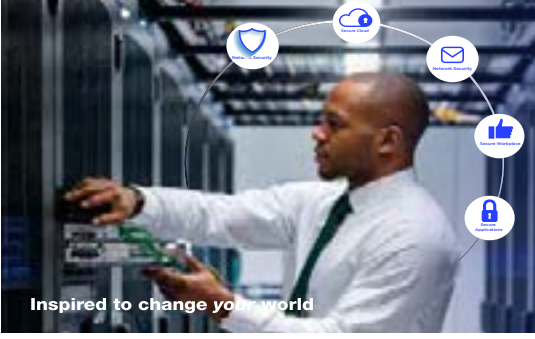


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Lesotho's harsh AI reality check

• New Commonwealth study ranks Lesotho second last among 56 countries

Lerato Matheka

Lesotho's ambitions to position itself in the rapidly expanding artificial intelligence (AI) economy have come under scrutiny after a major Commonwealth study ranked the country second last in youth AI readiness, exposing deep inequalities in employment opportunities, digital skills, and access to essential technological infrastructure.

The 2026 Commonwealth Youth AI Readiness Index, a study released yesterday 5, by the Ayre Think Tank during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Antigua and Barbuda, places Lesotho 55th out of 56 Commonwealth countries, with a score of just 27.8 out of 100 against the study's readiness benchmark of 53.

Only Malawi, ranked 56th with 26.3 points, performed worse.

Drawing on 1,128 research sources, the study examines conditions affecting approximately 732 million young people across the Commonwealth, assessing their ability to participate in and benefit from the growing AI economy.

The study found that for Lesotho, the most troubling issue is employment and enterprise opportunities. The country scored just 2.5 out of 10 for decent work, enterprise and transitions, the lowest result among all 56 countries surveyed.

The study said researchers identified high youth unemployment, prolonged job searches, widespread informal employment, and limited access to apprenticeships and work-based training as major barriers preventing young Basotho from benefiting from technological advancement.

It also identified digital exclusion as a significant obstacle.

According to its findings, electricity reaches only 60.6 per cent of Lesotho's population, while purchasing five gigabytes of mobile data costs nearly a quarter of the average income of the poorest 40 per cent.

Lesotho also scored 0.9 out of 10 for digital capability, although researchers acknowledged that this assessment relied on older evidence of conventional computer skills.

The study found insufficient evidence to determine how widely young people currently use AI technologies.

These findings emerge against a backdrop of growing government commitments to digital transformation and AI development.

In its 2026/27 national budget, the government allocated M386.4 million to the Information and Communications Technology sector to support digital transformation, infrastructure development and access to modern technological services.





The allocation covers broader ICT priorities, which it interprets as a dedicated AI investment budget.

In August 2026, Lesotho published its Artificial Intelligence Policy and Implementation Plan and hosted a five-day national AI strategy and data centre workshop in collaboration with United Nations agencies.

The country subsequently became the first to pilot the United Nations Blueprint for National AI and Data Strategies, an initiative intended to help governments translate digital ambitions into practical infrastructure and investment decisions.

Speaking at the United Nations in September, Prime Minister Samuel Matekane announced that Lesotho had begun implementing the first phase of its National Compute Roadmap, covering 2026 to 2029.

"Every investment in digital infrastructure must be justified by tangible improvements in people's lives, whether in agriculture, health, education, water or public service," Matekane said.

The Commonwealth findings place renewed attention on how these policy commitments will translate into affordable connectivity, employment and meaningful economic participation for young Basotho.

The study acknowledges government efforts, including the June 2026 launch of practical AI training under the Sebabatso youth empowerment initiative, which seeks to equip young entrepreneurs with AI skills to improve marketing, reach international customers and expand their businesses, supported by the United States Embassy and American Corner.

However, the study highlights the broader economic and infrastructural conditions that could limit the benefits of such initiatives.

Calvin Ayre, founder of the Ayre Think Tank, warned that technological advancement alone would not guarantee economic inclusion.

"AI is going to change how we work, how we do business and how wealth is created. But this is not a race that only the biggest or richest countries can win. What matters is giving young people the skills and the chance to get ahead, whether to start businesses, find jobs or build something for themselves."

He added: "Governments now have to decide what they're going to do about it."

Despite Lesotho's weak readiness position, researchers estimate that AI could make the country's economy USD37 million larger after ten years under a moderate scenario, with illustrative estimates ranging from USD18 million to USD57 million.

Professor C. Justin Robinson, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal of the University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus, emphasised the importance of enabling young people to participate in developing technology rather than merely consuming it.

"We need to make sure that the next generation will be able to do more than just consume AI products made elsewhere. Access must come with its own agency and a real equitable stake in how these systems are governed."

Public interviews to decide who tackles High Court case backlog

Lekhetho Makhanya

The High Court is moving closer to getting new judges, as the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) works to fill eight vacancies in a court struggling with a persistent backlog of cases.

The JSC will interview 14 shortlisted candidates on 23 and 24 November 2026. In line with the principle of transparency, the interviews will be open to the public. The venue has not yet been announced.

The process has moved steadily. The Commission advertised the eight puisne judge posts on 19 August 2026 and received 20 applications and nominations. At its 351st meeting on 29 October, it shortlisted 14 candidates. The JSC is the constitutional body responsible for appointing, promoting, disciplining and removing judicial officers.

If all posts are filled, the bench will grow significantly. The High Court has 13 substantive judges, including Chief Justice Sakoane Sakoane. Justice 'Maseforo Mahase, who is not among them, remains suspended and is in a protracted legal battle over her position.

Eight appointments would lift the bench to 21. Five judges would serve in the Main Division in Maseru, two in the Northern Division in Leribe and one in the Southern Division in Mohale's Hoek.

Five shortlisted candidates already sit as acting justices: Lesaoana, Rantara, Putsoane, Malebanye and Motebele. The Chief Justice appointed them in September 2025 to help ease the backlog. Their presence on the list suggests the JSC is weighing proven experience. It also means that if all five are appointed, the number of judges on the bench would rise by three, not eight, because the five are already serving in an acting capacity.

The figures show why the pressure is growing. Reporting on last year's performance, Sakoane said the Main Division registered 1,474 cases and completed 1,090, with 563 in allocation. The Northern Division registered 525 and completed 293. Across the courts covered, 2,704 cases were registered and 2,139 completed. When a court finishes fewer cases than it receives, the pile keeps growing.

The Commercial Division offers a counterpoint. It registered 612 cases and completed 718, which shows that backlogs can shrink when output exceeds intake. More judges, especially in the Main and Northern divisions, are the most direct way to achieve that.

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.

His remarks suggest that new appointments are only part of the answer. Without strong case management, additional judges may not shorten waiting times for litigants.

At the opening of the judicial year, Sakoane also stressed that "Judicial independence and accountability are non-negotiable." He said judges must be able to decide cases free from political pressure, economic influence and popular sentiment. Public interviews and a transparent process can strengthen confidence that appointees are chosen on merit.

The coming interviews are therefore a test of both speed and credibility. Once appointed and sworn in, the new judges are expected to strengthen the judiciary's capacity and help the courts decide pending cases more quickly.

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When real men show up

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Men in Linakeng, in Thaba-Tseka District, and surrounding areas have pledged to challenge gender-based violence (GBV), support family planning and oppose child marriage.

They acknowledged that men must take responsibility for the harm caused in families and communities. The commitments followed a three-day male engagement supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Participants discussed mental health, relationships, sexual and reproductive health, and healthy masculinity.

The men spoke openly about challenges including mental health, extramarital relationships and violence in the home. They welcomed information about family planning, saying the current economic situation makes it important for families to plan how many children they can support.

Thaba-Tseka has some of the country's most serious problems with teenage pregnancy and child marriage. According to the Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey, the district has the highest rate of teenage childbearing in the country, at 32%, compared with 12% in Leribe.

It also has the highest rate of forced child marriage, at 22%, which is often linked to teenage pregnancy.

Participants pledged to reject abuse in all its forms. They also promised to form support groups where men can discuss family planning and healthy masculinity with their peers, including men at animal posts.

Pii Lelaka said men recognise that they can be a source of problems in their families. He linked extramarital relationships to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and spoke about the effects of abuse on children.

"We abuse our families and make angry children who grow up in anger," he said.

He added that some women are afraid to tell their partners that they are using family planning.

UNFPA acting Resident Representative Motšelisi Phakisi commended the men for speaking openly about their challenges and frustrations. Thai Makhele, Deputy Principal Secretary at the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, challenged them to consider how they could restore men's dignity in their own lives and within their families.

Mosito Mokhabi said men can help restore trust by being present and responsible in their families.

"We are going to restore the dignity of men by living in our families. We will see to it that even children trust us," he said.

Fusi Khalala said family planning helps families decide how many children they can provide for. He said a lack of support from a partner could leave women feeling abandoned.

"We need to be supportive in our families and sing a song that men are now to be trusted," he said.

Motlalepula Nyakane said decisions about family planning should be made by both partners. He pledged to accompany his wife to a health centre. He added that men's reluctance to visit health facilities does not help families, and that he had learned about the importance of using contraceptives during sex with a partner.

"I will have to take responsibility to accompany my wife to the health centre so that she should not say that I have abandoned her and not say she has made the child alone," he said.

Tsotleho Fako said what he learned about HIV and AIDS had strengthened his understanding, and that he is now sharing the information with others. He said men need to support family planning and stop abusing children.

Masilo Hele also stressed the importance of family planning in the current economic circumstances. He said people have the right to be tested for STIs, and warned against stopping medication or avoiding health facilities for testing.

On child marriage, participants said they had learned that it is wrong, and pledged to report cases to the police. Tselohelo said participants were now aware of this. Nokoane Phatšoane acknowledged that child marriage exists in Linakeng and said men must work together to end it.

"We are going to report it to the police, and it is also good that we unite against it as men in this area," he said.

Hele raised concerns about underage children attending initiation school and committing offences after returning. Health Minister 'Mamokete Ntšekhe, who is also the MP for Mphosong, said she reports cases of child marriage to the police and works with the chief and councillor to address the practice.

Semena MP Tšepo Mosotho challenged men to question social expectations that label supportive men as having been "pacified". He urged them not to stop taking prescribed medication and said that caring for a family and making plans together are signs of responsibility.

"Go to our respective communities and be a salt that will season other males," he said.

Mashai MP Sekhele Mosebetsane said the engagement offers hope for change in the Mashai constituencies.

"Everyone is a leader. A person is a leader in their respective capacities, from the herders who take care of our livestock. It says if your conscience tells you that a thing is wrong, leave it," he said.

Rahlao Rahlao, the men's health focal person at the Thaba-Tseka District Health Management Team and one of the facilitators, said he was concerned that few men visit health facilities. He said men's preference for unprotected sex puts their partners at risk of STIs. However, he was encouraged that participants had learned that STIs can affect a pregnancy and expose an unborn child to infection. He urged men to stand against child marriage.

Dr 'Mamotena Sekhobe, from the Family Health Division at the Ministry of Health, commended the men who committed to becoming champions of family planning and restoring dignity in their families.

Phakisi said UNFPA was encouraged that mature men attended and could share what they learned with their sons.

"We are particularly encouraged as UNFPA that matured men could come to this male engagement to teach their sons and engage meaningfully with them to tell them that they should not abuse girls and hurt them with the lure that they love them," she said.

She urged young men to wait until girls have completed school and are older before marrying them. She also encouraged men to space their children to avoid placing an unreasonable economic burden on families.

Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development Pitso Lesaoana said the Government prioritises education through free primary and secondary schooling. He added that the Ministry of Social Development supports double-orphaned children and those whose parents cannot provide for them. He urged parents to make sure their children complete school, warning that failing to do so can perpetuate poverty.

Lesaoana said young men should ideally attend initiation school after completing high school, when they have reached at least 18 years of age.

The Protection and Administration of Custom at Initiation School Bill, 2022, is under development. If passed, it is intended to introduce legal safeguards, prevent initiates from being forced out of school and ensure that no child under 18 is initiated.



Why PSs keep chairing state boards, and why it matters



The Prime Minister of Lesotho, Samuela Ntsokoane Matekane



Minister Mputi Stephen Mputi

Bereng Mpaki and Seabata Mahao

Tourism Minister Mputi Steven Mputi recently introduced his own Principal Secretary (PS), Thabo Moleko, as the new chairperson of the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC) board.

He said they had worked together for a long time and called Moleko a hard worker.

What he did not say is that the appointment continues a practice that has run through Lesotho's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) for decades. It is often cited as one of the reasons many of them struggle or fail.

The practice is simple. The PS of the ministry that supervises a parastatal becomes chairperson of its board. The concern is not about Moleko as a person. It is about the arrangement, which puts a civil servant who answers to the executive in charge of a corporation that should answer to its mandate. It is also happening in 2026, months after government promised to end it.

Conflicted by design

A serving PS is conflicted by design. Recent changes to the recruitment of PSs under the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution Act have not changed who they report to: the Government Secretary, who is appointed by the Prime Minister. A PS who chairs a board may therefore feel pressed to put the wishes of political superiors ahead of the corporation's commercial interests, especially when the two clash.

The Mohlomi Corporate Governance Code, developed by the Institute of Directors of Lesotho (IoD Lesotho), says SOE board chairpersons should be appointed independently and not through political connection.

Launched in 2021, it has 22 key principles in six clusters, including board leadership, audit, risk, digital governance and sustainability reporting. Its advice goes against the old norm of PSs chairing parastatal boards. The code is direct about this:

"The concept of independent chairperson is foreign to most organisations in Lesotho. Principal Secretaries are automatically appointed to serve as board chairpersons of many SOEs. The majority shareholder appoints or assumes the chairpersonship of organisations by virtue of having controlling stake and more votes.

"Principal Secretaries are appointed on the basis of their political affiliations to be chief accounting officers of government ministries. Anyone who has a political connection can be appointed as a principal secretary but this does not make him or her suitable to serve as a board member, let alone as a chairperson of the board of an SOE," the code reads in part.

The IoD Lesotho has also urged government to stop appointing people to key SOE positions on political affiliation and to consider merit instead.

International practice points the same way. The Organisation for Economic and Cooperation and Devevelopment (OECD) guidelines on SOE governance say the state should be an informed owner but stay out of day-to-day management. South Africa's King Codes stress an independent, non-executive chair. Singapore and Norway, which the Deputy Prime Minister cited when she opened the Africa SOE Corporate Governance Summit in Maseru in August, keep ministers and serving officials at arm's length from SOE boards.

Big promises, little change

The strongest backing for the code came from the top. Addressing an IoD Lesotho conference in May 2026, Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane said his government fully endorses it.

"The Government of Lesotho through the Cabinet formally endorses the Mohlomi Code of Corporate Governance as the reference standard for governance conduct across public institutions, State-Owned Enterprises, Government-linked entities, and the broader corporate sector. We do not merely commend the Mohlomi Code and the Institute of Directors - we commit to its adoption, its operationalisation, and its institutionalisation within the machinery of the state," Matekane said.

He promised to build the code's principles into the governance mandates and performance frameworks of every SOE and public entity. He also promised to make them a core pillar of the National Strategic Development Plan, so that good governance drives development and is not just a box to tick.

Finally, he promised to build accountability, transparency and responsibility to stakeholders into the conduct frameworks of public servants, from Cabinet ministers to frontline civil servants.

At the August summit, government itself named depoliticising SOE boards, with emphasis on competence and professionalism, as one of its reform pillars. Yet the Moleko appointment shows that, on the ground, little has changed.

Chaka Nkofo, a corporate governance expert and a Quality Assurance Committee member of the Mohlomi Code Committee, said appointing PSs to chair SOE boards has been a common governance misstep for many state entities over the years in Lesotho.

"It is not only Minister Mputi who got it wrong, it has been done wrongly against best practice for many years in the past in Lesotho," Nkofo said.

He said the Prime Minister's endorsement of the code makes it government policy, which must now be put into practice in public departments if Lesotho is to achieve the governance transformation it needs.

Not an isolated case

Moleko is not an exception. The Ministry of Trade's PS, Palesa Matobako, chairs the board of the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC), while her deputy chairs the Basotho Enterprise Development Corporation (BEDCO) board.

Nthoateng Lebona, the PS of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, chairs the board of trustees of the Public Officers Defined Contribution Pension Fund (PODCPF).

The PODCPF shows what can go wrong. A 2025 report by Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) exposed governance challenges at the fund. It said Lebona failed to submit required regulatory documents to the Central Bank of Lesotho on time. The PAC said:

"It is mandatory for all trustees to get a clearance through a fit and proper assessment which is conducted by the Central Bank Of Lesotho as the regulator, however evidence suggests that the Chairperson has failed to submit necessary documents before the deadline, and she has also failed to submit even when the period was extended, however all the other members had complied with this requirement.

"This non-compliance undermines the Fund's legality and affects the legitimacy and credibility of the decision-making of the Board," PAC said.

The committee recommended that the PODCPF Act be amended to allow alternative representation of statutory or employer trustees, such as the Chairperson or the Accountant General, if office holders fail to meet the legal fit and proper requirements.

It can be done

Not every entity follows this habit. After reviewing their founding legislation, some state entities have kept PSs off their boards. They include the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC), Water and Sewerage Company (WASCO), Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL), the Lesotho Communications Authority (LCA) and Lesotho Water and Electricity (LEWA). This shows that independent leadership is possible in Lesotho.

Finance Minister Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane told Parliament in December 2025 that Cabinet had resolved to audit all SOEs to decide which can be restructured and which should be shut down. She also admitted that some SOEs have grown while others have shrunk and collapsed.

In June, she said boards made up largely of government officials and ministerial appointees tend to lack independence, objectivity, industry knowledge and specialised skills. Her colleague Minister Mputi is now making exactly the appointment she criticised.

Research reaches the same conclusion. A review of Lesotho SOEs found poor governance, including breaches of the Public Financial Management Act and failures to submit audited financial results.

Still no national SOE policy

The deeper problem is that Lesotho has never finished the policy framework that would end these appointments. The World Bank's country policy note pointed to fiscal implications and corporate governance shortcomings in the SOE sector.

In 2018, then-Finance Minister Moeketsi Majoro, later Prime Minister, launched a reform project with UK consultants Unicon. It aimed to develop a national SOE policy setting out government's ownership objectives, with clear accountability and reporting lines, as well as a national corporate governance code. Eight years later, there is still no comprehensive SOE policy.

The International Monetary Fund's 2025 Article IV consultation says SOEs continue to suffer chronic governance and efficiency shortcomings that undermine fiscal sustainability. The Fund has also warned of fiscal risks from loans and guarantees issued to SOEs. Taxpayers carry those risks.


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Lesotho Targets Textile, Leather and Footwear Industries Under New WTO-Linked Trade Programme

Lerato Matheka

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND— Lesotho is preparing a new phase of trade development assistance targeting its textile and apparel, leather and footwear industries, as the country seeks to expand productive capacity, strengthen domestic value chains and improve its participation in regional and international markets.

The country's Minister of Trade, Industry and Business Development, Motlatsi Maqelepo, outlined the proposed programme during the 10th Global Review of Aid for Trade at the World Trade Organization (WTO) headquarters in Geneva, where he presented Lesotho's experience alongside trade development initiatives implemented across African, Caribbean and Pacific economies.

The proposed programme falls under Phase Three of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), a multilateral partnership supporting the trade development of least-developed countries through institutional strengthening, policy development and investment in productive sectors.

Maqelepo said Lesotho was advancing its country programme development proposal, which would prioritise upgrading the textile and apparel, leather and footwear value chains.

Addressing the gathering as Lesotho's trade minister and a ministerial coordinator for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group, Maqelepo said the effectiveness of international trade assistance should be measured by the economic opportunities it creates for businesses and communities.

"For the ACP Group, Aid for Trade is turning market access into livelihoods, or should I say, it should turn market access into livelihoods, especially for women, young people, small and medium enterprises," he said.

Referring to the nearly USD800 billion disbursed globally under Aid for Trade between 2006 and 2024, the minister said the investment's significance lay in its ability to strengthen enterprises.

"The test is how that support helps businesses produce, compete and reach markets," Maqelepo said.

His presentation formed part of discussions following the launch of the joint WTO and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, Two Decades of Trade and Development Partnerships: Trends and Impact of the Aid for Trade Initiative.

The report examines how international assistance has supported trade infrastructure, productive capacity, institutional reforms and market access over the past two decades, while identifying persistent challenges affecting poorer economies.

Presenting Lesotho's experience, Maqelepo said EIF supported 572 farmers through greenhouse production training and installed five greenhouse technology packages, with women and young people identified as direct beneficiaries.

He said agricultural produce from the intervention had reached hotels, schools, supermarkets and surrounding communities, helping participating farmers establish connections with buyers.

"These numbers may sound low, but for small economies like Lesotho, they make an impact," the minister said.

"Produce from this programme reaches hotels, schools, supermarkets and communities, helping smallholders connect production with buyers."

He described the intervention as contributing to Lesotho's efforts to develop commercial agriculture and diversify economic activity.

"These are concrete steps towards commercial agriculture and diversification, building a foundation for participation in wider markets," Maqelepo said.

The agricultural initiative was presented as trade development assistance that supports domestic production and market connections, rather than solely financing infrastructure or trade policy reforms.



Lesotho Trade Minister Motlatsi Maqelepo with World Trade Organisation DG, Dr Ngozi Okonjo Iweala

Maqelepo did not provide figures for the total investment in the greenhouse intervention, the value of produce sold or the income generated by participating farmers.

Beyond agriculture, Maqelepo said the second phase of EIF support had contributed to the development of Lesotho's National Trade Policy Framework and national export-related policy work.

He said the experience had demonstrated the importance of connecting national trade policies with the productive capabilities of domestic businesses.

"The experience has demonstrated that sustainable trade development requires not only sound policies, but also stronger productive capacity, improved market access and increased domestic value chains," he said.

The proposed third phase, he said, would focus on strengthening the textile and apparel, leather and footwear industries.

The announcement comes as the Enhanced Integrated Framework enters a new programme cycle aimed at supporting least-developed countries to strengthen their trade institutions and develop productive sectors with export potential.

According to the OECD–WTO report, the EIF has disbursed more than USD340 million since 2008 to support trade ministries, trade diagnostics and productive-sector development across least-developed countries.

The partnership brings together 44 least-developed countries, 26 development partners, and eight international organisations, and its work has included establishing National Implementation Units within trade ministries, supporting Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies, and helping governments incorporate trade priorities into national development strategies.

The report states that 45 least-developed countries have integrated trade into their development strategies, while an independent evaluation attributed approximately one-quarter of trade reforms in those countries to EIF support.

The third phase of the programme, which runs until December 2031, is seeking to mobilise USD200 million for trade development in least-developed countries.

The report records initial funding pledges of USD37.9 million and describes a revised approach to resource mobilisation, project implementation and results measurement.

The minister's presentation took place during a session examining Aid for Trade's contribution to Africa's economic development and regional integration.

Introducing the discussion, the session moderator highlighted the opportunities associated with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which seeks to expand trade among African countries by reducing barriers and strengthening regional economic integration.

The moderator cited projections that the agreement could increase intra-African trade by up to 25% by 2040 and create as many as 30 million jobs.

The OECD–WTO report records that Africa received approximately USD19.8 billion in Aid for Trade disbursements in 2024, making it the largest recipient region ahead of Asia, which received USD18.7 billion.

Despite this financing, African countries still account for about 3% of global merchandise exports and 2% of services exports.

Least-developed countries, including Lesotho, account for around 1% of global merchandise exports.

Maqelepo said investments in economic corridors, customs systems and productive capacity have helped connect smaller enterprises with regional markets and improve access to international ports for landlocked economies.

He referred to improvements in African border-crossing procedures, including projects supported through TradeMark Africa and other development partnerships, which had reduced waiting times and trading costs.

The OECD–WTO report also highlights the Kazungula border crossing between Zambia and Botswana, where a bridge and one-stop border facilities reduced clearance times from as long as seven days to about 16 hours.

The project, supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the African Development Bank, is identified as an example of infrastructure and border-management reforms contributing to regional trade integration.

Maqelepo also presented examples from the Caribbean and Pacific regions to illustrate the impact of trade assistance on agricultural producers, small enterprises and services industries.

In the Caribbean, he cited an initiative supported by the European Union and implemented through the International Trade Centre (ITC), which trained more than 2,000 farmers in the coconut sector across 11 countries.

"Approximately one-quarter of the participating farmers were women, while 13 processors were connected with small-scale producers."

He said partnerships involving producers and cooperatives had mobilised approximately USD40 million in investment commitments; however, he emphasised that investment commitments must be converted into actual implementation to deliver economic benefits.

In the Pacific, the minister highlighted Australia's Market Development Facility, which reported that its work in Fiji had benefited more than 24,000 people and generated over USD45 million in additional income by the end of 2025.

"The programme supported economic activities involving agriculture, tourism, services and small-enterprise development."

Maqelepo also cited the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), as an example of digital technology improving border administration.

He said support for customs modernisation in Pacific economies, including Palau, reduced customs processing times from about one day to one to two hours.

"Across our regions, these experiences show why infrastructure, skills, finance and market connection must work together, and we must expand successful approaches and measure the benefits," Maqelepo said.

Maqelepo's presentation followed opening remarks by WTO Director-General Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who called for a new approach to international trade assistance that places greater emphasis on domestic reforms and developing economies' ability to add value to their products.

Okonjo-Iweala said the USD795 billion disbursed through Aid for Trade over two decades had contributed to infrastructure development, modernised customs systems, regulatory reforms and improved trading capacity.

However, she acknowledged that Africa and the world's least-developed countries had not substantially increased their shares of global trade.

"Nevertheless, despite significant Aid for Trade inflows, the shares of African countries and LDCs in global trade remained stuck around 3% and 1% respectively, though at least they kept pace with global trade growth," she said.

She urged development partners to support reforms that enable poorer economies to move into higher-value production and manufacturing.

"Beneficiary countries need further support with domestic reforms and behind-the-border issues that can unleash value addition to their goods and services and move them increasingly up the production and manufacturing ladder," Okonjo-Iweala said.

"This is how they can measurably increase their shares of global trade."

The Director-General also highlighted the importance of partnerships involving governments, development banks, businesses and other investors to strengthen productive capacity and expand trading opportunities.

NOTICE OF COMPANY DISSOLUTION

The Notice is hereby that **INSTAND CASH SOLUTIONS (PTY) LTD** is being dissolved with the Register of Companies Lesotho. Any objection to this matter should be forwarded to the following address:
REGISTER OF COMPANIES
MASERU
LESOTHO
Contacts: +266-22326647

Time is golden: Thaba-Tseka mothers get care closer to home

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Maternity homes are meant to bring care closer to pregnant women, especially those who live far from health facilities. Distance and delays can put mothers and babies at risk.

This week, the Thaba-Tseka Health Division received new park homes for use as maternity homes. It also received refurbished and furnished maternity homes, as well as equipment donated to Paray Mission Hospital.

The support came from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Vodacom Lesotho Foundation.

UNFPA acting Resident Representative Motšelisi Phakisi said every pregnancy should be wanted and every birth safe. She stressed that women and teenage girls must be able to get care and give birth safely, whatever their circumstances.

"No woman should die giving birth," she said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 700 women died each day in 2023 from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. This is roughly one death every two minutes. WHO says skilled care before, during and after childbirth can save the lives of women and newborns.

In Lesotho, the maternal mortality ratio was estimated at 478 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2023, according to WHO's African regional office. This was down from 529 in 2020 but remained above the sub-Saharan African average of 454 per 100,000 live births.

Health Minister 'Mamokete Ntšekhe said delays in reaching health facilities and getting proper care contribute to maternal deaths.

"In health, time is golden," she said.

Ntšekhe, who is a nurse, praised health workers in Thaba-Tseka for assisting with deliveries despite the challenges they face. She said the new facility would help women who might otherwise be stranded or delayed in seeking care. She also urged nurses to treat every patient with respect.



"Behind every number there is a human being. Behind every statistic is a family. Behind every family there is a community which makes the country," she said.

Ntšekhe also referred to a reported US$30 million (about M498 million) commitment linked to the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. She said it would support improvements in maternal health.

Thaba-Tseka District Medical Officer Dr Joseph Mashale said the maternity facility would serve pregnant women, including those who arrive after 5pm, who were previously sent to Paray Hospital. He said the district faces high rates of teenage pregnancy and child stunting, and welcomed the development of a teenage centre. He stressed that prevention and information are important in tackling health problems.

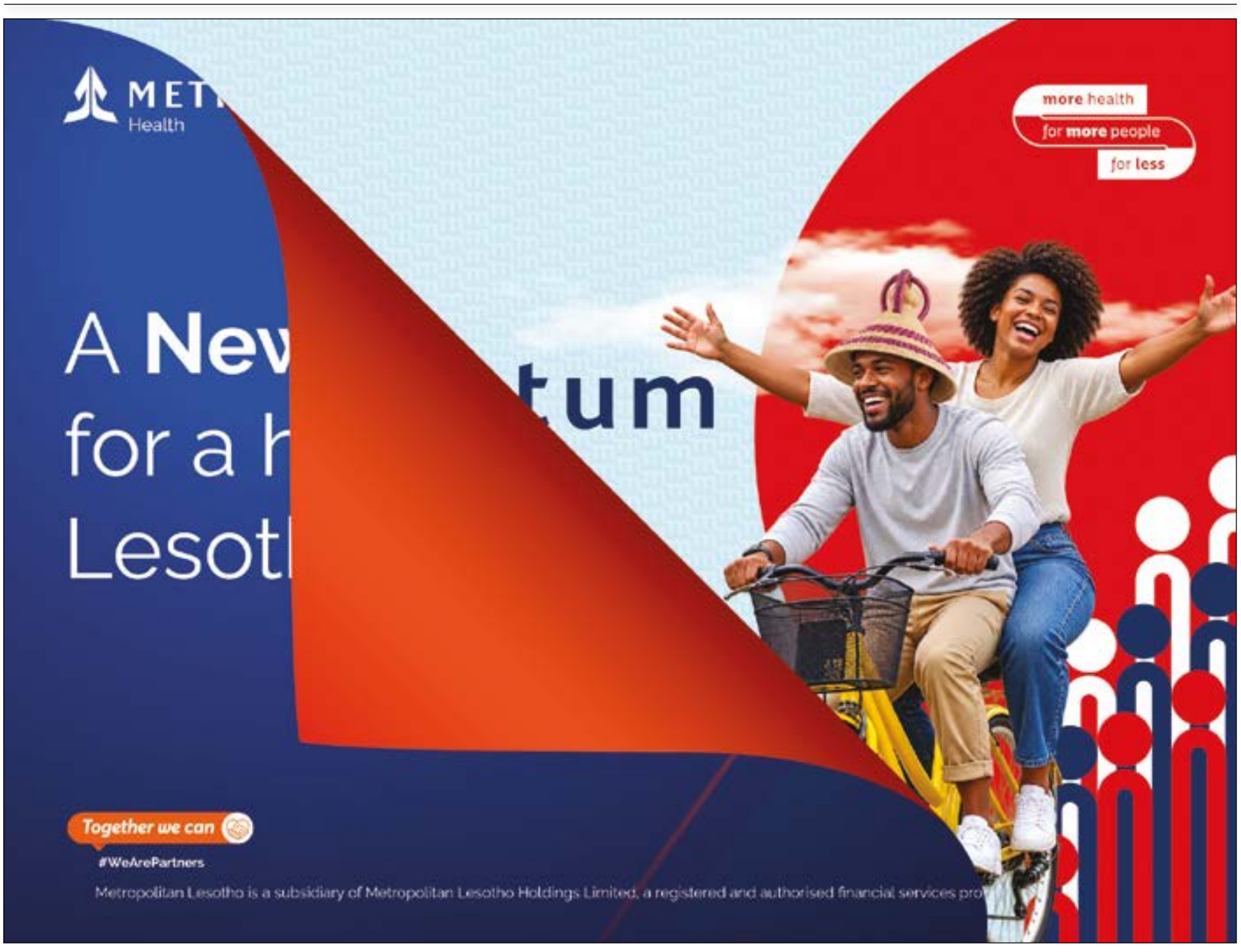
At Paray Mission Hospital, acting Superintendent Dr Andrew Edward Kemikimba said the hospital has 98 beds and receives referrals from nine health facilities. It recorded 183 deliveries in the first quarter and 209 in the second quarter. From January to September, 27 of the deliveries involved teenagers. He also named inadequate shelter accommodation, teenage pregnancy and late arrival for care as challenges.

Government representatives, legislators, development partners and members of the business community voiced concern about the high rate of teenage pregnancy in the district. They urged men to respect young girls and not exploit them. They also condemned intergenerational relationships, in which older men lure young, vulnerable girls with money and gifts in exchange for romantic relationships and sex.

These relationships reportedly jeopardise girls' futures. Some girls become pregnant, marry and do not return to school. Orphanhood and a lack of parental supervision were also cited as contributing factors. Some parents have moved to other districts or to South Africa for work, leaving their children without close guidance.

Thaba-Tseka District Administrator Tlali Mphafi said reducing teenage pregnancy is a shared responsibility, noting that girls do not become pregnant alone. Vodacom Lesotho Foundation Head Tšepo Ntaopane also called on communities to work together to reduce teenage pregnancy and make sure pregnant women can access good-quality services.

The minister urged police and community leaders to help fight child marriage. She encouraged young people to focus on their studies and take time to make decisions about their lives.



Govt must walk the talk in corporate governance

For years, Lesotho was among the very few countries without a corporate governance code of its own. Lesotho was among very few countries without their own corporate governance code.

That gap closed in 2021, when the Institute of Directors (IoD) Lesotho launched the Mohlomi Corporate Governance Code. It is named after the 18th-century philosopher who mentored King Moshoeshoe I, and it was built through government with financial assistance from the African Development Bank.

Five years later, the government that helped produce the code still treats it as decoration.

The Prime Minister's words in May were welcome. Ntsokoane Matekane publicly announced that Cabinet formally endorses the Mohlomi Code as the reference standard for governance conduct across public institutions, State-Owned Enterprises, Government-linked entities and the broader corporate sector.

He also promised to build its principles into the mandates and performance frameworks of public entities.

Yet last week's announcement of Thabo Moleko as chairperson of the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC) suggests nothing has changed. Moleko may well be a capable public servant, and that is not the point.

The code lobbies for the chairpersons of the boards of state-owned enterprises to be appointed independently. The public has seen no evidence of an open, merit-based process behind this appointment.

The LTDC is hardly a place to hand the benefit of the doubt. In March, Newsday reported that its board overlooked the candidate ranked first by an independent recruitment consultancy for the CEO post, and that reasons for the departure were never disclosed.

In September, there were media reports of board sources alleging that they were pressed to recommend a particular candidate for CEO, with the pressure coming from two people close to the Prime Minister. These are allegations, but they deserve answers, not silence.

Government's defenders will say the Code is voluntary. They are right. Legal analysts describe it as not yet binding, and even the IoD acknowledges the corporate environment is held back by limited resources, weak enforcement mechanisms, and underdeveloped institutional capacity.

That is exactly why political will matters. A voluntary code lives or dies by whether the biggest player in the economy, the state, sets the example. Public enterprises cannot be told to follow the code when the government itself ignores it.

Governance failures are not abstract. They are the stalled projects, the failed parastatals and the boards that answer to ministers rather than to the public. Investors read appointments and unexplained decisions as signals, and so do ordinary Basotho.

Government should now do four things:

- Publish clear, Code-aligned criteria for appointing SOE board chairs and directors, and follow them.
- Release the recruitment reports behind senior appointments, starting with the LTDC.
- Write Code compliance into performance contracts for every public entity, with consequences for breaches.
- Resource the IoD and regulators to monitor compliance, and report annually to Parliament

Mohlomi taught that leaders should serve the people they lead. The code carries that wisdom into the boardroom. Matekane has said the right things. The test now is whether he will bind his own government to them, starting with appointments his ministers make. Endorsing the Code at a conference costs nothing. Honouring it costs control, and that is the price Basotho are waiting for him to pay.



NO COMMENT

Why dictatorship must never be an option for Lesotho

By: Dr. Theko Tlebere

I really don't understand nor know where this thinking comes from, but there is a dangerous temptation in politics to believe that when a country experiences persistent problems, what it needs is a strongman who can silence disagreement, issue orders and force everyone to obey.

When people become frustrated by unemployment, corruption, political instability and poor public services, the promise of a ruler who will simply take charge can sound attractive. The appeal is understandable. The conclusion, however, is very dangerous, and my fear is the end not the means to an end.

For Lesotho, the question is not merely whether a powerful leader can make decisions quickly. It is whether the concentration of political power in one individual or an unelected group is a price Basotho should ever consider paying for the promise of order.

My argument is that dictatorship should not be entertained as a political solution to Lesotho's challenges. Before anyone celebrates the idea of a leader who can do whatever they want in the name of national development, we must understand what dictatorship is, how it operates and what happens when citizens lose the ability to question those who govern them.

What exactly is dictatorship? In everyday conversations, a dictator is often imagined as a cruel leader who shouts at subordinates, commands the army and expects unquestioning obedience. Although this image captures some aspects of dictatorship, political science offers a more precise understanding.

Dictatorship is a political system in which governing power is concentrated in the hands of one person or a small group, without effective mechanisms through which the population can hold those rulers accountable or remove them peacefully. Such rulers may come to power through a military coup, an election followed by the dismantling of political competition, or the gradual weakening of institutions intended to limit their authority.

In Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes, political scientist Juan J. Linz (2000) explains authoritarian rule through features including restricted political pluralism and the exercise of power within limits that are formally unclear. Put simply, people may be allowed to participate in certain aspects of public life, but they do not possess meaningful power to challenge the ruling authorities.

This distinction matters because dictatorship does not always announce itself with tanks in the streets. A ruler may wear a suit, address the nation in dignified language, promise development and even retain a parliament or courts. Yet, if those institutions cannot meaningfully constrain the ruler, their existence does not necessarily prevent authoritarian government.

The essential question is therefore not whether a leader looks respectable, speaks persuasively or claims to love the country. It is whether that leader is subject to enforceable limits on their power. So, what is the difference between a strong leader and a dictator?

Basotho should be careful not to confuse decisive leadership with dictatorship. A strong leader can establish clear priorities, enforce laws, demand accountability from public officials and make difficult decisions. A dictator, by contrast, seeks or exercises power without effective accountability.

The distinction is fundamental. A leader who dismisses a corrupt official after a fair investigation is exercising authority. A ruler who can imprison a political opponent merely because that opponent exposed corruption is exercising arbitrary power.

Likewise, a government that enforces public order under established law is different from one that treats every critic as an enemy of the state. The political philosopher Max Weber, in Economy and Society (1978 English edition), analysed legitimate authority and the different grounds on which people accept political rule. His work helps us understand that the possession of power and the legitimacy of its exercise are not the same thing. The ability to compel obedience does not, by itself, establish that a ruler is entitled to govern without restraint.

This is where the attraction of the so-called strongman becomes misleading. A person may be decisive without being dictatorial, and a person may be dictatorial without being competent. Concentrating authority in one individual does not automatically produce integrity, administrative ability or sound economic judgement.

Now, let us look at how dictatorship takes control of society, and leaves it bleeding with disappointment. Dictatorship is not simply a personality trait. It is also a system of political relationships and institutions.

In their influential book How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse, Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz (2018) examine how dictatorships emerge, consolidate power, govern societies and eventually break down. Their research shows why it is important to look beyond the individual ruler to the institutions and political groups that sustain the regime.

The first feature is the concentration of decision-making power. Decisions affecting national expenditure, appointments, security and public policy become increasingly dependent on the preferences of the ruler or a narrow inner circle. Institutions that might challenge questionable decisions become weaker or are filled with people whose primary qualification is loyalty.

The second feature is the restriction of political opposition. Critics may be portrayed as traitors, troublemakers or enemies of national progress. Political parties, civil society organisations and independent voices may face restrictions, intimidation or exclusion. The ruler presents disagreement as a threat to national unity rather than a normal part of public life. The third feature is the weakening of institutional independence. Courts, legislatures, oversight bodies and public institutions may continue to exist, but their ability to challenge the executive becomes limited. The problem is not necessarily that every institution disappears; it is that institutions lose the capacity to say no to those who hold power.

The fourth feature is the use of state power to secure political loyalty. Public appointments, contracts, access to resources and opportunities may become instruments for rewarding supporters and punishing perceived opponents. This creates a system in which citizens and officials learn that personal connections to the ruler can matter more than competence, fairness or the public interest.

Finally, dictatorship can become dependent on coercion. Where voluntary political support is uncertain, rulers may rely increasingly on security institutions, surveillance, intimidation or restrictions on public expression to preserve their position.

Not every authoritarian regime displays all these characteristics to the same degree. Linz's framework distinguishes among different forms of authoritarian rule, while Geddes and her co-authors demonstrate that dictatorships vary in their organization and behaviour. Nevertheless, the common danger is that citizens lose effective control over the exercise of political power.

I am definite this was too much to swallow in just one piece, lets pause here for now, next week we shall continue with the most dangerous feature of a dictatorship. The future is NOW!

...to be continued

Ready for the heat

• Thaba Tseka youth trained to combat El Nino effects



Seabata Mahao

Young people in Thaba-Tseka are being equipped with physical, digital and technical skills to help communities respond to climate change through a Youth Power Hub Central Region Networking Pitso aimed at strengthening partnerships for climate resilience.

The one-day gathering, held at Motherland Guest House, brought together youth-led organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs), government representatives and development partners to strengthen collaboration and promote youth participation in climate action, particularly in preparation for the anticipated effects of El Niño.

The initiative is led by UNICEF and its partners, including the European Union (EU), the Government of Japan and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with Plant One Tree (POT) serving as the organising association for the central region.

The Youth Power Hub works with 30 civil society organisations across Lesotho, nine of which operate in the central region. The programme seeks to empower young people to take leadership roles in climate action, build resilient communities and contribute to sustainable solutions to some of the country's pressing challenges.

The regional networking pitso forms part of a broader initiative to ensure that young people are not merely recipients of climate interventions but active participants in shaping policies and programmes that affect their livelihoods, education and wellbeing.

Speaking at the event, UNICEF Lesotho Deputy Representative Dr Ngozi Kennedy said climate change was increasingly affecting children and young people worldwide, with Lesotho experiencing recurring droughts, erratic rainfall, extreme weather conditions and declining agricultural productivity.

She said these challenges were not abstract environmental concerns for Basotho families but daily realities affecting livelihoods, food security, access to water, health and educational opportunities.

Kennedy explained that climate shocks threatened progress made in improving the lives of children and young people, stressing that every child deserved the opportunity to grow up healthy, learn in a safe environment and acquire skills needed to thrive.

"Our commitment, therefore, is not only to support immediate responses to climate-related challenges but also to help build resilience among children, young people, communities, and institutions," she said.

Although young people were among those most affected by climate change, Kennedy said they were also well positioned to develop solutions.

Across Lesotho, she noted, young people were already mobilising communities, establishing environmental initiatives, advocating for change, embracing innovation and supporting sustainable livelihoods.

She emphasised that young people should be involved in decision-making processes from the outset rather than being consulted after decisions had already been made.

"UNICEF firmly believes that young people should not simply be consulted after decisions have already been made. Young people must be active participants in shaping those decisions," Kennedy said.

She added that the solutions to climate change would not emerge only from conference rooms and government offices but also from communities such as Thaba-Tseka, youth-led organisations, schools and digital platforms.

Kennedy said the Youth Power Hub was established on the belief that organised, connected, skilled and empowered young people could become a powerful force for change.

She thanked the nine youth-led CSOs in the central region for organising the gathering, saying it provided an opportunity to strengthen cooperation, establish new partnerships, share experiences and identify practical actions to accelerate climate resilience.

Meanwhile, Mpho Lebesa from Plant One Tree said Lesotho's four agro-ecological zones were all vulnerable to persistent climate shocks, particularly those associated with El Niño.

She warned that forecasts pointed to another intense El Niño cycle from November 2026 to March 2027, with extreme temperatures and below-normal rainfall expected to place additional pressure on communities.

"In our mountain and central communities, these shocks translate directly into severe mid-summer droughts, disrupted school attendance, strained water availability, and threatened livelihoods," she said.

Mpho added that rural youth, young women, out-of-school youth and young people living with disabilities were likely to bear a disproportionate share of the effects because of their exposure to climate pressures and limited opportunities to influence responses.

However, she said young people should be recognised for their contributions as farmers, herders, entrepreneurs and community mobilisers rather than viewed merely as victims of climate change.

She explained that the pitso was designed to move youth engagement "from consultation to contribution" through three key objectives: amplifying young people's experiences at national level, securing institutional commitments and strengthening networks for sustained advocacy.

Discussions focused on five priority areas: agriculture and food security; water and sanitation; continuity of education during climate shocks; livelihoods and green jobs; and access to early warning systems and climate information.

The recommendations emerging from the regional discussions will be consolidated into a regional resolution and contribute to a National Youth Declaration on Climate Resilience to be presented at a national pitso in Maseru.

The process is also intended to secure practical commitments from ministries, district authorities, development partners and the private sector, in line with national frameworks such as the National Strategic Development Plan II, Lesotho's updated Nationally Determined Contributions, the National Climate Change Policy and the National Youth Policy.

Representing IOM, Tšepo Molefi highlighted the connection between climate change and human mobility, noting that environmental pressures could affect livelihoods and influence decisions about where people live, work and seek opportunities.

"Young people must not only be seen as people affected by climate change. They must be recognized as partners, innovators and agents of climate resilience," Molefi said.

He urged participants to go beyond identifying challenges and provide practical recommendations to partners, explaining how proposed solutions could be translated into concrete action.

Molefi reaffirmed IOM's commitment to working with the Government of Lesotho, young people, civil society, United Nations partners and development organisations to strengthen the links between human mobility, climate resilience and sustainable development.

He said the success of the pitso would ultimately be measured by the actions taken after the discussions.

Providing a seasonal climate outlook, Kealeboha Lenka from Lesotho Meteorological Services warned that much of the country was likely to experience below-normal rainfall during the early part of the 2026/27 summer season, while temperatures were expected to remain above normal.

Lenka said the October–December 2026, November 2026–January 2027 and December 2026–February 2027 periods were most likely to experience below-normal rainfall across much of Lesotho, although near-normal conditions were expected in the eastern parts.

He added that rainfall conditions could improve during January–March 2027, particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the country.

"Overall interpretation of the seasonal forecast points to a warmer-than-normal summer period from October 2026 through to March 2027, with the strongest indication occurring during January–February–March 2027," Lenka said.

He cautioned that the outlook suggested an increased likelihood of hot spells and heatwaves, particularly during prolonged periods of high-pressure systems and reduced rainfall.

Thaba-Tseka District Administrator Tlali Mphafi urged young people to take immediate action, warning that climate-related shocks would not wait for communities to become prepared.

He said although time was running out to address the effects of climate change, meaningful progress remained possible if people acted collectively and used available opportunities wisely.

Mphafi encouraged young people to avoid taking time for granted and to participate actively in implementing climate interventions.

He stressed that climate change affected everyone regardless of social or economic background, making cooperation essential in preparing communities for its consequences.

"We cannot fight against climate change; we have to live with it and adapt to it in a way that will make us live happily," he said, calling for coordinated efforts to help communities cope with changing weather conditions.

The Thaba-Tseka gathering is part of a series of regional youth networking pitsos held in Lesotho's northern, southern and central regions, including Leribe, Mohale's Hoek and Thaba-Tseka, ahead of a national engagement in Maseru.

The Youth Power Hub initiative, running from 2024 to 2029, targets young people aged between 10 and 25, with particular attention to adolescent girls and young women, youth living with disabilities, rural youth, migrants and young people in the diaspora.

Through dialogue, peer learning and collaboration with decision-makers, the programme seeks to ensure that youth priorities inform national climate planning and adaptation efforts.


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Invitation to Bidders

BID NOTICE UNDER OPEN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE TENDERING

02/11/2026

Supply and Delivery of Mobile Registration Devices - LES/IEC/TEN/PC/BOA1/2026-2027/05

1. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has received funds from Government of Lesotho (GOL) to be used for the acquisition of Supply and Delivery of Mobile Registration Devices
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 International bidding method contained in the Public Procurement Act 2023 and is open to all bidders.
4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the address given below at 8(a) from 09:00hrs – 16:00hrs.
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 **M 500.00** Five Hundred Maloti. The method of payment will be cash only.
6. Bids must be delivered to the address below at 8(c) at or before 11/12/2026 at 09:00hrs SAST. If appropriate, include the following: All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of M429,000.00. Bid security must be valid until 25/01/2027. 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 11/12/2026.
7. There shall not be a pre – bid meeting/ site visit at [*Insert address and time*] on the dates indicated in the proposed schedule in this notice.
8. (a) Documents may be inspected at: [Election House, Second Floor, Procurement Unit]
   (b) Documents will be issued from: [Election House, Procurement Unit 22314991]
   (c) Bids must be delivered to: [Election House, Ground Floor]
   (d) Address of bid opening: [Election House, First Floor boardroom]
9. The planned procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

Activity	Date
a. Publish bid notice	(02/11/2026)
b. Pre-bid meeting where applicable	(N/A)
c. Bid closing date	(11/12/2026)
d. Evaluation process	14/12/2026 – 18/12/2026
e. Display and communication of best evaluated bidder notice	(22/12/2026)
f. Contract signature	07/01/2027

Signature: ……..
Name: T.Nthakong (Ms)
Position of Authorised Official: Director Of Elections

LESOTHO

INVITATION TO BIDDERS

BID NOTICE UNDER OPEN COMPETITIVE TENDERING

06/11/2026

Supply and delivery of vehicles ITB/MOFAIR/01/2026-27

1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations received funds from Government of Lesotho to be used for the acquisition of vehicles.
2. The Entity invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the provision of the above supplies.
3. Bidding will be conducted in accordance with the open national competitive tendering bidding method contained in the Public Procurement Act and is open to all bidders.
4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the address given below at 8(a) from 08:00- 16:30.
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 M500.00. The method of payment will be cash.
6. Bids must be delivered to the address below at 8(c) at or before 10:00 a.m. on 03/12/2026. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of M5000,00. Bid securities or bid securing declarations must be valid until 17/02/2027. 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 10:30 a.m. on 03/12/2026
7. There shall not be a pre — bid meeting/ site visit at on the dates indicated in the proposed schedule in this notice.
8. (a) Documents may be inspected at: 1 st Floor Procurement Office Room 038B 22311150
   (b) Documents will be issued from: 1 st Floor Procurement Office Room 038B 22311150
   (c) Bids must be delivered to: Ground Floor Foreign Affairs 22311150
   (d) Address of bid opening: Ground Floor Foreign Affairs 22311150
9. The planned procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

Activity	Date
a. Publish bid notice	29/10/2026
b. Deadline for clarifications	1 9/11/2026
c, Bid closin date	03/12/2026 at 10.00 a.m.
d. Bid O enin date	03/12/2026 at 10:30 a.m.
e. Evaluation rocess	0 4 - 10/12/2026
f. Award rocess	1 1 - 16/12/2026
g. Display and communication of best evaluated bidder notice	17/12/2026
h, Contract signature	04/01/2027

Signature:
Name: Mr Thabang Lekhela
Position of Authorised Official: Principal Secretary

NOTICE OF SALE – RESIDENTIAL VILLA IN MASERU WEST

The European Union is selling its former staff accommodation in Maseru West and inviting individuals or entities interested in buying this property to submit an offer. The property is a residential villa of 472 m² on a 5 738 m² plot of land situated at 215 Tona-Kholo Road Maseru West.

The deadline to submit an offer is on 12 November 2026 at 23.59, local time.

Further information concerning the sales' conditions and visits to the property can be found on the following EU Delegation's webpage: https://link.europa.eu/fngbdfnm

NOTICE OF SALE – RESIDENTIAL VILLA IN MASERU WEST

The European Union is selling its former staff accommodation in Maseru West and inviting individuals or entities interested in buying this property to submit an offer. The property is a residential villa of 264 m² on a 4 642 m² plot of land situated at 216 Tona-Kholo Road Maseru West.

The deadline to submit an offer is on 12 November 2026 at 23.59, local time.

Further information concerning the sales' conditions and visits to the property can be found on the following EU Delegation's webpage: https://link.europa.eu/KpHmqq

Invitation to Bidders

BID NOTICE UNDER OPEN COMPETITIVE TENDERING

19 October 2026

Supply and delivery of Laser Cam Speed Camera - PRO/4/2026/2027

1. The *Ministry of Public Works and Transport* has been allocated/received funds from Government under Development Budget to be used for the supply and delivery of Laser Cam Speed Camera.
2. The Entity invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the provision of the above Goods.
3. Bidding will be conducted in accordance with the open *national* bidding method contained in the Public Procurement Act and is open to all bidders.
4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the address given below at 8(a) from [*0800hrs to 1600hrs*].
5. The Bidding document in English may be obtained by interested bidders from the office of procurement of Transport at Old Traffic Building, next to St Catherines High School
6. Bids must be delivered to the address below at 8(c) at or before *19th November 2026, 1200Hrs*. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of M10,000.00 Maloti only. Bid securities or bid securing declarations must be valid until 19th February 2027. 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 1230Hrs, 19th November 2026
7. There *shall not* be a pre – bid meeting/ site visit.
8. (a) Documents may be inspected at:
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport
   Old Traffic Department Building
   Next to St Catherines High School
   Procurement Unit
   Room 223
   (b) Documents will be issued from:
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport
   Old Traffic Department Building
   Next to St Catherines High School
   Procurement Unit
   Room 223
   (c) Bids must be delivered to:
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport
   First Floor of Public Works and Transport Building
   Corner Senate Road & Lepoqo Road, Industrial Area, Maseru
   Opposite Browns Wholesale
   (d) Address of bid opening:
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport
   First Floor of Public Works and Transport Building
   Corner Senate Road & Lepoqo Road, Industrial Area, Maseru
   Opposite Browns Wholesale
9. The planned procurement schedule (subject to changes) is as follows:

Activity	Date
a. Publish bid notice	*19th October 2026*
b. Pre-bid meeting where applicable	*(N/A)*
c. Bid closing date and time	*19th November 2026, 1200Hrs*
d. Evaluation process	*23rd – 27th November 2026*
e. Display and communication of best evaluated bidder notice	*30th November – 04th December 2026*
f. Contract signature	*14th – 18th December 2026.*

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

Celebrating cultures, inspiring young minds and building bridges between nations



Staff reporter

Culture distinguishes nations and offers visitors an opportunity to discover different ways of life, making it an important part of the tourism experience.

Lesotho, famously known as the Kingdom in the Sky, was among 13 countries represented at Faith Montessori School's annual World Culture Day celebration in Accra, Ghana.

The initiative supports the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation's (LTDC) mandate to promote Lesotho as a preferred tourism destination and builds on discussions with Wode Maya, a prominent Ghanaian YouTuber and content creator.

The event promotes cultural awareness, diversity and global understanding by giving learners the opportunity to explore different countries, their histories and traditions. This year, participating countries included England, Puerto Rico, Mexico, New Zealand, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malaysia, the United States of America, Mali, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand and Lesotho, whose culture was represented by Class 4.

The two-day event ran from 28 to 29 October. On the first day, learners displayed landmarks and tourist attractions in their classrooms and prepared traditional dishes from their respective countries.

The main celebration took place on 29 October, featuring cultural displays, traditional attire, performances and other activities showcasing the participating countries.

For Class 4, the assignment provided an opportunity to learn about Lesotho through independent research, creative projects and cultural activities. Guided by their teachers, the learners explored Basotho culture, including traditional attire, the iconic mokorotlo hat, local cuisine, language, music, dance and the country's mountainous landscape.

The Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC), with support from the Lesotho Travel, Tourism and Teachers Association (LTTTA), provided traditional attire for boys and girls, Basotho blankets and national flags. These materials enabled the learners to proudly showcase Lesotho during the cultural parade and presentations while learning about the country's heritage and the importance of preserving it.

The teachers described the experience as a meaningful learning opportunity, with learners proudly embracing Basotho attire and sharing their discoveries through storytelling, drama and presentations. They noted that cultural exchange builds confidence, communication skills, teamwork and respect for other cultures. Their message to the learners was to take pride in their heritage, remain curious about the world and confidently share their culture with others.

Learner Yaw Nyarko, aged nine, said he had learned about Basotho traditional blankets, mokorotlo hats, language, food and history. He described wearing the traditional attire as an exciting experience that made him proud to represent another African culture. Olga, also aged nine, was particularly fascinated by Lesotho's nickname, "The Kingdom in the Sky", its high altitude and beautiful mountains. She expressed a desire to visit its waterfalls one day.

Ocansey, the Assistant Headmaster of Faith Montessori School, emphasized the value of learning beyond the classroom:

"At Faith Montessori School, we believe that education goes beyond textbooks and classrooms. World Culture Day allows our learners to appreciate different cultures, respect diversity and recognize our shared humanity. We hope these experiences will inspire lasting friendships and strengthen connections between Ghana and other nations."

The LTDC Public Relations Manager, Molapo Matela, said participating in World Culture Day helps raise Lesotho's profile beyond Africa and introduces the country to international audiences. He noted that the initiative reinforces LTDC's mandate to promote Lesotho and attract travelers interested in experiencing Basotho culture and traditions.

Matela also expressed the hope that Lesotho would host its own World Culture Day celebration, led by LTDC and LTTTA, with support from the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture and the Ministry of Education and Training, particularly in September, during Tourism Month.

The LTTTA Chairperson highlighted the educational value of introducing international learners to Basotho culture and heritage, noting that such initiatives promote cultural awareness and help learners understand Lesotho as a tourism destination. He emphasized the importance of strengthening cultural and educational exchanges between schools in Ghana and Lesotho through virtual interactions, joint projects and school visits.

He further called for stronger collaboration among LTTTA, LTDC, schools and tourism stakeholders to promote Lesotho internationally and encourage young people to appreciate and preserve their cultural identity.

Through the World Culture Day celebration, Class 4 had the opportunity to share Basotho heritage with learners from other countries while discovering cultures beyond their own. The experience demonstrated how cultural exchange can build friendships, encourage mutual understanding and bring people together despite their different backgrounds.

Free dental and medical care reaches Teyateyaneng residents

Lungile Maseela

Residents of Teyateyaneng and surrounding communities received free medical and dental services on 4 November 2026 through an outreach aimed at improving access to healthcare, especially for people who struggle to afford treatment.

The outreach, held at Thakaneng Youth Centre, was organised under One Life, Smile, an initiative linked to the Roof of Africa rally.

About 18 healthcare professionals, including dentists from Spain, provided free dental examinations, tooth extractions, fluoride treatment, medical screening and oral hygiene education. The screening covered blood sugar, blood pressure and tuberculosis (TB).

The Teyateyaneng event was part of a five-day programme targeting five communities affected by the Roof of Africa rally. It began in Qalabane, Mafeteng, on Monday, moved to Matsieng on Tuesday and Teyateyaneng on Wednesday, then continued to Mantšonyane Bocheletsane on Thursday and ended in Nazareth, Maseru, on Friday.

One of the initiative's leaders, Spanish dentist Pablo Beardo, said the programme grew out of his love for Lesotho, which developed through exploring the country and taking part in the Roof of Africa rally as a motorcycle enthusiast. He said he wanted to use his professional skills to help people without expecting financial returns.

"This initiative strives to bring services closer to people who struggle to access them. I have always wanted to lend a helping hand in any way I can. I decided to focus on dental services because I am a dentist," he said.

Beardo said the initiative began last year and has expanded to five communities this year. Organisers intend to make it annual.

"Our aim with these annual services is to come back bigger each year, offering more services than we are able to provide today," he said.

He said plaque build-up, cavities and inflamed gums were among the common problems seen. Many people cannot afford dental care, so they delay treatment until problems become hard to manage. The team could not offer every procedure, such as dental implants, but used the skills and resources it had. It also stressed education on oral hygiene and preventive care. Beardo added that access to a medical facility would make it easier to offer more services in future.

Beneficiary 'Makatleho Motake said she came because of persistent dental problems. She said free services make healthcare more accessible. She also welcomed the participation of men, noting that they do not always use hospital and clinic services.

"The services here are very convenient, and it is a good initiative that will benefit the community," she said.

Member of Parliament for TY Constituency, Lebona Lephema, said initiatives such as One Life, Smile complement government healthcare, particularly where public facilities face resource constraints. He said Berea District continues to benefit from such interventions.

Lephema described the Roof of Africa's involvement as an example of corporate social responsibility that other businesses should follow. He said businesses' responsibilities go beyond commercial activity to include the wellbeing of the communities they operate in, and encouraged more of them to take part in initiatives that address community needs.

Teyateyaneng Councillor 'Manapo Mokoena said the turnout at the centre showed the community's interest in the services. She also expressed concern about difficulties residents reportedly face in getting certain services at Berea Hospital, and said alternative support in the community was encouraging.

"It is very busy here today, and that is a good thing. The people who have come here will receive assistance, and it is all free of charge," she said.

Minister Spokes' double honour puts Lesotho gospel music on the map

Chris Theko

Local gospel music continues to make its mark beyond the country's borders, with Minister Spokes receiving two prestigious awards at the Free State Gospel Music Awards in South Africa over the past weekend.

The musician, whose real name is Poloko Mohlapiso, received the Cross Border Excellence Award and an honorary award, recognising his contribution to gospel music and his efforts to extend Lesotho's musical influence.

For him, the recognition goes beyond personal achievement. It represents years of commitment to ministry and faith.

"Personally, it is a humbling confirmation that God hears the prayers we pray in the secret place. I always say that I am but a mere vessel in the hands of God, sent forth to preach the Gospel of Christ to the masses in song and to win souls for the Kingdom. To be honoured in this way is not a celebration of Spokes, it is a celebration of obedience," Minister Spokes said.

Professionally, he sees the awards as proof that his work is being noticed beyond Lesotho.

"It is a seal of approval on the assignment. It tells me that the work we have been doing consistently, with excellence and with integrity, is being seen and felt beyond our borders," he added.



He believes the recognition came from years of consistency rather than one song or performance. He said organisers highlighted his role in taking Lesotho's gospel sound across borders while keeping the message intact.

"They recognised the years of labour, the mentorship, the collaborations, and the commitment to uplifting gospel music as a ministry, not just as entertainment, and for that, I give God all the glory," he said.

His journey has not been without challenges. Coming from a small music market, he says limited resources, weak industry infrastructure and a lack of exposure have been major obstacles.

"Lesotho is a small nation with exceptional talent and anointed ministers, but limited industry infrastructure. There were seasons where I had the vision and the sound, but not the funding, not the platforms, and not the exposure," he explained.

"When you come from a small country like Lesotho, people often underestimate you until they hear you minister. I can write a whole book about the challenges that come with being a music minister from Lesotho," he said.

He credits faith, perseverance, relationships and a refusal to compromise his values.

"By the grace of God I overcame by refusing to compromise and refusing to quit. I leaned on God, I stayed faithful to the craft, I built genuine relationships, and I allowed excellence to speak for me."

He describes support from Basotho as deep and prayerful, while audiences in South Africa have welcomed him warmly.

"In South Africa and beyond, the reception has been overwhelming and gracious. I have found brothers and sisters who did not see me as a foreigner, but as a fellow labourer in the vineyard. South Africa, in particular, has embraced me as their own," he said.

Minister Spokes believes the awards show that Lesotho's gospel industry can compete internationally, but needs more exposure and opportunities.

"This says to the world: Lesotho is not just a mountain kingdom, it is a kingdom of worshippers," he said.

Looking ahead, he wants to use his growing profile to create opportunities for other Basotho gospel artists and mentor emerging ministers.

"My next ambition is not to become bigger, but to become more useful and create platforms that outlive me," he said.

Sannere speaks about voice sample on his new track



Chris Theko

Lesotho musician Relebohile Monaphathi, popularly known as Sannere, has admitted that he did not seek permission before incorporating the voice of a young Eswatini boy, Malangeni Dlamini, into his song Maybe, featured on his recently released EP, Serapeng Sa Lerato.

Speaking to Newsday, Sannere explained that he discovered the recording on TikTok while working on the song and was immediately drawn to the melody of the sound the boy was making.

He said he subsequently discussed incorporating the recording with his producer, but neither of them attempted to establish its ownership or obtain permission before using it.

"I came across the video on TikTok and, at the time, I was working on the song 'Maybe'. I didn't think much of it at the time and I liked the melody of the sound the boy was making," Sannere said.

Asked whether he had sought permission from the child's parents or guardians, the musician admitted that he had not.

"No. Like I said, I just liked it and we agreed with my producer to incorporate it. I didn't approach anyone because, at the time, I had no idea who the sound belonged to," he said.

Sannere further acknowledged that he may have suspected the voice belonged to a minor but admitted that he did not give the possibility sufficient consideration.

He explained that the emotional nature of the recording was precisely what attracted him to the sound and influenced his creative decision to include it in the song.

"I may have suspected that the owner of the voice is a minor, but I didn't give that thought much attention. As for the vulnerable state of that sound, that is what caught my attention and created excitement in me for the song," he said.

The admission comes after Malangeni's family raised concerns over the use of the child's voice without their authorisation, calling for clarity on consent, acknowledgement and the circumstances under which the recording found its way into the Lesotho-produced track.

The family has reportedly indicated that it is not seeking to incite hostility towards the musician or immediately pursue legal action, but rather wants to engage with Sannere and his management to find common ground.

Sannere confirmed that his team had since established contact with the family following their public statement, adding that discussions between the two parties are ongoing.

"Yes, after the family made a statement, my team and I reached out to them and we are currently in discussions. That's as much as I can reveal for now, but we are talking," he said.

On the question of possible compensation, Sannere said the outcome would depend on the ongoing discussions, indicating that he was open to hearing the family's expectations while also considering what would be mutually workable.

"I am willing to hear them, what can work for them and what can work for me as well. Any outcome to leave both parties happy," he said.

He added that the song had only been available for five days at the time of the interview, making it too early to determine how much revenue it had generated through streaming platforms.

Meanwhile, Maybe remains available on streaming platforms as the discussions continue. Sannere expressed hope that it would remain available, although the eventual outcome may depend on the agreement reached with the family.

The incident has brought renewed attention to the ethical and legal responsibilities surrounding music sampling, particularly where recordings involving children are concerned.

While sampling remains a widely used creative technique in music production, the availability of audio recordings on social media does not automatically grant artists the right to incorporate them into commercially released music.

The matter also raises questions about the responsibility of artists and producers to establish the origins of recordings and consider consent before using material that may involve vulnerable individuals.

With discussions between Sannere's camp and the Dlamini family reportedly underway, the outcome could provide an important lesson for artists and music producers across the region on the importance of obtaining permission and respecting the rights and dignity of individuals whose recordings become part of their creative work.

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The sky is the limit for Mofolo



Seabata Mahao

Lesotho's fast-rising marathon sensation, Kamohelo Mofolo, has announced himself on the global athletics stage with a remarkable third-place finish at the TCS New York City Marathon in the United States on 1 November 2026.

He clocked 2:06:26 in what was only his second race over the 42.2km distance. But for the 21-year-old, who celebrated his birthday on race day, the result was far more than a podium finish.

It was a statement of Lesotho's growing strength in international long-distance running, a significant personal milestone, and a ticket to the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles (LA2028).

The recognition has come quickly. Among the first to congratulate him was the U.S. Embassy in Maseru, which hailed his run in a statement:

"The U.S. Embassy in Maseru congratulates Kamohelo Mofolo on his third-place finish at the 2026 New York City Marathon, one of the most important international marathons. His run time was an impressive 2:06:26, qualifying him for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles!

"Mofolo is trained by American coach James McKirdy. Their partnership demonstrates what Basotho talent and American support can achieve.

"Ntate Mofolo's performance on the streets of New York will inspire thousands of Basotho and athletes across Africa. Lesotho is proud, and so are we! We look forward to seeing him run in Los Angeles!"

Such early praise reflects the scale of what the young runner has done. Mofolo was competing in his first World Marathon Major (WMM), against some of the world's leading marathoners, yet he remained competitive throughout, showing composure, tactical awareness and endurance well beyond what his limited marathon experience would suggest.

Behind the historic result was carefully planned preparation and a developing partnership with his United States coach, James McKirdy. Mofolo said his preparation had given him the confidence to compete, although adapting to the busy environment of New York was initially part of the challenge.

He and McKirdy arrived nine days before the race to allow him enough time to adjust to the unfamiliar surroundings. He attributed his confidence to 12 weeks of preparation, adding that Lesotho provided an excellent environment for marathon training.

He acknowledged a minor mistake at his final bottle station, which briefly cost him some ground, but he recovered and stayed in contention. Rather than fading in the closing stages of the demanding course, Mofolo said he felt stronger as the race neared its end.

"My coach tells me never to skip fuel. We work hard in training to do this. So I have a strong mind to push and fuel well. I felt even stronger at the very end. My last kilometre was my best," he said.

The numbers underline how steep his trajectory has been. Mofolo made his marathon debut at the Sanlam Cape Town Marathon in May 2026, finishing 11th in 2:08:50, a performance that placed him second on Lesotho's all-time marathon list at the time. Barely six months later, his New York time improved that mark by more than two minutes.

For a runner who is just 21, with only two marathons behind him, a World Marathon Major podium and an Olympic qualification are extraordinary credentials. The marathon rewards patience and accumulated experience, and Mofolo has barely begun to gather either, which is why his best years appear to lie ahead of him.

One of his most memorable moments was taking the lead during the race to test his competitors, inspired by fellow Lesotho marathoner Tebello Ramakongoana, who had previously taken the initiative in the Sydney Marathon.

"I took the lead in this race to test everyone. I saw Tebello do this in Sydney, and it felt good. Maybe next time I can be first over the finish," he said.

A 21-year-old who is already talking about winning a World Marathon Major, not merely competing in one, is a young athlete who sees victory as a realistic target and not a distant dream.

Mofolo's rapid development has come under McKirdy, who has guided his progress for the past two-and-a-half years. The American coach said he recognised the young athlete's potential early in their working relationship.

"For the last 2.5 years, we have been very deliberate in the path and plan. From the moment I saw his running in a video, early in coaching, I was convinced he would become one of the greatest marathoners, along with Tebello," McKirdy said.

He also identified Mofolo's personality, kindness and emotional intelligence as among his strongest qualities, saying they complement the demands of elite marathon training.

"Physically, he's not different. Emotionally, that's where he separates himself. He's incredibly smart and observant, and he knows how to use that skill in the run," McKirdy explained.

Their partnership is built on patience, communication and learning from every competition, with Mofolo saying his coach has taught him to approach each race differently, sometimes prioritising an aggressive start and at other times exercising patience.

The programme has been carefully structured, and McKirdy explained that training volume and intensity were increased gradually before a full marathon effort in the final 10 weeks of preparation.

McKirdy was confident Mofolo could clock approximately 2:06:30 in New York, and his prediction proved remarkably close when the athlete crossed the line in 2:06:26. For Mofolo, the lessons of each race are what matter most.

"My coach James is patient with me. He teaches me what I need and helps me think differently for each race. Some races we focus on being fast early, and others we focus on running patiently. Every race he says we learn something new. I learnt very much in New York," he said.

Beyond the podium, perhaps the biggest reward came when Mofolo learnt of his place at LA2028 several hours after the race, after seeing a Lesotho National Olympic Committee (LNOC) announcement on Facebook. Uncertain whether it was correct, he immediately contacted his coach to confirm.

"I did not know I qualified for the Olympics until many hours after. I saw the LNOC post on Facebook and asked my coach if it was true or a mistake. I am so happy to qualify. It is my dream to go to the Olympics. I don't know what I plan yet," he said.



Kamohelo Mofolo in New York, USA

For McKirdy, it was a moment of immense pride, given the work invested over two-and-a-half years.

"I have immense pride in what he's accomplished. In just under two years, he will be an Olympian. That's a treasure," the coach said.

With the Games still less than two years away, Mofolo is likely to arrive in Los Angeles in his early twenties, with more marathons, more experience and far more room to grow.

Although he is now looking towards the Olympic stage, Mofolo believes his achievement carries a bigger message for Lesotho. He wants to show that athletes from the Mountain Kingdom can compete against the best in the world and challenge for podium positions at the highest level.

"I want to show that we are strong. We can compete with the best in the world. I will go with Tebello and we fight to be on the podium," he said.

He hopes his success will also encourage aspiring athletes, particularly from communities where access to elite sporting resources remains limited. He also stressed discipline, saying being focused does not necessarily mean competing every weekend, but maintaining a healthy lifestyle through proper nutrition, sufficient sleep and good decision-making.

It is this philosophy that informs his concerns about support for athletes in Lesotho. Mofolo believes regular stipends would allow talented runners to concentrate on development without racing constantly just to cover basic living expenses, arguing that doing so undermines recovery, training and the chance to reach full potential.

"We don't need facilities. We need financial support so we don't have to race every weekend to pay for food. We can't develop if we are tired, and too many great runners are forced to race everywhere just to afford food to live. It hurts us," he said.

He challenged the country's leadership, athletics authorities, sponsors and the private sector to invest in athletes, arguing that sustained investment could produce even greater success.

"If our leadership can invest in us with stipends, we can see we are the best in the world. Give us eight years and we will win everything," he said.

McKirdy also cautioned against unrealistic expectations after major achievements, reminding supporters that marathon runners need time to recover and develop.

"Kamohelo will now be ranked as one of the top runners in the world, and I'd imagine his invitations will grow. But the mistake many pundits make is to expect athletes to capture these moments time and time again. We've been spoiled with Tebello and now Kamohelo, but please remember, these athletes are humans, not robots," he said.

The New York City Marathon, one of the world's most prestigious road races, drew nearly 60,000 runners over a challenging route through all five boroughs, from the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge in Staten Island to the finish in Central Park. Mofolo's third place confirmed that Lesotho belongs among the world's competitive marathon nations.

Asked what the result meant to him, Mofolo offered a powerful reflection: "It means we are here. We aren't dreaming anymore. We have become who we are meant to be," he said.

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Marathon to finish on iconic Senqu Bridge

Seabata Mahao

All the five races of the Mokhotlong Highlands Marathon are scheduled to finish at the iconic Senqu Bridge, blending in sports and tourism on the recently launched landmark.

The rare highlands sporting activity has been revived through the support of Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) which pumped in M300,000.

The LHDA has partnered with Eventful Moments to stage the 2026 LHDA Mokhotlong Highlands Marathon. The race is part of activities marking the 40th anniversary of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP).

The organisers are targeting at least 650 runners for the race on 6 December, 2026. The event is expected to attract local and international athletes. It has five races: the flagship 42.2km marathon, the 21.1km half marathon, the 10km, the 5km and a 1.6km race for children under 12.

The majestic Senqu Bridge, is a major structure built under Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) and officially opened in April this year.

The marathon returns after Eventful Moments staged a similar race in 2024. It was not held in 2025, partly because of financial challenges.

In an exclusive interview, Thabo J. Tšoeute, speaking for the organisers, said the LHDA sponsorship will help cover major running costs, including prize money. He stressed that the prize money will be shared between male and female athletes.

Tšoeute said 336 runners have registered so far, including 21 international athletes. Organisers want to reach 650 before registration closes on November 26, 2026.



Eventful Moments director Thabo J. Tsoeute with LHDA Chief Executive Tente Tente

"The race starts at different locations, with the 42.2km beginning at Sani Curve, the 21.1km at Ha-Mphere, the 10km at Ha-Mojakisane, the 5km at Khalong la Phokoane and the 1.6km children's race at Senqu Bridge," Tšoeute said.

To boost numbers, organisers have introduced easy online registration through eTicketing. They have also invited running clubs and companies to enter.

Each participant will receive a T-shirt, medal, cap and goodie bag. Tšoeute warned that no entries will be accepted on race day.

The marathon is also expected to boost Mokhotlong District's economy, creating business for local service providers, especially transport operators and accommodation facilities. Local businesses will get free stalls at the event to sell their goods and services. Organisers will also pay a tourism levy to the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC) for every ticket sold.

Tšoeute said preparations are under way with key stakeholders. Organisers have engaged the District Administrator (DA), the District Health Management Team (DHMT), the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) and others, and a Local Organising Committee has been set up to oversee preparations.

The Senqu Bridge is set to be a major drawcard for runners and spectators. Organisers describe the race as the first marathon in Lesotho to include a run across an iconic bridge of this size.

"The iconic Senqu Bridge is the biggest bridge among all LHDA infrastructure. This will bring an ultimate experience of running on a 900-metre-long bridge, which stands 800 metres high," Tšoeute explained.

He added that the high-altitude course will test athletes' endurance and help them prepare for demanding international races such as the Comrades Marathon.

Eventful Moments plans to make the race an annual fixture on the first Sunday of every December.

Organisers say the revival will boost sports tourism in the district and position the mountainous region as a destination for local and international endurance athletes.

World Cup heroics spur U-15's rise

Seabata Mahao

Lesotho's Under-15 (U15) national football team has been ranked seventh among the 14 Council of Southern Africa Football Associations (COSAFA) member countries following its participation in the U15 World Cup in Azerbaijan.

The team was ranked 27th in Africa and 116th globally out of 189 participating countries, according to team manager Sechaba Penane, who revealed the rankings during a welcoming ceremony held at Bambatha following the team's return home.

Penane expressed pride in the players for their dedication and commitment throughout the competition, saying that although the final outcome was not what they had hoped for, the tournament had provided valuable international exposure.

Lesotho concluded its campaign with a 2-0 defeat to Syria but registered notable victories against Gabon (3-2) and Bahrain (2-1), as well as a 4-3 penalty shootout win over Tahiti.

Speaking on behalf of the players, captain Kamohelo Motsamai thanked everyone who supported the team throughout its journey, saying the players had worked hard and remained determined despite the challenges they encountered.

Motsamai said the experience had equipped them with valuable lessons, skills and exposure to international football, adding that the players were proud to have represented Lesotho on the global stage.

Head coach Mahlomola Matšoara also praised the players for their determination and discipline, noting that the challenges encountered during the tournament did not prevent them from fulfilling their responsibilities.

Matšoara said he was particularly proud of the respect and discipline demonstrated by the players, adding that their participation marked an important milestone in the development of youth football in the country.

He said the tournament had offered the young players an opportunity to measure their abilities against international standards, learn from different football cultures and gain experience that could benefit their future careers.

Officially welcoming the team, Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) president Lijane Nthunya said the players had represented the country with pride and deserved recognition for their achievement.

Nthunya said representing Lesotho at a prestigious FIFA competition was an honour in itself, regardless of the results recorded on the field.

He noted that competing and interacting with young footballers from different countries provided an important learning opportunity, stressing that the experience went beyond football results to include personal growth, discipline, teamwork and cultural exchange.

"This experience is about much more than football results. It is about personal growth, discipline, teamwork, cultural exchange and developing a deeper understanding of what it takes to compete at the highest level," Nthunya said.

He encouraged the players to use the international exposure as a stepping stone towards greater achievements, saying their journey was only beginning.

Nthunya further emphasised the importance of nurturing young talent through structured development programmes, noting that LeFA was committed to creating pathways that would allow promising players to progress through the different national age groups.

He said the association wanted to develop players with strong technical and tactical abilities who understood the professional demands of football and could eventually compete at the highest international level.

The LeFA president also urged the players to remain humble, disciplined and focused, while continuing to respect their coaches, teammates and parents.

He acknowledged the contribution of parents and guardians, saying their encouragement, sacrifices and continued support played a significant role in the development of young footballers.

Nthunya reaffirmed LeFA's commitment to strengthening grassroots football and expanding youth development opportunities, adding that investment in young players was essential to the future success of Lesotho's national teams.

He said the players' participation in the tournament should inspire them to work harder, improve their abilities and pursue their football ambitions with renewed confidence.

The U15 team's campaign in Azerbaijan represents an important step in exposing Lesotho's emerging football talent to international competition, with the experience expected to contribute to the country's long-term youth football development.


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