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Defence submits compelling evidence in Mahao murder trial

Lekhetho Makhanya

The defence in the marathon murder trial of Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao has produced documentary evidence which appears to directly challenge the Crown's contention that allegations of a mutiny plot within the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) were fabricated to justify his killing.

The evidence was presented this week before the High Court by Corporal Marasi 'Moleli, one of the soldiers accused of murdering Mahao.

The Crown has maintained that Mahao was himself a suspect in an alleged mutiny plot and that the mutiny narrative was later used to cover up his killing.

Mahao was fatally shot by an LDF task team on June 25, 2015, during an operation dubbed "Operation Safe Lives". He later died while receiving treatment at Makoanyane Military Hospital, according to evidence before the court.

The army has maintained that Mahao was shot after resisting arrest and fighting back. He is alleged to have drawn and pointed his pistol at Captain Tefo Hashatsi before Captain Haleo Makara shot him at Mokema. Hashatsi was the team leader of the operation.

But Crown counsel Advocates Rethabile Setlojane and Lehlohonolo Phooko have questioned the legality of the operation, including who authorised it.

Setlojane argued that the operation could not have been lawful because the soldiers tasked with arresting Mahao were all junior to him in rank.

Captain Hashatsi was the most senior of the eight soldiers who manned the operation, but was still junior to Mahao.

The Crown has also relied on the testimony of the current Army Commander, Lieutenant General Mojalefa Letsoela, who previously testified as State Witness No. 38.

Letsoela dismissed the existence of a mutiny plot, telling the court that there was no record of mutiny charges and, therefore, no prosecutable case before the Court Martial.

The Court Martial order

On Tuesday, however, the defence produced a document that appears to contradict that testimony.

Led in evidence by Defence Counsel Advocate Napo Mafaesa, 'Moleli presented correspondence endorsed by then Minister of Defence and National Security Tšeliso Mokhosi, directing that a Court Martial be convened to try members of the LDF on mutiny charges.

Newsday has seen a copy of the document, titled "Convening Order for the Court Martial", dated August 13, 2015, less than two months after Mahao was killed.

In the order, Mokhosi stated: "I, Mr Tšeliso Mokhosi, the Honourable Minister of Defence and National Security, acting pursuant to the provisions of section 92(1) of the Lesotho Defence Force Act No.4 of 1996 read with Lesotho Defence Force (Delegation of Powers) Legal Notice No.131/2000 do hereby convene the Court Martial for purposes of trying, jointly, the stated and listed members of Lesotho Defence Force attached hereto on Annex 'A'."

The Minister directed that the Court Martial sit at the structure near the Military Detention Centre, commonly known as Maximum Prison, in Maseru, or at another place as provided for under the Act.

The first charge listed in the order was: "Charge no.1 - Mutiny involving the use of violence or threat of use of violence contrary to section 48 (1) (a) of the Act, read with sections 48 (2) and 103 (1) of the Act."

Mokhosi further provided for an alternative charge if the Court Martial could not establish that the alleged mutiny involved violence or the threat of violence.

That charge was: "Incitement to commit mutiny involving the use of violence or threat of use of violence contrary to section 48(1) (b) of the Act, read with sections 48(2) and 103(1) of the Act."

If that charge also failed, the accused were to face a further alternative:

"Failure to use utmost endeavours to suppress a mutiny or failure to report that a mutiny is taking place or is intended contrary to section 49 of the Act."

The order also appointed Major General Letsoela as President of the Court Martial, alongside Majors Ketseletso Mofoka, Kamoho Ramoriting, Tlelima Matia and 'Marethabile Kabane as members.

Mokhosi appointed Lieutenant Colonel Rapele Mphaki and Captains Noahana Lebona, Tieho Rankhone, Senatla Damane and Mosuoe Letsie as waiting members.

He also appointed Judge SPB Hancke as Judge Advocate.

The order stated: "After having consulted with the Attorney General in accordance with the Act. I hereby appoint Judge SPB Hancke as judge Advocate at the Court Martial."

Advocate R. Surh was appointed prosecutor, assisted by Major Bulane Sechele and Second Lieutenants Moeketsi Mosehle and Mantšo Sello.

The Minister further directed that the record of the proceedings be transmitted to the confirming authority for confirmation of the findings and sentence if the accused were found guilty.

The document therefore places on record that, shortly after Mahao's death, the government had formally initiated a Court Martial process involving alleged mutiny charges.

'Mahao was a Brigadier when he died'

The defence also presented documentary evidence concerning Mahao's military rank at the time of his death.

The evidence shows that Mahao had been removed as Commander of the LDF and reverted from Lieutenant General to Brigadier with effect from May 22, 2015, more than a month before he was killed.

Correspondence from then Government Secretary (GS) Moahloli Mphaka to Mahao stated: "I (Mphaka) am to inform you that, acting pursuant to section 21(b) and (e) of the Lesotho Defence Force Act No.4 of 1996, and in accordance with the advice of the Right Honourable the Prime Minister (Pakalitha Mosisili), His Majesty the King (Letsie III), has terminated your commission as Lieutenant General and removed you from office as Commander of the Lesotho Defence Force, effective from 22 May, 2015."

Mphaka added: "Accordingly, you have reverted to your position as Brigadier in the Army."

The communication was accompanied by Legal Notice No. 60 of 2015, which terminated Mahao's appointment as LDF Commander and repealed the 2014 notice that had promoted him from Brigadier to Lieutenant General and appointed him Army Commander.

"I, King Letsie III, pursuant to section 21 (b) and (e)of the Lesotho Defence Force Act No.4 of 1996, and acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister (Pakalitha Mosisili) terminate the appointment of Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao, as Commander of Lesotho Defence Force with effect from 22 May, 2015.

The Lesotho Defence Force (Appointment of Commander) Notice 2014 is repealed," the notice stipulated. It was dated May 21, 2015.

The rank issue is potentially significant because the soldiers who allegedly went to arrest Mahao were junior to him, a point already raised by the Crown in challenging the legality of the operation.

'Today is the day we are going to arrest Brigadier Mahao'

Giving evidence about the events of June 25, 'Moleli said he reported for duty at Ratjomose Barracks at about 6am.

At around 9am, he said, Captain Hashatsi arrived and told him and his colleagues: "Today, is the day we are going to arrest Brigadier Mahao."

According to 'Moleli, Hashatsi was briefing the soldiers who formed part of the task team established to hunt down suspected mutineers and arrest them.

The team included Second Lieutenant Litekanyo Nyakane, Captain Haleo Makara, Sergeant Motsamai Fako and Corporals Motšoane Machai, Mohlalefi Seitlheko and Tšitso Ramoholi, all of whom are accused in the murder trial. Private Halahala was also present.

'Moleli said Hashatsi divided the soldiers into four teams and assigned him and Halahala to the fourth team.

"He divided us into four teams. He said Brigadier Mahao was going to be arrested at his farm at Mokema. I was in the fourth team with Private Halahala, and our role as the fourth team, Captain Hashatsi ordered, was surveillance. We were tasked with the role of providing the general team with real-time surveillance on Mahao, thus me and Private Halahala," 'Moleli testified.

He said they travelled to Mokema with Hashatsi and Nyakane and positioned themselves where they could observe movements at Mahao's home and farm.

Between 11am and noon, they noticed a white truck which they believed belonged to Mahao arriving at the farm.

They later saw Mahao leave the farm in the truck between 2pm and 3pm and informed Hashatsi.

Hashatsi instructed them to hurry to a nearby tarred road, where they were expected to join him and Nyakane and follow Mahao.

Before they reached the rendezvous point, Hashatsi called again, telling them to hurry.

'Moleli testified that Hashatsi subsequently called back in an agitated state. "Hee Banna! Masepa a se a etsahetse," (Guys! Shit has happened.)

'Moleli said Hashatsi then told them that Mahao had been shot after resisting arrest and fighting back.

The court has previously heard that Mahao allegedly pointed his pistol at Hashatsi during a struggle as the soldiers attempted to arrest him, after which Sergeant Makara intervened and shot him in what the court heard was a "double-tap" army-style shooting.

The trial continues before Justice Charles Hungwe in the High Court.

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Lesotho's SADC chair bid stalls

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Lesotho's bid to chair a key Southern African security body has stalled after this month's Southern African Development Community (SADC) Summit failed to name a successor to the position, pushing a decision into an extraordinary summit expected around October 2026.

The position in question is Incoming Chairperson of the SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation — a three-country rotating structure, often referred to simply as the SADC Troika, which gives political direction on peace and security matters across the 16-nation bloc.

Lesotho, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, Limpho Tau, formally applied to take up the post, writing to the SADC Secretariat on March 4, 2026, to declare its intention.

Tau told Newsday last night that the Secretariat acknowledged receipt on 12 March. Angola is understood to be the other country in contention for the position.

Tau confirmed that no decision was reached at SADC's 46th Ordinary Summit, held in Durban on August 17, and that the matter has instead been deferred to the extraordinary summit in October. He said government is continuing to lobby other member states for support ahead of that meeting.

What happened in Durban

At the August summit, SADC did fill the top Organ position. King Mswati III of Eswatini was elected Organ Chairperson, taking over from Malawi. But the summit named no Incoming Chairperson to sit alongside him, the seat Lesotho is competing for.

By contrast, SADC's main leadership positions were filled in full at the same summit, with South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa named overall SADC Chairperson and Zambia named Incoming Chairperson.

Tau said Lesotho's case for the position rests on the principle that SADC leadership posts should rotate among member states. Because SADC generally decides such matters by consensus rather than by vote, the absence of agreement in August effectively pushed the decision to October rather than settling it against Lesotho.

The bid has stalled, in other words, according to Tau, not failed. Lesotho still has a chance to secure it when the extraordinary summit convenes.


Prime Minister Matekane with SA President at the SADC Summit in Durban

A history that runs deeper than one bid

Lesotho has held the Organ chairmanship before. At the SADC Summit In Dar es Salaam in August 2003, the Heads of State and Government elected Lesotho's then Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili, as the chairperson, with South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki as Incoming Chairperson. Mosisili succeeded Mozambique's president Joaquim Chissano.

As outgoing chair the following year, Mosisili launched the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) and reported on regional peace and stability.

In 2014, Lesotho was next in the rotation after Namibia but was passed over for South Africa due to its domestic political instability.

Lesotho also last held the rotating SADC chairpersonship from August 2006 to August 2007. It followed Botswana and was succeeded by Zambia.

In September 2017, Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) commander Lieutenant-General Khoantle Motšomotšo was assassinated by fellow officers at his barracks outside Maseru.

Angola held the Organ chair at the time, and its then foreign minister, Georges Chikoti, led SADC's fact-finding mission into the killing. Within days, a SADC standby force drawing troops from South Africa, Angola and Mozambique had deployed into Lesotho to stabilise the country.

That history adds weight, and sensitivity, to Lesotho's current bid. The country is now angling for a leadership role in the very regional structure that has, at several points over two decades, had to step in and manage instability inside its own borders.

Why the position matters

Whoever eventually becomes Incoming Chairperson will take over the Organ's leadership from 2027, with responsibility for steering the region's response to ongoing security concerns, including the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the political crisis in Madagascar, the SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC), and counter-terrorism operations in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province.

Lesotho's own standing with SADC

The stalled bid comes at a pointed moment for Lesotho's relationship with the bloc. SADC removed Lesotho from the Organ's own watchlist agenda in August 2025, closing a chapter of more than a decade during which the bloc repeatedly had to intervene in the country's domestic political and security crises.

Lesotho's government has described that removal as restoring its standing as an equal partner within SADC, rather than a state under regional monitoring, which is what makes the current setback sting. Barely a year after being trusted to manage its own affairs without oversight, Lesotho has yet to be trusted with a hand in managing the region's.

Basotho migrants arrested in Durban factory raid

Lekhetho Makhanya

Twenty-five Basotho migrants have been arrested in South Africa after they were found working without the required legal documents at a suspicious garment factory in Hammarsdale, Durban.

Lerato Nkhetše of the Migrant Workers Association of Lesotho told Newsday on Monday that the suspected Chinese-owned factory appeared to have already been under close watch by KwaZulu-Natal authorities over alleged labour and other regulatory violations.

"It appears the firm was already suspected of employing undocumented foreigners and operating beyond legal working hours, among other tendencies. The firm itself was, therefore, a target for inspection by the police and relevant authorities in Durban," Nkhetše said.

A police operation conducted on August 16 resulted in the arrest of the 25 undocumented Basotho allegedly employed at the factory.

Three other foreign nationals from Malawi and Eswatini were also arrested, while two Chinese managers were taken into custody, Nkhetše said.

Regarding the 25 Basotho, Nkhetše said the Lesotho government was expected to intervene through the Consulate General of Lesotho in Durban.

He blamed what he described as the "failing" passport-processing system of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Police in Lesotho, saying delays in obtaining travel documents were leaving Basotho migrants vulnerable to losing employment in South Africa.

"Many Basotho employed in South Africa are losing their jobs because they are sabotaged by the Lesotho passport system. They are frustrated by delays and, sometimes, failed processes while applying for travel documents," Nkhetše said.

He added: "Today, we still have some Basotho who applied for their passports in 2024 and early 2025, but are still waiting for them. This is despite the claims that have recently been made regarding improvements in the issuance of passports and national identity documents."

The Ministry of Home Affairs and Police has, in recent years, faced criticism over persistent inefficiencies in the processing of passports and identity documents.

The newly appointed Minister of Home Affairs and Police, Voeswa Tsheka, has apologised to Basotho and other residents who have experienced delays, poor treatment and inconvenience, saying the ministry takes full responsibility.

The apology followed a damning report by the Ombudsman, Advocate Tlotliso Polaki, published in May, which exposed what it described as a pattern of maladministration, inadequate digital infrastructure and systemic failure to comply with the ministry's Service Charter.

The report also flagged irregularities in the issuance of diplomatic passports, including the failure to enforce statutory surrender provisions.

Tsheka said police officers had been deployed to Home Affairs offices across the country as part of efforts to root out corruption.

"The Ministry condemns all acts of bribery and solicitation for payments to fast-track services," Tsheka said.

In April, the ministry temporarily halted passport production "until further notice", leaving more than 50,000 applicants frustrated. The disruption particularly affected Basotho working in South Africa who require passports to travel.

Tsheka said that when the crackdown began, the passport backlog stood at more than 61,000 applications but had since been reduced to about 38,000.

"In a day we print half of the new applications and process the other half," she explained, adding that the usual daily output ranges from 1,200 to 1,600 passports, while in the worst case, about 900 are printed.

Contacted for comment on Tuesday, the ministry's Public Relations Manager, 'Marelebohile Mothibeli, said many Basotho had applied for passports but had failed to collect them after they were finalised.

"There is a large number of Basotho who have applied for passports here. Most of their passports have been finalised, but they do not come and fetch them. We can only assist if you bring the list of their names, so we can check in the system how far their applications are, if they indeed applied. You may find that their passports have long been finalised but they don't bother to check with us," Mothibeli said.

Efforts to reach the Consulate General of Lesotho in Durban for comment were unsuccessful.

Maseru celebrates India's independence and bilateral ties

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The Indian community in Lesotho has celebrated India's Independence Day with fervour and pride, commemorating the country's independence from British colonial rule.

The celebration, held in Maseru, featured the hoisting of the Indian tricolour and was attended by ministers, members of the diplomatic community, senior government officials, business leaders and other guests.

India celebrates its Independence Day annually on August 15, marking its independence from British rule in 1947.

Addressing the gathering, Honorary Consul for India in Lesotho, Biju Abraham Korah, recalled the sacrifices made by India's freedom fighters in the struggle for independence.

"Let us also remember the sacrifices made by our freedom fighters. Let us be inspired by their courage and determination, and remember those who laid down their lives for our country. On this Independence Day, let us pledge to uphold the values of democracy, equality and justice," Korah said.

"Let us work for a more just and equitable society, where everybody has the opportunity to succeed."

Korah described India as a country at the forefront of technology and scientific discoveries, while also highlighting its contributions to yoga, the arts, music and culture.

"India is also a land of opportunity, where we have made remarkable progress in various fields such as technology, science, engineering, health and agriculture," he said.

Lesotho and India established diplomatic relations in 1971, five years after Lesotho gained independence from Britain.

In 2003, then Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili visited India, a visit that subsequently paved the way for the opening of Lesotho's resident diplomatic mission in New Delhi in 2005.

The two countries recently held the sixth session of the Joint Bilateral Commission of Cooperation (JBCC) in New Delhi, with Lesotho's delegation led by Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, Thabang Lekhela.

In July, Lesotho also witnessed the send-off of 40 students who travelled to India to pursue their studies under scholarships provided through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

In a speech delivered on the occasion, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on Indians to pursue their dreams with determination and resolve.

"Any nation becomes great and achieves its goals when it moves forward on the pure strength of its dreams and resolutions," Modi said.

"When dreams and resolutions are high, the absolute height of our capability also increases. Every single citizen has made every possible effort with complete dedication to take the country to new heights."

Modi said India's position in the global economy had changed significantly, noting that the country had previously been counted among the world's "fragile five" economies but was now among the "fastest-growing" economies.

For his part, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations Richard Ramoeletsi said the occasion was more than a celebration of India's independence, describing it as a reflection of the enduring friendship and cooperation between India and Lesotho.

Ramoeletsi commended the Indian Government for its "remarkable achievement and resilience", as well as its continued contribution to global peace, development, cooperation and prosperity.

He described India as an important partner for developing countries, including Lesotho.

"And we greatly value the spirit of solidarity and South-South cooperation that characterises our relationship. As developing countries, Lesotho and India share common interests in promoting multilateralism, sustainable development, equitable global growth and the reform of international institutions that reflect the needs of developing countries," Ramoeletsi said.

Vice-President of the Indian Association of Lesotho, Salman Mohamed, expressed appreciation to the Government and people of Lesotho for the warmth and hospitality extended to the Indian community.

"I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Lesotho for their continued friendship, support and goodwill to us, the Indian community," Mohamed said.

Notice

DECLARATION OF CUT-OFF DATE FOR ELIGIBILITY TO RESETTLEMENT ENTITLEMENTS IN THE POLIHALI SITE RESERVOIR INUNDATION AREA UNDER PHASE II OF THE LESOTHO HIGHLANDS WATER PROJECT

1. Preamble

This Notification confirms the declaration by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), of a Cut-Off Date for eligibility to resettlement entitlements for households to be relocated within the Polihali Reservoir Inundation Area under Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. The Cut-Off Date is declared in accordance with the provisions of the LHWP Phase II Compensation Policy (July 2022).

2. Effective Date and Scope

The Cut-Off Date to resettlement entitlements will come into effect on the following dates for households that are part of the resettlement programme from the following village areas:

1. ***Cut-Off Date: 21 August 2026 for the following villages:***
   a. Ha Jobere (Seate Community Council)
   b. Kheseng and Tsekong (Mphokojoane Community Council)
1. ***2. Cut-Off Date: 04 September 2026 for the following villages:***
   a. Koung Ha Phohla and Sekokong (Mphokojoane Community Council)
   b. Ha Sekantši (Menoaneng Community Council)

3. Implementation

The declaration of the Cut-Off Date is based on the registration of all private assets in the Polihali Reservoir Inundation Area, such as fields, trees, homestead plots, homestead structures (dwellings, buildings, other structures) and other homestead assets. The asset registration was undertaken by LHDA together with asset owners and representatives from the communities and local authorities. Asset registration forms were prepared for all affected assets and verified by the owners, local authorities and LHDA. The asset registration included taking photos of the assets and gathering supporting documentation such as identification documents and Chief's ownership confirmation letters. A census of all affected owners was also conducted to determine eligibility for compensation and resettlement entitlements.

The resettlement programme in the Polihali Reservoir Inundation Area will commence shortly, which requires the declaration of this Cut-Off Date to determine the final eligibility to resettlement entitlements. The Cut-Off Date takes account of the following:

a. Structures (dwellings, buildings, other structures) that were recorded and verified during the asset registration exercise from 2018 to 2020;
b. Incomplete structures that were registered and that have subsequently been completed at the time of the relevant Cut-Off Dates for the respective villages referred to in Section 2;
c. Alterations to structures that we recorded and verified after the asset registration exercise from 2018 to 2020; and
d. New structures that have been constructed at the time of the relevant Cut-Off Dates for the respective villages referred to in Section 2.

Compensation options (e.g., replacement housing constructed by the Project or the owner; continued use by the owner and therefore no compensation or replacement) will be agreed with each household.

Please Note: New structures that are constructed after the Cut-Off Dates for the respective villages referred to in Section 2 will NOT be considered in the determination of resettlement entitlements. Similarly, any further construction to partially completed structures after the Cut-Off Dates for the respective villages referred to in Section 2 will NOT be considered in the determination of resettlement entitlements.

Owners with registered fields in the Polihali Reservoir Inundation Area that will be affected by reservoir impoundment may continue using their fields until formal notification of acquisition is issued by LHDA and compensation is paid.

4. Further Information

For further information please contact the Polihali Operations Branch Public Relations Unit by telephone: (+266) 2224 6300 or email: mohlotsanep@lhda.org.ls or masihlehol@lhda.org.ls.

Notice by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority - LHDA

New sheriff in town ahead of 2028 polls

Ms. Tebello J. Nthakong

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has appointed Tebello J. Nthakong as the new Director of Elections, filling a position that has remained under interim leadership since the abrupt resignation of her predecessor earlier this year.

"The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has appointed Ms Tebello J. Nthakong as the new Director of Elections in accordance with the National Electoral Act, 2011, Section 114," the IEC said in a statement this week.

Nthakong takes over from Advocate Mpaiphele Maqutu, who resigned abruptly in February, shortly after the current Commissioners assumed office.

Since Maqutu's departure, Lydia Macheli, the recently retired Civic Education Manager, had been acting as Director of Elections.

The Director of Elections is responsible for managing the operations of the Commission under its supervision and direction. The Director is the most senior officer among IEC staff and is answerable to the Commissioners.

IEC Chairperson Dr John Maphephe previously disclosed that the Commission had received 27 applications for the position. A consultancy firm was engaged to screen the applicants and recommend five candidates for interviews by the Commission.

Registered political parties were present during the interviews to observe the proceedings, although they did not participate in the selection process, which was conducted by the Commission.

Nthakong is no stranger to the IEC, having previously worked for the electoral body. She brings 16 years of experience in governance and electoral affairs, with expertise in electoral administration, project management, institutional strengthening and democratic governance.

She has held senior leadership positions in Maseru, Leribe and Mafeteng, where she served as the principal representative of the Director of Elections.

In that capacity, she oversaw the implementation of IEC policies, coordinated operations and managed electoral projects.

Nthakong has also played a role in facilitating national, local government, by-election and fresh election processes, including two national snap elections.

She holds two master's degrees, in Electoral Policy and Administration and Governance and Political Transformation.

Her experience in electoral operations, stakeholder engagement, conflict prevention and mediation, and capacity building is expected to be critical as she assumes the leadership of the Commission's secretariat.

Her appointment comes at a politically significant time, with the lifespan of the 11th Parliament due to expire in November 2027. The next general election is expected to be held in early 2028, meaning Nthakong will oversee key preparations for the polls.

The IEC has also proposed synchronising national and local government elections. In July, the Commission said holding the elections concurrently could save the country money and reduce administrative costs.

As Director of Elections, Nthakong is likely to play a central role in engaging political parties and other stakeholders to build support for the proposal, particularly as it would require political and legislative buy-in.

She also takes office as Parliament considers proposed changes to the electoral system, including the controversial "best loser" Bill, a Private Member's Bill seeking to reform the allocation of proportional representation seats.

The Bill, sponsored by Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) Member of Parliament Mootsi Lehata and seconded by All Basotho Convention (ABC) proportional representation member Lebohang Hlaele, is currently before the National Assembly.

It proposes amendments to the National Assembly Electoral Act, 2011, including the abolition of party lists and the introduction of a system under which the IEC would allocate proportional representation seats based on individual constituency performance, particularly among losing candidates.

Nthakong's appointment therefore comes as the electoral body prepares not only for the next national elections but also for possible changes to the country's electoral framework.

It is not yet clear when she will formally assume office, as she is expected to serve notice with her current employer, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Her appointment is for a five-year term.

Eight High Court judge posts up for grabs

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The Judicial Service Commission (JSC) has announced eight vacancies for Puisne Judges of the High Court of Lesotho, as the judiciary continues to grapple with a shortage of judges and a persistent backlog of cases.

The announcement, issued by the JSC Secretary, who is also Registrar of the High Court, Advocate 'Mathato Sekoai, invites applications and nominations from members of the public and non-profit organisations for candidates of "high moral character and integrity".

The eight successful candidates will be appointed across the three divisions of the High Court. Five will serve in the Main Division in Maseru, two in the Northern Division in Leribe and one in the Southern Division in Mohale's Hoek.

Once appointed and sworn in, the judges are expected to strengthen the judiciary's capacity and support the courts' efforts to expedite the hearing and determination of cases pending before them.

Judges perform the core judicial function of exercising the judicial power vested in the courts of Lesotho. The Constitution provides that "judicial power shall vest in the courts of Lesotho" and that the courts shall include the Court of Appeal and the High Court, among others.

NEW JUDGES SWORN-IN - Picture Courtesy (Government of Lesotho)

Members of the public and institutions may nominate potential candidates for the vacancies. Once the names of applicants and nominees are published, members of the public and institutions will also have an opportunity to lodge objections for consideration by the JSC.

Since 2021, candidates for judicial posts have been required to apply for positions and undergo public interviews as part of a competitive appointment process. Previously, the JSC would recommend candidates to His Majesty the King for appointment to the bench.

There are currently 13 substantive judges serving on the High Court, including Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane. They are Judges Molefi Makara, Moroke Mokhesi, Polo Banyane, Realeboha Mathaba, Fumane Khabo, 'Maliepollo Makhetha, 'Makampong Mokhoro, 'Mafelile Ralebese, Moneuoa Kopo, Tšeliso Mokoko, 'Mabatšoeneng Hlaele and Itumeleng Shale.

Judge 'Maseforo Mahase remains suspended and is engaged in a protracted legal battle concerning her position.

In an effort to address the persistent case backlog and shortage of judges, Chief Justice Sakoane appointed five legal practitioners and judicial officers in September 2025 to serve in an acting capacity. They are Advocate Tsebang Putsoane, Senior Resident Magistrate Palesa Rantara, Senior Resident Magistrate 'Manapo Motebele, Advocate Tšooana Lesaoana and Sekake Malebanye KC.

Applications and nominations must reach the JSC by September 18.

The interviews will be held from November 4 to 5 and will be conducted publicly and broadcast live across different media platforms. Following the interviews, the JSC will forward its recommendations to His Majesty the King for consideration and appointment.

The recruitment comes against the backdrop of a significant caseload across the High Court divisions.

During the opening of the judicial year earlier this year, Chief Justice Sakoane stressed the importance of judicial independence, saying: "Judicial independence and accountability are non-negotiable."

He said judges must be able to determine cases free from political pressure, economic influence and popular sentiment.

Reporting on the performance of the courts during the previous year, Sakoane said the High Court Main Division registered 1,474 cases, with 563 in allocation and 1,090 completed.

The Labour Appeal Court registered 47 cases, with 31 allocated and 33 completed.

The Commercial Division registered 612 cases, with 112 allocated and 718 completed, while the Northern Division registered 525 cases, with 84 in allocation and 293 completed.

Across the courts covered in the report, 2,704 cases were registered, 810 were in allocation and 2,139 were completed.

Sakoane said the efficiency of the courts should be measured by their ability to handle cases within a reasonable time without compromising fairness or the quality of justice.

"Cases that are managed well take relatively shorter time to dispose of," he said, adding that the time taken to deliver rulings and judgments is an important indicator of effective or ineffective case management.

Free at the gate, elitist beyond it: 26 years after free primary education

... Lesotho still fails its poorest learners

Seabata Mahao

In 2000, Lesotho did something few of its neighbours had managed. It promised every child, regardless of what their parents earned, a place in a primary school classroom. Twenty-six years later, that promise looks less like the foundation of an equal society and more like the first rung of a ladder that keeps breaking under the feet of the poor.

The latest evidence of that breakage is not in a village school but in a loan office. The National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS), the body that finances most Basotho students through university, is now enforcing a clause that can deny a student a loan because of a debt run up by a parent or guardian, sometimes years before the student was born.

Human rights organisation Advocates for the Supremacy of the Constitution (SECTION 2) calls it unconstitutional. A closer look at the numbers suggests it is also something else. It is the newest, sharpest expression of a system that was built to be universal and has, in practice, become elitist.

Free Primary Education (FPE) was rolled out grade by grade from 2000, reaching all seven primary grades by 2006, and was only written into law as compulsory a decade later through the Education Act of 2010. The policy did what it was designed to do at the primary level. Net enrolment climbed to roughly 82 percent, up from a system in which, by some estimates, a third of school-age children had been shut out entirely.

When the 2010 Act was signed, UNICEF's then Lesotho representative, Dr Ahmed Magan, framed it as unfinished business rather than a finish line. The next phase of implementation, he said at the time, would be the decisive stage in making the right to free, compulsory education a reality rather than a slogan. Sixteen years on, that decisive stage has arrived at secondary and tertiary level, where school fees were never abolished and where the state's commitment thins out considerably.

The leak in the pipeline

The numbers tell an uncomfortable story about what happens to children after primary school. UNESCO Institute of Statistics data cited by the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa put Lesotho's lower secondary completion rate at just 39 percent for boys and 56 percent for girls as of 2019. Gross enrolment in tertiary education that year sat at roughly 8 percent for men and 12 percent for women, meaning that for every ten young Basotho who should, by age, be in university or college, eight or nine simply are not there.

A World Bank-commissioned study into the long-term effects of FPE found that although the transition rate from primary to secondary school is relatively high, at around 81 percent, a high Junior Certificate failure rate, fluctuating between roughly a quarter and a third of candidates in the years studied, combined with a 16 percent secondary dropout rate to thin the pipeline sharply. The study's own conclusion was blunt. It said that those who ultimately reach university tend to be a narrow slice of especially motivated, high-achieving students, disproportionately from better-off households, precisely the outcome free primary education was meant to prevent.

This is the context in which the NMDS dispute has to be read. A loan clause that can freeze a student's funding over a parent's unpaid debt is not an isolated administrative rule but it is one more filter in a system that has been filtering out poor children at every stage since the day they leave primary.

"The child did not cause the debt"

NMDS itself insists it is simply protecting a revolving fund. Its Director of the Loan Bursary Fund, Thabo Ntoi, has been explicit that the assistance is not charity. "The Fund therefore does not provide grants or free financial assistance," he said in an August 7 statement, arguing that repayment is what keeps the scheme alive for the next generation of students. According to Ntoi, under the Fund's rules, a loan is treated as household-based, potentially binding a borrower's parents, spouse and children, and it is that last category that has drawn SECTION 2's fire.

The organisation does not dispute that NMDS is a loan scheme, or that government has a right to recover public money. Its objection is narrower and, it argues, constitutional. "A child born into a household years after a parent took out a loan was never a party to that contract and cannot lawfully be bound by it." As SECTION 2 puts it: "The child did not cause the debt, did not agree to it and could not have prevented the default."

SECTION 2 has grounded that argument in the Constitution itself, Section 18's protection against discrimination on grounds of birth or status, Section 19's guarantee of equality before the law, Section 26's commitment to equality of opportunity for disadvantaged groups, and Section 28's pledge that Lesotho shall endeavour to make education available to all. It had given NMDS until August 14, 2026 to withdraw the clause or face a court challenge seeking to have it declared null and void. The deadline was extended after NMDS agreed to meet the organisation on Friday, August 21. NMDS later asked to postpone the meeting.

Building an elite, not a nation

Strip away the legal language and the pattern becomes familiar. Free primary education was sold as the great equaliser, a child's start in life would no longer depend on a parent's payslip. But every stage after Standard 7 reintroduces exactly that dependency, school fees at secondary level, tuition and accommodation costs at tertiary level, and now, a parent's credit history. A system that filters this aggressively by household income at every gate is not producing universal education. It is producing a small, self-selecting elite who make it through, while the rest are quietly returned to the villages they came from.

That matters well beyond any one family's court case, because more than half of Basotho, over 75 percent of the population is poor or economically vulnerable, according to a 2019 World Bank and Bureau of Statistics poverty assessment, cannot simply absorb a lost loan and try again next year. For a household living close to the poverty line, a delayed or denied allocation is not an inconvenience. It is the difference between a child entering a lecture hall and a child staying home for good.

A country that cannot afford to lose its talent

The irony is that Lesotho can least afford to be narrowing its pipeline of skilled graduates. The country has, by multiple measures, one of the most severe shortages of specialist health workers in the world. Roughly 0.9 doctors for every 10,000 people, according to Ministry of Health and World Bank-linked data, in a country that still has no medical school of its own and trains its doctors abroad. District-level figures compiled for a 2017 review of public health spending found Maseru with 2.3 doctors per capita against a low of 0.26 in Mafeteng, a gap that tracks, closely, the same rural-urban divide that shapes access to secondary and tertiary education.

The shortage is not confined to medicine. At the National University of Lesotho (NUL), the country's oldest and largest institution, researchers examining the university's own restructuring noted that the Council on Higher Education (CHE) requires only PhD holders to supervise postgraduate students, yet senior, doctorally qualified staff remain scarce in several departments, with one senior NUL figure quoted in the Lesotho Times attributing the churn to qualified academics leaving for better-paid work elsewhere. A nation trying to grow specialist doctors, engineers and PhD-holding researchers cannot do so while narrowing, rather than widening, the number of poor and working-class students who reach a lecture theatre in the first place.

The next test

NMDS has indicated it will not respond to SECTION 2's challenge outside a legal process, and both sides agree, at least, that the Fund needs to remain solvent for future students. The disagreement is over who should carry the cost of keeping it that way. SECTION 2's position is that punishing a student for a parent's default does not recover a single loti of the outstanding deb. it simply creates, in the organisation's words, a second victim of it.

26 years ago, Lesotho decided that a child's education should not be hostage to their family's finances. Whether that principle survives its collision with a controversial clause of the NMDS policy may now be decided in court. But the deeper question the case exposes will remain long after any judgment. A country that already loses its brightest students to fees, distance and now debt cannot simultaneously complain that it lacks the doctors, engineers and doctorate-holders it needs to grow. The two problems are, in the end, one and the same.

Tleetse Phakoe: Planting change in Mafeteng

Women Initiatives Lesotho reachout programs

Seabata Mahao

When Tleetse Ada Phakoe talks about agriculture, she does not start with rainfall figures or policy documents. She starts with her mother.

"I experienced firsthand the impacts of climate change on the lands my widowed mother was working to provide for us," she says. "Produce was no longer the same."

That memory, more than any lecture hall, is where her life's work began.

Today Phakoe is known across Mafeteng as an environmentalist, an eco-feminist and the founder of Women's Initiative Lesotho (WIL), a women-led collective that has spent the past few years turning a hard truth about rural Lesotho, the people growing the country's food are rarely the ones who control the land, the water or the decisions that shape their futures, into a programme of action.

It is a truth Phakoe has watched play out in her own home district. Mafeteng has long struggled with water shortages, while parts of the district face worsening land degradation. Droughts come more often than they used to. For a family like hers, that was not an abstract climate statistic, but it was the difference between a harvest and a bad year.

A rough start

Phakoe's path to founding WIL was not a straight line. Like many young Basotho, she came home after finishing her studies to find no jobs waiting. The frustration of that period wore her down, and she says she fell into depression. What pulled her out was, in a way, the same thing that now defines her work, other women.

She began volunteering with a local women's group and quickly noticed she was not the only one struggling. Young graduates ahead of her in age were still jobless. Others around her were being pulled into crime, early pregnancies, alcohol and drug use, or simply leaving the country to find work elsewhere.

"I started mobilising young women and youth, connecting them to opportunities and information," she recalls.

That informal mobilising grew, slowly, into something bigger. WIL was established in 2022 and formally registered in 2024. It now describes its mission as advancing gender justice, climate justice and accountable governance, big words for what, on the ground, looks like community gardens, farmer training and tree planting.

Whose labour, whose land

According to Phakoe, roughly eight in every ten rural households in Lesotho depend on agriculture in some form. Women do much of that work. What they often do not have, Phakoe says, is land in their name, decent tools, or a say in how a household's farming decisions get made.

"Women are already doing most of the labour-intensive work in Mafeteng's food system," she says. "Giving them land security, decision-making power and market access converts labour they're already contributing into household nutrition and income they currently see very little of."

That is the logic behind WIL's approach, better seeds and drought-resistant crops will not fix much if the women doing the planting are still locked out of the decisions around them.

Young people are a smaller part of the picture. Phakoe estimates only about one in five farmers is young, and many who could take over family land choose to migrate instead, discouraged by how little farming seems to pay. WIL's youth-focused work tries to change that impression, in part by bringing in tools like drone mapping and satellite imagery, which Phakoe uses herself as a trained GIS analyst and drone pilot, to help communities spot water-stressed land and plan irrigation more precisely.

"Young people are more likely to stay in a sector that looks like a skilled career, not a fallback," she says.

What has actually been built

Numbers alone don't capture what WIL does, but they give a sense of scale. Five community gardens established, two training manuals produced on organic pesticides and fertiliser, more than 1,000 farmers trained directly in agroecology, and over 5,000 reached through broader programmes. Volunteers and partner communities have planted more than 200,000 trees.

At Boleka, Ha-Maholi community garden, member Thakane Mphou says the project changed what her household could rely on, food for the table, and produce sold on to a local school for extra income.

Phakoe is wary of measuring success by attendance at a training session. "All of them have had the greatest impact and continue to do so since they are now in the hands of communities and we continue to provide support," she says of WIL's completed projects.

The limits of good intentions

WIL's work has also taught Phakoe what doesn't work, chiefly, plans drawn up far from the people meant to carry them out. Adaptation strategies designed in offices rarely survive contact with a village that has no reliable water source, she says. Training women in new farming methods means little if they still cannot own or control the land they farm.

It's why WIL now tries to keep communities involved throughout a project, not just at the consultation stage. "We serve people by enhancing the decisions they make themselves," Phakoe says.

The organisation's next step is value addition, taking a crop or two already grown around Mafeteng and building simple processing, drying and packaging capacity so farmers keep more of what their produce is worth, rather than selling it raw for the smallest possible price. Phakoe sees this as opening doors for young people beyond the farm itself, into processing, marketing and small agribusiness.

Money, and the lack of it

Like most grassroots organisations, WIL runs on funding that rarely matches its ambitions. Phakoe points to donor dependency, small short-term grants and water scarcity as the obstacles that slow everything down. Small grants, she says, tend to force organisations into scattered, disconnected activities instead of building anything lasting.

Her ask of government is for genuine co-design, not just consultation after decisions are already made. Of development partners, she wants multi-year, flexible funding rather than one-off project money. Of the private sector, she wants help building markets for what farmers actually produce.

"WIL doesn't need partners who write a check and step back," she says. "We need partners willing to invest in a model we're still proving."

Starting before feeling ready

Phakoe's own path into leadership began in 2020, when she joined a rural women's movement years before WIL existed. It taught her, she says, that leadership doesn't have to begin at the top, that credibility can be built inside communities that already exist, rather than from scratch.

Self-doubt, she admits, was one of her biggest obstacles. She wasn't sure at first that she could build WIL or keep it funded. What got her through was learning that confidence tends to follow action, not the other way around.

"Success demands overcoming obstacles," she says.

Since founding WIL, her own profile has grown alongside it. She holds a degree in Physical Geography from the National University of Lesotho (NUL), is completing a postgraduate diploma in Project Management, and has been named a 2025 Mandela Washington Fellow at Texas Tech University and a 2026 Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Trust 100 Young Leaders Awardee.

But when she talks about the next ten years, the goal is not really about WIL's name at all. She wants permanent infrastructure, more gardens with attached processing centres, a development hub for training and mentorship, run by the women who use them, so the next generation doesn't have to start from nothing the way hers did.

"My work is dedicated to the people of Mafeteng as the ones on the frontlines against every form of injustice against them," she says. "WIL is because of them."

It is a modest way of describing an ambitious idea, that dignity in rural Lesotho starts with who gets to decide what happens to the land.

Women Initiatives Lesotho reachout programs

Tleetse Phakoe, Founder of Women Initiatives Lesotho

 21 August - 27 August 2026

Reimagining Africa's State-Owned Enterprises: From Governance Principles to Public Value

Accountability Must Become the Daily Work of Government and Every State-Owned Enterprise

By Honourable Justice Nthomeng Majara
Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho

Across Africa, State-Owned Enterprises occupy a position of immense national responsibility.

They deliver electricity, water, transport, communications, housing and development finance. They manage strategic national assets and significant public resources. Their performance can either accelerate national development or hold it back.

For this reason, SOE governance cannot be treated as a technical concern reserved for boards, regulators and government ministries. It is a matter of national development, economic stability and public trust.

When an SOE performs well, businesses become more productive, communities gain access to essential services, and employment and investment opportunities expand. When it fails, citizens bear the consequences through unreliable services, lost opportunities, increased public expenditure and declining confidence in state institutions.

The question before Africa, then, is not whether governance matters. We know that it does. The question is whether we are prepared to make accountability a daily leadership practice rather than an occasional institutional exercise.

Governance is often discussed in terms of structures, policies, codes and compliance. These are important, but they are not sufficient.

At its core, governance is about leadership, accountability and service to the people.

An institution may have well-written policies, established committees and comprehensive reporting systems yet still fail to fulfil its mandate. Structures become effective only when those entrusted with them act with integrity, competence and a genuine commitment to the public interest.

The quality of an SOE reflects the quality of leadership at every level, from the government that defines its mandate to the board that provides oversight and the executive team responsible for implementation.

Appointments must be based on merit. Responsibilities must be clearly defined. Decisions must withstand public scrutiny. Leaders must be empowered to perform their duties, but they must also be answerable for the results they produce.

Africa must move beyond simply managing institutions. We must lead institutions that create public value, stimulate investment, generate employment and contribute meaningfully to national development.

Lessons from Lesotho's accountability journey

In Lesotho, the National Leadership Forum and Accountability Summit were established as structured platforms through which government could assess its performance, strengthen coordination, identify implementation challenges and account publicly to the nation.

These initiatives required us to acknowledge that our country's challenges cannot be addressed through the 'business-as-usual' approach.

We must move beyond measuring government performance by the number of meetings held, reports produced, or activities undertaken. Citizens judge institutions by whether services reach them, whether public resources are used responsibly and whether their lives improve because of the decisions their leaders make.

The Accountability Summit created a platform for citizens and civil society to engage directly with government, ask questions, raise concerns, and contribute to national development solutions.

Opening government to public scrutiny is not always comfortable. However, accountability cannot exist only when questions are easy or results are favourable. It requires leaders to report honestly on achievements, acknowledge shortcomings, and explain how they will address identified challenges.

When leaders account openly for their performance, public trust can be rebuilt. When citizens are heard, and their experiences inform implementation, governance becomes more responsive and development more inclusive.

These same principles must extend to every State-Owned Enterprise.

SOEs should not account only for expenditure, revenue or statutory compliance. They must also account for the public value they create.

A water utility must demonstrate whether more households and businesses have reliable access to safe water. An electricity company must show whether it is improving supply reliability and supporting economic activity. A transport institution must account for whether it is improving connectivity, safety and participation in the economy.

Financial sustainability is essential, but it is not the only measure of success. SOEs have both commercial and developmental responsibilities. Their performance must be assessed against the strategic purpose for which they were established.

From dialogue to measurable action

Lesotho is honoured to host the Africa State-Owned Enterprises Corporate Governance Summit.

Hosting this continental dialogue reflects our belief that governance is strengthened through openness, mutual learning and collective leadership.

No African country has perfected governance. Every nation faces institutional challenges, but every country also has experiences others can learn from. Board members, executives, policymakers and regulators must be prepared to share not only their successes but also their failures and unresolved challenges.

The quality of its speeches alone will not determine the summit's value. What will determine its value is what participating governments, boards and institutions do afterwards.

We must leave Maseru with more than declarations of intent. The summit should inspire practical commitments to merit-based appointments, stronger board oversight, transparent procurement, financial discipline, effective risk management and measurable institutional performance.

Every participating institution should ask: Are our mandates clear? Are our boards equipped to provide effective oversight? Are appointments based on merit and competence? Are public resources producing the intended development outcomes? Most importantly, are citizens' lives improving because of our work?

We should not ask these questions only at summits. They must become part of the regular discipline of governance.

This summit will contribute to a new era in African governance, one in which accountability becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Africa possesses the talent, resources and leadership required to transform its future. What is needed is consistent implementation, stronger institutions and a shared commitment to accountable leadership.

Accountability is not an event, a slogan or a moment of public explanation. It is the continuing obligation of leadership to translate authority, resources and promises into measurable improvements in the lives of the people we serve.

Africa's Boardrooms Must Become Guardians of Public Value

By Malehlohonolo Mahase,
Chief Executive Officer,
Institute of Directors Lesotho

Across Africa, discussions about State-Owned Enterprises often begin with financial distress and end with a debate about reform, recapitalisation or privatisation.

Before considering any of these options, we must ask a more fundamental question: is the institution being governed effectively?

Capital cannot compensate for weak oversight. A new strategy cannot succeed where responsibilities are unclear. Operational reforms will not endure if boards lack independence, directors are appointed without regard to competence and executives are not held accountable for performance.

The condition of Africa's SOEs is inseparable from the condition of Africa's boardrooms.

SOEs manage public resources and deliver electricity, water, transport, communications, housing and development finance. Their boards are therefore not ceremonial structures. They guard institutions that ultimately belong to the public.

Most institutions can point to governance policies, board charters, committees and codes of conduct. Yet the existence of these instruments does not necessarily mean that an organisation is well governed.

Governance becomes meaningful only when it shapes behaviour: how appointments are made, how decisions are taken, how conflicts of interest are managed, how risks are anticipated and how executives are held accountable.

A governance code that is never applied cannot prevent institutional failure. An audit committee that receives information but does not interrogate it cannot protect an organisation.

This is particularly important for SOEs because citizens carry the cost when governance fails. They experience unreliable services, lost economic opportunities, pressure on public finances and declining confidence in state institutions.

Good governance is therefore not merely about protecting an organisation. It is about protecting public value and carrying the service delivery mandate to the citizens.

Accountability begins in the boardroom

Boards occupy a critical position between the government, as shareholder, and management, as the institution's operational leadership.

For this arrangement to work, the boundaries must be respected. Government should set policy expectations without getting involved in day-to-day operational decisions. Boards must exercise independent judgement rather than merely endorse instructions received from elsewhere. Management must be empowered to implement strategy while remaining accountable for performance.

Every director should understand that appointment to an SOE board is not a reward or mark of status. It is an acceptance of fiduciary responsibility.

Directors require the courage to ask difficult questions, the competence to understand the answers and the integrity to act when the institution's interests are at risk.

The Mohlomi Code: from custodianship to implementation

Lesotho's contribution to this continental governance conversation is embodied in the Mohlomi Corporate Governance Code.

Developed by the Institute of Directors Lesotho, the Code is a home-grown framework applicable to State-Owned Enterprises, private businesses, nonprofit organisations and other registered entities.

It draws inspiration from Chief Mohlomi, the renowned Basotho philosopher and mentor to King Moshoeshoe I. His leadership philosophy emphasised wisdom, ethical conduct, peaceful and productive relationships, stakeholder accommodation, and creating value for future generations.

These principles are highly relevant to the modern boardroom.

The Mohlomi Code brings this Basotho leadership heritage together with contemporary principles of accountability, transparency, ethical leadership, stakeholder inclusiveness and institutional sustainability.

As custodian of the Mohlomi Code, IoD Lesotho's responsibility extends beyond promoting the document. We must help ensure that its principles are understood, adopted and translated into boardroom practice.

Its application should be evident in merit-based appointments, appropriately composed boards, independent decision-making, effective board committees, transparent disclosure, regular board evaluations and continuous director development.

The Code must not become a respected document that is displayed in offices but absent from institutional decisions.

Its value will be determined by whether it changes how organisations are led.

Bringing Africa's governance conversation to Lesotho

IoD Lesotho is honoured to co-convene the Africa State-Owned Enterprises Corporate Governance Summit in Maseru.

The summit brings governance practitioners, directors, executives, regulators and policymakers together to exchange practical lessons on strengthening the continent's public enterprises.

It also allows Lesotho to present the Mohlomi Code as evidence that African countries can develop governance frameworks that meet contemporary institutional demands while remaining grounded in their own values and identities.

Lesotho may be a small economy, but it is not a peripheral voice in Africa's governance conversation.

Our history offers a leadership tradition rooted in diplomacy, consultation, wisdom and intergenerational responsibility. Our economic circumstances also give us a practical understanding of the pressures faced by public enterprises operating within narrow fiscal margins and competitive regional markets.

The summit's legacy must be visible in stronger boards, more capable directors, transparent institutions and SOEs that deliver better financial and developmental outcomes.

Africa does not need boards that exist merely to satisfy legislation or approve decisions already taken elsewhere.

It needs boards that think independently, act ethically, anticipate risk, protect public resources and hold executive leadership accountable.

It needs directors who understand that their primary duty is not to the person or institution responsible for their appointment. Still, to the organisation they have been entrusted to govern and the public value it exists to create.

Our vision is of a Lesotho where corporate governance is not simply a code on a shelf but a lived practice in every boardroom.

That is the promise of the Mohlomi Code.

As its custodian, IoD Lesotho is committed to moving that promise from principle to practice, and from Lesotho's boardrooms into the wider African governance conversation.

Vodacom, Starlink team up for satellite broadband internet

Seabata Mahao

Vodacom Lesotho is turning to satellite technology to strengthen reliable connectivity for enterprises, public institutions and organizations operating in areas where terrestrial infrastructure is difficult, costly or slow to deploy.

The new satellite broadband service dubbed Enterprise Satellite Connectivity Solution is powered by Starlink's low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellite technology.

Under the partnership, Starlink's satellite technology will be used to provide mobile network backhaul in areas where terrestrial infrastructure is limited, unreliable or too expensive to deploy.

In Lesotho, where mountainous terrain can make the construction and maintenance of fibre networks, microwave links and telecommunications towers challenging, the technology offers an additional route to connectivity for businesses and public institutions operating beyond the reach of conventional infrastructure.

The solution particularly targets enterprises, public institutions and other organisations requiring dependable connectivity in difficult operating environments.

It is intended to provide customers with primary connectivity where terrestrial options are unavailable or impractical, resilient backup connectivity when existing networks fail, and what Vodacom describes as an "Unbreakable Internet" model, combining satellite and terrestrial links to support business continuity.

Lisemelo Ramafikeng, the Executive Head of Department: Vodacom Business said at the launch in Maseru this week that connectivity had become a strategic business requirement rather than simply an information technology service.

"For enterprises and public institutions, connectivity has become a strategic requirement for continuity, service delivery and sustainable growth," she said.

Ramafikeng said the satellite solution would give customers a managed and dependable connectivity option, particularly those operating in complex or remote environments.

On his part, Vodacom Lesotho Chief Executive Officer Mohale Ralebitso said the initiative reflected the company's focus on extending access while strengthening the country's digital resilience.

Vodacom Lesotho Chief Executive Officer Mohale Ralebitso

"Lesotho's geography requires connectivity models that are practical, resilient and capable of reaching people and organisations wherever they live, work and deliver services," Ralebitso said.

He said satellite connectivity would complement Vodacom's existing terrestrial network and could support sectors where interruptions in communications can have significant operational consequences.

These include agriculture, healthcare, financial services, construction and tourism, among others.

At group level, Navindran Naidoo, Executive Head of Department: Non-Terrestrial Networks at Vodacom Group, said LEO satellite technology was emerging as an important component of enterprise connectivity resilience.

Compared with traditional satellite systems, LEO networks operate much closer to Earth, enabling improved latency and higher throughput. For businesses, this can make satellite connectivity more suitable for applications that depend on relatively responsive internet connections.

Naidoo said Vodacom's partnership with Starlink combines satellite technology with the group's local installation, support and managed-service capabilities.

The objective, he said, is to help organisations maintain operations during disruptions caused by factors including power instability, infrastructure damage and remote operating conditions.

The business case extends beyond simply connecting remote offices. Vodacom said the solution could support branch connectivity, cloud-based services, digital payments, remote monitoring, video collaboration and e-government platforms.

It could also provide connectivity for education and health systems, emergency coordination, public safety, social protection payments and communication with citizens in historically hard-to-reach areas.

The launch included a panel discussion involving enterprise customers, including Letshego Financial Services and First National Bank Lesotho, focusing on the role of resilient connectivity in maintaining business continuity, customer convenience and uninterrupted digital services.

Delivering the keynote address, Minister of Information, Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation NthatiMoorosi described the development as significant to Lesotho's digital transformation ambitions.

Moorosi said the country's digital future depended on ensuring that citizens, businesses and public institutions were able to participate in the digital economy regardless of where they were located.

"Every Mosotho, every enterprise, every public institution and every community must have a fair opportunity to participate meaningfully in the digital economy," she said.

The minister said the satellite broadband service should therefore be viewed as more than a commercial product.

She described it as a contribution to Lesotho's wider development agenda, particularly efforts to build a connected, resilient and inclusive digital society in which geographical location does not determine access to economic and social opportunities.

Vodacom Lesotho turns to Starlink to strengthen connectivity resilience

21 August - 27 August 2026

TURNING HOPE INTO IMPACT.

A year of Econet's investments that strengthened education, empowered communities, celebrated culture and sport, and expanded sustainable opportunities across Lesotho.

(FY2026)

HEALTH
- Oral Health (Quthing)
- Starlight Oasis of Hope Hospice

ENVIRONMENT & FOOD SECURITY
- Fruit-UP School Drive

SOCIAL SERVICES
- Project House - Butha-Buthe
- 12 days to Xmas
- Food Parcels & Wheel chairs (GivingTuesday)
- LDF Youth Development Program
- EcoSure Burial Outreaches
- SOS WiFi

ENTERTAINMENT
- Econet APICA
- Beer Meat Bands Festival
- Lecholi Mountain Drive & Braai Experience
- Bar.One Pop Up
- Jungle Cats Charity Run

SPORTS
- Rugby
- People's Cup
- Easter Games Sponsorship
- Local Marathons
- MDLBSA Masters Tournament (Softball)
- LCS Sponsorship
- Roof of Africa
- Maama Community Games
- Golf
- SAIMSA GAMES
- SOS Charity Games
- LISA Games

EDUCATION
- Higherlife Foundation Lesotho
- Tertiary Institutions Best Performers Awards
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- Youth Connekt Africa Summit
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KINGDOM OF LESOTHO
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL AND INTENTION TO RE-ADVERTISE

Tender Title: Provision of Catering Services for Eight Hospitals
Tender Reference Number: GoL/MOH/004/2026/27

The Ministry of Health hereby informs all prospective bidders and the general public that the above-mentioned tender notice is withdrawn with immediate effect.

Accordingly:

1. the current tender timetable is discontinued;
2. all site visits previously scheduled from **20 to 24 August 2026** are cancelled;
3. prospective bidders should not submit bids under the withdrawn notice; and
4. bidding documents already issued under the current notice shall no longer be used for submission purposes.

The tender will be **re-advertised** following completion and approval of the revised bidding document. The new advertisement will provide the official tender reference number, issue date, site-visit schedule, submission deadline and all applicable bidding requirements.

All prospective bidders, including those who obtained the current bidding document, are advised to look out for the re-advertisement through the Ministry's official communication channels and newspapers of wide national circulation.

The Ministry thanks you for your good consideration.

Issued by:
Mantsoanelo Monyobi
Principal Secretary (ai)
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
Date: 19 August 2026

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY
FOR HEALTH
2026 -08- 19
P.O. BOX 514
MASERU 100 - LESOTHO

Lerotholi Polytechnic
Moshoeshoe Road, Maseru, Lesotho

INVITATION TO TENDER

SUPPLY, DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION OF AIR CONDITIONERS AT LEROTHOLI POLYTECHNIC

1. Introduction and Background
Lerotholi Polytechnic (hereinafter referred to as "the Polytechnic" or "LP") is a public technical and vocational education and training institution located in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho. The Polytechnic provides technical, vocational, and continuing education programmes across multiple schools and administrative departments.

The Polytechnic invites eligible qualified and experienced vendors to submit sealed bids for the **Supply, Delivery and Installation of 19 Air Conditioners** at Lerotholi Polytechnic main campus Maseru. Interested bidders may request bidding documents from the Procurement Office at a non-refundable fee of **Five Hundred Maloti Only** (LSL 500.00), by email to procurement@lp.ac.ls with the Proof of Payment attached as PDF. Tenders will be issued on email ONLY, no hard copies will be issued. The document must be accompanied by 5% of the bid price.

2. **Scope of Works**
The successful bidder shall be responsible for:
- Supply of air-conditioning units in accordance with the required specifications as follows:
  - ► 32000BTU*12
  - ► 24000BTU*6
  - ► 12000BTU*1
- Delivery to Lerotholi Polytechnic Main Campus UNIPOD Building;
- Installation, testing and commissioning of the units;
- Provision of all necessary installation materials and accessories;
- Electrical connections associated with the installation;
- Demonstration and handover of the installed systems; and
- Provision of warranties, manuals, remote controls and relevant documentations

Additional requirements and instructions are as specified in the tender document.

3. Bid submissions must meet all the conditions indicated below, failure to comply with conditions 3.1 (a), 3.1 (b), 3.1 (e) and 3.1(h) will lead to disqualification:

3.1 General terms and conditions
a) Valid Tax Clearance Certificate.
b) Valid Traders Licence.
c) VAT registration certificate (where applicable).
d) Company Profile.
e) The submission shall include three (3) references where similar assignment(s) were undertaken and should specify full names of client companies, the contact person(s), their email addresses and telephone numbers. All references will be contacted for further information on those assignments.
f) Lesotho laws SHALL be applicable.
g) Late submissions shall not be accepted.
h) Compulsory site visit will be conducted on Tuesday 14 September 2026 at 10:00 am. Bidders will assemble at UNIPOD building next to the main gate for registration.

Interested bidders should make payments at the following:
- MPesa: **14096; Pay Merchant & Fees, Pay School Fees, Ref: Company Name**
- Ecocash: **52629; Pay Merchant; Pay Fees; Ref: Company Name**
- **Banking Details:**

Account Number: **9080003510146**
Account Type: **Business Current Account**
Account Name: **Lerotholi Polytechnic**
Branch Name and Code: **City; 060667**
Swift Code: **SBICLSMX**
Bank Name: **Standard Lesotho Bank**

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours; 0800hrs-1700hrs:
Procurement Office
Lerotholi Polytechnic
P.O. Box 16
Maseru
Email: procurement@lp.ac.ls
Tel: 22324402

Completed tender documents **(1 original and 4 copies)** in sealed envelopes bearing no identification of the tenderer, clearly marked **"Tender No: LP/ADM/06/2026 Supply, delivery and installation of Air conditioners"** as per instructions in the tender documents and addressed to:
THE PROCUREMENT MANAGER
LEROTHOLI POLYTECHNIC
P.O. BOX 16
MASERU

ATTENTION Procurement Manager,
must be deposited in the Tender Box situated in Administration II Foyer, on or before Friday 18 September 2026 at 12:30p.m. Tenders will be opened same day at 14:00hrs at the Administration I Block Conference room, in the presence of the Tenderers or their representatives who choose to attend.
LP reserves the right to accept or reject any tender in whole or part without giving reasons for its decision.

Invitation to Bidders

BID NOTICE UNDER OPEN NATIONAL COMPETITIVE TENDERING

3 August 2026

Tender For Supply and Delivery of Metrology Equipment - MTIBD/26-27/01

1. The *Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development* has been allocated/received funds *from Government of Lesotho* to be used for the acquisition of *Metrology Equipment*.
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 *competitive bidding* method contained in the Public Procurement Act and is open to all national bidders.
4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the address given below at 8(a) from *9:00 am to 4:00 pm*.
5. The Bidding document in English may be purchased by interested bidders on the submission of a written application to the address below at 8(b) and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of *M1000.00*. The method of payment will be *cash*.
6. Bids must be delivered to the address below at 8(c) at or before *10:00 am on the 7 September 2026*. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of M20, 000.00. Bid securities or bid securing declarations must be valid until 7 December 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 10.00 am on the 7 September 2026
7. There *shall not be* a pre – bid meeting.
8. (a) Documents may be inspected at: Procurement Unit Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development, 2nd Floor, Old LNDC Office Block Maseru Lesotho. Contact person is Head of Procurement Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development email address ghoase.morakabi@gov.ls

   (b) Documents will be issued from: Procurement Unit Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development, 2nd Floor, Old LNDC Office Block Maseru Lesotho.

   (c) Bids must be delivered to: Procurement Unit Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development, 2nd Floor, Old LNDC Office Block Maseru Lesotho.

   (d) Address of bid opening: Ministry's Main Boardroom, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development, 2nd Floor, Old LNDC Office Block Maseru Lesotho.

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

Activity	Date
a. Publish bid notice	3 August 2026
b. Pre-bid meeting where applicable	Not applicable
c. Bid closing date	7 September 2026
d. Evaluation process	14 September 2026
e. Display and communication of best evaluated bidder notice	17 September 2026
f. Contract signature	30 September 2026

WORLD BANK GROUP
IFAD Investing in rural people
JICA
SADPII

Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP II)

Matching Grant Programme

Call for Applications

Background:
The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFSN) has received financial support from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) under the supervision of Internation Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). The financial support will be managed by the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II) under Matching Grants Programme (MGP) to support investment by commodity-based producer groups and agri-businesses for agriculture-related businesses to support access to markets by formally or informally linking producers to value chain actors through vertical alliance building.

Priorities:
Grant Financing:
Two grant windows are available to applicants:
i. qualifying supported commodity-based producer groups for investments up to LSL1,000,000.00
ii. agri-businesses in win-win partnerships with groups for investments of up to LSL1,500,000.00

Eligible Applicants:
The commodity-based producer groups and/or agri-business activities operating in all ten districts of Lesotho are eligible for grants. Eligible applicants include a) qualifying commodity-based producer groups; b) agribusiness firms willing to make investments that demonstrate win-win partnership with commodity groups. The commodity-based producer groups with women in leadership roles within the group and have a quota of at least 40% youth and at least 50% women will receive priority for grant support. Government Employees are not eligible. Commodity groups and agri-businesses should be registered with Law Office and Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development. The land on which the operations will be conducted should be registered in the name of the enterprise (commodity group, agri-business, etc.). Investment support should will be on production and post-harvest equipment.

Beneficiary contribution:
In all cases, successful applicants will be required to make a co-finance contribution in cash to engender ownership and demonstrate commitment. Co-finance cash contributions for the commodity-based producer groups grants for registered associations and cooperatives will be 20% of the funds requested. Agri-business grants for registered agriculture-oriented and privately-owned enterprises, associations and cooperatives will require a 30% co-finance contribution. In both cases, 100% of such contribution MUST BE available before SADP II disburses funds to beneficiaries.

The participation and contribution from different partners should be confirmed by written agreement reached between the principal applicant, the service provider (World Vision International, Lesotho) and/or other partners. In the application, the lead firm must clearly identify and mention the commodity group that it will be working with to implement the grant. The number of group members to benefit from the grant should be clearly outlined and disparaged by sex, age and other parameters

Eligible Expenditures under Grant:
Eligible expenditures shall relate to long term capital assets relevant to the activity. This include costs associated with the purchase and installation of equipment for production, harvesting, post-harvest handling, processing, preservation, storage, grading, packaging etc., the construction of necessary buildings storage, processing, marketing; the purchase and installation pumps, boreholes, tanks etc; product development; alignment with national and international food and safety standards; and marketing campaigns.

Non-Eligible Expenditures under Grant:
The following items would not be covered by the grant amount: (a) Salaries or payment for works and services provided to the project by the grant applicants or its members; b) any expenditures made prior to the date of signature of the Grant Agreement or after closure date of the project; c) land surveys; purchase, rent or leasing of land and existing buildings; d) any expenditure related to operating costs, which are expected to be the direct responsibility of the applicant; e) any expenditure with a hazardous impact on the environment. Each proposal should have an environmental social impact assessment and safeguards management plan as part of its design

Applications should be submitted in four copies (one original plus three photocopies) and delivered by hand at the office of the MGP Secretariat in the District Agricultural Office (DAO) in the 10 districts of Lesotho. Applications submitted after deadline will not be accepted.

Evaluation of the Applications:
All applications received within the deadline will be screened by the MGP Secretariat for compliance with the above rules. The successful applications will then be evaluated by specialized Technical and Financial Reviewers, submitted to the MGC for approval of financial and technical review and finally field verifications will be conducted. The list of successful applicants will be published through public posting at the MGP Secretariat's office. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed by letter, and their original project documents could be returned to them on request.

Application Documentation:
The official application will be managed by World Vision International, Lesotho, in all the 10 districts.

Deadline and Place for Submission of Applications:
The deadline for submission of applications is on or before **August 26, 2026, at 1630hrs**.

Sannere drops *Pha Balimo 2* project

Sannere - Picture courtesy (NyweNywe Photography)

Chris Theko

Top hip hop artist Relebohile Monaphathi, popularly known as Sannere has released his much-anticipated EP *Pha Balimo 2*, a three-volume project that sees the artist return to the cultural and linguistic roots that have become central to his music.

The project is a sequel to his 2024 release Pha Balimo, but Sannere said his intention this time was not simply to produce another instalment.

"When I sat down to plan Pha Balimo 2 and its concept, I had one main objective, which was to remind Basotho of the kind of music I am actually good at and that I'm still very good with music inspired by our culture and language," he said.

The ambitious project contains 30 tracks divided into three volumes, with the final volume dedicated specifically to Famo.

Sannere said the decision to incorporate Famo was deeply personal, arguing that the genre forms an important part of his identity as a Mosotho, regardless of his career as a hip hop artist.

"The genre of music Famo has a huge impact on me as a Mosotho before being an artist, hence you can even hear its influences on my music. Even internationally, as Basotho we are known by Famo music, so whether I like it or not, that genre is part of me and part of us as Basotho," he said.

The three-volume format also allowed the artist to accommodate the different audiences that have followed his career.

Sannere explains that, as someone who is constantly recording, he had accumulated a number of songs that his fans wanted to hear but which had never been officially released.

"I opted to release *Pha Balimo 2* in three volumes because I know I have fans for different reasons, so I decided to cater for all of them," he said.

Unlike the first Pha Balimo, which was produced entirely by Flash Cortez, the new project brings together several producers and artists in an attempt to create a broader and more diverse sonic experience.

Sannere said working with multiple producers was deliberate.

"All I wanted when I brought together different producers and featured artists was to create something different from Pha Balimo, where I only worked with one producer, Flash Cortez. I believe had I done that, we would have had a similar style of production," he said.

Among the producers featured on the project is Vibeboybeatz, a long-time collaborator who appears more frequently than any other producer on the project.

Sannere explained that their relationship goes back to his earlier days as RM Leever and the HotSpot Cypher, when Vibeboybeatz would step in whenever his then-producer, Shev Shang, was unavailable.

The project features a wide range of artists, including Phephel'a, Nthethe, Lenonyane, Culture Spears, Phoka ea Boraa, Sebotsa, Ntate Milo and Tekano, among others.

The project goes beyond music, for Sannere. He views it as an opportunity to promote Lesotho and preserve appreciation for the Sesotho language among younger generations.

"My goal with this project is to sell Lesotho locally and internationally. I have made it my mission to teach and instil Sesotho to the youth because it's through us as influential people that Sesotho can be instilled and appreciated," he said.

The artist also sees his fusion of hip hop with traditional Basotho sounds as part of a broader return to cultural roots.

He argues that while Basotho embraced hip hop as it became a global phenomenon, traditional genres such as Famo have always been deeply rooted in Basotho culture.

"Hip hop was never really our thing, part of our culture as Basotho. We have always had our own signature music, which is Famo. Although when hip hop became a global thing we also embraced it, eventually we were always going to go back to our roots."

Sannere believes his growing reputation as one of the leading voices in the current wave of Sesotho hip hop comes from his ability to fuse contemporary hip hop with traditional Basotho sounds.

"I think the reason I'm called the leader of this current wave of Sesotho and hip hop fused is because I became popular because of it. I essentially made it known as new-age Famo with songs from Pha Balimo, such as 'Ha Le Felile O Njoetse'."

With Pha Balimo 2, Sannere is positioning himself not only as a hip hop artist but also as a cultural storyteller seeking to make Sesotho and Basotho identity relevant to contemporary audiences. The three-volume project is now available to listeners.

Cutting their way to success

Chris Theko

In March 2023, Motsoane "Barber Mots" Ranchobe and his business partner, Shakhane "Shakes Da Barber" Pilioane, started Luxury Barbershop with little more than a passion for barbering and a determination to build something of their own.

There was no substantial start-up capital. Instead, the two entrepreneurs began by renting two workstations in a shared premises alongside hairdressers and nail technicians.

What started as a modest operation has since grown into a five-workstation barbershop with its own premises, five employees and an average of about 20 customers a day.

For Ranchobe and Pilioane, the journey has been less about overnight success and more about steadily turning an idea into a recognisable brand.

"We started with what we had," Ranchobe, popularly known as Barber Mots, says, reflecting on the early days of the business.

The founders say their entry into barbering was influenced by both their circumstances and their interest in the craft. While unemployment and the need to create an income were part of the reality they faced, there was also a genuine passion for barbering and the desire to build something beyond simply finding work.

For Pilioane, known as Shakes Da Barber, the journey has demonstrated the importance of starting even when conditions are not perfect.

"You cannot always wait until you have everything. Sometimes you have to start with what is available to you and build from there," Pilioane says.

That philosophy appears to have shaped Luxury Barbershop's growth.

The two founders have had to learn not only how to serve customers and sharpen their barbering skills, but also how to operate a business together.

As with any partnership, disagreements are inevitable. The challenge, they say, has been learning how to separate personal differences from business decisions and find common ground when making important choices.

"We don't always agree on everything. But we have learnt that the business has to come first," Ranchobe says.

That ability to navigate differences has become particularly important as the business has expanded from two rented workstations to its own premises.

The founders describe the move into their own shop as one of the significant turning points in the Luxury journey.

Their first premises was a shared space where they operated alongside other businesses, with only two workstations available to them.

Today, Luxury Barbershop has five workstations, a reception area and a dedicated waiting area, a physical representation of how far the business has come since 2023.

The shop currently employs five people, including three additional barbers, an assistant and a receptionist.

On an average day, the business serves approximately 20 customers, giving the operation a steady flow of clientele and demonstrating the demand they have been able to build around the brand.

For the founders, however, growth is not measured only by the number of customers walking through the door.

They have also used the business to develop skills and create opportunities for young people, having trained four young people in barbering.

"It's important for us to create opportunities for other young people. We also started somewhere, so if we can help someone else learn and grow, that is important to us," Pilioane says.

Building a brand through collaboration

The founders also see collaboration as an important part of building a modern brand. Rather than limiting the business to the traditional barbershop model, Luxury has worked with personalities from Lesotho's entertainment, influencer and digital-creator space.

Among the influencers, artists and content creators the barbershop has collaborated with are Mavele The Infinity, Litšepe Lr, TikToker Dumela, Mayeza, Walter Nkopane, DJ Toxique, Chris Theko, Ceejaydamafia and Keshy.

For the founders, such collaborations have provided an opportunity to increase the brand's visibility while connecting Luxury with audiences beyond its physical location.

The collaborations also reflect the changing nature of branding, where businesses increasingly use relationships with creatives and public figures to build awareness and establish themselves within popular culture.

The founders say working with creatives has been an important component of their growth strategy.

That approach is also reflected in the name Luxury.

The founders say the name was chosen to communicate more than simply a place where customers come to have their hair cut. It represents the experience they want customers to associate with the brand.

From the physical environment to customer service and the quality of the work, the intention has been to create an experience that feels different from an ordinary barbershop.

But the journey has not been without its challenges.

Building a business without significant initial capital required the founders to be resourceful, while the transition from a shared space to their own premises brought new responsibilities and financial pressures.

Their experience has also taught them that entrepreneurship requires more than technical skills.

"You learn as you go," Ranchobe says. "There are things you only understand once you are actually running the business."

Although the founders have chosen not to disclose the value of their biggest investment in Luxury Barbershop, their progression illustrates the gradual reinvestment that has taken place since the business began.

From two rented workstations, they now have a five-station operation of their own and a team of five employees.And they are not stopping there.

Luxury Barbershop currently operates from one location, but the founders have set their sights on opening two additional locations within the next five years.

For Ranchobe and Pilioane, the ambition is therefore to transform Luxury from a successful single-location barbershop into a broader brand capable of creating more employment and opportunities for young Basotho.

Looking back at where they started, the founders say the journey has reinforced the value of starting small, remaining consistent and being willing to learn.

What began in March 2023 without actual start-up capital is now a business serving approximately 20 customers a day, employing five people and having trained four young people.

The next chapter will be about whether the two entrepreneurs can replicate that growth beyond their first location.

For now, however, Luxury Barbershop's story remains a reminder that entrepreneurship does not always begin with deep pockets or perfect conditions.

Sometimes, it begins with two workstations, two people and a decision to start.

Locally developed Christian game goes international

Chris Theko

A gospel music podcast in Maseru has become the unlikely starting point for a gaming project now reaching players and testers across several countries.

Created by Lesotho-born creator and digital media practitioner Seipati Motlatla in 2025, Crescendo came into being while Motlatla was looking for a game to play during an episode of her gospel music podcast, Rhythm Convos, which she started in May that year.

The physical version of game has been tested by YADAH ACAPPELLA in the Philippines, and by a group of friends in Manila, while the digital version has been played by people within Motlatla's network.

The project has already reached testers in Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana, Argentina and the Philippines.

"Why don't I just make a game of our own?" Motlatla recalls thinking.

She initially began developing a digital game before deciding, about a week later, to create a physical board game as well. What began as something fun for the podcast eventually developed into Crescendo, a gospel music game available in both physical and digital formats.

The project is centred on Christian music, its history, knowledge and the educational experience that comes from engaging with music.

"Christian music carries so much history, culture, theology, memory and storytelling, and I wanted the game to create a space where people could discover and test what they know while having fun together," she said.

Motlatla says Crescendo is designed to make Christian music interactive, allowing players to learn about songs and artists, test their knowledge and create conversations with friends, family, church members and young people.

"Crescendo is basically my way of saying: Christian music can be educational, social, competitive and fun at the same time," she said.

Motlatla did not initially set out to fill a gap in Christian gaming. Instead, she wanted to create something rooted in Christian music and gospel culture that was genuinely enjoyable.

As development progressed, however, she began seeing possibilities beyond Rhythm Convos, particularly because of her interest in digital evangelism.

"That was the moment I thought, 'Okay, this could actually be something,'" she said.

The project began evolving into an interactive Christian experience that could reach people who may not necessarily engage with traditional forms of Christian media.

"That's when Crescendo started feeling less like a side project and more like a real creative platform," said Motlatla.

For Motlatla, gaming can also be a ministry tool without making players feel as though they are being preached at.

"Gaming can create relationships. Gaming can create conversations. Gaming can teach. Gaming can bring people together," she said.

As the founder, creator and designer, Motlatla has handled much of Crescendo's development herself, from concept development and game design to testing, branding and refinement.

She says one of the biggest challenges has been building the project without a large team or established infrastructure.

"You learn very quickly that having an idea is the easy part. Turning the idea into something functional, playable and presentable is where the real work is," she said.

She admits she nearly abandoned the project at one point but decided she could not start something without finishing it.

"I almost gave up at some point, but I had to now remember that I can't start and not finish. So I kept going," she mentioned.

The experience has taught her patience and the importance of testing and improving the game rather than expecting the first version to be perfect.

The physical version of Crescendo has been tested by YADAH ACAPPELLA in the Philippines and by a group of friends in Manila, while the digital version has been played by people within Motlatla's network.

The project has reached testers in Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana, Argentina and the Philippines.

"Having people in different countries interact with something that started as a random thought for my podcast has been so surreal," she said.

Testing has also shown Motlatla that creators cannot always predict how audiences will experience their work.

"One of the biggest things players have taught me is that the creator is not always the best judge of the experience," she said.

Feedback has helped her improve instructions, gameplay and understand what players actually enjoy.

Despite its international ambitions, Motlatla says Crescendo must retain the story of where it originated.

"I don't want Crescendo to become an international project by losing the story of where it came from," said Motlatla.

She wants the game to reach audiences globally while remaining connected to its roots as an idea created by a young Mosotho woman.

The game features music from different parts of the world, reflecting her vision of unity in Christian diversity.

"Music will always unite us," she stated.

For Motlatla, representation is not simply about entering existing spaces but creating something of her own and allowing people to discover where she comes from through her work.

Motlatla sees Crescendo eventually becoming a commercial gaming brand, with the physical and digital versions expanding into different formats.

She also hopes to build a global Christian gaming community around the project, with Crescendo potentially being played in churches, youth groups, Christian schools, music ministries, families, universities and camps.

"Yes, I want Crescendo to be a successful brand. But more than that, I want it to become a space where Christian creativity feels exciting and global."

For now, the project remains in development and testing. What began as an attempt to create a game for a gospel music podcast has become an ambitious project connecting Christian music, gaming, faith and community across borders.

"I don't know exactly how far God intends to take Crescendo. I just know I want to be faithful with the idea He gave me."

New faces, old issues as PLMC belatedly holds AGM

Seabata Mahao

The Premier League Management Committee (PLMC) will convene its long-delayed Annual General Meeting (AGM) tonight under a new-look executive, following key member departures and the controversial manner of their replacements, which has drawn sharp criticism from some clubs.

The PLMC re-shuffle adds a layer of intrigue to a gathering that was always going to set the tone for Lesotho's top-flight football heading into a new campaign.

The AGM, previously postponed, will now take place on 21 August 2026, at 18:00 at the Bambatha Tšita Sports Arena. A memo dated 13 August confirmed the new date to Premier League clubs, who were instructed to resubmit the names of their representatives by close of business on 18 August.

Each club may be represented by two office bearers: the president or vice-president, and the secretary, general manager or another authorised executive member, provided the latter carries a written proxy from the club president.

On August 5, the PLMC informed clubs that Litsie Nokoane had become Chairperson of the Premier League "with immediate effect," replacing Hlompho Maitin after Lioli FC withdrew Maitin.

In protest, Bantu FC withdrew its PLMC representative Moruti Sekokotoana, who was serving as the deputy chairperson in the PLMC.

Whatever the outcome tonight, the reshuffled committee's first major test comes at a sensitive time. The meeting arrives just a day before the 2026/27 Vodacom Premier League season kicks off, meaning boardroom politics will share the spotlight with genuine title-race intrigue on the pitch.

The 2026/27 season bursts into life on Saturday, with defending champions Lijabatho beginning their title defence against newly promoted Mzamane at Bambatha Sports Arena. The champions are expected to start as favourites, but Mzamane will see the fixture as a chance to announce themselves in the elite division.

Lijabatho have used the pre-season to prepare for a demanding campaign, including a high-intensity training trip to Botswana last week, with one eye on their CAF Champions League debut in September against Madagascar's CFFA.

One of Saturday's biggest attractions is the heavyweight meeting between Lioli and the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) at the SexophoneThejane Technical Centre in Maputsoe. Lioli endured a disappointing campaign last season, failing to retain the league title before losing the Alliance Challenge crown to Matlama, and now begin a new chapter under coach Blessing "Bro B" Moyo.

LDF, meanwhile, have strengthened their squad with recruits who recently completed army training, including former Lioli players LelumaPosholi and MphaleMphalaole, Lijabatho striker KhaketlaMatamane and former LCS goalkeeper Mosoeu Seahlolo.

Also at the SexophoneThejane Technical Centre, Linare face LMPS. Linare remain under coach JabulaniMendu, entering his second season after a campaign that fell short of expectations despite a major squad overhaul. LMPS, who finished 10th last season, will target improvement under new coach Masupha Letsie, having added midfielder Thabo Mats'oele from Linare and possibly welcoming back RaboamaKoloti.

Lifofane return with renewed ambition after finishing second and winning the Most Improved Team award, bolstering their squad with South African-based signings striker Thato Monaba and defender KgotsoMoleko. LU FC will hope home advantage aids a positive start under new coach Letlatsa Mampe.

At Bambatha, Manonyane face a well-organised Bantu side, who completed their recruitment early and added forward BakuenaRamakatsa, recently returned from Ventura County Fusion in the United States. For Manonyane, the fixture is an early chance to move away from the relegation battles of recent seasons.

Machokha host LCS at Bambatha on Sunday after an aggressive recruitment drive that brought in Rethabile Rasethuntsa, Kotelo Kgotlello, Molapo Johannes, MoqolisiMothae and MorapeliLesoetsa. LCS begin a new era under coach SidwellMothea following a difficult campaign.

In Mohale's Hoek, Majantja host newly promoted Villa FC at the Russell Sebatana Technical Centre, looking to build on an impressive prior season, while Villa aim to prove they belong among Lesotho's elite.

The weekend concludes at the LCS Ground, where Members host Matlama. Matlama arrive with confidence after winning the Alliance Challenge and will again be expected to challenge for major honours, while Members, under new coach KatisoMojakhomo, look to frustrate one of the league's traditional heavyweights.

The first battle is on the pitch on Saturday. Tonight, though, it's the PLMC's new leadership that faces its opening fixture, in the boardroom.

M100k boost for basketball tournament

Seabata Mahao

Maluti Mountain Cement (MMC) has injected M100 000 into the Lesotho Basketball Association (LBA) International Basketball Tournament, giving a major boost to the return of high-level basketball competition to the Mountain Kingdom.

The tournament is scheduled for 4-6 September, 2026 at Lehakoe Recreational Centre, where national teams from Botswana and Eswatini, alongside provincial clubs from South Africa, are expected to compete in both the men's and women's categories. Matches will be played on the centre's indoor and outdoor courts.

The LBA welcomed MMC's sponsorship, describing it as an investment not only in the tournament but also in the development of local athletes and the promotion of Lesotho on the international sporting stage.

"Your support is more than just sponsorship, it is an investment in the growth of basketball, the development of our athletes and the promotion of Lesotho on the international sporting stage," the association said.

The M100 000 contribution will help the LBA meet key tournament costs, including venue hire and prize money, while also assisting with logistical requirements for participating national teams, such as meals.

LBA president MolupeRatšolo said bringing international tournaments back to Lesotho was one of the commitments the current leadership made when it took office.

"We are happy LSRC helped us with our applications, we thank the MMC and we are going to have a beautiful tournament," Ratšolo said.

He said the success of last year's tournament had given the association confidence to build an even stronger competition.

"We are always going to other countries thinking we cannot host tournaments like this. We hosted it last year and we saw the work we did and we are going to build on that," he said.

For the LBA, the tournament is about more than competition. Ratšolo said exposing local players to stronger opposition would help raise the standard of basketball in Lesotho, while giving younger players role models to emulate.

"Our wish is to have high-level competition and be able to compete with other countries. It helps that young players see their seniors on the stage and are encouraged that they can start from primary schools to build their sport," he said.

Botswana, which won last year's tournament, is expected to return to defend its title, while the LBA is awaiting confirmation from other invited teams.

MMC Sales and Marketing Manager MakoaSemethe said the company's support reflected its belief that basketball and other sporting codes should receive greater corporate backing.

"Basketball and other sporting codes deserve the same support traditionally given to football," Semethe said.

He pointed to MMC's previous support for other sporting disciplines as evidence of the company's broader commitment to sport.

"We have supported volleyball in the past in Thaba-Bosiu, we have also helped rugby, so it is our wish that other sporting codes grow as well," he said.

The LBA expressed its gratitude to MMC for joining the tournament as a sponsor, saying the partnership would help create an event filled with "big basketball, big energy and big moments."

The association said the partnership was also about creating a lasting sporting legacy for Lesotho.

"Together, we are building more than just a tournament, we are building a legacy with our most trusted cement in the country," he said.

Maluti Mountain Cement (MMC) has injected M100 000 into the Lesotho Basketball Association (LBA) International Basketball Tournament

LeFA eases financial squeeze on PL clubs

Seabata Mahao

The Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) has moved to ease the financial burden facing Premier League clubs ahead of the 2026/27 season, acknowledging the growing costs associated with running top-flight football teams.

The intervention was tabled by LeFA President LijaneNthunya during a special meeting of the LeFA Executive Committee held last week.

According to LeFA, the initiative is aimed at assisting clubs facing mounting expenses related to travel, player welfare and day-to-day operations.

Nthunya told members that the association has allocated funds to support Premier League clubs during the upcoming season. However, the exact amounts to be disbursed to individual clubs, as well as the distribution model, are still being finalised.

LeFA President Lijane Nthunya

The move comes as LeFA continues its engagement with FIFA in an effort to secure broader financial assistance that could benefit clubs across all divisions of Lesotho football.

"We are starting with the Premier League because the needs there are immediate," Nthunya said.

"Once we receive feedback from FIFA, we will be in a position to assist more clubs across the football pyramid."

LeFA Communications Manager Mikia Kalati confirmed the association's position, saying the intervention forms part of efforts to support clubs and strengthen the sustainability of domestic football.

The financial challenges facing clubs have remained a major concern in Lesotho football, with teams required to meet substantial costs covering transportation, player-related expenses, technical staff and other operational needs throughout the season.

The latest intervention is therefore expected to provide some relief to Premier League teams as they prepare for the 2026/27 campaign.

LeFA said further details regarding the amounts and disbursement arrangements will be communicated to clubs and other stakeholders once final discussions have been concluded.

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Lesotho beach volleyball ladies storm continental tournament

Lesotho's ladies Beach Volleyball team

Seabata Mahao

Lesotho's ladies Beach Volleyball team has qualified for the next round of the CAVB 2026 Beach Volleyball Continental Senior Championships after defeating Burundi 2-0 in a tough encounter on Thursday this week.

The team's remarkable breakthrough came after two wins and a loss in the group stages of the competition currently ongoing in Egypt from 18–22 August 2026.

After initially suffering a 2-0 defeat against Morocco in their opening match, team Lesotho, comprising Neo Chapole and Moroesi Tolofi bounced back in impressive fashion by first defeating Benin 2–1, and then defeating Burundi 2-0.

Chapole and Tolofi showed renewed determination against both Benin and Burundi, battling to secure their first and second wins of the continental tournament.

The result is an important confidence boost for the Lesotho duo as they continue their campaign against some of Africa's leading beach volleyball teams. With Olympic qualification at stake, every match represents an opportunity for the Basotho pair to strengthen their bid for a place at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

Lesotho's participation in the championship is already a historic achievement, with the country making its first appearance at such a high level in Beach Volleyball.

The team earned its place in the Olympic qualifying competition after finishing second in qualifiers held in Mozambique in early July. Three qualification places were available, and Lesotho secured one of them.

The team is coached by Moholo Lekomola, while 'Maleteketoa Sekhonyana serves as Team Manager.

The Lesotho Volleyball Association (LVA) has described the competition as a major milestone for the country, with Olympic qualification offering an opportunity to raise the profile of Basotho volleyball on the international stage.

The tournament, being held in Egypt from 18–22 August 2026, brings together leading beach volleyball teams from across the continent. For Lesotho, the mission is clear: compete strongly, build on the victory over Benin and remain in contention for a historic Olympic qualification.

Following their historic qualification to the next round, Chapole and Tolofi will now look to carry the momentum into their remaining matches as they continue their pursuit of continental success and a coveted ticket to LA2028.