

Lesotho Insights 2024/25

a comprehensive overview of business, development and economy



The Bicentennial Edition - Volume II

Celebrating the 200 years of the formation of the Basotho Nation

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Table of Contents

Publishers' Note	3
Map of Lesotho	4
Foreword by Minister of Finance and Development Planning	5
Short History of Lesotho	6
Modern Political History	7
The Head of State – King Letsie III	9
System of Government	11
Lesotho Missions Abroad	12
Ports of Entry	14
Revolutionizing Tax Payment - RSL Advertorial	16
Budget Speech Analysis	20
UNDP Advertorial	25
Lesotho at a Glance – Infographic	32
Metropolitan Revels in 55 Years of Partnership with Basotho – Advertorial	34
Prime Minister Sam Matekane shares his views on the legacy of King Moshoeshe I	41
Transformation Resource Centre – Advertorial	43
Driving the Digital Economy – Econet Telecom Lesotho Advertorial	46
Reflecting on the 200 years of the Basotho Nation	49
Rebranding the Mountain Kingdom	53
Re-Envisioning the Political System of Lesotho and the Constitution of the future	57
How we Celebrated; a review of the Bicentennial Celebrations in Lesotho	63
Pioneer Mall Heritage Wall – Advertorial	72
LNDC – Advertorial	73
Pioneering Connectivity Solutions for a connected Future in Lesotho – Vodacom Advertorial	78
New government policy to accelerate industrialisation drive	81
Lesotho Standards Institution - Ministry of Trade Advertorial	82
The impressive figures behind LHDA's 38-year staggering legacy	85
LHDA Day, 38 Years of Impact – LHDA Advertorial	88
Building a Resilient Road Network – Roads Directorate Advertorial	90
Road Fund – Advertorial	92
Lesotho sets sights on becoming a net exporter of clean energy	95
Game-Changer: Lesotho's Mothae Diamond Mine Acquired by Local Company	99
New Developments and transformation in the banking sector	103
Lesana – Advertorial	106
Lesotho's organic rosehip shaking up the global pharmaceutical market	111
Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II – Advertorial	112
Lesotho health preparedness outlined	115
Production of Biochar from Invasive Shrubs: A Sustainable Solution for Lesotho	119
European Union in Lesotho	121
An overview of Lesotho's basic education and response to the challenges of formative learning	127
NUL Innovation Hub – Advertorial	130
Looking at Lesotho's Tourism Sector Through a New Lens	133
Find your destination with Avani	137
Tourism Events	138
Lodgings and Treats	145
The Nanabolele Blanket Exhibition	153
Celebrating Tradition – Aranda Advertorial	157
Mashu Mokitimi: Lesotho's Timeless Art Legend	159





Editor's Note

The year 2024 is one of the most iconic years for Lesotho in recent years. We are indeed a lucky generation to be celebrating the 200 years of the formation of the Basotho nation by the great King Moshoeshoe I. I am extremely proud to be alive at this time and elated that this publication exists to also join Basotho in celebrating this milestone.

Lesotho Insights championed the course to celebrate the 200 years and we dubbed the 2023/24 edition the Bicentennial edition. Fair enough, it was still early days and as the nation warmed up to this historic feat, we found it fitting to maintain the status quo and term this one, volume II of the bicentennial edition. While the 2023/24 edition is what I regard the encyclopaedia of King Moshoeshoe from a historical perspective, Volume II is forward looking, giving us an opportunity to look at King Moshoeshoe's legacy with a futuristic lense.

In a lot of engagements on the topic of King Moshoeshoe and the 200 years, I had occasion to discuss King Moshoeshoe with eminent persons of the kingdom that I respect at different times. The first is Archbishop Tlali Lerotholi OMI, who, in a midst of some intelligent discussions, would have liked Basotho to speak about what Lesotho and Basotho, wherever they are, have contributed to the world in the last 200 years. As I reminisced on this discussion much later, it dawned to me that beyond King

Moshoeshoe, we may not as a people and country, have contributed enough to make a bold claim that may go into the annals of history with a sense of pride. No inventions, no changemakers in politics, academia, economy or any other field. Pockets of excellence do exist in many fields, but we struggle to find outstanding leaders and pioneers in the mould of King Moshoeshoe, Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela or Albert Einstein for example. For me, I find this telling and it says we should do better.

In another discussion, I also spoke to another son of the soil, Ntate Pali Lehohla, the former Statistician General of South Africa, who is a proud Mosotho in the diaspora. He pointed out that our modern culture as Basotho is deeply rooted in the stories of migrant labourers. He says that culture has transcended from 'Ma-weekend' as they used to be called to 'banna ba likobo' or zama-zamas, who have gained notoriety in South Africa and given us a bad name in the process. He argues that perhaps, the starting point towards re-branding Lesotho would be to decisively weed out the rot that this culture has adopted, repackage our rich legacy and resell it to Basotho and the world as a true identity of Basotho as a nation. This he says, has potential to transform 'mino oa famo' – the Basotho accordion music, into a tourism product that could yield positive spin offs on national identity and the economy in the long term.

It is on the back of these discussions that I believe the 200 years milestone should be a time for deep and genuine introspection. A time to ponder and reflect on what we have contributed as a nation to the world in the last 200 years. This is the spirit with which we should approach the bicentennial celebrations. I believe that when we have found our footing, we will note that in the exemplary works of great Basotho achievers like Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa, 'Masechela Khaketla, Tsepo Tshola and many other eminent Basotho who have departed, we truly have a base that we can use as a springboard to inspire greatness. Doing right from today and aspiring for the greatness of King Moshoeshoe in our everyday lives can make a difference that has potential to influence others to make Lesotho a great country in a family of nations. In celebration of King Moshoeshoe's legacy, I challenge all Basotho at home and in the diaspora to

emulate King Moshoeshoe in their everyday lives. We all have a moral obligation to honour his legacy and drive our country to greatness. That is what I believe he would have wanted.

In keeping with this ask, this edition explores how we have celebrated King Moshoeshoe's legacy and brings to life some of modern day discussions on re-branding the country and its socio-political landscape, thanks to the input of contributors such as Tsikoane Peshoane, Nthakeng Selinyane and others.

Other sections of the book as always, continue to provide insights into the latest in economy, development and tourism to provide a bird's eye view of where Lesotho fares in the development and economic agenda.

It would be remiss of me not to convey our appreciation for the support that we continue to receive from all our advertisers who continue to sponsor the existence of this publication through their advertising. We also recognise the support of the development partners. In particular, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU), who have been featured in this edition. I believe this is a big show of confidence that we are doing our part by remaining true to the course of being the ambassadorial publication for the Mountain Kingdom.

To our readers, I trust that you will enjoy the second instalment of our bicentennial edition. If you have the 2023/24 edition and now this one, you have a collection of carefully curated work that covers the history and the legacy of King Moshoeshoe. I have no doubt that these will remain important souvenirs for your houses and offices for generations to come.

Happy reading!!!

Manyathela Kheleli
Publishing Editor



Foreword by the Minister of Finance and Development Planning



It is with a deep sense of gratitude that I once more write this foreword for Lesotho Insights, a publication that continues to inspire confidence in our people and one that also continues to be our ambassador to the world. I therefore consider myself to be privileged to be a part of this coffee table book, now in its fifth edition.

The last edition was particularly special as it broke the story and gave direction towards an epic milestone in our lifetime, which is the celebration of the 200 years of the formation of the Basotho Nation. The book gave us a thought-provoking account of the life of the founder of our nation, the Great King Moshoeshoe I and his legacy. I thank the eminent Basotho and celebrated scholars who contributed to making that edition a fitting tribute to the father of our nation. The fourth edition is indeed a souvenir edition that must be kept for generations to come.

I am glad that the editorial team also found it in their wisdom to make this edition Volume II of the Bicentennial Edition. Whereas the last edition was looking backward and celebrating King Moshoeshoe's legacy, this one is more futuristic and speaks to the aspiration of Basotho towards a prosperous nation that yearns for prosperity, peace and development for our people today and into the future.

These aspirations are premised on the slogan of the bicentennial celebration, which is Birth, Reflection, Revival – *Tsoalo, Boitekolo, Tsosetso*. The slogan challenges all of us as the Basotho nation to make sense of where we come from as a nation, to cherish our origins, and draw that inspiration to reflect and think deeper about maintaining Moshoeshoe's legacy to the future. The essence of this time for personal and national introspection is the remedy for most of the challenges that currently bedevil the Kingdom. We can all start today to commit and to play our part in building the Lesotho that we want for ourselves and for the future generations.

This slogan is also extremely profound as it challenges all of us to go back to our foundations to find our purpose as the Basotho nation. It also propels us to the future that is filled with a new found vision and a sense of purpose for each one of us and also as a collective that we proudly call Basotho. I therefore take this opportunity on behalf of His Majesty's government to extend this challenge to all of you to take a moment to look back, recalibrate and approach your life and outlook to life with a renewed sense of purpose and unparalleled patriotism that has the propensity to take our country to the next level in all facets of our lives. We owe it to ourselves and the future generations to make Lesotho a country that we are all proud of.

It is my fervent hope that this book will inspire you with ideas of what to do to go back to the roots of our foundation as a people. I am convinced that this edition will help you reflect and become your moral compass to strive for a Lesotho whose future is peaceful, progressive and prosperous.

It is now two years since the dawn of the new government led by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Samuel Matekane. I believe that the new administration now has a firm grip on the reins, and steadily so, and that Basotho are starting to see the trajectory of development in many aspects of their lives. At this stage, I can only say that with your support as a nation and the support of our development partners and the private sector, we can certainly do more. Let us roll up our sleeves and work hard towards the 'Lesotho we Want'. It is possible!

I wish to conclude by conveying my heart-felt appreciation to the advertisers, contributors and readers of Lesotho Insights. With your support, the story of a forward-looking, positive and revitalised Lesotho will continue to reach the world. I do not doubt that you will enjoy this edition of Lesotho Insights and find the information contained in this book insightful and as refreshing as always. Wishing you a pleasurable reading experience.

Khotso Pula Nala!

Hon. Dr. Retšelisitsoe Adelaide Matlanyane, MP
Minister of Finance and Development Planning

Short History of Lesotho



The Kingdom of Lesotho was founded by King Moshoeshe I during the Lifaqane wars, a period of both instability and nation building that took place in Southern Africa in the early 1800s. To create the Basotho Nation, Moshoeshe united several clans and peoples and forged agreements with other prominent chiefs. In 1868, the nation was placed under England's (Now Great Britain) protection, from which it obtained independence on October 4, 1966. Formerly Basutoland, Lesotho is one of the last three constitutional monarchies in Africa. The Kingdom of Eswatini and the Kingdom of Morocco are the other two. The country's land mass covers an area of around 30,355 square kilometres. Lesotho is home to a population of slightly over 2.1 million people.

The country is famously known the world over as the “Kingdom in the Sky” due to its high altitude as two thirds of the country is covered by mountains and its lowest point is well over the majority of Africa.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Completely surrounded by its only neighbour, South Africa, Lesotho is a landlocked country located near the southernmost point of the African continent. The Kingdom of Lesotho is one of only three nations in the world that are enclaves, along with San Marino and the Vatican in Italy.

Two-thirds of Lesotho's terrain is mountainous. The majestic mountains of Lesotho have given credence to the country's other moniker, the ‘Switzerland of Africa’. With its lowest point at 1400 meters above sea level, Lesotho is a country with the highest lowest point in the world. The lowest elevation of Lesotho is at Morifi at the confluence of Senqu and Makhaleng rivers at 1400 metres. As some would put it, Lesotho is the country that is closest to heaven. The country's highest peak, Thabana-Ntlenyana, is at 3482 meters above sea level and is the highest mountain in Southern Africa.

The topography of the country is divided into four distinct geographical regions with ascending latitude. The lowlands are in the Southwestern parts of the country along the Caledon River at an elevation between 1400 and 1800 metres above sea level. The foothills are in central Lesotho forming the border between lowlands and highlands, predominantly in the East with altitudes between 1800 and 2200 metres above sea level. There is also the Senqu River valley extending from Mohale's Hoek and Quthing in the South, to Mokhotlong in the Northeast with elevation ranging from 1400m to 1800m. The Eastern parts of the country are mainly the highlands forming the Drakensberg escarpment with altitudes ranging from 1400 to 3482 above sea level. Vast wetlands in the Highlands of Lesotho are sources to many rivers in the region, including Senqu/Orange River, which is one of the longest rivers in Africa at the length of 2200 kilometres. Senqu forms many boundaries in the region and empties into the Atlantic Ocean in Namibia.

Lesotho gets most of its rains in the summer, where temperatures are typically cool due to the country's altitude. The highlands of the Drakensberg endure mid-20 to lower-30 degree summer temperatures and sub-zero temperatures with snow in the winter. In fact, Lesotho is the coldest nation in Africa getting snow in its highlands annually.

Largely because of its altitude, Lesotho has a temperate climate with hot summers and cold winters. The lowlands often reach 30 °C (86 °F) in the summer, while winter temperatures can go down to -7 °C (19.4 °F) and the highlands to -20 °C (-4.0 °F) at times.

Annual precipitation ranges from 600 millimetres (23.6 in) in lowland valleys to 1,200 millimetres (47.2 in) in northern and eastern escarpment sections. Most of the rain falls throughout between October and April. Winters are often dry between May and September. Snowfall is common in winter, although higher mountain peaks may experience snowfall occasionally all year-round. The annual variation in rainfall is quite irregular, resulting in occasional droughts during the dry season (May to September) and flooding during the rainy season (October to April).

POLITICAL HISTORY OF LESOTHO Pre-Colonial History

The Lifaqane or Mfecane wars, which were brought on by King Shaka's expansion of the Zulu dominion, are thought to have sparked the formation of the Basotho as a nation in the 19th century by King Moshoeshe I, the country's founding father. Moshoeshe (born Lepoqo) was the eldest son of Mokhachane, a subordinate chief of the Mokoteli branch of the Bakuena tribe. He was born in Menkhoaneng in 1786. The founding father of the Basotho nation possessed leadership skills from an early age and had bold astute aspirations to become a great chief. He is regarded as the greatest politician of his era because of his deft diplomacy and commitment to peaceful coexistence with other clans during his rule.

In 1824, he led his people on the migration from Menkhoaneng to Thaba-Bosiu which became a mountain fortress that defended his nation from the Lifaqane wars. At Thaba-Bosiu, Moshoeshe formed

the Basotho nation with splinter groups and remnants of other tribes who sought refuge with his people. Chief among these included the Baphuthi of Moorosi, Makhoakhoa of Matela, the Batlokoa of Sekonyela and Bataung of Moletsane. These clans and other Nguni speaking tribes form the Basotho Nation that we know today.

The arrival of white settlers in the Cape, mainly the British and the Boers and their occupation of the African hinterland gave rise to many wars between these settlers and other indigenous people including Basotho. In 1833, King Moshoeshe I welcomed the missionaries led by Eugene Casalis, who brought Christianity to his people and also served as advisors and mediators during his reign. Lesotho was eventually proclaimed a British protectorate on 15th April, 1868 at the request of King Moshoeshe I to Queen Elizabeth. The British named the territory Basutoland. King Moshoeshe I died on 11 March 1870 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Paramount Chief Letsie I. He left an indelible legacy as a warrior and a great statesman who built the Basotho nation we know today.

After the Gun War in 1880 between the Cape Colonial Government and Basotho chiefs who defied the Cape Colony's disarmament policies, Basutoland was ruled directly from London through a Resident Commissioner posted in Maseru.

Colonial History

From the 1860s, Basutoland became one of the most productive farming regions in Southern Africa, supplying food to the mining towns of Kimberly and Johannesburg. During the reign of Chief Seeiso Griffith, Basutoland was so affluent that it was able to present 24 Spitfire fighter planes to Britain during World War II. The country also became a hub for migrant labour who worked in the mines in South Africa, which still account for a sizable portion of the national economy today.

However, the colonial policies were not conducive for economic growth. Basotho did not like these policies and attempts to campaign for legislative policies started as early as 1907 with the Basutoland Progressive Association. In the years that followed, Basotho became more politicised, leading to the proclamation of Independence on 4 October 1966.



Parliament Building at Mpilo Hill

Modern Political History

Chief Sekhonyana 'Maseribane of the Basutoland National Party was Lesotho's first Prime Minister, albeit lasting only two months in 1965 before making way for his party's leader, Chief Leabua Jonathan, who reigned from 1965 to 1970. Jonathan lost elections in 1970 but refused to hand over control to the Basutoland Congress Party, which had won 36 seats compared to his BNP's 23. He declared a state of emergency and suspended the constitution from 1970 to 1986. He was later deposed by a military junta led by Major General Justin Metsing Lekhanya.

The military government of Lekhanya signed the Lesotho Highlands Water Project treaty with South Africa which paved the way for the construction of Katse and Mohale dams. The dams supply water to South Africa. Major General Lekhanya's government also replaced the national flag formerly used by the BNP government and imposed order No.4, which banned political activities in Lesotho. Tensions also arose between the military administration under Major General Lekhanya and the palace which led to the King being sent into exile to Britain, leaving his son, then Prince Mohato Bereng Seeiso, to ascend the throne in 1990. Lekhanya was forced to resign in 1991 by Colonel Elias Phisoane Ramaema in another bloodless military coup.

Ramaema's government, committed to returning the country to civilian governance, abolished Order No.4 and established the Constitutional Reform Commission, leading Lesotho to the general elections in 1993. The formerly banned Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), achieved a landslide victory, claiming 79 of the then 80 parliamentary seats in the election, ushering the return of democracy to the Mountain Kingdom.

The BCP government, led by Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle went through tumultuous times leading to Prime Minister Mokhehle resigning from BCP to form the Lesotho Congress for Democracy which took over government in June 1997. In 1998, the country held elections which were won by LCD, now led by Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, a protégé of Ntsu Mokhehle. Mosisili reigned for 14 years until he was defeated by a coalition of LCD, BNP and ABC in 2012, giving Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, the leader of All Basotho Convention, his first taste at the helm as Prime Minister.

The 2012 elections started a new era in Lesotho politics, which has been dominated by coalition governments. Coalition politics are the outcome of the Mixed Member Proportional system, in which 80 members of parliament are elected in first-past-the-post constituency elections and 40 are appointed to the National Assembly under a compensating proportional representation scheme. Political party members elected to parliament through proportional representation are now kingmakers in coalition government formation. This tendency is the result of major political parties' decreasing dominance as they fragment into minor groups. According to the current political environment, coalition governments will continue to dictate the formation of government in Lesotho for the foreseeable future.

On the flipside, the politics of coalitions have also been confronted with disagreements that have rendered governments unstable. This instability drove Lesotho to hold two elections in the space of three years (2012 and 2015). The next elections were held in June 2017, which were won by a coalition of ABC, Basotho National Party (BNP),

Alliance of Democrats (AD) and Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL). The coalition elected Thabane as the Prime Minister of Lesotho until his resignation on 19 May 2020. The balance of power in parliament shifted the formation of the coalition government, which saw the AD being withdrawn in favour of DC. These changes led to the swearing-in of former Minister of Finance, Dr Moeketsi Majoro as the new Prime Minister of Lesotho and Mathibeli Mokhothu as the Deputy Prime Minister. The coalition led by Dr Majoro has been unstable following a fallout within the ABC, which saw Majoro losing to Nkaku Kabi for the leadership position in the ruling party. This loss created an imbalance in cabinet, creating two centres of power that eventually stabilised, thereby allowing Dr Majoro to finish the tenure of the tenth Parliament of Lesotho.

The country successfully went to the 2022 National Assembly elections in October 2022 with a record 65 political parties registered contesting the elections. The outcome of the elections gave rise to a coalition of three political parties, the Revolution for Prosperity (RFP), the Alliance of Democrats (AD) and the Movement for Economic Change (MEC). The coalition is led by RFP, a newcomer in Lesotho's political landscape led by a businessman Mr. Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane. The party garnered 56 seats in the 120 member parliament, formed barely seven months before the general elections. This was one of the strongest showings in an election by any political party in over a decade. Despite the strong showing, the RFP led government encountered some early tremors following the defection of its three members of the legislature, leading to a possible motion of no confidence that was foiled through the court. Since then, the RFP led government has since stabilised and increased its coalition member parties to seven, buttressing its powerbase the RFP led coalition has firmly set its sights to remain at the helm of government to the end of the 11th Parliament in 2027.

HEADS OF GOVERNMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Sekhonyana 'Maseribane	1965
Chief Leabua Jonathan	1970 - 1986
Major General Metsing Lekhanya	1986 - 1991
Major General Phisoana Ramaema	1991 - 1993
Dr. Ntsu Mokhehle	1993 - 1998
Dr. Pakalitha Mosisili	1998 - 2012
Dr. Motsoahae Thomas Thabane	2012 - 2015
Dr. Pakalitha Mosisili	2015 - 2017
Dr. Motsoahae Thomas Thabane	2017 - 2020
Dr. Moeketsi Majoro	May 2020 - Oct 2022
Ntsokoane Samuel Matekane	October 2022 to date

The Royal family. Seated left His Majesty King Letsie II, seated right Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso. Standing from left, Her Royal Highness Princess Senate Mohato Seeiso, Crown Prince Lerotholi Seeiso and Her Royal Highness Princess 'Maseiso Mohato Seeiso



The Head of State - King Letsie III

His Majesty King Letsie III is the Kingdom of Lesotho's Head of State. He was born Prince David Mohato Bereng Seeiso on July 17 1963. He took over the throne in 1996 as the first son of King Moshoeshoe II and Queen 'Mamohato Bereng Seeiso, following his father's untimely death.

Prince Mohato received his elementary education at Iketsetseng Private School in Maseru from 1968 to 1972, where he finished standard five. The following year, he travelled to the United Kingdom to study at Gilling Castle, a Roman Catholic school run by the order of St. Benedictine in Yorkshire, where he completed his primary education in 1976. The young prince proceeded to his father's alma mater, Ampleforth College in 1977, where he finished his secondary and high school studies in 1980. From 1980 to 1984 Prince Mohato came home to pursue his university education at the National University of Lesotho, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Law.

He returned to the United Kingdom in 1984 and completed a Diploma in English Legal Studies at the University of Bristol in 1986. He later enrolled at the University of Cambridge where he read Development Studies, completing in 1989. At the same time, he enrolled at Wye College of the University of London where he studied Agricultural Economics.

On December 16 1989, Prince Mohato was inaugurated as the Principal Chief of Matsieng (the Lesotho Royal Village). On November 12 1990, he was sworn in as King when the ruling Military Council exiled his father, King Moshoeshoe II. At this point, he was named King Letsie III after King Letsie I, the eldest son of King Moshoeshoe I. On January 25 1995, King Letsie III abdicated the throne, the same day His Majesty King Moshoeshoe II was reinstalled.

But following the tragic death of his father in a car accident, King Moshoeshoe II, on January 15 1996, King Letsie III was reinstalled as King and Head of State on February 7 1996. His coronation took place

on October 31 1997 in Maseru. His Majesty and the people of Lesotho celebrated the silver jubilee of the King's coronation on 31 October 2022.

On February 18 2000, King Letsie III married Miss Karabo Motšoeneng, who became Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso. Their Majesties have three children: Her Royal Highness Princess Senate (born October 7 2001), Her Royal Highness Princess 'Maseiso (born November 20 2004), and His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Lerotholi (born April 18 2007).

King Letsie III has a strong interest in agriculture. He spends most of his free time visiting his family's cattle posts in the mountains. He appreciates country life and devotes himself to arable farming and animal breeding. His Majesty is the Food and Agriculture Organisation's nutrition ambassador to the world.

Horse riding, squash, tennis, and rugby are among His Majesty's favourite sports. The King also loves music, particularly classical, avant-garde jazz and traditional music. King Letsie III celebrated his diamond jubilee on 17th July, 2023.

The Royal Lineage

Moshoeshoe I	1824 - 1870
Letsie I	1870 - 1891
Lerotholi I	1891 - 1905
Letsie II	1905 - 1913
Griffith Lerotholi	1913 - 1939
Seeiso Griffith	1939 - 1940
'Mantšebo Seeiso	1940 - 1960
Moshoeshoe II	1960 - 1996*
Letsie III	1996 - to date



King Letsie III

Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso

Her Majesty the Queen, nee Karabo Motšoeneng was born on June 2 1976, at Maluti Adventist Hospital in Mapoteng, to Mr Thekiso and Mrs 'Makarabo Motšoeneng. She is the oldest of five children in her family.

Queen 'Masenate enrolled at Machabeng International College in Maseru in 1990 and studied there until 1996, earning an International General Certificate for Secondary Education and an International Baccalaureate Diploma. She was chosen as a boarding prefect for the girls at Machabeng, and she also played for the school netball team. Miss Karabo Motšoeneng, at the time, also won a bronze medal in the Prince Mohato Awards, an exciting self-development programme for young people aged 14 to 25, which equips them with life skills to make a difference in themselves, their society, and the world.

In 1996, during her final year at Machabeng, she grabbed the attention of the Crown Prince, Mohato Bereng Seeiso and a courtship between them began. Her Majesty continued with her studies at the NUL where she enrolled for a Bachelor of Science Degree programme with the purpose of pursuing a career in pharmacy. Following the news of her engagement to His Majesty King Letsie III in October 1999, Her Majesty postponed further studies. On February 18 2000, they were married at a Royal Wedding ceremony attended by scores of dignitaries, including King Charles III of the United Kingdom.

Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso is the first common citizen to marry into the royal family in modern history. Her Majesty, as Queen Consort of the Kingdom of Lesotho, constitutionally shares His Majesty's social rank and status, and

she serves as Head of State when the King is abroad.

Her Majesty's royal duties and philanthropic activity have been heavily influenced by the Queen Mother, Queen 'Mamohato, Bereng Seeiso. The Queen and Queen Mother 'Mamohato became close, and the latter's death in 2003 left an indelible mark on the former.

Her Majesty graduated from Columbia University in New York, United States with a Bachelor's Degree in Economics in May 2011, despite juggling her Royal obligations, motherhood, and studies.

The queen is particularly fond of supporting disabled and underprivileged children and communities. She supports a number of organisations and charities, including the Lesotho Red Cross and Hlokomela Banana. In 2006, she resurrected the Queen's National Trust Fund, which was established in the 1980s by the Queen Mother, Queen 'Mamohato. Her Majesty raises funds for the majority of her charitable work, including participation in the annual Moshoeshoe Walk, which commemorates the historic 84-kilometre pilgrimage by Basotho led by the Great King Moshoeshoe from Menkhoaneng to Thaba-Bosiu, where the Basotho nation was founded and fortified.

Her Majesty enjoys baking, hiking and going to the gym in her spare time.



System of Government (Arms of State)

Parliament

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with a bi-cameral legislature made up of the Senate and National Assembly. The Upper House or Senate has 33 members, 22 of whom are Principal and Ward Chiefs representing the College of Chiefs, and 11 other members of the public nominated by the King on the Prime Minister's proposal. The Lower House has 120 seats, 80 of which are elected by first-past-the-post (FPTP) ballot and 40 by proportional representation. This system, which Lesotho implemented for the first time in 2002, is known as a Mixed Member Proportional system. The Prime Minister is chosen from the Lower House or National Assembly to lead the government.

The country also has a Local Government structure throughout the ten districts of the country divided into wards of approximately the same population, though their geographical area may differ immensely. The Local Government Councils are a mixture of elected members of the public and area Chiefs representing the traditional leadership structures.

Judiciary

Lesotho's justice system is mixed in that the Constitution recognises both Roman-Dutch Law (blended with some English Common Law) and Sesotho Customary Law (also referred to as the Laws of Lerotholi). The Chief Justice of Lesotho is selected by the King on the advice of the Judicial Services Commission and heads the High Court of Lesotho. The Court of Appeal sits occasionally above the High Court to consider appeals against the High Court's decisions and verdicts. The Magistrates Courts, Regional Courts, and Local Courts are located beneath the High Court, which also has various specialised wings (such as the Commercial Court, Labour Court, Land Court, and so on). However, many of the village disputes at the village level are still settled at the Chief's kraal by the Chief assisted by village elders.

The Executive

Section 87 of the Lesotho Constitution empowers the King to appoint a Prime Minister based on the advice of the Council of State. The Prime Minister is a Member of Parliament who commands a majority of the National Assembly's members. Once appointed, the Prime Minister advises the King on the appointment of ministers from the National Assembly and Senate, one of whom will serve as Deputy Prime Minister. The Cabinet is the Executive of Government and is in charge of government policies and state affairs. Parliament holds the Cabinet jointly accountable. His Majesty's Government's under the administration led by Prime Minister Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane, is composed of 20 ministers and no Deputy Ministers, down from 28 Ministers and 10 Deputy Ministers. It is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to size the portfolios of his cabinet.



The National Flag

The colours of the Lesotho national flag are Blue, White, and Green with a Black Basotho Hat on the White portion in the middle.

Blue represents the sky where the rain comes from, and white symbolises the peace that Basotho are renowned for. Green represents the land and its

fertility and the Black hat is the iconic symbol representing the Basotho people.



The Coat of Arms

The Lesotho coat of arms features a Basotho shield emblazoned with a crocodile which is the clan totem of the royal family. Behind the shield are two crossed weapons, the spear and the knobkierie, which symbolise protection. The left and right are supported by the famous Basotho ponies which are a symbol of wealth and contentment in Basotho culture. The foreground is adorned with the national motto: Khotso, Pula, Nala, which means Peace, Rain, and Prosperity. The coat of Arms was adopted on 4 October 1968.

National Motto

The national slogan is Khotso, Pula, Nala!, which translates to Peace, Rain, and Prosperity. During vast wars and conflicts, when the Basotho nation was established, Peace was necessary for the country's prosperity. Basotho believe that if there is peace, rain will fall. Bountiful rains mean a good harvest and enough of grass in the pastures, ensuring that people and animals are fed and prosper.

National Anthem

The melody and the lyrics of the national anthem, "Lesōthō Fatše La Bo Nta'a Rōna" has its roots in Europe. The melody was from a Swiss songbook from around 1823 composed by Ferdinand-Samuel Laur. Despite being from a Swiss songbook, the musical style is similar to that of anthems of other nations in the area in the "Eastern folk" style, perhaps indicating the melody was "Africanised" sometime after it was first introduced to the country. The lyrics were by a French missionary, François Coillard, a protégé of Eugene Casalis. Coillard grew up near the French-Swiss border, close to the area where Laur's songbook was released. It is believed that he may have known of the melody from there. The anthem first appeared in a collection of songs for high schools in 1869.

The anthem originally had five verses, but by the 20th century, only the first and last verses were used. Current lyrics were refined by a renowned Mosotho composer, Joshua Pulumo Mohapeloa and the national anthem as we know it today was eventually adopted in 1967 by a royal decree, which was backdated to Independence Day, October 4, 1966.

The Anthem

*Lesotho fatše la bo-nta'a rona,
Har'a mafatše le le tle ke lona,
Ke moo re hlalileng,
Ke moo re holileng,
Rea le rata.*

*Molimo a k'u boloke Lesotho,
U felise lintoa le matšoenyeho.
Oho, fatše lena,
La bo-ntata rona,
Le be le khotso.*

Lesotho Missions

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

VISION:

By 2025, Lesotho will be a peaceful, prosperous and globally competitive nation

MISSION:

Promote and advance national interests internationally and protect Lesotho's sovereignty and territorial integrity

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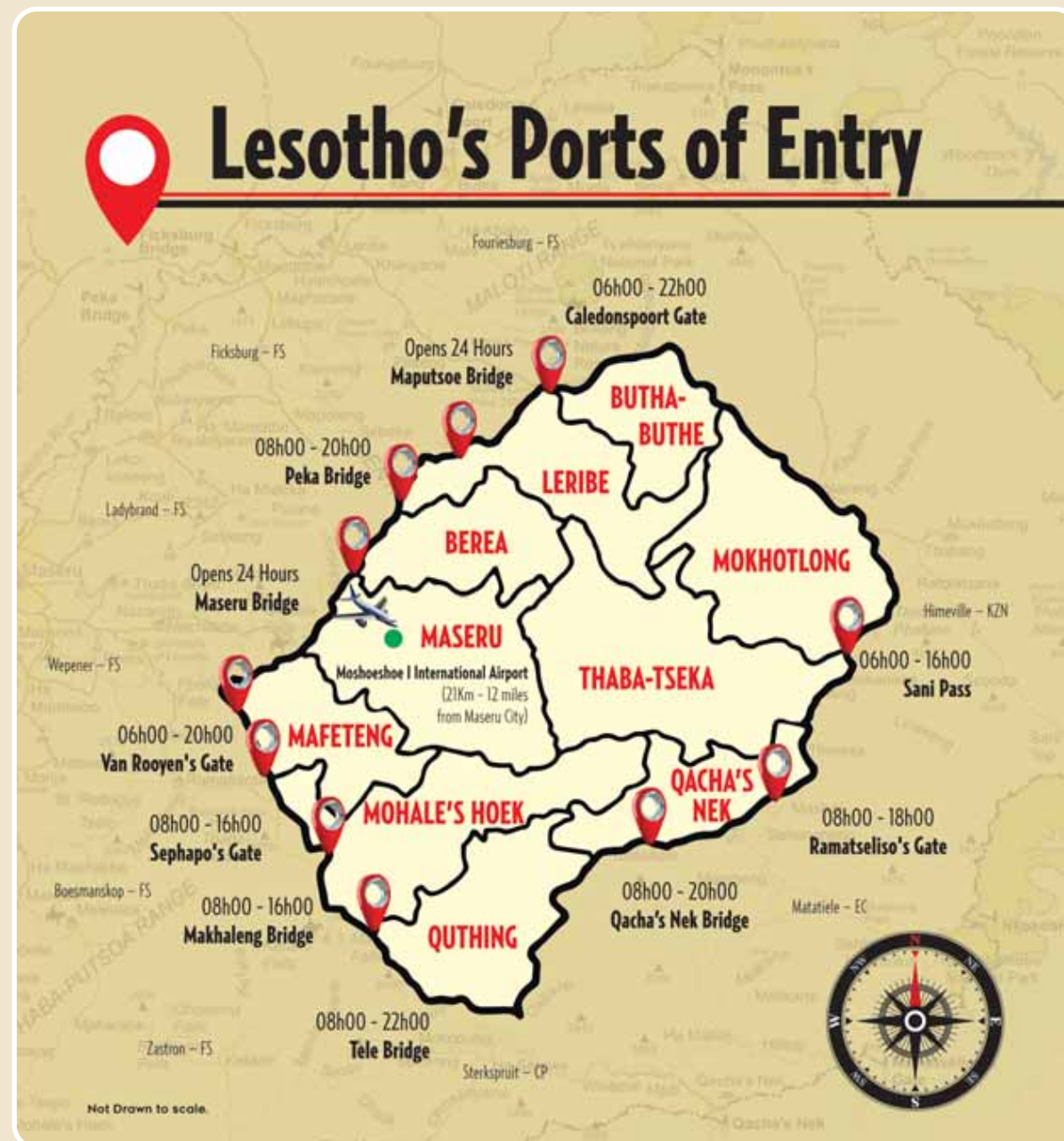
Email: foreignaffairslesotho@gmail.com

Office Hours: Monday to Friday
08:00 - 12:45 hrs
14:00 - 16:30 hrs



**Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations
Honourable Lejone Mpotjoane**





Lesotho's Ports of Entry and Border Control

The majority of goods and visitors to Lesotho arrive by road. Eleven border posts give entry into Lesotho from South Africa, which is Lesotho's only neighbour. Because of the ruggedness of terrain in some parts of the Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek districts, 4x4 vehicles are advised for these parts. At all these ports, there are Lesotho officials responsible for Immigration, security, livestock and agricultural products control, Tourism and Customs officials.

Lesotho Border Posts

Maseru	Ladybrand - F.S.	Open 24 hours
Qacha's Nek	Matatiele - E.C.	08h00 - 20h00
Maputsoe	Ficksburg - F.S.	Open 24 hours
Ramatseliso's Gate	Matatiele - E.C.	08h00 - 18h00
Caledonspoort	Fouriesburg - F. S.	06h00 - 22h00
Peka Bridge	Gum Tree - F.S.	08h00 - 16h00
Tele Bridge	Sterkspruit - C.P.	08h00 - 22h00
Sephapo's Gate	Boesmanskop.	08h00 - 16h00
Van Rooyen's Gate	Wepener - F.S.	06h00 - 20h00
Makhaleng Bridge	Zastron - F.S.	08h00 - 16h00
Sani Pass	Himeville - Natal	08h00 - 16h00



Customs Regulations

All goods brought into Lesotho are subject to Customs control and baggage may be subject to examination. Customs declarations are required upon arrival. False or incomplete declaration is an offence involving penalties, including forfeiture of any article.

Duty Free

The following items and quantities to a total value not exceeding M500.00 per person are allowed under rebate duty:

- 2 litres of wine per person, 1 litre of spirits or other alcoholic beverages
- 200 cigarettes, 250 gm pipe tobacco, and 20 cigars.
- 50 ml perfume.

Any excess is charged import duty at a flat rate of 20%.

Visitors from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland, are not permitted to bring liquor into Lesotho.

Prohibited and Restricted Goods

Counterfeit coins or notes; dangerous weapons, including swords, cutlasses, bayonets, daggers, and knives with cutting edges of 30 cm or more in length (excluding such knives as are ordinarily used for domestic purposes, agriculture or the meat trade); blasphemous material; indecent or obscene works or articles of an inflammatory nature such as certain pamphlets or posters.

Customs Officers and members of the Police Force give the highest priority to drug detection and the legal penalties for drug trafficking are severe.

Domestic pets, livestock, seeds, bulbs, plants and trees may not be imported without payment of Customs and Sales Duty and are subject to quarantine restrictions.

Permits may be obtained from:

The Principal Secretary.
Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security.
P.O. Box 24, Maseru 100. Lesotho

Lesotho Tax Regime

The Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL) formerly Lesotho Revenue Authority, operates at all the borders for customs purposes. RSL, which became operational in January 2003, incorporates the functions of the old Income Tax, Customs and Excise and Sales Tax Departments. Specifically, the RSL is responsible for the administration all tax laws in Lesotho. RSL also collects non-tax revenue from toll fees at all ports of entry on behalf of the Road Fund.

The RSL was established to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of revenue collection and to provide an improved service to the public.

The RSL as a tax administration entity is required to maintain the highest standards of financial integrity and corporate governance. Despite operating outside the framework of the Civil Service, the Authority is fully accountable to Parliament.



**Revenue
Services
Lesotho**

Revolutionizing Tax Payment: Revenue Services Lesotho Leads the Way in Digital Convenience

At Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL), we understand that in today's fast-paced world, every minute matters. That's why we are committed to transforming tax payment into a seamless experience, accessible from anywhere at any time. Our latest initiatives reflect our dedication to leveraging innovative technology to make tax payment simpler, faster, and more convenient for every taxpayer in Lesotho.

Gone are the days of queuing and paperwork. RSL is rolling out a range of secure, user-friendly digital payment platforms that are designed to meet you where you are. Whether you're a small business owner or a salaried employee, you can now pay your taxes directly from your preferred device, with just a few clicks. Our integrated platforms enable easy access through banking apps, mobile wallets, and online portals, making it possible to settle your tax obligations with unparalleled ease.

Our Partnerships

- **M-Pesa Integration**

Our partnership with mobile network operator, Vodacom, through VCL Financial Services (M-Pesa) revolutionize the tax payment process, offering a user-friendly, dependable, and cost-effective solution. With zero-rated transaction fees, Clients can now experience a low-cost payment experience for payment of their taxes and customs duties. Additionally, customers have the flexibility to make payments from anywhere, at any time, and conveniently utilise the M-Pesa confirmation SMS as a receipt for future reference. This platform caters to customers of all backgrounds, from those using basic feature phones to those with high-end smartphones, reflecting the commitment of RSL and VCL Financial Services to financial inclusivity and accessibility.

- **Sasai Econet Financial Services Integration**

In another ground breaking collaboration, Revenue Services Lesotho integrated systems with Sasai Econet Financial Services through EcoCash. This integration allows taxpayers to conveniently pay their taxes and customs duties using their EcoCash wallets through the RSL website. With this integration, Taxpayers enjoy the convenience of making payments in their comfort of their own homes and



Revenue Services Lesotho and Econet Lesotho



Revenue Services Lesotho and Land Administration Authority

offices, saving time and money. The service is accessible and provided within the bound of cutting-edge security environment to safeguard users' financial information.

- **Land Administration Authority Automatic Compliance Integration**

Automatic Compliance Integration is the latest collaboration first pioneered between Revenue Services Lesotho and the Land Administration Authority (LAA). This solution is intended for the administration of Pay As You Earn tax type, where the integration allows for the automatic sharing of taxpayer payroll data, leading to prepopulating PAYE tax returns. With this solution, LAA and RSL have their monthly PAYE returns prepopulated, making the compliance process smoother, faster, and convenient. Automated Compliance is the future of PAYE tax collection and will soon be rolled out to government ministries and parastatals to streamline and bring efficiencies in tax collection.

- **Standard Lesotho Bank**

We have also modernised our payment solutions by integrating our payments systems with Standard Lesotho Bank, where Taxpayers are now able to pay for import VAT as well as Income Tax seamlessly using the Unayo platform from the Bank on their mobile phones. The 24/7 availability of this service allows Taxpayers to make payments at their convenience and unrestricted by traditional business hours. The service is simpler, faster and more accessible. The payment solution is also secure and done in real-time, thereby saving time and reducing the cost of compliance for our Taxpayers.

Our digital solutions are crafted to make paying taxes straightforward while



Revenue Services Lesotho and Standard Lesotho Bank



f t in y
www.rsl.org.ls

Toll-Free Number:
8002 2009

WhatsApp:
6221 0090

Instant Chats:
Available on our website

Email:
info@rsl.org.ls

minimizing risks, ensuring that you can focus on what matters most: growing your business or enjoying your hard-earned income.

By investing in these digital solutions with the collaboration of various financial institutions, fintechs and organisations, Revenue Services Lesotho is paving the way for a modern, efficient tax system that aligns with the demands of today's taxpayers. Our commitment to innovation means that you're not just paying taxes; you're stepping into a streamlined process that enhances compliance, convenience, and peace of mind.

Embrace the future of tax payment with RSL – where convenience meets innovation for you.



The law of nature

In the tapestry of the animal kingdom, there exists a timeless dance of survival and succession—a symphony conducted by the wisdom of ages. It begins with a single stride, where the hoofbeats of the elders echo across the land, guiding the young and forging paths through the wilderness.

From the steady hunt of the lionesses, whose strategic prowess ensures the pride's sustenance, to the industriousness of the ants, whose tireless labour builds empires beneath the earth, each effort compounds into a legacy of resilience. It is a pact whispered through the rustling leaves and carried on the wind—a covenant of prosperity woven into the very fabric of existence, the law of nature.

Picture the ripple effect of a wise investment, parallel to the herds migrating across the plains, their synchronized steps echoing the rhythms of abundance. It is the foundation upon which future generations stand strong, inheriting not only wealth but the wisdom to nurture and grow it.

Today, as we gaze upon the boundless horizon of opportunity, we invite you to embark on this journey with STANLIB Lesotho. Let us harness the power of your hard-earned resources, transforming aspirations into achievements and securing legacies yet unwritten. Together, let us continue this timeless pact of trust and transformation.

Invest with STANLIB Lesotho, where your investment transcends mere numbers—it becomes a testament to the enduring legacy of the animal kingdom's wisdom and the promise of a prosperous future.



Lesotho's Best Network

- ▶ Most Admired Telecommunications Brand
- ▶ Most Admired Brand Doing Good for Society, Environment And People, Non-Lesotho

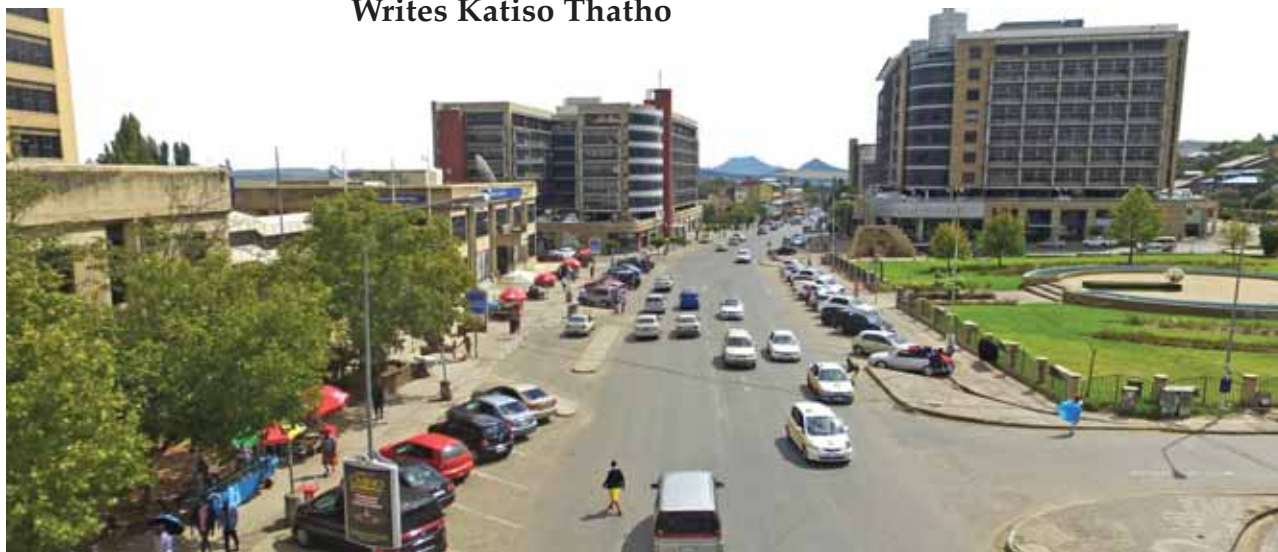
Vodacom Lesotho has earned prestigious accolades as the most admired brand doing good for society, environment, and people, alongside being named the most admired telecommunications brand in the 2024 edition of Brand Africa's Best Brands Awards.

#WeConnectForABetterFuture
#FurtherTogether

Budget Speech 2024/25 Analysis

From Reconstruction and Recovery to Growth and Resilience

Writes Katiso Thatho



Domestic Economic Developments

In 2023/24, Lesotho's economy showed signs of modest improvement, driven by construction activities, fiscal discipline, and prudent financial management. This fiscal year was marked by a slightly better growth trajectory, a stronger fiscal position, and easing of inflationary pressures. Underlying challenges, such as high unemployment and a reliance on external revenues, however persisted. This report highlights key developments in Lesotho's economy in 2023/24, with limited context from 2022/23 to offer perspective on the nation's economic progress. The report also provides a high level analysis of the 2024/25 Budget Speech in Parliament.

Lesotho's GDP grew by 2.2 per cent in the fiscal year ending March 2024, reflecting an improvement from the 1.6 per cent growth recorded in the previous year. This growth was largely driven by construction activities under the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) II, which served as a major infrastructure development effort. Despite these gains, unemployment remained

high, forcing the underperformance of both the diamond and textile exports. The textiles sector, in particular, continued to face challenges due to reduced demand from international markets, primarily the United States.

While 2022/23 saw a more modest GDP growth rate of 1.4 per cent, driven by the services and construction industries, the underperformance of the manufacturing sector, especially textiles, remained a common threat between the two years. In 2023/24, the economy began to show signs of recovery, but significant barriers to robust growth remained.

Sectoral Performance in 2023/24

- **Primary Sector:** Mining was a key driver of economic growth in 2023/24, building on the momentum gained from the reopening of the Liphobong Mine in 2022/23. Agriculture, however, faced significant setbacks, especially due to an exceptional dry season that exacerbated food security concerns across the country. This was a sharp contrast to 2022/23, when the agricultural sector had grown by 3.4 per cent, buoyed by favorable rains.

- **Secondary Sector:** The manufacturing sector continued to struggle in 2023/24, particularly in textiles, which experienced further declines due to reduced demand from the US market. This contraction mirrored the 18.9 percentile decline in the textiles and clothing industry seen in 2022/23. The construction sector however, performed better in 2023/24, primarily due to the expansion of infrastructure projects under LHWP II, which also supported the tertiary sector.
- **Tertiary Sector:** Services remained a significant contributor to growth in 2023/24, particularly public administration and services linked to the LHWP II project. Although there was growth in the services sector, it was insufficient to address the high levels of unemployment and poverty across the country. This performance was consistent with 2022/23, where the tertiary sector grew by 2.5 per cent.

Inflation Upsurge

Inflation was another key concern during the 2023/24 fiscus with prices rising sharply in the second half of 2023, reaching a peak of 8.2 per cent in January 2024. The spike in inflation was largely attributed to external shocks, including global food and energy price increases. By June 2024, inflation had eased to 6.5 per cent, as global prices stabilized and other external factors normalized.

In comparison, inflation in 2022/23 averaged 6.4 per cent, showing a decline from the high rates in previous years due to a fall in food and energy prices, which was briefly disrupted in 2023. Lesotho's fiscal position improved substantially in 2023/24, with a fiscal surplus of 6.1 per cent of GDP, a significant rise from 2022/23. This improvement was primarily driven by an unexpected increase in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) transfers, which were 10.4 per cent higher than in FY 2022/23. Notably, the government did not increase the public wage bill like in previous years. Instead, it used the SACU proceeds to reduce arrears and rebuild deposits at the Central Bank, reflecting a shift towards more prudent fiscal management.

Throughout 2023/24, the Central Bank of Lesotho maintained its policy rate at 7.75 per cent, in line with South African interest rates, to support the Loti's peg to the Rand. This monetary policy stance helped manage inflation and maintain exchange rate stability. Additionally, credit to the private sector grew by 12.5 per cent, largely owing to construction activities linked to LHWP II. Nonperforming loans also improved, dropping to 3.8 per cent of total loans, thereby indicating a healthier financial sector. Lesotho's external sector showed improvements in 2023/24, as the current account deficit

narrowed significantly due to higher revenues from renegotiated water royalties and SACU transfers. These revenues helped to offset a widening trade deficit caused by increased imports for the LHWP II construction activities even when the reliance on imports for such projects continued to weigh on the trade balance.

Budget Speech

The 2024/25 Budget Speech, themed “Building on Resilience, Working Together, and Fostering Sustainable and Fair Growth,” emphasizes sustainable growth, inclusive development, employment generation, and poverty reduction. Building on the 2023/24 budget, which focused on “Reconstruction and Recovery,” the new budget adds a focus on fair growth, aiming for a more equitable economic environment benefiting all citizens. The 2024/25 budget continues the shift towards an export-led, private-sector-driven economy, with investments in infrastructure, energy, and the digital economy. Major projects like the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) II are central to stimulating broader economic growth. The focus on private-sector engagement and technology-driven growth sharpens the modernization efforts started in 2023/24.

A key priority for this fiscal year is pinned on ensuring fiscal sustainability by reducing reliance on SACU receipts. The government emphasizes tax reforms and digitization to improve revenue collection and proposes the creation of a development and stabilization fund. Building on the 2023/24 fiscal strategy, the 2024/25 budget goes further to leverage technology to improve fiscal management, signaling a more technology-driven approach. The Treasury Single Account (TSA) plays a crucial role in consolidating government accounts, enhancing transparency, and improving cash management. This continues the strategy from 2023/24, but places greater emphasis on addressing the root causes of fiscal mismanagement.

The 2024/25 budget is also centered on digitization to modernize tax collection, introducing e-filing and e-invoicing to eliminate tax evasion. This builds on 2023/24 reforms, but with a stronger focus on technological solutions. The budget also aims to improve spending efficiency and plans to outsource government services to the private sector, pushing the modernization agenda further than before. The focus on Public Financial Management (PFM) reforms, public service restructuring, and private-sector participation continues, with a greater emphasis on technology and e-governance. Similar challenges to those in 2023/24, such as policy delays and pushback from industries remain potential hurdles.

Top Budget Priorities for 2024/25

A key priority in the 2024/25 budget is the health sector, which, despite a slight decrease in allocation from M2.246 billion in 2023/24 to M2.217 billion in 2024/25, remains a central focus as government continues to manage post-pandemic healthcare needs. The budget speech emphasized the need to build on healthcare reforms, ensure access to essential services, and enhance the overall resilience of the health system.

Similarly, education and training remains a priority, with M2.677 billion allocated for 2024/25, slightly down from M2.730 billion in the previous year. Education continues to be critical for Lesotho’s long-term development. While the allocation has decreased marginally, the budget speech reaffirmed the government’s commitment to education reforms, expanding access to quality education, and improving educational outcomes. This continued investment is necessary to address the country’s youth unemployment challenge and foster human capital development.

The Finance and Development Planning sector saw an increase from M2.636 billion in 2023/24 to M2.739 billion in 2024/25, underscoring the government’s focus on fiscal consolidation, investment in development projects, and supporting economic recovery. The emphasis in the 2024/25 budget speech on prudent fiscal management and the need to build resilience against future shocks is reflected in this allocation, with more funds directed toward ensuring effective financial planning and economic stability.

Another critical area receiving attention is Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs, and Police, which saw its allocation rise to M1.760 billion in 2024/25 from M1.730 billion the previous year. This increase supports the government’s drive to strengthen local governance, improve public security, and foster an environment conducive to social and economic development. Public security remains a cornerstone for growth, ensuring that economic activities can flourish within a stable environment.

Figure 1: Budget allocation comparison 2023/24 vs 2024/25

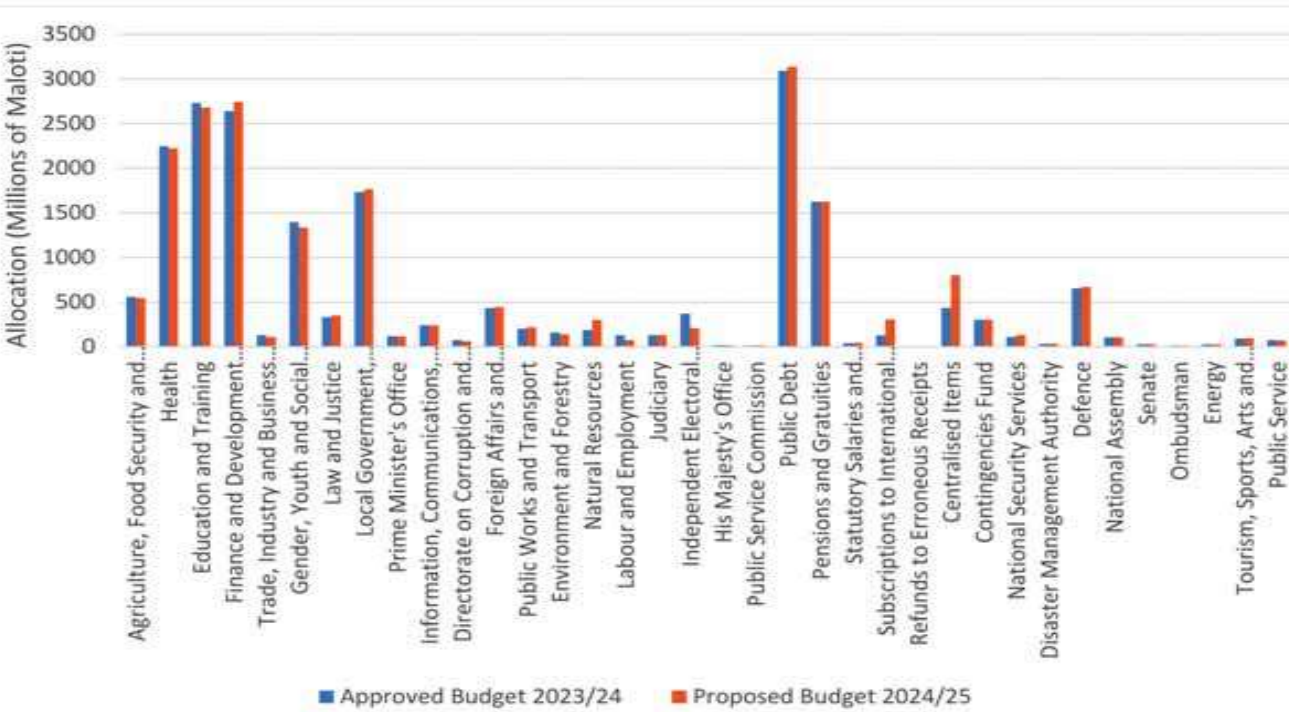


Figure 2: Extended NSDP II DStrategic Direction



Significant Upward Budget Allocations

Certain sectors saw substantial increases in funding, aligning with the strategic objectives laid out in the 2024/25 budget speech. Public Works and Transport, for instance, received a significant increase from M199.850 million in 2023/24 to M215.709 million in 2024/25. This rise underscores the government’s commitment to infrastructure development, a key pillar of economic growth. Infrastructure improvements, particularly in transport, are essential for enhancing connectivity and access to markets, thus fostering economic activity.

Natural Resources saw one of the largest upward revisions, with its allocation increasing from M186.084 million in 2023/24 to M299.122 million in 2024/25. This sharp increase reflects the government’s strategic focus on leveraging natural resources to boost revenue, particularly through initiatives like the Lesotho Highlands Water Project II (LHWP II) and water royalties. The budget speech highlighted the importance of capitalizing on Lesotho’s natural resources to enhance fiscal sustainability, making this a key area of investment.

The Environment and Forestry sector also enjoyed an increase in allocation, moving from M157.904 million in 2023/24 to M179.315 million in 2024/25. This is consistent with the budget speech’s emphasis on environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation, which are crucial for building long-term resilience in the face of global environmental challenges. The increase in funding highlights the government’s recognition of the environment as a critical factor in achieving sustainable development goals.

Significant Downward Budget Allocations

Despite the overall emphasis on growth and resilience, some sectors experienced slight downward adjustments in their budget allocations. Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, for example, saw a reduction from M557.394 million in 2023/24 to M547.256 million in 2024/25 despite the fact that the sector remains critical for Lesotho, particularly in addressing food security challenges. The reduction however, may indicate a strategic shift, where the government is focusing on optimizing existing resources within this sector. This could also reflect a reallocation of funds toward more immediate infrastructure and natural resource projects, as highlighted in the budget speech.

Another area with reduced funding is Gender, Youth, and Social Development, which dropped from M1.395 billion in 2023/24 to M1.333 billion in 2024/25. While this decrease could raise concerns, this adjustment could likely reflect efforts to streamline other social services while continuing to focus on inclusive growth.

Public Debt

Public debt allocation remained relatively stable, with a slight increase from M3.090 billion in 2023/24 to M3.134 billion in 2024/25 reflecting government’s ongoing effort to manage its debt obligations sustainably to ensure that more funds can be directed toward development projects rather than debt servicing. The 2024/25 budget speech emphasized fiscal prudence, and this stable allocation indicates a strategic effort to keep debt manageable while continuing to invest in critical areas of the economy.

The National Strategic Plan (NSDP)

The National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) II, initially designed to guide Lesotho’s development from 2018/19 to 2022/23, has had its timeframe extended to 2027 due to significant implementation challenges over the past three years. The failure to implement the plan as envisioned is said to be largely due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which derailed progress in key sectors of the economy. In addition, a lack of monitoring and evaluation, coupled with poor data collection practices, is said to have further compounded the non-achievement of NSDP II’s goals. As the plan moves into this extended phase, it may be crucial to double efforts to focus on issues like unemployment reduction through agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and technology sectors, while also enhancing private-sector growth, infrastructure development, and good governance.

In light of this, an analysis of Lesotho’s economic performance in 2023/24 against the goals set out in the NSDP II reveals a mixed picture. While some progress has been made, particularly in fiscal management and infrastructure development, key areas such as unemployment reduction, private-sector growth, and sectoral transformation have lagged behind the targets outlined in the plan.

Growth Progression and Economic Structure

The NSDP II emphasizes the need to transform Lesotho’s economy from being consumption-based to one driven by production and exports, with a particular focus on agriculture, manufacturing, mining, and tourism. In 2023/24, Lesotho’s GDP growth reached 2.2 per cent, a modest improvement over the previous year’s 1.6 per cent. This growth was primarily driven by construction activities under the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP II). While this is a positive development, the textile and diamond sectors—key drivers of export growth—remained sluggish, with their performance not reflecting the transformative ambitions of the NSDP II. The agriculture sector, which is pivotal for both job creation and food security, was hit by an exceptional dry season in 2023, exacerbating food security concerns. This illustrates a continued reliance on external factors and weather conditions, rather than the structural transformation that NSDP II seeks.

Social Transformation and Human Capital Development

A major pillar of NSDP II is social transformation, with the aim of improving human capital, boosting employment, and reducing poverty through better education, healthcare, and social protection systems. Lesotho however, continues to face significant challenges in this area. Unemployment, particularly among the youth, remains alarmingly high, and progress in job creation has been slow. While there was a commitment to enhancing employment through agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, these sectors have not seen the expected growth in 2023/24.

Infrastructure Development

The NSDP II highlights infrastructure development as a crucial component of economic transformation, focusing on sectors such as energy, transport, ICT, and water infrastructure. In 2023/24, infrastructure spending, particularly related to the LHWP II, was a key driver of GDP growth. The increased allocation to Public Works and Transport, which reached M215.7 million, underscores the government's commitment to improving infrastructure, which is essential for supporting economic activities and enhancing market access. The broader ambitions of NSDP II, such as improving energy security and expanding ICT infrastructure, however have progressed at a slower pace. The government's focus on infrastructure in 2023/24 is a step in the right direction, but significant investment will be required to meet the NSDP II's infrastructure targets by 2027.

Fiscal Management and good Governance

One of the more successful areas of 2023/24 has been in fiscal management, an area of priority under NSDP II's fourth pillar on good governance and accountability. The 6.1 per cent fiscal surplus recorded in 2023/24, driven by windfall SACU transfers and increased water royalties, reflects a positive shift towards fiscal prudence. The government's decision to use these revenues to reduce arrears and rebuild deposits at the Central Bank, rather than expanding the public wage bill, aligns with the NSDP II's focus on fiscal sustainability.

While progress in fiscal management is evident, broader goals around transparency and accountability—central to NSDP II—have seen slower development. The ongoing challenge of creating a merit-based, transparent public service and improving governance systems remains. As noted in the feedback from planning stakeholders, the failure of monitoring and evaluation during the early implementation phase of the plan has led to poor accountability, an issue that may need to be addressed if Lesotho is to achieve the governance goals laid out in the NSDP II.

Implementation Challenges and Future Outlook

Failure to implement the NSDP II over the past three years has been largely attributed to external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as internal issues like the lack of monitoring and evaluation. This has necessitated the extension of the plan's timeline to 2027, providing the government an opportunity to reassess its strategies and strengthen efforts toward achieving the NSDP II's objectives. Moving forward, Lesotho will need to focus on:

- Job creation through agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism.
- Accelerating infrastructure development to support private-sector growth and improve productivity.
- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure better implementation and track progress.
- Improving governance and accountability systems to foster trust

in public institutions and create an environment conducive to private-sector investment.

NSDP II in the 2024/25 Budget

The 2024/25 budget reflects a mixed alignment with the goals outlined in Lesotho's National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) for 2023/24 - 2027/28, which focuses on inclusive growth, socio-economic transformation, and sustainable development. While the budget makes notable strides in certain areas of the NSDP II, there are also areas where the budget allocation either deviates from or does not fully address the strategic objectives laid out in the plan.

Alignment with NSDP II

1. Infrastructure Development and Economic Diversification are some of the core pillars of the NSDP II with clear focus on improving infrastructure—particularly in the areas of energy, water, transport, and ICT. This will help to drive economic diversification away from a consumer-based economy to a producer and export-driven economy. The 2024/25 budget strongly aligns with this goal by prioritizing public works and transport, with the budget allocation for this sector increasing from M199.8 million in 2023/24 to M215.7 million in 2024/25. Additionally, funding for natural resources increased to M299.1 million in 2024/25 from M186 million in 2023/24, which supports the exploitation of Lesotho's water resources and other natural assets.

Investments in infrastructure, particularly through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project II (LHWP II), contribute to building a solid foundation for industrialization and export growth, key aspects of the NSDP II's vision. This is a crucial step toward improving connectivity, facilitating trade, and enabling the growth of value-added sectors like manufacturing.

2. Health and Human Capital Development

The NSDP II places strong emphasis on improving human capital development, particularly in education and health. The 2024/25 budget reflects this priority by allocating M2.217 billion to the health sector, though this is a slight reduction from M2.246 billion in 2023/24. Despite this decrease, healthcare remains one of the top priorities in the budget, which aligns with the NSDP II's call for better healthcare infrastructure, improved healthcare services, and access to medical care. Similarly, education continues to receive significant funding, with M2.677 billion allocated in 2024/25. This aligns with the NSDP II's objectives of investing in education reform and expanding access to quality education, which is critical for youth employment and long-term economic growth.

3. Fiscal Prudence and Public Debt Management

4. The NSDP II advocates for good governance and sound macroeconomic management as fundamental to ensuring fiscal stability and enabling sustainable development. The 2024/25 budget shows strong alignment with this objective by maintaining fiscal prudence. The largest allocation in the budget is for public debt servicing, which accounts for M3.134 billion, reflecting the

government's commitment to managing debt sustainably and maintaining fiscal stability.

Moreover, the government's strategy of using windfall revenues from SACU transfers to reduce arrears and build reserves at the Central Bank aligns with the NSDP II's focus on creating fiscal buffers and ensuring that public spending is targeted towards development rather than consumption. This prudent fiscal approach, coupled with controlled recurrent spending, is critical to stabilizing the macroeconomic environment, a key goal in the NSDP II.

Deviations from NSDP II

1. Agriculture and Food Security

The NSDP II places significant emphasis on agriculture as a sector that can drive inclusive growth, improve food security, and generate employment, particularly in the rural areas. The 2024/25 budget shows a slight reduction in funding for the agriculture, food security, and nutrition sector, with its allocation dropping from M557.4 million in 2023/24 to M543.7 million in 2024/25. This reduction could be seen as a deviation from the NSDP II's focus on agriculture-led growth. It may also indicate that the sector is not receiving the level of prioritization needed to meet the ambitious goals of increasing agricultural productivity and climate resilience in rural communities.

2. Manufacturing and Industrialization

One of the key pillars of the NSDP II is to transform Lesotho's economy into a producer and export-driven economy through industrialization and the development of value-added sectors like manufacturing. The 2024/25 budget however, does not demonstrate a significant increase in funding or focus on these sectors. The trade, industry, and business development allocation fell from M126.7 million in 2023/24 to M108.1 million in 2024/25. This reduction in funding for industrial and business development may indicate that the manufacturing sector, particularly textiles, which has struggled in recent years, is not receiving the attention it requires to recover and drive the industrial growth envisioned in the NSDP II.

3. Employment Creation and Social Development

While the NSDP II highlights employment creation as a critical priority, particularly through youth employment and skills development, the 2024/25 budget shows a slight decrease in funding for gender, youth, and social development, with its allocation falling from M1.396 billion in 2023/24 to M1.333 billion in 2024/25. Given the high levels of unemployment in Lesotho, particularly among the youth, this reduction could be seen as a deviation from the NSDP II's emphasis on creating job opportunities and reducing poverty. The budget speech also highlighted the continuing challenges of unemployment, signaling that more direct interventions may be needed to align with the NSDP II's employment goals. to align with the NSDP II's employment goals.

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1. Lesotho's Journey Towards Sustainable Development: The Integrated National Financing Framework and SDG Investor Map
2. Igniting Innovation: How STEAM & UniPod are Shaping Lesotho's Path to Prosperity
3. UNDP's Steadfast Commitment: Driving Lesotho's Multi-Sectoral Reforms Forward
4. From Lesotho to the World: Experience Elevation



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Lesotho's Journey Towards Sustainable Development: The Integrated National Financing Framework and SDG Investor Map

In a landmark effort to propel national development and align with global sustainability goals, the Kingdom of Lesotho has embarked on an innovative journey by initiating the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF). Spearheaded by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the INFF represents a strategic response to the country's pressing financing challenges. It aims to establish structural, and institutional mechanisms, as well as policies for the mobilization and management of development financing resources.

As Lesotho confronts the challenge of closing its development financing gap, estimated at LSL 3.3 billion under the National Strategic Development Plan II 2018/23, the INFF has emerged as a beacon of hope. The INFF process began with a comprehensive Development Finance Assessment (DFA), which meticulously mapped out the financial landscape of the nation. This assessment not only identified the challenges and gaps but also opportunities for improved mobilization and management of the identified finance sources for Lesotho's development. The resulting INFF roadmap continues to provide crucial insights, enabling the government to develop and implement strategies for the effective mobilization, management, and diversification of these resources. By aligning its development financing sources with national priorities, the INFF is actively addressing the financing gap and guiding the country towards sustainable economic growth.

Central to this transformative journey is the SDG Investor Map—a pioneering tool designed to unlock private sector investment aligned with the Sustainable



Hon Minister of Finance and Planning Dr. Retselisitsoe Matlanyane and UNDP Resident Representative Dr. Jacqueline Olweya at the launch of the SDG investor.

Development Goals (SDGs) and implement Lesotho's INFF roadmap. This tool equips private investors with critical information on investment opportunities in Lesotho, facilitating decisions that align with both profitability and the SDGs. Through this initiative, the Government of Lesotho, in collaboration with the UNDP, aims to attract and channel private investments into key sectors that are vital for national development. The SDG Investor Map has identified five priority areas where sustainable development and profitable investment intersect: Agriculture, Manufacturing, Renewable Energy, Health (Pharmaceuticals), and Financial Services.

The impact of the SDG Investor Map cannot

be overstated. It serves as a vital resource for the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC), a national investment promotion and development finance agency, enabling the identification of high-potential investment opportunities and providing essential market analysis. By aligning these opportunities with national priorities and the SDGs, Lesotho will not only attract investments but also foster partnerships between local and external investors. These partnerships will bring in much-needed skills, technology, and innovations, thereby enhancing productivity and value-chain development. The graceful launch of the SDG Investor Map by the Honourable Minister of Finance and Development Planning, alongside



the UNDP Resident Representative, marked a significant milestone in Lesotho's development narrative and established a mechanism to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

The INFF process has also played a crucial role in strengthening Lesotho's capacity to implement the SDGs in alignment with its National Priorities. This journey has been pivotal for the Government of Lesotho in propelling the achievement of these goals. Through a series of capacity-building workshops spanning five days, national stakeholders, including representatives from government, members of Parliament and Senate, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the private sector, academia, and the media, were brought together to deepen their understanding of SDG planning and implementation. This collaborative effort culminated in the establishment of a robust SDG coordination

structure, which was instrumental in the preparation of Lesotho's Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2022, ensuring broad stakeholder consensus on the national SDGs coordination mechanism. Moreover, the INFF facilitated the development of a policy framework that enhances cooperation between the government and CSOs. With support from UNDP, this policy was formulated to address the fragmentation of efforts in financing and implementing national priorities, ensuring a more cohesive and impactful approach to achieving the SDGs. This policy framework now provides a structured mechanism for improved engagement and partnerships between the government and CSOs, aligning their efforts towards national development and the successful implementation of the SDGs. Lesotho's journey with the INFF and SDG Investor Map is a powerful testament to



the nation's unwavering commitment to sustainable development. It reflects a forward-thinking approach to financing that recognizes the vital roles of both public and private sectors in driving economic transformation. As Lesotho

celebrates its 200th anniversary, the INFF and SDG Investor Map stand as enduring pillars of progress, guiding the nation towards a future where economic growth is harmonized with social and environmental well-being.

Igniting Innovation: How STEAM & UniPod are Shaping Lesotho's Path to Prosperity

Global Trends in STEAM
Since 2023, the UNDP, in partnership with the Ministry of Information, Communications, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MICSTI), has led the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) initiative and conference in Lesotho. Integrating these

disciplines into Lesotho's economy is critical, given STEAM's role in driving innovation, productivity, and growth. Developing STEAM skills can create new jobs, particularly in high-tech, creative sectors, and advanced manufacturing, helping diversify the economy and reduce reliance on traditional sectors. STEAM also

contributes to sustainable development by promoting environmentally friendly technologies and renewable energy.

The STEAM initiative is establishing a robust innovation ecosystem that integrates education, research, and industry, positioning Lesotho as a hub for

regional innovation. Sustained investment and policy support could transform the economy by fostering high-value industries, enhancing competitiveness, and improving resilience. The initiative's primary goals include enhancing national capacities, inspiring innovation, mobilizing investments, creating sustainable jobs,



Unipod Technicians Installing an Engine

and supporting technology growth with a focus on youth and gender inclusivity.

Global trends indicate that STEAM disciplines are essential for participating in the evolving

job market, especially as emerging technologies drive job creation. By 2025, the World Economic Forum predicts 97 million new

jobs globally, while 85 million may be displaced due to automation. STEAM skills are growing in demand, but women remain underrepresented, with only 28% of the global STEAM workforce.

STEAM in Lesotho

Lesotho has low participation in STEAM, particularly among women, who make up only 25% of STEAM graduates. While the education system is recognizing the importance of STEAM, challenges like limited resources and cultural barriers persist. Opportunities for growth lie in digital transformation, where STEAM professionals are needed in sectors like renewable energy, healthcare, and ICT.

Key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and ICT stand to benefit from integrating STEAM. Since its inception, the initiative has exposed over 500 youth to STEAM and awarded grants to 15 businesses through its innovation competition. It has built

partnerships across academia, government, and the private sector to support innovation and creativity.

UniPod

The UniPod, housed at Lerotholi Polytechnic, is an innovation hub fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and grassroots organizations. It includes three main components: the MakerSpace, Design Lab, and Collaborative Space, which promote innovation, product development, and industry linkages. The UniPod aims to create a national innovation ecosystem, support entrepreneurship, and advance local value chains.

By partnering with the Timbuktoo initiative, UniPod will facilitate collaboration across Africa, fostering innovation and knowledge sharing to drive sustainable development. Through interdisciplinary projects, the UniPod will help Lesotho apply STEAM education to real-world challenges, advancing local innovations and contributing to the global knowledge economy.



200 STEAM Innovators at the STEAM bootcamp with the Minister of Information, Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation Hon Nthathi Maorosi and UNDP Resident Representative Dr. Jacqueline Olweya.

UNDP's Steadfast Commitment: Driving Lesotho's Multi-Sectoral Reforms Forward

National reforms in Lesotho are rooted in an incremental process aimed at enhancing efficiency across all sectors of governance. Since gaining independence in 1966, the Kingdom of Lesotho has faced recurring political instability, compounded by piecemeal interventions that have failed to fully address fundamental governance issues.

These instabilities have had a ripple effect, negatively impacting other sectors and leading to a widespread call for multi-sectoral reforms. In response to recommendations from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU), and the Commonwealth, the Government of Lesotho embarked on a comprehensive reform program. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as a strategic partner, has been instrumental in providing expertise and resources from the inception of these reforms, resulting in significant progress.

Financial support from the European Union (EU) enabled the UNDP to contribute to a successful national dialogue, creating an inclusive platform for stakeholders to share their views. This process paved the way for national consensus on the content of the reforms and the institutional framework for their implementation across seven thematic sectors. The culmination of this process was the adoption of the Multi-Stakeholder National Dialogue Plenary II Report, which now serves as a blueprint for driving the reforms to build

"The Lesotho We Want."

The National Reforms Dialogue Act of 2018 was enacted to facilitate inclusive discussions on the reform agenda, leading to the establishment of the National Leaders' Forum (NLF) and the National Dialogue Planning Committee (NDPC). These bodies set the stage for the formation of the National Reforms Authority (NRA), an entity tasked with overseeing the reform process.

Upon the conclusion of the NRA's mandate, the National Reforms Transitional Office (NRTO) was established to continue the reform efforts. UNDP's support transitioned seamlessly from the NRA to the NRTO, ensuring that the momentum of the reforms was maintained despite a complex and challenging political environment. The NRTO, with UNDP's technical support, successfully segmented the proposed constitutional amendments into the 10th and 11th amendments. This strategic segmentation aimed to expedite the passage of clauses requiring a simple majority, thus avoiding delays caused by more contentious clauses requiring a supermajority or a referendum. Passing these "low-hanging fruit" amendments is expected to reinvigorate confidence in the reform process among stakeholders.

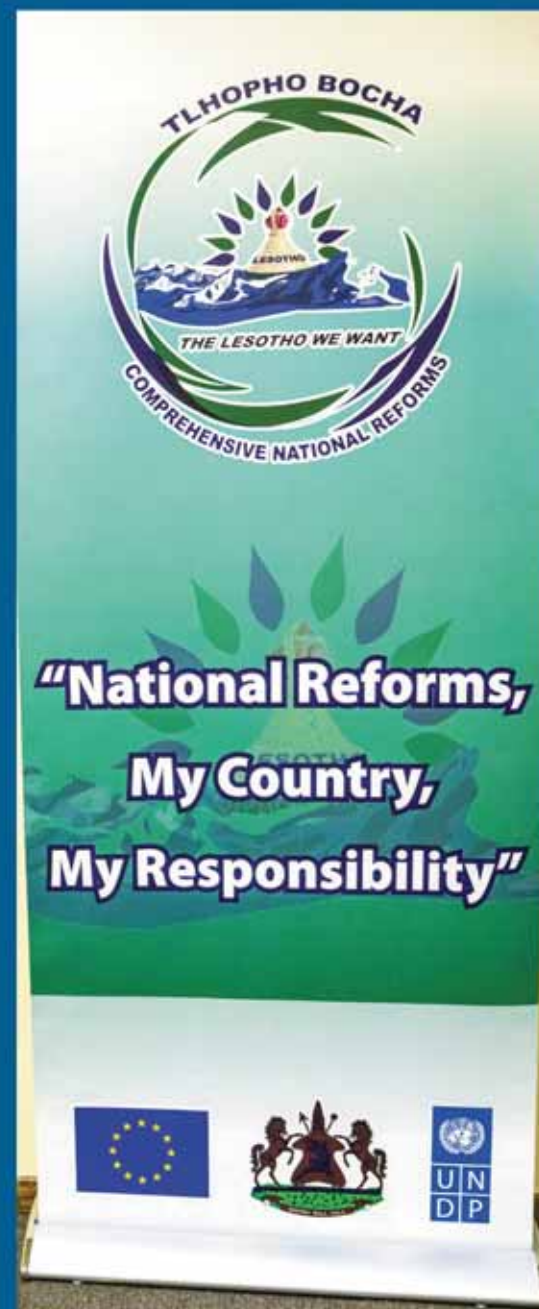
The reforms project focuses on seven thematic areas: the constitution, parliament, national security, justice, public service, economy, and media sectors. Effective implementation of reforms in these areas is expected to

enhance efficiency and productivity, driving the anticipated transformation. The success of the overall reform effort is heavily dependent on the successful implementation of constitutional reforms and this requires support to both houses of parliament to undertake their four functions, with the reforms process falling under the "legislative function".

In the justice sector, UNDP's support has been significant, aimed at promoting efficiency and access to justice, which is also necessary for realising the principle of equality. This support also seeks to uphold an inclusive and accountable justice system, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focused on reducing inequalities, strengthening peace, and building robust institutions.

UNDP has also supported the Government of Lesotho in its initiative to reform the recruitment of principal secretaries (PSs) from being politically motivated to being competency-based. This support led to the recruitment of fifteen PSs based on fair and competitive bases. UNDP's support transcended their recruitment stage, to hone their abilities through enrolment into executive leadership training programme whereby they are coached on effective leadership. Premised on UNDP's steadfastness in supporting the Lesotho's multi-sectoral reforms programme, there is hope that the programme will reach fruition.

Reforms Banner



From Lesotho to the World: Experience Elevation

The Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho, nestled between the Drakensberg and Maloti Mountain ranges, is home to some of the highest mountains in Southern Africa, thus referred to as “The Kingdom in the Sky.” The country is packed with breathtaking mountain ranges of all different shapes and sizes and is the only country in the world that is entirely above 1,000 meters.

Lesotho can be described as one of Africa’s best-kept secrets—a land waiting to tell stories of its heritage and beauty. Imagine and listen to the gushing streams of the Senqu River and the waterfalls in the Maluti Mountains, soaked in hoarfrost, ice crystals, and snowflakes that transcend in the morning sunlight. Lesotho! The Kingdom in the Sky, a landscape that captivates hearts with its breathtaking scenery of majestic mountains, lush greenery, tranquil lakes, and rivers.

Lesotho offers a vastly different tourism experience, with the potential of the tourism sector lying in its natural beauty, rich endemic flora and fauna, and captivating cultural heritage that includes paleontology, archaeology, and the highest concentration of San rock art paintings in Southern Africa. The appeal of this extraordinary country is rarely found in more commercialized destinations. Mountains, valleys, and rivers provide memorable scenery for tourists. Moreover, Lesotho is among the few countries in

Africa where there is snow every winter season. There is immense potential to attract investors, traders, and tourists to visit, explore, and invest in this beautiful country.

The Kingdom in the Sky is endowed with sunshine, enjoying 300 days of sunshine throughout the year. Lesotho boasts an extraordinary collection of exceedingly rare diamonds, prized as true treasures that spark a sense of wonder across the world. Water is another asset that the “Mountain Kingdom”—as it is affectionately known—

prides itself on and is known as Lesotho’s “white gold.” This is due to the natural and plentiful abundance of pure, clean water in the country. Being a mountainous country, the mountain streams have created an opportunity for the generation of hydropower and green hydrogen using water from rivers and dams.

Lesotho’s trade and investment offer goes far beyond its natural endowments found in water, diamonds, and elevations. The country’s development framework, the Extended Lesotho National Strategic

Development Plan 2023/24 – 2027/28 (NSDP II), is premised on a promise that inclusive economic growth will be achieved through economic diversification and the creation of sustainable, decent jobs, with a particular focus on the youth. The plan targets the creation of approximately 40,000 jobs in the private sector within the identified priority sectors that include agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, technology, and innovation.

Using its strategic partnership with the Government of Lesotho and Basotho,



UNDP is supporting the nation in ensuring that it achieves its national priorities and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of those was post-Covid-19 when Lesotho was crippled by the negative impacts of the pandemic. UNDP birthed an innovative initiative to assist in boosting the investment and tourism landscape of Lesotho. Introducing Lehakoe (the Gem), a digital compendium of economic treasures and investment opportunities in Lesotho. The national photobank is designed to forge new avenues for partnerships and collaborations in co-creating new

tourism products and services, economic assets, promoting trade and investment, leading to job creation and sustainable economic growth. The guiding tools for the development of Lehakoe were advancing the attainment of the national priorities and the SDGs.

One way of acceleration was through the partnerships in the development of this national Gem. UNDP partnered with Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC), the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC), and the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), content creators from the tourism private sector—

tour operators, hikers, travel agents, hospitality players, and technical expertise provided by academia for the development of the digital portal.

Lehakoe depicts the Mountain Kingdom with eye-catching imagery and includes virtual reality to ensure that one fully immerses themselves in all that Lesotho has to offer. This tech-based solution to promoting tourism and investment features virtual tours and imagery that showcases all the natural endowments of Lesotho—water, the sun, mountains, flora, and fauna. Additionally, it showcases heritage (history and culture), tourism (tourist attraction sites), and investment areas (existing opportunities). It is a collaborative exercise where content creators from the government, academia, and the

private sector are equipped with skills to feed into the photobank.

As commemoration of the bicentennial celebrations in the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho, Lehakoe is being transformed into a national initiative that is used by partners to promote investment, tourism, and showcase the various opportunities that Lesotho can offer. The design of Lehakoe ensures its integration with similar initiatives, one being the Lesotho Nation Brand led by LNDC. Lehakoe is embedded as it feeds into the image library of the Nation Brand.

Lehakoe's prototype was launched during the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly by the Right Honourable Prime Minister Samuel Matekane. The national launch, graced by government dignitaries, potential investors, and tourism players, took place in October 2024.



Lesotho at a Glance – Key



GENERAL



Population
2,332,354
(Projection based
on 2016 Census)



Area
30,355
Square
kilometers



Official Languages
2



Literacy Rate
81%



Global Gender Gap Index
0.6950
(Rank 87 out of 153 countries)



ECONOMY



Gross Domestic Product
\$1.845 Billion (source:
www.worldbank.com)



GDP Per Capita
\$1,045.9



Average GDP
Growth Rate
1.0% in 2024



Average Inflation Rate
8.3%



Consumer Price Index
106 (since July 2024)
6.7%

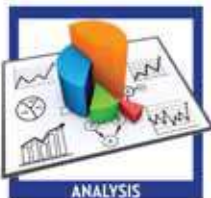


Human
Development
Index
0,514
Rank 162
out of 189
countries



Ease of doing Business Index
Rank: 122/190 Countries
DB Score: 59.4

Facts and indicators 2024/25



Government Budget as
a Percentage of GDP
52.87%



Unemployment Rate
18%



Sovereign Debt as Percentage of GDP
51% at
M19.6 Billion



Visa Openness Index
0,302 Rank out of 37
Africa Countries



Corruption Perception Index
Rank: 99/180 countries
Score: 38/100



International Credit Rating
B Stable
Fitch Rating



HEALTH



Life Expectancy
55.22 years



Maternal Mortality
554 per 100,000
Births

Doctor to
Population Ratio
0.9 per 10,000



HIV/AIDS
Prevalence Rate
15-49 years
20.9%



Nurse to
Population Ratio
10.2 per 10,000



SOURCES: World Bank <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lesotho/overview>, WHO, Human Development Report UNDP Country Programme Document, countryeconomy.com, Transparency International, Bureau of Statistics: www.bos.gov.ls





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Econet is proud to lead the charge in bringing the next generation of wireless technology to Lesotho. With our second-to-none 5G network, we are providing unparalleled speed, connectivity, and reliability, positioning Lesotho alongside global leaders in digital transformation. Whether for businesses, gamers, or everyday internet users, 5G is opening doors to a new era of possibilities.

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- Massive Connectivity; 5G can handle significantly more connected devices than previous generations. This is critical for smart cities, connected homes, and the growing number of smart devices in daily life.
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Prime Minister Matekane flanked by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and other dignitaries at the YouthConnekt Africa in Kigali, Rwanda



Prime Minister Sam Matekane Speaks on what Basotho Must Learn from King Moshoeshoe I's Legacy into the Future

Writes Manyathela Kheleli



Modern day politics are a big departure from how the great King Moshoeshoe I founded the Basotho nation in the last two centuries. With his vision and exemplary leadership founded on diplomacy, tolerance, charity and forgiveness, Lesotho still stands tall as a resilient nation. That it still appears like a scar on the map of conquest, in the belly of its powerful neighbour, South Africa, is testimony to the unyielding courage and statesmanship that Moshoeshoe stood for. It only follows that post-independence politicians must follow in his footsteps to continue his rich legacy and preserve the Basotho nation that has survived for over 200 years.

The 11th prime minister of Lesotho, Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane, has a rare honour of leading the country during a time coinciding with the bicentennial celebrations of the birth of Lesotho. In an interview with the Lesotho Insights, the Prime Minister shares his views on what the legacy of the founder of the nation holds for Basotho. He contends that King Moshoeshoe I was a true leader devoted to unifying the Basotho nation through peaceful means.

According to Prime Minister Sam Matekane, the legacy of King Moshoeshoe I has stood the test of time. He says the father of the Basotho nation founded his nation premised on peace, unity, protection and harmony that prevailed at Thaba Bosiu, the mountain fortress that would later become the hallmark of the formation of the Basotho nation as we know it today.

The prime minister says he believes King Moshoeshoe I's vision, deeply rooted in respect for self and others is the foundation of modern day democracy. Much more than his military prowess and deft diplomacy, his passion towards the protection and welfare of his subjects catapulted him to become a respected leader in the region. His influence and charisma transcended clans and remnants of other tribes seeking refuge in his nation. Like the pied piper, his people had a deep sense of faith in him, which also made his 47-year reign easier. He was able to unite various clans under the Basotho tribe that we have today, creating a single, cohesive identity and polity. While the clans retained their own identities, they came to form the broader Basotho nation, which resisted conquest and eventually secured the sovereignty that Lesotho enjoys today.

Asked about what he believes Lesotho politicians can learn from King Moshoeshoe I and apply in today's world; the prime minister says modern day politicians in Lesotho must learn to work together.

"We need to look beyond politics and self-interest. We need to learn to accommodate everyone to face modern day challenges. Today, politics divides us, we need to have one vision to unite the nation."

Matekane also contends that most politicians invariably sell the same ideas during electioneering in terms of their promises to the electorate.

"As politicians, we all speak one language but if we were to fulfil those promises and work together to build our nation and accommodate everyone, we would be a great nation united to fight

unemployment and poverty.

"I wish politicians could work together. At the moment, our politics has been largely divisive and I pray that we look at politics differently to build the nation together."

But he contends that it has not been easy for politicians to find a common ground. In his opinion, all politicians bring different agendas when they get to parliament and deviate from the true course.

"This is outside of our mandate as politicians and I recommend that we return to the only commitment that matters; serving the nation."

Sworn into office on 22 October 2022, Prime Minister Matekane is almost halfway through his five year team at the helm of his coalition government, which has also had its fair share of challenges.

"I have a five year mandate until 2027. There were a lot of turbulences when we started, to the point that even the opposition took advantage to try to infiltrate and destabilise the government. I am now at a point where I am super confident that we have gone beyond those uncertain times and all hands are now on deck as we work for our people. What stands out for me for this term is to achieve some commendable milestones for Basotho," he said, adding that he is confident that his will be the first coalition government since 2012 that will see off its full term to the next elections in 2027. This against the background that none of Lesotho's preceding coalition governments failed to survive beyond two years, making Matekane's government the most stable of the pack.

As soon as he got into office, notable strides were made, mostly in the maintenance and roll out of the road infrastructure and he says this has been strategic.

"I believe there are many national priorities, but I strongly believe that any healthy economy is built on infrastructure development that begins with building roads, which must be on acceptable standards."

The prime minister says that access to roads makes development possible. His other notable priority has been to ensure that Lesotho changes the face of its capital city, Maseru.

"We have given our city a new lease of life by lighting it up. Our airport also has to meet international standards, and that is already work in progress," Matekane adds.

He says his government has managed to stretch its budget to accommodate infrastructure development by curbing overpricing, which has been endemic to government procurement. "Prices for goods and services procured by government have been so high in the past, even up to five times the market price, and controlling that has helped us to save and redirect those savings to other projects."

The Prime Minister has also started Sebatso, a youth empowerment initiative aimed at fostering the growth of youth-led businesses, preparing them for investment in both national and international stages across the sectors of agriculture, arts, technology and tourism amongst others.

"I believe Sebatso is a big success. I have taken these young entrepreneurs to countries like Kenya and Rwanda, where they have performed very well. Just to give you an example, in Kenya, we had about 20,000 youths from 32 countries. I am proud to say Basotho have been winning awards in all the countries they have been to. This shows we are going somewhere" he said.

But his tenure has come with challenges, Matekane says. The government is cash-strapped. Added to that, the bureaucracy and foul attitudes among civil servants have worsened the situation.

"In my view coming from business, these are the main challenges that are frustrating our progress. Back in my days at Matekane Group of Companies (MGC), I would sit in board meetings in which we would make resolutions. We would then immediately get into implementation, but the process is different with government. A decision can take up to five months before implementation, which can be frustrating."

While there have been challenges, it will be premature to say his government has registered any failures when his five-year term still hasn't ended. Quizzed on any failures of his government to date, Prime Minister Matekane says he cannot say he has failed as yet. There might be areas where the administration has not done well, but he still has a chance to rectify any deficiencies.



Prime Minister Sam Matekane at the bicentennial celebration event

"All the promises I have made to the nation have a five-year timeline, I'm still within my term," he adds.

Asked about his message for the future to Basotho in line with the theme of the 200-years celebration – Birth, Reflection Revival (*Tsoalo, Boitekolo, Tsosoloso*), the Prime Minister says Basotho should start toeing the line of their forefathers.

"I say let's follow King Moshoeshoe's legacy and principles, where he

spoke of peace, oneness and care. Let's follow the same route, but being well aware that we are living in the modern world that has gone through numerous transformations over the years. We are a nation that has transformed from fighting for survival, getting full independence and now an active member of the international community. In the next 100 years, we must focus on being a self-sustaining country that has a clear growth and developmental plan to remain relevant for its people today and beyond."

And he had a message for investors. They must come and invest in Lesotho. There are lots of opportunities that they can explore.

"There are many opportunities in Lesotho in different sectors such as tourism, agriculture, energy and many others. Remember Lesotho has water in abundance. That water, often dubbed the white gold, can be taken advantage of by investors towards the generation of electricity for export. It can also be used for agriculture to meet both domestic and export demand."

Lesotho has a young educated, population and lots of skilled labour that can also be exported for economic development and skills transfer.

When he retires from politics, he wishes to be remembered as the Prime Minister who rid the country of corruption.

"It is my wish to leave a corruption-free Lesotho that can also be a model for the world to emulate. To demonstrate my commitment on this wish, my government increased budget for Lesotho's anti-graft body, the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) in the first year in office from M23million up to M74 million to capacitate it to do its work more diligently and without fear or favour. I want to leave a clean government for the next prime minister."

Prime Minister Matekane says his government is here to serve the interests of Basotho and walk the journey with them. His biggest appeal is for the nation to exercise tolerance and patience to achieve national dreams.

"We still have a long way to get to the Lesotho we all aspire for. We came in during very difficult times, and we are trying to correct the things that were not right."

The Prime Minister says the theme of the bicentennial celebration, which is "Birth, Reflection Revival" should serve as a guiding light for Basotho at home and in the diaspora to rekindle and inspire all efforts towards opening a new chapter to the next 200 years. He says, King Moshoeshoe I's legacy "compels us to a new dawn heading towards a prosperous future together as one nation".



Christian Fellowship Sessions One of the **TRC Ecumenical** for Clergy attended by prominent figures such as the first Anglican Church's Emeritus Bishop Phillip Mokuku, Michael Baba Jordaan – TRC Management Team Coordinator, Sister Veronica Mapaseka Phafoli – founder of Development for Peace Education, and Judy Gay – representative of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (USA).

TRANSFORMATION RESOURCE CENTRE

Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) is an **Ecumenical Resource Centre** that advocates for justice, peace, and participatory development. It was established in 1979 by Dr. James (or Jimmy) and Joan Stewart. TRC owes its origins to the church. Its founders saw the organization as a community of caring people, the majority of whom survived the Maseru Massacre in 1982 and 1985. The Stewart couple were members of St. Mary's Catholic Cathedral in Sharpeville; hence, the origins of the Centre are rooted in the Christian faith.

TRC's socio-political focus was inspired by Michael 'Baba' Jordaan's studies of Paulo Freire's ideas of liberation, social analysis, justice, leadership, community work, simple decision-making, action planning, new forms of management, and problem-solving mechanisms. These were captured in a manual for social analysis and community work called Training for Transformation, from which TRC took its name, a veritable **Resource Centre for Transformation**. With pedigree equal to Stewarts' commitment to truth of faith, Michael Jordaan worked for the Christian Institute and South Africa Council of Churches' magisterial area of Kroonstad, which were banned in 1977 and 1978, respectively. He was very instrumental in the formation of similar organization such as the Christian Institute; therefore, he is also recognized as the founding father of TRC—**Baba which means the father in isiZulu language!**

Our Scope

TRC uses a national focus due to the breadth and complexity of its programme content. While operationally the organization addresses specific project areas in the districts of Maseru, Mafeteng, Leribe, Botha Bothe, Mokhotlong, the impact and stimuli of the organization's work is expected to be felt nationally. Regional and international connections keep the Centre firmly on the global development agenda.

Our Strategy

As an advocacy and lobby organization, TRC prefers friendly, patient persuasion to robust, confrontationist militancy through dialogue, information, partnerships, community presence, research, publication, training, networking, lobbying, and advocacy. The main actors in advocacy are the recipients themselves. TRC empowers the poor and marginalized to lobby for their rights. TRC forges linkages and relationships to improve chances of receiving support. The Centre enhances the potential and capabilities of its clients in areas such as rural development, resource conservation, environment protection, human rights, good governance, and democracy.

PROGRAMMES

Public Service and Accountability

The Programme comprises access to services advocacy projects that engage communities to become organized, informed, and confident to skillfully engage government to be responsive in advancing access to basic services. It involves public participation and accountability initiatives where citizens claim their rights by demanding participation in parliamentary processes that shape laws and public policies.



From left to right: **Mosito Lelimo** (Assistant Deputy Clerk), **Tsikoane Peshoane** (Executive Director—TRC), **Melissa Schumi Jones** (US Embassy Maseru Public Relations Officer), **Thakane Thabisi**, **Mosebo Mohlatsane**, and **Tebello Motuba** (Qalo High School, St. Rose High School, and Seeliso High School, respectively) with **Hon. Thabang Kholumo** Member of Parliament—Qalo Constituency at **American Corner Supported Advocacy for Constitutional Reform Students Parliament**.

Research, Information and Communication

The programme supports high-quality research and learning processes that serve as a primary information hub for TRC programming. It provides learning opportunities to continually learn, both from its own and others' experiences to develop and deepen its practices and strategies through acquiring, maintaining, and disseminating adequate informative materials that communicate issues of Public Service and Accountability as well as Human Rights and Access to Justice.



Michael Baba Jordaan Management Committee and Team Coordinator (1989-1995) facilitating **TRC Friends' Meeting dialogue** in the library.



From left to right: **Commissar Bobo Pemba**, **Xolile Mini** (survivors of Maseru Massacres), **Lerona-Rebatho Mdlankomo** (born in 1982 during Maseru Massacre tragedy), **Ntate Masupha Seeliso** (Matsieng Principal Chief during the Massacre), **Ms Constance Seoposengwe** – Her Excellency Republic of South Africa High Commissioner (currently), **Tsikoane Peshoane** (TRC Director), **Commissar Mbulelo Musi** (Maputo Massacre tragedy survivor), **Colone Sibonisang Matomela** (from South Africa High Commission Maseru), **Betty Leslie**, **Sibongile Kubeka** (Maseru Massacre Survivors), and **Lira Theko** (Head of Programmes-TRC) at Sea-point (known as Seputana Cemetery) in Lesotho.

Human Rights and Access to Justice

The human rights and access to justice programme focuses more on the protection and promotion of human rights – respect, advocacy for justice and elevation of socio-economic rights to be part of the Bill of Rights in the constitution of Lesotho. It is further particular in strengthening human rights institutions and oversight bodies that human rights violations exposed are documented and victims redressed. The programme strives to advance constitutional democracy and social justice through the promotion and protection of community welfare and the well-being of poor and vulnerable people.

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
HIGH COMMISSION LESOTHO

Brot
für die Welt



Civil Society Organisation Mass action for national reforms led by Transformation Resources Centre, Lesotho Council of NGOs, Labour movements, and Action for Peace & Solidarity (APS) – an association of families of the victims of political mayhem of 2015.



American Corner Advocacy Constitutional Reform Students Parliament schools' representatives drawn from districts youth engagement forums organised by TRC in 2019 together with Adv. Fine Maema – National Assembly Clerk, Hon Thabang Kholumo, and Constitutional Law, Human Rights, and Justice Minister Mokhele Moletsane.



Fostering Security Sector Institutions Compliance with Human Rights Standards—TRC campaign supported by Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and European Union (EU) Delegation in Lesotho in 2021.



John and Judy Gay are missionaries who were seconded to TRC by the Episcopal Church of the United States of America after the TRC Ecumenical Christian Fellowship Session held at the Centre.

TRC, Executive Director Tsikoane Peshoane.

Thakane Thabisi
was the first
award winner.

Michael Baba
Jordaan, TRC
Management Team
Coordinator

ECOCASH & ECOSURE CELEBRATE 10 YEARS (OF EMPOWERING BASOTHO)

EcoCash

The pioneer of mobile money services in Lesotho, ushered in an era of financial inclusion & flexibility.

EcoSure

With its counterpart - EcoSure Rebolokahile, honours a decade of comfort, cooperation, inclusivity and compassion.

In its decade of operations, EcoCash & EcoSure pioneered

- Mobile money services,
- Payments systems for businesses and SMMEs
- Mobile money funeral insurance,
- Expanded coverage for families
- EcoSure group for communities.

Positioning our financial services for long term success

Here's to another decade of revolution, improvement and making a positive difference in people's lives.

Econet Expo

Driving The Digital Economy

The Econet Expo, Lesotho's first digital Expo, was the ultimate destination for all Basotho, young and old, to join the global digital revolution and explore the latest digital technologies, products, and services.



The Expo featured some of the most highly anticipated products and services of the year to ensure digital access and inclusivity for all in the country. Our products centred around these main categories; AI Technology, MSME Accelerators, Smart Living, On The Go, 10x Business Solutions and Gaming.

All attendees experienced our digital solutions that are designed to:

- Make life easier and more affordable in the home
- Improve speed and productivity in the workplace
- Keep people connected, wherever they may be
- Enable speedy cashless financial transactions
- Educate and stimulate the minds of children
- Create connected families and communities through exhibits, interactive workshops and live demonstrations

GAMING ZONE



The Econet Expo was an ultimate digital solutions experience that captured the hearts and minds of all Basotho who attended.

Smart Living



ECONET eSIM-SECURE, VERSATILE CONVENIENT, DIGITAL

Embrace boundless freedom and seamless connectivity!

Innovation and Development

In 2023 we introduced our groundbreaking innovations and developments, setting new standards in how we bring connectivity to Basotho.

1. Introducing the eSIM: Pioneering a Wireless Revolution

What is the eSIM?

With the introduction of our cutting-edge eSIM technology, you can switch mobile carriers with just a few taps on your phone.

The eSIM, or embedded SIM, is a virtual, non-physical SIM card securely embedded in your device.

Benefits of eSIM:

- **Seamless Connectivity:** No more swapping physical SIM cards when switching carriers or traveling internationally. Stay connected effortlessly.
- **Enhanced Security:** eSIMs are highly secure, reducing the risk of SIM card theft or fraud.
- **Space-Saving:** eSIMs free up valuable space in your device for larger batteries or additional features.
- **Eco-Friendly:** Say goodbye to plastic SIM cards, contributing to a greener planet.



ECONET FIBRE NETWORK EXPANSION



2. Expansion of our Fibre Network

We've been hard at work expanding our Fibre Network across the nation, and the benefits are immense: unparalleled speed, reliability, and efficiency compared to traditional copper cables.

Benefits of Fibre:

- **Lightning-Fast Speeds:** Enjoy blazing-fast internet speeds that can handle the demands of today's data-hungry applications and devices.
- **Enhanced Reliability:** Say goodbye to buffering and dropped connections. Fiber is less susceptible to interference, ensuring a stable connection.
- **Reducing Wireless Traffic:** With more users connected to the Fiber Network, we're relieving congestion on our wireless infrastructure, leading to a smoother and faster wireless experience for everyone.
- **Future-Proof Connectivity:** Fiber is ready for the next generation of technology, ensuring you stay connected in the years to come.

With eSIM and an expanded Fiber Network, we're dedicated to providing Basotho with a faster, more flexible, and more reliable connection across the nation.

Inspired to change your world

BACKGROUND OF C4005D

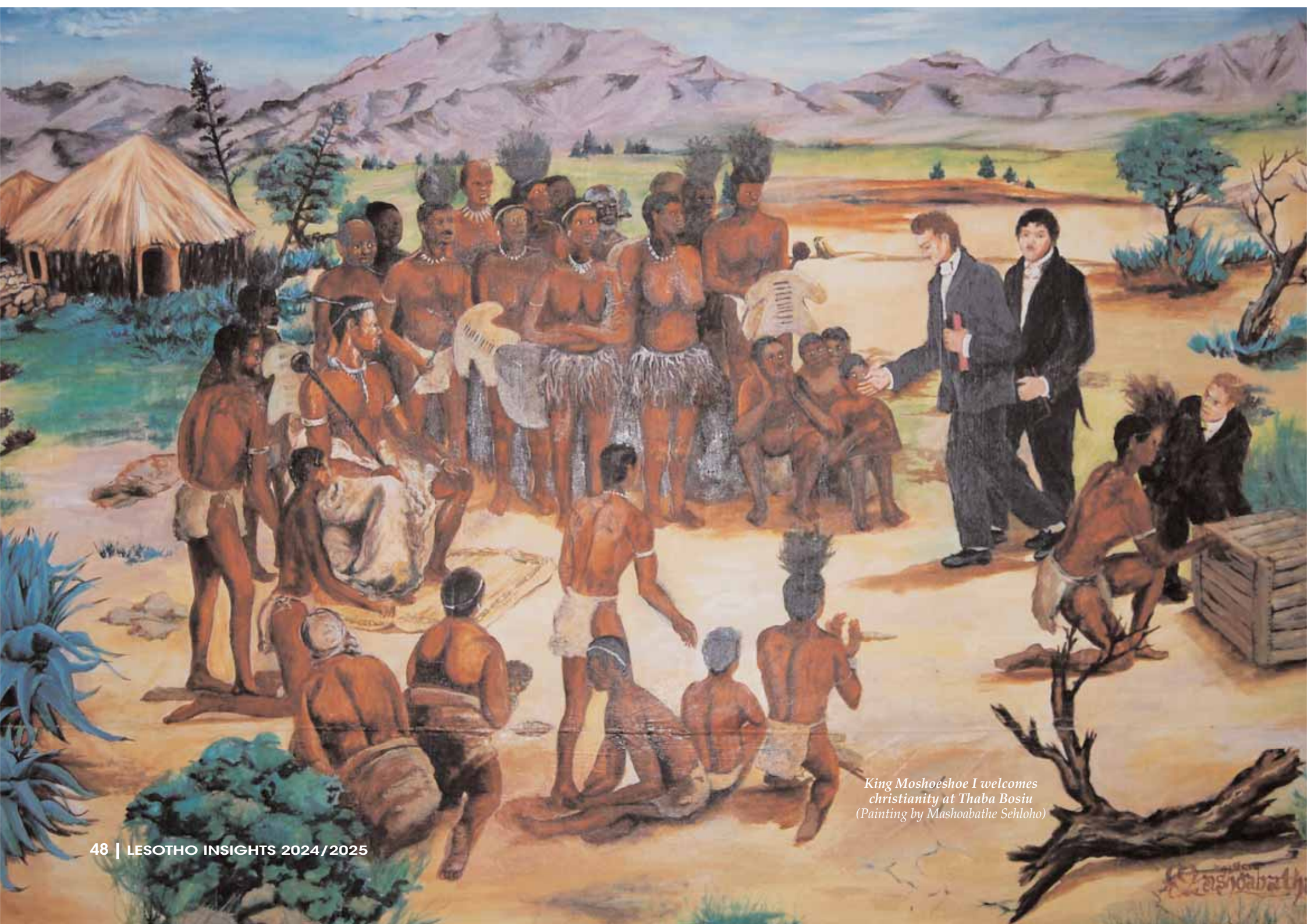
INSTALLATION OF TELECOMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PHASE II



Polihali Powerstation - Mokhotlong

Econet/CBS JV has successfully completed the implementation of Phase 2 LHDA C4005D contract, under which it was contracted to upgrade and expand the existing LEC telecommunications network from Maseru Central via Maputsoe to the Katse Dam, as well as a network from Maputsoe via 'Muela and Tlokoeng to Mokhotlong network to provide telecommunication services to the new dam site at Polihali, plus the specified sites requiring services during the construction period.

The Scope of Work included the upgrading of some existing nodes to accommodate the higher bandwidths, the installation of new nodes in the Polihali area, the establishment of a ring network configuration to achieve high availability and reliability, as well as the provision of data network equipment, voice communication and video conferencing equipment, and related services.



*King Moshoeshe I welcomes
Christianity at Thaba Bosiu
(Painting by Mashoabathe Sehloho)*



King Moshoeshe I died on 11 March, 1870, at the age of 83. At the time of his death, he had established a nation in southern Africa like no other, a proud Basotho nation formed from the remnants of other clans in the region. Moshoeshe and his people stood resolute when most African nations in Southern Africa perished during the onslaught of the Lifaqane wars, and later the occupation of the white settlers.

Reflecting on the 200 years of the Basotho Nation

Writes Manyathela Kheleli

Two decades down the line, we remember him with great fondness as a military strategist, and a diplomat who created the Basotho what Lesotho has today. His legacy lives on. In keeping with his initiation name, Letlama – the Binder, Moshoeshe truly embodied his initiation name by bringing together fragmented clans to form a cohesive nation.

We look back at what King Moshoeshe stood for and what he would have wished for his people as a tribute to the founding visionary. Basotho throughout the world celebrated the bicentennial anniversary of the existence of the Basotho nation.

King Moshoeshe's documented exploits have become a fountain of knowledge for the disciplines of political science, political philosophy and public administration among others. As a fitting tribute to the father of the nation, below is an artistic representation of what I think King Moshoeshe would have said about his country if he were alive or if he could speak from the grave. This article is purely artistic and is neither meant to infringe on the rights nor feelings of anyone. Any inconvenience caused is sincerely regretted.

s a starting point, I pay tribute to the historians and scholars who have written volumes of literature documenting my trials and tribulations during my life. Looking back, I find it humbling that the people who afforded me a worthwhile encounter with the white people, the missionaries like Eugene Casalis, saw how we lived as a young nation then, and took note of how we came to being as Basotho under my leadership. They relied on oral traditions to record the evolution of the Basotho nation from its formation. Later, Reverend David Frederick Ellenberger and other modern scholars such as Peter Sanders, Professor LBBJ Machobane and many others, used this literature to provide academic reviews of what they believe I stood for. For the purposes of what I want to share with you, I choose to align myself with an article titled "The Exemplary Ethical Leadership of King Moshoeshe of Basotho of Lesotho in the nineteenth Century Southern Africa" (2015) by Khali Mofuoa and "Facts about King Moshoeshe !: The Razor of Southern Africa (2014) by Bill Humphrey. The latter was used by Professor Itumeleng Mosala when he delivered a lecture at the fourth King Moshoeshe memorial lecture hosted by University of Free State.

I credit most of my experiences to my mentor and spiritual leader, the venerable Chief Mohlomi, who not only changed my perspective to life and leadership, but truly inspired me to serve my people and lead them to survive the time of chaos that we called lifaqane, and later the onslaught inflicted by the white settlers who wanted to destroy us and take our land. Through Morena Mohlomi's teachings, I became a changed man. I dedicated my life to peace and servitude. My entire life has been about a big departure from violence to peace. From the shearer of Ramonaheng's beard as a courageous warrior, I underwent a transformation that has signified my reign and nation building. I envisioned Lesotho as a country at peace with itself and at peace with its neighbours, as espoused in the Vision 2020 statement that you have today.

Long back, during the days of my youth, it was survival of the fittest. It was important to fight and conquer the weak and seize their land, cattle, women and children. This is what we later called Lifaqane. Democracy had not yet taken root in any formal way. Boundaries were not fixed, and governments, as you know them today, did not exist. Survival hinged on military prowess, with conquest often being the fate of those unable to defend themselves. My contemporaries, the likes of Shaka of the Zulu nation, probably thought I was a coward. But it was the realisation that peace was better than war, which inspired me to foster peace.

My journey in leadership and the formation of the Basotho nation that we are proud of today started when I was just 34 years old. At that age, I was already leading a small Bamokoteli clan as an heir to my father, Mokhachane. After fighting many battles, I sat down with some of my key advisors and made a decision to leave Menkhoaneng for Thaba Bosiu, which was safer as it was impregnable. It was a tough call to make travelling with all our belongings, men and women - I knew it was going to be a big risk, but one that was worth taking. Little did I know that on this journey, my own grandfather, Peete would be ambushed and devoured by the cannibals.

In the end, we arrived at the Thaba Bosiu plateau, a flat land with abundant water from its eight springs and a large expanse of vegetation on which my people could survive. The biggest advantage was that the mountain had six distinct passes, and the other areas around it were dangerous cliffs that would make it impossible for the enemies to climb. Thaba Bosiu became a mountain fortress which I think should be treasured today for the safety that it provided us in the formative days of the Basotho nation.





Morena Mohlomi, the greatest mentor of Moshoeshoe I and largely responsible for his exemplary and visionary leadership

At Thaba Bosiu, instead of building our nation through coercion and subjugation, I built and maintained the Basotho nation through making cultural plurality, the binding value for my people. I established a system of alliances and consensus, which enabled me to instil loyalty and allegiance. An example of such are the alliances I made with the Batlokoa of 'Manthatisi, Makhoakhoa led by Chief Lethole and the Bataung of Moletsane. I also welcomed the remnants of other clans running away from Shaka's spear into my growing nation. I allowed them to intermarry with us because I had a vision of a strong and big nation, where we would all live together in harmony as one people.

I made it my mission to provide wealth and prosperity for my people. Granted that cattle raiding was a norm during those times, I also sought to ensure that my subjects had food in abundance, I instilled in my people the importance of supporting those who were poor, particularly those smaller clans like the Ndebeles, Tswana and other Sesotho speaking tribes that had joined to become my subjects.

To sustain the livelihoods of my newly found subjects that I did not regard as refugees, I introduced the Mafisa system, where I loaned cattle to those in need so that they could use the cattle and return them

to the communal kraal once they were back on their feet. Under the same Mafisa system, I also gave cattle to young men who did not own cattle to pay the bride price – bohali. In keeping with our tradition, children born from those marriages were mine. I believe this also helped me to not only earn the respect of my people but also their loyalty and service, which helped us to increase our wealth as a nation.

Following the advice of my mentor, the great Chief Mohlomi, I also endeavoured to marry women from chiefdoms and clans in the region – among them San, Zulu and Xhosa speakers. I did this because I knew that a chief of a clan whose daughter was married to me would think twice before they could attack me. That explains why I had more than 150 wives in my lifetime.

I never lost a major battle during the Lifaqane wars nor to the British or the Boers, a feat that many native rulers in Africa were unable to maintain during my time. Often times, I found peaceful means to solve a dispute. But pushed to the limit, I used all my might to win my battles. I remember the battle of Berea with the British, led by Sir George Cathcart in 1852. We won the war convincingly, but to save his bruised ego, I wrote Cathcart a letter conceding defeat and to ask for peace. I want to believe this is a tactic that you now call the carrot and stick approach. I did this because I was aware that I could not maintain the wars with the white settlers. Collateral damage was too high. Later on, I eventually sought protection from Queen Victoria, not as a colony, but a protectorate. This, I believe, was a move that helped Lesotho to maintain its sovereignty, even long after my death.

I acknowledge modern scholars that have credited me for being one of the earliest proponents of democracy in the 1800s, which I find humbling. This, they say, emanated from my consultative approach in decision making. On how I governed my people, I had a number of elected people, senior councillors or matona as they were called, whom I regularly called upon for advice at Khotla. I also had the habit of calling my subjects to public gatherings (pitso), where I updated them on the latest issues and other matters of governance. I was also conscious to allow my subjects to criticise and advise me on many of my key decisions, so that they felt they were party to the decision-making process and would take ownership of policies emanating from those decisions.

As you might realise, I fought, I toiled, and I made many sacrifices to make the Basotho nation what it is today. For many reasons, I am proud that Lesotho, my Lesotho, my Basotho have remained resolute this far and remained a nation for a staggering 200 years. It is humbling and I look at it with a smile. I have always wished for a Basotho nation that aspired for tolerance and encouraged people from different ethnicities, regions and backgrounds to come together to promote patriotism and social cohesion in order to pave way for a more harmonious and peaceful Lesotho. I have also wished for a country that is united across the political divide. This wish would resonate with my strong sense of cooperation, mutual respect and tolerance, and also for Lesotho to be seen by the world as a country that embraces diversity and inclusivity.



*Moshoeshoe dictating a letter to his de-facto Minister of Foreign Affairs Eugene Casalis
(Copyright: Morokapula Production)*

I believe that these traits are also profound in my actions, where I even allowed the cannibals that maimed my grandfather to be incorporated into my nation.

As we look ahead to the next 100 years and beyond, I will still be here as your guardian angel to help you become an example for world peace, and a beacon of hope and diplomacy that builds nations. I wish for Lesotho to be exemplary in leading peace efforts throughout the world and encourage world leaders to settle disputes through negotiation and peaceful means. I also urge you to stay true to our moral compass, which will guide you to learn and appreciate the value of true compassion, diplomacy and servant leadership that embodied my reign.

That said, Basotho ba heso, the next 200 years of the Basotho nation depend on our ability to embody the virtues that I instilled in the 48 years of my reign. By staying true to my vision of unity, inclusivity and peace, you can influence my legacy to endure for generations to come. In doing so, you will continue to make me proud and make Lesotho a respected country in the community of nations.

Protect the weak, respect women and girls. Old men and women who have become frail and sickly are not wizards and witches, they need your protection. During my rule, there were no orphans and that must continue. We are a compassionate people and that is how the world should know us.



Rebranding the Mountain Kingdom

Writes Nthakeng Selinyane



The national slogan-Khotso, Pula, Nala-Peace, Rain, Prosperity adorn the main traffic circle in Maseru.

Lesotho is a country that is exceptionally loved by its people, and until recently, it had a very small diaspora, as even the most successful and world celebrated citizens find it hard to call another country home. Many made illustrious careers abroad but still ended up dying and being buried on home soil. Looking back at what the Great King Moshoeshoe could have envisioned when he founded and devoted his life to building the Basotho nation, the often deep but largely misunderstood Sesotho figure of Speech "sekoale Basotho" simply compels us to honour his legacy.

Even the Basotho of South Africa do not have their own recognised king in the Republic like the Bafokeng, Zulus and others because they look up to Matsieng as their throne and Thaba-Bosiu as their fortress. The latter being the precolonial fortress of the nation's putative founder, King Moshoeshoe and the former being the customary home of the King of Lesotho. From the apartheid years of Radio Bantu to the present-day Lesedi FM, the South African Broadcasting Corporation's Sesotho radio broadcasters and listeners, being Basotho of South Africa, have had a long history of fond reference to Lesotho as their cultural home or a source of their cultural identity. They often fondly refer to Lesotho as "*Kahar'a Naha*", meaning (a

feeling of being) in one's home country. Not that they would automatically choose to live in Lesotho if by some odd happenstance they were to be constrained to choose between abiding in the country of their cultural identity or where they currently hold formal citizenship; but they remain permanent brand ambassadors for Sesotho culture abroad.

We are also a resilient nation that has come back from the brink multiple times when it seemed we could just tilt over and be finished as a nation. The most spine-chilling of these was the 1970 post-election riots and subsequent declaration of the state of emergency, the state of emergency which mutated into a scorching confrontation that included the

mounting of a guerilla war by the main opposition party after losing the election, and the 1998 post-election riots. These sad episodes have dramatically changed the nation's political trajectory with the historic reform of the electoral model where for the first time since 1994, Basotho have witnessed a long train of coalition governments. This new electoral model has produced a parliament of no fewer than 10 parties in each parliament since 2002, and the new era has seen no post-election protests and conflicts as the new model caters for a variety of representation in parliament, thereby proverbially leaving no one behind.

The jury is still out on coalition governments – some say the trend has helped curtail rotten regimes while others say they have exacerbated instability. As the revolving door brings all of them rapidly into contact with the mechanics of governance, almost none of the significant parties and the so-called decimal point parties which obtain one seat or two in Parliament have been in government at one point or another, thereby ensuring that criticism of politics becomes more constructive over time and there's a palpable construction of a solid national political culture.

As a nation, what we have to seriously deal with, before everything else, is harnessing political identity as a force for good in our personal, capable of being transformatively deployed by its bearers, not enslaving them for all sorts of devious ends that derail us from our covenants. We do wear our multiple identities with pride and use them the way that we want, from being a boy, a girl, a man or woman, an initiate, a believer or atheist, or a follower of such, and use them as we like.

As Basotho we are known as a nation of peace and hospitality, in our culture unknown visitors are welcomed into our homes with kindness and served food, and if you're without food, you are obliged to explain yourself for your condition of absence of food, in Sesotho "*ua ba latolela*". We say "*Lijo li jeoa ka baeti*", meaning the best food is brought out when the visitors arrive.

*Army parade with flag-bearers displaying
the country flag and the Royal Standard*





Basotho women dressed in cowhide traditional wear and seana-marena blankets, iconic symbols of Basotho culture.

Respect, especially of the young for the elderly, is an intrinsic part of our being, where in a public bus, a youth will instinctively stand up for an adult if there's no seat left. At our national border control posts, you will find printed on giant boards the words "Kena ka Khotso" which translate to "come into our land in peace", you are welcome to the land of peace.

Our national vision 2020 said, by that year, Lesotho would have been a nation at peace with itself and its neighbours. This didn't fall out of the sky, as even our greeting says: "khotso e be le uena", meaning 'May peace be with you'. It also says we shall be having a healthy and sustainable natural environment and cindered biodiversity. We have a culture of non-discrimination for outsiders, we see them simply as other human beings who deserve the same dignity as that which we intrinsically wear. Once in our midst, a newcomer is no longer a stranger; hence our saying, "U se nna u re ho moroa 'moroa tooe".

Lesotho has a year calendar of four unique seasons, with cold winters and hot summers, though lately there are climate change disruptions, so visitors of all

climate preferences can enjoy its beauty in the season of their preference.

We are a country blessed with a great altitude, with our lowest point being more than 1000 metres above sea level, which reduces our risk to diseases like malaria, and our general topography renders us relatively safe from catastrophic floods. We have scenic mountain ranges of breathtaking beauty and touring them can be extremely therapeutic.

The scenery of Lesotho is picturesque, sporting rolling mountains and plateaus, valleys and long rivers boasting clean white waters. The altitude of the country has earned it the proud name: "The Kingdom in the Sky", sometimes called the Switzerland of Africa for its mountainous ranges. Travelling to the highlands is an exhilarating experience, on majestically meandering roads that have won engineering awards for such stunning feats as the Mphorosane hairpin bend and the Malibamats'o Bridge.

Our country also brags of unique cultural products like the mokhibo, mohobelo, ndlamo dances; and mokallo (stick mock fighting), cattle riding races,

mangae, famo music and "Basotho rap" music. Early this century, this cultural bouquet was showcased at the Morija Cultural Festival. (MACUFE), drawing participants from home and abroad. This would be a critical cog in the delivery of "the Lesotho we want", the motto and battle cry of the comprehensive national reforms.

Our forebearers fought and won many brutal wars, the climax of which was the defeat of our British colonial masters in the Gun War of 1880-1881. At the time of Independence, we were rated the most literate nation on the continent, and well versed in systems of governance.

In the formative years of our nation, our leaders welcomed other nations' refugees dispersed from their original settlements. We accept ourselves as an amalgamation of nations, hence the abiding embrace of others who pass through or come to abide among us, and a strong tradition of dialogue and seeking common ground in the sometimes bitter differences among ourselves as a nation. Hence the much-vaunted modern precepts of democracy were in no sense a novelty to our nation at the point of contact with colonialism, and should not today be contested as though they are a foreign acquisition in our discourse for sharing spaces of entitlement in politics and the economy.

Today, we boast a diaspora of great achievers in the

vocations of diplomacy, economy and academia, and a great genius in collective search and discovery of solutions to challenges in the multiple facets of our nationhood. It is the drawing together of all these strands of history and age-old national values and a variegated stock of knowledge, armed with the current national reforms, which will place us on the pedestal of becoming a great nation that we once were.

In closing, perhaps as a nation, joined by the rest of the world to celebrate this once in a lifetime milestone to commemorate the two hundred years of the formation of a great and unique Kingdom, we should make a clarion call, united as one to say "sekoele Basotho!" This is a very rich figure of speech, loosely translated to imply that it is time for Basotho to recalibrate and re-invigorate themselves to greatness. As a people, we have what it takes to break the shackles and live the dream of "The Lesotho we Want," a country that is endowed with honour and dignity in the region and beyond. This is the Lesotho that the great King Moshoeshoe I could have envisioned two centuries ago. Today, we simply have an obligation to honour his legacy to the next 200 years.



A Mosotho traditional doctor dressed in porcupine quills headgear



A peaceful protest. One of the many that led to the call for national reforms as a means to restore lasting peace and order after a period of political instability

Re-envisioning the Political System of Lesotho and the Constitution of the Future: Spotlight on the Reforms

Writes Tsikoane Peshoane

In 1993, the nation returned to the rule of democracy, making it an important turning point. The formation of the Interim Political Authority (IPA), which led to the Mixed Member Proportion (MMP) election model's introduction in 2002. Lesotho had 10 years of political stability. But this was eventually interrupted by the advent of the coalition governments' phenomenon in 2012.

Despite a number of changes to the 1993 Constitution, the political system over the past 30 years has been characterised by structural flaws in state institutions and political elitism that has prioritised managing public affairs and state institutions over enhancing the public's ability to hold the government accountable.

Unless the issues of poverty, high rate of unemployment, human rights violations, and poor service delivery by public institutions are properly addressed, stability will not prevail.

The ultimate objective of national reforms should be to inform the future constitution since it will help to advance socioeconomic rights, access to justice, and social justice through strengthening social accountability and constitutionalism.

The genesis of the current political system's disorders in Lesotho

Lesotho's political system is by and large carved from a constitutional monarchy headed by King Letsie III and a parliamentary system that is based on Section 20(1) of the constitution, which provides universal and equal suffrage. The monarchy serves as a source of pride and identity for Basotho,

fostering a sense of national unity and cohesion. Executive functions are exercised by members of the parliament in cabinet selected by the prime minister for royal approval within the parliamentary system. The parties in the minority serve in opposition to the majority party or coalition of parties, and have the duty to challenge it regularly. The prime minister may be removed from power whenever he or she loses the confidence of a majority of the ruling party or of the parliament. Since the inception of representative democracy or rather electoral democracy, the party system has been very dominant and always characterised by turbulences and political upheavals.

The first taste of electoral democracy for Lesotho was in the 1960 district council elections and subsequently in 1965, just before independence. But Lesotho experienced a democracy blackout from 1970 to 1993. The period 1993 was pivotal in that the country went back to democratic rule, which was temporarily practiced from 1965 to 1970. According to Gay, Gill, and Hall (1995), 1970 was the first abort of democratic rule in Lesotho as Leabua Jonathan, the then prime minister, refused to hand power to the Basotholand Congress Party (BCP)'s Ntsu Mokhehle when it became clear that he was going to lose elections. What followed, according to the authors, was political instability in Lesotho. But the counterargument is hereby put up by Sixishe (1984), who argues that one of the early threats to Lesotho's democracy was a resolve by the BCP leadership to unseat the Basotho National Party (BNP) government within two weeks after the 1965 elections. A determination by BCP leadership was to "make it difficult for Jonathan to rule; they said the election was rigged by the British in collusion with South Africa" (Sixishe, 1984).

Sixishe (1984) argues that the first taste of Lesotho's democratisation was in 1965. Khaketla (1972) argues that Jonathan was the author of political instability in Lesotho by refusing to hand power to Ntsu Mokhehle in 1970. Thereafter, the BNP government ruled by decree and without popular mandate.

It is evident that Lesotho's democratic path had been tainted when Lesotho was ruled without elections for 16 years, before the military

junta coup de tat on 20 January 1986. In 1993, Lesotho returned to democratic rule, although since that time, elections were punctuated by post-election conflict. It is therefore clear that Lesotho's democratisation path has been thorny and conflictual to this extent. This is indicating that most probably, the country's political leadership has inherited a colonial state without the basic tenets of a well-functioning, deliberative democratic culture. However, it was not until 1998 when consensus was reached, pointing the source of the problem to be the electoral system.

The main challenge originated from the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral model inherited from Britain without reflecting on Lesotho's needs and political landscape. Thus, it resulted in one party rule with a huge political win and opposition claiming that elections were rigged. Consequently, the overthrow of government orchestrated by the monarchy in 1994, was the consequence of an allegation of manipulation of election results. It would seem that the pattern continued in 1998 with dire consequences of political upheaval as opposition parties rejected the electoral outcome with aspirations of overthrowing the elected government. As it has been argued, the main challenge has always been the electoral model throughout the years.

Prospects improved through the establishment of the Interim Political Authority (IPA), resulting in the introduction of the new electoral model, Mixed Member Proportion (MMP), which was operationalised in 2002. That altered political representation in parliament; consequently, Lesotho enjoyed 10 years of political stability, which was to be cut short by a history of political upheavals.

This resulted in the formation of the first coalition government in 2012. Yet this too was short lived, lasting only two years and some months from May 2012 to February 2015. Multiple governments followed thereafter, all lasting just two years and that instability highlighted a critical question whether Lesotho's politicians and democratic institutions were fit enough to advance and dispense democracy in the country.



Sworn in as the Prime Minister of the 11th Parliament, Prime Minister Matekane receives a copy of the Constitution of Lesotho from the Army Commander

Branches and institutions of state – Performance since 1993

The capacity and performance of the executive was never an issue or taken into stern consideration; thus, this domain and management of policy was left to external institutions and regional organisations such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). The traditional functions of the state were rolled back, and restructuring of public service took place in an effort to professionalise the civil service. Contrary to that, the public service was evidently ineffective and highly politicised, with little or no assets as they were privatised subsequent to the restoration of democracy in 1993.

Parliament's role is holding government accountable, although it now more or less a rubber stamps of government as it is hugely dominated by

the influence of the executive. Parliamentary portfolio committees are mostly inactive and maintain low profile, compounded by issues of capacity of MPs. However, Parliament's main role is to make laws. In the Westminster model, parliament's effectiveness is always compromised by the fact that a ruling party always has an in-built majority support in the popular house of parliament.

Contrary to the other two arms of government, there have been developments in the judiciary, as justice is relatively affordable and accessible and corruption is still minimal (not rife). However, the challenges such as the management of cases, and the quality of judgements is still questionable. Notwithstanding that, justice is still very costly and inaccessible to others, as the High Court's southern region division is still a pipedream. In addition, the medium of record is still English, which is foreign to most Basotho.

Supplementary accountability institutions

Supplementary institutions that were adopted to uphold values of good governance, such as the Ombudsman, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO), are poorly resourced and challenged by non-transparent appointments. Regardless, there is a need to reinforce the independence of these institutions to fight corruption, strengthen accountability and performance-based appraisal of the executive, legislative, and judicial spheres of government.

Parliament is the overarching oversight institution policing the actions and behaviour of the government as a whole, while the Ombudsman deals with the complaints lodged through it against public officials. Yet the success of these institutions in terms of achieving their objectives as defined by the national constitution, in particular, holding politicians and government officials to account is still a long journey to go.

The rise of elitism via manipulation of political system in the last 30 years

The critical question here is how the political system has been performing in the last 30 years in terms of securing political stability and fostering economic growth. The concentration has mainly been on nothing but the inclusion of political elites in the state political system and the persistence of de facto political power, which emphasises how the same elites are able to shape politics to prioritise their interests over issues of poverty that have been the challenge of this country.

The changing of electoral model from FPTP to MMP – the new model, has really reduced the political conflicts and violence subsequent to elections. The model used prior to 1997 produced a minority government, where the winner had fewer votes than consolidated opposition votes. While the changes of electoral system was a positive development, the changes fell short in responding to economic issues affecting the majority of the citizenry. As Makoa (2013) purports, elections do not translate to democracy; they need to be reinforced by strong, supporting democratic institutions that should directly be established by the constitution.

Constitutional amendments since 1993

Since 1993, constitutional norms have placed more emphasis on running state institutions and handling public affairs than on strengthening the people's ability to hold the government responsible. Nine amendments have been made to Lesotho's Constitution since it was adopted in 1993. The first amendment to the constitution was nothing but the structural formation of the Lesotho defence force (LDF) and the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS). The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was introduced to the Constitution by the second amendment, while the third amendment basically provided modifications on structural issues of police service. The fourth and fifth amendments to the constitution were only concerned with the introduction of mixed-member proportional (MMP), composition of membership in parliament, and modification of IEC Commissioners' tenure of office and public service commission, respectively.

The Sixth Amendment introduced protection of victims of crime, decisions as to the question of membership of parliament, referendums, exercise of the prime minister's functions during absence and illness, deputy ministers, some adjustments to the attorney general's department, the national advisory planning board, remuneration of certain offices, and the insertion of a new chapter of the Human Rights Commission (HRC). Design to the question of parliamentary membership is also reintroduced by the seventh amendment; provisions highlighting issues of marriage to a Lesotho citizen and dual citizens and restoration of Lesotho citizenship have been highlighted in the eighth amendment to the constitution. The last changes introduced in the constitution have been made through the nine amendments, which underscore issues of motion of no confidence against government, prorogation of parliament, the prime minister's resignation for personal reasons, and the caretaker government. Regarding the latter, 'Nyane (2021) argues that "all these changes have been inspired by the country's constitutional problems since the advent of coalition politics in 2012... the changes brought about by the Ninth Amendment can at best be regarded as interim rather than permanent measures, while the long-lasting constitutional reforms are being prepared for the country."

With the exception of the sixth amendment, where protection of victims of crime has been underscored, constitutional experience under democratic rule since 1993, has completely failed to make advancements towards empowering citizens to hold government accountable for high rates of unemployment, human rights violations, and poor performance of service providers in the provision of service delivery within the communities. These have largely contributed to poverty and political instability persisting in the country. This trajectory has been undermining citizens as the ultimate authority and custodians of the constitution. This is still quite characteristic in the tenth and eleventh draft bills which have been tabled before parliament. In the words of Makoa (2013), "constitutional democracy in Lesotho needed not only to be entrenched or buttressed but also to be capacitated to deliver on the value that defines it—good governance, which encapsulates political accountability, administrative transparency, fight against corruption, protection of human rights, popular participation, and the rule of law."

The constitution of the future and the new political system

If poverty persists in the country, peace will not prevail; hence, we need to strengthen relations between voters and their representatives for enhanced responsiveness to their needs. It is against this backdrop that the TRC position has placed emphasis on promoting human rights (realisation of socioeconomic rights), access to justice and social justice by strengthening social accountability, and constitutionalism. As it has been indicated that elections cannot solve Lesotho's problems unless the issue of poverty is addressed; efforts of the TRC have been the



Democracy in action, the outgoing Prime Minister, Dr. Moeketsi Majoro hands over the Lesotho flag to the incoming premier, Samuel Matekane symbolising a peaceful transfer of power.

consolidation of initiatives that support service delivery and accountability demands through Sea-le-Methati initiatives.

The Centre being in charge of providing information that had to inform advocacy on human rights, service delivery, and social accountability, it has also been very instrumental in providing communities with legal resources to increase their leverage over public institutions to demand the protection and efficiency of human rights and services, respectively. It has worked with the disadvantaged or marginalised groups and provided possible strategies that could be applied to respond to their challenges, such as the high rate of unemployment, human rights violations, and poor performance of service providers in the provision of service delivery within the communities.

Given the fact that hitherto the existing political system has mainly been characterised by monopolisation of state power by political elites to the detriment of the majority population who have endured the heat of

being on the coal face of the high rate of unemployment; human rights violations; and poor performance of service providers in the provision of service delivery within the communities, TRC is of the opinion that the focus of the national reforms must be on the NEW CONSTITUTION. Notwithstanding that, in light of the fact that elections alone cannot solve problems of the political system unless issues of poverty are addressed, it is imperative that the country must embark on the constitutional reforms, which are centred on empowering the people to be custodians of the new constitutional democracy that has been defined by Makoa. Given the fact that the past 30 years of the Second Constitution of the country since independence have been focused much on constitutional frameworks for the administration of the state, while quite a few amendments to the constitution speak directly to the people. Be that as it may, conclusions must be derived from public discourse, wisdom, and ideas of ordinary citizens. **Let reforms be desires and aspiration of the people.**

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*Young army bootcamp recruits displaying a formation for
200 years at Setsoto Stadium*



How we celebrated: A review of the bicentennial celebrations in Lesotho

Writes Mahlomola Letsie



President Cyril Ramaphosa seated on the right of His Majesty King Letsie was one of the main guests at the Bicentennial Celebrations

The year 2024 marked a hallmark in the history of the Basotho nation as a whole, not just to those living within the enchanting kingdom, but also to those living in the diaspora and in the far and wide countries such as Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, who share the same cultural roots, like the Rosvi.

It was a momentous pinnacle of paying homage to the heroic endeavours of selfless men and women, under the tutelage of the great leader, King Moshoeshoe I, who had a vision of one day creating a mighty nation, through the pragmatic vision that he heightened in the wake of the exodus of Basotho in 1824, when transmigrating from the Ha Mopeli fortress, in Botha Bothe, to the Thaba Bosiu citadel,

which now serves both as the national monument, and informally, as the county's necropolis.

The hype and the coordinated country wide events, to mark and sensitise the masses about the bicentennial of King Moshoeshoe I's arrival at Thaba Bosiu with his followers, are captured in the article below.

The first bold steps

On Wednesday, 4 October 2023, during the 57th anniversary of Lesotho's independence, King Letsie III, motivated the nation towards the maiden buildup of the bicentennial celebrations, which were slated to run until 4 October 2024.

It was at that august public gathering, held at Thaba Bosiu, that His Majesty King Letsie III, unveiled the official 200 years logo and its four founding principles;

1. Promoting unity and inclusivity; the bicentennial celebrations are anchored on fostering unity among diverse communities within Lesotho and beyond. It encourages people from different ethnicities, regions and backgrounds to come together in celebrating and promoting patriotism, tolerance, social cohesion.
2. Development of legacy projects; the celebrations shall be a catalyst for sustainable projects that shall play a role in livelihood change for Basotho. Such projects will leave a lasting memory and be remembered as legacies of the 200 years celebration.
3. Showcasing cultural heritage; the celebrations offer a platform to showcase Lesotho's rich cultural heritage. Through various events such as traditional music, performances, dance shows, art exhibitions, and cultural festivals to name a few.
4. Celebrating the role of the monarchy; the 200 years celebration is anchored on the role that was played by King Moshoeshoe and his peers in bringing together diversity of people to become one. The celebration therefore, reflects and celebrates the role played by the monarchy.

It is therefore befitting that against the backcloth of the aforementioned four cornerstones of the 200 years that we reconnoiter, how far the nation has performed and aligned itself 12 months later itself in attainment of the said goals and more.

The unity accentuated by collective prayer – the 40 days kickoff.

The year 2024 did not start on a high note as far as the itinerary of the 200 years anniversary celebrations were concerned. It took at least 40 days, that's one month and nine days, before the 200 years anniversary celebrations could commence.

Coincidentally, and quite aptly too, the 200 years anniversary national celebrations began at the first statue crafted exclusively to pay homage to King Moshoeshoe I by Belgian sculptor, Eugene-Leon Bouffa commissioned by the Lesotho government in 1966. The statue is currently famously known as Moshoeshoe I statue.

It was at the basal of that King Moshoeshoe I's statue, that on Friday 9 February 2024, that the first ever event of the 200 years celebration took place. It was a united prayer by different churches. The prayer sought to seek divine guidance for the leaders of the country, and beseech for wisdom, peace and unity from God. His Majesty King Letsie III, who attended the event, and had led a procession from the Royal Palace to Moshoeshoe I statue, was gifted a Bible as his spiritual guiding tool during the bicentennial celebrations.

The King's one on one with the students

Clad in white T-shirts inscribed Basotho 200 years with an iconic image of King Moshoeshoe I, and waving miniature Lesotho flags, a good number of tertiary students, was afforded a once in a lifetime audience with His Majesty King Letsie III at the old Parliament building on 13 March 2024, hardly three days after the celebration of annual Moshoeshoe's Day.

*Celebrating 200 years in the Diaspora, Basotho in Matatiele,
South Africa also commemorated the Bicentennial celebrations*



The military excursion to trace King Moshoeshoe's senior friends

In June, as part of the 200 years celebrations, a strong contingent from the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF), under the leadership of Major General Matela Matobakele, crossed over to South Africa, and embarked on an expedition to Kroonstad, to trace the last treks of Chief Mohlomi, the great advisor to King Moshoeshoe I. The military team also discovered the grave of Chief Lethole, who was the second most powerful chief to have made a chieftom pact with King Moshoeshoe I. The military made the remarkable discoveries with the assistance of celebrated local historian, Mathethebala Pitso.

Coinciding with the winter solstice, on 20 June 2024, a great phenomenon among Basotho dubbed "letsatsi le kena tlung", which is the longest night in southern hemisphere, the military team arrived at Botha Bothe, an erstwhile fortress of King Moshoeshoe I.

Heritage Wall

On 22 June, two days after visiting the Botha Bothe fortress, the military legion, arrived at Thaba Bosiu. Coincidentally, it was the same night that a prominent mall, Pioneer, launched the Heritage Wall, a vividly picturesque wall with vintage and rare images detailing the evolution of Basotho nation, from as early as during King Moshoeshoe I's era.

The Matatiele connection

In July 2023, the government in collaboration with private sector launched Project RE, (remembering, reconnecting, regenerating patriotism) an initiative meant to bring Basotho together, to collectively tackle poverty and other social ills plaguing the country, under the theme, to reconnect, to regenerate and reunite with the aim of creating a better society during the bicentennial celebrations and beyond. The project launched the National Revival torch in November.

In August 2024, Project RE's National Revival torch was taken to Matatiele, in the Eastern Cape

province, South Africa, where a huge jubilant crowd headlined by both Lesotho and Matatiele's Basotho chiefs welcomed it. It was a momentous celebration where Sesotho culture was embraced and celebrated to mark the 200 years.

By the end of October 2024, Project RE's torch had reached six districts in Lesotho and three provinces in South Africa.

The French homage and blankets appreciation

On 2 October, the embassy of France in South Africa, Malawi and Lesotho, in partnership with Alliance Francaise de Maseru and Morija Museum & Archives (MMA), unveiled a new blanket inspired by the French's Notre Dame, Eiffel Tower and the Basotho's decorative mural art (litema). A short film, 'The Kingdom in the Sky: Moshoeshoe's Strategy

and Legacy' was also launched in celebration of Basotho's 200 years.

Two days earlier, MMA, began a six week appreciative initiative, showcasing a plethora of all Basotho blankets ever designed since Basotho began wearing blankets, and termed it Nanabolele, to coincide with the 200 years celebrations.

The 200 years celebrations become an iconic prelude to the memorable Independence Day

On 3 October, on the eve of the independence commemorations, the iconic symbol of 200 years accompanied by the national inspired coloured lights illuminated the main traffic circle in Maseru, much to the amusement of passerby and spectators. The white coloured crosses erected on three

mountains surrounding the city of Maseru, were also officially unveiled. Crosses which also light the city at night, were donated by The Right Honourable Prime Minister Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane, as a noble gesture to commemorate the 200 years celebrations.

The next day, on 4 October, the 58th anniversary of Lesotho became a double celebration, as the nation celebrated the independence coupled with the 200th anniversary. Dignitaries included United Nations' second in command, Her Excellency Amina Mohammed, His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, deputy president of Zimbabwe, Honourable Kembo Mohadi, and other notable regional leaders.

After the Independence Day celebrations, many events were held in Maseru and a few in other districts to keep the 200 years momentum alive.



Lesotho Defence Force parade

The peace keeping battalion recently recalled from Mozambique was part of the 200 years festivities





Cultural exchange ... a dance troupe from Malaysia were part of the celebrations



Korean Taekwondo team contributed with artistic displays



Chief Lerotholi Seeiso presented the 200 year Revival Torch in Johannesburg



Another Ndlamo Troupe performance, performing in Welkom, South Africa at a commemorative event hosted by Mara-a-Basotho



Lesotho Defence Force parade



Traditional Dance - Mokhibo Traditional Dance



A parade of clans that make the Basotho nation



Ndlamo troupe performance at Setsoto Stadium



A parade of women in traditional attire



St. Paul's African Apostolic Church band led the 200 years prayer march



Some of the congregants at the bicentennial prayer session dressed in white to symbolise peace



Part of the Losvi contingent from Zambia, traced back their origins to celebrate with their people in Lesotho



Basotho girls dressed in traditional attire at the 200 years prayer session



Cattle procession at the cultural day in Thaba Bosiu was another event celebrating the 200 year anniversary



Heritage Wall

A Celebration of 200 Years of
Basotho History



"The Pioneer Mall Heritage Wall is a testament to the (Basotho's) enduring spirit encapsulating the essence of our shared heritage and the milestones that have shaped our nation over time."

His Majesty King Letsie III

About the Heritage Wall

Explore 200 years of Basotho heritage, right in the heart of Maseru! The Pioneer Mall Heritage Wall is a visually captivating and informative installation that celebrates the founding of the Basotho nation by King Moshoeshoe I in the 1820s, seamlessly fusing shopping and learning into one wholesome experience.



About Pioneer Mall

For 15 years, Pioneer Mall has set the standard for modern shopping, lifestyle, and business in Lesotho. As the country's foremost retail destination, we offer a carefully curated mix of stores designed to meet the diverse needs of every visitor—whether you're a local or exploring Lesotho from abroad.

Pick n Pay

W WOOLWORTHS

AMERICAN SWISS

 **Standard Lesotho Bank**

WESTERN UNION WU



 **CLICKS**



About the Wall

- **A Cultural Landmark:** Open to the public, this unique monument showcases significant moments in Lesotho's history.
- **Collaborative Creation:** The Heritage Wall was developed through public submissions and is the first in a series of historical installations planned for the mall.
- **Educational & Inspiring:** Visit the wall to engage with the stories of our nation's monarchs, cultural heritage, and historical milestones.
- **A Lasting Legacy:** With over 570,000 monthly visitors, Pioneer Mall is proud to be a hub for culture, learning, and community.

Come and experience the rich history of Lesotho at Pioneer Mall—where shopping meets heritage.



Heritage Wall

A Celebration of 200 Years of
Basotho History

"This Heritage Wall reflects our cultural wealth as a nation. For visitors to our kingdom, it serves as a gateway to learn about our rich history and unique culture."

Mr. Sebehela Selepe
Chairman: Moruo Developments



Visit and Explore the Wall

Physical Address + Map QR Code

Cnr Pioneer Rd and Mpilo Blvd
Maseru, Lesotho



Connect With Us Via Social Media

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Twitter/X



@PioneerMall

Instagram



@Pioneer_Mall



Ministry of Tourism, Sports,
Arts and Culture





Since its establishment in 1967, the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) has championed the course to develop industry in Lesotho and to facilitate foreign direct investment into the country. This is for the sole purpose of developing Lesotho's industrial capabilities and to facilitate a vibrant economy that can create employment. The LNDC Act of 1990 as Amended, mandates the Corporation to initiate, promote, and facilitate the development of manufacturing and processing industries, mining and commerce in a manner calculated to raise the level of income and employment in Lesotho.

Today, LNDC boasts a portfolio of over 78 manufacturing and processing firms spread in Six industrial estates; Thetsane, Maseru Industrial Area, Tikoe, Maputsoe, Nyenye and Mohale's Hoek Industrial Estates. Another industrial site at Ha Belo in Botha Bothe has recently been completed and is on the verge of being opened for use by investors. Tikoe Extension is also at the verge of completion. While this extension is expected to house around 21 factory buildings at full capacity, currently 7 buildings are under construction.

Factories that the LNDC facilitated for their establishment in Lesotho account for over 36,000 of Basotho employed.



Experience Elevation

In May, 2024, LNDC launched the Lesotho National Brand that uniquely position Lesotho as an investment destination of choice for investors. The new national brand aptly dubbed "Experience Elevation" is aimed at projecting the image of Lesotho on the global stage to bolster efforts towards attracting investors, boosting tourism as fostering international trade and economic diversification.

Experience Elevation is inspired by the spiral aloe and the conical Basotho hat, which are powerful national symbols for Lesotho. The new national brand is also intended to inspire with a sense of pride and ownership. "A deeper sentiment towards patriotism ensures that Basotho understand the formation of our nation and the moral fibre that connects us in the global family of nations," says Advocate Molise Ramaili, the Interim Chief Executive Officer of LNDC.

In order to fulfil its mandate, LNDC is also implementing its 2023-28 strategy, which has identified and prioritised the following key sectors as the mainstays for building a economy for Lesotho:



Manufacturing

Lesotho is among the top four (4) producers of textiles and garments in Africa and has a well-established footwear industry. There is a growing position in automotive components, electronics and electrical products. Good transport links give better access to wider markets and pure water in large quantities is vital in the industry.

The anchor industry in this sector is textile and garment manufacturing, which has existed in Lesotho for 30 years, competently servicing the US and regional markets. For the past 5 years, Lesotho has been the number one exporter of garments to the US under the African Growth and Opportunities Act. Other areas of investment in manufacturing include automotive components, plastic products, consumer electrical and electronic appliances, packaging material and garment accessories such as zippers and buttons.

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Agri and Aquaculture

The Government of Lesotho supports the agriculture sector and creates an enabling environment for growth. Importantly, Lesotho has plentiful supplies of pure water for the growth of crops and food processing, and climate suitability for early harvest. The country boasts tremendous potential in products such as;

- Rosehip
- Herbs and Spices
- Processed foods
- Bottled water
- Hemp
- Medicinal Cannabis
- Fish (pure salmon, trout)

In aquaculture, the potential for aquaculture development has increased as a result of the current and planned water development projects such as the Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase I and II respectively.

Due to differences in altitude, Lesotho also has two distinct fish farming zones namely:

- The Lowlands – where temperatures are relatively high and
- The Highlands – characterised by cold climatic conditions.

The cold climatic conditions in Lesotho are suitable for the production of high-quality trout. Trout, like its salmon cousins, requires clean and cold, well-oxygenated, fast-moving water at a high altitude, which is exactly what Lesotho's dam reservoirs offer. Current fish product stands at 300 tons of trout per annum with potential to grow the capacity to 1,200 tons per annum.



Renewable Energy

Opportunities exist for investors to supply renewable products or to develop renewable power generation in Lesotho. Currently, the major exploits found in the country for renewable energy are hydro energy, solar energy and wind energy.

According to Lesotho's Department of Energy, Lesotho potentially produce 450 MW in hydropower and hundred more with wind power. However, only 17 per cent of this potential is being exploited, 96 percent of it at the hydro-power plant and the rest from mini hydro-power at Mantšonyane, Mokhotlong, Tsoelike, and Semoni. Lesotho. Energy demand is growing in South Africa and the rest of the region, and Lesotho has the potential to develop renewable power.

"A deeper sentiment towards patriotism ensures that Basotho understand the formation of our nation and the moral fibre that connects us in the global family of nations."

Advocate Molise Ramaili
Interim Chief Executive Officer



One of the major unique features of the country is altitude. Lesotho is the only country in the world which lies entirely 1000m above sea level. In fact, the lowest point in Lesotho is 1400m above sea level.

There are immense opportunities to explore because of Lesotho's unique features including:

- Attractive and unique tourism destination mountain and highland settings, a pristine environment
- Short stays for African and international visitors travelling on the continent for leisure and business
- Immersion in Lesotho's unique African culture and heritage
- Visa free access to Lesotho by nationals from over 70 countries
- Lesotho is attractive to visitors from the Northern Hemisphere during winter due to its snow.

► High Altitude Training Facilities

Lesotho is an ideal location for high altitude sports training facilities. A high class, integrated facility is envisaged that would feature among other things:

Outdoor and indoor sports arenas
Accommodation
Wellness spa(s)
Sports treatment / Medi-centre

For more information visit Lesotho www.ltdc.org.ls.

► Water Sports and Recreation

Existing and prospective Lesotho Highlands Water Project dams pose a notable opportunity for initiating water-based sporting and recreational activities. In particular, the dams are suited to leisure cruise boats and extreme sporting events.

The Corporation (LTDC) is already operating a small cruise on Mohale dam. This operation will be transferred to a private operator for more efficient operation and further development.

► Health and Wellness Resorts

Lesotho has many attributes that can be leveraged to position the country as a health and wellness destination. These include:

- High altitude
- Clean mountain air
- Abundance of naturally clean water
- Distinct seasons of the year
- Endemic medicinal plants
- Hot springs
- Reclusiveness

These contribute a great potential to Health spas and wellness resorts.

► Accommodation Facilities

The country is under-supplied with accommodation facilities of appropriate standards particularly along key and strategic tourism nodes.

Lack of accommodation is the major source of revenue leakage from tourism in Lesotho. Drove of tourists from South Africa cross into Lesotho for the day, only to go back and sleepover in South Africa.



Development Finance

LNDC has also set up the Development Finance Business Unit to develop, a portfolio of financing solutions that are intended to support private sector led industrial development and economic diversification.

Primarily, the role of development finance unit is to amongst others, raise capital, lend or borrow money for investment in Lesotho. It is also intended to provide provides technical, advisory or management assistance and services to businesses.

There are currently four types of financial instruments available to investors;

✓ **Equity Financing**

LNDC also has an equity finance product currently only available to support strategic, NSDP II aligned projects initiated or promoted by the Corporation. The Corporation is working on resource mobilization to capitalise this instrument so that it can be extended more broadly to strategic private sector projects.

✓ **Project Preparation Fund**

The PPF is designed to develop a pipeline of bankable or investment ready projects through undertaking of feasibility studies, business plans, transactional advisory services as well as environmental and social impact assessments as may be required. The funds are extended to derisk projects for crowding in private investment. The corporation converts these funds to equity or loan at deal closure.

✓ **Quasi Equity**

Quasi Equity instrument provides innovative finance to fast growing local companies which promise high development effects. The product offers debt capital with more sustainable repayment terms and exit strategies in order to increase access to finance for viable early-stage businesses.

✓ **Supply Chain Finance**

The purpose of the Supply Chain Finance is to stimulate access to credit and broaden participation of Basotho owned businesses in the supply chain of goods and services across all sectors of the economy. The Corporation's Supply Chain Finance comprises three instruments, namely, Invoice Factoring, Contract Financing and Pre-Approval Letter where:

- *Invoice Factoring* enables local suppliers of goods and services to raise up to 80% on outstanding invoices secured by a strong credit profile of a buyer.
- *Contract Financing* enables suppliers of goods and services to raise up to 80% of their contract cost price secured by a strong credit profile of a buyer, and,
- *Pre-Approval Letter* is issued on behalf of an applicant addressed to a specific buyer outlining terms and conditions of pre-approved funding for a specific tender.



Adient Factory at Tikoe Industrial Estate specializes in automotive seating. The factory in Maseru produces a range of seats for Ford and Nissan.

New Government Policy to Accelerate Industrialisation Drive

Writes Bereng Mpaki

In March 2024, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Business Development took significant strides toward finalising the Lesotho National Industrialisation Policy (2024–2028).

The policy document, developed with technical support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa (ECA SRO SA), aims to promote an export-driven economy.

The 2024–2028 Lesotho National Industrialisation Policy is a successor to the 2015–2017 policy. It aims to accelerate development of industrial activity in the country with a view to enhancing economic growth led by the private sector.

Some of the key sectors in this initiative include commercial agriculture and tourism, with the establishment of linkages between SMME's and larger companies also critical for sustainable industrialization.

The one-day workshop in March 2024, co-hosted by the Ministry of Trade and ECA SRO SA, served as a platform for validating the draft policy. The workshop's objective was to review the policy, identify gaps, and allow stakeholders who hadn't participated in earlier data collection to contribute feedback.

Participants included representatives from government ministries, the private sector, development partners, academic institutions,

research organizations, and the media. The process was designed to promote collective ownership of the new industrial policy.

The attendants heard during the workshop that while the previous policy proposed tax incentives, trade policy adjustments, and regional integration to drive industrialisation, it was however, hindered by limited financial resources and an overreliance on a small number of industries, exposing the economy to global uncertainties and changing consumer preferences.

Other challenges that were highlighted included a lack of foreign investment due to a challenging investment climate, and insufficient specialised skills for industrial growth.

Additionally, the need for better global competitiveness and access to international markets, particularly for the textile and garment industries, was noted. Poor coordination between implementing agencies due to an unclear framework also remains a significant obstacle.

Thabo Moleko, then Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Trade, highlighted that the policy's main goal was to drive inclusive, sustainable economic growth and private sector-led job creation.

He emphasised that the policy aligned with changes in the continental landscape, including the African Continental Free Trade



A packaging plant for bottling beer at AB INBEV, Maseru

Area (AfCFTA), and was consistent with the Southern Africa Development Community's Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap (2015–2063), a regional plan aimed at boosting economic growth through structural transformation.

Moleko expressed gratitude to the ECA for its assistance in reviewing the 2015–2017 Industrial Policy, and underscored the importance of improving Lesotho's business and investment climate.

"Together, we can make Lesotho an attractive destination for domestic, regional, and international investment, promoting industrialisation and enhancing competitiveness to increase the quality of manufactured goods and exports," he remarked.

Olayinka Bandele, the Chief of the Inclusive Industrialisation Section at ECA SRO SA, reiterated the UN's support for Lesotho's industrialisation agenda, which aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

The first one involved transitioning from a consumer-driven to a producer and export-driven economy to reduce vulnerability to price fluctuations and external shocks.

She also highlighted the need to emphasise technological advancements and innovation to boost productivity and global competitiveness. Lastly, she spoke about strengthening the role of the private sector, especially micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as a central pillar of the economy.

Lesotho Standards Institution

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development is mandated to develop National Quality Infrastructure (QI) in support of economic development, industrialization, favourable investment climate as well as social resilience. QI here, refers to a system comprising the

the quality, safety and environmental soundness of goods, services and processes. The current QI framework is enshrined in the National Quality Policy and Regulatory Framework. In the case of metrology, the Weights and Measures Act, 1970 serves as the principal law under which relevant and appropriate

the principal law which sets out establishment of a national standards body mandated to develop and publish national standards and carry out associated conformity assessment activities. Enlisted below are aspects of QI.

LSI is well positioned to provide technical information pertaining to market requirements on standards, technical regulations, testing, inspection, certification, and training requirements. Information provided to our clients is pertinent to assist businesses in saving time and reducing costs of doing business, as they can provide products and services that conform to market requirements.

Metrology

means the science of measurement and its application (Source: JCGM 200:2012)

- ✓ Calibration services
- ✓ Verification and inspection services
- ✓ Registration of measuring instruments

Certification means a third-party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons (Source: ISO/IEC 17000:2004)

- ✓ Product certification
- ✓ System certification

Accreditation

is a third-party attestation related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks (Source: ISO/IEC 17000:2004)

- ✓ Promote accreditation
- ✓ Facilitation...

Standardization

is the activity of establishing, with regard to actual or potential problems, provisions for common and repeated use, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context. In particular, the activity consists of the processes of formulating, issuing and implementing standards (Source: ISO, Good Standardization Practices)

- ✓ Standards development
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Sale of standards
- ✓ Testing

Conformity assessment

Means the demonstration that specified requirements (stated in standards, regulations etc.) relating to a product, process, system, person or body are fulfilled (Source: ISO/IEC 17000:2004)

Lesotho Standards Institution – LSI is mandated to develop, maintain, publish and implement national standards in support of the private sector and public policy. The standardisation spin off activities: testing, inspection and certification, as well as training are also conducted to ascertain conformance to quality and safety requirements. The excerpt below describes in detail the services offered by LSI.

Standards Development

LSI's core activity is to coordinate and facilitate development of national standards together with associated specifications, user guides and handbooks and to publish as well as to promote national standards and other deliverables. Standards are developed by groups of experts organised into technical committees which focus on various fields of economic activity. LSI is currently developing the national standardization strategy which is intended to provide an outlook on how standardization can support economic growth and foster social protection whilst safeguarding the environment.

A. LSI Services

LSI offers the following services to support Lesotho's development focusing on the three P's, namely People, Planet, Prosperity Information services

B. Sale of Standards and other LSI deliverables

LSI offers sale of standards as needed by various stakeholders. These standards can be published national standards or international standards published by organizations that LSI has membership.

C. Training

The LSI training academy offers standards implementation training to assist organizations to implement standards for their specific operations to improve their competitiveness and achieve excellence. Developed with and delivered by competent trainers, our demand driven courses cover management system standards in the areas of quality, health and safety, food safety as well as laboratory management system. Annually, training calendar is published.

D. Testing

LSI is developing testing capabilities to meet the demands of private sector, as well as to support public policy as delivered by regulatory bodies. The food laboratory offers testing of bottled water products and supports programmes geared towards ensuring nutritious foods through testing of micronutrients

organizations (public and private) together with the policies, relevant legal and regulatory framework, and practices needed to support and enhance

regulations are being developed. Regarding standardization and conformity assessment, the Lesotho Standards Institution Act, 2014 serves as

In her presentation of the draft 2024–2028 National Industrial Policy, Dr Mamello Ncheke, a consultant for ECA SRO SA, led discussions on key areas such as industrial policy priorities, resource mobilisation, and monitoring.

One of the policy’s strategic objectives, she noted, as accelerating economic diversification while promoting energy efficiency and sustainability.

Mary Motebang, Director of Trade at the Ministry of Trade, reaffirmed the government’s commitment to quickly

implementing the finalised policy, urged stakeholders to actively participate.

“Each of us has a role to play. Interrogate the policy to ensure it strengthens Lesotho’s capacity to implement industrialisation, mobilise resources, and monitor progress toward achieving its industrialisation goals,” she said.

The finalised Lesotho National Industrialisation Policy addresses the shortcomings and positions the country for sustainable economic growth.



(File picture) Dispatch section at Lesotho Flour Mills



(File picture) Routine maintenance of machinery



(File picture) Inspection of car seats manufactured by Adient, Lesotho



Tunnel boring started with smaller engine driven machines to make way for specialised equipment



The bi-national Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) has a mandate of collecting and delivering specified quantities of water from Lesotho to serve the water-challenges South Africa's Gauteng region, while also using the water infrastructure to generate hydro-electric power for Lesotho.

By and large, the LHWP has had a transformative impact on different aspects of Lesotho's development agenda since its establishment in 1986. This article explores some of the positive key milestones that have left a legacy of this multi-billion Maloti project as it marks its 38 years in existence.

The Impressive Figures behind LHDA's 38-year Staggering Legacy

Economic Empowerment

One of the most compelling success stories of the LHWP is its contribution to the country's economic empowerment. As an economic transformation vehicle set up for strategic public policy imperatives for Lesotho, the LHWP has proved to be one of the largest contributors to economic growth over the past three decades.

Data from the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), a Lesotho side implementation and management agency of the LHWP, indicates that over M17 billion has been injected into Lesotho's economy during the implementation of Phase I, with a further M53 billion to be spent by the end of the ongoing Phase II implementation.

Of the total M17 billion spent during Phase I, M12 billion was spent during Phase 1A implementation while M5 billion was invested into Phase 1B, culminating in the creation of 16 000 jobs for Basotho citizens, who received a collective M1 billion in wages.

Under the ongoing Phase II, a total of 11 000 jobs have already been created to date. From skilled (7 491 employees) to unskilled positions (3772 workers), the employment boost has been a significant force in improving the livelihoods of many individuals and families in Lesotho.

Another key pillar of the LHWP is its economic beneficiation strategy, which prioritizes procurement from local businesses. Here, M1.2 billion was spent on local suppliers for goods and services during Phase I, while M550 million was paid to Basotho contractors and consultants.

During Phase II implementation, the project has already spent M366 million on Basotho businesses across the country, while M96 million was spent on procurement of goods and services from Basotho companies based in Mokhotlong for the dam contact, and M46 million spent on procurement from Basotho companies in Mokhotlong and Leribe for the tunnel contract. This economic support has served as a catalyst for the growth of businesses and fostering skills development across different sectors in the country.

Generating a Sturdy Revenue Stream for Lesotho

Another remarkable aspect of the LHWP is the continuous generation of royalties from the transfer of water to South Africa. To date, Lesotho has collected a total of M17 billion in royalties, with an impressive average monthly revenue of M300 million to boost its public purse.

The project has to date generated M1.4 billion in total revenue for Lesotho from the sale of bulk electricity to Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) for local consumption. The LEC purchases power from LHDA from which the collected revenue is used to sustain the LHDA's operations. Thus the royalties and power revenue represent the direct, tangible and ongoing economic benefits that Lesotho derives from its natural water resources.

Human Development Impact

Another notable achievement of The LHWP has been developing the skills to unlock employment opportunities. Over 1700 Basotho from project communities have graduated from the LHDA's Skills Testing and Accreditation Program to enable them to access employment within the LHWP and outside.

Another LHDA's academic initiative, the LHDA Bursary Program has awarded 16 scholarships since 2018 to 70 percent of Basotho beneficiaries, spending over M4, 1 million the process.

A further M99.7 Million has been spent on skills development and skills transfer initiatives to

Basotho. The LHDA's Young Professionals Programme has successfully guided 82 graduates into careers, with 78 of them fully employed in fields connected to the LHWP.

Infrastructure and Educational Milestones

At the heart of the LHWP's mission is the commitment to improving infrastructure across the country. Roads stretching over 2000 kilometers have been constructed under Phase I of the project, linking communities, facilitating trade, and opening access to remote areas that were previously unreachable. For example, the construction of the Polihali Dam in Mokhotlong has necessitated the construction of the Polihali Western Access Road (PWAR), which is a new, 54.3-kilometre paved road linking the A8 in the vicinity of Ha Seshote in the west to Polihali in the east. It will join the PNEAR at Polihali. The works include earthworks, layerworks, three new bridges across Matsoku, Semenanyane and Makhoaba rivers, asphalt surfacing, drainage systems and appurtenant works. These infrastructure developments are very significant milestones of the project that not only benefit the project, but thousands of people living in the vicinity of the project area.

On the other hand, 45 classrooms in 16 schools have been constructed, offering state-of-the-art learning space that provides safe, conducive learning environments for Lesotho's youth. Five health facilities were built under Phase I, ensuring that rural communities now have access to essential medical services.

A further M4.5 million has been spent on Health Management Information Systems, Capacity Building, and community based health services, in partnership with the Ministry of Health. This investment not only strengthens healthcare delivery but also equips local communities with the knowledge and tools to take control of their health and well-being.

The infrastructural investments in health and education have emphasized the project's broader social impact.

Commitment to Conservation and Sustainability

While the LHWP is celebrated for its economic and social advancements, it also stands as a model for environmental sustainability. The establishment of conservation sites, including the Tšehlanyane National Park, Katse Botanical Garden, and Bokong Nature Reserve, underscores the project's dedication to preserving the natural beauty and biodiversity of Lesotho. These sites do not only protect ecosystems but also serve as tourist attractions, promoting eco-friendly economic opportunities for local communities.

In addition, the LHWP's Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) initiatives focus on rangeland and wetlands rehabilitation. By employing local community members, about 10 987 people from 2019 to 2024 and M36 million paid in wages to employed community members, the LHWP has effectively merged conservation with job creation, addressing both environmental and economic needs.

Water and Sanitation Lifeline for Villagers

Water remains at the core of the LHWP's mission. Through the Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) Projects, the project has provided 2 292 households with access to potable water systems, ensuring that clean and safe water is available to most remote villages. Alongside this, 446 households have benefited from the installation of modern toilet facilities, significantly improving hygiene and the quality of life for residents.

Powering Communities through Solar Electrification

While the project is renowned for its elaborate hydroelectric power generation prowess, the LHWP has made strides into solar powered rural electrification drive, connecting over 208 households in Katse and Mohale villages to life-improving power.

This initiative not only reduces dependency on traditional energy sources but also brings modern amenities to areas that previously lacked electricity. Solar power has provided a lifeline for these communities, supporting economic activities and improving the overall standard of living.

Status of the ongoing Phase II Implementation

The implementation of Phase II of the project is progressing well, having advanced into the main stages of the project namely, Polihali Dam construction, Polihali Transfer Tunnel construction, and the construction of the main bridges, with significant milestones already notched to date.

The overall progress in the construction of Polihali Dam is currently at 18.95 percent, while the construction of the Polihali Transfer Tunnel is currently at 25.10 percent. Part of the notable milestones also includes the arrival of the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) components from China during the second half of 2024.

The arrival of the TBM components is regarded as a crucial step in the construction of the Polihali Transfer Tunnel, which will be excavated from both the Katse and Polihali sides.

The 38-kilometer transfer tunnel will play a key role in augmenting the water transfer capacity between Lesotho and South Africa, ensuring a more reliable water supply to the Gauteng region while also enhancing the hydropower generation capacity for Lesotho.

The second TBM that will excavate from the Polihali side is scheduled to arrive in the country in early 2025.

Progress on the construction of the bridges is significantly more pronounced at 56.28 percent. The construction of the majestic Senqu Bridge, the largest of the three bridges to be constructed under Phase II across the Polihali reservoir, got underway in late 2022, and is projected for completion in 2026.

A covered assembly for the construction of the deck of the 825m long Sengu Bridge



Spanning an impressive length of 825 meters across the reservoir, the majestic 90-meter-high Senqu Bridge will be the first extradosed bridge in Lesotho, which will add to the scenic allure of the country.

Along with the Senqu Bridge, the construction of two additional bridges commenced in August 2023, to ensure the continued access of Mokhotlong town across the reservoir and connecting to the national road network.

Apart from these major works under Phase II, the advance infrastructure construction works consisting of bulk power and telecommunications infrastructure, housing, diversion tunnels, roads, Katse Lodge upgrade, the Polihali Operations Centre and Polihali lodge among others have been completed.

The water transfer to South Africa is expected to commence in 2029, while hydropower generation through the Oxbow Hydropower Scheme, which is progressing at a slower pace, is expected to follow in 2030. It is currently at the design and engineering

of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), and Resettlement Action Planning (RAP) studies stage.

Meanwhile, LHDA announced a planned total shutdown of tunnels for a period of six months from October to March 2025. This is a maintenance shutdown that impacts key components of the water delivery system being the Transfer Tunnel from Katse to 'Muela as well as the Delivery Tunnel From 'Muela to Ash River Outfall in RSA. The LHDA has stopped the delivery of water to the Republic of South Africa and the generation of hydro-electric power for Lesotho at 'Muela. During this time, LHDA will undertake extensive maintenance and repair works inside the tunnels and other related infrastructure. To mitigate the risk of loss for royalties, the Authority delivered more water to compensate for the outage, however, for electricity generation, the Lesotho Electricity Company has been compelled to seek more power from other suppliers in South Africa and Mozambique to augment power supply in Lesotho.



Engineers testing the bed of the dam for the strength of the rocks and any likelihood of seismic movements



The construction of one of the 15 piers that will make Senqu Bridge, the tallest (pier 9) will be approximately 88m in height

LHDA Day | 38

THE LESOTHO HIGHLANDS

TOTAL ROYALTIES COLLECTED FROM LHWP

M17 Billion

M3,6 Billion

Current Average Annual Royalties Revenue

M300 Million

Average Monthly Royalty Revenue

Phase 1

TOTAL INVESTMENT

M17 Billion

M12 Billion

Phase 1A

M5 Billion

Phase 1B

16,000

Jobs created for Basotho

M1 Billion

Paid in Wages

ECONOMIC & BUSINESS GROWTH

M550 Million

Paid to Basotho contractors & Consultants

M1.2 Billion

Spent on local suppliers for goods & services

INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES AND
EDUCATION, AND CENTERS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

2000Km

of Roads constructed under Phase I

45 Classrooms at 16 Schools

5 Health Facilities built
under Phase I

HERITAGE, CULTURE AND CONSERVATION SITES BUILT

Ts'ehlanyane National Park, Katse Botanical Garden, Bokong Nature Reserve

Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) Projects:

- 14 villages. 446 households from three villages installed toilets.
- 2,292 households provided portable water systems.

Solar Rural Electrification:

Over 208 households from Katse and Mphahlele connected to power through solar

Years of Impact

WATER PROJECT BY THE NUMBERS



TOTAL ELECTRICITY REVENUE

M1,4 Billion

Cumulative

M 55 Million

Average Monthly Revenue

Phase 2

TOTAL PLANNED INVESTMENT

M53 Billion

JOB CREATION

7,491

Skilled

11,000

Basotho employed under Phase II to date

3,772

Unskilled

INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT: RANGELAND AND WETLANDS REHABILITATION

10,987

Community members benefitted from jobs in ICM

M36 Million

paid in wages to community members working on ICM initiatives from 2019 to 2024

PUBLIC HEALTH

M4,5 Million

spent on Health Management Information Systems, Capacity Building, and community based health services, in partnership with the Ministry of Health.

ECONOMIC BENEFICATION

M366 Million

spent on Basotho businesses across the country

M96 Million

spent on procurement of goods and services from Basotho companies in Mokhotlong.

M46 Million

spent on procurement of goods and services from Basotho companies in Mokhotlong and Leribe

DAM CONTRACT

TUNNEL CONTRACT

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- M99.7 Million spent on skills development and skills transfer initiatives to Basotho graduates. 78 fully employed at LHDA, contractors, LHDA Young Professionals Programme – 82 consultants or outside. 77 of the 82 are Basotho.
- Over 1700 Basotho from project communities graduated from Skills Testing and Accreditation Program to enable them to access employment within LHWP and outside.
- LHDA Bursary Program – 16 scholarships since 2018, 70% Basotho, Over M4,1 million invested

Building a Resilient Road Network: The Roads Directorate's Commitment to Lesotho's Future

Established through the Roads Directorate Act No 16 of 2010, the Roads Directorate is dedicated to constructing, upgrading, rehabilitating, and maintaining Lesotho's vital network of roads and bridges. From major roads to rural footbridges, we are working tirelessly to connect communities and enhance the flow of goods and services across the nation.

Vision and Strategic Goals

Our vision is to make all parts of Lesotho accessible through safe and well-maintained road infrastructure. We strive to ensure safe and reliable access across Lesotho through a network of high-quality, well-maintained roads and bridges. As outlined in our 2022-2025 strategic plan, we are taking decisive steps to realize this vision by focusing on:

- Developing and maintaining 6,000 km of road infrastructure.



- Constructing and maintaining 120 rural footbridges.
- Creating a climate-resilient road and bridge network by 2030.
- Meeting Lesotho's urgent infrastructure

needs

In 2022, the Lesotho Road Management System reported that many roads needed immediate attention due to inadequate maintenance, limited funding, and heavy rainfall damage. Our current focus includes extensive asset recovery efforts, covering pavement rehabilitation, improved drainage, and rural footbridge reconstruction. We are also expanding the paved road network to link all districts and border posts with resilient bitumen roads, built to withstand all weather conditions.

Key ongoing projects include:

- Rehabilitation of the A1 Road from 'Malesaoana to Botha-Bothe, linking Leribe and Botha-Bothe districts.
- Rehabilitation of the A3 Road from Masianokeng to St. Michael's in Maseru.



- Rehabilitation of Moshoeshoe and Kofi Annan Roads in Maseru
- Installation of bailey bridges across the Ljabatho and Koro-Koro rivers for essential connectivity.
- Regraveling of 100 km of rural roads and providing street lighting in Maseru CBD.

Designs and Studies for Future Projects

In anticipation of future needs, we are conducting essential feasibility studies and detailed designs for key projects, such as:

- Tebellong Bridge across Senqu River in Qacha's Nek.
- Design of Thaba-Tseka to Makunyapane to Mokhotlong Road (92km)
- Decongestion of Maseru through

intersection improvements.

Achievements and Aspirations

Managing over LSL 60 billion in infrastructure assets, we operate with an annual capital budget averaging LSL 1.3 billion. Despite funding challenges, our milestones include:

- Construction of the Marakabei to Monontša Road, enhancing access between Lesotho and South Africa, launching a Graduate Engineering Development Program.
- Implementing a Roads Reserve Management Strategy.
- Completing the significant Mpiti-Sehlabathebe Road, which enhances access to Lesotho's only World Heritage Site.



- Completion of the Tsoaing and Jimisi Bridges.
- Construction of a footbridge connecting communities of Ha Tseka and Ha Pena-Pena in Maseru.



Our mission extends beyond infrastructure; we are building connections that empower communities and foster economic growth. The Roads Directorate is proud to serve as a cornerstone for Lesotho's sustainable and prosperous future. Together, we are creating quality roads to improve connectivity, boost the economy, and support the country's long-term success.



Roads Directorate



@Roads_LS



Road Directorate Lesotho

Quality Roads, Improving Connectivity



Maintenance and Repair of 'Malesaona to Butha-Butha Circle Road sponsored by Road Fund

Vision

We are committed to enhance Lesotho's economy through efficient revenue collection and disbursements towards road infrastructure.

Mission

To effectively and efficiently collect revenue and disburse funds for safe road infrastructure.

Purpose

To collect road user charges and finance road works and road safety activities.

Employee Philosophy

Create the most efficient and joyful workforce in Africa.

Core values

At all times and to stakeholders we shall uphold the principles of: **TRAIT**
T= Transparency,
R= Responsibility,
A= Accountability,
I= Integrity, and
T= Team spirit at all levels.

About Road Fund

The Road Fund was established under the Section 21(3) of the Public Financial Management and Accountability Act 2011 and operationalised by the Finance (Road Fund) Regulations 2012. The main reason for establishing the Road Fund was to shift the burden of financing maintenance of Lesotho's

road infrastructure from general taxes collected by the central fiscus to road user fees, and to close the persistent financing gaps that characterised road maintenance before the establishment of the Road Fund.

Mandate of Road Fund

Road Fund is dedicated to collection of revenue and disbursement of funds for maintenance of roads. Road Fund collects road user charges from a variety of streams including Toll Gate fees, Road Maintenance Levy, Short Term and Special Motor Vehicle Permits and Fines on Traffic Offences. Road Fund then finances Road Implementing Agencies namely the Roads Directorate, Ministry

of Local Government and Maseru City Council to undertake routine, emergency and periodic maintenance of all roads in Lesotho. As part of its mandate, Road Fund also finances Road Safety Activities to ensure safety of road users on the country's roads.

Revenue Collection

In the year 2023-2024, another increase in revenue collection was realised by the Road Fund Secretariat as it collected a total amount of M293,346,843 increasing by M74,227,982 (33.88%) from M219,118,860 collected for the same period up to 31 March 2023. The Road Maintenance Levy remained the largest stream, followed by the Toll



Gate Fees. Both saw an adjustment of rates from the beginning of the year under review, hence remarkable performance compared to the previous financial year.

Construction and Upgrading of Toll Infrastructure

With the aim to improve road user experience through better operating facilities, the Road Fund has embarked on the improvement of three border gates through construction and upgrading of Caledonspoort Border, Maputsoe Border and Maseru Bridge. By the end of 2023-2024 the first two borders were almost complete, while Maseru Bridge was the only that is behind schedule. The total cost aimed at improving the road user experience and better operating facilities is estimated at around M17 million.

Sani Solar Power Plant

Road Fund has erected a Solar Power Plant for automation of the Toll operations at the Sani Border Post in the Mokhotlong district. The objective is to generate electrical power to facilitate automation of the Toll Gate Fees revenue collection processes, which has since been completely manual and to curb revenue leakage resulting from the manual collection. This capacity of the Plant is sufficient to supply the required 1.8 KW load of Toll System components. The solution has 2-day autonomy; it can store enough power to supply the Toll System for 2 days without recharging



Solar Power Plant at Sani Border Post



Beneficiaries at Qoaling Primary School showcasing their uniform packages donated by Road Fund

when there is no sunlight. This solution has also been well received by the other Border Agencies as it seeks to improve the living conditions of the border personnel through access to solar generated power.

Regional Leadership

The Road Fund Chief Executive Officer continued to lead the region as the Chairperson of the Road Funds regional body known as the ARMFA Southern Africa Focal Group (ASAFG). By virtue of leading the region, the Chairperson also forms part of the Executive Committee at continental

level, as a representative for the region. Under the CEO's leadership, physical and virtual meetings were organised and executed to deal with issues of interest to the region, and the ASAFG Action Plan was revised and finalised, and ready for implementation.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) promotes a vision of business accountability to a wide range of stakeholders and also the organisation being recognized as a responsible citizen. During the reporting period, the Road Fund continued to demonstrate a sense of responsibility towards the community by ploughing back through its CSR programme. Since the CSR Committee decided to deal with incoming requests, Motimposo Primary School was identified and became the biggest beneficiary receiving 10 two-seater desks, aimed at improved the students learning experience.

The Road Fund further supported the Ministry of Education and Training's Back to School initiative, whereto the Ministry requested all sectors to show support and appreciation to learners by donating school items to mark this day. A total of forty vulnerable students of Qoaling LEC Primary School were assisted by the Road Fund, they received full packages of school uniform as per their individual needs, these included school shoes, uniforms, jerseys, shirts and socks.



Transformers at Ha-Ramarothole Power Station



Lesotho Sets Sights on Becoming a Net Exporter of Clean Energy

By Kekeletso Motopi Matli

The Lesotho government has set an ambitious target of achieving a higher penetration of renewable energy (RE) in the national energy mix. The expected completion of the Oxbow hydropower plant by 2028 would guarantee the country 182MW of clean energy. The Oxbow hydropower plant is expected to generate 80MW. Calculated as an addition to the existing power generated by Muela Hydropower Station which produces 72MW, Ramarothole Solar Plant with 30MW phase I production and 2MW generated by Mantšonyane Power station producing 2MW, the country's production of 182MW would see the national power supply extending to the rural parts of the country. The country has other mini-grids such as the hybrid diesel-hydro station in Semonkong and solar mini-grids. The country's potential production and utilisation of both solar and hydropower electricity present the country as a potential net exporter of clean energy.

According to Lesotho's Ministry of Energy, the country could potentially produce 450 MW in hydropower and several hundreds more from wind power. The country enjoys an average of 3,000 hours of sunshine annually, and abundant water resources. With its high altitude and abundant sunshine throughout the year, Lesotho is positioned favorably for solar energy generation. The 300 days of sunshine annually and an average solar radiation of about 5.5 to 6 kWh/m²/day, the country's solar potential is substantial. This solar irradiance is comparable to, if not better than, many regions globally recognised for their solar capabilities. The national commitment to the production of clean energy is endorsed in the 2024 National Budget Speech. The Minister of Finance, Retselisitsoe Matlanyane, expressed the national desire in the 2024/25 budget speech in the National Assembly in February 2024.

"The Government of Lesotho shall up-scale its production of green and renewable energy (through increased capacity of generation of solar, wind and hydropower) with the view to be self-sufficient in energy and export by participation in the regional power pool.

"In this regard, maintenance of the 'Muela infrastructure is key to facilitating energy access," Matlanyane stated. Production as well as export of clean energy could play a crucial role in meeting Lesotho's energy needs as well as economic advancements.

"Government shall upscale efforts to ensure access to clean water and sanitation for Basotho and further forge alliances with countries in the region to build infrastructure that facilitates transfer and distribution of water to the SADC region," the Minister said she advocates for the investments in solar photovoltaic (PV) technology that cannot only boost electricity generation, but also provide energy access to remote and rural areas where traditional grid extension is challenging.

According to the Final Report on the establishment of National Energy Fund for Lesotho-Capital Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Power was identified as the most suitable option for off-grid electrification, proposing six off-grid options based on the affordability levels ranging from solar lanterns, solar kits, Solar Home Systems (SHS) to mini-grids. There is buy-in from the Government and recognition that the private sector will be an important ally in achieving universal electrification by 2030. However, the off-grid market in Lesotho is still in its infancy. Uptake of off-grid solutions is hampered by a lack of funding and an immature regulatory and legal environment (mini-grid regulations has only recently been approved) to promote greater access to off grid clean energy, particularly for the roll-out



High voltage power transmission lines

of mini-grids. As a result, there are only a few energy service companies operating in the off-grid space, including existing private sector providers of standalone SHS and mini-grids in the country.

The Ramarothole Solar Power Station stands as a beacon of progress in Lesotho's energy sector. Through its innovative technology, environmental benefits, and positive social impact, it underscores the potential of solar power to drive sustainable development and contribute to a greener future for the country and the region. Situated in Mafeteng, Ha-Ramarothole village, the project represents a major stride forward in the country's quest for

sustainable and renewable energy. Officially inaugurated in early 2024, this state-of-the-art solar facility is a landmark development in Lesotho's energy landscape and a testament to the nation's commitment to green technology and environmental sustainability.

The solar power station is strategically located in the Ramarothole region, which benefits from high solar insolation levels due to its elevated position and relatively clear skies. This makes it an ideal location for harnessing solar energy, providing a reliable and clean alternative to fossil fuels.

Solar panels at Ha Ramarothole Solar Power Station



Mothae Mine now owned by Executive Mining is one of the four commercially operated diamond mines in Lesotho.



DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGICAL FEATURES

The Ramarothole Solar Power Station boasts a capacity of 150 megawatts (MW), positioning it as one of the largest solar installations in Southern Africa. The facility is equipped with cutting-edge photovoltaic (PV) panels that convert sunlight directly into electricity. These panels are mounted on single-axis tracking systems, which optimise their angle to follow the sun's path, thereby maximising energy capture throughout the day.

The station's design includes advanced inverter technology that ensures efficient conversion of direct current (DC) generated by the PV panels into alternating current (AC) suitable for integration into the national grid. Additionally, the project incorporates energy storage solutions, with large-scale battery systems designed to store excess energy produced during peak sunlight hours. This stored energy can be dispatched during periods of low sunlight or high demand, enhancing the reliability and stability of the power supply.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT

The environmental benefits of the Ramarothole Solar Power Station are substantial. Unlike fossil fuel-based power generation, solar energy production does not emit greenhouse gases or other pollutants. By shifting to solar power, Lesotho significantly reduces its carbon footprint and contributes to global efforts to combat climate change. The land used for the solar arrays has been carefully selected to minimise disruption to local ecosystems and wildlife.

Solar energy can power essential appliances, such as lights, refrigerators, and radios, improving the quality of life and enabling modern conveniences. For many households, especially those in rural areas, access to hot water is a luxury. Solar water heaters can address this need by using the sun's energy to heat water, thus reducing reliance on electric or fuel-based heating methods. This not only lowers energy costs but also enhances comfort and hygiene.

With an average elevation of over 2,000 meters above sea level, Lesotho's high-altitude provides a distinctive advantage in wind energy generation. At



Giant inverters convert direct current to alternating current used in the grid

such elevations, the wind speeds are generally higher and more consistent. These are critical factors for efficient wind power production. According to recent studies, wind speeds in Lesotho often exceed the threshold necessary for commercial wind turbine operation, making it an ideal candidate for wind energy projects.

Lesotho could easily improve the national electricity supply with the production of 6,000 MW from wind energy production. However, notable technical challenges remain, as Lesotho's unique geography means increased risk of lightning strikes as well as icy winters, posing significant threats to efficiency and infrastructure integrity. By embracing this opportunity, this would have meant that Lesotho could stop importation of expensive electricity from South Africa and Mozambique. This coupled with the prospects of hydropower production would place Lesotho in a position to export power to her big neighbor South Africa.

The Lesotho Power Generation Master Plan (2011) explicitly outlines the prefeasibility of wind power farm to be located at the Lekhalong Le Lesehla Pass in Quthing, South of Lesotho. The site is in the proximity of a soon to be erected 33kV line.

Medium-sized wind turbines (1.6 MW) have been considered as the main option. Installation of the 10MW wind farm would not close power deficit, but would allow water to be stored in the dam only to be used during power shortages.

The establishment of wind farms can create jobs, stimulate local economies, and foster technological innovation. As the wind energy sector grows, it can also attract international investment and collaboration, further integrating Lesotho into the global clean energy market.

POSSIBILITY OF EXPORTING TO SOUTH AFRICA

With the country producing at least 6,450MW of electricity from all its potential clean energy sources possibility of selling excess to South Africa and other countries in the region.

South Africa, with its burgeoning population and expanding industrial sector, faces persistent power shortages. Frequent load-shedding and infrastructure challenges have made the country increasingly reliant on external sources of electricity. In this context, Lesotho's potential as a stable and

renewable energy supplier becomes particularly attractive.

ECONOMIC AND REGIONAL BENEFITS

The potential economic benefits for Lesotho are considerable. Exporting electricity could provide a much-needed revenue stream, bolstering the nation's economy and funding critical development projects. This economic boost could help Lesotho improve its infrastructure, healthcare, and education systems, creating a positive cycle of growth and development.

From a regional perspective, increased electricity trade between Lesotho and South Africa could strengthen the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP), an initiative aimed at enhancing electricity cooperation among member states. This integration promises to improve energy security and stability across the region, offering a model of cooperation that could be replicated elsewhere in Africa.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Despite the promising outlook, several challenges need to be addressed. Capacity constraints in Lesotho's current hydropower infrastructure require attention, and expanding this capacity will demand substantial investment and careful planning. Additionally, Lesotho and South Africa must manage environmental and social impacts to ensure that projects are sustainable and beneficial for local communities.

Political and economic stability in both nations will also play a critical role in realizing the full potential of this electricity trade. Ensuring a favorable investment climate and strong bilateral relations will be essential for overcoming these hurdles.

A COLLABORATIVE FUTURE

As Lesotho and South Africa navigate these challenges, the prospects for a robust and mutually beneficial electricity trade are bright. With continued investment, regional cooperation, and a focus on sustainable development, Lesotho's role as an electricity exporter could become a cornerstone of its economic growth and a significant contribution to regional energy security.

Game-Changer: Lesotho's Mothae Diamond Mine Acquired by Local Company

Writes Thato Chobokoane



Some of the high value gemstones discovered at Mothae.

In a groundbreaking development for Lesotho's economy, Mothae Diamond Mine, one of the country's most valuable assets, has transitioned into the hands of a fully Basotho-owned company, Executive. This acquisition represents not only a shift in ownership but also a significant step towards ensuring that the wealth generated from Lesotho's natural resources stays within its borders, benefiting the nation as a whole. The successful purchase by Executive, under the leadership of CEO Kenny Lephema, is more than a business deal – It's a bold statement of Basotho self-determination and ambition.

The ownership comes after the Australia based Lucapa Diamond Company's recent divestment of its 70% stake in the Mothae diamond mine; marking a strategic shift in the company's focus. Following a review of its asset portfolio, Lucapa opted to concentrate on its core operations in Angola and Australia, leading to the sale of its Mothae stake to Executive. The divestment, completed after a competitive sale process, not only represents Lucapa's efforts to streamline its global operations but also opens the door for greater local ownership of Lesotho's mineral wealth, symbolising a significant milestone for the nation's economic development.

For decades, foreign companies have had a dominant share of the nation's mining sector, resulting in large portions of the wealth flowing out of the country. However, this acquisition marks a pivotal change, representing Basotho's potential towards reclaiming control over their resources and reinvesting in their own communities. Executive's involvement in Mothae sets the stage for a new era of locally driven economic growth, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

A vision for the future

At the centre of this bold move is Kenny Lephema, CEO of Executive, whose determination to see Basotho own and operate their own natural resources has been decades in the making. In an exclusive interview, Lephema shared his passion for making the Mothae acquisition a model for other local businesses.

"We are the pioneers," Lephema says with pride. "This acquisition is historic. For the first time, Basotho are the majority owners of a mine of this magnitude. If you look at other big mines in the country, most are owned by foreign companies. We've set an example for Basotho to know that it's possible to operate and own a mine, and we are the first to do so on this scale."

Lephema's vision goes beyond just owning the mine. He envisions a future where Lesotho's mining sector is synonymous with innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity.

"What technologies can we introduce into the mining industry that will allow us to operate sustainably? How can we create more jobs and diversify our supply chain? These are the questions we're focusing on as we take control of Mothae," he explains.

Empowering local suppliers and communities

One of Executive's key strategies for the future is ensuring that more Basotho suppliers are integrated into the mine's operations. Mining, as Lephema notes, traditionally relies on local procurement, and he sees this as an opportunity to incubate a robust supply network in Lesotho.

The leases of the mines require us to use more local suppliers," Lephema says.

"We want to engage with them and help them grow. By doing this, we can create a company that is not only environmentally friendly, but also supportive of Basotho businesses."

This is a key element of Executive's long-term sustainability plan. By nurturing local suppliers, the company aims to build a self-reliant ecosystem that supports the broader economy. It is this interconnectedness—between the mine, local businesses, and the community—that Lephema believes will drive real economic growth for years to come.

The importance of beneficiation

For Executive, owning the mine is just one part of a larger vision. Beneficiation – the process of adding value to raw materials before they are exported – is a key focus for the company. By retaining more of the diamond value chain within Lesotho, Executive aims to ensure that the country benefits from the full economic potential of its resources.

Lephema is adamant about the role of beneficiation in driving local wealth creation. "Executive wouldn't exist if it wasn't for Basotho," he says.

"We've been able to build our business because of the support we've received from our people, and now we want to give back by creating sustainable opportunities for future generations. We want to pass down this business, and that can only happen if we instil a sense of national pride in our consumers and workforce."

He emphasises that Executive is committed to creating a lasting legacy, not just for his own children but for the entire nation.

"This isn't just about today; it's about the future. It's about building something that will last for generations."



Overcoming challenges and building expertise

While the acquisition is a monumental achievement, it is not without its challenges. As a company with two decades of experience in drill-and-blasting operations, Executive is well-versed in mining processes. However, owning and operating a mine comes with new responsibilities—particularly in areas like plant processing and diamond recovery.

“Now, we have to focus on the technical aspects of the mining operation,” Lephema explains.

“This includes understanding the market for diamonds, improving recovery rates, and managing the ebb and flow of production at Mothae. These are new challenges, but we have the technical team and the expertise to address them.”

One of the most pressing challenges is maintaining the security of the mine.

“We’re now dealing with precious stones, and security is a top priority,” Lephema says.

“This requires significant investment, but we are prepared to meet that challenge head-on.”

Additionally, Lephema notes the rise of synthetic diamonds as another potential hurdle. However, he remains confident that Mothae’s unique offering—its high-quality white, yellow, and pink diamonds—will continue to command a premium on the global market.

“At the end of the day, the diamonds speak for themselves. Mothae is known for producing some of the world’s most sought-after stones, and we will continue to deliver that quality.”

Mothae Mine has 8.8 hectares of diamondiferous kimberlite pipe **100**



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Letšeng Diamonds has made a M29,3 billion contribution to the Kingdom of Lesotho's fiscus since 2012. The direct economic contributions include royalties, dividends, taxes, corporate social responsibility and investment, local procurement spend, PAYE remittances, and mining lease related payments.

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Breaking barriers in the Diamond Industry

The diamond industry has long been dominated by foreign investors, making Executive's entry into this space all the more significant. As a black-owned company, Executive's acquisition of Mothae is a powerful statement of inclusion and transformation in an industry historically controlled by non-African players.

"The diamond industry was started by white people, and for the longest time, they controlled the market," Lephema acknowledges.

"But now, we are part of that market. We are players! The product speaks for itself, and we're here to show that a black-owned mine can succeed at the highest levels."

Lephema is also quick to point out that while Executive is proudly Basotho-owned, the company remains open to foreign investment and collaboration.

"We've learned a lot from our international partners, and that has helped us get to where we are today," he says. "Foreign investment has been crucial to our growth, and we welcome continued partnerships. But now, we want to play it forward and help other Basotho companies thrive."

A new era of pride and ownership

For Lephema and Executive, the acquisition of Mothae is about more than just financial success—it's about national pride and economic empowerment. The company's journey is a testament to what is possible when Basotho take ownership of their own resources.

"We've created a dream that is now attainable for all Basotho," Lephema says. "This is much more than diamonds. It's about showing our people that we can do this—we can own our industries, create jobs, and build something that lasts."

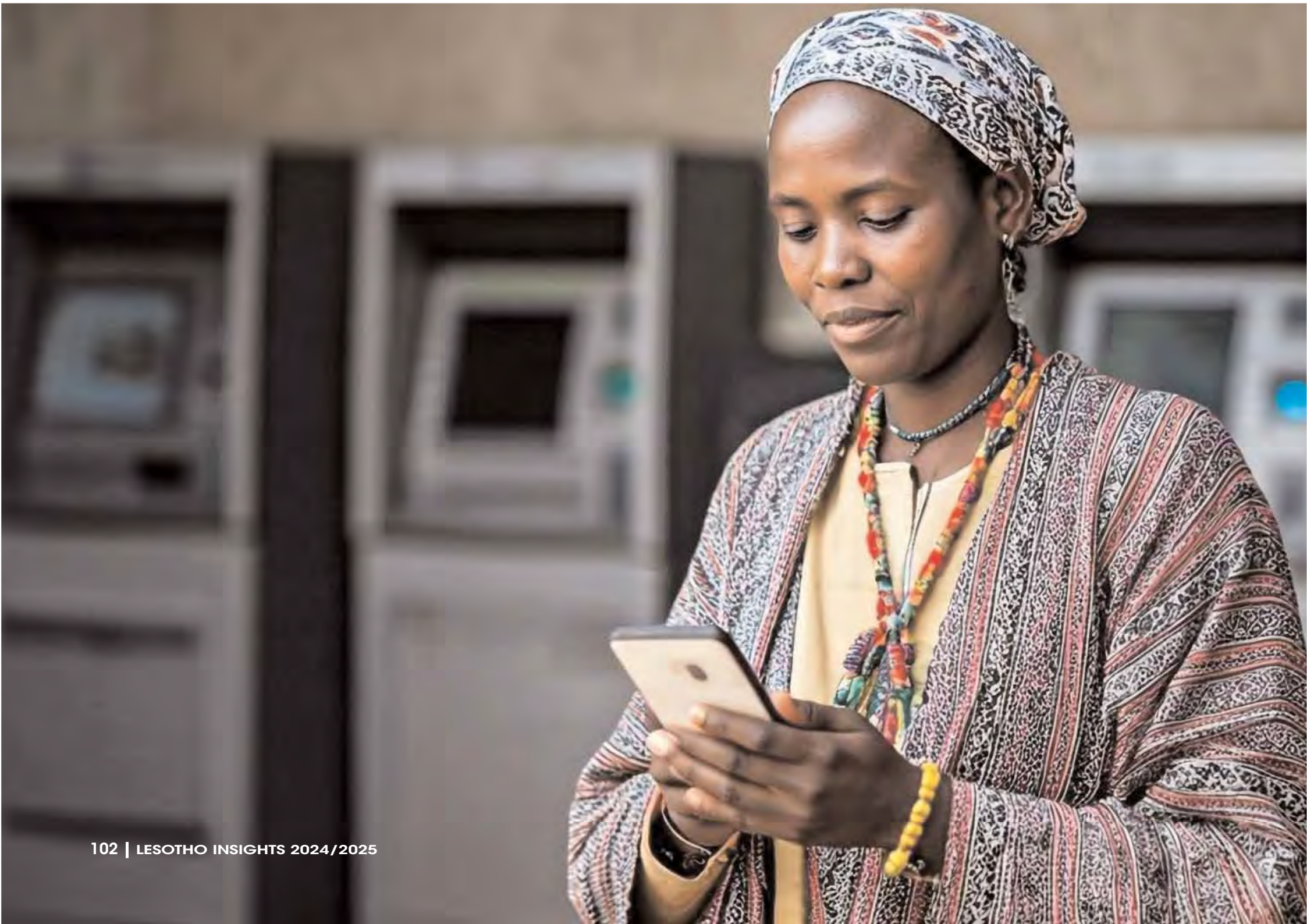
As the first Basotho-owned company to operate a mine of this magnitude, Executive is blazing a trail for others to follow. And for Lephema, the journey is just beginning.

"This is about creating a legacy. It's about ensuring that our diamonds, our resources, and our story are part of the global narrative. We want Basotho to wear our diamonds, to take pride in what we produce. And we want the world to know that Lesotho is open for business."

With the Mothae acquisition, Lesotho stands on the cusp of a new era—one where Basotho are not just workers in foreign-owned mines, but the owners and drivers of their own economic destiny. And for Executive, this is just the beginning.



Mothae Diamonds Treatment Plant



New Developments and Transformation in the Banking Sector

By Staff Reporter

In 2024, the banking industry introduced two major changes that will radically change the payment regime in the country, within the Common Monetary Area (CMA) countries (Lesotho, South Africa, Eswatini and Namibia) as well as in the country. These countries are unique because they share a currency parity with the South African rand, the biggest economy in the region.

Invariably, when South Africa sneezes on matters affecting its monetary policy, the rest of the CMA countries catch a cold. A recent case in point is the grey listing of South Africa by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental finance watchdog established to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other threats to the integrity of the international financial system. At home, banks have also localised card transactions through the introduction of the Lesotho National Payment Switch, which has reduced the reliance on electronic payments to foreign e-commerce gateways, thereby reducing the costs of transactions for consumers.

From September 2024, commercial banks in Lesotho stopped cross-border payments and collections for payments valued at M5 million and below. These payments were initially treated as 'local' payments because they were cleared centrally in South Africa as the hub for CMA payments. However, with this change, such payments can still be made, but are now classified as international payments similar to other jurisdictions worldwide. Such payments now require additional and mandatory information, including, but not limited to the source of funds, full payer and payee's address details and the Balance of Payments (BOP) category. The payment transactions are now subjected to further scrutiny, and the implication is that, in some instances, it takes longer for these payments to be processed, and same day value is not realised as it used to be the case. Moreover, the treatment of these payments attracts higher bank charges as they are now no longer regarded as domestic payments.

The parity of the Lesotho loti to the South African rand has also made it easy for Basotho to purchase goods and services in South Africa, and one such

example is insurance.

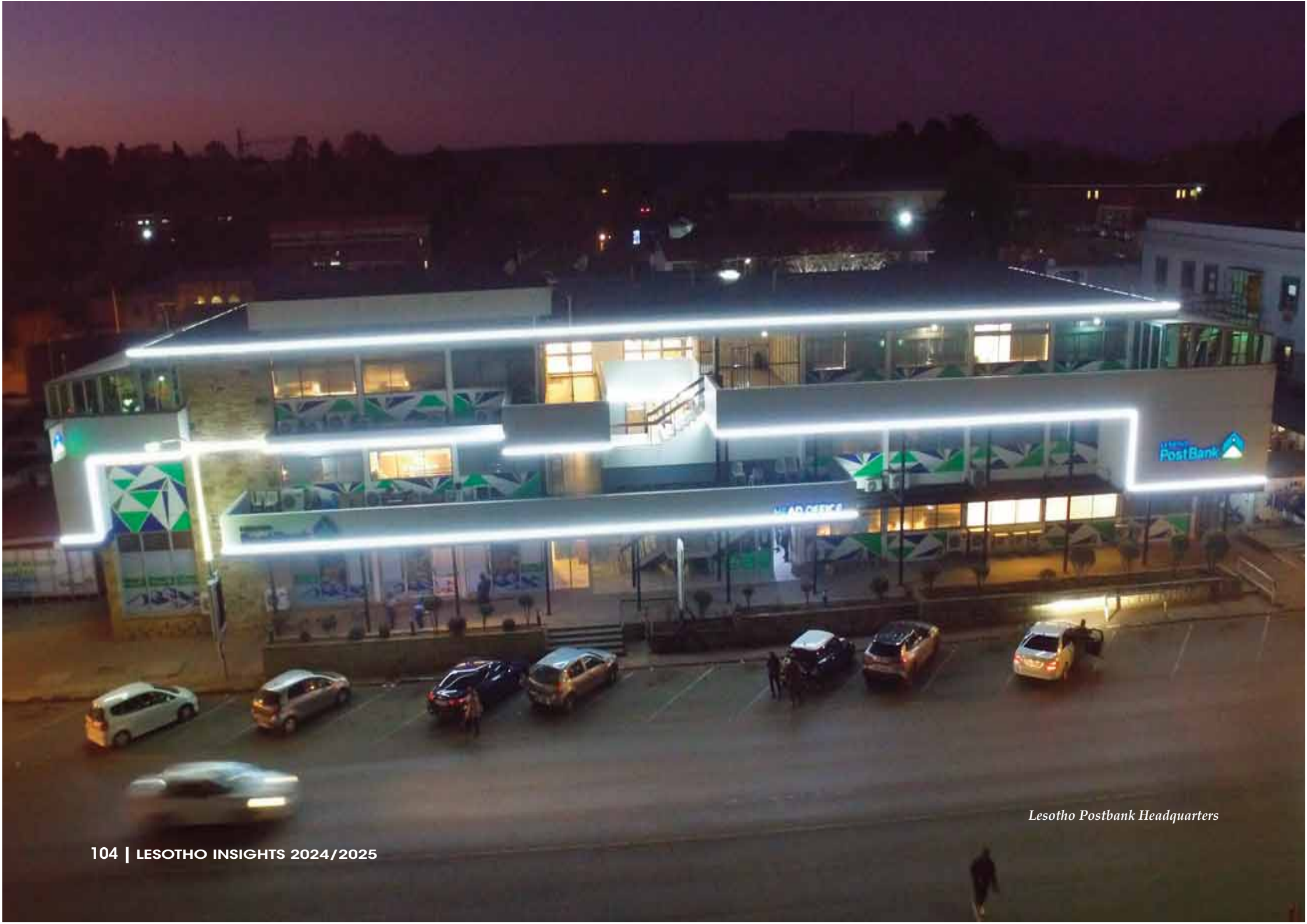
But monthly premiums to South African insurance companies have also been highly impacted by this change. This is because the new changes have also terminated direct Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) cross border collections among CMA countries. EFT debit transactions for a foreign bank must now be facilitated through a local bank. In the case of South African insurance companies such as Sanlam, Old Mutual for example; which have no presence in Lesotho, these insurance houses have options of collecting either by opening accounts at local banks, where premiums would then be paid locally and then subsequently relayed as bulk payments to South Africa.

Alternatively, premium payers who want to maintain their insurance covers in South Africa have had the burden of opening new accounts in South African banks, where the insurance houses would collect. This means Basotho should now regularly maintain and fund those South African accounts to have their premiums paid regularly. At the time of going to print, only Old Mutual had opened a Lesotho account to ease collections for its customers in Lesotho.

The decision to terminate cross border transactions within CMA has been made by the CMA Cross Border Payments Oversight Committee (CPOC) and the central banks in the CMA countries. Major drivers of this decision are risk and compliance that must be mitigated, especially around identifying sources of funds and full details of the origins of such money flows. For a significant period, these transactions between the four countries lacked regulation, making tracking difficult, and this was one of the concerns raised by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).



Lesotho Postbank is the only one of four commercial banks in Lesotho that is 100% Basotho owned



Lesotho Postbank Headquarters

FATF grey listed South Africa in February 2023, highlighting 20 deficiencies in the country's Anti-Money Laundering and the Combating of Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regime. Grey listing by FATF means that South Africa has significant gaps in its anti-money laundering policies and frameworks that need to be resolved, and the country has committed to working with FATF to resolve these issues. These include the passing of several pieces of legislation aimed at improving the country's financial crime laws, including the General Laws Amendment Bill 2022. In its quest to robustly address the FATF deficiencies, South Africa has established the Fusion Centre comprising state actors like the National Prosecutions Authority, Special Investigations Unit, the South African Revenue Services and Crime Intelligence Unit. According to Investec, the Fusion Centre has collectively, preserved and recovered approximately M1.75 billion in criminal assets.

While grey listing by FATF signals a red flag, where a country may be impacted in its ability to access international financial markets, it is deemed to not pose significant risks to the stability of the South African economy. Grey listing is generally considered to be a good instrument towards incentivising countries to comply with Anti-Money Laundering and Combating of Terrorist Financing best practices. Currently, there are 21 other countries on the FATF grey list including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Venezuela. Iran, North Korea and Myanmar Republic are on the FATF blacklist, while the Russia has been removed from the membership of FATF following its invasion of Ukraine.

To date, South Africa has resolved 15 of such deficiencies and progress will be reviewed by FATF in February 2025. By default, when South Africa makes changes to its laws and policies to improve its compliance to the prescripts of FATF, such measures invariably affect other CMA members, including Lesotho, which is why this moratorium on cross border payments has affected Lesotho and the rest of the CMA countries. Whereas this change is seen by many as an impediment to the faster flow of money between Lesotho and South Africa, on the flipside, it is going to strengthen controls and add the necessary impetus on combating money laundering. For the Central Bank of Lesotho, it will help the regulator to monitor and keep accurate records of financial flows between Lesotho and South Africa, which was traditionally a difficult task as there were no controls before this implementation.

Meanwhile, there has also been another notable development regarding changes to the gateway for card transactions in Lesotho, which came into effect in October 2024. Traditionally, all ATM and Point of Sale (POS) transactions for all banks in Lesotho used Visa and Mastercard gateway for e-commerce, both for local and international transactions again, Lesotho transactions were processed through the South African interbank switch operated by BankServ. These ATM and POS transactions implied that for any transaction instance happening on the ATM card, such a payment was deemed to have been an international payment. However, effective October 2024, all local transactions are now localised, thanks to the establishment of the Lesotho National Payment Switch (Leswitch) by the Central Bank of Lesotho and the sector players. Leswitch is aimed at establishing modernising Lesotho's electronic payment infrastructure. Leswitch connects various digital payment systems, including POS, ATMs and mobile money, thereby consolidating all domestic electronic transactions into a single central hub for authorisation and processing.

The National Payment Switch is designed exclusively for domestic payments, which implies that this will affect transactions initiated through accounts held in the country. The primary goal of Leswitch is to enhance the digital payments infrastructure in Lesotho to meet both current and future customer demands. Leswitch will facilitate near real-time electronic payments, ensuring that funds are available to recipients in real-time.

Leswitch also brings to life, digital interoperability. This will enable seamless processing of payments between banks and non-banking entities in Lesotho, thereby simplifying the payments landscape.

Looking to the future, Leswitch will support local payment innovations such as e-commerce gateways and e-government payment integrations.

Overall, Leswitch will promote greater financial inclusion by leveraging digital infrastructure to reach underserved populations. It is also hoped that consumers will also realise reduced costs for all domestic transactions. For both innovations, the biggest winner is the Central Bank of Lesotho, which will now accurately monitor and report on the financial cashflows between Lesotho and South Africa.



VISA and Mastercard operate seamlessly in Lesotho for both Local and International transactions



LESWITCH connects all domestic payments and transactions including ATMs



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We are thrilled to share that Lesana Financial Services has been honoured with two prestigious awards. One of these is by Brand Africa which recognized Lesana as one of Lesotho's Top Financial Services Brands for 2024 in Lesotho's Best Brands category. The second is being recognized among the top 4 of the Most Admired Financial Services Brands. These accolades are a testament to our unwavering commitment to advancing the lives of Basotho nation, especially those who have been traditionally excluded by the banking sector.

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Rural communities harvest wild rosehip, thrash and sell to companies that export it to Europe, this provides some source of income their families.

Lesotho's organic Rosehip shaking up the Global Pharmaceutical Market

Writes Bereng Mpaki

While diamonds, garments, wool and mohair, trout, and cannabis have long dominated Lesotho's export landscape, a new product - organic rosehip - is quietly making waves on the global pharmaceutical scene.

Scientifically known as *Rosa Eglanteria* or *Rubignosa*, the fruits or berries of this wild-growing medicinal plant are said to be rich in vitamins A, C, D and E and full of antioxidants to combat free radicals in the body.

This makes rosehip a darling to the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries, as the use of complementary medicines in the form of herbal medicines and nutraceutical products continues to gain popularity globally.

A rising star in pharmaceuticals

The oil extracted from the rosehip seeds is used to manufacture high quality cosmetics products, and is renowned for excellent tissue regeneration properties which reduce the appearance of scars, sun damage and aging wrinkles as well as prevention of the formation of thickening of the skin when forming scar tissue.

Rosehip oil helps to accelerate the healing process, especially on skin that has been subjected to excessive sunlight. The shells (skin) of the rosehip fruit are also used to make rosehip tea, which is said to prevent bladder infections, dizziness and headaches.

Expanding Lesotho's export profile

Lesotho's organic rosehip industry, which began as recently as 2016, has not only diversified the country's export portfolio but also caught the attention of first-world consumers.

According to the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Business Development, major markets for Lesotho's rosehip products are in Europe, including Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

"Lesotho exports of dried fruit (HS Code 081340) and plants used for pharmaceutical purposes (HS Code 121190) to the EU market grew from

less than €100,000 in 2012 to over €1.5 million in 2016. The pharmaceutical plants, particularly rosehip, are now also exported to Germany, France, Poland, and the UK," the Ministry said.

Other markets to a lesser extent are believed to include New Zealand and the United States (US), which the Lesotho government has earmarked for diversifying and increasing exports to the region through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Eligible as a specialty food, Lesotho hopes to take advantage of the US's growing organic niche market to supply with rosehip products. The challenge however, would be addressing the organic certification of the rosehip and other specialty products working with the producers.

Lucrative business with significant economic contribution

Although a relatively small and upcoming industry, the lucrative rosehip production generates an estimated M300 million in export revenue annually for Lesotho. The Ministry estimates that Lesotho has the potential to produce between 8,000 and 10,000 tons of rosehip per year.

In 2017, one of the local processing companies, Rosa Canina, exported 1,200 tonnes of processed rosehip, primarily to Europe.

What sets the rosehip industry apart is its strong connection with rural communities. Harvesting, which takes place between March and June, is done by local villagers who sell the fruit to processors, providing the much-needed income in areas with few job opportunities.

A 2022 study conducted by Rhodes University highlighted rosehip's role in supporting rural livelihoods. Though the income generated from rosehip harvesting is relatively modest, the study found that it acts as an important safety net, particularly for households facing job scarcity or food insecurity.

The study called *The Rural Households' Perception of Rosehip and the Role It Plays in Rural Livelihoods in Lesotho*, however, found that the income from rosehip was the community's lowest source of income.



The brains behind Wild Plants Growers, Miloane Mokhobo with some of his rosehip harvest ready for export.

"Despite the income from rosehip being low, it acts as a safety net in the face of shocks such as limited job opportunities and food shortages to the poorer households who have few income sources.

It further said harvesting together improved cooperation among the rural people, where they saved money earned from selling rosehip and buy larger quantities of fertiliser for the next planting season.

"This implies that rosehip plays a valuable role in contributing to social capital by supporting community relationships and helping build trust and solidarity among harvesters," the report concluded.

A range of products is manufactured from rosehip

Beyond cosmetics and tea, rosehip is used to produce a variety of products that are finding favor in global markets including animal feed. This growing industry holds promise not only for diversifying Lesotho's economy but also for improving the lives of its rural population

Increasing production through cultivation

Despite it being a wild-growing plant that has previously proved difficult to cultivate or propagate, there has been notable efforts to farm the crop on a commercial scale, with promising results.

A local company, Wild Plants Growers, which specialises in producing wild plants that have a commercial value, has made it its business to find a way of reproducing rosehip to increase production to create more jobs, while also helping the country to earn more foreign currency. The company is currently on the exploration phase to export to China.



Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II

The government of Lesotho is implementing the Smallholders Agriculture Development Project II. This project builds on the success of its predecessor SADPI, which closed in 2020. In its second phase the project has expanded its geographic scope to reach all the ten districts of Lesotho with an expanded breadth of activities and further attention on irrigation investments and interventions, climate resilience and social inclusion. The project is supported by the World Bank, the Government of Japan and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to the tune of M70 million until May, 2026.

Objectives

The key objectives of SADP II is to improve food security for Basotho and improve nutrition in the country through climate smart agricultural practices. The project also seeks to support improved agricultural output through commercialization and import substitution, so that the sector creates jobs and improves rural household income. The project also intends to ensure the inclusion of women and youth in the agriculture sector.

SADP II is made of four key components below with a summary of planned activities and key achievements to date:

COMPONENT 1: Promoting Climate Smart Agricultural (CSA) Practices and Advisory Services

Subcomponent 1.1 Capacity building for Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)

» Planned activities

- Engagement of CSA Consultant to backstop districts in CSA trainings.
- Training of 9000 lead farmers on 5 prioritized CSA practices/technologies: Target groups (Farmer Field Schools (FFS), Lead Farmer and Follower farmers)
- 10 Demonstrations and Trials across the country

» Key achievements

- A total of 7348 farmers have been trained on 5 prioritized CSA initiatives covering improved crop varieties and livestock management, protected agriculture (shade nets and Plastic tunnels) Water harvesting and drip irrigation, Conservation agriculture and Agroforestry across the country.
- 587 farmers were trained on Farmer Field Schools in Maseru, Quthing and Botha-Bothe.
- 4 demonstration plots implemented in 4 Irrigation schemes (Tsitsoeng Quthing, Nkhunkhu-Mohale's hoek, Makoabating Maseru and Thaba-Phatsoa-Leribe).

Subcomponent 1.2 Irrigation Development

» Planned activities

- Rehabilitation of existing Irrigation infrastructure (9 additional schemes) in all districts.
- Development of Irrigation schemes identified to have potential for rehabilitation.
- Capacity building of farmers and extension staff on irrigation technologies and management.

» Key achievements

- 1389 farmers have been trained on irrigation, technologies, operation and maintenance in all districts.
- 9 additional irrigation schemes in Mokhotlong, Maseru, Mafeteng, Quthing, Thaba-Tseka and Qacha's Nek) were identified, delivery of equipment completed. Civil works in Thaba-Tseka, Qacha's Nek, Quthing, Mafeteng have already commenced.

Implementation of the sub-component is in progress with no major achievements to date.

Subcomponent 1.4 Integrated Climate, Weather and Market Advisory Services

» Planned activities

- Development of the Lesotho Agro weather tool
- Segmenting and registering farmers.
- Digitising agricultural statistics.

» Key Achievements

- Trainings on agro-weather tool for farmers have been undertaken in Butha-Butha, Mokhotlong and Makhaleshoek. SMS notifications are already being sent to extension staff for pilot testing and sharing with farmers.
- The Management Information System consultancy engaged, system has been developed and 4576 farmers have been registered to date.

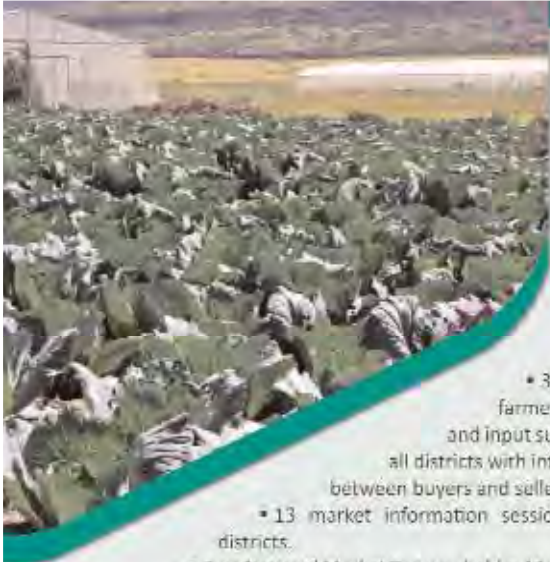
COMPONENT 2: Improving Agricultural Commercialization and Nutrition

Sub-component 2.1. Support for Horizontal Alliances

» Planned activities

- Training of farmers in Agri business management and group formation & dynamics
- Round table meetings
- Trade fairs
- Market information disseminations
- Study tours for farmers.





» Key Achievements

- 4279 farmers trained on agri-business and marketing skills
- 664 farmers trained in group formation and dynamics in all districts.

• 36 buyer-seller meetings for farmers and traders (off-takers and input suppliers) were conducted in all districts with intention of forming alliances between buyers and sellers.

- 13 market information sessions were held in all the districts.
- Two National Market Day was held in Maseru with aim of promoting sustainable agri-business and more than 1070 people participated. Producers generated sales of more than M128,000.

Sub-component 2.2: Support for Vertical Alliances

» Planned activities.

- Training of service providers
- Matching grants for improving smallholder productivity.
- Matching grants for Agri-businesses
- Youth Call
- Engagement of Youth Mentorship Consultant.
- Lead firms' engagement

» Key achievements

- 30 Service providers were trained on proposal writing for Lead Firms.
- A total of M49.2 million was disbursed to matching grants beneficiaries for milestone two and three under round one and two of the project.
- Under Youth Call, 39 beneficiaries have received milestone one amounting to M3,12 million.

- Recruited 7 lead firms which have already signed the contracts and ready for the first milestone disbursement

Sub-component 2.3. Improved Nutrition

» Planned activities.

- Advocacy

- campaigns on nutrition diets
- Community based dietary knowledge.
- Nutrition Sensitive Grants. Disbursement to 59 Nutrition Clubs consisting of 970 households.

» Key achievements

- In partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) the project disseminated Nutrition messages through public gatherings to 34,612 households, translating to 138,448 people reached.
- Construction of shade-nets is complete as well as the procurement and delivery of dual purpose fruit trees for 736 households in Thabo-Tseka, Leribe, Berea, Maseru and Mafeteng.

COMPONENT 3: Project management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation

» Planned activities.

- Formation and training of Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) committees
- Environmental and Social Safeguards training for farmers and extension staff
- Integrated Pest Management training for Extension staff.
- Development of M&E system for effective monitoring and reporting.

» Key achievements

- 71 GRM committees established in all districts except Qacha's Nek. 367 people comprising extension staff and local authorities (Chiefs and councillors) were trained on Environment and Social Safeguards as well as on Grievance Redress Mechanism.
- 379 people including farmers and extension staff were trained on Integrated Pest Management.
- M&E system developed and functional. Awaiting engagement of Data Clerks to assist in data entry.

COMPONENT 4: Contingency Emergency Response Component

» Planned activities.

- 11,000 vulnerable households receive agricultural inputs and technical support on intensive vegetable production on household plots to increase the availability and consumption of nutritious vegetables.
- 250 vulnerable households receive agricultural inputs and technical support for commercial vegetable production as a means to increase the supply of vegetables on local markets and the availability and consumption of nutritious vegetables in rural areas.

- 15,000 households supported with agricultural inputs for the 2022 summer cropping season to restore their post-flood agricultural productivity.
- Improve production and productivity of potatoes among 750 households through fostering aggregation activities in selected districts as part of emergency response, resilience building and economic empowerment of farmers.
- Increase livestock production among 33,000 livestock-dependent vulnerable households affected by floods through the support of veterinary inputs and technical support.

» Key achievements

- The 4 x 4m shade nets were received in the country in December 2023. The procurement of 6 x 5m shade net structures for medium-sized drip irrigated fields is underway.
- A total of 209 extension officers were trained from the 10 districts so they can provide the needed mentorship support.
- 11,350 (95%) beneficiaries were able to collect maize seed during the day of distribution. 10,750 (89.5%) beneficiaries collected their items during day of fertilizer distribution.

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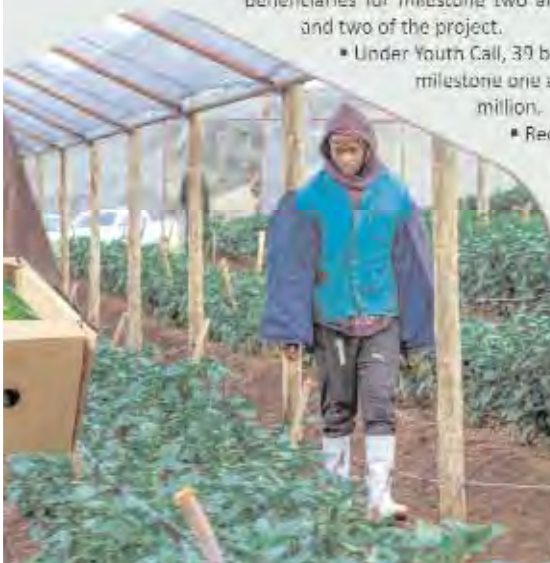
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State-of-the-art Maseru District Hospital now in operation



Lesotho Health Preparedness Outlined

Writes Kekeletso Motopi Matli



As Lesotho navigates the complexities of healthcare in a rugged and diverse landscape, the government and health organisations are launching a forward-thinking health plan aimed at revolutionising the country's healthcare system. The Lesotho Health Plan 2024 embodies a strategic vision to enhance healthcare access, quality, and outcomes for all citizens.

The country is banking on Village Health Workers as the front-line soldiers in disease control. Spread across the country in some of the remotest villages, in the deep mountains of Lesotho, health workers are the first frontliners to reach these remote communities.

In July 2024, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported on an event-based surveillance training they conducted for 3,455 community leaders and village health workers. The training, held in Mohale's Hoek, Botha-Bothe, Qacha's Nek, and Thaba-Tseka, aimed at improving the timely detection and response to health threats in Lesotho. Africa Centre for Disease Control (CDC)

Director General, Dr. Jean Kaseya's emphasis on empowering community health workers aligns with recent efforts by the World Health Organisation (WHO). This training comes at a critical time, as the continent faces a growing number of mpox cases. Mpox, a viral zoonotic disease caused by the monkeypox virus, has recently been classified as a growing global health concern. As of August 19, 2024, there were 18, 602 recorded cases of mpox in 13 African countries, with the Democratic Republic of Congo accounting for the highest number at 17,796 cases.

The Ministry of Health's commitment is complimented by the government's desire to support village health workers. In her Mid-term budget speech, the Minister of Finance Dr. Retselisitsoe Matlanyane said the health sector was committed to achieving universal health coverage and improving primary healthcare. The country has expended M882 million to support this mission, including subsidies for non-financial institutions and essential health service procurement.

"Immunisation campaigns for children were held and through the 'Hlasela Lefuba' initiative, Government has conducted TB screening and initiated treatment for 286 patients in every district. New health posts have been established in key areas, enhancing primary healthcare services," Dr Matlanyane noted.

The ministry is addressing the long overdue compensation challenge for Village Health Workers (VHW) by verifying data for stipend or allowance payments and reviewing the VHW policy for alignment with Lesotho's primary healthcare objectives. Village Health Workers play an important role in addressing healthcare challenges in underserved areas. The presence of VHW helps to improve healthcare access, deliver preventive services, build community trust, and

reduce health disparities, contributing to overall community health and well-being.

Lesotho's healthcare system faces several challenges, including a high prevalence of both communicable and non-communicable diseases, limited healthcare infrastructure, and disparities in access to services between urban and rural areas. Additionally, the mountainous terrain and remote locations make healthcare delivery particularly difficult. The 2024 Health Plan seeks to address these issues through a range of targeted strategies.

The strides made by the Health Ministry ensures that the country can protect her citizens even in the wake of yet another health emergency of Mpox. Although the country has not fully recovered from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, a team of very vigilant workers is gearing towards keeping Mpox at bay. With the support of development partners such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Africa Centre for Diseases Control (CDC) the country has attempted to put in place a strategy to ensure that the country is free of M-pox.

Already facing a range of health issues, this emerging threat poses significant challenges and requires a multifaceted response. It typically presents with symptoms resembling those of smallpox, including fever, rash, and swollen lymph nodes, though it is reported to generally be less severe.

Coordinating with international health organisations, gathering information, and preparing for the worst-case scenario, the multifaceted strategy aims at increasing public awareness, strengthening the healthcare system, and setting up emergency response units. A series of educational workshops and public service announcements have begun roll outs. Local leaders, health workers, and community activists are all involved in spreading crucial information about Mpox—its symptoms, prevention methods, and the importance of seeking medical help if needed.

The Ministry's team has embarked on a rigorous campaign to ensure that local clinics and hospitals are equipped with the necessary supplies and knowledge. Mobile health units have been dispatched to the more remote areas, where they conducted screenings and distributed informational materials. The goal was not only to

prepare but to ensure that even the most isolated communities have access to the necessary resources.

Nearly two months after the Africa Centre for Disease Control (CDC) declared the mpox outbreak a Public Health Emergency of Continental Security—the first such declaration by the agency since its establishment in 2017—Lesotho remains among the fortunate countries that have not recorded a single Mpox case despite her only neighbor, South Africa, recording 24 cases as of 10 October 2024.

Despite Lesotho's current Mpox-free status, proactive measures are crucial to maintaining this record. To achieve this, the Ministry of Health and its partners must ensure effective communication that encourages citizens to adopt preventive behaviours, such as using condoms during sex.

To reinforce this message, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has emphasised that while using condoms during sex can reduce the risk of contracting mpox, it does not "prevent spread from skin-to-skin or mouth-to-skin contact.

The outbreak of Mpox in Africa comes at a time when the Maseru District Hospital and Eye Clinic (formerly Queen Elizabeth II Hospital) has been handed over to the government after completion of renovations. The completion and opening of the Maseru District Hospital has been a push in a positive direction for the health service delivery. Maseru District Hospital and Eye Clinic is a state-of-the-art medical facility committed to delivering high-quality healthcare to Basotho. Equipped with advanced medical equipment and offering services such as dialysis, ICU, CT-scan, dermatology, and eye care, the hospital also includes training facilities for aspiring doctors and nurses, reinforcing the country's dedication to improving healthcare accessibility and quality in Lesotho.

This impressive facility, funded with the support of the People's Republic of China, represents an investment of over M800 million and took three years to build, with construction managed by the Shanghai Construction Group. The project was initially spearheaded by former prime ministers, Thomas Thabane and Pakalitha Mosisili, who were dedicated to bringing this vision to fruition.

During the handover, Prime Minister Samuel Matekane expressed gratitude to the people and government of China, noting that the collaboration strengthened the friendship between the two nations and symbolised unity as Lesotho celebrates 200 years as a nation. “I am convinced that this facility is equipped to provide quality outpatient and inpatient health services to Basotho thereby significantly reducing the need for Basotho to receive medical treatment outside the country. This hospital among others will provide services at the level of a regional hospital,” he said.

The Minister of Health, Selibe Mochoboroane also committed to improved healthcare at the new hospital saying, “I want to promise Basotho nation that they are going to receive the best healthcare treatment with this milestone. The equipment installed in this hospital compels us to provide the best services possible”.

In her remarks, at the same occasion, WHO Country Representative, Dr. Mary Stephen highlighted the importance of the Maseru District Hospital and its impact on the region’s healthcare system. “This development is set to remove the need for our citizens to seek medical treatment abroad, ensuring that high-quality care is available right here at home. In addition to its clinical services, the hospital boasts training facilities and

dormitories for trainee doctors and nurses, fostering the next generation of healthcare professionals in Lesotho”, said Dr. Stephen.

She expressed WHO’s commitment to supporting the Government of Lesotho in providing quality healthcare services to the people.

“We are keen to collaborate and continue providing technical support to the Ministry of Health in Lesotho as it endeavors to improve healthcare services for all.”

Understanding Mpox transmission

In light of Dr. Kaseya’s call for appropriate messaging, it’s crucial to understand how the virus spreads. The World Health Organisation (WHO) explains that mpox can be transmitted to humans through physical contact with an infected person,

contaminated materials, or infected animals.

“Common symptoms of Mpox are a skin rash or mucosal lesions which can last 2–4 weeks accompanied by fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, low energy, and swollen lymph nodes,” WHO explained. It stated that laboratory confirmation of Mpox is done by testing skin lesion material by PCR. Mpox is treated with supportive care, according to WHO.

“Vaccines and therapeutics developed for smallpox and approved for use in some countries can be used for mpox in some circumstances.

“Mpox can be prevented by avoiding physical contact with someone who has mpox. Vaccination can help prevent infection for people at risk,” the WHO website reads.

Meanwhile, Africa CDC said cross-border

transmission to previously unaffected countries remains a concern. Lesotho’s proximity to South Africa, which has recorded 24 mpox cases, slightly increases its risk of also seeing cases. Hotspots for Mpox include Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda.

In light of these concerns, Mochoboroane noted that a recent inter-ministerial meeting assessed the country’s risk of Mpox and found it to be moderate. He noted that the country’s preparedness to fight mpox, in case it is detected, stands at 46 percent, which is 8 percent lower than the average readiness rate across the African continent.

“Key guidelines on how to combat this disease have been finalised and distributed to districts, health facilities, and ports of entry. “Additionally, at least 200 health workers have received basic training on Mpox, equipping them to quickly identify and manage cases if they occur. We have also informed our health partners as part of our preparedness strategy,” Mochoboroane told the National Assembly in August 2024.



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Village health workers are an integral part of Lesotho's health system. Those deep in the rural areas often travel for training on horseback to the nearest clinics.



*Finished product. Packaged charcoal from invasive species,
put to good use and ready for the markets*

Production of Biochar from Invasive Shrubs: A Sustainable Solution for Lesotho

Writes Letsatsi Selikoe

Invasive shrubs have emerged as a significant environmental challenge across various regions worldwide, and Lesotho is no exception. These invasive species not only disrupt local ecosystems but also threaten the livelihoods of communities that rely on the land for agriculture and grazing. The soaring growth of these shrubs has created a pressing need for sustainable land management strategies to restore ecological balance and enhance economic resilience.

Against the backdrop of these challenges, Toka Letsie, an alumnus of the National University of Lesotho, recognised the urgent need for a sustainable solution to manage invasive shrubs effectively. Biochar is a carbon-rich product produced through the pyrolysis of biomass. The production of biochar presents a transformative approach where invasive shrubs can serve multiple beneficial purposes that could help save the Mountain Kingdom's biodiversity.

Lesotho, is grappling with the proliferation of invasive shrubs that are overtaking vast areas of rangeland, particularly in rural locations.

Invasive species, including *Felicia filifolia*, *chrysochoma ciliata*, and *seriphium plumosum* have proliferated, severely disrupting the native flora and fauna, leading to reduced biodiversity and ecological imbalance.

Studies indicate that approximately 30% of Lesotho's rangeland has been compromised by these invasive shrubs, profoundly affecting agriculture and grazing patterns crucial to the livelihoods of rural communities.

The invasion of these shrubs has been particularly pronounced in key districts such as Thaba Tseka, Butha Buthe, Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek, and Quthing. In these regions, the dense thickets created by invasive shrubs choke native grasses, reducing available grazing land for livestock and disrupting traditional agricultural practices.

The long-term consequences of this invasion are dire, as many farmers are currently experiencing reduced crop yields and livestock health, thereby threatening food security and economic stability.

One of the critical economic sectors affected by these invasive species is the wool and mohair industry, which is central to Lesotho's economy. Lesotho is among the world's leading producers of mohair, and this industry significantly contributed 3.37% to the national GDP in 2018.

The presence of invasive shrubs adversely affects the quality and quantity of grazing land available for sheep, which can lead to reduced wool and mohair production. Not only does this impact farmer incomes, but it also has

ripple effects on the entire value chain, from production to export. Given that the wool and mohair industry is a source of livelihood for thousands of families, the unchecked spread of invasive species poses a severe threat to both local economies and food security.

Moreover, the environmental impact extends beyond agriculture. The invasive shrubs have been found to contribute to land degradation, soil erosion, and impaired hydrological cycles. The dense root systems of these shrubs compete fiercely with local vegetation for nutrients and water, leading to the degradation of once-fertile lands. This competition further exacerbates water scarcity in times of drought, which is increasingly concerning in the face of climate change.

With traditional pastoral lifestyle at stake, the socio-economic implications are alarming. As traditional livelihoods are disrupted, rural communities find themselves grappling with food insecurity and diminished income, leading to a downward spiral of poverty that exacerbates social inequalities.

The environmental damage caused by invasive shrubs in Lesotho is profound and multifaceted. Research has shown that these plants can reduce soil fertility, alter hydrological cycles, and increase susceptibility to wildfires.

Furthermore, the dense root systems of invasive shrubs can lead to the compaction of soil, which inhibits water infiltration and nutrient availability.

This results in less productive agricultural land, reduced grass cover, and diminished biodiversity, making it increasingly difficult for farmers to sustain their crops and livestock.

Additionally, the invasion has detrimental effects on water sources. High-density infestations of invasive species can lead to changes in watershed dynamics, diminishing

the availability of water for local communities and agriculture.

In a country where water resources are already stressed, further depletion can result in severe consequences for both rural livelihoods and urban populations.

In response to these challenges, the need for a holistic and sustainable solution is paramount. The existing strategies employed by the government primarily focused on uprooting and disposing of these invasive shrubs have proven to be inefficient and costly. While eradication is necessary, the approach must also consider the potential value that these invasive species can offer if used sustainably.

Against the backdrop of these challenges, Toka Letsie, an alumnus of the National University of Lesotho, recognised the urgent need for a sustainable solution to manage invasive shrubs effectively.

In 2019, he founded Senqu Green Energy Solutions with a vision to create a product from these troublesome plants, transforming them from a liability into a resource that could contribute positively to the environment and the economy.

Driven by a desire to protect both the land and local communities, Letsie conducted research in various countries, including Namibia, Kenya, and India, to study innovative methods for utilising invasive shrubs sustainably.

Inspired by his findings, he learned about pyrolysis—a process of burning organic material in the absence of oxygen—to convert these shrubs into biochar.

This not only provides an effective way to eliminate invasive species but also leads to the production of valuable products that can benefit various sectors, particularly agriculture.



Senqu charcoal has efficient combustion and produces less smoke.

Biochar is a carbon-rich product produced through the pyrolysis of biomass. The production of biochar presents a transformative approach where invasive shrubs can serve multiple beneficial purposes.

Letsie's initiative focuses on the unique advantages that biochar offers to Lesotho's soil, agriculture, environment and economy.

Soil pH Regulation: Lesotho's soils often exhibit high acidity, which can prevent optimal plant growth. The alkaline characteristics of biochar can help neutralise soil acidity, fostering a more conducive environment for agriculture.

Moisture Retention: One of the most significant benefits of biochar is its ability to absorb and retain moisture.

This is crucial given the erratic rainfall patterns and increasing temperatures attributed to climate change.

Farmers can leverage biochar to maintain soil moisture during critical dry periods, enhancing drought resilience.

Carbon Sequestration: Biochar plays a pivotal role in carbon circulation. By sequestering carbon that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere, biochar contributes to mitigating climate change. This aligns with global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat global warming—a priority concern for Lesotho.

Nutrient Enrichment: Biochar not only improves soil structure but also enhances nutrient availability. It provides a habitat for beneficial soil microbes, which can improve soil fertility and overall plant health, leading to increased crop yields.

Water Treatment: The porous nature of biochar makes it ideal for treating contaminated water. In regions where water supplies may be compromised, biochar can serve as a natural filter, removing pollutants and contributing to cleaner water for both agriculture and domestic use.

Building on the success of biochar, Letsie also identified an opportunity to produce charcoal as a sustainable energy source.

The production of charcoal from biochar can significantly reduce reliance on traditional fossil fuels and wood that contribute to deforestation. As communities transition away from these less sustainable energy sources, charcoal produced through this method offers a cleaner alternative.

The charcoal produced can serve as a reliable heating source for local households, thus reducing the burden on natural resources and promoting energy self-sufficiency.

Given that charcoal has a more efficient combustion rate than traditional wood, it generates less smoke and emissions, making it an environmentally friendly option.

Senqu Green Energy Solutions aims to create a sustainable business model that meets the growing de-

mand for clean energy while simultaneously creating job opportunities for rural communities, hence the establishment of Lesotho's Black Gold Project.

The strategy involves establishing production facilities in close proximity to the districts where invasive shrubs are prevalent.

Currently, the output of Senqu Charcoal is modest, but the potential for growth is staggering. With sufficient funding and support, Letsie estimates that operations could scale significantly.

He anticipates generating an initial revenue of approximately M 5 - 8 billion in the next 10 years, with potential for increase as production ramps up and market access improves. The demand for sustainable charcoal is high, especially with the growing awareness of environmental issues and the push for renewable energy sources.

Letsie's projections also indicate that should Senqu green energy solutions receive the necessary investment, it could create around 50 thousand jobs initially. With freelance producers stationed and trained to produce at the shrub locations.

This vision of establishing a sustainable industry has garnered attention from various stakeholders, including governmental bodies, NGOs, and international organisations.

By aligning with national initiatives aimed at combating invasive species and embracing green energy solutions, Letsie seeks to mobilise support for his project. Collaborating with government agencies and community organisations is essential for raising awareness about managing invasive shrubs and supporting local farmers in adopting sustainable agricultural practices.

Furthermore, community collaboration is critical in the success of the Lesotho black gold initiative. Engaging local populations in the production process not only empowers them economically but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards environmental stewardship.

As communities actively participate in managing these invasive species, they also become champions for sustainable land use practices.

The culmination of these efforts is encapsulated in what aims to position Lesotho as a global leader in the production of biochar and charcoal.

This ambitious vision advocates not only for environmental sustainability but also for reducing reliance on conventional energy sources, thereby bolstering national energy security.

Through dedicated efforts to educate communities about the multifaceted benefits of converting invasive shrubs into valuable resources, Senqu Green Energy is paving the way for a transformative industry that can reshape local economies and mitigate environmental degradation.

The overarching goal is to enhance Lesotho's agricultural productivity while contributing to climate change mitigation efforts.

The narrative surrounding the production of biochar from invasive shrubs offers a glimmer of hope in addressing the environmental challenges faced by Lesotho.

As the country stands at the cusp of this promising transformation, the collaborative spirit between local communities, government, and stakeholders is vital to achieving a greener, more sustainable future.

Through the lens of Lesotho's invasive shrub crisis, one thing remains clear: challenges can be turned into opportunities with visionary thinking and collective action.

The journey towards sustainable development may be fraught with difficulties, but the potential rewards—both environmental and economic—make the endeavor worthwhile.

Awarded best Local Flea Market Producer 2024, Senqu Green Energy Solutions stands not just as a business initiative but as a beacon of resilience, innovation, and hope for the people of Lesotho.

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Foreword

Lesotho and Team Europe: Together in the Footsteps of King Moshoeshe I

As Lesotho celebrates its 200th anniversary, this milestone is a moment to reflect on the past while looking ahead to a sustainable future. Addressing climate change, harnessing renewable energy, and ensuring access to water and energy for all are crucial steps towards this vision, while creating jobs and skills.

Our planet is significantly different than it was in 1824 when King Moshoeshe I led his people from the northern part of modern-day Lesotho to Thaba Bosiu, the Kingdom's birthplace, in search of safety and peace.

Two centuries later, as we retraced King Moshoeshe I's footsteps in the historical Walk, we observed rivers reduced to a trickle. We trod dusty paths and rested on hardened grass, early signs of an impending drought. Last year was the warmest ever recorded since Moshoeshe I's time, and 2024 is on track to break this record again. Data shows that the 10 warmest years in the last two centuries – spanning Lesotho's entire existence – are the last 10 years.

This calls for climate action at all levels. Lesotho and the European Union have renewed their partnership to support the sustainable management of water and land resources, renewable energy, and to provide access to energy and water for all.

As part of the [Global Gateway](#) initiative, Europe's strategy to boost smart, clean, and secure connections in digital, climate, energy, and transport sectors, we are working together to develop sustainable partnerships that benefit both people and the planet.

In the last two years, the Government of Lesotho and the EU have launched two main initiatives, [Renewable Lesotho](#) and [Metsi a Lesotho](#), to improve access to renewable energy and water, thereby creating the basis for growth and prosperity for all.

Our shared journey is marked by a robust bilateral

relationship encompassing not only water and renewable energy, but also regional and international trade, good governance, cultural exchanges, social protection, youth empowerment, and gender equality.

As we walk together through these initiatives, we wish all people in Lesotho a happy anniversary!

Team Europe



Metsi a Lesotho

Water: Essential to
life and development.

Metsi a Lesotho: Expanding Access to Safe, Sustainable, and Affordable Water

Water is a finite resource, increasingly threatened by the ongoing climate crisis. Climate change exacerbates water scarcity, particularly in vulnerable regions like Lesotho. Faced with more frequent extreme weather events, safeguarding healthy catchment and wetland ecosystems is critical. These ecosystems underpin health, food, water, energy, and livelihoods. Sustainable water resources management can help Lesotho reverse land degradation, ensure water availability for its people and its neighbours, promote food security, secure jobs and skill development.

Access to safe and affordable water and sanitation is a basic human right and essential for sustainable development, regional stability and peace. However, Lesotho and the broader region face water scarcity and unequal access due to rising demand and climate change.

In response, 2024 marks the launch of **Metsi a Lesotho**, a new initiative aimed at providing clean water, sanitation and hygiene services to rural communities while preserving water and land resources for future generations. Over the next five years, Metsi a Lesotho will construct or rehabilitate water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in 250 rural communities, 125 schools, and 15 clinics, starting from those that are currently without access all over the 10 districts. These projects include systems for the collection, treatment, storage, and distribution of water, as well as toilets and handwashing stations.

Metsi a Lesotho will also contribute to **ReNOKA**, Lesotho's national movement to restore land and water, through sustainable management approaches and rehabilitation measures across 50% of Lesotho's sub-catchments. Currently, ReNOKA implements rehabilitation measures in 18 priority areas, reclaiming 565 hectares of watersheds, rejuvenating wetlands, and reintroducing native flora and fauna. Metsi a Lesotho aims to extend this coverage to 28 vulnerable sub-catchments through collaborative efforts with local communities.

ReNOKA has also significantly contributed to the development of policies, skills and data information systems in natural resources management. Metsi a Lesotho will continue to enhance strategic planning and the development of water policies and regulations. It will equip natural resources management professionals with essential skills and generate, update, and share water and soil data to improve services and ensure sector accountability.

Metsi a Lesotho's success relies on partnerships with Lesotho's government, relevant ministries, Team Europe, UNICEF, and other key water sector projects such as the Lesotho Lowlands Water Development Project - Phase 2. UNICEF oversees the construction of water, sanitation and hygiene systems in rural areas, schools, and healthcare centres and provides additional financing for this action. The European Union continues to play a pivotal role in Lesotho's water sector, investing EUR 27 million (LSL 540 million) in Metsi a Lesotho. The EU's funding remains open to contributions from other partners.

Preserving the environment and fostering socio-economic prosperity are not contradictory objectives but one and the same.





Renewable Lesotho: Leading the Way in Affordable and Accessible Clean Energy

Lesotho has significant renewable energy potential in hydro, wind, and solar power. Harnessing these resources can bring reliable, equitable, and affordable access to clean energy, uplifting communities and enhancing Lesotho's energy independence.

This transition positions Lesotho to meet its own energy needs and potentially become a clean energy exporter, setting an example for the region. In doing so, jobs and skills will be created and resources now used to import energy will be redirected to the nation's growth.

Renewable Lesotho was launched in 2023 to tap into this potential. The initiative aims to increase clean energy generation and efficiency in the Mountain Kingdom, promote reliable and equitable energy access, and improve energy sector leadership and capacity.

Renewable Lesotho employs a comprehensive approach, offering capacity development for organisations, companies, academic and vocational training entities, and institutions involved in the energy transition. The initiative also provides and facilitates diverse financing sources and modalities, unlocking investments in the renewable energy sector through results-based grants, equity, loans, and

potentially guarantees.

Infrastructure development is a priority, supporting projects ranging from off-grid solutions such as energy efficient stoves, home solar systems, solar water heaters and mini-grids to potential larger investments in hydro, solar (including floating solar), wind energy, and energy transmission. Building on existing EU-supported efforts, we have collaborated with the private company OnePower to construct 11 solar mini-grids in rural areas, to provide first-time electricity access to 20,000 people, small enterprises, schools, and health facilities.

To promote renewable energy technologies, the EU is also supporting partnerships between Lesotho and Europe's higher education and vocational training institutes. The National University of Lesotho (NUL)'s Energy Research Centre (ERC) in Roma, and the Bethel Business and Community Development Centre (BBCDC) in Molepolole, have partnered with the University of Turku in Finland and the Linnaeus University in Sweden to develop state of the art training facilities, update or develop new courses, and enable student and staff exchanges to strengthen renewable energy and energy efficiency skills.

We have also joined forces with the Energy Research Centre at the National University of Lesotho to host the first Lesotho Energy Access Dialogue (LEAD) Conference on 13-14 November 2024, in Maseru. Supported by Renewable

Lesotho and the Alliance for Rural Electrification, this event aims to raise awareness and contribute to the growth of Lesotho's renewable energy market.

The LEAD 2024 Conference will focus on enabling universal energy access through policy reviews, funding opportunities, and fostering cooperation among academia, policy-makers, private sector, and financial institutions. An exhibition will showcase projects and products in Lesotho's renewable energy sector, with details available on the LEAD website and social media platforms. Visit: bit.ly/4dFb120 to learn more and register for the LEAD conference.

As the event's name suggests, we invite everyone to support Lesotho's energy transition and LEAD by example, honouring the legacy of Moshoeshe I as we mark Lesotho's 200th anniversary. Demonstrating its commitment, the European Union is investing EUR 15 million (LSL 300 million) into Lesotho's renewable energy, with additional contributions from other partners, such as the Government of Germany and the United Nations Development Programme.

Renewable Lesotho is a joint initiative by Lesotho, the European Union, the European Investment Bank, multi-donor platforms GET.transform and GET.invest, the Association of Bilateral European Development Finance Institutions (EDFI), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Renewable Lesotho underscores the shared belief that access to clean energy is essential for sustainable development, illustrating how the EU translates global concerns and climate action into local impact in Lesotho.





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Pupils at Schorge Early Childhood Care and Development Centre in Maseru.

An overview of Lesotho's Basic Education and Response to Addressing the Challenges of Formative Learning for Basotho children

Writes Manyathela Kheleli

Statistics indicate that between 2010 and 2022, Lesotho's population increased by approximately 14 percent. Data also suggests that the country has a notably high young demographic, with 53.4 percent of the population under 25 years old. This youthful demographic is a critical asset for the development of the country's human capital, a vital component for economic development. Quality education and skills development have therefore become an even more pressing agenda that the country must get right to build economically relevant, skilled, and entrepreneurial human capital with the requisite knowledge to move the country forward.

Lesotho's education system faces challenges in delivering a complete 12-year schooling programme. Students typically complete about 10 years of education, and the quality, as reflected in test scores, is moderate. Additionally, a significant proportion of children under five suffer from stunted growth (35 percent), and life expectancy remains suboptimal, resulting in a Human Capital Index (HCI) of 0.40. This underscores the need for substantial improvements in healthcare, education, and overall human development. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure for assessing average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Lesotho's HDI value for 2022 was 0.521—placing the country in the Low Human Development category, ranking it 168th out of 193 countries and territories.

Education sector context

Lesotho's educational system has four principal programmes: Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), Primary, Junior Secondary, and Senior Secondary education. The formal education system follows a 3-7-3-2 model, which includes three years of ECCD for children aged 3-5 (preschool), seven years of primary education for children aged 6-12 (Grades 1-7), and five years of secondary education for adolescents aged 13-17 (Grades 8-12). This secondary phase is divided into three years of lower secondary (Grades 8-10) and two years of upper secondary (Grades 11-12).



Primary School learners at Thamae LECSA Primary School

This structure is aligned with international standards and regulated by the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (LQF). Foundational legislative mandates, such as the Education Act of 2010 and the Higher Education Act of 2004, illustrate Lesotho's commitment to global educational and human rights agreements, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Education plays a central role in Lesotho's socio-economic transformation, as reflected in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II) and the

Education Sector Plan (ESP). These strategic frameworks aim to enhance the quality of education and address skill gaps, in alignment with African Agenda 2063. The Government of Lesotho (GoL) has demonstrated a strong commitment to education, allocating 8.9 percent of the GDP to education in 2021, exceeding international recommendations in the Incheon Declaration on Education Agenda 2030. This substantial investment underscores the government's prioritisation of education, further supported by significant household contributions to educational spending. The strategic objectives outlined in the NSDP II and the Education Sector Operational Plan 2021-2023 focus on ensuring equitable access to quality education, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of educational programmes, and promoting transparency and accountability.

Lesotho has made notable progress towards universal education, particularly with the introduction of free primary education in 2000, later reinforced by the Education Act of 2010. Since 2010, primary education has been free and compulsory, and accessible to all children aged 6-12, although secondary education remains non-compulsory. In 2016, the scope of basic education was expanded to include pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary education. Students take exams at the end of their lower secondary education, following seven years of primary school and three years of lower secondary. Lesotho operates 2,134 ECCD centres, 1,504 primary schools, and 361 secondary schools. The country has achieved widespread access to primary education, with a gross enrolment rate (GER) of 103% and a net enrolment rate (NER) of 86%, while also maintaining gender parity in ECCD and primary education.

Despite these achievements, there are significant challenges in policy implementation and resource distribution. A considerable portion of the free primary education budget goes towards teachers salaries, with inadequate emphasis on educational resources. While the free primary education programme covers textbooks, stationery, and school feeding, these programmes create fiscal strain. Additionally, the need for capital investment, infrastructure development, and the modernisation of educational facilities receives minimal funding from the overall education budget. The Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2018 revealed that primary education completion rates were 80% nationally but as low as 58% in the poorest households. Completion rates were higher in urban areas (92%) than in rural areas (74%), with the highest rates in the lowlands (89%) and the lowest in the mountains (62%).

The MICS 2018 also indicated that lower secondary completion rates were only 44% nationally, with just 12% in the poorest households. Completion rates were higher in urban areas (68%) than in rural areas (31%), with the highest rates in the lowlands (55%) and the lowest in the mountains (24%) and foothills (19%). The Ministry of Education and Training's annual school census for 2022 showed that transition rates from Grade 10 to Grade 11 were 60.4% for girls and 53.5% for boys.

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Premature school leaving, or dropout, affects the efficiency of the education system. Although dropout data for Lesotho is unavailable, it would be useful to have rates disaggregated by grade and gender. Many young people who leave school report doing so because their

parents could not afford fees, uniforms, and books, and they received no government support. The MICS 2018 indicated that 3% of primary school-age children and 14% of lower secondary school-age children were out of school, primarily due to financial barriers, lack of interest, and incomplete education. This highlights the need for alternative educational pathways and support systems.

The quality of foundational education in Lesotho is a concern, with many children lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills. Among children aged 7-14, only 25% demonstrated foundational reading skills in English, 40% in Sesotho, and 15% demonstrated foundational numeracy skills. The 2021 assessment for Grade 4 students found that only 38% had foundational literacy skills in Sesotho, 49% in English,

and 44% in numeracy. By Grade 6, only 34% of children had foundational literacy skills in Sesotho, 44% in English, and 42% in mathematics.

Lesotho employs many teachers, but disparities in their distribution and effectiveness remain. Many primary school teachers, though formally qualified, lack essential literacy and numeracy skills. The absence of in-service training and school inspections compromises education quality. World Bank data from 2016 suggests that only 51% of primary school teachers demonstrated competency in literacy, and just 31% were proficient in numeracy. Among junior secondary teachers, 49% were competent in mathematics, 42% in biology, 66% in chemistry, and 52% in physics.

Modern classrooms built with the support of Government and donors at most primary schools in Lesotho





A new method of teaching English Jolly Phonics on trial at Thamae LECSA Primary School



ECCD learners in class

Addressing the challenges

Building a strong educational foundation is key to fostering sustainable development and inclusive growth. The Government of Lesotho is committed to this goal, as articulated in the 2016-2026 Education Sector Plan and the 2020-2023 Education Sector Operational Plan. These documents emphasise equipping children with the skills and knowledge necessary to reach their full potential and contribute to a productive society.

In response to challenges in basic education, the government has extended the Second National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II) to 2027/28. This plan aims to foster inclusive economic growth, develop human capital, improve infrastructure, and enhance governance. A significant focus is placed on education, equipping the population with the critical skills needed to participate effectively in the job market and civic life. The strategy promotes equitable access to quality education, lifelong learning, and learner-centred teaching methods.

In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), with support from the Local Education Group (LEG), conducted an Enabling Factors Assessment and Review (EFAR), identifying the use of data and evidence, along with domestic financing, as critical areas of focus. This led to the development of the Partnership Compact in 2023, ratified by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in early 2024. The Compact aims to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, especially for marginalised learners, and improve foundational literacy and numeracy.

MoET's strategy includes professional development programmes focusing on 21st-century skills, foundational literacy and numeracy, and specialised training for secondary teachers in mathematics and science. To address data-related challenges, MoET is enhancing its data management capabilities, transitioning to systems like DHIS2 for improved policy monitoring.

To reduce socio-economic barriers to education, especially at the secondary level, the government has implemented social assistance programmes.



Grade 6 learners at Thamae LECSA Primary School



ECCD learners at a playground

NUL INNOVATION HUB



'Where Academia Meets Industry'

NUL INNOVATION HUB STORY

The National University of Lesotho (NUL) is laying down a self-sustaining innovation and job-creation ecosystem that is meant to last. The National University of Lesotho (NUL) Innovation Hub is an entity of the University that seeks to incubate and accelerate a multitude of businesses initiated by NUL students, staff, graduates and outside entities through innovative approaches to provision of space and business support services.

The National University of Lesotho (NUL) has transitioned from the Education 3.0 model, which focused on Teaching, Research, and Community Service, to the Education 5.0 model. This new type of Education integrates Innovation and Industrialization into its programs, reflecting a broader and more modern educational approach that emphasizes practical applications and economic impact.

NUL Innovation Hub understands that



great products are conceived and perfected in the labs during teaching, but they cannot end in the laboratory they move out of the laboratory to be incubated for commercialization purposes.

The aim of the NUL Innovation Hub is to assist the businesses to graduate from small businesses to big professionally run businesses with the capacity for mass production of goods and services. The hub is designed to act as an interface between academia and business and it acts in the following ways:

What or who is incubated by the NUL Innovation?

The NUL Innovation Hub incubates businesses, treating them as independent legal entities that must operate autonomously from the NUL and the individuals who initiated them, whether they are students, teachers, graduates, or youth entrepreneurs. The goal is not to create self-employing youths but to establish self-

sustaining businesses that generate jobs for many youths.

Incubation Approach

- **Physical Incubation:** The NUL Innovation Hub provides space for enterprises within its facilities, currently accommodating several businesses in the NUL Innovation Hub building.
- **Virtual/Remote Incubation:** The Hub also supports businesses outside the university by providing guidance and support remotely, allowing them to operate independently in their own locations.

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Aim of Incubation

The primary aim of the incubation stage is to test the performance of a product, to test its market reception, and, where necessary, to go back to the labs and fix the flaws even as incubation proceeds.

Enterprises in the NUL Incubation Hub are provided with finance literacy knowledge and skills, book keeping and financial record keeping, guided to register their businesses and to have tax clearances. Business ethics and mental health programs are part of the incubation of NUL Innovation Hub.

Perfecting the prototype and scaling it to meet the target market demands is a priority of the NUL Innovation Hub. While in the Incubation the qualities of the products are tested technically and chemically but more than anything else, acceptability of products is tested from consumers and changes are made on the products until consumers are happy with the product.

At the incubation stage, the idea is to insulate the businesses as much as possible from the outside world's harsh realities by providing free rent, free electricity, free internet and many other free or low-cost services.

Once the businesses pass the incubation stage, we are ready for Acceleration stage and mass production.

How many Cohorts Incubated so Far

The NUL Innovation Hub has so far incubated two cohorts, with 30 physically incubated startups and 160 virtual ones, we've

provided the training, mentoring, and coaching needed to turn ideas into industry-changing solutions. The success speaks for itself, with 95% of our physically incubated companies still standing strong, creating jobs and driving economic growth, one of these companies has employed 9 full time females and 4 who come on part-time basis. The other one has 19 employees both men and women. This is job creation.

One such success story is MILCO situated at Sefika Complex, an achievement to our commitment to promoting local products and services. With over 385 registered members and 117 companies, MILCO has accumulated significant revenue, professionalizing Lesotho products and expanding into online markets.

While we were still wondering about seed funding to incubate the second cohort. The NUL Innovation Hub received funding from the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) project through the Lesotho Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing (LEHSFF).

The 10 businesses that were incubated through the CAFI funding:

- i. **Mothibe Family Farm** - Dairy Farming
- ii. **M & M Dairy Farm** - Dairy farming
- iii. **Juligerm** - Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Agricultural extension services



- iv. **Q.N Agrarian** - Dried Fruits production
- v. **Eagloo MentCare** - Mental Health Services
- vi. **Meat Delight** - Processed meat, spice blends & herbs
- vii. **Chemconsult** - Manufacturing liquid detergents
- viii. **Rele Jewellery & Crafts** - Earrings, Necklaces and other crafts
- ix. **Orbital Lab** - Product testing services
- x. **EnergyWise** - Manufacturing of solar products

With the funding received from CAFI, the above enterprises were able to register their businesses and ensure tax compliance, they were able to acquire raw material and equipment for processing among other things.

Media Outreach as part of the ecosystem

FACEBOOK

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@nulinno

EMAIL

nulinno@gmail.com

Conferences and EXPOs to Showcase Enterprises Products

The NUL Innovation Hub is hosting the National University of Lesotho International Science Technology and Innovation Conference and Expo (NULISTICE) which periodically showcases all these works and helps us reflect on the meaning of it all (www.nulistice.org.ls). The NULISTICE event happens every other year. The first was in 2016, followed by the 2018 one. In 2020, the third NULISTICE event was held, continuing the tradition of excellence and innovation. However, the world soon faced an unprecedented challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic brought many activities to a halt, and NULISTICE was no exception. The planned events for the following years were put on hold as the Hub, like many other institutions, adapted to the new reality.

Scheduled for March 2025, The NULISTICE 2025 is poised to not only showcase new projects but also to reflect on the journey and resilience of the innovators involved. As NULISTICE 2025 approaches, the anticipation grows. The Hub is busy with preparations, each participant ready to present their hard work and breakthroughs.

None of this would have been possible without the collaborative efforts of our partners. From government ministries to NGOs, from UN entities to local enterprises and cooperatives, we've built a network of support that fuels our mission of promoting innovation and technology.







Minister of Sports, Tourism, Arts and Culture with staff of LTDC at the Tourism Indaba, Durban.

Looking at Lesotho's Tourism Through a New Lens

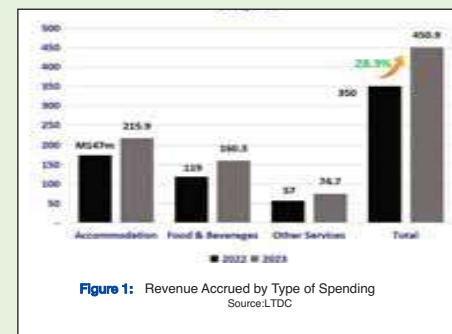
Writes Manyathela Kheleli

Tourism is often touted as one of the key pillars for economic development—a silver bullet that can reduce unemployment and generate foreign exchange. For the most part, the sector has been largely dormant, but it is now rumbling with potential, poised to erupt with impact in the near future. Appropriately, the government of Lesotho has prioritised tourism as a sector with the potential to enhance sustainable economic growth and drive private sector-led job creation.

In her budget speech, the Minister of Finance announced a pivotal policy change, stating that it was the government's intention to transfer all state-owned tourism facilities to the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC). With the arrival of a new Chief Executive Officer, there is a renewed sense of stability, and prospects of the tourism sector are worth viewing through a fresh lens. The sector is expected to grow by at least 20% over the next two years.

Tourism remains a priority sector in the National Strategic Development Plan II, which has been extended to 2027. Before the advent of COVID-19, the sector made notable strides in several initiatives, including the Quality Star Grading of accommodation facilities, training programmes, strengthening the private sector, and promoting the national tourism brand. However, the pandemic severely eroded these gains, bringing the sector to its knees. To this day, tourism has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

Fast forward to 2024, there is renewed hope that the sector will regain momentum and contribute meaningfully to the economy, while promoting Lesotho as a top destination for tourists and potential investors worldwide. Current statistics show that the sector is making significant progress toward pre-COVID numbers. According to the Bureau of Statistics, tourism contributes an average of 0.6% to Lesotho's GDP. However, this percentage only reflects data from balance of payments figures, which do not include all tourism sub-sectors. In the period 2022/23, the tourism sector reportedly generated M350 million and M451 million, respectively, representing year-on-year growth of 28.9%, as shown in Figure 1 below. LTDC further projects that revenues will grow by at least 20% over the next two years.

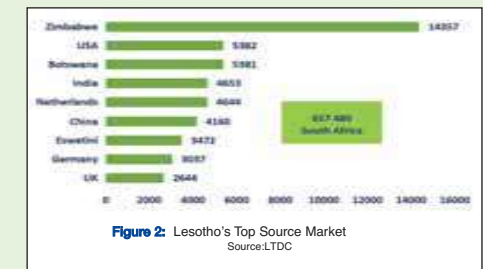


The Mid-Term Visitor Attractions Report by LTDC from June 2023 highlights Maletsunyane Falls, Thaba Bosiu, and the Morija Museum as the top three attractions in the country. Visitor numbers at Thaba Bosiu nearly doubled, from 1,630 in 2023 to 3,795 by March 2024, while Maletsunyane experienced moderate growth, from 1,422 to 1,831 during the same period. Interestingly, most visitors at these attractions are from Lesotho, reflecting a rise in domestic tourism, which has been influenced by the pandemic, among other factors.

International arrivals, which play a crucial role in the value of tourism, are also on the rise. According to the LTDC International Arrivals and Accommodation Statistics Report 2023, Lesotho recorded a 35.6% increase in international arrivals

compared to the previous year, with total arrivals in 2023 reaching 733,694. Although these numbers are growing, they have yet to return to pre-COVID levels, when arrivals averaged 1.4 million per year until 2019.

South Africa remains the primary source market for tourists visiting Lesotho, accounting for 89.6% of all arrivals. Zimbabwe, the USA, and India also registered significant numbers. There is strong potential for growth in overseas markets, with the United States, India, the Netherlands, China, and Germany ranking as the top five overseas tourism source markets for Lesotho. In 2022, these countries contributed a total of 21,876 overseas arrivals, with 5,382 of them being American tourists.



Only 1% of tourists arrive in Lesotho by air, as road travel is generally seen as a cheaper and more convenient option. Maseru Bridge, which is the gateway to the capital city, accounts for 44% of all road arrivals, followed by Ficksburg (35%) and Caledonspoort (14%). The peak tourist seasons in Lesotho are April and December, making the country a popular destination during Easter and the festive period.

With an estimated 11,059 beds spread across 165 accommodation establishments throughout the country, hotels dominate the scene, comprising 47% of all available accommodations. Hotels are followed by guesthouses, bed-and-breakfast facilities, and the increasingly popular homestays. Out of the 165 lodging establishments included in LTDC's 2023 accommodation survey, Maseru alone accounts for nearly 40% of all rooms in the country, with 1,461 rooms. Butha Buthe, Leribe, Mokhotlong, Mafeteng, and Quthing follow closely behind.



Canoeing on Maletsunyane River near Semonkong



Abseiling at 'Maletsunyane

Revenue from the tourism sector is generated primarily from accommodation, food, beverages, and other services. Accommodation spending reached M215 million in 2022/23, while food and beverages brought in M160.3 million. Combined with other services, the industry generated total revenues of M450.9 million, up from M350 million the previous year—an impressive 28.9% growth, which suggests bright prospects for the future.

The full potential of tourism in Lesotho can only be realised through increased investment in packaging the country's attractions and promoting them globally. Capital injection is crucial to achieve this, which is why the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture introduced the Tourism Levy under the Tourism Regulations of 2022 to help fund the sector's development.

The levy is collected from both local and international tourists who use tourism facilities and services, with the LTDC responsible for administration and collection. The levy is set at 1.5% of the room rate for accommodation, M50 per flight ticket for travel agents, and 1.5% per ticket sold by tour operators and event promoters. The levy is also collected as entry fees at attractions such as Kome Caves and Liphofung Village, and for vehicles entering Lesotho at ports of entry.

In 2023/24, the levy collected over M3.6 million, and LTDC projects collections of around M4.3 million in



Accommodation facilities at Afriski in Winter



The 1.8 km slope at Afriski Resort ranks 2nd to Oukaimeden in Morocco. The two are the only slopes in Africa



The annual Roof of Africa Enduro attracts overseas and regional tourists to Lesotho

2024/25. However, due to the volatility of the tourism industry, these numbers are not guaranteed. The funds collected will be used to develop and maintain tourism products and facilities across the country, including signage installation, capacity building, and branding initiatives to promote Lesotho as a top destination.

In terms of the strategic outlook for the sector, the LTDC has set its focus on:

- i. Developing the National Tourism Strategy and LTDC Strategic Plan
- ii. Ensuring LTDC's financial stability
- iii. Amending the Tourism Levy Regulations for smoother implementation
- iv. Marketing Lesotho as a unique tourism destination both in Africa and globally
- v. The LTDC also aims to harness data and technology to optimise tourism development and marketing.

In addition to the levy, the government has strengthened LTDC's capacity to raise revenue by announcing plans to transfer the ownership of several tourism-related assets, including 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre, Sehlabathebe National Park, and Kome Caves, to LTDC.

With these initiatives underway, it is clear that Lesotho's tourism sector is positioning itself to achieve its core mandate—spurring economic growth and creating jobs for the nation.



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Tourism Events

Lesotho host a number of major entertainment and tourism events throughout the year. Here is a selection of major events that attract multitudes of revelers in and outside the country



Roof of Africa ... Round the houses

• Roof of Africa

The Roof of Africa is known as the Mother of Hard Enduro - the world's original hard enduro. The Roof of Africa covers distance between 250km to 350km for 3 days in the mountains, with the lowest elevation at 1400m.

Roof of Africa has become one of Lesotho highly anticipated event hosted during the last weekend of November every year. It is said to be the oldest hard enduro race staged for the first time in 1967. Roof of Africa starts with the "round the houses" in Maseru CBD followed by a tough weekend riding in the mountains and rivers of the Mountain Kingdom. Obviously not for the faint hearted, but a spectacular event to watch for local and international enthusiasts.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/theroofofafrica/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/theroofofafrica/>

Website: <https://theroofofafrica.com/>

Apica

Apica, which stands for AFRICA PICNIC AND CAMPING, is an African movement inspired by the outdoor picnic setting in the Lesotho mountains. The event is mainly sponsored by Econet Telecom Lesotho.

The event attracts well over 400 attendees. This two-day event is a family-friendly outing featuring local and South African artists, and an array of fun-filled activities. Hosted annually during the Easter holidays, attendees can expect a lot of fun and music for friends and lovers.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AfricaPicnicAndCamping/>

• Cleketseng

Cleketseng is an annual event held to celebrate the combined birthdays of Clepa and Lieketseng, whose friendship has blossomed for over the years. The two merged their names and came up with the name Cleketseng when they started the joint celebrations in 2015. Since then, Cleketseng has become a buzzword in the local entertainment scene, and a hub for Basotho hip hop and other local genres of

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cleketseng/>



Apica



Cleketseng

Moshoeshoe Walk

The Moshoeshoe walk follows the historic footsteps of the founder of the Basotho Nation, the Great King Moshoeshoe I, from his birth place at Menkhoaneng to Thaba Bosiu where he established the Basotho Nation at his final resting place. The first walk took place in 2007 with around 40 participants and has grown to over 1000 participants, with a good percentage of international participants. The event is hosted around 11th March to coincide with Lesotho' national holiday commemorating Moshoeshoe's Day.

Facebook: <https://web.facebook.com/moshoeshoewalk/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/moshoeshoewalk/>

Website: <https://moshoeshoewalk.wordpress.com/>

Wine Festival

This is a holistic experience that celebrates culinary arts, local flavors, and the joy of shared moments. Indulge your palate with delectable bites from our carefully selected food vendors, offering a tantalizing array of gourmet delicacies that perfectly complement the wines on offer.

The festival welcomes world class wine makers, and brands from the culinary industry from both Lesotho and South Africa. The event is home to over 100 wine brands, musical performances and food vendors from over 10 stalls.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LesothoWine/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lesothowine/>

Website: <https://lesothowine.co.ls/>

Beer Meat Bands Festival

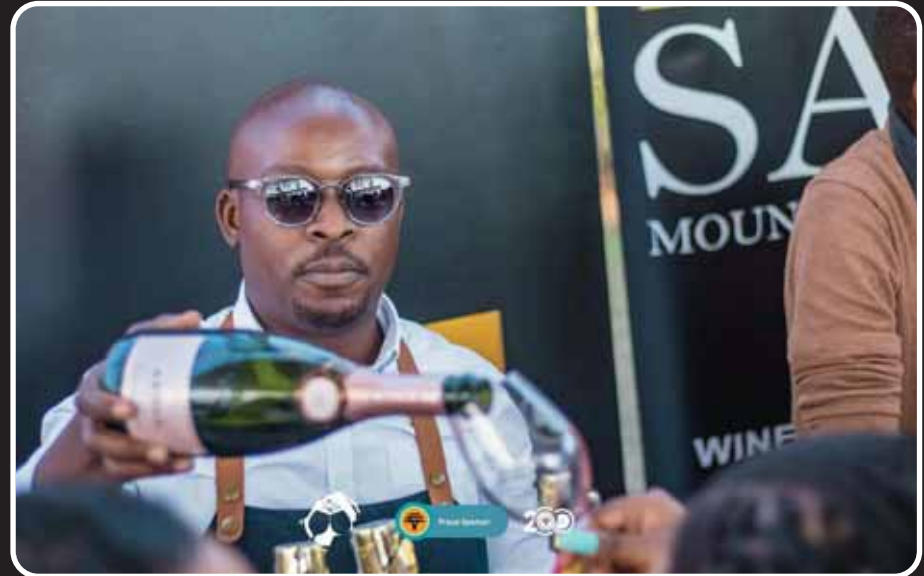
Launched in 2016, the Beer Meat Bands Festival is an annual event held at Baduza Park, Maseru Mall in October. It is a collaboration between Baduza Park (housing Nada and Ba.One), ECONET Telecom Lesotho, and Maluti Mountain Brewery. A lifestyle event with a range of craft beers, and a wide selection of meat while enjoying beautiful live music.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/baduza.family.park.beer.meat.bands.festival/>

Rock Your Team

Another event that add to the flair of many events happening in December. This event takes place at 'Manthabiseng Convention Centre grounds. It is a themed event where revelers dress up in sporting gear of their favorite team or sporting code.

Facebook: [Rock Your Team](#)



Wine Festival



Beer, Meat, Bands Festival



Moshoeshoe Walk

Gin & Trout Festival

The Great Spirit of the Kingdom moves across our mountains and waters beckoning to visitors far and wide to come and savour the flavours of Lesotho. As the premier Food and beverage tourism festival in the country, Gin & Trout offers amazing gin tasting experiences and varied expressions of world famous Lesotho Trout in some of the most breathtaking locations in the world.

www.gntfestival.co.ls

Facebook: Lesotho gin & Trout Festival



Maletsunyane Braai Festival

Maletsunyane Braai Festival is the biggest braai festival in Lesotho. It is a two-day annual event taking place on the last weekend of November. It takes place against the backdrop of the breath-taking Maletsunyane Falls in Semonkong which is about 115km from the capital City-Maseru. The fall has been certified by the Guinness World Records as the longest commercially operated single-drop abseil in the world. Maletsunyane Falls has been listed by Conde Nast Traveler as one of the 50 most beautiful places to visit in Africa.

The event is ideal for campers, braai lovers, and adventure fanatics who's love an escape into the deep, river filled mountains of the Kingdom. The festival headlines both local and international acts, and boasts fun filled activities such as braai, camping and bon fire with friends and attendees. A perfect event for escaping and networking.

Website: <https://www.maletsunyanebraaifest.co.ls/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/maletsunyanebraaifest/>

Letofe

Lesotho Tourism Festival (LETOFE), which is now called the Standard Lesotho Bank LETOFE Lifestyle Experience. It is an annual event happening on the 3rd Saturday of December. The festival has been hosted for the last twenty years and has grown from a jazz festival to a lifestyle festival attracting revelers in Lesotho and the neighbouring countries. It is currently the biggest festival in Lesotho that brings on stage celebrated artists including renowned international acts.

Website: <https://www.maletsunyanebraaifest.co.ls/>



Letofe



The official national tourism tagline



Maletsunyane Braai Festival

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Visit www.maletsunyanebraaifest.co.ls for ticket sales

Maletsunyane-Braai-Festival

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At the cornerstone of driving Lesotho's economic vitality, we collaborate intimately with local farmers, cultivating the very essence of excellence in grains.

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Linford Vodka

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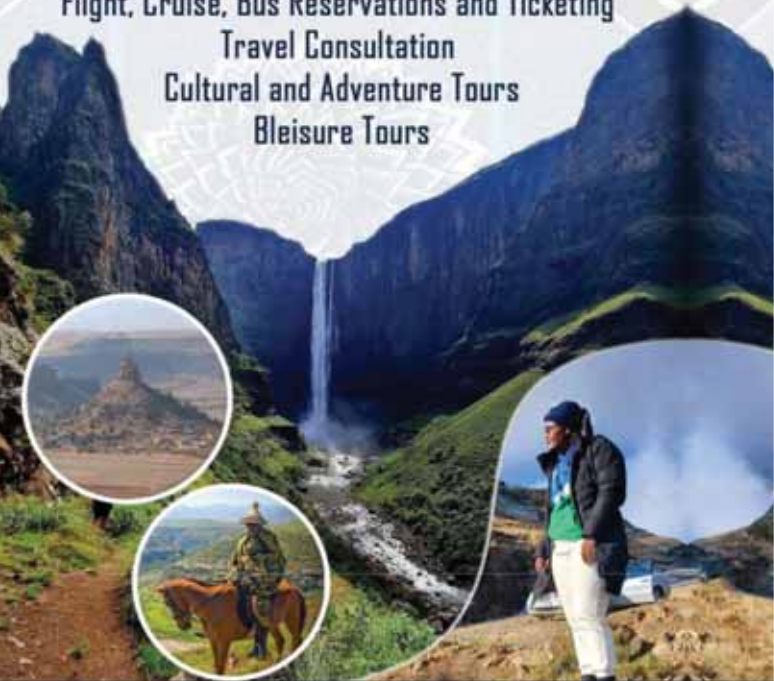
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SCENERY
— guest house —

SCENERY MAQALIKA

Scenery Maqalika is an extension of Scenery stadium in the outskirts of Maseru East. It boasts 20 fully

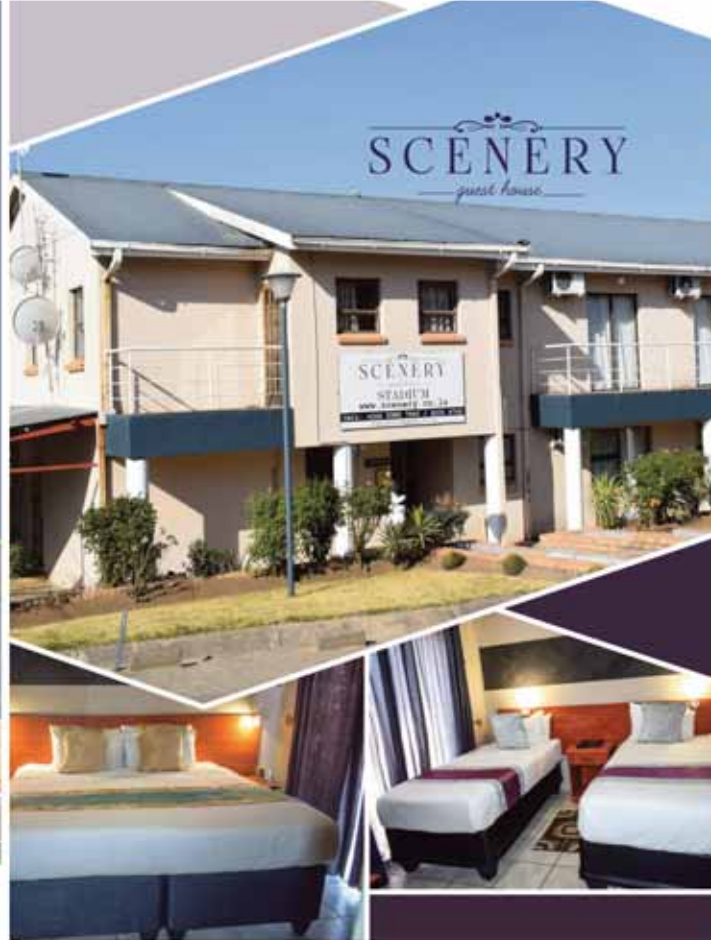
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SCENERY
— guest house —

SCENERY MOKHOTLONG

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Wearing a blanket is a source of pride for Basotho women



The Nanabolele Blanket Exhibition: What Identity, History and Patriotism looks like from Morija Museum and Archives

Writes Thato Chobokoane

In a celebration of this iconic fabric and its place in the nation's history, the Morija Museum and Archives proudly presented the *Nanabolele Blanket Exhibition*. Curated by Mamokoena Makhema, the exhibition is a narrative of Basotho identity and history, inviting them and the world to rediscover the essence of Lesotho as it celebrates 200 years of its existence. The exhibition opened on 30 September 2024 until the end of March, 2025.

Makhema, whose life experiences span over two decades abroad, draws from her journey of grappling with questions of identity and representation. As a filmmaker, storyteller, and now curator at the Morija Museum and Archives, her work reflects the layered complexities of what it means to be a Mosotho.

Her curatorship of this landmark exhibition not only marked her return to her homeland but positioned her as a cultural ambassador. Her journey has crystallised the understanding that the Basotho blanket is more than just a garment. Widely recognised and inspiring even to international films and storytelling as a symbol of African resilience, fortitude and greatness, the Basotho blanket tells the world who we are.

For two centuries, Basotho have found a myriad of commonalities in the symbols that have formed part of their culture and identity. From the clans, their totems and praise songs, to the flora and fauna that adorn the landscapes unique to the altitude and natural splendour that rests head and shoulders above all land masses at the highest lowest point in the world. From the songs and celebratory tunes of the country to the events that mark the nation's growth, Lesotho has reached 200 years of nationhood, and 58 years of independence with stark traditional characterisations that are unique to Basotho. These are represented as symbols and iconography of our growth and milestones, and none is as profound as the collective narrative of heritage and history found in Basotho Blankets.

The Basotho Blanket: A Historical Marker of Identity

The Nanabolele Blanket Exhibition did more than simply showcasing the evolution of the Basotho blanket; it breathed life into the layers of history, culture, and philosophy embedded in this singular item. For Basotho, the blanket is not merely a utilitarian object but a metaphysical one too, intertwined with every stage of life. As Basotho philosophy teaches, the "*kobo*" (blanket) is present from the moment of birth to the moment of death. The exhibition traces this sacred cycle - beginning with the amniotic sac, the first "*kobo*" of life, and ending with the blanket that wraps the deceased in the womb-shaped grave.

The Morija Museum allows visitors to appreciate how these moments of life, embodied in the phases of the blanket, form Basotho identity. Through each stage - birth, initiation, marriage, war, grief, and even death - the blanket remains a symbol of continuity and belonging. The spiritual dimension of the blanket highlights the intrinsic connection between the Basotho people and their land, their ancestors, and the divine presence they refer to as *Ra*, underscoring the paternal and protective nature of God in Basotho cosmology.

The story of the Basotho blanket began in earnest in 1861, when Moshoeshe I, founder of the Basotho nation, was gifted the first non-hide blanket by a British trader named Howell. This marked a significant transition in Basotho cultural attire - from hides to cotton and woollen blankets. Over time, the blankets became imbued with cultural significance, and brands such as Victoria, Victory, and Seanamarena took on roles beyond their utilitarian function. They became markers of status, occasions, and national pride. The Nanabolele Blanket Exhibition not only pays homage to these historical brands but also celebrates the longstanding nature of this tradition in modern times.

A celebration of Heritage and Rebirth

The Nanabolele Blanket Exhibition comes at a time when Lesotho is reflecting on 200 Years since the founding of the Basotho nation under King Moshoeshe I. This bicentennial year has reignited a spirit of national introspection and rebirth, an opportunity to reclaim and revive the values that Moshoeshe stood for. Namely diplomacy, openness and the embracing of other cultures, rehabilitation over punishment, among others. Just as the first blanket was a symbol of Moshoeshe's acceptance of modernity while maintaining his cultural identity, the exhibition stands as a metaphor for Lesotho's journey into the future - grounded in tradition but forward-looking in its approach.

The Morija Museum and Archives, under Ms. Makhema's curatorial guidance, aims to not only preserve this heritage but to activate it, making it a living, breathing part of Basotho life. This exhibition, set against the backdrop of the bicentennial celebrations, seeks to foster a renewed sense of pride and patriotism among Basotho. It is an invitation to Basotho of all ages, especially the youth, to reconnect with their roots, to understand the history behind the blankets they wear, and to appreciate the deep significance of this cultural symbol.



Lesotho Television presenter, Nomaswati Letšolo (left) with the curator, 'Mamokuena Makhema



Princess Senate (left) and other dignitaries were part of the exhibition



A variety of blankets on display at the Nanabolele Blanket Exhibition



A beautiful collection of blanket designs, some of which are created by local designers.

Each blanket on display tells a story of the nation's journey through colonialism, independence, and the modern era. Designs such as Mohololi, Serope sa Motsoetsoe, and contemporary creations by young Basotho designers offer a visual and tactile journey through history. Visitors are invited to touch, feel, and engage with these blankets, to hear the stories of the people who wore them, and to walk away with a deeper understanding of what it means to be Mosotho.

The vision for the future Tourism, Education and Global Recognition

The Nanabolele Blanket Exhibition is not just a local endeavour; it is part of a larger vision to promote Lesotho on the global stage. The Morija Museum and Archives plans to extend the exhibition beyond its confines, transforming it into a traveling exhibition that will tour different parts of Lesotho and the world. This international

ambition is part of a broader strategy to position Lesotho as a cultural and tourism magnet, drawing visitors from across the globe to see Basotho heritage firsthand and to experience an elevation of mind and altitude.

The significance of this exhibition extends beyond culture and heritage. It aligns with the Lesotho Nation Brand which is aimed at attracting foreign direct investment and boosting tourism. The Nanabolele Blanket Exhibition is a natural extension of this brand, showcasing one of the nation's most iconic cultural products and using it as a vehicle for storytelling, identity reclamation, and national pride. By sharing the story of the Basotho blanket with the world, Lesotho hopes to attract visitors not only to Morija but to the nation as a whole, thereby driving economic growth and fostering cross-cultural exchange.

Through this exhibition, Lesotho is poised to leave an indelible mark on the global stage, inviting

people from all corners of the world to experience the beauty, resilience, and creativity of the Basotho people: It serves as both a reminder of how far Lesotho has come and an inspiration for where it is going.

A timeless celebration of Basotho identity

As the exhibition draws visitors in, it becomes clear that this is more than just a display of fabric and design. It is a journey into the heart of a nation, a meditation on what it means to belong, and an invitation to rediscover the values that have sustained the Basotho people for centuries. Through her thoughtful curation, Makhema has created a space where the past and present intersect, where history is not just remembered but lived, and where the future of Lesotho's cultural heritage is being actively shaped.

In years to come, the Nanabolele Blanket

Exhibition will be remembered not only as a celebration of the Basotho blanket but as a turning point in the nation's collective cultural consciousness. It is a reminder that even in the face of modernity, some traditions are too important to let go thus we celebrate the innovative spirit behind the curatorship which highlights its significance in the bicentenary and beyond. The Basotho blanket, like the independent nation it represents, is here to stay – the resounding gong that will lead the charge on the return to patriotism for Basotho both at home and in the diaspora, as a symbol of unity, pride, and identity.



Website: www.morijamuseum.org
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Aranda



Celebrating Tradition

Aranda's Commitment to Basotho Creatives

In the heart of Lesotho, Basotho blankets are more than just blankets; they are a symbol of identity, culture, and heritage. At the forefront of celebrating this legacy is Aranda, a brand dedicated to empowering Basotho creatives.

Through initiatives like the Young Basotho Designers Collection, Aranda is not only preserving the rich tapestry of Basotho traditions but also developing a new generation of designers who tell Basotho stories through blanket designs. This initiative aims to elevate

the voices of emerging designers of Basotho origin. Aranda provides a platform for these talented individuals to showcase their creativity and craft, allowing them to reinterpret the iconic blanket designs that are deeply rooted in their culture.

Aranda launched the inaugural Young Basotho Designers Collection in 2022. Mokete Mohapi, a talented creative, was one of those selected to be part of this ground-breaking initiative. He showcased his design skills by creating the Majabajaba blanket which is dedicated to his wife and was inspired by his love for her.

Mokete Mohapi's journey with Aranda initially began in 2020, when he obtained the rights to create non-blanket products inspired by Basotho Heritage Blankets. This led to a fruitful partnership that established his business Miles Ahead, as a key collaborator with Aranda. This collaboration has continued to flourish, resulting in his design of the Chabana sa Khomo blanket. This masterpiece was created to honour the 200-year bicentennial of Lesotho, a nation known for its vibrant culture and resilient spirit.

At the heart of the blanket is a striking depiction of King Moshoeshe I, the founding father of the Basotho nation. The Chabana sa Khomo blanket beautifully captures this lineage, surrounding

King Moshoeshe I with the kings and a queen who have followed him, symbolizing continuity and heritage. Complementing these figures are the iconic Basotho shield and the Mokorotlo, traditional symbols of strength, resilience, and cultural pride.

The name of the blanket, Chabana sa Khomo, signifies inherited ties and the philosophy that "there is unity in diversity," which was a core belief of King Moshoeshe I. This sentiment is woven throughout the fabric of Lesotho's history, where different tribes and cultures came together to form a unified nation.

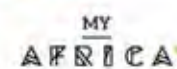
To further commemorate this significant milestone, a woven label featuring the official logo of Lesotho's 200-year celebration adorns the blanket, making it a truly special piece.



Aranda Textile Mills proudly supports the legacy of King Moshoeshe I and the heritage of the Basotho nation.

This blanket is not just beautiful; it is a celebration of history, culture, and the spirit of unity among the Basotho people. Join us in embracing this historic occasion with the Chabana sa Khomo blanket—an enduring piece that honours the past while looking towards a bright future.

The Young Basotho Designers Collection is a biennial initiative dedicated to celebrating Basotho heritage through innovative design. Following the success of previous collections in both 2022 and 2024, Aranda is excited to announce the launch of the third instalment in 2026. This upcoming edition will once again seek to uplift and showcase emerging Basotho talent, providing a platform for new voices to share their stories through the art of blanket design. We invite aspiring designers to follow us on social media for updates on the application process and to stay connected with our journey. Hala halala Ma-Apara kobo a matle!



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Meshu Mokitimi: Lesotho's Timeless Art Legend

Writes Thato Ramafu



Meshu Mokitimi stands as a living monument to the spirit of African art. At 98 years old, the legendary artist's journey began in the humble home of his parents, Lemela and 'Malemela Mokitimi.

Born on 15 March 1926 in Ha-Sankoe, Qeme, Mokitimi's artistic path was shaped early in life. Like many children in Lesotho, Ntate Meshu, as he is fondly referred to, grew up playing with clay. But what set him apart was his remarkable ability to breathe life into his creations. From a young age, it was clear that art was his calling.

Ntate Meshu's educational path railroaded his artistic journey. Starting at Sankoe Primary School, he went on to St Barnabas Intermediate School, and later attended Lerotholi Polytechnic, then known as Lerotholi Tech School. Although he pursued craftsmanship, he left before completing his studies, disillusioned by the restrictions that stifled self-expression at the time. However, the flame of his creative spirit was not extinguished.

While at St Barnabas, an Anglican sister, who saw his figurines recognised his extraordinary talent. With her support, the young Meshu started taking art seriously. His work, deeply expressive and unique, tells African stories, specifically, those of Basotho. For a well-travelled artist who has traversed the globe, it is humbling that his influences have continued coming from his African identity.

For Mokitimi, it is crucial that his creations speak of Africanism, echoing the heart of Basotho culture. Through this lens, he discovered that African art often carries political weight, reflecting the struggles and aspirations of the continent.

Mokitimi credits many artists as his personal influences throughout his life journey. Nigerian artist Twin Seven-Seven, with whom he travelled to the United States, left a profound impact. He also names Dumile Mhlaba and Father Clara Haut, an Austrian artist who lived in the Free State, whose friendships, forged across borders, as some of the catalysts that helped shape his artistic vision and cemented his legacy.

Asked to estimate the number of art pieces he has created, Ntate Meshu simply laughs. The sheer volume of his work is incalculable, far surpassing thousands, as his mission has always been to outpace Picasso's record of over 100,000 artworks. Meshu has never focused on keeping count. Instead, he says he has focused on creating, producing piece after piece, each one speaking its own truth. For him, no artwork stands above the other. Each creation holds a special place in his heart, telling its own unique story. It is up to the beholder to choose a favourite, as the artist treasures them all equally.

Mokitimi's artistry has taken him to many places including England, South and East America, and Asia. He speaks with reverence of his travels, yet if given the chance to live out his final days in any place, he quickly points out he would choose Israel. The country's rich artistic and religious history deeply resonate with him. But in the end, Lesotho is home and he is deeply rooted in it.



"Mother and child" ... the mother gazes upwards. By lifting her face to the heavens, she shields her child from the sorrow etched on her expression.



"Moraba-Raba"... Basotho men wrapped in blankets, and Mokorotlo crowning their heads. They sit opposite each other in quiet concentration on a game of wits - moraba-raba

Among the many accolades that Mokotimo has received, one that remains closest to his heart is the Most Loyal Order of Ramats'eatsana Award, a prestigious National award presented by His Majesty King Letsie III to a select outstanding Basotho citizens in recognition of their distinguished service for their country. And in Mokotimo's case, for his remarkable contribution to promoting the arts and shaping Lesotho's artistic landscape. His contributions have also been recognised by the National University of Lesotho and the Smithsonian Institute in the United States of America, among other prestigious institutions. These honours reflect the wide-reaching impact of his work, both within Lesotho and internationally.

Mokotimo's life was not solely dedicated to art; he also played a part in Lesotho's political awakening. In 1948, while teaching in the Eastern Transvaal, close to Swaziland (now part of Eswatini), he met Ntsu

Mokhehle, one of the former prime ministers of Lesotho. At the time, Mokhehle was a teacher, and he inspired Mokotimo and his fellow countrymen to return to Lesotho and pursue further education.

Mokhehle was a passionate advocate for education, urging Basotho working in the mines of South Africa to come home and build the nation through learning. His words left a lasting impression on Mokotimo, particularly Mokhehle's love for his country and its people. The meeting not only shaped Mokotimo's political awareness but also influenced his art, which has always been rooted in the pride and identity of Lesotho.

In 1958, Mokotimo's artistic journey took a significant turn when he went to Ghana to study design at Achimota College. While there, he was exposed to a rich array of African art forms, including sculpture, wood carving, and effigies, which deeply influenced his work. The college also

introduced him to European masters, such as Michelangelo, broadening his artistic vocabulary. Achimota emphasised the importance of mastering techniques before pursuing his own individual style, a discipline that Mokotimo embraced. It was during this period that Léopold Senghor was developing the philosophy of Négritude, which Mokotimo was drawn to. Inspired by this cultural movement, he began developing his own style of African expressionist art, one that would blend traditional African aesthetics with personal self-expression. This fusion became the foundation of his distinct, bold voice in the world of art, one that celebrates the complexities of African identity while also engaging in global artistic dialogues.

Mokotimo's works have garnered international attention, with collectors such as former US President Bill Clinton, actor Denzel Washington, and philanthropist Bill Gates among others, acquiring pieces from his extensive collection. Even the Duke of Sussex, Prince Harry played a role in facilitating purchases of some of Mokotimo's art pieces. Today, traces of his work can be found across Africa, Europe and America, a testament to the universal appeal of his creations and the lasting impact of his artistic legacy.

Reflecting on Lesotho's past, Mokotimo recalls a time when the country was envisioned to be the "Switzerland of Africa", a hub of education, with a university in every district. That vision, largely unrealised, still fuels his hope for the future even at his ripe old age. He believes that the concentration of universities in the capital, Maseru, has diverted the country from its original path. Yet, ever the optimist, Mokotimo insists that it is not too late to correct this course.

In his critique of the present, the artist calls on the government to draw closer to the arts. He laments the delayed opening of Lesotho's national museum and the lack of support for emerging artists. He sees a gap in leadership's understanding of the role that art plays in society. He argues that artists, lacking institutional support, often play it safe instead of pushing the boundaries of self-expression. Mokotimo therefore urges young artists to be bold and fight for their place in the global art market, reminding them that true self-expression should be aggressive, a force of nature.

Forever humble, when asked how he would like to be remembered and celebrated, Mokotimo quickly shifts focus from himself to his beloved country. He values connection, meeting, conversing, and dreaming together of a better, truly independent Lesotho. In the phase of 200-years milestone, he urges Basotho to embrace their identity and to listen to one another with open hearts and minds. The future, Mokotimo believes, holds immense potential. He encourages constructive criticism, collaboration, and leadership that understands its role in society, pushing for a Lesotho that can stand proudly on the world stage.



Meshu's artworks inspired by music. The accordion (left), the saxophone (centre), and the "pennywhistle"(right) paintings are a manifestation of the rythm of music translated to visual form.



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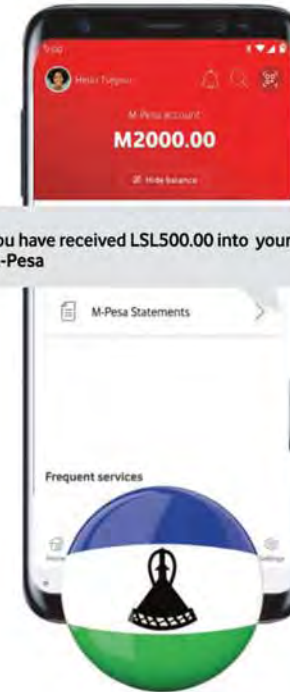
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