on principle and results, not just survival and self-interest.

Lesotho's youth are educated, connected, and ambitious. We are not short on interest in our country's future. What we lack is confidence that the system will actually value what we bring to it. Closing that gap, between what we quietly believe and what we are willing to say and do in public, is essential.

If we continue to hide, the advantage will stay with the shameless. And the cost of that will be paid by all of us, especially by the generation that comes after us.

Farmers Pitso Agriculture & Excellence Awards 2026 Categories

1.Primary Farming Excellence Categories

These categories form the foundation of the awards and recognise excellence in core agricultural production. They celebrate farmers who demonstrate productivity, innovation, resilience and leadership within crop and livestock farming.

CATEGORIES

Crop Production

- Smallholder Farmer of the Year
- Commercial Farmer of the Year
- Emerging Farmer of the Year
- Young Farmer of the Year
- Woman Farmer of the Year
- Best Horticulture Producer
- Best Grain Producer
- Best Organic Farmer
- Climate-Smart Farmer of the Year
- Conservation Agriculture Champion
- Best Potato Producer of the Year

Livestock

- Best Broiler Farmer
- Best Layer Farmer
- Best Free-Range Poultry Farmer
- Best Dairy Cattle Farmer
- Best Dairy Goat Farmer
- Best Wool Producer
- Best Mohair Producer
- Best Horse Breeding & Performance Farmer
- Best Pig Producer
- Best Aquaculture/Fish Farmer
- Animal Health Champion
- Best Bee-Keeper
- Best Rabbit Breeder/farmer
- Best Dog Breeder
- Best Merino Sheep Breeder
- Best Angora Goats Breeder

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2. Innovation & Agribusiness Categories

This segment recognises businesses, entrepreneurs, and innovators contributing to agricultural transformation. It positions agriculture as an economic driver and encourages investment, technology adoption, and value addition.

CATEGORIES

- Agribusiness of the Year
- Agri-Tech Innovation Award
- Best Agro-Processing Enterprise
- Best Agricultural Start-Up
- Best Agricultural Cooperative
- Best Agri-Finance Support Institution
- Best Market Access Initiative
- Best Export-Oriented Agricultural Business

02

3. Youth, Women & Inclusion Categories

These categories ensure the awards are socially inclusive and developmental. They highlight the contribution of women, youth, schools, and marginalised groups in strengthening food systems and rural livelihoods.

CATEGORIES

- Rural Youth Agripreneur of the Year
- Women in Agriculture Leadership Award
- Best Youth-Led Agribusiness
- Disability Inclusion in Agriculture Award
- Community Food Security Champion
- Best School Garden Initiative
- University/College Agricultural Innovation Award

03

4. Sustainability & Climate Categories

These awards recognise individuals and organisations implementing environmentally responsible and climate-resilient agricultural practices.

CATEGORIES

- Climate Resilience Award
- Water Conservation Champion
- Sustainable Land Management Award
- Indigenous Seed Preservation Award
- Renewable Energy in Agriculture Award
- Regenerative Farming Award
- Environmental Stewardship Award

04

5. Media, Advocacy & Knowledge Sharing Categories

Agriculture cannot grow without communication, awareness, and information sharing. This segment recognises journalists, content creators, researchers, and educators advancing agricultural discourse.

CATEGORIES

- Best Agriculture Radio Programme
- Best Agriculture TV/Digital Content Creator
- Best Agriculture Newspaper
- Agricultural Photography Award
- Agricultural Storytelling Award
- Best Agriculture Influencer of the Year
- Best Research & Extension Excellence Award

05

6. Community & National Impact Categories

These categories celebrate individuals, institutions, and communities making a lasting contribution to national development, food security, and agricultural leadership.

CATEGORIES

- District Agricultural Excellence Award
- Community Farming Initiative of the Year
- Food Security Champion
- Agricultural Mentor of the Year
- Agricultural Leadership Award
- Traditional Leadership in Agriculture Award

06

Nominate or apply here:

https://seahlolo.co.ls/farmers-pitso-agriculture-excellence-awards-2026/

OR via Whatsapp:

(+266) 6389 8445

Invitation to Bidders

BID NOTICE UNDER OPEN COMPETITIVE TENDERING

02 July 2026

Supply and delivery of 3% Aqueous Film Forming Foam - PRO/1/2026/2027

1. The *Ministry of Public Works and Transport* has been allocated/received funds from Government under Development Budget to be used for the acquisition of 3% Aqueous Film Forming Foam.
2. The Entity invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the provision of the above Goods.
3. Bidding will be conducted in accordance with the open national bidding method contained in the Public Procurement Act and is open to all bidders.
4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the address given below at 8(a) from [*0800hrs to 1600hrs*].
5. The Bidding document in English may be obtained by interested bidders from the office of procurement of Transport at Old Traffic Building, next to St Catherines High School
6. Bids must be delivered to the address below at 8(c) at or before *04th August 2026, 1200Hrs*. [If appropriate, include the following: All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of 2% of the bid amount. Bid securities or bid securing declarations must be valid until 04th November 2026. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below at 8(d) at 1200Hrs, 04th August 2026.
7. There *shall not be* a pre – bid meeting/ site visit.
8. (a) Documents may be inspected at:
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport
   Old Traffic Department Building
   Next to St Catherines High School
   Procurement Unit
   Room 223

   (b) Documents will be issued from:
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport
   Old Traffic Department Building
   Next to St Catherines High School
   Procurement Unit
   Room 223

   (c) Bids must be delivered to:
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport
   First Floor of Public Works and Transport Building
   Corner Senate Road & Lepoqo Road, Industrial Area, Maseru
   Opposite Browns Wholesale

   (d) Address of bid opening:
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport
   First Floor of Public Works and Transport Building
   Corner Senate Road & Lepoqo Road, Industrial Area, Maseru
   Opposite Browns Wholesale
9. The planned procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

Activity	Date
a. Publish bid notice	*02nd July 2026*
b. Pre-bid meeting where applicable	*(N/A)*
c. Bid closing date	*04th August 2026*
d. Evaluation process	*05th – 14ht August 2026*
e. Display and communication of best evaluated bidder notice	*17th – 21st August 2026*
f. Contract signature	*24th – 28th August 2026.*

Signature: _____________
Name: Mapaseka Nkone
Position of Authorised Official: Procurement Manager

VACANCY

Lesotho Electricity Generation Company (LEGCO) invites applications from suitably qualified candidates to fill the position of a Driver on a fixed term contract

The Responsibilities of the Driver shall include:

- Ensure that LEGCO fleet is clean and roadworthy
- Check vehicles requirements and maintain their records properly (log books)
- Ensure proper management of service and other maintenance schedules and report any faults.
- Ensure the safety and comfort of passengers, assist with luggage, and represent the company with a professional demeanor.
- Act as a Messenger and safely pick and/or deliver official documents, parcels and mail to intended recipients while maintaining dispatch records.
- Drive office vehicles for transportation of authorized personnel and delivery/collection of official goods/cargo and ensure that they are safely delivered to their destinations.
- Ensure that LEGCO requirements are adhered to in case of accidents and/or emergencies.
- Conduct pre- and post-trip inspections, monitor fluid levels (oil, water), tire pressure, and ensure that routine servicing is scheduled.
- Support and assist the office in performing registry-related duties and messaging services.
- Make distribution of correspondence material to appropriate persons and or offices.
- Provide logistical support to Administration Officer in the organization and prepare for all workshops, meetings and events.
- Ensure compliance with traffic laws and that the vehicle is always fueled.

Job Specifications and Requirements

The incumbent must have a minimum qualification of C.O.S.C. Certificate plus a Driver's License and Defense Driving with at least 5 years driving experience.

OR

Standard 7 plus Driver's License and Defensive driving with at-least 10 years driving experience.

NB: Standard Pass from Assessment test done by Department of Traffic & Transport is pre-requisite and the potential candidate must possess good interpersonal skills and be a good team player.

Applications, Curriculum Vitae with certified copies of educational certificates, Driver's Licence and an ID copy should be hand delivered to:
Human Resources and Administration Manager at LEGCO offices situated at House No.251 Honeymoon Park, Maseru West, Contacts: 22312164

Closing Date: 31st July 2026

NATIONAL DRUG SERVICE ORGANISATION

N D S O

P.O.Box 1167
Mafeteng 900
Lesotho
Tel: (+266) 2270 0232
Fax: (+266) 2270 1340

NATIONAL DRUG SERVICE ORGANIZATION (NDSO)

INVITATION TO BID

Open National Competitive Tendering

Tender No.: NDSO/CUSTOMERMEETING/2026/07
Subject: Provision of Accommodation and Conference Facilities to NDSO

The National Drug Service Organization (NDSO), a Trading Account for the Ministry of Health in Lesotho, invites eligible bidders to submit bids for the Provision of Accommodation and Conference Services for the NDSO Customer Meeting and Gala Dinner, to be held from **19 to 23 October 2026.**

Bidding will be conducted through Open National Competitive Tendering procedures in accordance with the Public Procurement Act, 2023.

Interested eligible bidders may obtain the Bidding Documents from the NDSO website at www.ndso.org.ls.
Bid Closing Date & Time: 14:00 hours, 13 August 2026
Bid Opening: 14:30 hours, 13 August 2026, in the presence of bidders' representatives who choose to attend

Note: There shall not be a pre-bid meeting/site visit. Late bids shall be rejected.

Address for inspection, submission and opening of bids:
National Drug Service Organisation
Procurement Building
Mafeteng 900, Lesotho

Contact Details:
tenders@ndso.org.ls
Telephone: +266 2221 5300

Specific Procurement Notice

Request for Bids

(One-Envelope Bidding Process)

Country: Kingdom of Lesotho
Name of Project: Department of Rural Water Supply
Contract Title: DRW, System Maintenance Programme, 2026-2027

RFB Reference No.: DRWS/M/GOL2/2026-2027

1. The Ministry of Natural Resources has received financing from the Government of Lesotho(GOL) toward the cost of the Rural Water Supply Projects and intends to apply the proceeds toward payments under the contract for **DRW, System Maintenance Programme, 2026-2027**
2. The Ministry of **Natural Resources** now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders of DRWS category **B, C and D** to submit tenders for **DRW, System Maintenance Programme, 2026-2027**
3. Bidding will be conducted through Open National competitive Tender as specified in Public Procurement Act of 2023.
4. Interested eligible Bidders may inspect the Bidding document during office hours; **09:00 hours** to **16:00 hours** at the **Department of Rural Water Supply Railway station, Railway Station, Next to WASCO Offices.**
5. The bidding documents in **English, will be collected from Department of Rural Water supply, Railway Station, next to WASCO Offices, Maseru from Friday 26 June 2026 to 05 August 2026, at the non-refundable fee of M1 500.00. Payment shall be made to** Accounts Office DRWS Maseru, **Bidders must produce the receipt obtained from accounts office to procurement Unit in order to receive the bidding documents.**
6. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before **05, August, 2026, at 10:00 am**. Electronic Bidding will **not be** permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend at the address below:
   Procurement Unit
   DRWS Office Khubetsoana,
   Resource Centre,
   Next to Appropriate Technology Services (ATS)
   Maseru
7. All Bids must be accompanied by a **Bid Security of M20,000** in the form of a Bank Guarantee.
8. A Compulsory Pretender meeting shall be held on Monday **13 July, 2026 at 10:00 am** at the DRWS Khubetsoana Resources Centre, Maseru.
9. All questions and clarifications relating to this tender should be directed to The Procurement Unit, Ministry of Natural Resources, Bokamoso Business Suit, Old Christie House, Orpen Road, and Opposite Centre for Accounting Studies Maseru. Tel: 27325160.

LNDC
Lesotho National Development Corporation
Together we build sustainable industry

NOTICE OF INVITATION TO TENDER
PROVISION OF SECURITY SERVICES AT LNDC PROPERTY ACROSS LESOTHO
PROJECT REFERENCE: LNDC-PDM-26-06
02nd July 2026

1. The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) has allocated funds to be used for provision of security services at LNDC Property across Lesotho.

2. The LNDC invites sealed bids from **eligible local security service providers registered with the Ministry of Police and Public Safety (Registration certificate) and Ministry of Trade and Industry (Business ID)** for provision of the above said services.

3. Bidding & bidder eligibility shall be conducted in accordance with the Open National Bidding procedures prescribed in the Public Procurement Act, 2023 and the Regulations made under the Act.

4. Interested and eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding document at the address given below at 9(c) from **2 July 2026** between ***08:30am and 16:30pm.***

5. The bidding document which has been prepared in the English language is available free of charge in ***soft copy*** by emailing ***procurement@lndc.org.ls.*** A ***hard copy*** may be purchased by interested bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **M500.00** directly into the LNDC bank account and submit proof of payment at the finance office at LNDC Development House block A Level 6.

6. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security equal to 1% of the bid amount for each Lot tendered for, issued by a locally registered financial institution.

7. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below at 9(c) at 10:15 on 7th August 2026 at LNDC Development House, Block A Level 1.

8. The planned Procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

	Activity	Date
(a)	Publish bid notice	02nd July 2026
(b)	Mandatory pre-bid meeting & Site visit at LNDC Dev House Block A Level 1	22nd July 2026
(c)	Bid submission address	Tender box situated at the reception areas at 1st floor
(d)	Bid closing date & time	07th August 2026 on or before 10:00am
(e)	Evaluation process	11th August 2026
(f)	Display of best evaluated bidder notice	8th October 2026
(g)	Contract signature	23rd October 2026

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

NETE KE THERE

VACANCY

The National University of Lesotho invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for the following posts:

POST NO.	POSITION	DEPARTMENT / FACULTY	DEADLINE
3646	Farm Attendant	Animal Science / Agriculture	31 July 2026
3427	Library Access Assistant	Thomas Mololo Library	31 July 2026

For full job description please refer to NUL Website: www.nul.ls or visit our HR Office at Roma for a hard copy. Please quote the post number you are applying for. For further clarifications call +266 22340247 or +266 22340601 ext 3842/3844.

In your application letter, include the names and contact details of your three (3) referees

Please combine covering letter, CV, certificates, Identity Document/Passport and email them in read only PDF file, if not, will be disqualified). *All applications should be emailed to* ***dhr@nul.ls*** *and addressed to:*

Director - Human Resources
National University of Lesotho
Roma 180 - Lesotho

LNDC
Lesotho National Development Corporation
Together we build sustainable industry

NOTICE OF INVITATION TO TENDER
PROVISION OF CLEANING SERVICES AT LNDC PROPERTY ACROSS LESOTHO
PROJECT REFERENCE: LNDC-PDM-26-07
02nd July 2026

1. The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) has allocated funds to be used for provision of cleaning services at LNDC Property across Lesotho.

2. The LNDC invites sealed bids from **eligible local cleaning service providers registered with the Ministry of Trade and Industry** for provision of the above said services.

3. Bidding & bidder eligibility shall be conducted in accordance with the Open National Bidding procedures prescribed in the Public Procurement Act, 2023 and the Regulations made under the Act.

4. Interested and eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding document at the address given below at 9(c) from **2 July 2026** between ***08:30am and 16:30pm.***

5. The bidding document which has been prepared in the English language is available free of charge in **soft copy** by emailing ***procurement@lndc.org.ls.*** A **hard copy** may be purchased by interested bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **M500.00** directly into the LNDC bank account and submit proof of payment at the finance office at LNDC Development House block A Level 6.

6. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security equal to 1% of the bid amount for each Lot tendered for, issued by a locally registered financial institution.

7. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below at 9(c) at 10:15 on 7th August 2026 at LNDC Development House, Block A Level 1.

8. The planned Procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

	Activity	Date
(a)	Publish bid notice	02nd July 2026
(b)	Mandatory pre-bid meeting & Site visit at LNDC Dev House Block A Level 1	22nd July 2026
(c)	Bid submission address	Tender box situated at the reception areas at 1st floor LNDC Development House Block A.
(d)	Bid closing date & time	07th August 2026 on or before 10:00am
(e)	Evaluation process	11th August 2026
(f)	Display of best evaluated bidder notice	8th October 2026
(g)	Contract signature	23rd October 2026

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NOTICE OF INVITATION TO TENDER
Office Configuration at LNDC Development House, Block A Level 8
PROJECT REFERENCE: LNDC-PDM-2026-05
02nd July 2026

1. The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) has allocated funds to be used for **Office Configuration at LNDC Development House, Block A Level 8.**

2. The LNDC invites sealed bids from Category A Contractors registered with the Ministry of Public Works for the provision of the above works.

3. Bidding & bidder eligibility shall be conducted in accordance with the Open National Bidding procedures prescribed in the Public Procurement Act, 2023 and the Regulations made under the Act.

4. Interested and eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding document at the address given below at 9(c) from **2 July 2026** between ***08:30am and 16:30pm.***

5. The bidding document which has been prepared in the English language is available free of charge in **soft copy** by emailing ***procurement@lndc.org.ls.*** A ***hard copy*** may be purchased by interested bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **M500.00** directly into the LNDC bank account and submit proof of payment at the finance office at LNDC Development House block A Level 6.

6. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of ***M30,000.00 from a locally registered financial institution.***

7. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below at 9(c) at 10:15 on ***6th August*** 2026 at LNDC Development House, Block A Level 1.

8. The planned Procurement schedule (Subject to changes) is as follows:

	Activity	Date
(a)	Publish bid notice	02nd July 2026
(b)	Mandatory pre-bid meeting & Site visit at LNDC Dev House Block A Level 1	21st July 2026
(c)	Bid submission address	Tender box situated at the reception areas at 1st floor LNDC Development House Block A.
(d)	Bid closing date & time	06th August 2026 on or before 10:00am
(e)	Evaluation process	10th August 2026
(f)	Display of best evaluated bidder notice	26 October 2026
(g)	Contract signature	13th November 2026

LAND ADMINISTRATION AUTHORITY

BID NOTICE UNDER OPEN COMPETITIVE TENDERING

[LAA ICT/Internet Services: 08/07/2026]

The *Land Administration Authority* has allocated funds be used for the acquisition of ***supply and delivery of Internet Services***.

1. The Entity invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the provision of the above supplies.
2. Bidding will be conducted in accordance with the open national bidding method contained in the Public Procurement Act and is open to all bidders.
3. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the address given below at 7(a) from ***[08;00am to 05:00pm]***.
4. Bids must be delivered to the address below at 8(c) at or before ***[12:00 Noon)***. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below at 7(d) at **[21/08/2026]**
5. There *shall NOT* be a pre – bid meeting as indicated in the proposed schedule in this notice.
6. (a) Documents may be inspected at: ***Land Administration Authority***

(b) Documents will be issued from: ***Land Administration Authority***

(c) Bids must be delivered to: ***Director General and Chief Executive Officer***

(d) Address of bid opening: ***P.O. Box 11856, Maseru, Lesotho. Lerotholi Road Opposite, The Royal Palace***

9. The planned procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

Activity	Date
a. Publish bid notice	***08/07/2026***
b. Pre-bidmeeting where applicable	**N/A**
c. Bid closing date	**21/08/2026**
d. Evaluation process	***(24th August to 31st August 2026)***
e. Display and communication of best evaluated bidder notice	***(01st to 14th September 2026)***
f. Contract signature	***(15th to 21st September 2026)***

[LAA HRA/ Two (2) SUV Vehicles/08/07/2026]

1. The *Land Administration Authority* has allocated funds be used for the acquisition **of supply and delivery of *Two (2) SUV Vehicles.***
2. The Entity invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the provision of the above supplies.
3. Bidding will be conducted in accordance with the open national bidding method contained in the Public Procurement Act and is open to all bidders.
4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the address given below at 7(a) from ***[08;00am to 05:00pm]***.
5. Bids must be delivered to the address below at 8(c) at or before ***[12:00 Noon 08/07/2026)***. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below at 7(d) at **[21/08/2026]**
6. There *shall NOT* be a pre – bid meeting as indicated in the proposed schedule in this notice.
7. (a) Documents may be inspected at: ***Land Administration Authority***

(b) Documents will be issued from: ***Land Administration Authority***

(c) Bids must be delivered to: ***Director General and Chief Executive Officer***

(d) Address of bid opening: ***P.O. Box 11856, Maseru, Lesotho. Lerotholi Road Opposite, The Royal Palace***

9. The planned procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

Activity	Date
a. Publish bid notice	***08/07/2026***
b. Pre-bidmeeting where applicable	**N/A**
c. Bid closing date	**21/08/2026**
d. Evaluation process	***(24th August to 31st August 2026)***
e. Display and communication of best evaluated bidder notice	***(01st to 14th September 2026)***
f. Contract signature	***(15th to 21st September 2026)***

ROLL
REGENERATION OF LANDSCAPES AND LIVELIHOODS

IInvitation for Bids

Maseru, Lesotho
08 JULY 2026

Re: Procurement and Distribution of Field Crop Inputs to Support Vulnerable HHS-LSO-2000002340-0240-G-NCB

The *Government of Lesotho* has received financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Food and Agriculture Organization *(FAO) and OPEC Fund for International Development* (OFID) and intends to apply a part of the proceeds of the financing to this purchase. 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 **Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods.**

1. The *Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods* includes rehabilitation of sixteen identified landscapes in Lesotho and improvement of the livelihoods of the people in the rural areas, within a period of eight years.
2. This invitation for bids (IFB) follows the general procurement notice that appeared on IFAD website on the **21st April 2026**, Lesotho Times newspaper on the **23rd April 2026** and Public eye newspaper on **24th April 2026** and **Informative on 29 April 2026**
3. The purchaser now invites sealed bids from eligible entities (bidders) for the **Procurement and Distribution of Field Crop Inputs to Support Vulnerable HHS** More details on these goods and related services are provided in the schedule of requirements in this bidding document.
4. This IFB is open to all eligible bidders who wish to respond. Subject to restrictions noted in the bidding document, eligible entities may associate with other bidders to enhance their capacity to successfully carry out the procurement.
5. Bidding will be conducted using the **National Competitive Bidding (NCB)** method, the evaluation procedure for which is described in this bidding document, in accordance with the IFAD Procurement Handbook which is provided at www.ifad.org/project-procurement. The NCB process, as described, will include a review and verification of qualifications and past performance, including a reference check, prior to the contract award.
6. Please note that a pre-bid conference **will not be** held as described in the bid data sheet (BDS), Section III of the bidding document.
7. Bidders interested in submitting a bid shall download the bidding document from the following website: www.rollproject.gov.ls and complete the registration form available on the website

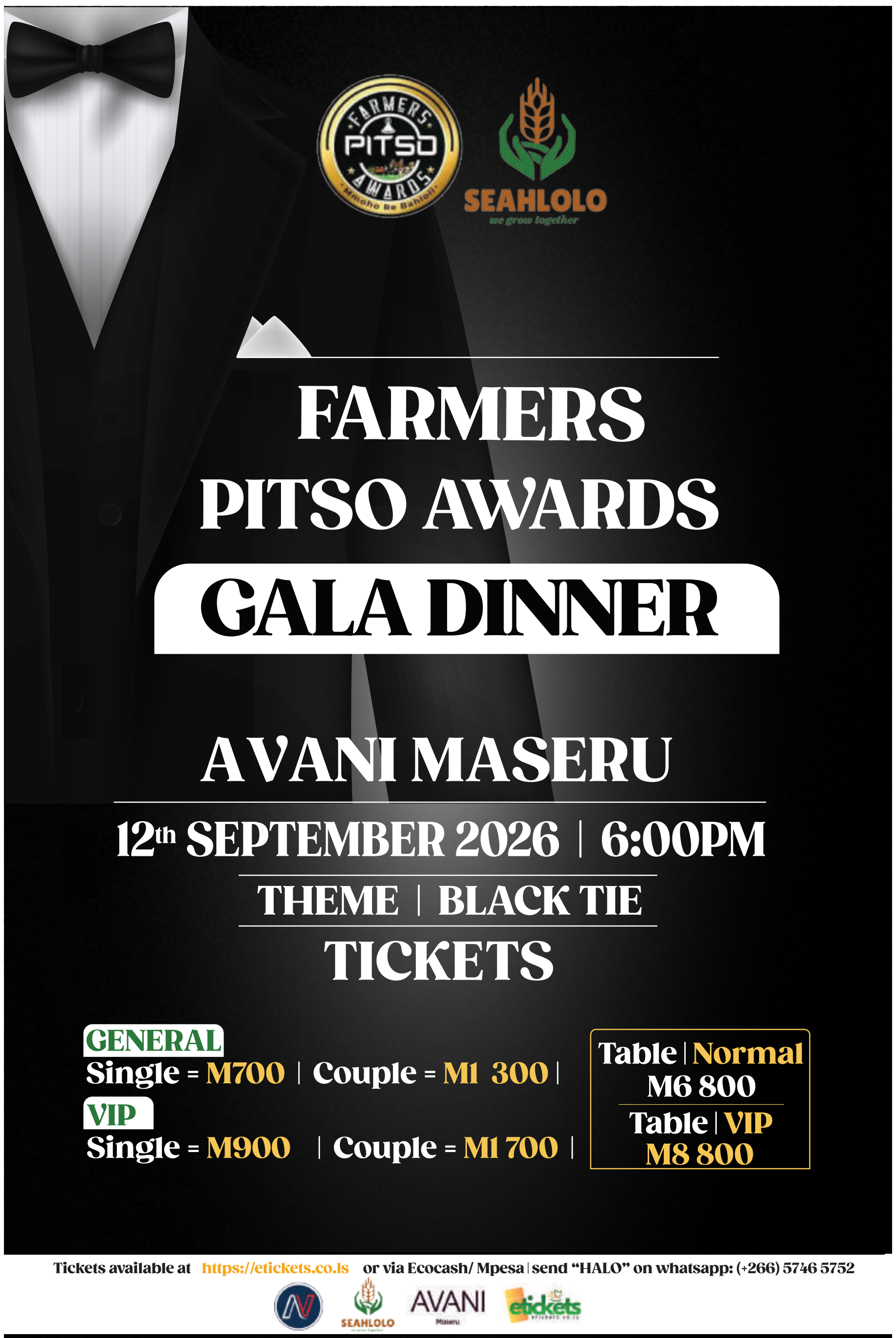
Attn: Procurement Manager ROLL Project
Ministry of Environment & Forestry
Industrial Area, Plot no. 12281-609,
Maseru 100
Lesotho
Tel: (+266) 58730763/ (+266) 58757203
E-mail: ***procurement.roll@gov.ls*** and copy to ***morakanyane.mafatle@gov.ls***

8. Bids must be delivered to the address and in the manner specified in the bid data sheet– instructions to bidders 23.2, no later than **10:00** local time on the **10 August 2026**.
9. Bidders shall be aware that late bids will not be accepted under any circumstance and will be returned unopened at the written request and cost of the bidder. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security or bid-securing declaration (as required) in the manner and amount specified in the bid data sheet.
10. Please note that electronic bids **shall not** be accepted.

Yours sincerely,
Procurement Manager
Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods Project Ministry of Environment and Forestry
Industrial Area, Plot no.12281-609, Maseru 100, Lesotho
Tel: (+266) 58730763/ (+266) 58757203
E-mail: ***procurement.roll@gov.ls***

Procurement and Distribution of Apiculture Tools and Materials To Support Vulnerable HHS-LSO-2000002340-0241-G-NCB

IFAD Investing in rural people   OPEC FUND   gef



FARMERS PITSO AWARDS Mmoho Re Bahloli
SEAHLOLO we grow together
FARMERS
PITSO AWARDS
GALA DINNER
AVANI MASERU
12th SEPTEMBER 2026 | 6:00PM
THEME | BLACK TIE
TICKETS
GENERAL
Single = M700 | Couple = M1 300 |
VIP
Single = M900 | Couple = M1 700 |
Table | Normal
M6 800
Table | VIP
M8 800
Tickets available at https://etickets.co.ls or via Ecocash/ Mpesa | send "HALO" on whatsapp: (+266) 5746 5752
SEAHLOLO
AVANI
etickets

FARMERS PITSO AWARDS Mmoho Re Bahloli
FARMERS
PITSO
AWARDS
AGRICULTURE & EXCELLENCE
'MANTHABISENG CONVENTION CENTRE
FRIDAY
SCHOOLS
EXHIBITIONS & COMPETITIONS
SATURDAY
FARMERS
AWARD CEREMONY
SATURDAY
GALA
DINNER (BLACK TIE)
PRIZES TO BE WON | FOOD | MUSIC | AWARDS
11 & 12 SEPTEMBER 2026
Jandrell
AVANI Maseru
SEAHLOLO
T-CONNECT
Bata
Afrivet
etickets
KOMBAT
KYRON
SWAVET
Africa Tanks
Willard
STARKE AYRES

More to share
with our tasty treats
Select something delicious with our iconic Champion Toffees, Manhattan, Mister Sweet, Super C Sweets, and Candy Tops Eclairs. Packed full of flavour and perfect value for money.
Premier
Growing Together
200
Growing Together Since 1824
THE ORIGINAL
CHAMPION
The BIG taste that lasts
Candy Tops
Making life sweeter
ECLAIRS
mister sweet
MORE THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE
MANHATTAN
The taste of Fun
Super C
The original energy sweet.

Napo Masheane's HerStory International Theatre Festival reignites the voices of women and Basotho people

Mbali Mbatha

Four years after the last edition of the HerStory International Theatre Festival at the Soweto Theatre, internationally acclaimed playwright and cultural activist Napo Masheane is relocating the event to its new permanent home, QwaQwa.

While 2026 being the 50th anniversary of the Student Uprisings has been on everyone's lips since last year, Masheane couldn't help noticing the silence around this year also being the 70th of the iconic women's march to the Union Buildings.

"It's the 70th anniversary of the march. We are less than three weeks away from Women's Day and it's quiet. Even with June 16 itself, most of the time when women are mentioned in the uprisings discussion, it's not even about their own stories; it's usually because her brother was one of the students who got shot," Masheane observed.

Delving into the nurturing nature of African women, she points out how the involvement of Winnie Mandela and the other mothers who tended to the victims on 16 June 1976 seldom make news headlines.

"Nothing has changed. Women are still fighting to be recognised." The four-year break wasn't by choice, as Masheane shares the heartbreaking story of the financial constraints being so serious that still today she owes some of the artists who worked with her in 2022.

This resulted in a decline in her mental health, but Masheane is ready to start afresh even if doors are being slammed in her face. Masheane reflects on her own experiences with marginalisation, saying since 2025 she has sent more than 40 proposals for the festival, with the 70th anniversary of the 1956 women's march as a selling point.

However, this iconic memory in African history was met with rejection, serving as a reminder that artists should create their own platforms and prompting her to curate the festival independently.

"If HerStory doesn't happen, there's essentially no women-specific festival. I used to curate a women's festival in one of SA's biggest theatres. It still exists, but it's no longer a pro-women initiative that is championed by women, for women."

HerStory is a multi-disciplinary festival that marries international cultural exchange with theatre, music, poetry and other spheres of creativity. This was inspired by Masheane's observation of African theatre history carrying all the elements of art.

When someone recites a poem, for example, this is accompanied by ululation which is a form of creative expression. When someone starts a song, it prompts dance and movement, and when a drummer starts playing, they conjure up various responses such as whistling and prose.

The celebration weaves together her own Sotho lineage with that of Lesotho-born AfroSoul artist Maleh (Malehloka Hlalele), Tamara Dey's cross-cultural appeal and Wanda Baloyi's multi-cultural musicality.

From 7–10 August 2026, Masheane and her "sisters in creativity" will amplify women's stifled voices against the backdrop of the equally marginalised stories of the Basotho people in partnership with various national heritage sites under SANPARKS, including the Basotho Cultural Village, Golden Gate Highlands National Park, Joe's Lifestyle and the Phuthaditjhaba Auditorium.

She's not oblivious to the current anti-immigration protests in SA that are currently making global headlines, and the line-up speaks to that. Not only is Maleh born and raised in Lesotho, but Johannesburg born and bred Baloyi brings her parents' Mozambican flair to the festival, and while Dey is South African, her ancestral lineage interweaves Greek, Portuguese and other identities.

"Artistic migration is nothing new. Art has always brought various cultures together, and has always mirrored the reality that happens in our societies." "The women in the line-up are not celebrities; they are my sisters, we grew up together in this industry. When Tamara and Wanda were busy with underground music, we were busy with poetry and theatre."

Some of her international friends will also be presenting work in their own languages, including Italian and Portuguese, as she feels it's important for younger artists to understand that language advocacy is not just an African conversation but a global one.

Various South African actors, including the recently departed Seputla Sebogodi, have been vocal about the dominance of isiZulu on the small screen, lamenting the apparent disenfranchisement of other cultural identities.

The partnerships with heritage sites therefore, present the opportunity to find alternative platforms where various cultures can be amplified.

"Instead of fighting broadcasters, creatives need to remember that there is space to make this work in our own villages and the communities that raised us," she asserts.

Whether one is coming from Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town or Lesotho, it's still central. She says its beautiful landscape and references to Basotho culture deserve to be celebrated, especially since the town is not as clustered as the big cities.

This is personal for the cultural activist whose childhood memories are emblazoned with QwaQwa recollections. For her, coming home is also about reconnecting with her spiritual guides and immersing herself in familial bonds.

Ski enthusiasts flock to Afriski

Lesotho attracts thousands each winter to its unique ski resort, the only such tourist attraction in sub-Saharan Africa

MOGOMOTSI MAGOME
Associated Press

BUTHA-BUTHE, Lesotho -- One may not expect thousands to flock each winter to Lesotho but for many ski enthusiasts from across southern Africa, the small, landlocked mountain kingdom has become the go-to place in recent years.

Lesotho's high elevation and mountainous terrain combine to make it the coldest country on the continent, with temperatures in the highlands typically plunging to minus 8 degrees Celsius (about 18 degrees Fahrenheit) between June and August.

The Afriski Mountain Resort, some 3,200 meters (10,499 feet) above sea level, nestled in the northern Maluti Mountains, is Lesotho's single fully operational ski resort — and the only one in sub-Saharan Africa.

The majestic snow-covered landscape is ideal for skiing, and both seasoned and new visitors enjoy the slopes that are spread over 17 hectares (42 acres) surrounding the resort — about the size of 24 standard soccer pitches. The resort opened 25 years ago, a short bus or car ride from the nearest major town of Butha-Buthe, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) away.

Last year, tourism contributed about seven percent to Lesotho's annual GDP of some $2.6 billion. For its part, Afriski provides a chunk of needed cash in a country cited by the World Bank as one of the poorest in the world — and its artificial snow machines ensure it stays open throughout the Southern Hemisphere's winter.

U.S. President Donald Trump may have joked in 2025 about Lesotho being a country that "nobody has ever heard of" but just a year earlier, the kingdom, bordered on all sides by South Africa and with a population of 2.3 million, celebrated 200 years of the founding of the Basotho nation and 58 years of independence from British rule.

Located in its entirety at and over 1,000 meters (3,280 feet) above sea level, Lesotho sees a lot of snow — and skiing is growing in popularity here from a rare sport previously mainly associated with North America and the European Alps.

Most people drive into Lesotho from neighboring South Africa but international visitors can also fly in to the airport in Maseru, the country's capital.

Afriski's CEO, Theo Ferreira, says almost 70% of the visitors come from South Africa; the rest are mostly from Lesotho or elsewhere in southern Africa. The resort now has 227 full-time and seasonal employees, nearly all Lesotho nationals, with about 30 South Africans, working mainly as skiing instructors, he said.

While the resort has rooms for 420 overnight guests, the nearby Butha-Buthe and Mohlokong towns can offer extra accommodations in peak season. The busiest day so far this year saw over 1,400 visitors while in 2025, the record was over 1,600 day visitors and those staying overnight or longer, Ferreira said.

Because unreliable weather patterns can make natural snow scarce, the resort relies on artificial snow to make skiing possible all winter long.

The resort has played role in helping ski tourism emerge as another attraction in southern Africa, known for its wildlife and scenic coastlines along the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.

For many visitors, Afriski is where they had their first ski lessons, braving falls and dusting themselves off before having another try, and another — until making that first, full glide down without falling.

Janco Smits, a student from Cape Town, South Africa, describes it as "an amazing slope to learn on."

"At the start it was a little discouraging because you fall, and you fall hard," he said. "But the people here, they gave me one lesson and after an hour, honestly, I felt confident."

"When you think of the African continent, you don't think of snow. You think about ... the sun and the Sahara (Desert)," said Thato Ramaphoko, a first-timer at the resort from Pretoria, South Africa's capital. "But that you can actually go to all that and also come here and it also snows at the same time, it is just mind-blowing, so I just had to see it for myself."

Visitors at Afriski can also sample a taste of Lesotho in the form of traditional sausage rolls and Maluti Lager, the country's proudly home-brewed beer.

As for a souvenir to take home, try the colourful Basotho blanket, which comes in vibrant colours and patterns that also pop up in local garments and are creatively integrated into various skiing jackets and gear.

From Maseru: Let Nonhle Thema breathe

Nonhle Thema

Tšepo Moletsane

As someone observing South African public life from neighbouring Lesotho, I have watched with interest the recent furore surrounding media personality Nonhle Thema. During an interview on 947 FM with Thando Thabete, she claimed to have introduced Twitter to South Africa, citing her time overseas when the platform was already gaining traction there. The remark has ignited heated debate, drawn in fellow celebrities such as Somizi Mhlongo, and sparked accusations of exaggeration on one side and bullying on the other.

It is time to let Nonhle breathe.

South Africa's entertainment industry is dynamic and highly competitive, where personalities live under intense public scrutiny. Every statement is dissected, every claim examined for historical accuracy, and every misstep amplified across platforms. In such an environment, it is understandable that a single interview clip can snowball into a national conversation. Yet the intensity of the reaction risks crossing into unnecessary piling-on.

Nonhle, like many public figures, has contributed to the cultural landscape over the years. She deserves the space to reflect, to speak, and even to err without facing disproportionate backlash.

That said, grace should not be confused with exemption from accountability. Public figures wield influence, and words carry weight. Claiming to have "introduced" a major platform to an entire nation invites scrutiny, particularly in a country with a sophisticated and early-adopting digital community. A measure of humility and careful phrasing would serve Nonhle well. She need not be the gift that keeps on giving controversy. In an industry where personal brand is currency, strategic restraint can protect one's legacy far more effectively than bold assertions.

From my vantage point in Lesotho, South Africa's entertainment scene often appears enviably vibrant. The robust media ecosystem, passionate audiences, and ability to generate sustained discourse are signs of a mature, albeit noisy, industry. We in Lesotho look at this energy with a mixture of admiration and aspiration, hoping one day to nurture a similarly lively creative sector. Yet vibrancy should not come at the cost of fairness. Healthy public discourse benefits from both robust debate and basic decency.

Nonhle Thema has every right to tell her story and share her experiences. South Africans, in turn, have every right to agree or disagree. The productive path forward lies in measured criticism rather than personalised attacks, and in thoughtful reflection from public figures rather than repeated provocation. Let her breathe. The industry, the audience, and Nonhle herself will be better for it.

Poverty, financial exclusion fuel pyramid schemes in Lesotho

Staff Reporters

The recurring invasion of pyramid and Ponzi schemes in Lesotho is less a failure of public awareness than a symptom of deeper economic and structural challenges, with poverty, unemployment and limited access to formal investment opportunities continuing to leave thousands of Basotho vulnerable to financial predators.

This is according to an independent analyst Thabo Qhesi, who argues that economic desperation and financial exclusion remain among the key root causes driving ordinary citizens into schemes that promise extraordinary returns for modest investments.

His sentiments come in the wake of the collapse of SGK, the latest alleged pyramid scheme to hit Lesotho, which is estimated to have defrauded Basotho of close to M10 million.

The scheme, which masqueraded as a digital marketing and online advertising platform, promised participants guaranteed returns for watching online videos and completing simple tasks before abruptly stopping payments in recent weeks.

Investigations by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) have revealed that at least M8.6 million was channelled through multiple bank accounts before being transferred abroad or converted into cryptocurrency.

The Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) had warned the public as recently as June this year that SGK was among several unlicensed investment schemes operating illegally in the country. Yet, like the infamous MMM scheme that swept through Lesotho nearly a decade ago, thousands of Basotho continued to invest despite repeated regulatory warnings.

Expressing his thoughts on the matter, Qhesi believes the pattern points to a fundamental policy failure. He argues that while financial literacy remains important, it is misleading to attribute the continued success of pyramid schemes solely to public ignorance.

Rather, he says, many participants are making what appears to them to be rational economic decisions in extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

"High unemployment, heavy reliance on remittances from mineworkers and other cross-border earners, and limited access to affordable formal credit push households toward any accessible opportunity that promises fast returns on modest savings," Qhesi notes.

He argues that when households are struggling financially and legitimate investment opportunities appear inaccessible or require large amounts of capital, unlicensed schemes effectively become the path of least resistance.

According to Qhesi, pyramid schemes thrive because they fill a genuine market gap rather than competing against strong and accessible formal alternatives. A large proportion of Basotho remain under-banked or entirely excluded from the formal financial system, while savings and investment products designed for informal sector workers and low-income earners remain limited.

The recent introduction of low-barrier investment products into the market demonstrates that product innovation can begin to address this challenge. However, he argues that much more needs to be done to ensure ordinary Basotho have credible and affordable pathways to save and build wealth.

Beyond economic pressures, Qhesi identifies Lesotho's relationship-based trust economy as another major driver behind the persistence of such schemes.

Unlike conventional financial scams perpetrated by strangers, pyramid schemes are typically marketed through trusted social networks.

"They spread through family, church, workplace and village networks. The social credibility of the person introducing the scheme routinely outweighs an abstract regulatory warning from an institution with limited everyday presence in people's lives," he said.

This social dynamic partly explains why even educated individuals frequently become victims. In many instances, participants join schemes not because they fail to recognise the risks but because someone they trust has already received returns.

By design, early entrants are paid, creating tangible and highly persuasive local evidence that the scheme works.

"Visible early 'proof' of payout" often outweighs institutional warnings, Qhesi argues. When a neighbour buys new furniture or a relative successfully withdraws profits, many participants conclude that they, too, can benefit before the scheme collapses.

Indeed, several victims of SGK have publicly admitted they knew the investment sounded too good to be true but nevertheless hoped they would recover their money before problems emerged.

Another critical weakness he identified is the nature of regulatory enforcement.

Qhesi argues that public warnings that are not swiftly followed by visible consequences for perpetrators gradually lose their effectiveness.

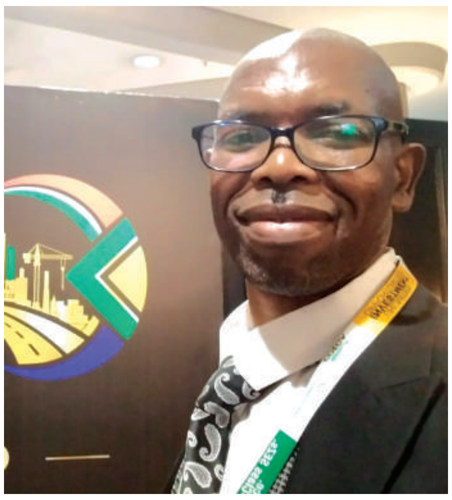
"Warnings that are not swiftly followed by asset freezes, prosecutions or public accountability of promoters reduce the perceived cost of running or joining a scheme, and weaken the credibility of future warnings," he notes.

To remedy this, PSFL is advocating for rapid and publicised asset freezes, criminal prosecutions of scheme promoters and greater cross-border regulatory cooperation, particularly with South African authorities given the movement of promoters and funds across national borders.

The foundation has also proposed the establishment of rapid public reporting mechanisms for suspected schemes to facilitate earlier intervention before large sums of money are collected.

Financial literacy remains another important pillar of the proposed reforms. However, Qhesi believes awareness campaigns must move beyond conventional public notices issued after schemes have already gained traction.

Instead, he recommends embedding financial literacy programmes at existing community



touchpoints, including remittance pay-out points, workplaces, schools, churches and village structures.

Working with chiefs, religious leaders and community organisations would make financial education more credible and accessible than standalone awareness campaigns, particularly in rural communities.

Importantly, such programmes should explain why pyramid schemes are mathematically unsustainable rather than merely warning that they are dangerous.

"Most participants can recognise that a scheme sounds too good to be true, but few can articulate why fixed high returns are structurally unsustainable," Qhesi argues.

Finally, the foundation is calling for stronger post-collapse accountability mechanisms, including efforts to pursue restitution where possible and prominently publicise enforcement outcomes to deter future promoters.

Qhesi believes the lesson from SGK is clear; pyramid schemes are ultimately symptoms of broader economic realities confronting ordinary Basotho. So long as unemployment remains high, formal investment opportunities remain inaccessible and enforcement remains slow or invisible, new schemes will continue to emerge under different names.

Bantu send title warning with King's Cup capture

Bantu FC's winning goal against Matlama King's Birthday Cup (Pictures Courtesy Matchday)

Seabata Mahao

Bantu Football Club's preparations for the forthcoming Vodacom Premier League (VPL) season took a serious turn after the Mafeteng giants defeated fellow title contenders Matlama FC 2-1 to lift the 2026 King's Birthday Cup at Setsoto Stadium on Friday.

The victory, secured in dramatic fashion before a sizeable crowd celebrating the official birthday of His Majesty King Letsie III, offers an early indication that A Matšo Matebele will once again be among the teams to beat when the new league campaign kicks off next month.

While the annual King's Birthday Cup remains a pre-season friendly tournament, the intensity, quality and competitiveness displayed by both sides reflected the significance of the fixture between two of Lesotho's football heavyweights. More importantly for Bantu, it provided an opportunity to measure their readiness against one of their biggest rivals ahead of what promises to be another fiercely contested title race.

Bantu opened the scoring through Moeketsi Sekola, whose well-taken strike handed the Mafeteng-based outfit an early advantage in a fiercely contested encounter.

Matlama refused to back down and continued to press for an equaliser. Their persistence paid off in the 81st minute when Litšepe Marabe found the back of the net to level matters and set up a dramatic finale.

Just when the match appeared destined for a draw, Tšeliso Botsane emerged as Bantu's hero. The forward struck in the 86th minute to send the Bantu faithful into celebration as his late goal secured a memorable 2-1 victory and the King's Birthday Cup.

Held annually on July 17, the tournament celebrates His Majesty King Letsie III's birthday while offering football supporters an early glimpse of the country's top clubs as they fine-tune their preparations for the new season.

The triumph will undoubtedly provide a timely confidence boost as they continue building momentum for the forthcoming campaign for Bantu. Defeating a fellow VPL powerhouse in pre-season not only underlines the club's ambitions but also suggests that their preparations are gathering pace at the right time.

Despite the defeat, Matlama took positives from the encounter, having used the match to raise funds for the club while assessing the progress of their new signings and overall squad depth.

Speaking after the match, Matlama's Public Relations Officer Themba Talane said the club had achieved its main objectives despite the defeat.

"Our main objective as a club for this game was accomplished because we were collecting funds for the club, not only for us but also for our opponents," Talane said.

"We have seen that fans do not usually come in large numbers for friendly matches, but this time they turned up in encouraging numbers."

Talane explained that the technical team also used the fixture to assess the club's new signings under competitive conditions.

"The coach wanted to test the new players to see whether they are ready for the pressure that comes with playing for Matlama. As a club, we can say they responded well, and the coach is satisfied with the new squad."

He added that evaluating the team's depth was another key priority before the start of the new campaign.

"We also wanted to determine whether we have enough quality in every position. We cannot rely on one player because if, for example, a defender gets injured, it creates problems for the team's balance. We need to make the necessary adjustments before the league kicks off."

The entertaining contest highlighted the intensity and quality expected in the upcoming Vodacom Premier League season, with both clubs showing encouraging signs as they continue their pre-season preparations.

Alliance Women's Challenge improves prizes

Seabata Mahao

Four clubs will battle for preseason honours when the second edition of the Alliance Women's Challenge kicks off at BambathaTšita Sports Arena on Saturday, marking another important milestone in the growth of women's football in Lesotho.

The preseason tournament, introduced last year as an extension of the long-running men's Alliance Challenge, will feature Berea Ladies, Linare Ladies, Matlama Ladies and Lesotho Correctional Service (LCS) Ladies.

Alliance Insurance expanded its sponsorship to include women's teams last year, providing female footballers with a dedicated preseason competition after years of backing only the men's event. The initiative has been widely welcomed as another step towards raising the profile of the women's game in the country.

Berea Ladies enter the tournament as favourites. Backed by Premier League giants Lioli, Berea are the only participating side currently competing in the Women's Super League (WSL), where they regularly test themselves against the country's top teams, including Kick 4Life Ladies, Lijabatho Ladies and Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) Ladies.

Their experience at the highest level is expected to give them a significant advantage over Linare Ladies, Matlama Ladies and LCS Ladies, who all campaign in lower divisions.

Despite their status as favourites, Berea will know better than to take anything for granted. Knockout football has a reputation for producing upsets, and their rivals will be determined to seize the opportunity to make an early statement ahead of the new season.

This year's edition also comes with a major financial boost. Alliance Insurance has invested M100,000 into the competition, while the champions will, for the first time, be rewarded with a trophy and gold medals.

The inaugural tournament was staged without a prize budget, making this year's investment a significant milestone in the continued development of the competition and women's football in Lesotho.

Action gets underway on Saturday morning when Berea Ladies face Linare Ladies at 10:00am before Matlama Ladies take on LCS Ladies at 12:00pm, with both matches scheduled for BambathaTšita Sports Arena.

Interestingly, the women's fixtures mirror those of the men's Alliance Challenge, which will be played at Setsoto Stadium next weekend.

Tickets for Saturday's double-header are priced at M20, with all four participating clubs set to share the gate takings equally.

Alliance Insurance says it remains committed to supporting the development of women's football in Lesotho and hopes this year's tournament will attract an even larger crowd following the successful debut of the competition last season.

All eyes on Makatile

Seabata Mahao

Lesotho's top road cyclists are aiming to make a strong impression at the Lucara Botswana Cycling Challenge, with national star Kabelo Makatile leading the country's medal hopes in Letlhakane, Botswana, this weekend.

The annual event, which takes place on 26 July 2026, is expected to attract some of Southern Africa's finest cyclists from Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. Beyond the racing, the challenge is organised to bring the Letlhakane community together in promoting health and wellbeing.

All eyes will be on Makatile, who returns to the race determined to go one better after finishing runner-up in last year's edition. He will headline Lesotho's campaign in the Elite Men's 120-kilometre race.

The Basotho ace arrives in Botswana in excellent form following an impressive domestic campaign. He claimed victory at the National Criterium Championships staged at Makonayane Square in Maseru on July 6 before adding another podium finish with third place at the National Mountain Bike Championships held at Lepereng on July 17.

Lesotho's challenge in the men's categories will also feature KhotsofalangRakaota and Thato Tlouoe, who will compete in the Under-23 120km race, while promising youngster SeutloaliMorie lines up in the Youth 60km event.

In the women's competition, PontšoMakatile and LebohangSelepe will fly the national flag in the Women's Junior 90km race.

The national star Kabelo Makatile

The team is under the guidance of coach Moeketsi Makatile, who believes the competition will provide an important platform for the country's emerging riders to gain valuable international experience.

"This is an important competition for our cyclists, especially the younger ones like Thato, Seutloali and Lebohang, because it gives them international racing experience," Makatile said.

The experienced coach expressed satisfaction with the team's preparations and is confident Lesotho can challenge for top honours across several categories.

"I hope it will be a good race. We have prepared well and that gives me confidence that we will perform strongly.

"There are three riders, Kabelo, Pontšo and Rakaota, from whom I expect nothing less than podium finishes. They have competed in this race before and know what it takes."

While international exposure remains a key objective, the Lesotho camp is equally motivated by the attractive prize purse on offer at one of Botswana's premier cycling events.

"We are not going there just to participate. We are also going there to compete for the big prizes because this is one of the best-paying cycling races in Botswana," Makatile said.

The Lesotho squad arrived in Botswana yesterday and will complete its final preparations ahead of Sunday's races, where the team hopes to return home with podium finishes and further strengthen the country's growing reputation in regional cycling.

Newsday ...pacing standards

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New season set for explosive kick-off

Seabata Mahao

With just 39 days remaining before the start of the 2026/27 Vodacom Premier League (VPL) season, excitement is building after the Premier League Management Committee (PLMC) circulated the draft opening-round fixtures to clubs ahead of the new campaign.

The new season is scheduled to kick off on August 22, marking an earlier start than in recent years. While clubs have already received the draft fixtures, the PLMC is yet to release them officially to the public, with match venues expected to be confirmed closer to the start of the season.

Supporters can, however, look forward to an exciting start to the campaign, with several heavyweight clashes involving the country's traditional giants scheduled within the opening three rounds.

Newly promoted Summit FC and Mzamane FC will also be eager to prove they belong among the elite after securing promotion from the A Division. The league has cautioned clubs that the fixture list remains provisional.

"The fixtures are subject to change due to several reasons, including adjustments to the FIFA, COSAFA and CAF calendars," the PLMC said.

"They may also change due to adverse weather conditions, cup competitions, requests from clubs for fixture changes in accordance with regulations, referees' fitness tests, while all catch-up games will be scheduled for midweek."

Defending champions Lijabatho begin the defence of their historic maiden league title at home against returning side Machokha before facing a tricky away assignment against Majantja, who impressed with a fifth-place finish last season. They then return home to host Manonyane.

Having two home fixtures in their opening three matches should suit coach Kabelo Malapane, who will be hoping to maintain the momentum that carried Lijabatho to last season's title while also preparing his side for its maiden CAF Champions League campaign. The away trip to Majantja is nevertheless expected to provide an early examination of the champions' credentials.

Lijabatho FC celebrating their VPL's Championship

Last season's third-placed finishers, Bantu, appear to have received one of the more favourable starts among the title hopefuls. A home clash against newcomers Summit is followed by an away fixture against LCS before they welcome LDF in Week Three.

Bantu head into the new season brimming with confidence after defeating Matlama 2-1 to lift the King's Birthday Cup last week, and coach James Madidilane will be hoping his side capitalises on a favourable opening run as they seek to mount another title challenge.

Matlama, who enjoyed an impressive resurgence under coach Thabile Secker to finish strongly last season, face one of the toughest opening schedules. Tse Putsoa open away to LDF before hosting LMPS and then travelling to face last season's runners-up, Lifofane.

With two away fixtures in their opening three matches, Matlama will have little margin for error, particularly against a Lifofane side they failed to beat in either meeting last season. Lifofane claimed a convincing 3-0 victory in the first-round meeting before the reverse fixture ended goalless.

Former champions Lioli begin a new era under newly appointed coach Blessing 'Bro B' Moyo. Their campaign starts away to Limkokwing before they host rivals Linare in one of the standout fixtures of the opening month. They then travel to face promoted side Mzamane.

The highly anticipated clash against Linare is expected to attract significant attention as supporters get their first glimpse of Lioli's rebuilding project under Moyo.

Linare themselves begin at home against Mzamane before travelling to Lioli and returning home to host Machokha.

LDF launch their season with a heavyweight clash against Matlama before travelling to Members and then visiting Bantu, giving them two demanding encounters against likely title contenders in their opening three matches.

Last season's runners-up, Lifofane, begin at home against Majantja before travelling to Manonyane and hosting Matlama in what promises to be one of the biggest fixtures of the opening month.

As part of their preparations for the new campaign, Lifofane will also host South African giants Kaizer Chiefs FC on August 2 in a high-profile friendly encounter.

Meanwhile, Limkokwing, now under recently appointed coach Letlatsa Mampe, face an equally challenging start with fixtures against Lioli, Machokha and Majantja.

LMPS host Manonyane before travelling to Matlama and then welcoming Members, while LCS begin with a home fixture against Members before facing Bantu and travelling to newly promoted Summit.

Majantja arguably have one of the toughest starts, opening away to Lifofane before hosting defending champions Lijabatho and then travelling to Limkokwing.

Manonyane also face a difficult schedule, beginning away at LMPS before hosting Lifofane and travelling to champions Lijabatho.

Promoted side Mzamane begin away to Linare before hosting fellow newcomers Summit and then entertaining former champions Lioli.

Machokha's return to the Premier League starts with arguably the toughest assignment possible, an away fixture against defending champions Lijabatho, before hosting Limkokwing and travelling to Linare.

Summit, meanwhile, face a baptism of fire as they begin away to Bantu before meeting fellow newcomers Mzamane in what promises to be a fascinating battle between the promoted sides. Their first home Premier League fixture comes against LCS in Week Three.

Members, who narrowly escaped relegation on the final day of last season, begin away to LCS before hosting LDF and travelling to LMPS.