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**MOHAHLAULA**  
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# The Hidden Crisis Facing Lesotho's Journalists

BY: Mamello Mochesane

For many journalists, it begins with a dream, a passion to inform, a desire to speak truth to power, and an ambition to write stories that shape society. But for many early-career journalists and newly graduated workers engaged as interns in Lesotho's media houses, their dreams are turned into a nightmare. As journalists strive to hold power accountable, few realise that many of them are themselves victims of a broken media system in urgent need of reforms.

Behind the news headlines they write are stories of unpaid labour, toxic working environments and a lack of institutional support for their mental health. And yet, there is no one to hold their employers accountable because there is no association or union for the welfare of journalists. Seventeen journalists interviewed for the purpose of this piece, of which seven spoke on record while 10 declined to speak on the record and participated in numbers for this investigation, cited fears of blacklisting, loss of employment or reputational damage. This shows a me-



dia culture where silence ensures survival. Below are responses from journalists who did not want to participate in the investigation:

**Journalist 1 - The Post Newspaper**  
I cannot share details of my working environment, they will put my job on the line as much as I want to help.

**Journalist 2 - Moeletsi oa Basotho and Lesotho Today**  
I am currently busy, but I am afraid of getting in trouble with my bosses when they learn about my taking part in the investigation.

**Journalist 3 - Lesotho Times**  
I consulted my bosses about responding and they said I am tarnishing the company's name since I am already talking to you, threatening to fire me. I can no longer be part of this investigation.

**Journalist 4 - Radio Lesotho**  
I am afraid to respond to your questions while I still work here. It is a threat to my job.

**Journalist 5 - former employee with The Post Newspaper**  
My relationship with my former colleagues is very sour and I want nothing to do with

that company. Also, the way I left was not good.

**Journalist 6 - former employee with The Post Newspaper**  
I am afraid I cannot be part of this study. I could be blacklisted, not just in journalism but wherever I would wish to apply for jobs.

**Journalist 7 - former employee with The Post Newspaper**  
I have not been with The Post for a long time and this can threaten my job.

**Journalist 8 - Public Eye**  
I do not think I can comment on this. Every media house has its complexities,

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# Safe Drinking Water For all, Adequate Sanitation, Reliable Energy Services

By: Staff Reporter

## Maseru

The Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) Strengthening Public Participation in Wash and Clean Energy Developments in Lesotho, a three-year project, has found that large portions of the rural population of Basotho remain without access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and reliable energy services.

These gaps, the findings of the project further inform, affect health outcomes, school attendance and overall development of communities, affecting mostly female people, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups.

Other gaps include limited community voice in policy-making decisions and a growing clean-energy market that communities often cannot access or influence; therefore, the project addresses these realities by strengthening public participation while ensuring communities are not just beneficiaries but active contributors to sector governance.

The survey study behind the project says these challenges are com-



pounded by climate change, a rising pandemic in recent times, with recurring droughts affecting water availability and floods causing damage to existing WASH infrastructures.

To combat these challenges, the CRS, with financial backing from the EU is implementing the three-year project that seeks to empower civil society organisations, community-based organisations and local community structures to take a leading role in shaping, advocating for and supporting the implementation of equitable and sustainable WASH and clean energy policies and programmes.

In his presentations at a breakfast meeting called by the EU to give a progress report on the four

projects implemented by the union, Ntoi Ts'ehlana, a representative of the CRS said this project was implemented in the districts of Butha-Buthe, Quthing, Mohale's Hoek and Leribe and has been running since June 2025. The project, Ts'ehlana said, was designed to ensure communities are meaningfully involved in shaping and monitoring WASH and clean energy policies and programmes, building the capacity of CSOs, CBOs and community structures to address these sectors 'needs, strengthening coordination between societies and government, while equipping civil society to lead public-private engagement.

The CRS believes that if civil society and community structures receive advocacy capacities, if

coordination platforms are created or revitalised and civil societies understand the clean energy private-sector landscape, "then communities will have stronger representation, better solutions and meaningful participation in WASH and energy decisions." This is because when people have the skills to participate, they can influence policies, improve accountability and help drive sustainable service delivery.

The implementation approach of the project has been grounded in four principles; human rights-based and participatory approaches, gender equality and social inclusion, multi-stakeholder coordination and practical action grants that will enable Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to implement targeted advocacy, outreach or demonstration activities.

"The CRS Capacity Strengthening model will be at the core of our implementation, not only to provide capacity building but to ensure adequate institutional strengthening for the participating CBOs and provide accomplishment as they implement their advocacy plans. This approach will ensure sustainability beyond project implementation," Ts'ehlana said.

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which I am not ready to talk about.

Journalist 9 – The Reporter Sorry, I am not comfortable answering.

Journalist 10 – The Reporter I cannot answer, I am sorry. I am no longer with the company.

Yet, those who shared their experiences exposed issues, struggles and the state of journalism in Lesotho, a profession that promises truth but often delivers trauma.

An anonymous former employee of Informative Newspaper described a working environment that is toxic, where employees worked without formal contracts and were filled with mental suffering without institutional support in place. “There was no formal contract, it was a verbal agreement. Sometimes there was no payment and no one would explain anything. It felt like modern-day slavery,” she shares.

She further indicated that mental health was never considered. She ended up experiencing panic attacks and sleep paralysis which led to her resignation. “We stayed because of desperation. Media managers feed on vulnerability,” she stated.

Safety was also a concern. She said at times they would be given assignments that

needed them to be dispatched early in the morning and late at night without transportation allowances.

Thapelo Moeketsi, a seasoned journalist with seven years in the field, is another victim of this modern-day slavery who has not been paid for his work. He worked for Mafeteng Community Radio Station and later joined the Weekly Observer.

“I was told I was volunteering. At first, I did not mind, I was driven by passion. I did not just fall in love with it, I went to school to study it” he said. However, in his recent job, he was promised transport and telecommunications allowance, all of which he never received. He said he’d often pay for his transport out of his pocket and wrote stories that would never be published. “It is called exploitation,” he said.

He said the environment was welcoming at first but eventually turned toxic.

“I felt overworked, unsupported and began questioning whether I was even good at this profession.” Despite experiencing anxiety and depression, Moeketsi reported the situation to his supervisors. Their response was always vague. They promised things would change, but nothing ever did.

Moeketsi said that he never received a contract, it was a verbal agreement.

“I thought of quitting,

but my passion keeps me here. Journalism has the power to hold the government accountable and that is what keeps me going. Amidst the experience, I am grateful for the opportunities because they made me who I am today,” Moeketsi concluded.

‘Malebabo Majoro’s experience at Mxxl Radio, Lesotho Times and Lesotho Tribune reveals a systemic pattern of neglect for interns. At Mxxl Radio, she said there was no supervision. Internship students had to figure things out themselves and relied on an outsider to write their reports.

“We left with nothing learned,” she said.

Majoro described the Lesotho Times newsroom as a toxic culture where newcomers were mocked. She said one would be mocked for mistakes and denied credit for the work they were assigned. At Lesotho Tribune, she found herself paid below the minimum living wage. She said

it was impossible to survive in this economy. She ultimately left journalism after experiencing severe burn-out and underpayment. The crisis deepens as recurring stories reveal a consistent pattern of young journalists being exploited by working long hours for little to no compensation, denied their voices in newsrooms/ articles and

suffering emotionally and mentally, with no support systems in place.

Anonymous, who worked with Newsday, The Mail and 357 FM Radio Station, highlighted that for journalists to be paid, they are told to source potential advertisers, an experience she described as overtime for doing your job as a journalist and marketing personnel.

Another anonymous person who worked with The Post Newspaper said they were never paid for their work. “They told me that the company has no money as they make money through advertising.”

She said she was promised compensation for her work, but up to this day, she has not received anything.

“The energy in the newsroom was okay between the co-workers, but the toxicity came from the management who displayed favouritism in broad daylight. Some people’s work was published while others were not. The management would choose people to assign and communicate to,” explained anonymous from Newsday. Another anonymous with Informative and Lesotho Times added to these by stressing that the supervisors are the ones exerting toxicity, which made it impossible for many

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# EU, Lesotho Create a Future Rooted in Dignity, Equality, Respect

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The European Union has pledged a total of EUR8.45 million (LSL168.5 million) in Lesotho on youth grassroots organisations to help in an effort to promote social accountability, protect human rights and combat gender-based violence in Lesotho. This was revealed at a breakfast meeting hosted by the EU in Maseru earlier this week.

For years, the EU has committed significant resources to support initiatives meant for combating GBV, providing calls for projects to empower them to enact positive change among Basotho.

The Union highlighted that it recently signed grants amounting to a total of EUR2.87 million (approximately M56.9 million) with the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Gender Links and Sesotho Media and Development- a four-way partnership aimed at reinforcing a shared dedication to gender equality, women's economic empowerment and climate justice.

Through its Inclusive Lesotho Programme, the EU is also ready to allocate small financial grants to foster advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives to help advance electoral participation for women and marginalised groups.

With proper, sustainable



advocacy, it is believed that the initiatives will challenge existing social norms, encourage political engagement and secure representation for under-represented groups.

The EU has therefore budgeted EUR1.419 million for initiatives aimed at protecting human rights defenders and witnesses and fighting corruption. Part of the grant, dedicated to Gender Links, is in support of the Local Action for Gender Links Justice in Lesotho, a 40-month-long project that was constructed under the lot title Promotion of gender equality, women's economic empowerment and ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence, including within the LGBTIQ+ community.

This project has been implemented in the 10 districts of Lesotho across 30 community councils with the aim of promoting gender justice in the country by ending GBV and

empowering women and marginalised groups through evidence-based action, strengthened governance structures and economic empowerment initiatives.

It also aims to strengthen local action plans to end GBV, promote sustainable solutions to ending GBV and document evidence of the nexus between economic empowerment and ending GBV for replication in Lesotho and beyond.

The main beneficiaries of the project, the organisation said, are survivors of GBV, especially women and girls, LGBTIQ+ community members and people with disabilities among others.

At the end of the project, Gender Links wishes to have empowered 300 survivors with improved economic independence, increased public knowledge on gender equality and strengthened local leadership in GBV prevention

among other goals.

Sesotho Media's Transforming Gender Norms and Strengthening Domestic Violence Laws for Inclusive Protection Across Lesotho, on the other hand, aims to enhance the protection and well-being of women and children, promoting widespread awareness of the Counter Domestic Violence Act, 2022, especially in hard-to-reach communities.

The organisation said it has designed support services promotion initiatives within the project to ensure that at the end of the project, communities are aware of services available to survivors of domestic violence, including shelters, legal aid and counselling. To achieve its goals, Sesotho Media has partnered with legislative bodies, government institutions and ministries, development partners, diplomatic missions, civil society, media and the public.

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to report it.

Working hours were excessive, with no compensation or contracts, just appointment letters lacking termination clauses. She ultimately left journalism after experiencing severe burnout and underpayment.

Beneath the exhaustion and exploitation lies a growing crisis that is often overlooked, which is mental health.

"I had panic attacks and sleep paralysis. All I thought about was work," a former

Informative journalist confided.

Many speak of anxiety, burnout and depression. Selloane Nyakane, who worked with the Lesotho Tribune, was eventually diagnosed with major depression.

"That was the final straw. I had to resign and choose my mental health," she said.

Journalism is more than a profession for many Basotho journalists, but it is a calling.

They enter newsrooms with positive thinking, carrying not just notebooks but a hope

to make a difference. But once inside, that hope meets a brutal reality.

Bokang Masasa, Editor at Lesotho Tribune, acknowledged the difficult conditions but framed internships as character-building.

"I always tell my internship students that in this life, especially in Lesotho, you get motivated by hunger to work harder and rise above starvation." Masasa emphasised that internships are meant for light

work and grooming. She said they, however, are very sensitive when it comes to the issue of taking internship students since their budget is limited and cannot afford to give them monthly stipends while attached with them.

While she acknowledged that mental health is a sensitive issue in journalism, she stated that there are no well-being policies in place at Lesotho Tribune for their staff and in any other media house.

She further highlighted that media houses depend significantly on advertisements for their sustainability and to pay salaries, Lesotho Tribune included, however portraying the advertising market as highly competitive, "making it challenging for us to attract clients." "Despite our limitations, we strive to share the little revenue we generate among our employees to keep them motivated during these tough times, meeting them halfway in terms of transportation to their assignment destinations and making sure they carry out their tasks without feeling any weight in their pockets," said Masasa.

Most of the journalists interviewed joined the industry through internships. However, they were rarely paid, a fact some managers defend.

Abel Chapatarongo, CEO of The Post Newspaper portrayed that they are not under any obligation to pay interns. They are paid by MNDS as stated in their internship documentation.

"Those not paid had an agreement with us before-

hand. We strive to create a happy family at The Post," he said.

Chapatarongo maintained that employees are paid above the minimum wage but declined to share figures for confidentiality. On mental health support, he said, "It's not our area. That should come from the government." The Editor-in-chief of The Post, Shakeman Mugari, defended unpaid internships as standard practice worldwide.

"Interns are given resources like transport. We do not see them as labour, but as training opportunities." But unpaid internships are no joke. According to Under Lesotho's Labour Act No. 3 of 2024, unpaid internships are a violation of workers' rights. The act states "worker means a person who performs work in any capacity for an employer or at an employer's business or undertaking". It further states that workers must be paid for an average total of 246 hours monthly, with specific overtime rates for hours beyond 195. This definition clearly includes interns, as they perform work within an employer's business.

Therefore, not paying interns for their labour is not only a violation of the Labour Act but also a breach of their human rights.

They are also a direct contradiction to the country's commitments under the International Labour Organisation, which are workers' rights to be protected at the workplace and to adopt adequate work practices and envi-

ronment control measures, which do not put workers' lives under a safety and health crisis.

Yet, for many interns, unpaid work becomes the only entry point into journalism, with no clear path forward.

Caswell Tlali, another Editor at The Post, admitted "We are not medical doctors. We are a profit-making company. But it is an eye-opener that serious mental health issues exist." Many journalists interviewed revealed they did not report their mistreatment because there were no institutions to turn to. "Who do you complain to when your manager is the problem?" asked one journalist who worked with Newsday, The Mail and 357 FM.

She never received payment during her three years in the industry.

"I was told the company was still growing and needed us to bring advertisers," she explained. "Favouritism thrived. There were no contracts, and I have no motivation to return to work," said an anonymous person from The Post. Anonymous from Newsday described management as unqualified and driven by

personal agendas, saying many of them cannot even define journalism ethics and it is frustrating to be led by people who never studied journalism. Tlotliso Mokone, a psychologist with Q&G Psychological Support, showed that she had treated journalists experiencing burnout and trauma though confidentiality prevents her from naming

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individuals.

“Journalists face PTSD, burnout, anxiety, depression and substance abuse. They are high-risk due to constant exposure to trauma and tight deadlines,” she said.

Mental health care in Lesotho is limited. According to the World Health Organisation, the country has only 0.06 psychiatrists per 100,000 people.

“There’s also stigma, lack of awareness, and very few youth-friendly services,” Mokone added.

She noted that when media institutions ignore journalists’ trauma, consequences include increased turnover, poor job performance, and damage to personal relationships. “Most media houses do not fund mental health care. That exacerbates everything.” According to Advocate Matalenta Pheko, Lesotho lacks a comprehensive legal framework protecting journalists or whistle-blowers.

“There is no shield law. No explicit protections. The Constitution provides general freedom of expression, but no specific statutes support press workers.”

She added that defamation lawsuits are often used to silence critical journalism, leading to self-censorship. Also, the law should distinguish between malicious falsehoods and factual reporting.” Advocate Jobo Lephuthing concurred.

“Journalists have failed to

push for laws protecting themselves. In some cases, journalists are co-opted by political factions and compromise ethics.” The result is not just fear, but paralysis. Important stories go unwritten. Investigations are not pursued. The press, instead of acting as a watchdog to hold those in power accountable, is being silenced and made to obey them.

The investigating journalist attempted to secure interviews with several key stakeholders regarding the issue. The Principal Secretary at the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology received the interview questions but did not respond. Follow-up calls were made, but he did not answer. Again, one of Lesotho Times’ management informed the investigator off record that they would not be responding to the interview request. Mxxl Radio management also received the interview questions but did not provide any response, despite follow-up efforts made before the publication of the article. While the Editor of Informative showed that she would not respond after learning of the investigation.

However, Maqalika Matsepe from the Ministry of Labour stated that the Labour Act protects all workers, including journalists, although it does not mention them specifically.

Kananelo Boloetse, Chairperson of the Journalists Association of Lesotho, admitted that there is currently no active association for journalist welfare. He also represents MISA Lesotho, which advocates for media rights but does not function as a union. He emphasises the need for a journalist union and an independent media council.

Stressing that they advocate for press freedom, but they need structural change.

Without enforceable labour standards, they are fighting with one hand tied.

The result is not just fear, but paralysis. Important stories go unwritten. Investigations are not pursued. The press, instead of acting as a watchdog to hold those in power accountable, is being silenced and made to obey them.

This investigation reveals a systemic crisis that Lesotho’s journalists are suffering emotionally, financially and professionally in silence. Without contracts, legal protections, mental health support or institutional allies, they are forced to choose between exploitation and exit.

The silence from the Ministry of Communications and major media houses speaks volumes. Meanwhile, journalists continue to work under informal arrangements, sometimes without pay, often without

recognition and frequently at the expense of their mental health.

Media reform is no longer a distant goal, it is a pressing necessity. Journalists are

calling for reforms that include: enforceable labour contracts for all media workers, a journalist union to advocate for fair pay and working conditions, mental health

support embedded in newsrooms, legal reforms to protect journalists from intimidation and defamation and clear government support for media independence and sustainability.

“I still believe in journalism. I believe in the power of stories. But we deserve better.

Until real change comes, more journalists will suffer or leave,” said Nyakane.

Journalists are tasked with holding power to account. But who holds media institutions accountable when they mistreat their own? This investigation found out that many journalists earn between nothing to minimum of M500 a month and this alone shows how the system is failing them. It is the broken structures, weak legal frameworks that leave the media fraternity exposed, undervalued and easy to exploit. The problem is not the journalists, but it is the broken system that continues to fail the very people who keep the public informed.

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# ESG Lens

## Governance Analysis: Imported ESG Frameworks vs Lesotho's Development Agenda



# 9

Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

At the core, imported ESG frameworks in Lesotho's banks do some good for development, but structurally they exist first to protect the South African parent balance sheets, and only secondarily to advance Lesotho's own agenda. Let's unpack that in a governance-focused way.

1. Who designs the ESG rules that Lesotho's banks follow? Three of Lesotho's four commercial banks are subsidiaries: - Standard Lesotho Bank Standard Bank Group (JSE-listed, SA-regulated).

- Nedbank Lesotho



Nedbank Group.

- FNB Lesotho FirstRand Group. Their ESG policies, exclusion lists, climate commitments and risk frameworks are designed and approved at group level in Johannesburg, under JSE, South African Reserve Bank and global investor pressure.

These include:

- Group-wide climate risk policies, some

coal/oil & gas restrictions, and sector "heat maps". - Group environmental and social risk assessment (ESRA / E&S) frameworks used in credit decisions.

- Group governance structures (sustainability committees, risk committees, integrated reports) that bundle Lesotho together with other subsidiaries in Africa.

Locally: - FNB Lesotho explicitly says it uses an ESRA process to manage environmental and social risk in lending.

- Standard Lesotho Bank publishes a local ESG report but the underlying frameworks are clearly "Standard Bank Group" frameworks adapted for Lesotho.

- Nedbank Lesotho adopts the green and sustainability language from Nedbank Group, positioning itself as a "green and caring bank" while relying heavily on group policy. So the design authority for ESG sits outside Lesotho. Local boards are mostly implementers of group policy, not originators.

2. What are those group ESG frameworks actually optimising for? From a governance standpoint, group ESG

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10

Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The United States and the Government of Lesotho have signed a five-year bilateral health cooperation agreement committing a combined \$364 million to transition Lesotho's health system toward long-term self-sufficiency, amid growing scrutiny over the effectiveness, governance and sustainability of donor-funded health programmes. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed this week by U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Tom Hines and Minister of Finance Retselisitsoe Matlanyane, outlines a planned U.S. invest-

# BUSINESS & ECONOMY

## U.S., Lesotho Sign \$364 Million Health Deal Aimed at Ending Aid Dependency



ment of \$232 million alongside a \$132 million co-investment by the Government of Lesotho over the next five years. The agreement is framed under the America First Global Health Strategy

and is expected to take effect from April 2026. According to the U.S. Embassy in Maseru, the agreement marks a strategic shift away from long-term dependency on foreign health aid

toward domestic ownership, tighter accountability and measurable outcomes.

"The America First Global Health Strategy

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and the MOU build on the successes of past global health programs," a U.S. Embassy spokesperson said on background. "However, our global health programs have become inefficient and created dependency among recipient countries."

Rethinking a billion-dollar legacy Over the past 25 years, the United States has invested more than \$1 billion in Lesotho's health sector, largely through HIV and infectious disease programmes such as PEPFAR. The embassy credits this support with saving millions of lives globally, preventing 7.8 million HIV transmissions from mother to child, and helping Lesotho achieve the 97-97-99 HIV treatment targets.

But U.S. officials now openly acknowledge structural weaknesses in how health aid has been delivered.

"Today, less than 40 percent of health foreign assistance goes to front-line supplies and health care workers worldwide," the spokesperson said. "The remaining 60 percent of funds are spent on technical assistance, program management, and other forms of overhead costs."

The newly signed MOU, the embassy said, is designed to correct these inefficiencies by enforcing "robust audit mechanisms" to ensure that "every dollar is accounted for, every outcome is measured, and every lesson is learned."

Confidence in Lesotho's capacity

Despite longstanding concerns around governance and procurement in the public sector, the United States says it is confident Lesotho can manage a self-sustaining health system within the five-year transition period.

"Yes. We would not have made a deal we thought could not be kept," the spokesperson said, adding that benchmarks were developed jointly with the Ministries of Health and Finance and on-the-ground providers.

Lesotho's commitment to raise \$132 million in domestic HIV-related financing over five years is described as "phased and achievable," with performance incentives built into the agreement. The embassy also noted that Lesotho already finances about 70 percent of its antiretroviral medication purchases, a contribution that counts toward the domestic funding target.

U.S. support over the years has also focused on strengthening core systems, including medicines supply chain management, which the embassy says now operates "efficiently with minimal external assistance."

Safeguards against abuse Against a backdrop of repeated donor concerns about corruption, political interference and procurement abuse in public programmes, the embassy said the MOU contains explicit safeguards.

"There will be robust audit mechanisms which have been agreed upon by both governments to regulate implementation measures over the five years," the spokesperson said.

The agreement includes performance benchmarks and oversight provisions aimed at protecting both American and Lesotho taxpayer funds while strengthening Lesotho's planning and supervisory capacity.

Transparency still to be defined

On whether progress and expenditure reports will be made public, the embassy stopped short of a firm commitment, noting that reporting mechanisms are still being finalised ahead of

implementation.

"Transparency and accountability are steadfast goals," the spokesperson said, but added that Lesotho retains full ownership of its health data under national laws. Any data sharing will continue to focus on aggregated, programmatic information used for monitoring and reporting to the U.S. Congress.

"Ultimately, Lesotho owns this effort, as well as its health system data," the spokesperson said. "The Embassy cannot make this commitment on their behalf."

A high-stakes transition The agreement represents one of the most consequential shifts in U.S.-Lesotho health relations in decades.

While it promises greater efficiency, accountability and domestic ownership, it also places significant responsibility on the Government of Lesotho to meet funding commitments, governance benchmarks and reform targets in a compressed timeframe.

Whether the transition succeeds may ultimately determine not only the future of Lesotho's health system, but also how international partners recalibrate long-term aid relationships across the region.

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frameworks mainly pursue three things:

1. Regulatory compliance and licence to operate - JSE listings, King IV, South African Reserve Bank's climate risk guidance and global investor expectations push big SA banks to show credible ESG risk management.
2. Portfolio de-risking and capital protection
  - ESG and climate tools are used to protect the group's consolidated balance sheet from stranded assets, litigation, reputational risk, and future capital charges.
  - Sector policies (e.g. on coal, mining, deforestation, large dams) are primarily calibrated to global risk norms, not Lesotho's specific development trade-offs.
3. Reputation and investor signalling
  - Integrated and climate reports are written for asset managers, global ratings agencies and NGOs in London, New York and Johannesburg, not for a farmer in Mohale's Hoek.

None of this is inherently bad. But it means the first-order objective of these ESG systems is

to keep the group safe and attractive to its capital providers. Lesotho's needs are a constraint, not the design centre.

3. Where do these imported ESG rules help Lesotho? There are genuine development benefits.

(a) Basic governance and ethics Group codes of ethics, risk frameworks and compliance systems raise the floor:

- FNB Lesotho publishes a detailed Code of Ethics and privacy notice, including human rights expectations and supply chain conduct (e.g. prohibiting modern slavery).

- Standard Lesotho Bank's ESG report discusses whistleblowing, anti-fraud frameworks, conduct metrics and complaints-handling systems.

That gives Lesotho a higher baseline for corporate behaviour and governance than you might otherwise expect in a small market. It also gives regulators (CBL) more robust risk and compliance partners.

(b) Exposure to climate and environmental risk tools - FNB Lesotho's ESRA, imported from FirstRand, forces some consideration of envi-

ronmental and social risk in lending.

- Standard Lesotho Bank's group framework and local ESG report explicitly highlight nature, water and climate risks, and SLB has partnered on water-resilience and conservation projects. These tools, in principle, should reduce reckless lending into environmentally destructive projects and slowly normalise the idea that climate risk is financial risk.

(c) Some alignment with green and inclusion objectives Group sustainability narratives do create some room for:

- Renewable energy and solar finance pilots (Nedbank's "green" positioning, Standard Bank Group's clean energy focus).

- Youth enterprise and SME projects (SLB's Bacha Entrepreneurship Project, FNB SME competitions).

So imported ESG

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## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

does not only de-risk the parents. It delivers some real, tangible local positives.

4. Where do these frameworks clash with Lesotho's development agenda? This is where the governance critique bites.

(a) Development priority sectors are structurally "unbankable" in group risk models. Lesotho's policy documents are crystal clear: - NSDP II and NFIS II want massive scaling of finance to smallholder agriculture, MSMEs, rural livelihoods and climate adaptation. Yet, under group credit and ESG risk frameworks:

- Smallholder farmers with insecure land rights, limited audited statements and climate exposure are textbook high-risk clients.  
- MSMEs without formal collateral, audited accounts or long track records are penalised by risk-weighted models and E&S risk flags.

Imported ESG tools make it easier for a credit committee in Johannesburg to say: "Agricultural value chain in Lesotho + climate risk + weak collateral = too risky for

our group capital." So the same ESG risk lens that is meant to avoid harm can also lock in a conservative, low-development lending pattern, directly at odds with Lesotho's aim to use finance as a lever for structural transformation.

(b) Climate policy interpreted as "don't touch high-risk climate sectors" From Lesotho's viewpoint:

- Climate strategy is about investing more, not less, in climate-exposed sectors, but changing how they operate (better seeds, irrigation, soil management, water systems, resilient infrastructure).

From a group risk lens: - The simplified takeaway can become: "Agriculture, rangelands, water infrastructure and small rural enterprises are climate-exposed, so they are high risk. Better keep exposure small." Without explicit development mandates, imported ESG tends to avoid climate risk, rather than finance climate resilience.

(c) Local accountability vs group accountability Who do Lesotho subsidiaries ultimately answer to when ESG

tension arises? - Legally and financially, parent shareholders and regulators are the priority.

- NSDP II, NDC targets and Lesotho's vulnerable communities are not hard constraints inside group ESG scorecards.

Example governance dilemmas: - A Lesotho project is high impact for national food security but looks messy on an E&S checklist (land tenure disputes, weak EIAs).

- Group ESG risk tools may flag it as "too controversial", and group risk committees have veto power.

In that moment, parent de-risking trumps local development.

5. Is there any way to bend imported ESG toward Lesotho's agenda? Yes, but it requires local governance interventions, not just more glossy reports.

(a) CBL and government: set local ESG expectations. Instead of passively importing group frameworks, Lesotho could:

- Issue Guidance Notes on climate and development-oriented ESG for banks.

- Require banks to report Lesotho-specific ESG data (sectoral credit, MSME shares,

agriculture, gender/youth data, climate exposures).

(b) Co-design de-risking tools that align with both agendas. If parent banks fear losses, the answer is not to starve Lesotho's priority sectors of capital, but to: - Use guarantee schemes, blended finance and public risk-sharing (with donors, IFC, AfDB, etc.).

(c) Strengthen local board responsibilities on development. Local boards could be required to: - Report on how their ESG frameworks contribute to NSDP II, NFIS II and NDC implementation.

- Develop local "ESG + development" scorecards that sit alongside group scorecards.

6. Bottom line: who is ESG really serving?

On the evidence:

- Today, imported ESG frameworks primarily serve parent balance sheets.

- Lesotho benefits at the margin.

- But there is no hard mechanism ensuring that these frameworks are optimised for Lesotho's development priorities, especially where those priorities require taking more risk.

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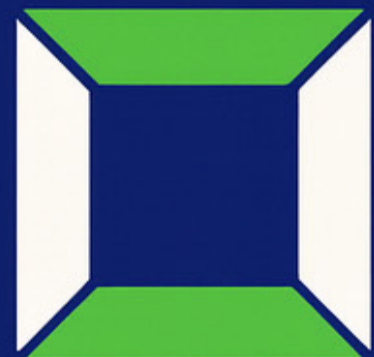
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# EDITORIAL

## When the referee has no whistle



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Editorial

There is something deeply unsettling about watching an institution exercise sweeping authority at the very moment it lacks the legal standing to do so.

The Independent Electoral Commission's recent campaign to deregister allegedly non-compliant political parties raises exactly that concern. Not because compliance does not matter. It does. But because who is enforcing the rules, when they are doing so, and how selectively they are applied matters just as much in a constitutional democracy.

At present, Lesotho has no substantive IEC commissioners. Their terms have expired. No new commissioners have been lawfully appointed. Yet the institution is acting as though nothing has changed, issuing determinations with profound consequences for political participation and



pluralism.

This is not a technicality. It goes to the heart of legality.

An electoral management body derives its authority from statute and from the lawful appointment of its commissioners. Without commissioners in office, the IEC is not merely weakened. It is incomplete. Decisions taken in this vacuum invite legal challenge, institutional embarrassment, and public distrust.

And then there is the question of consistency. The IEC insists that parties must comply with its regulations, including requirements around constitutions, reporting, and internal democracy. That principle is sound. But it collapses the moment enforcement becomes selective.

The ruling Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) has, by all publicly available information, not held an elective conference within the timeframe prescribed by IEC regulations. Internal democratic renewal is not optional. It is a core

requirement meant to prevent personal capture of political organisations and to ensure accountability to members.

Yet there has been no visible urgency from the IEC to address this glaring non-compliance. No public warning. No enforcement action. No demand for timelines. Silence.

So the picture that emerges is uncomfortable: smaller or opposition parties face deregistration, while the governing party's breaches are overlooked. Whether intentional or not, the optics are corrosive. An electoral umpire cannot afford even the perception of favouritism.

This matters because elections are not only about voting day. They are about the integrity of the entire electoral ecosystem. When parties are removed from the register in a process that appears legally questionable and unevenly applied, the damage extends far beyond those parties. It undermines confidence in the referee itself.

There is also a broader institutional concern. Acting *ultra vires*, even in the name of order, is a dangerous habit in a fragile democracy. If an institution without properly constituted leadership can still exercise coercive powers, then rules cease to be safeguards and become instruments.

The irony is sharp. An IEC that insists on strict compliance from political parties is itself operating

in a space of questionable compliance with the law governing its own composition.

This is not an argument against regulation. It is an argument for procedural legitimacy.

The correct sequence matters. Appoint commissioners lawfully. Restore the institution's full authority. Then enforce the rules evenly, transparently, and without fear or favour. Anything else risks turning regulation into repression, and administration into arbitrariness.

For the ruling party, the issue is equally serious. Internal democracy is not a public relations exercise. A party that governs the country cannot credibly preach constitutionalism while sidestepping its own regulatory obligations. Silence from the IEC does not erase non-compliance. It merely postpones accountability.

For Parliament, the executive, and the Council of State, the failure to timeously reconstitute the IEC has now spilled into a governance problem. This is no longer about bureaucratic delay. It is about the integrity of the electoral system itself.

Lesotho has paid a heavy price in the past for institutions that overreach, under-reach, or selectively enforce the law. The lesson should have been learned by now.

A referee without a whistle should not be ejecting players from the field.

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# EU Continues Fight to End GBV in Lesotho

By: Staff Reporter

## Maseru

The European Union (EU) recently held a press briefing to update the public on its ongoing support for Civil Society Organisation (CSO) projects in Lesotho.

This meeting was a vital part of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) campaign and the Union's framework in the fight, highlighting the urgent need to address this widespread issue. During her opening remarks, the EU Ambassador to Lesotho, HE Mette Sunnergren, expressed deep concern over the continuing high rates of GBV and domestic violence in the country.

She shared alarming statistics from the OECD Lesotho Country Profiles; a

staggering 40 percent of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a current or former partner at least once in their lives.

Furthermore, 14 percent of women over the age of 15 have endured such violence.

Sunnergren expressed how shocking it is to see sexual offences and crimes linked to GBV remain so persistent, affirming the



EU's commitment to continuously tackle this serious problem. The EU is not working alone in this fight; it is deeply committed to ending GBV through prevention efforts and ensuring survivors receive support and justice. Sunnergren emphasised that the EU shares a common goal with the government of Lesotho, local civil society and international partners,

united in their efforts to stop this pandemic that affects the nation, working together through joint campaigns to promote gender equality. The EU is dedicated to supporting Lesotho's institutions and communities, particularly by strengthening justice systems through initiatives like the Support for the Reform and Strengthening of Governance in Leso-

tho which aims to help ensure proper responses to GBV cases.

In this fight, CSOs are recognised as essential partners in driving change and delivering crucial services as they play a key role in advocacy and community development, bringing their insights directly to the fight against GBV

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and helping to break down the stigma surrounding it.

The EU values CSOs immensely, including them in every decision-making process.

Their involvement has been integral to the success of initiatives like the Youth Power Hub, a joint initiative aimed at strengthening the abilities of over 30 youth-focused CSOs to influence change and tackle critical issues within their host communities.

To achieve its goals of inclusion, advocacy and raising awareness about GBV, the EU ambassador stressed the importance of dialogue, consultations and actively listening to local CSOs.

The EU has held and will continue to hold these crucial discussions across different districts. Through these dialogues, it has learned about the challenges CSOs face, including limited access to reliable and continuous funding and the need for better training in specific areas. CSOs have also offered valuable suggestions during these dialogues that they say are crucial for shaping the EU's strategies and improving its initiatives, including improving coordination within and between sectors and strengthening organisations' technical skills.

Sunnergren said these efforts are part of the EU's strategic roadmap

which includes mapping civil society organisations and conducting surveys in Lesotho.

The EU Civil Society Roadmaps act as unified frameworks, guiding EU Delegations and Member States in empowering civil society at the national level. They focus on strengthening policy discussions, better integrating funding sources and providing support to help organisations thrive in a supportive environment.

By following these roadmaps, the EU ensures that civil society's vital contributions to governance and development are acknowledged and enhanced.

This approach also helps coordinate efforts among

EU Delegations, Member States and other donors, leading to a more consistent and effective way of working with civil society.

However, challenges remain. The 2021-2023 roadmap highlighted the complex political environment and CSOs' difficulty in accessing reliable funds as major hurdles.

Nevertheless, the insights and practical experiences of these organisations on the

ground are invaluable. They provide a critical perspective that helps the EU address challenges more effectively and adapt its approaches to better meet the specific needs of communities in Lesotho.

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# CBL Prides Itself on New Banknotes, Displays Improved Security, Inclusivity Features, and Durability

BY: Staff Reporter

## MASERU

The Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) has introduced newly upgraded Maloti banknotes, a significant move aimed at curbing counterfeiting while also ensuring the durability of the notes. This move, the bank said, was done in line with the global central bank's mandate to review and upgrade banknotes regularly, a periodical practice of enhancing national currency for security, durability and public confidence.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, Lehlomela Mohapi, the CBL's First Deputy Governor, said these global standards in currency management not only affect the financial sector but the entire population of Basotho.

He informed that it is the central banks' work worldwide to upgrade banknotes from time to time to counter evolving counterfeit threats. In his speech, Dr Maluke Letete, the Governor of the Central Bank, expressed pride in the security level, look and feel of the new notes, saying these are the best notes ever produced by the



CBL. "In an era of advancing technology, counterfeit threats evolve rapidly. Our new currency incorporates state-of-the-art security and is machine-readable for the banking system," Letete said.

These new features on the notes, he said, are more than just a design; they represent a reaffirmation of the CBL's commitment, security and trust

and describe a development in a historic step in Lesotho's journey.

The notes also integrated art features, including but not limited to UV security and see-through features and tactile marks that will aid the visually impaired to feel the notes when running their fingers over the edges of the notes.

Letete further emphasised the improved material composition of the notes.

Before, Maloti notes were made from cotton paper, but the new notes make additional use of sisal thread, which is expected to make them remain in circulation among users for up to four years, an apparent double life span of the previous notes. This doubled lifespan, Letete said, will mean less printing expenses for the bank.

For M50 notes upwards, the bank has adapted the use of a hybrid composite substrate, a combination of cotton and polyester, which gives the notes a smooth, silkier and slippery texture. These new materials, the bank said, align with modern sustainability standards.

Far and beyond technical upgrades and change of material usage, the new banknotes incorporate design elements that reflect Lesotho's heritage and identity, with the security thread that has been changed from displaying mokorotlo to showing glimmering and rolling stars and a slimmer "CBL" font on the thread.

The upgraded notes are said to be anti-bacterial and are already in circulation. The old notes remain relevant until the CBL warns otherwise.

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# PAC Demands Answers as Health Sector Criticism Escalates

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

This week the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) pressed officials from the Ministry of Health and Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital (QMMH) for hard answers on senior leadership failures and escalating concerns about hospital operations.

The meeting, which drew substantial attention on social media, exposed deepening frustration among lawmakers and ordinary Basotho alike over recurring problems at the country's flagship referral hospital, including alleged breaches of procurement rules and disappointing service delivery.

PAC members voiced mounting concern that repeated assurances from health officials have yielded little improvement. The committee's chairperson described recent revelations about procurement irregularities connected to the hospital's private wing and contracts awarded without proper consultation or compliance with the law as "deeply troubling," reflecting patterns that merit serious legislative scrutiny. Ministry representatives, who were called to explain the decisions, sought to justify their actions by citing planning documents and past advice from advisory bodies. However, their explanations often fell short of satisfying the tough inquiries from MPs, who insisted that transpar-



ency and accountability must be upheld if public trust in the health system is to be restored.

Lawmakers also raised alarm about the persistent bed shortages and disruptions in essential services at QMMH, which have been widely reported by patients and health workers over recent months. Families have reportedly waited for hours, even days, for care, fueling public anger and sparking questions about how allocated funds are being used in practice. In some moments, the exchange turned sharp as PAC members underscored the risks posed to patients when hospital administration fails to act in accordance with established procurement laws and health policy standards. One member

of the PAC remarked that continued institutional lapses not only endanger lives but erode the public's confidence in government health services.

Officials from QMMH and the Ministry conceded that challenges persist but highlighted efforts underway to streamline processes and strengthen oversight. They promised follow-up reports and expressed willingness to work with PAC to address gaps, though skepticism remained palpable from committee members.

At the heart of the debate was a clear message from Parliament: the era of delayed responses and vague promises must end. PAC warned that it will not hesitate to issue formal summonses, impose accountability measures and,

if necessary, recommend budgetary adjustments should leadership fail to show substantive progress. As the session concluded, the broader public reaction suggested that Basotho are watching closely. Many citizens expressed hope that increased scrutiny will translate into tangible improvements in hospital services, from reduced waiting times and better supplies to more robust financial governance. Whether the commitments made during the parliamentary session will lead to meaningful reform remains to be seen, but for now the government faces intensified pressure from both lawmakers and the public to deliver a health system that meets the needs and expectations of the nation.

# LHDA Called to Review Water Treaty Agreement

By: Lemohang Botsane

Maseru

**S**einoli Legal Centre (SLC) held a Stakeholders Conference on Human Rights and Development, an annual event aimed at producing a draft treaty framework that will inform subsequent engagements on treaty reform in Maseru this week. The conference, inaugurated in 2023, commemorates International Human Rights Day and serves as a platform for inclusive dialogue, reflection and strategic engagement on the intersection of development and human rights, marking a seminal moment where communities directly affected by Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) shared their lived experiences with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including representatives from government ministries, development partners, academia, civil society and the media.

It also coincided with the commemoration of International Human Rights Day as well as Seinoli Legal Centre's 10th Anniversary. The LHWP Phase 1, completed in 1998, left numerous unresolved issues, and the ongoing Phase 2 continues to pose additional human rights and development problems in its project area communities. Despite proposed solutions from the affected communities and key stakeholders, the problems have worsened, suggesting that the recommended solutions have either been outrightly rejected or that the same flawed thinking that was used in creating



the problem is being applied in seeking to resolve them.

As a result, SLC commissioned a study on water infrastructure development and human rights in Lesotho, evaluating the current development model in operation, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and proposing a more suitable model that aligns with international human rights obligations and the contemporary exigencies relating to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Speaking at the conference, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy, Mohlomi Moleko, said it was true the LHWP presents complex societal and environmental challenges, however reaffirming that the project is about people, livelihoods and their rights.

He said the government has put in place oversight mechanisms, which include a Lesotho Highlands Water Commission, which seeks to ensure that the benefits of the project extend equitably to all Basotho, especially host communities.

In a bid to address all the project's unresolved issues, Moleko said the government has strengthened its delegation in the Water Commission to tackle outstanding social and hu-

man rights concerns in the project areas.

He mentioned that through collaboration with civil society organisations, the government is committed to advancing the protection of human rights and promoting Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles in all LHWP projects. The recently launched LHWP Strategic Plan, on the other hand, is focused on advancing sustainable development, fostering partnerships and addressing the legitimate concerns of various stakeholders, including host communities. Through this renewed approach, the LHWP is committed to community engagement, environmental stewardship and measurable improvements in livelihoods.

Moleko promised that the government and LHDA shall no longer plan for Basotho without their participation, nor have them live adjacent to massive LHWP while they do not have access to portable drinking water.

In a panel discussion, Advocate Borena-Habokhethe Sekonyela highlighted issues related to participation, legal frameworks, compensation policies and sustainable development, particularly in the context of the authority and its associated treaties and policies.

He therefore recommended, among others, comprehensive treaty review, inclusive decision making, fair and transparent compensation, improved monitoring and compliance, enhanced legal access and regular public engagement sessions.

At the end of the conference, stakeholders put SLC in charge of an action programme where it shall organise stakeholders'

sessions focusing on the extractive sector, especially the mining industry. As a coordinator, the SLC shall also promote pathways that will enhance the participation of communities in LHWP host areas, particularly marginalised groups, develop a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (BHR), develop an ACT of Parliament that specifically makes Right to Development legal and binding and strengthen grievance mechanisms and comprehensive treaty review.

At the first conference, the LHDA, as the project implementer, had participated, offering an overview of the project's trajectory, achievements and the challenges encountered.

The second one focused on introspection and resolution and was enriched by the participation of international bodies, including the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights and the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development.

These institutions provided critical insights into international human rights law frameworks, offering normative guidance for integrating human rights into Lesotho's development planning and treaty frameworks.

This third meeting therefore reviewed the LHWP Treaty, an important matter that was raised in the second conference, to facilitate constructive dialogue on how development treaties can be aligned with the principles of equity, participation, accountability and sustainability while safeguarding the rights of communities affected by large-scale infrastructure projects.

# Ministry of Energy Pledges M30 million for Water Supply Projects

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The Minister of Natural Resources and Energy, Mohlomi Moleko, introduced to the public more than 30 contractors appointed by the ministry to implement rural water supply and sanitation works across the country earlier this week in Maseru.

Construction of these projects kicked off on Tuesday, December 9. These projects represent a significant step in expanding access to clean and safe water for the Basotho, particularly in areas that have long awaited improved services.

Speaking at the introduction meeting, Moleko said, despite having abundant water resources, supplying neighbouring countries with more than 40 percent of its water, it was very embarrassing that a huge population of Basotho was still without adequate clean water and sanitation.

Therefore, to compensate for this embarrassment, the government has allocated M30



million for these water projects. When he first got into office, Moleko said the village water supply budget rested at just M7 million while the rural water supply budget was M70 million, thereby warning contractors that they'll be working on a very reduced budget. Because of this reason, he emphasised the need for diligent work and timely delivery. The ministry said in

the district of Quthing alone, about 329 community members who relied on 47 latrines will benefit directly from the water project. In the constituency of Mekaling, about 853 community members who drank from solar boreholes and gravity systems, with an estimated 100 latrines will also benefit from the project, ensuring that everyone in the constituency and countrywide has access to clean water. These water projects

reinforce the ministry's focus on bringing reliable water and sanitation services closer to Basotho. By involving communities in the project, the ministry strengthens accountability and ensures that the work responds to real needs on the ground. It therefore remains committed to accelerating water access across the country, ensuring every Mosotho has access to safe and clean drinking water.

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# Traditional Healers Encouraged to Penetrate Medical Field

By: Staff Reporter

Maseru

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry in collaboration with the UNDP and the National University of Lesotho's Department of Biology hosted a delayed commemoration of the African Traditional Medicine Day in Maseru on Wednesday.

The day, intended to raise awareness about the significant role traditional medicine plays in enhancing the health and well-being being of people, was declared and adopted in August 31, 2002 by the World Health Organization.

The use of some traditional herbs during the COVID-19 pandemic are relatable examples that underscore the continued reliance on and value of traditional medicine, a practice that has long lived and continues to save lives of many communities, especially in rural areas where traditional medicine remains the most accessible and affordable health-care option, demonstrating its importance to millions of Africans.

This event was graced with the presence of many traditional healers from different corners of Lesotho who emphasized how their work in the medical field is often overlooked whenever discussions related to health issues are held.

Access and Benefit Sharing



(ABS) Project Manager, Lebone Molahlehi, said they have discovered that even though some traditional healers are well informed on how to make medicine out of natural herbs, a large number of them fail to preserve the very same plants they use for future purposes.

Rasemoko Polile, a researcher from the NUL Innovation Hub reiterated that majority of traditional healers only come into the field with the hope of enriching themselves, adding that this mentality is one of the key factors that results in harming the environment by pushing some plants to the risk of extinction.

Though he acknowledged their woe of being overlooked, he reckoned this is caused by the fact that healers do not have registered unions or councils that can help them create a much audible and credible voice. He said this makes them oblivious to platforms that could help penetrate markets much easier.

Polile said another key

challenge was caused by traditional healers themselves who do not follow proper protocol to have their products medically tested and cleared in labs, saying this poses challenges not just in the marketing arena but in prescribing intake measurements and prescription to patients as well.

He said documentation of medicine performance in patients plays an important role too as it helps identify what the medicine cures or can be used to prevent too. Polile made all informal healers in the southern region of Africa aware that an estimated M2.5 billion is still accessible for them to legally set up their shops and get verified.

The Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Maphakamile Xingwana, encouraged traditional healers to invest their time in researching what they need to do to be recognised, respected, trusted and penetrate the market. She said their presence and participation was the first

step, further recommending more meetings to discuss ways on how to penetrate the industry legally and not meeting in annual event like this one.

The event brought together key stakeholders in traditional and complementary medicine, with participants including Western Medical and Traditional Health Practitioners, Herbalists, bio-traders, Naturopaths, Homeopaths, Phytotherapists and representatives from Government ministries, the Lesotho National Commission for UNESCO, NGOs and Civil Society.

This event aims to create a platform to recognise the importance of traditional medicine and indigenous knowledge, promote the safe and effective use of traditional medicine through appropriate regulation of products, practices, and practitioners and create awareness on the conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants, which are increasingly threatened by over-harvesting and uncontrolled use.

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Lesotho Tribune

By Litšitso Letsunyane

The Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) has finally acted on mounting pressure from the football fraternity by firing senior national team coach Leslie Notši and his entire technical team, in a move that signals the beginning of a new era under the association's recently elected leadership.

The dismissals, confirmed by LeFA Secretary General Mokhosi Mohapi, follow Likuena's failure to deliver on its mandates in both the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifiers and the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualification campaign. Many questioned why changes were not made sooner despite a string of disappointing results and persistent struggles.

Coach Notši, along with his assistant coaches

Bafokeng Mohapi and Abraham Mongoya and goalkeeper coach Samuel Ketsekile, were eventually shown the door. For months, the writing had been written on the wall. LeFA's executive committee had openly suggested that Notši's future would be decided after the national team's poor performances, yet decisive action was repeatedly delayed.

Likuena failed to advance beyond the group stages at the COSAFA in South Africa earlier this year in June, stumbled through a disappointing World Cup qualifiers campaign, and missed out on qualification for the 2025 AFCON tournament in Morocco, scheduled for 21 December to 18 January 2026. All these missions ended in failure, which further intensified calls for a

coaching overhaul.

Despite a verbal warning issued after the World Cup qualifiers, that the technical team's days were numbered, LeFA raised eyebrows by allowing Notši to remain in charge for two international friendly matches against Malawi at Toyota Stadium in Bloemfontein. Many supporters viewed the decision as a clear contradiction of the association's own stance.

Notši, who also notably doubled as LeFA's technical director, was appointed in 2023 following the departure of Serbian coach Veselin Jelusic. While his reign did produce a bright moment in guiding Likuena to the 2023 COSAFA Cup final, where they lost narrowly to Zambia, many critics argue that isolated success was not enough to mask deeper, long-term



problems.

LeFA Secretary General Mokhosi Mohapi has confirmed the sackings, but has also clarified further that the purge extends far beyond the senior men's team. It affects coaches of all national teams, including the Under-20 and Under-17 squads for both men and women. Coaches currently in possession of LeFA property have been instructed to return all association assets by the end of the week, while the federation finalizes pro rata payments for work already completed.

These mass dismissals also come in the wake of a significant political change at LeFA, following the election of Lijane Nthunya as president in October, bringing to an end the reign of former president Advocate Salemane Phafane KC. According to Mohapi, the restructuring is part of a deliberate strategy to align technical appointments with the vision of the new administration.

Mohapi stated that the association will soon advertise the coaching vacancies, as it seeks to search for a new technical team that aligns with the new leadership's vision to rescue a national side that many believe has been allowed to drift for far too long.

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