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**MOHAHLAULA**  
AIRLINES

# Nyakane and Hashatsi Were Furious When Told of Ramahloko Shooting, Court Hears



By: Tholoana Lesenya

The High Court this week heard that Captain Litekanyo Nyakane and the late Captain Tefo Hashatsi reacted with fury when informed that Sub-Inspector Mokhe-seng Ramahloko had been shot during the August 2014 attack on the Police Headquarters in Maseru, with the defence suggesting that both men had given explicit instructions against the use of violence.

The revelations emerged during ongoing cross-examination of Sergeant Shaabe Thamae, a state witness in the high-profile treason trial involving prominent political figures and senior military officers.

Through Advocate Kabelo Letuka, counsel for Nyakane, the court was told that Nyakane was present at the Police Headquarters when the attack unfolded. According to the defence version put to the witness, Nyakane became visibly furious upon learning that Ramahloko had been shot, questioning why lethal force had been

used despite his earlier instructions that confrontation should be avoided. Letuka suggested to the witness that Nyakane had explicitly told members of the army not to engage in any violent confrontation, but that he was later informed by other soldiers that the deceased had been “fighting,” which allegedly led to him being shot.

The defence further indicated that Nyakane was shown a pistol at the scene, which he was told belonged to Ramahloko. Following the shooting, he is said to have instructed soldiers to remove the injured officer from the building so that he could be rushed to hospital.

The court also heard that Nyakane contacted Hashatsi by telephone to inform him of the shooting. Hashatsi, the defence submitted, reacted angrily and questioned how such an incident could have occurred when clear instructions had been issued. Shortly after the call, Hashatsi reportedly proceeded to the Police Headquarters accompanied by other army personnel, and upon ob-

serving that several police officers had sustained injuries, directed that they be transported to hospital for medical treatment. Sergeant Thamae returned to the witness stand this week to conclude testimony that had been interrupted last year due to illness. His return follows a successful application by the defence to defer the cross-examination of another state witness, Sergeant Kamoho Mahanetsa. The application, brought by Advocates Napo Mafaesa and Lepeli Molapo, sought time to secure an expert report deemed necessary for the defence’s case. The court granted the request, allowing proceedings involving Thamae to continue in the interim.

In his evidence, Thamae recounted that on the day of the incident he had been on duty in the radio room at the Police Headquarters alongside Ramahloko and Police Constable Mokete Litulo. He provided a detailed account of the events leading up to the fatal shooting and the chaos that reportedly ensued during the attack.

The incident forms part of a broader case in which several high-ranking individuals stand accused of serious offences arising from the events of 29 and 30 August 2014. The accused include Lesotho Congress for Democracy leader and former Deputy Prime Minister Motshetjoa Metsing, Movement for Economic Change leader and current Minister of Health Selibe Mochoboroane, former army command-

er Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli, and army members Litekanyo Nyakane, Motloheloa Ntsane and Leutsoa Motsieloa. All have pleaded not guilty.

They face charges including treason, murder, attempted murder, aggravated assault and acts risking injury or death. Among the charges common to all accused are the murder of Sub-Inspector Ramahloko and the attempted murder of Letsekang Mothibeli, along with alternative counts. Additional allegations of aggravated assault involve Sergeant Mahanetsa, Lance Sergeant Thabisa Kopa, Lance Sergeant Thamae, Police Constable Litulo and Police Constable Mone. Charges of treason and the attempted murder of Police Constable Moeketsi are directed specifically at Kamoli, Nyakane, Metsing and Mochoboroane, and include allegations of assault against Sub-Inspector Joel. According to the charge sheet, the offences are alleged to have been committed in furtherance of a shared common purpose among the accused, acting in concert with the late Tefo Hashatsi, Bulane Sechele, Tumo Lekhooa and others unknown to the prosecution.

The defence team comprises Advocates Motiea Teele KC, Letuka Molati, Lepeli Molapo, Kabelo Letuka and Napo Mafaesa. The prosecution is led by Advocates Motene Rafoneke and Rethabile Setlojoane. Proceedings continue before Justice Maliepollo Makhetha, with further cross-examination expected as the case progresses.

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# Hiring Controversy Fuels Fears of Census Boycott

By: Molefi Tsumane

MASERU

**A**llegations of politically motivated recruitment in the run-up to Lesotho's National Population Census have sparked fears of a public boycott, casting a shadow over one of the country's most consequential national exercises.

The controversy centres on how census supervisors and enumerators are being selected and whether the process has been manipulated to favour supporters of the ruling Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) party.

Government Moves to Contain the Fallout Seeking to calm tensions, Minister of Education and Training Prof. Ntoi Rapapa appeared before the Committee of Supply in the National Assembly on Thursday, speaking on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Development Planning.

Rapapa confirmed that approximately 1,200 graduates in Statistics and Economics had been recruited as supervisors, drawn from the Ministry of Public Service database an approach he defended as drawing on an existing pool of qualified candidates rather than initiating a fresh open recruitment process.

He added that recruitment for enumerators remains ongoing, with applications closing on March 20. Candidates



must hold diploma-level qualifications and are required to indicate their constituencies and districts to enable deployment in areas where they have local knowledge.

"The intention is to enable them to work within their constituencies, as they are familiar with their terrains," Rapapa told lawmakers.

Transparency Concerns Deepen

The government's explanation has done little to satisfy Members of Parliament, who have pointed to what they describe as a troubling lack of transparency particularly in the appointment of supervisors.

Several MPs alleged that certain individuals had been pre-selected or recalled through unofficial channels. A list circulating on social media, reportedly bearing official constituency stamps, appears to show names of individuals already hired before the official application deadline had closed.

Basotho National Party (BNP) leader Hon. Machesetsa Mofomobe has gone further, alleging in Parliament that the ruling RFP had already handpicked and placed its supporters in census roles while the application process was still open. He warned that the exercise risks being reduced to a partisan undertaking a charge that has resonated with other opposition figures. Basotho Action Party leader Prof. Nqosa Mahao has called for urgent parliamentary intervention, urging the relevant committee to investigate the allegations without delay.

"The allegations are alarming and require proper scrutiny," Mahao said.

Deputy Speaker Mrs. Ts'epang Mosena acknowledged the seriousness of the concerns, noting that Parliament would need to give the matter further attention. The Deeper Risk: A Crisis

of Public Trust

What began as a dispute over hiring procedures has since evolved into something more troubling a threat to the legitimacy of the census itself. If citizens come to view the exercise as politically compromised, the risk of low participation or outright refusal to be counted grows considerably. Such an outcome would do far more damage than any procedural irregularity: it would distort the population data upon which national budgets, service delivery plans, and development strategies depend for the next decade.

The National Population Census, conducted every ten years and scheduled for April, is the bedrock of how government allocates resources and plans for the future. But its value rests entirely on one fragile element: public trust.

The Question the Government Has Not Answered

While authorities have sought to justify the recruitment approach, they have yet to directly address the growing perception that the process has been compromised. In a census, where participation is voluntary and driven by civic confidence, that silence carries real consequences.

The ultimate risk may not lie in how the census is conducted, but in whether enough Basotho choose to take part in it at all.

# Lesotho to Nearly Double Disability Grant Recipients — But Thousands Still Left Out

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

The government plans to significantly expand its disability grant programme in the 2026/2027 financial year, nearly doubling the number of beneficiaries in a move that has drawn both praise and pointed criticism from lawmakers who say the expansion still falls far short of what is needed.

Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development Pitso Lesaoana announced the development this week while presenting his ministry's budget request before the Committee of Supply in the National Assembly. The ministry is seeking an allocation of M1.48 billion for the upcoming financial year.

The centrepiece of the proposal is an increase in disability grant recipients from approximately 2,000 to 4,904, more than double the current base. Of those, around 3,200 persons with disabilities have already completed medical assessments and qualified for the grant. However, only 2,400 of them will be accommodated in the upcoming phase, added to existing beneficiaries to bring the total to just under 5,000. Lesaoana was candid about the limits of the plan. Even with the expansion, some who qualify will be turned



away once the budget ceiling is reached. "There are still deserving beneficiaries who will not be covered at this stage due to financial limitations," he said, adding that the ministry remains committed to gradually widening coverage as resources allow.

Alongside the increase in recipients, the payment model will also change. Beneficiaries who previously received M1,800 on a quarterly basis will now be paid M650 per month. The shift is designed to provide more consistent and predictable support, allowing recipients to budget more reliably for daily expenses rather than managing larger, infrequent lump sums. The minister said the selection of new beneficiaries will be conducted across all districts to ensure equitable geographic distribution and address disparities between urban and rural areas.

The proposal drew support

from some quarters of the National Assembly. All Basotho Convention leader Nkaku Kabi welcomed the expansion, describing it as both necessary and commendable. "This is a positive development that will make a meaningful difference in the lives of many Basotho living with disabilities," he said.

But the announcement also ignited debate. Several legislators argued that the expansion does not go nearly far enough, pointing out that a significant number of qualifying persons with disabilities will still be excluded from support. With an estimated 8,000 persons with disabilities in the country, the proposed cap of 4,904 beneficiaries would leave roughly 3,000 qualifying individuals without assistance. Some members drew a direct comparison with the old age pension, which provides universal coverage to elderly citizens regardless

of means, and argued that disability should be treated with the same universality. "There should be no discrimination in access to social protection among persons with disabilities," one member said, arguing that vulnerability is not determined by medical classification alone.

Lesaoana framed the disability grant expansion as part of a wider effort to strengthen social welfare, noting that several grants were increased in the previous financial year, including those targeting orphans and vulnerable children, the elderly, and individuals on public assistance. "These adjustments reflect government's continued commitment to improving the welfare of vulnerable groups," he said. Despite the legislative debate, the proposed budget allocation was ultimately adopted as part of the annual financial estimates.

The expansion marks a meaningful step forward that will bring real relief to thousands of households. But the gap between those who qualify and those who will actually receive support has placed the government's social protection ambitions under scrutiny. As implementation begins, pressure is likely to grow on whether future budgets can close that gap, or whether the programme's reach will remain constrained by the same financial ceilings that limited it this year.

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# Treason Trial Cross-Examination Pushed to May as Witness Returns Briefly to the Stand

By: Tholoana Lesenya

MASERU

The High Court has scheduled the continuation of cross-examination of state witness Sergeant Shaabe Thamae in the ongoing treason trial for 26 to 29 May 2026, after proceedings this week could not be concluded and the matter was postponed once more.

Thamae, whose testimony is central to the prosecution's case, first took the stand in February 2025 before his cross-examination was halted when he fell ill. He returned briefly to the witness stand this week to continue giving evidence, but proceedings again could not be finalised, necessitating the fresh postponement.

The latest adjournment also follows a successful application by defence advocates Napo Mafaesa and Lepeli Molapo to defer the cross-examination of another state witness, Sergeant Kamoho Mahanetsa. The defence argued they required additional time to obtain an expert report deemed crucial to their case, and the court granted the request.

In his testimony, Thamae detailed events surround-



ing the alleged attacks of 29 and 30 August 2014 at the Police Headquarters in Maseru. He told the court that on the day in question he was on duty in the radio room alongside the late Sub-Inspector Mokheseng Ramahloko and Police Constable Mokete Litulo. He recounted how the situation rapidly escalated when armed members of the army allegedly stormed the premises, describing the moment Ramahloko was shot and sustained fatal injuries amid the chaos as officers attempted to respond to the unfolding attack. Thamae also testified that he was later forced, under duress, to transport the body of the deceased to the mortuary. His account painted a picture of confusion and fear as police officers found themselves under siege

during the operation. The case has drawn significant public attention owing to the seniority of the individuals among the accused. Those standing trial include Lesotho Congress for Democracy leader and former Deputy Prime Minister Mothetjoa Metsing, Movement for Economic Change leader and current Minister of Health Selibe Mochoboroane, former Army Commander Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli, and army members Litekanyo Nyakane, Motloheloa Ntsane and Leutsoa Motsieloa. All have pleaded not guilty.

The charges common to all accused include the murder of Sub-Inspector Ramahloko and the attempted murder of Letsekang Mothibeli, along with related alternative counts, as well as aggra-

vated assault against Sergeant Mahanetsa, Lance Sergeant Thabiso Kopa, Lance Sergeant Thamae, Police Constable Litulo and Police Constable Mone. Specific charges of treason, the attempted murder of Police Constable Moeketsi and the assault of Sub-Inspector Joel are directed at Kamoli, Nyakane, Metsing and Mochoboroane. The prosecution contends that all offences were committed in furtherance of a shared common purpose, with the accused acting in concert with the late Tefo Hashatsi, Bulane Sechele, Tumo Lekhooa and others unknown to the state. The defence team comprises Advocates Motiea Teele KC, Letuka Molati, Lepeli Molapo, Kabelo Letuka and Napo Mafaesa. The prosecution is led by Advocates Motene Rafoneke and Rethabile Setlojoane. The matter is presided over by Justice Maliepollo Makhetha. When proceedings resume at the end of May, the cross-examination of Thamae is expected to be among the most consequential phases of the trial yet, as the defence seeks to challenge his account of the 2014 events while the prosecution works to reinforce its case.

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# Lesotho Validates New Voter Registration Strategy Ahead of 2027 Elections

By: Molefi Tsumane

MASERU

The Independent Electoral Commission, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union, this week held a high-level validation meeting in Maseru to finalise a new national Voter Registration Strategy, marking a concrete step toward overhauling the country's electoral systems ahead of the 2027/2028 general elections.

The meeting brought together stakeholders from government, civil society and international partners to formally endorse the strategy, which forms part of the Inclusive Lesotho Project, an M85 million initiative designed to modernise electoral processes and restore public confidence in the voter roll.

At the heart of the strategy is a plan to resolve long-standing problems with the existing voter roll, including the removal of deceased persons from the register and the integration of more ac-



curate civil registry data. The strategy also charts a transition toward sustainable registration software and digital tools intended to give the IEC full ownership and security over voter data, reducing dependence on external systems.

The strategy places particular emphasis on lowering barriers for marginalised groups, with targeted outreach plans

for youth, women and persons with disabilities. It also seeks to align Lesotho's registration processes with the recommendations of the 2022 EU Election Observation Mission, which identified a range of electoral reforms the country was urged to implement before its next general election.

Officials framed the validation as a shift from

planning to implementation, with attention now turning to how effectively the strategy is translated into practice in the period leading up to the election. The collaboration between the IEC, UNDP and EU is intended to signal a shared commitment to building a registration system in which every eligible citizen can participate with confidence.

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# Minister Mofosi requests M548 million for agricultural sector

By: Staff Reporter

**M**inister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition Thabo Mofosi has appealed to the National Assembly for M548,935,673 to fund a sweeping set of initiatives aimed at transforming the country's agricultural sector.

Presenting the ministry's budget request to the National Assembly on Wednesday, Minister Mofosi outlined an ambitious agenda that includes boosting agricultural production, strengthening the wool and mohair value chain, enhancing food and nutrition security, and expanding market access for agricultural products. The ministry also intends to extend support to small and medium enterprises operating within the sector.

To achieve these goals, Mofosi detailed several key interventions. The ministry plans to transfer the sale of farming inputs to the private sector — a move expected to improve efficiency and widen farmer access to supplies. Infrastructure investment also features prominently in the plan, with new irrigation centres to be constructed in Leribe and Quthing, while existing facilities in Maseru will undergo rehabilitation. The minister did not specify a timeline for the completion of these projects or indicate how the funds would be distributed across the various programmes.



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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporters

MASERU

The Ministry of Health has responded to concerns raised by members of the public over shortages of essential medicines in Thaba-Tseka, Qacha's Nek and Maseru districts, maintaining that government facilities remain adequately stocked while challenges persist largely outside its direct control.

In its response, the Ministry acknowledged that shortages of essential medicines do exist, but insisted these are not occurring within its own government-run facilities. The situation, it said, varies from one health centre to another, particularly among facilities that fall outside direct government supply systems.

"The extent of this out of stock cannot be clearly indicated since it may vary from facility to facility and it is outside our jurisdiction," the Ministry said. A Two-Tier Supply System Under Scrutiny At the centre of the issue is a two-category system used to distribute medicines

across the country. The first category, Category A, includes critical treatments such as TB and HIV medication as well as family planning drugs. These are supplied directly by the Ministry of Health to all accredited facilities, including government, non-government and private institutions. The Ministry insists that these life-saving medicines are being supplied without interruption. The second category, Category B, operates differently. Under this arrangement, individual health service providers are responsible for purchasing their own supplies, and it is here that shortages are being reported.

The Ministry emphasised that government facilities have not recorded stock-outs under this arrangement, suggesting the shortages are concentrated among facilities that must procure their own medicines independently.

**Budget Constraints Cited as Key Driver**

An internal assessment by the Ministry points to financial limitations as a primary cause of the shortages.

"Some of those facilities do not purchase enough

supplies due to budgetary constraints," the Ministry noted.

Authorities ruled out supply chain disruptions, stating there are no significant challenges with distributors in making Category B commodities available. This places the burden squarely on individual facilities, raising serious questions about the sustainability of a system that depends on facility-level purchasing power.

**Government Seeks Long-Term Solution** The Ministry says it is aware of the challenges and is working with partners to develop a lasting solution. Discussions are ongoing under a Memorandum of Understanding framework, aimed at ensuring medicines are consistently and equitably available across all health facilities.

**Interim Measures Increase Pressure on Health Workers**

In the meantime, the government has introduced interim measures to manage the situation. These include strengthening outreach services for patients with chronic conditions, where groups are organised and healthcare workers collect medication in bulk from nearby government facilities.

The Ministry acknowledged, however, that this approach places a heavy workload on hospital staff. Healthcare providers have also been advised to increase the quantities they order, particularly to accommodate patients moving from facilities experi-

encing stock-outs.

**Patients Directed to Private Pharmacies** The Ministry confirmed that where critical medicines are unavailable, patients may be advised to seek alternatives from nearby facilities or purchase from private pharmacies. It described this as standard practice in cases where treatment cannot be interrupted, though it noted that providers should not direct patients to specific pharmacies. **Government Insists Its Facilities Are Stocked** Despite the concerns reported, the Ministry maintains that government health facilities are well stocked, supported by a tracking system used to monitor stock levels. It further stated that no formal complaints have been received regarding shortages of health commodities.

**A System Under Pressure** While the government maintains that its core supply systems are functioning, the situation exposes structural imbalances within the health sector. A system that guarantees supply in some facilities while leaving others dependent on their own financial capacity risks creating uneven access to essential medicines across the country. For patients in Thaba-Tseka, Qacha's Nek and Maseru, the distinction may feel academic. What matters is whether medication is available when it is needed. And increasingly, the answer to that question appears to depend not on policy, but on where one seeks treatment.





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Lesotho Tribune

By: Staff Reporter

MASERU

**P**ressure is mounting on the government to account for a widely publicised M400 million facility said to be earmarked for youth businesses, after Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) Member of Parliament Thabo Maretlane demanded clarity on its whereabouts in Parliament.

Maretlane's intervention has reignited a debate that Lesotho Tribune has previously examined in detail, raising fundamental questions about whether the fund, as presented to the public, ever truly existed. Maretlane challenged the government to explain what has become of the M400 million, which had been communicated as a targeted intervention

## BUSINESS & ECONOMY

### RFP's Maretlane Asks Parliament: What Happened to the M400 Million for Youth Businesses?



to unlock financing for young entrepreneurs. A Fund That May Not Exist

Prior reporting by this publication paints a very different picture from the one initially presented to Basotho.

Investigations by Lesotho Tribune established that the so-called M400 million youth fund is

not a standalone pool of capital accessible to young entrepreneurs.

What exists instead is a partial credit guarantee scheme, a financial instrument that operates very differently from what was implied in public messaging.

Rather than the government directly disbursing funds to youth-owned

businesses, the scheme works by guaranteeing a portion of loans issued by commercial banks, thereby reducing the risk borne by lenders. This distinction is critical. Under a credit guarantee model, beneficiaries must still qualify for a bank loan, submit a business plan, meet

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standard lending criteria, and repay the loan in full. The government, in essence, does not provide cash. It acts as a backstop in the event of default. Repackaging Old Instruments? Evidence suggests this mechanism is not new. Lesotho has operated versions of a Partial Credit Guarantee Fund for over a decade, aimed at addressing the persistent challenge of collateral requirements for small businesses. More recent iterations have been scaled up significantly, with government-backed guarantees reportedly reaching between M350 million and M400 million, channelled through financial institutions to support small and medium enterprises.

This raises a troubling possibility: that an existing financial instrument was rebranded or communicated in a way that suggested the creation of a new, dedicated youth fund, when in reality no such fund exists in the conventional sense. Parliament Demands Clarity

Maretlane's parliamentary question strikes at the heart of transparency and public accountability. If the M400 million was never a direct financing facility, several questions follow. Why was it presented as a fund specifically earmarked for youth businesses? How many young entrepreneurs have actually accessed financing through the scheme? What proportion of the guaranteed lending has

reached youth-owned enterprises? And is the government deliberately conflating guarantees with actual disbursed funding?

These are not merely technical questions. They go to the core of how economic policy is communicated, and whether Basotho are being misled about the opportunities available to them.

The Illusion of Access For many young Basotho, access to finance remains one of the most significant barriers to entrepreneurship. The announcement of a M400 million fund created a powerful perception: that capital was readily available, that youth empowerment was a genuine priority, and that government was shifting its support toward enterprise development.

But if access still depends on conventional bank lending requirements, the reality may be far more restrictive than the promise. Credit guarantee schemes, while useful, do not eliminate risk for borrowers. They redistribute part of the risk between banks and the state. For entrepreneurs without collateral, stable income or a credit history, the barrier to entry often remains unchanged.

**A Question of Political Messaging**

The controversy now unfolding reflects a broader problem in Lesotho's policy environment: the gap between policy instruments and political messaging. Announcing a M400 million youth fund carries significant

political weight. It signals ambition, commitment and responsiveness to youth unemployment. But if that announcement rests on a technical reinterpretation of an existing facility, it risks eroding public trust. Maretlane's intervention may therefore prove to be more than a routine parliamentary query. It could compel the government to clarify the true nature of the facility, provide data on beneficiaries, and reconcile its public statements with actual policy design. The Bigger Picture What is ultimately at stake is not just M400 million. It is the credi-

bility of economic policy communication in Lesotho. When financial instruments are repackaged without clear explanation, the result is a cycle of inflated expectations, limited real access and growing public frustration.

For a country grappling with youth unemployment and sluggish private sector growth, the gap between promise and reality is not merely inconvenient. It is economically dangerous. As Parliament awaits answers, one thing is clear: the question is no longer just where the money is. It is whether it was ever there in the first place.

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# Lesotho Prepares for Census

By Lemohang Botsane

Lesotho is gearing up for its Population and Housing Census on April 12 and it's doing so with a modern twist. This time around, unlike in the past, the country is using digital cartography powered by enterprise mapping systems to make sure every household is counted accurately.

Detailed maps have been created to show every enumeration area and household across the country. These maps will help enumerators find and count households using digital devices, reducing errors and ensuring the data collected is reliable.

"This year's census is different," Constituency Supervisor Neo Ramonyatsi said in a press briefing. "Enumeration will only take place at designated households identified through our digital maps. This will help minimise errors and ensure the integrity of the data." The use of digital cartography and enterprise mapping is expected to bring greater accuracy, efficiency and accountability to the census process. It ensures that no household is missed and none is counted twice. Assistant Supervisors are currently being trained and they will pass on their knowledge to enumerators who will carry out the actual counting. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)



is supporting this effort, recognising the importance of quality data for planning and delivering services. The organisation said accurate population data is essential for planning and delivering services in maternal health, youth empowerment and gender equality. It has also provided technical assistance, helped develop a communications strategy and supplied tablets for the digital census because "every person counts and every house-

hold matters; the UNFPA emphasised its commitment to ensuring the census is a success.

The census is a big deal for Lesotho and with these modern tools, the country is poised to gather the data it needs to move forward.

As the country prepares for this important exercise, residents are encouraged to participate and make their voices heard.

The census will provide valuable insights into Lesotho's population, helping policymakers make

informed decisions about healthcare, education and economic development. With digital cartography and enterprise mapping, Lesotho is taking a big step towards a more accurate and efficient census process.

The government and the UNFPA are working together to ensure the census is a success, and the results will be used to shape the country's future. Lesotho is counting on its people to participate and make this census a landmark event.

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Lesotho Tribune

By Staff Reporters

**S**outh Africa has moved decisively to shield its struggling steel sector, introducing steep anti-dumping duties on construction-grade structural steel imports. The new tariffs impose a 74.98% duty on Chinese steel and 20.32% on imports from Thailand, following a formal investigation confirming that these products were being sold into the local market at below fair value.

The probe, led by the International Trade Administration Commission (ITAC), found that imported structural steel was entering the Southern African Customs Union at artificially low prices, causing measurable harm to domestic producers. The tariffs are not a minor policy adjustment. They are a response to what authorities describe as a

# AFRICA

## South Africa imposes steep duties on steel imports to protect local industry



severe market distortion. Imports from China and Thailand surged dramatically in recent years — in some cases rising nearly 19-fold — undercutting local producers by as much as 20%.

The timing is critical. South Africa's steel industry was already under considerable strain before these tariffs were introduced. Weak domestic demand, high input costs, and infrastructure bottlenecks had combined with a flood of

cheap imports to push the sector toward crisis. Imported steel now accounts for roughly 36% of domestic consumption, with China alone responsible for 73% of those imports. The consequences have been tangible. Major producers, including ArcelorMittal South Africa, have been forced to scale back operations, with some facilities shutting down entirely as losses mounted. The tariffs are, in effect, an attempt to buy time — to

stabilise a sector central to construction and infrastructure development. But they also expose a deeper structural problem: South Africa's steel industry is not only battling unfair foreign competition, it is also contending with internal weaknesses that tariffs alone cannot fix. Whether protection will translate into genuine recovery, or simply delay an inevitable restructuring, remains the defining question for the sector.

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# Ministry of Finance, AfDB Launch Plan to Boost Lesotho's Economy



**BY: Lemohang Botsane**

MASERU

The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, in partnership with the African Development Bank (AfDB), has implemented a new plan to support Lesotho's economic growth. The Country Strategy Paper (CSP) outlines how the AfDB will provide technical and financial support to Lesotho from 2025 to 2030. Mpotjoane, speaking at the event, said the CSP is a big opportunity for Lesotho to secure more

support and grow its economy. He noted that the plan aligns with Lesotho's own development goals, focusing on areas like ICT, water, energy and multi-sectoral projects.

Mpotjoane encouraged the private sector and other stakeholders to get involved and back the plan's implementation. He spotlighted Lesotho's rich resources, including diamonds and water, but stressed that these need to be used productively to benefit the country.

AfDB Deputy Director General, Moono Mupotola, said the bank has

been working with Lesotho since 1973 and has provided 68 loans for projects in transport, water and agriculture. She announced that 49 million USD will be invested in projects related to ICT, water and energy during the CSP period. Mupotola praised the CSP's focus on sustainable infrastructure and improving public sector efficiency. She mentioned initiatives like the Lesotho Lowlands Water Supply, which has improved hygiene and sanitation for many Basotho people.

Central Bank of Lesotho

Governor Dr Maluke Letete expressed concern about the impact of global geopolitical conflicts on Lesotho's development efforts. He emphasised the need for solutions to these hurdles.

The CSP launch followed a workshop where participants reviewed progress, identified challenges and agreed on ways to improve project implementation.

In general, the CSP aims to unlock opportunities for Lesotho's growth and development, with support from the AfDB and collaboration with local stakeholders.

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# Suspended director general allegedly travels to Kenya on official trip

By: Lemohang Botsane

MASERU

**F**resh controversy has emerged within the Ministry of Local Government after it was revealed that a senior official on precautionary suspension has allegedly undertaken a government-sanctioned trip to Kenya.

The official, Mrs 'Mating Mahooana, Director General of the Local Government Service, was formally placed on three months' precautionary suspension pending disci-



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LESOTHO TRIBUNE  
SENTIMENT TRACKER

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Lesotho Tribune

By Lesotho Tribune

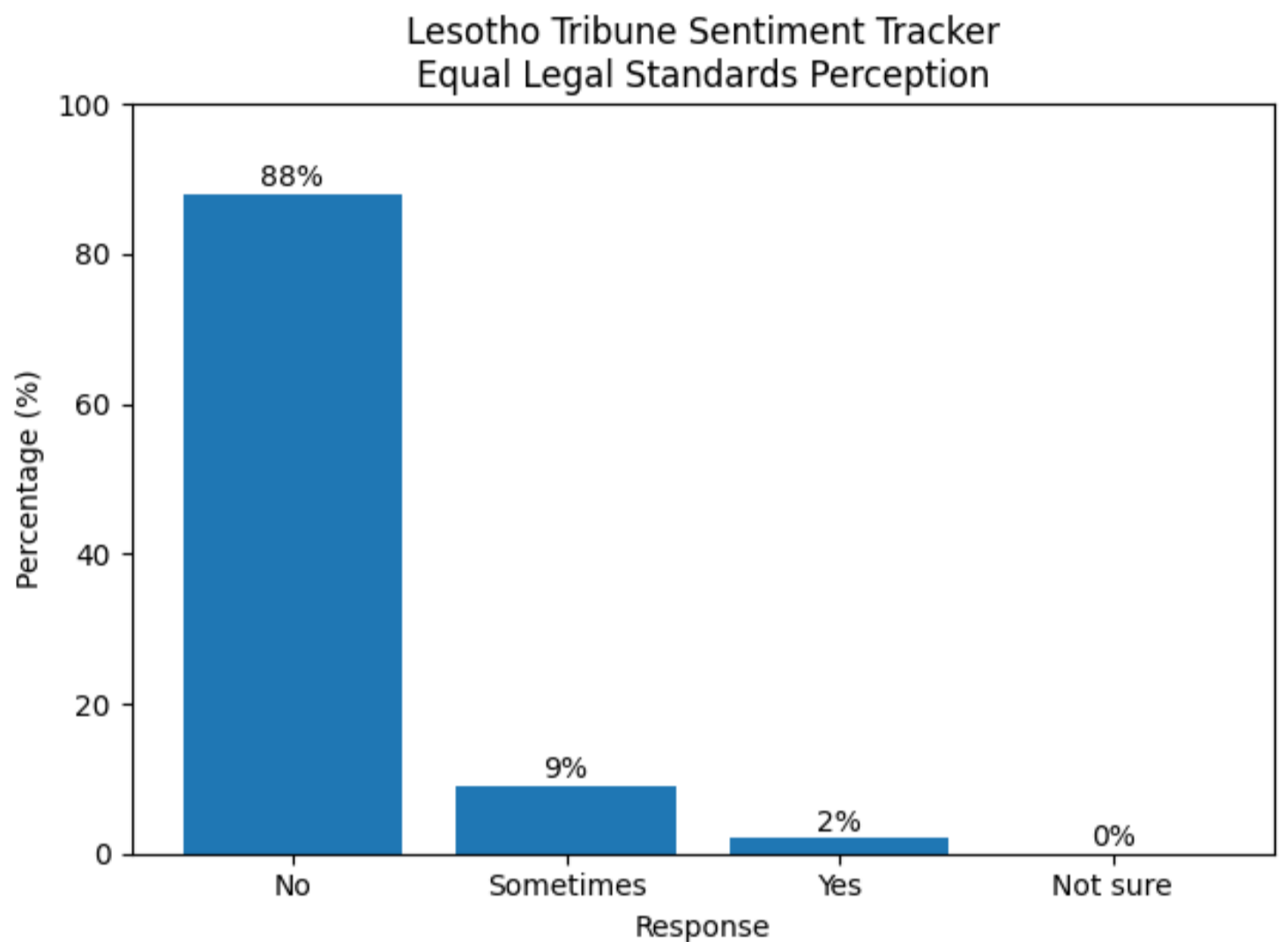
MASERU

A shadow of doubt is falling over Lesotho's upcoming National Census. A sentiment poll conducted by the Lesotho Tribune has found that a clear majority of respondents do not trust the process enough to take part — a finding that, if it reflects broader public sentiment, could undermine one of the country's most consequential statistical exercises in years.

The poll, run across the Tribune's social media platforms, follows allegations that census enumerator recruitment may have been shaped by preferential selection before the official application window had even closed. At its core, the controversy reduces to one ques-

# SENTIMENT TRACKER

## Census Trust Crisis? Most Lesotho Tribune Poll Respondents Refuse to Participate



tion: Can Basotho trust a process designed to count them?

What the Numbers Show



The results offer a striking portrait of public disillusionment:

- 64% of respondents said they do not trust the census process
- 18% said they would participate regardless of their concerns
- 18% remain undecided,

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watching for a government response before making up their minds. The sample size is modest, but the pattern is hard to dismiss. The dominant mood is not merely skepticism — it is hesitation grounded in a sense that the process was compromised before it began. Why a Census Matters More Than Most Realise A national census is not a routine administrative exercise. Its results shape the country for the decade that follows. They determine:

- How public resources are distributed across districts
- Where constituency boundaries are drawn
- How social and economic policy is designed
- How Lesotho presents itself to international partners and development institutions

When trust erodes this early in the process — at the recruitment stage, before a single household has been visited — the integrity of everything downstream is called into question.

The Perception Problem Whether the allegations of pre-selection are ever formally substantiated may, in practice, matter less than the fact that many Basotho already believe them.

In governance, perception has real consequences. The claim that enumerators may have been chosen through back channels rather than merit does not

sit in isolation. It lands in a landscape already shaped by years of concerns about:

- Preferential treatment in public appointments
- The politicisation of institutions meant to serve all citizens
- The absence of credible, independent oversight mechanisms

Each new allegation reinforces the last. And with each reinforcement, the burden of proof on government grows heavier. The Quiet Danger: Apathy Over Anger The most alarming outcome of a trust deficit is not public outrage. Outrage, at least, is visible and can prompt a response. The real risk is silence.

A census does not collapse dramatically. It degrades quietly — through households that give incomplete answers, communities that turn enumerators away, and citizens who simply are not home. A low-trust census produces low-quality data. And low-quality data produces flawed decisions that governments, communities, and development planners are then forced to live with for ten years.

That is the true cost of perception mismanaged. What Authorities Must Do Now

Restoring confidence at this stage is possible, but it requires deliberate, visible action — not reassurances alone. Authorities should consider:

1. Publicly clarifying the enumerator recruitment

process, with full timelines  
 2. Publishing selection criteria and, where possible, the names of those selected and how they qualified  
 Silence or defensive denial at this point will only harden the doubts already forming.

The Stakes Beyond the Count This moment is about more than census data. It is a test of whether Basotho believe that national processes are conducted fairly — and whether they still see value in participating in them. When citizens begin to treat

participation as optional, the effects ripple outward. Governance weakens. Institutions lose legitimacy. The distance between the state and the people it is meant to serve grows wider.

A credible census will not fix all of that. But a discredited one will make it considerably worse.

Disclaimer: **The Lesotho Tribune sentiment poll was conducted via social media and is not a scientific survey. Results reflect the views of online respondents who chose to participate.**

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Lesotho Tribune

By: Malefo Thinyane

A census is not a political event. It is a national reckoning with reality.

Every ten years or so, a country pauses to count itself. To ask who we are, where we live, how we are housed, how old we are, and how many of us there are. The answers to those questions shape everything that follows: how schools are built, how hospitals are funded, how roads are planned, how budgets are divided. A census is, in the most literal sense, the foundation upon which a government builds its understanding of its own people.

Which is precisely why reports that census field workers are being recruited along partisan lines should alarm every Mosotho, regardless of which party they support.

The Census Belongs to

# OPINION

## When the Census Becomes a Political Tool, Everyone Loses



the Nation, Not the Party in Power Let us be clear about what a census is and what it is not.

It is not a campaign. It is not a reward for loyalty. It

is not an opportunity to plant supporters across the country under the cover of official employment. It is a technical exercise that demands impartiality, rigour

and public trust above all else.

When field workers are selected on the basis of political affiliation rath-

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er than competence, the damage runs deeper than a few unqualified appointments. It corrupts the very process by which Lesotho understands itself.

A census worker with a political mandate, whether stated or implied, does not simply count people. They carry an agenda into the field. That agenda may influence who gets counted, how questions are asked, which communities receive thorough coverage and which are passed over. The resulting data may never reflect what actually exists on the ground.

And if the data is wrong, every decision built on top of it is wrong too.

**Bad Data Has Real Consequences** This is not an abstract concern. It has direct, material consequences for ordinary Basotho.

Census data determines how government resources are allocated across districts. A community that is undercounted receives less. Less funding for clinics. Fewer teachers for schools. Inadequate infrastructure investment. The people who suffer are not politicians. They are the residents of those communities, many of whom may have no idea that their numbers were never accurately recorded.

Politicised census employment creates the conditions for exactly this kind of distortion. If workers are loyal first to a party and second to the process, the incentive to ensure accurate, complete coverage of all communities,

including those that voted differently, is undermined before a single household is visited.

**It Undermines the Independence of National Statistics**

Beyond the data itself, partisan recruitment erodes something harder to rebuild: institutional credibility.

The Bureau of Statistics exists to produce numbers that everyone can trust.

Government ministries, development partners, researchers, civil society organisations and international bodies all rely on national statistics to plan, to fund and to evaluate.

That trust is not automatic. It is earned through consistent, transparent and politically independent work.

The moment a census becomes associated with partisan employment, that credibility is placed in doubt. And once doubt takes hold, it is extraordinarily difficult to dislodge. Future surveys, future censuses, future data releases will all carry the shadow of that compromised moment.

Lesotho cannot afford to be a country whose statistics are viewed with suspicion. In a development environment where donor funding, investment decisions and policy support depend on reliable data, the reputational cost of a politicised census extends far beyond our borders.

**It Sets a Dangerous Precedent** There is also the question of what this normalises.

If partisan employment

in the census is accepted without serious pushback, it signals that technical national institutions are available for political capture. That the party in power can extend its reach into processes that are supposed to sit above politics. That competence is secondary to loyalty when the state is hiring.

This precedent does not stay contained. It spreads. It weakens the civil service. It discourages qualified professionals who refuse to play political games. It rewards those who are willing to subordinate their professional responsibilities to partisan interests. Over time, it hollows out the capacity of the state to function independently of whoever happens to be in power.

A country that cannot conduct an impartial census has a deeper problem than bad data. It has a governance problem.

**What Should Happen Instead** The standard for census employment should be straightforward: hire people who are capable of doing the job, train them properly, and hold them accountable to the process rather than to any political principal.

Field workers should be selected through transparent, merit-based criteria. Community knowledge and language skills are legitimate selection factors. Party membership is not. Civil society organisations, opposition parties and independent observers should be given meaningful oversight roles to monitor recruitment and

deployment. The Bureau of Statistics must be empowered to make these decisions free from political interference, and seen to be making them.

These are not radical demands. They are the minimum conditions required for a census to mean anything.

**A Country That Counts Itself Honestly** Ultimately, a census is an act of national honesty. It is a country looking at itself clearly and recording what it sees, without flattery and without distortion.

Lesotho faces real challenges: poverty, unemployment, migration, inequality and a public health burden that demands targeted, evidence-based responses. Meeting those challenges requires knowing precisely where they are most acute, who is most affected and what resources exist to address them.

None of that is possible if the census is compromised at the point of data collection.

The government must understand that a politicised census does not serve the party in power. It does not even serve the people who benefit from partisan appointments. It fails everyone, including those who engineered it, because governance built on false numbers eventually collides with a reality that data cannot hide.

**Count the people. Count them all. Count them honestly.**

That is not a political position. It is the only responsible one.

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# Press Forward Communications Launches to Strengthen Corporate-Media Relations in Lesotho



By Press Release

**M**aseru, Lesotho: Wednesday, 25 February 2025 - Press Forward Communications, a public relations and media relations consultancy, has officially launched with a focused mandate to strengthen relationships between corporates and the media in Lesotho.

The firm was established in response to a persistent gap within the communications landscape, where engagement with media is often reactive or treated as secondary rather than strategic.

Press Forward Communications seeks to reposition media relations as a central pillar of corporate reputation management and public engagement.

The founder, Thato Ramafu, brings professional experience from both the newsroom and corporate communications environments, having begun her career in media before moving into cor-

porate PR role. This dual perspective informs the consultancy's approach, which is grounded in an understanding of newsroom realities as well as organisational pressures. "Media professionals play a critical role in shaping how organisations are perceived," says Ramafu. "Sustainable public trust requires intentional, ethical and well-managed relationships between corporates and the media." Corporates may at times hesitate to deepen engagement with media due to concerns about scrutiny or perceptions of impropriety. In other instances, limited engagement stems from operational demands. Many organisations operate within tight internal deadlines and performance targets, leaving little capacity to build and maintain deliberate media relationships.

Press Forward Communications addresses both dynamics by acting as a structured intermediary, ensuring engagement

remains professional, transparent and mutually beneficial.

A key focus of the consultancy is improving the practical experience of media practitioners during corporate activities and field assignments. Drawing from first-hand experience, Ramafu notes that logistical gaps such as late return travel and limited support structures can place strain on journalists. The consultancy aims to introduce coordinated, ethical support systems that prioritise dignity, safety and professionalism without compromising editorial independence and safety.

In addition to media relations, Press Forward Communications recognises the increasing influence of digital creators within the public relations ecosystem. The consultancy will work to develop and position influencers as credible, strategically aligned brand partners. In the Lesotho context, where many influencers have

significant reach but limited structured positioning, the firm intends to provide guidance on brand development, professional conduct and long-term value creation.

Press Forward Communications offers services including public relations strategy development, media relations management, media buying, media training, communications strategy design, influencer relations and project-based communications support for organisations requiring outsourced expertise. While its service offering is comprehensive, the consultancy's primary focus remains the strengthening of media relations as the foundation of responsible and effective communication.

The firm also signals its intention to collaborate with corporates, development partners and independent practitioners to advance industry standards and contribute to national development. By prioritising ethical engagement and structured partnership, Press Forward Communications aims to elevate the practice of public relations in Lesotho and beyond.

Headquartered in Maseru and operates as a public relations and media relations consultancy committed to bridging institutional and media interests through strategic, balanced and principled communication.

**For media enquiries, partnerships or further information, please contact:**

**Thato Ramafu on +266 5998 1038 Or at [tayramafu@gmail.com](mailto:tayramafu@gmail.com)**



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