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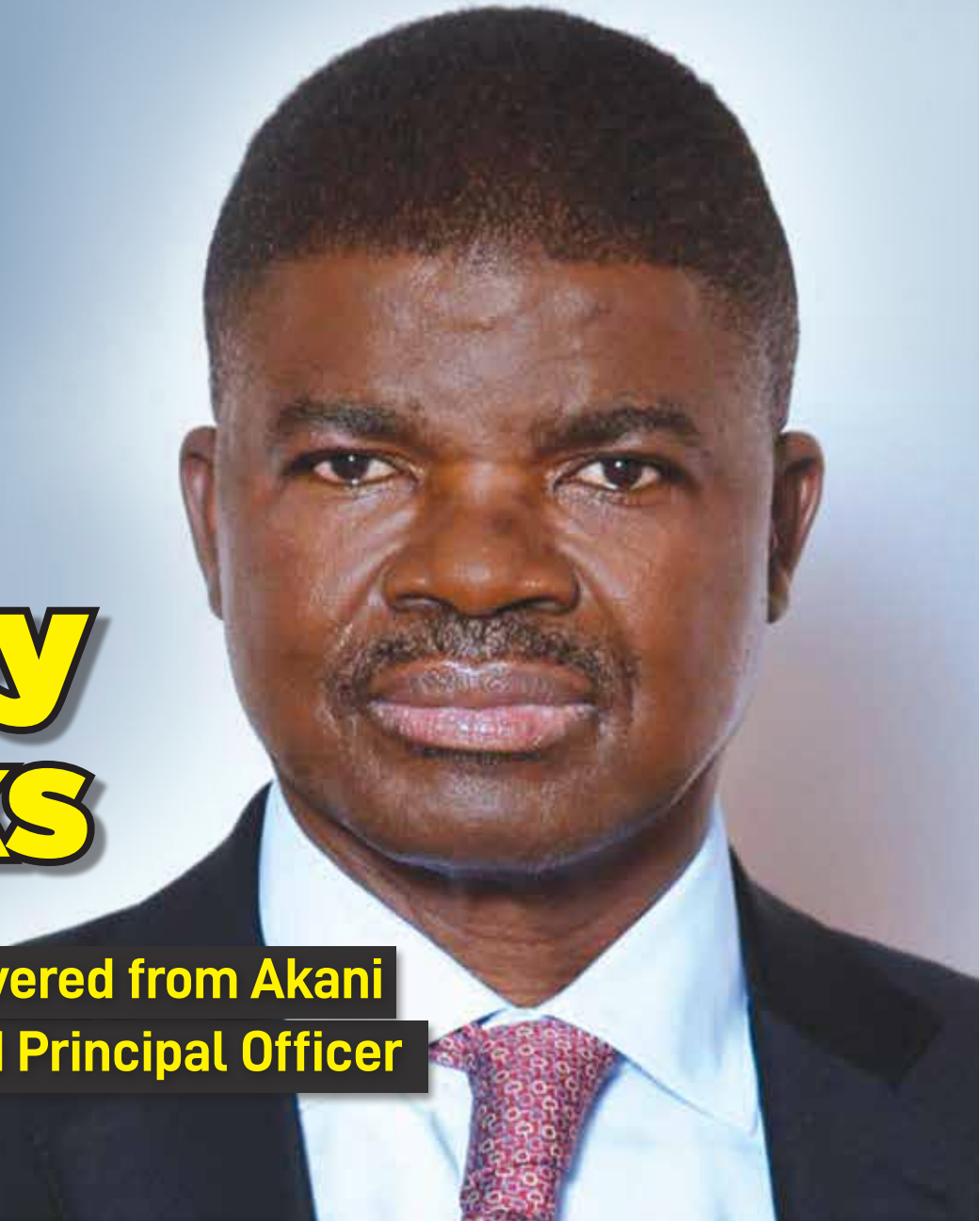
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Lesotho Welcomes Powerful Machine to Speed up Water Project



By: Mamello Mochesane

Maseru-

Lesotho reached a major milestone on Wednesday in its efforts to complete Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). The country welcomed one of two massive tunnel boring machines (TBMs) at the Caledonspoort border post, where it was received by top officials. This machine is a key piece of equipment that will help build a vital underground tunnel for the project.

The Minister of Natural Resources, Mhlomi Moleko, along with South African High Commissioner of Lesotho, Constance Seoposengwe, and the Chief Executive of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), Tente Tente, were present to greet the TBM. Members of the LHDA Board of Directors and representatives from the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission (LHWC) also attended the welcoming ceremony.

Speaking at the event, Tente highlighted the significance of the moment, stating, "Today marks a historic moment for Le-

sotho."

He explained that the TBM left Shanghai, China, on July 30, 2024, and arrived at Durban Harbor on August 27, 2024.

"The machine arrived in parts, transported on multiple trucks. A total of 97 trucks, 64 large trucks, 13 abnormal load trucks, and 33 standard trucks, will be used to deliver each machine to its final destination at Katse," Tente added.

Once the machine is assembled, it will be 423 meters long and will be used to dig an underground tunnel. The LHWP is a joint effort between Lesotho and South Africa, aimed at providing water and energy for both nations.

Tente further explained that two tunnel boring machines were planned for the project. However, due to some delays, only one machine was brought in first to speed up the construction process. Traditional tunnel digging methods, which use explosives and trucks, could only cover about 3.7 meters per day. The TBM, however, will allow the team to dig up to 20 meters per day, drastically improving the pace of construction.

The arrival of the TBM has brought new hope that the project will be completed on time and within budget. Her Excellency Seoposengwe praised the LHDA for delivering the equipment successfully, calling it critical to the success of the entire project.

"Our relationship is not limited to this

project; the two countries share a long history, marked by both difficult and joyful times. The TBM will work faster than traditional drilling methods, and every day and every second from now on must count," she said.

Seoposengwe also stressed the importance of completing the project by 2028, ensuring that it stays on budget while maintaining high quality and minimizing its impact on local communities and the environment.

Minister Moleko added that the TBM is expected to reach Ha Bereng, in Katse, within two days, where it will begin tunnelling. The event, he said, reaffirms the continued importance of the 1986 LHWP treaty, which aims to improve the lives of people in both countries. The project is expected to not only provide water to South Africa but also generate electricity for Lesotho, creating benefits on both sides of the border.

The tunnel boring machines are crucial to the LHWP's success. As the construction process advances, the LHDA and its partners will continue working hard to ensure that the project is completed on time, delivering water and energy to millions of people in both Lesotho and South Africa.

The arrival of the TBM marks a promising step forward for the LHWP, and as construction continues, the people of Lesotho can look forward to the benefits of this important project for years to come.

Recruits and one officer admit to assaulting inmates

By: Tholoana Lesenya

Maseru-

More or less recruits are starting to open up and acknowledge assaulting inmates during the search exercise that was conducted at Maseru Central Correctional Institution (MCCI) on December 22, 2023.

This occurred after majority of those who testified earlier before the Commission of Inquiry on the escape of inmates, refused that they assaulted inmates during the search exercise.

One Correctional Officer, Malefane Sepiriti stated to the Commission in his evidence that he was thankful to Correctional Officer Makintane who had the audacity to reveal the truth before the Commission as everyone was fearful to do so.

"All recruits battered the inmates" he said, showing that about 15 recruits who gave evidence first, before the Commission, might have denied beating up the inmates as they did not have courage and were also frightened. He thanked an inmate by the name of Litekanyo Nyakane who warned the recruits to tell the truth before the Commission, while they still



can.

Officer Sepiriti additionally revealed that though he sheltered some inmates when they were being assaulted, he did that indirectly as he knew it was a deadly sin to shield them directly. Nevertheless he acknowledged that he failed to fulfill his responsibility of protecting the inmates when they were being assaulted.

Meanwhile, the recruits are continuing to testify before the Commission and some still insist their superiors heard cries of inmates when they passed by to punishment cells in block C during the search.

On the other hand, Correctional Officer

Molaoa Mothabeng has finally acknowledged being one of the recruits who attacked inmates during the search exercise. Officer Mothabeng admitted before the Commission of Inquiry on the escape of inmates that he assaulted some inmates during the search exercise that was led at Maseru Central Correctional Institution (MCCI) on December 22, 2023 which resulted in the assault of inmates, leaving Tlotliso Bereng paralysed.

He was earlier associated by numerous inmates in their evidences before the Commission, although he refused hitting them during cross examination. Mothabeng

showed that he searched Block B, C and maximum, disclosing the names of inmates whom he searched and assaulted. "Some of those I reprimanded were the ones I knew as they were my students and I was just being playful with them by laying my hands on them," he said.

Though he maintained that he did not beat Bereng up as he took nine seconds in his cell, saying he found him silent with Officer Mokoloko and could not approve if the latter had already assaulted Bereng or not. Mothabeng added pointing out that in the middle of the assault, inmates cried louder when they saw senior officers, saying he assumed it was their way of seeking help.

He concluded that he did not see anything wrong in beating up inmates based on how they survived at correctional service training school as it was rooted in them that recruits must be rough on inmates.

"I still had fear that this would bring terrible consequences" he said, adding that no one had expected there would be serious injuries when inmates were assaulted. Meanwhile the Commission's Chairperson Justice Realeboha Mathaba said even though some recruits have decided to confess to assaulting inmates, they are still not brave enough to tell the Commission who precisely they saw assaulting inmates.

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RFP Catches Big Fish: Rapapa's Arrogance Drives Hloaele into the Fold

By: Tholoana Lesenya

Maseru-
 In Wednesday 3rd August, the Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) welcomed forty-four (44) new members from different parties: Alliance of Democrats (AD), Democratic Congress (DC), Basotho National Party (BNP), and All Basotho Convention Party (ABC) and United Africans Transformation (UAT), Basotho Action Party (BAP).

Thuso Litjubo and Mokoto Hloaele, two prominent members of AD also left the party to join RFP. Hloaele expressed Dissatisfaction with the leadership of Ntoi Rapapa accusing him of side-lining key party founders and other constituencies after the 2022 election, which him become a minister in the RFP led coalition government.

Hloaele stressed that Rapapa, once held a political rally at his constituency of Maliba-Mat'so #6 without informing him. Adding that Rapapa's interests and focus of his constituency of Mosalemane #19. This according to Hloaele has caused "tension" and dissatisfaction among other AD constituencies.

He also hinted that he could have joined RFP since its inception if RFP focussed on politicians rather business people. He further mentioned that if by then RFP had sought political leadership Maliba-Mat'so, would have become an RFP strong-hold.

Similarly Litjubo's departure reflects a growing discontent within the AD which

he informed it face internal strife since its founding leader, Monyane Moleleki lost the leadership election last year.

He said the RFP's policies and vision are appealing, further praising RFP for its efforts in improving infrastructure, service delivery and also noted that since RFP took power in 2022 the-economy has grown by around 2.5%.

Litjubo concluded that RFP is more aligned with his political goals and aspirations.

Members of AD were seen in numbers crossing to RFP of which this may lead to either weakening or dissolution of the party.

On his part, Khauta Monare from AD urged Basotho to leave their political parties for RFP, stating that coalition governments has not helped the country since its inception in 2012.

Further stressing that there is a need to vote for one party in the 2027 elections.

Alliance of Democrats is part of the ruling coalition led by RFP, AD only won two constituencies and has two Proportional Representation seats which equates to four (4) seats in parliament.

Speaking exclusively to Lesotho Tribune and AD member who requested to remain anonymous shed light behind leaving AD for RFP.

She said Rapapa has been blocking posts for AD members in political post such as Home Affairs and Principal Secretary Post.

She argued that Rapapa has exhibited a lack of commitment to empower AD members, preferring instead to recruit individuals from other parties in exchange for political posts. Asked to give names of such individ-



uals the unnamed AD member was unable to give names, instead tasking Lesotho to "investigate".

Unnamed AD source accused Rapapa of not showing interest in other constituencies rather disproportionately allocating AD'S resources to his own Constituency.

Further compounding, these issues are allegations that claims that he bribes individuals within the party with to create a political fractions, which further deepen divisions within the party. Adding that already AD committee is divided into two (the Mamasieane & Rapapa's).

She is also alleged that Rapapa betrayed Moleleki during the leadership elections in 2022, where he undermined Moleleki candidacy. He stressed that the actions Rapapa portrays a person who is self-centred and an indicative of a broader arrogance and a lack of discipline.

"Rapapa has been deliberately sowing dis-

cord among party members to solidify his own control and influence, in his efforts to secure personal political gain has weakened the AD's Cohesion," she said.


Further allegations claim that Rapapa's greed has reached a point where he allegedly receive kick-backs from the Principal Secretary of Education as well as from contractors involved in building schools.

Lesotho Tribune reached out to Ntoi Rapapa to comment of the above allegations but his response was not available at the time of publication.

Other career politicians who joined RFP are stock theft accused former Minister of Police, Lepota Sekola, former President of Women's League from DC, Lieketseng Mosuhli and six councillors and other members who were welcomed by the RFP Secretary General, Nthathi Moroosi and Mokhethi Shelile at RFP offices.

"Lipilisi tsa li ARV Hase Mahala" Lebohang Mothae

By: Selloane Nyakane

Maseru-
 Mokeng o neng o ts'oaretsoe baphatlalatsi ka Labobeli ho hlhalletse ha lipilisi tsa bohle (ARV) ese mahala.

Litaba tsena li buuoe ke Mookameli oa mokhatlo oa HIV/AIDS (NAC) Lebohang Mothae. Mothae ha a toboketsa litaba tsena o supile ha Lesotho le sebelisa bonyane limilione tse M233 ka selemo ele ho khahlamet-sa theko ea lithlare.

Ha a tsoela Pele o bonts'itse ha Lesotho le iphetse sekepele sa ho loants'ana le HIV/AIDS ka bonyane linoko tse 95% ebe Basotho ba tsebang boemo ba bona, 94% ebe Batho ba noang lithlare.

Ha a phethela litaba tsa hae o elilitse Basotho ho ts'epahalla lithlare tsa bona, le ho lisebelisa ka nepo, a elets'a hore ba tlohele ho li tsoaka le lithethefats'e kaha Naha e kena litse'nyehelong.

A bua mmokeng o ts'oanang, Mookameli kalosong ea lits'oactso tse ncha, Maema Ramaema o supile ha lits'oactso tse ncha lipha-hame haholo Maseru ka linoko tse 20.1%,

Mafeteng 19.3%, Mohale's Hoek 18.9%, Butha-Buthe ke 15.4%, Berea ke 17.2%, Quthing eona ke 17.1% ha Mokhotlong ele 15.4%.

"Sekhahla sa HIV/AIDS se ntse se phahame, Lesotho le boemong ba 65.1%," a rialo

Maema o bonts'itse ha Seterekeng sa Quthing se tobane le qholotso ea ho fa bakuli lithlare ka linoko tse 79.6%.

O supile mabaka ele hobane Batho ba Quthing boholo ba sebetse Afrika Boroa 'me ba bonahala ba sa late lithlare litsing. Ha a tsoela Pele o supile ha Quthing batho ba teng ba bua puo tse fapaneng 'me seo se khina litse'ebeletso tsa Bophelo kaha baoki ba sa utloisisisi puo ea koo le bakuli ba sa itubi hoesa litsing ka lebaka le tsoanang.

Ha a hatela pele, o bonts'itse ha selemo sa 2010 ene ele bonyane batho ba 94,288 bane ba fumana lithlare tsa ts'oactso ea HIV/AIDS ha selemo sa 2023 ele bonyane Batho ba 241,462 'me Palo ea Batho ba sebelisang lithlare e nyolohile ka 15%.

"93% ea basali ba lilemo li 15 hoesa holi-mo ba tseba boemo ba bona ha 90% ea



bona ba noa lithlare ka nepo ha banna ele 90% 'me seo se supa ha mokhatlo o tlameha ho khothaletsa banna ho tseba boemo ba bona," a toboketsa

Maema o khothalelitse basali ba bakhachane ho noa lipilisi ka nepo ele ho tlohele ho ts'oactsa bana nakong ea bokhachane le ho se emise lithlare nakong ea kanyeso.

A tlatselotea ka hore batsoali ba ts'epahalle lithlare tsa bana kaha ke ka bona sekhahla sa

bona sa ts'oactso seka fokotsehang.

Ke bonyane 80% ea bana ba lilemo li 0-14 ba tsebang boemo ba bona. A bonts'a ha lilemo tse 13 tse fetileng ba bolokile bafu ba bangata 221,868 ka selemo sa 2023 ba 17,019 ha lits'oactso tse ncha enele 23,623 ha selemo sa 2023 ene ele 1,483.

Ha phethela litaba tsena, o ipilelitse ho Basotho bohle ho sebelisa mekhoea eohle ea ho thibela HIV/AIDS ele ho theola boemo ba HIV/AIDS ba Naha machabeng.

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Lesotho Tribune

By Staff Reporter

In Friday 30th August 2024, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) continued the grilling of National University of Lesotho (NUL) pension fund trustees. The proceedings laid bare the Lesotho pension fund industry's deep - rooted rot, corruption, incompetence and lack of prudent regulation.

The PAC proceedings has also confirmed Lesotho Tribune's investigative series about a syndicate, led by Mergence Lesotho, Akani Financial Services and Cadiant Partners, that has until recently corruptly consolidated itself in the Public Officers' Defined Contribution Pension Fund (PODCPF). According to sources and confirmations before the PAC this "pack hyenas" has been bribing the PODCPF's Investment subcommittee chairman and NUL pension fund Principal Officer, Mr. Monaheng Mahlatsi to corruptly appoint them as service providers to both pension funds.

How It Started

In 2017 Cadiant Lesotho shareholder and founder, Mr Semoli Mokhanoi, through what sources familiar with the matter and recent PAC proceedings said was undue influence, managed to get Cadiant, a relatively small and in-experienced investment consultant, appointed to the PODCPF.

Before being appointed as an investment consultant, Cadiant offered investment advise to collective investment scheme(s) in South Africa with combined assets of no more than M6 billion maloti.

In 2018, through Cadiant and Mr. Mahlatsi's recommendation, Mergence Lesotho, whose founder is... you guessed right!...Mr. Semoli

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Mergence, Akani and Cadiant Are Hyenas...They Hunt In Packs



Mokhanoi, was appointed without open competitive tender as an asset manager with an open private equity mandate worth M1.5 billion.

In 2019, through their business relationship in South Africa, Mergence brought in Akani Fund Administrators and corruption enabler, Mr. Monaheng Mahlatsi to try and get NBC Lesotho removed as a long-standing and highly experienced pension fund administrator.

This plot failed and on his admission before the PAC, Mr. Mahlatsi went to court to challenge appointment of NBC Lesotho citing the so called forensic audit findings, by Mergence related Bowmans (more on this in our next publication).

In 2023, NUL pension fund's Principal Officer, Mr. Monaheng Mahlatsi appointed Cadiant, for a contract it is not licensed to perform by Central Bank of Lesotho. This appointment of Cadiant was made to prepare for appointment of Mergence, [un]fortunately, Lesotho Tribune's investigation began, and the plan stopped.

According to sources, Mergence was set to be allocated over M300 million of NUL pension fund to manage.

In 2024 Cadiant and Mr. Mahlatsi appointed Akani Financial Services at the NUL pension fund, to administer the university's pension affairs, removing another credible administrator, Metropolitan Lesotho.

PAC's Recommendations

The Public Accounts Committee (PC)

recommended that the entire NUL Pension Fund Board of Trustees decisions are null and void since it had been operating without the fit & proper clearances from the Central Bank of Lesotho.

PAC went further for "removal" of Mr. Monaheng Mahlatsi as the Principal Officer of NUL pension fund.

PAC declared all appointments and/or contracts made the current

- Fraudulently received M2.4 million recovered from Akani
- Mahlatsi 'removed' as NUL Pension Fund Principal Officer



board as null and void, until a properly constituted board is established.

Proceeds of Corruption Recovered

In its Friday seating, after discovering that the NUL board of trustees has been serving illegally for close to a year, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) rescued over M2.4 million which was illegally paid to Akani Financial Services by Mr. Mahlatsi since March 2024.

The funds were transferred from Akani Financial Services account to Metropolitan Lesotho's account.

See proof of payment below:


Audit Trustees

PAC is mulling a forensic audit of all NUL pension fund trustees, due to evidence that Mr. Mahlatsi is on Akani and/or Mergence's payroll.


Drawing Parallels


Akani South Africa has been found guilty of bribing three trustees at Chemical Industries National Provident Fund (CINPF) in June 2022 (See SCA dismisses appeal against ruling that found bribery story).

The ruling by the South Gauteng High Court confirms that indeed Akani is capable of 'pay for play.'



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SCA dismisses appeal against ruling that found bribery

In June 2022, the full bench of the South Gauteng High Court found that payments made to three key provident fund officials in 2019 were intended to bribe them. Today, the Supreme Court of Appeal upheld that ruling.

By: JUSTIN BROWN

Just before noon today, five judges of the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) in Bloemfontein dismissed an appeal against a South Gauteng High Court ruling.

Akani Retirement Fund Administrators (Akani) and the R6bn Chemical Industries National Provident Fund (CINPF) filed the appeals.

'The appeal is dismissed,' judge Dumisani Zondi said in court. He and the four other judges conferred shortly after hearing arguments for and against the appeal of the South Gauteng High Court ruling this morning.

'This is a victory for vulnerable fund members at the mercy of the trustees who make decisions on their behalf. The justice system will not tolerate any malfeasance in taking those decisions,' NBC Holdings (NBC) executive head of legal and compliance Lieb van Zyl told Citywire South Africa.

Advocate Adrian Botha, who represented eight CINPF members at the SCA, told Citywire South Africa that the SCA's dismissal of the appeal meant the 2022 ruling and its findings stand.

The eight members were financially supported by NBC with legal fees, which can still be recovered if the written dismissal, which the related parties are still waiting for, includes cost. NBC was involved in the case from the start, as it was initially replaced by Akani as a service provider by CINPF for reasons that have since been ruled invalid. Momentum, however, has subsequently been appointed as the administrator for the pension fund.

'The appeal was not adjudicated on its merits as the review relief sought by NBC had become academic. Akani maintains that there was no basis in fact or law for the full court [South Gauteng High Court] to make any findings against it,' Akani spokesperson and Akani marketing manager Mathawe Matsapola wrote in an statement.

Akani will await the reasons of the SCA before deciding on any further steps,' they added.

Legal representatives for the CINPF present in court declined to comment.

History of the case

The case concerns a dispute around the CINPF's dismissal of one service provider and its replacement by

three others. The CINPF is a pension fund that invests billions of rand on behalf of its 21,600 members, predominantly South African blue-collar workers in the chemical, pulp, paper and pharmaceutical industries.

In the 2022 ruling, penned by Judge Leicester Adams and two other judges, the full South Gauteng High Court bench in Johannesburg invalidated the decision of the CINPF and its trustees in November 2019 to terminate the provident fund's service agreements with NBC.

Adams also invalidated the decision of the CINPF and its former principal officer, Bonginhlanhla Dangazele, and the fund's chair of its board of trustees, Reginald Sema, to appoint Akani, Novare Actuaries and Consultants, and Moruba Consultants and Actuaries as its administrative, consulting, and actuarial service providers.

Those three service providers replaced NBC, the CINPF's administrator since its inception in 1987.

In the 2022 ruling, Adams ordered that the CINPF remove Sema and Ayanda Sithole, who was CINPF's deputy chair, from the CINPF board of trustees.

At the centre of the legal battle are Dangazele, Sema and Sithole, who, according to NBC and other parties, received bribes from Akani to influence the decision to appoint Akani as CINPF's fund administrator.

Bribes

The full bench, in its 2022 ruling, said the South Gauteng High Court's first ruling, which took place in July 2020, should have rejected the far-fetched and implausible explanations proffered by CINPF and Akani for the irregular payouts received by CINPF's senior office bearers.

The full bench said that the true purpose of the payments was to bribe Dangazele, Sema and Sithole.

'In my judgement, the termination of NBC's services is tainted with fraud and corruption,' Adams wrote.

The judge said Dangazele, Sema and Sithole's bribery was sufficient to invalidate CINPF's supposed reasons for switching service providers.

Comments from Akani were added to this story on Friday, 6 September.

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Lesotho Tribune
Information Librarians

Lesotho faces unprecedented hunger crisis, 700,000 lives in jeopardy



By: Selloane Nyakane

Lesotho has been long grappling with severe food insecurity exacerbated by El Nino induced drought that has significantly reduced agricultural outputs.

On this opinion piece, we will explore how food insecurity has affected the livelihoods, mitigation and the government response on issues surrounding food security.

Even though the government has implemented various initiatives at addressing food insecurity the results have been mixed hence I opine that the situation is becoming increasingly dire each minute thus it is imperative to reflect on the underlying causes and potential solutions.

In an exclusive interview with Dr. Ts'episo Rants'o, best described food insecurity as the lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Adding that people experiencing food insecurity may struggle with: insufficient food, unreliable food sources, and low quality diets.

"The worsening hunger crisis is likely caused by low income, climate change, poor agricultural structure, global food supply chain, economic instability," he listed

He said a critical step to curb high food insecurity; the country needs to invest in smart agriculture that will allow Lesotho to produce more with less using innovative technologies and sustainable practic-

es that can withstand the challenges of climate change.

In addition, introducing drought-tolerant crop varieties can help farmers to maintain productivity despite increasing erratic rainfalls, again water harvesting and irrigation can ensure steady water supply even in dry periods.

According to the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee report (LVAC) approximately an alarming 700,000 Basotho, nearly One-third of the population face severe food insecurity – this marks a distressing increase from 582,000 in 2023.

It furthers that the scale of this disaster is overwhelming across South Africa 40-80 of maize crop has been lost but Impact in Lesotho particularly is devastating.

World Food Program (WFP) Lesotho Annual Country Report 2023, published on the 2nd April 2024 also cites that Lesotho remains one of the most unequal countries globally with nearly half of the population (49.7%) living below the poverty line, with a stark rural-urban divide in poverty distribution of particular concern are children with 65% classified as multi-dimensional poor and over a quarter being orphans.

Additionally, the Latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Acute Food Insecurity analysis further illustrates the gravity of the situation. "From May -September 2024 approximately 293.000 people in rural area will

experience high level of acute insecurity (IPC 3) or above," it states

It furthers that out of ten districts analyzed five were classified as (IPC2) stressed while remaining five were in (IPC3) crisis. The most affected district include Maseru, Qacha's Nek where 30% of the population is in crisis (IPC3) followed by Mochale's Hoek and Quthing at 25%.

The report also stress that the situation is expected to worsen with around 403,000 people (27%) projected to be in crisis from October 2024 - March 2025 driven by ongoing price hikes and the potential impact of La Nina.

"High Food Insecurity is driven by storms, heavy rains, high temperature, dry spells, drought which have damaged crops," it List

As the report continues to navigate this issues: it States that induced dry spells 2023/24, rainy season the area planted recorded a decrease of 32% in the 23/2024 season compared to 2022/23 agricultural season leading to the lowest yield since 2018/19.

With this findings, it is evident that they underscore the urgent need for urgent action to reduce food gaps, protect, restore livelihoods and prevent acute malnutrition, however there is a growing perception that the government is out of touch with the realities on the ground, failing to address urgent need of its people rather the cosmetic changes which seem to gloss over the root causes of the

nation's most pressing problems.

On the 4th September 2024, Reena Ghelani, the Assistant Secretary General and Climate Crisis Coordinator for El Nino and La Nina undertook a four day mission

to meet with communities affected by the drought, Government officials, UN and civil societies.

Ghelani said UN agencies have provided the government with US\$ 113 million to scale up the humanitarian assistance.

She informed that they looked into Immediate needs of people, response and strategies to built long term resilience against climate shocks.

"The situation is becoming difficult in Qacha's Nek and Mafeteng," she said

She mentioned that famers are highly affected by drought that has let to crop failure.

Additionally, mothers are distressed they have no sufficient food for their children thus the allocation of funds will be critical to help people access sufficient food and other essential services.

"We stand to support the government through OCHA to strengthen humanitarian coordination and scale up the response and also ensure effective response" she stated

In a country struggling with deep-seated issues like "food insecurity the government has been seen mostly focused on to urban beautification.

Even though this may improve safety and morale they have raised critical questions about Government priorities.

The installation of streetlights and the beautification of the public spaces through flower planting are symbolic of government trying to project image of progress and modernization.

While these actions are visually appealing and might enhance the daily lives of other citizens by improving safety and aesthetic of urban areas they do a little to address systemic issues plaguing the nation.

Hunger for instance is not a problem that can be solved with streetlights, it requires comprehensive agricultural policies, social safety nets and initiatives to increase food security. I believe instead of focussing on beauty projects a more impactful approach would involve investing in modern Agricultural techniques, providing

support to farmers and most of all creating policies that will ensure that food reaches those who need it most.

In conclusion, it is not about making promises during political campaigns, it is about making tough decision and taking responsibility for the outcomes.



Investment Challenge

Youth Edition

The Investment Challenge - Youth Edition

Youth and Investing: A New Era

Youth and investing were as different as water and oil until the last decade. Social media's proliferation and tech-enabled trading platforms have bridged the gap, offering greater access through simplification, affordability, and democratization.

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Innovations like fractional shares and ETFs have accelerated participation in financial markets, welcoming previously excluded demographics.

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We are excited to see you take full ownership of your investment journey for a financially secure future.

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Starting Date

Saturday 14 September 2024

At Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Maseru Lesotho



STANLIB





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Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

In the hearing organised by Lesotho's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) into the relationship between Mergence Lesotho and the Public Officers Defined Contribution Pension Fund (PODCPF) on Weds 04 September 2024, the PAC seems to be missing critical elements, focusing on the end rather than addressing the root of the issue. This misguided approach was evident during the 04 September 2024 inquiry, where the PAC zeroed in on Mergence's claim that the PODCPF had changed its discretionary mandate without following due process.

However, the real issue extends far beyond this procedural matter. It begins with the very inception of the contract and, more importantly, the questionable appointment of Mergence as an asset manager by Cadiant Partners—a process riddled with conflicts of interest that the PAC has yet to properly investigate.

Conflict of Interest: A Ticking Time Bomb Ignored

At the heart of the matter is the involvement of Semoli Mokhanoi, a key figure who played dual roles as both a shareholder of Cadiant Partners and a player within Mergence Lesotho. This dual involvement positioned Mokhanoi as both a "referee" and a "player" in this scenario, a clear conflict of interest that violates basic corporate governance principles. When Cadiant Partners appointed Mergence as an asset manager for PODCPF, they essentially handed the keys to someone with vested interests in both sides.

According to the **Investment Management Agreement** between Mergence and PODCPF, the agreement explicitly highlights the need for the Investment Manager to avoid and mitigate conflicts of interest. However, how could this be done when the very foundation of the appointment process was corrupt? The contract stipulates that the Investment Manager is to disclose any conflict of interest at the earliest reasonable opportunity, but when the entire selection of Mergence was mired in conflicted interests, this clause becomes futile.

Corrupt Appointments: The Beginning of the End

PAC's inquiry should not have started with Mergence's management of PODCPF's portfolio but rather with the origin of Mergence's appointment. This appointment is steeped in cronyism. According to previous reports, Mr. Mokhanoi's role in appointing Mergence was anything but transparent. The selection process for an asset manager should have been open,

EDITORIAL

PAC Must Revisit Root of Mergence - Pension Fund Capture: A Corrupt Contract Holds No Legal Ground...



competitive, and free from bias to ensure that the pensioners' funds are managed by the best available entity. Instead, Mokhanoi, via Cadiant, appointed his own firm—Mergence—a blatant example of self-dealing.

Adding to this troubling narrative is Monaheng Mahlatsi, a trustee of PODCPF, who has openly admitted to having a relationship with Mokhanoi. This admission further deepens suspicions of corrupt practices surrounding the selection of Mergence. This trustee, who was responsible for safeguarding the interests of the fund, seems to have had personal connections with the very person who stood to benefit from the appointment, reinforcing the fact that this was not a fair or objective process.

PAC Must Focus on the Inception of the Contract

The PAC's current approach, which centers on the recent discretionary mandate changes, is akin to treating the symptoms of a disease without addressing its cause. By doing so, they risk losing sight of the larger, more pressing issue: the corrupt and conflicted appointment of Mergence. The committee should refocus its efforts on examining the entire appointment process, starting with the role of Cadiant Partners and Mokhanoi in manipulating the asset management tender process.

Good Corporate Governance: Where It All Went Wrong

The principles of good corporate governance demand accountability, transparency, and ethical management of public resources. In this case, every piece of evidence points to a breakdown in corporate governance at multiple levels—from the trustees to the asset managers. The very purpose of corporate governance is to prevent exactly what seems to have occurred here: the capture of public funds by conflicted individuals who manipulate processes for personal gain.

It is also worth noting that the contract between Mergence and PODCPF directly mentions the importance of avoiding conflicts of interest, as well as a clause that emphasizes acting in the best interest of the client. Yet, how can Mergence—or any party involved—claim to have been working in the pension fund's best interests when the entire structure of their appointment was compromised?

What PAC Must Do Moving Forward

To truly get to the bottom of this issue, the PAC must not limit itself to recent developments or technical adjustments to the mandate. Instead, it needs to look back to when this web of conflicts and relationships first took root. The appointment of Mergence was not a case of a well-qualified firm being selected through fair competition; it was the product of a corrupt system that allowed an insider—Mokhanoi—to appoint his own company, thereby gaining control over the pension funds of public officers.

The PAC's inquiry should be restructured to:

- **Investigate the appointment process:** Was Mergence appointed through a transparent, competitive process, or was it handpicked by Cadiant and Mokhanoi?
- **Examine the trustees' involvement:** Were trustees like Mahlatsi acting in the best interests of the pensioners, or were they compromised by personal relationships?
- **Review the role of the Central Bank of Lesotho:** As the regulator, did the Central Bank properly supervise and vet this appointment?

Conclusion

The Public Accounts Committee has a responsibility to ensure that public funds are managed in a transparent and accountable manner. However, by focusing on recent procedural changes, the committee risks overlooking the far more serious issue of a corrupt and conflicted appointment process that dates back to the selection of Mergence as an asset manager. To truly serve the public interest, the PAC must redirect its focus to the origin of this deal and hold those responsible accountable for violating the principles of good corporate governance.

The Investment Management Agreement also provides further insight into how poorly structured this entire arrangement was. For instance, clause 4.2.6 grants Mergence full power and discretion to conclude and negotiate all legal agreements on behalf of the PODCPF, further enhancing their authority and control. This raises significant governance concerns—who was watching the watcher? This is where the PAC should focus its inquiry.

The committee needs to ask the following:

1. **How was Mergence selected as the asset manager?** Was there a competitive process, or was the appointment influenced by personal relationships and insider connections?
2. **What role did Cadiant Partners and Semoli Mokhanoi play in the selection process?** Were they allowed to influence the process to their benefit?
3. **Were the trustees of PODCPF, like Monaheng Mahlatsi, fully transparent about their relationships with Mokhanoi?** Was this relationship disclosed to the full board and to the pensioners whose money was at stake?
4. **Did the Central Bank of Lesotho properly oversee this process, considering the applicable laws governing such agreements?**

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Dear
Lesotho Tribune Community,

As we celebrate our third anniversary, we want to extend our deepest gratitude to all of you—our readers, advertisers, and paying subscribers. Your unwavering support has been the cornerstone of our journey, allowing us to bring you the stories that matter most.

Over the past three years, we've had the privilege of reporting on the issues that shape our nation and impact our daily lives. From groundbreaking investigative journalism to in-depth analysis, we've strived to be your trusted source of news and information.

To mark this milestone, we will be republishing some of the most consequential stories we have covered. These stories are a testament to the path we have traveled together, highlighting our commitment to informing, educating, and empowering our community.

Thank you for being part of the Lesotho Tribune family. We look forward to continuing this journey with you, delivering journalism that makes a difference for many years to come.

With sincere appreciation,

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Lesotho Tribune

BY: University of Copenhagen - The Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Newly discovered gene may influence longevity

Summary:

It turns out that a particular gene has a great influence on longevity, a new study concludes. This may pave the way for new treatment.

Sleep, fasting, exercise, green porridge, black coffee, a healthy social life ...

There is an abundance of advice out there on how to live a good, long life.

Researchers are working hard to determine why some people live longer than others, and how we get the most out of our increasingly long lives.

Now researchers from the Center for Healthy Aging, Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine at the University of Copenhagen have made a breakthrough.

They have discovered that a particular protein known as OSER1 has a great influence on longevity.

“We identified this protein that can extend longevity (long duration of life, red). It is a novel pro-longevity factor, and it is a protein that exists in various

animals, such as fruit flies, nematodes, silkworms, and in humans,” says Professor Lene Juel Rasmussen, senior author behind the new study.

Because the protein is present in various animals, the researchers conclude that new results also apply to humans:

“We identified a protein commonly present in different animal models and humans. We screened the proteins and linked the data from the animals to the

human cohort also used in the study. This allows us to understand whether it is translatable into humans or not,” says Zhiquan Li, who is a first author behind the new

study and adds:

“If the gene only exists in animal

models, it can be hard to translate to human health, which is why we, in

the beginning, screened the potential longevity proteins that exist in many organisms, including humans. Because at the end of the day we are interested in identifying human longevity genes for possible interventions and drug discoveries.”

on one of these genes that affected longevity most, called the OSER1 gene,” says Zhiquan Li.

When a gene is associated with shorter a life span, the risk of premature aging and age-associated diseases increases.

Therefore, knowledge of how OSER1 functions in the cells and pre-clinical animal models is vital to our overall knowledge of human aging and human health in general.

“We are currently focused on uncovering the role of OSER1 in humans, but the lack of existing literature presents a challenge, as very little has been published on this topic to date. This study is the first to demonstrate that OSER1 is a significant regulator of aging and longevity. In the future, we hope to provide insights into the specific age-related diseases and aging processes that OSER1 influences,” says Zhiquan Li.

The researchers also hope that the identification and characterization of OSER1 will provide new drug targets for age-related diseases such as metabolic diseases, cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases.

“Thus, the discovery of this new pro-longevity factor allows us to understand longevity in humans better,” says Zhiquan Li.

Story Source:

Materials provided by University of Copenhagen - The Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences. Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

“*We found 10 genes that, when – we manipulated their expression – longevity changed. We decided to focus on one of these genes that affected longevity most, called the OSER1 gene*”

Paves the way for new treatment

The researchers discovered OSER1 when they studied a larger group of proteins regulated by the major transcription factor FOXO, known as a longevity regulatory hub.

“We found 10 genes that, when -- we manipulated their expression -- longevity changed. We decided to focus

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AFRICA

Botswana to hold elections October 30 as President Masisi seeks 2nd term

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Lesotho Tribune

By Mqondisi Dube

GABORONE, BOTSWANA — Botswana, Africa's longest democracy, will hold its general election on October 30, President Mokgweetsi Masisi announced Tuesday. Masisi will seek a second and final term after his ruling party endorsed his candidacy over the weekend.

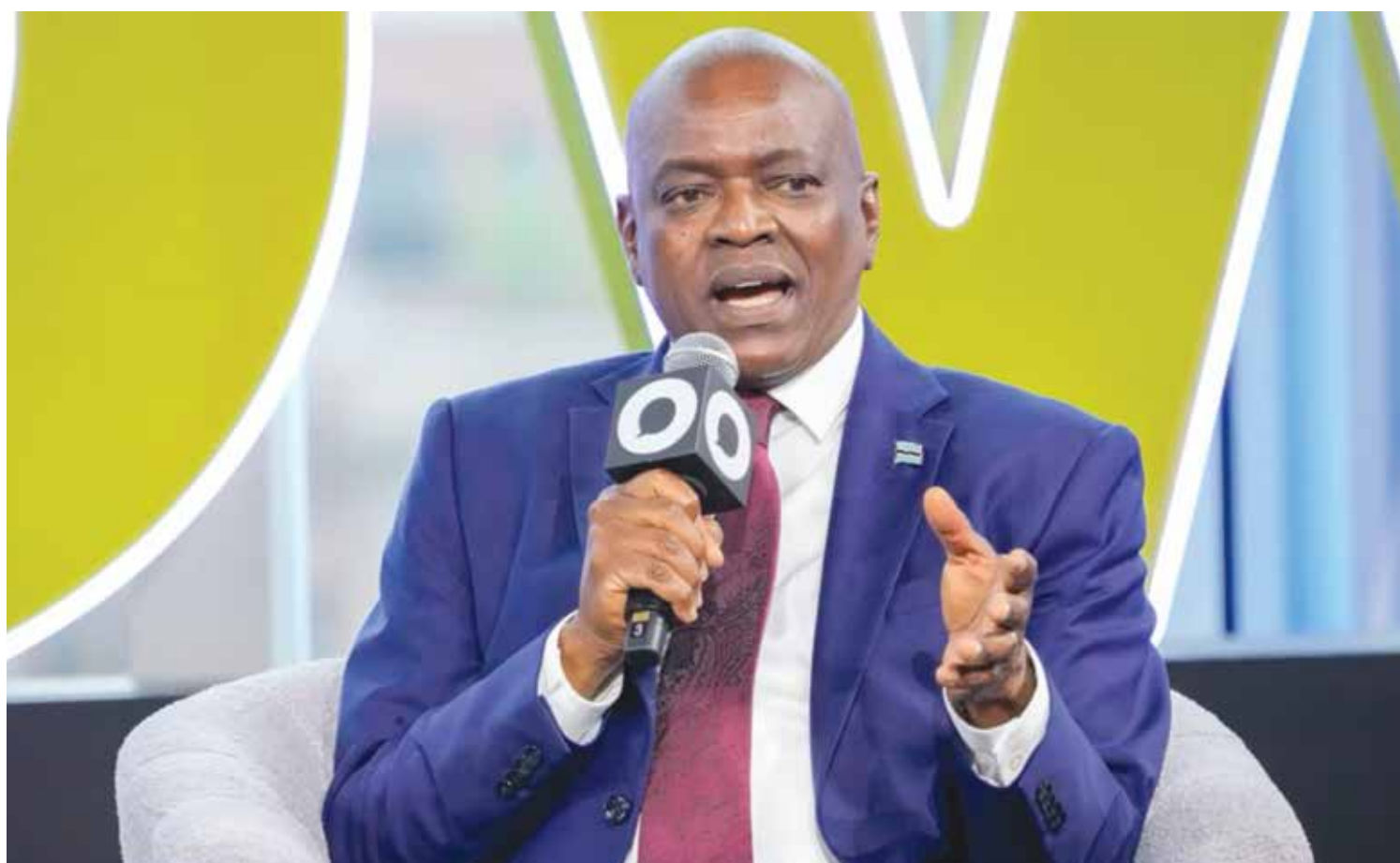
In a public address, Masisi said Botswana will continue with its long-standing principle of holding regular elections. Masisi's ruling Botswana Democratic Party has been in power since independence from Britain in 1966.

"The constitution of the Republic of Botswana mandates that we, as a nation, hold general elections every five years," Masisi said. "This is not just a legal obligation but a fundamental principle that underpins our democracy, a commitment we have honored, and we will continue to honor in the future."

The president urged voters to turn out in large numbers after previous elections in 2019 experienced voter apathy and low turnout.

Out of a target of 80% set by the country's electoral body, the Independent Electoral Commission registered only 63% of the eligible voters.

Masisi declared October 30 and 31 as public holidays to encourage citizens to vote.



Botswanan President Mokgweetsi Masisi addresses attendees of the Global Citizen Now conference, May 2, 2024, in New York.

Masisi is seeking a second term, which would be his final one, if he is reelected. The president is allowed two terms in office, according to the constitution

The BDP's main threat is from a coalition of parties, the Umbrella for Democratic Change, or UDC, and the Botswana Congress Party, which has broken away from the opposition alliance.

UDC spokesperson Moeti Mohwasa said they expected the announcement of the election date to come earlier.

"We welcome the date. However, it is regrettable that such an announcement is made at such short notice," Mohwasa said. "We would have liked a situation whereby the

date of elections is announced well in advance, but what we are happy with is that after so much suffering under the BDP rule, this will come to an end on October 30."

Mohwasa said the election should be free and fair after his party alleged rigging in the previous poll, claims that were dismissed in court. The ruling party also denied the allegations.

Leonard Sesa, a political analyst at the University of Botswana, said it was right for the president to make the election date public as concerns over a delay were mounting.

"We were going to get worried if it was going to be postponed," Sesa said. "Remember, we are talking about a beacon of shining democracy in Africa. Small things matter

when gauging democracy. So, issuing a writ to say October 30, we are on the right track."

Sesa said political parties are not yet ready for the election as they are still battling to field candidates in all constituencies.

"There was a delay for political parties to conduct their intra-party primary elections, within the political parties themselves, and people were worried," he said. "There are some constituencies that all the political parties including the ruling party, have not posted anyone to stand."

In the previous election, the BDP secured a comfortable victory, where its share of the popular vote increased from 47% in 2014 to 53% five years later.



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Lesotho Tribune

OPINION

Flash Poll Results | Ministry of Police, Home Affairs, and Local Government Challenges in Lesotho

In a poll conducted across both Facebook and Twitter by *Lesotho Tribune*, respondents were asked what should be done about the persistent challenges related to passports and identification cards in the Ministry of Police, Home Affairs, and Local Government. The results offer insight into public sentiment regarding potential solutions to these pressing issues.

Summary of Results

Across both platforms, a significant portion of the population expressed a desire for structural changes within the Ministry. The following are the combined results:

- **Unbundle Ministries:** 47% of

into smaller, more specialized units.

- **Reshuffle the Minister:** 36% preferred a ministerial reshuffle, hoping that new leadership would address the current inefficiencies.

- **Minister Not to Blame:** 17% believed that the issues were beyond the control of the Minister, indicating that structural or systemic issues might be at play.

Methodology

This flash poll was conducted on August 28, 2024, through both Facebook and Twitter, targeting Lesotho Tribune's social media followers. The

total sample size included 141 respondents, with 94 votes from Facebook and 47 votes from Twitter. The poll ran for a period of 24 hours.

- **Margin of Error:** ±5%
- **Confidence Level:** 95%

Analysis

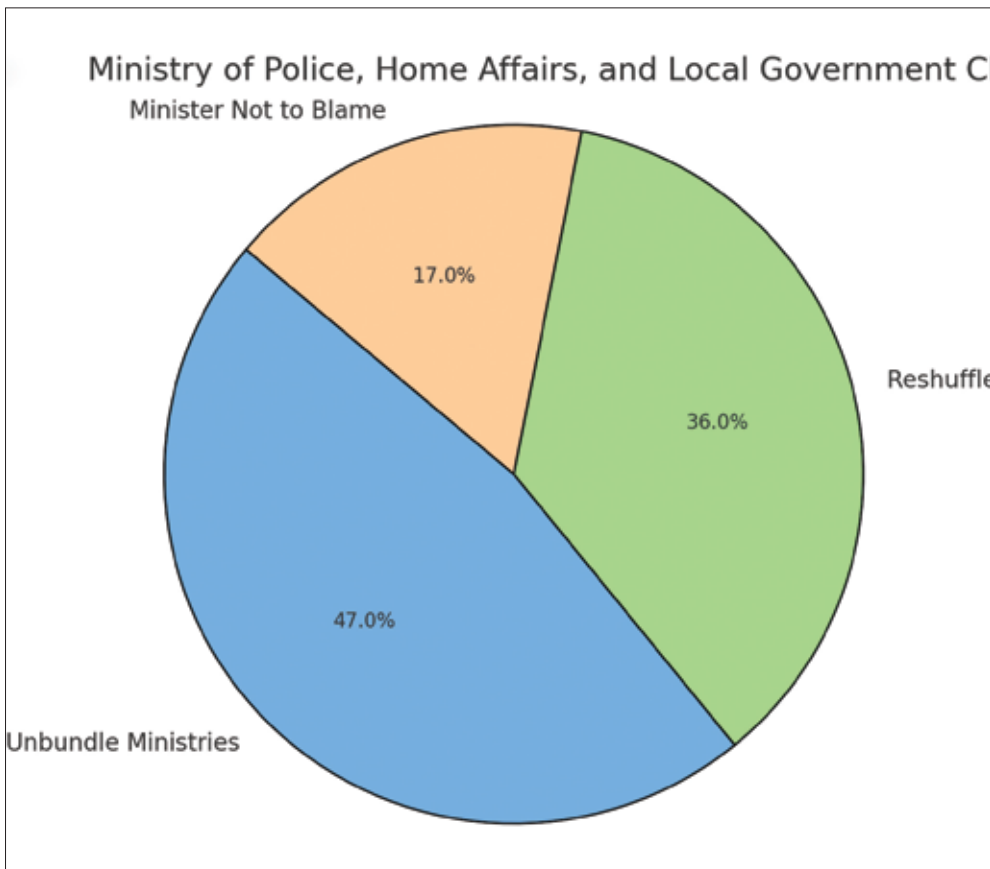
The overwhelming support for unbundling the Ministry (47%) suggests that the public perceives the current structure to be inefficient, perhaps overwhelmed by the scope of responsibilities. In contrast, a significant minority (36%) feels that a reshuffle at the top might yield better results, indicating that leadership is still a crit-

ical factor. Only 17% hold the view that the issues are not attributable to the Minister, highlighting widespread frustration with the current administration.

Conclusion

The *public* is calling for urgent reform in Lesotho's Ministry of Police, Home Affairs, and Local Government. Whether through unbundling or reshuffling, there is a clear demand for change to resolve the passport and identification card backlog.

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Empty Leg Flight

"An empty leg flight is also referred to as a repositioning leg. This is a segment of a trip that places an aircraft in the correct location for the next flight. Individuals can seek to purchase individual flight tickets when these empty leg flights become available"



Group Charters

"The option to rent (charter) an aircraft as a group from a departure/destination of your choice. Whether you want to give your employees an experience of a life time or whether as individuals who want to organise an escapade to Durban, a group charter will allow you to decrease the individual's cost"



Aerial Survey Charters

"Aerial survey is a method of collecting geomatics or other imagery by using airplanes. Companies or NGOs use such when satellite imagery lacks the resolution required. For example mapping land to build an electrical grid, or for assessing land for a housing estate development"



Air Cargo Charters

"The renting (charter) of an aircraft or space in the cargo bay of the plane (freight forwarding) to ship your goods from your departure/destination of choice. We provide the full package of AWB and customs clearing. If you have something perishable or valuable in large quantity that needs shipping - we're your go to service provider"



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Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

In a significant move towards improving adolescent health amongst other issues in Lesotho, the Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission (LSRC) and UNICEF Lesotho officially launched a partnership on Thursday, September 5th, at the LSRC headquarters. This innovative initiative, co-funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) through UNICEF, aims to reach adolescents and young people with integrated health services, particularly focusing on increasing vaccine uptake.

The partnership is a direct response to the growing need for accessible healthcare among young people in Lesotho. By leveraging the appeal of sports and recreation, the initiative seeks to promote both physical and mental well-being while addressing critical public health issues, including vaccine hesitancy. The launch event was graced by the presence of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Sports, underscoring the government's commitment to this vital cause.

One of the unique aspects of this partnership is its emphasis on utilizing sports as a platform to reach young people with health services. A series of sports events, including tournaments and physical activity challenges, will be organized across the four target districts: Mophale's Hoek, Berea, Leribe, and Maseru. These events are not just about competition; they are designed to promote physical fitness, mental well-being, and healthy life-

ARTS & SPORTS

Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission (LSRC) and UNICEF Lesotho Partner to Promote Health Through Sports & U-Report



styles.

Moreover, these sporting events will provide a crucial opportunity for healthcare professionals to offer on-site vaccinations and health screenings. By bringing healthcare services directly to the communities, the initiative aims to make it easier for adolescents and young people to access the care they need. The first event is scheduled for Mophale's Hoek on September 14th, followed by Berea on October 12th, Leribe on November 2nd, and Maseru on November 16th.

A key component of the partnership is the integration of U-Report, a UNICEF platform that allows young people to voice their concerns and opinions on various issues, including health. During the sports events, interactive sessions with U-Report ambassadors will be held to engage participants. These sessions will not only provide information on vaccinations and other health issues but will also

gather real-time feedback to help understand the barriers to vaccination. This data will be invaluable in informing policy and program development, ensuring that the initiative is responsive to the needs of the community.

Beyond increasing vaccine awareness and uptake, the partnership between LSRC and UNICEF Lesotho has broader health objectives. The initiative aims to promote overall health and well-being by encouraging physical activity and educating communities on nutrition, mental health, and preventive healthcare. By addressing multiple aspects of health in a holistic manner, the project seeks to improve the long-term health outcomes for adolescents and young people in the target districts.

UNICEF Lesotho Country Representative, Deepak Bhaskaran, highlighted the significance of the partnership, stating, "Sports offer a powerful avenue to connect with children, fam-

ilies, and communities, making it an ideal platform for health education. By integrating sports programs, we can effectively raise awareness about the importance of immunization."

This project is a collaborative effort involving local sports clubs, schools, community organizations, and health authorities, all working together with strong support from the Ministry of Health. The partnership aims to tackle vaccine hesitancy and enhance public health outcomes in Berea, Leribe, Maseru and Mophale's Hoek.

The LSRC and UNICEF Lesotho partnership represents a promising and innovative approach to public health, combining the power of sports with health education and services. As the initiative rolls out across the target districts, it is expected to make a significant impact on the health and well-being of adolescents and young people in Lesotho.