



# TRAVERSE

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LTDC's CEO *a.i.* Mr. Sehlabaka Ramafikeng

## **FOREWORD**

I wish to start by acknowledging that since the emergence of COVID-19, it has been and still is a very challenging time for the tourism industry. The global economy was pushed into one of the worst recessions of recent times, which has changed the overall orientation and presents uncertainty on the future of tourism. This unprecedented era presents to us a mammoth task of derivation and implementation of effective action plans and strategies to help revive the industry. In that case, LTDC undertakes to work closely with its parent Ministry to ensure relevant response strategies and programmes are derived and put in place.

What seems obvious is that tourism will rebound slowly and that domestic tourism will for some time be the mainstay. This implies that we have to refocus our marketing efforts and invest more on domestic travel promotion. Likewise, the tourism business operators need to reconfigure their consumer packages to accommodate more domestic travellers' needs. We remain optimistic about the government's efforts towards the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine, which in our view is the major driving force for the industry to gain travellers' confidence.

Part of our strategies in our quest to rebuild the industry is ensure appropriate infrastructural development at various tourism hotspots across the country. In that spirit, it gives a great pleasure to share with the team that the Semonkong visitor Comfort Facility has been completed and handed over to the private operator. Likewise, Botha-Bothe Information centre at Caledonspoort has also been handed over to the private operator. These facilities will therefore be in operation as soon as operators are ready and members of the public will be advised in due course. Through these facilities, we aim to change the lives of host communities through tourism since the operators will be sourcing some of the tourism related services such as tour guiding and acquisition of handicrafts etc.

On quality assurance, which we believe will also play a pivotal role in restoring and gaining more travellers confidence, a remarkable progress [given the current uncertainty], has been noted whereat about 8 new enrolments in the QUALStar Grading Program have been recorded. Quite significant number of local Tour Guides and Homestay operators from different areas have been capacitated in the areas of tourism business operation and best practices. Visitors are thus encouraged to engage local tour guides to maximise their travel experiences.

It is evident that unlike in the recent past whereat we embraced and leveraged on technology to make travel more convenient and accessible, we now NEED to use technology to make travelling safer, more manageable and possible. It would therefore be a good move to incorporate latest technological innovations in our businesses, mindful of the fact that the competition is going to be fiercer and we need to amplify our services.

I wish to express my gratification to my immediate team (LTDC) and the tourism industry players at large for your commitment in this industry seen from your commendable effort expended in making sure that against all the uncertainties, the tourism industry in Lesotho remains above the situation. To all travellers, your unwavering support can never go unnoticed, we urge all travellers to continue doing tourism for the good of this country.

*"Basotho, Seho se llile, hiking, camping le tsohle tsa bo tsona li fesheneng etsoe kholumolumo ena khale ere koalletse ka matlung. COVID-19 safety protocols ke lelomolo." #VisitYourCountryFirst*

*Sehlabaka Ramafikeng*



## EDITOR'S NOTE

For me, to travel is to live and doing life is all about what I learn and do when I travel. Although we are doing our best of being grounded amid COVID-19 and related protocols which we are bound to observe whenever we travel, this difficult time is reminding us that travel is important for boosting our mental health and personal growth.

Despite this muddle, my take is, the break (*due to the pandemic*) presents to us the gift of time to reconfigure our travel industry and map the road to recovery. As we chart our course towards recovery, we have to bear in mind that not only is tourism a revenue generator but it can also serve as a developmental tool, by way of strengthening local supply chains. This means we now need more innovation and collaboration. We also need to be ready to change our business models where necessary including the manner in which we package our tourism product offering and services to meet new and different demand.

For now, we need to direct our efforts more towards domestic tourism stimulation and respond to the needs of domestic travellers. For international travel, although the pandemic is not yet over, we are slowly beginning to see blue skies and we need to strengthen our efforts in rebuilding travellers' confidence together with tracking and understanding new market trends as well as drivers of travel demand. Our commitment towards building a more resilient industry and sustainable tourism should be at the heart of every enterprise.

Not only should we look forward to travelling again without any restrictions, we should also aim to do it better☺

Manchafalo Motšoeneng  
Editor





## ROLL OUT OF PRO-POOR TOURISM CONCEPT TO HASTEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TOURISM



Hon Minister in delivering his Remarks to the community



LTDC's CEO addressing Semonkong Community

Tourism experiences at various tourism attractions and business ventures are by and large shaped and influenced by participation and engagement of host communities. In 2016, LTDC noted that often these business ventures leave the host communities disgruntled because most of their business models are not designed in a manner that embraces the idea of pro-poor tourism yet they use the local community resources for daily business operations and to enhance their product offerings. Since then, LTDC has been strengthening community participation and beneficiation around the key attractions sites for purposes of enhancing tourist experience and length of stay in the country and around the destination areas.

*Pro-poor tourism is about respecting the places we visit as tourists and the importance of putting the interests of those communities and their environments authentic. At its heart, pro-poor tourism is the commitment to individual and corporate responsibility for implementing the principles of sustainable development and enhancing the linkages between tourism businesses and host communities.*



As part of this initiative, Community Tourism Development Forums (CTDFs) have been established at villages around key attraction sites, mostly managed by LTDC. A CTDF is a committee elected by the community to oversee development projects facilitated by the concerned tourism facility in the area, under the management and guidance of LTDC. It comprises of representatives of all villages involved as well as local administrative authorities such as chiefs and councillors. A 10% share of the total annual gate takings at any of the facilities is set aside and disbursed into the community development fund. The community then decides which developmental project they wish to undertake with the allocated funds and LTDC oversees the implementation by guidance and any other related support required.

In March and April 2021, LTDC disbursed the collected revenue to the communities of Ramokoatsi and Semonkong respectively. An annual (2019/20 because tourism activities were halted for several months during 2020 due to COVID 19) 10% share of the total annual gate takings at Semonkong toll gate to the value of M14 000.00 was awarded to Semonkong Community Tourism Development Forum.

Present at this momentous occasion were The Honorable Minister of Tourism Environment and Culture, Adv. Lekhetho Rakuoane, LTDC's CEO Mr Sehlabaka Ramafikeng among other high ranking Officials for Semonkong Local Government Authorities.

In her introductory remarks, LTDC's Head Product Development and Investment Promotion – Ms. Mamello Morojele noted that Semonkong has been a premier tourist attraction for the longest time owing to the popular Maletsunyane water fall that attracts throngs of visitors from across the globe. She further noted that since the implementation of the collection of gate takings at the boom gate, this is the first time funds were disbursed to the community development fund and for that reason, it was imperative to invite The Honourable Minister to officiate and witness the event.

In his remarks, Mr. Sehlababaka Ramafikeng said tourism is fruitful when communities are involved in its development and therefore acknowledge its importance. "In my view, this translates to decreased cases of vandalism of local infrastructure, positive feedback and increased tourism activity and revenue and more beneficitation to the communities, hence LTDC and The Ministry of Tourism found it befitting to support and oversee the growth of tourism and other

relevant developments in this area", Ramafikeng noted. He encouraged the community to work harder and use the break brought about by the COVID 19 Pandemic as a stepping stone to ensure that the dream of Semonkong as one of the magnificent and preferred tourism hub in the country becomes a reality. "This is an opportunity for us to prepare ourselves and get ready for even better tourism offering as soon as the world is open", he said. "The tourism industry had been under significant pressure in 2020 and hundreds of people were negatively affected by retrenchments,



*SCTDG Chairperson, Mr. Lekhula Ntai*



*Mr. Nqheku Matolo addressing Ramokoatsi community*



*Ramokoatsi CTDF members*



salary cuts and general anxiety regarding their future and economic security. In that view, there are things we need to get right and implementation and promotion of Pro-Poor Tourism approach is among the first to ensure that Basotho's lives are improved through tourism. This will also be our contribution towards the achievement of Sustainable development Goals", He concluded.

On behalf of Semonkong Community Tourism Development Group, the Chairperson Mr. Lekhula Ntai said the community is greatly inspired and pleased because they realize the benefits resulting from tourists' arrivals in their area, unlike in the past where they could just see tourists traveling around and enjoying the beauty without benefit to the host community.

He pleaded the Minister to engage his counterparts from other Ministries to facilitate construction and maintenance of the main road to the fall as well as other essential infrastructure and services, water and electricity were top of the list. "If the access road to the fall remains in the condition it is now or deteriorates due to lack of maintenance, the tourism business will take the beating and we will not realize the full potential of Maletsunyane waterfall", The Chairperson emphasized. In conclusion Mr Ntai noted that they are looking forward to working with LTDC to sensitize and educate the public and Herdboys on Best Practices in Sustainable Tourism Development.

In his remarks the Minister of Tourism Environment and Culture Advocate Lekhetho Rakuoane appealed to Semonkong CTDF to be innovative and come up with fascinating activities that could attract more visitors and promote longer stays in the area. "It would be such a gratification to see Semonkong transforming into a tourism hub. This can only be achieved by you being on the forefront while LTDC and the Ministry offers full support", He said.

The Minister concluded by expressing his gratitude to the community for embracing the idea of tourism and committing to drive tourism to greater heights in Semonkong. He also assured the community that they have full support of the Ministry.

A similar event was held at Ramokoatsi to hand over funds to the value of M8 575.00. The LTDC's Assistant Tourism Officer, Mr Nheku Matolo highlighted that, Ramokoatsi Recreational Park could have done better had it not been because of closure for several months due to COVID 19 pandemic. He however encouraged the community to engage strategies that can further improve the park and lure more visitors for increased revenue. "We are optimistic that when the pandemic is over and/or vaccines are easily available, you will be able to welcome more visitors to the park and receive more revenue to develop your locality", stated Matolo.

The community members from both Ramokoatsi and Semonkong were elated and undertook to work hard and participate more in tourism initiatives. Most of them portrayed unshakable interest in establishment of tourism related businesses such as production handicrafts, rural home stays and site tours to iconic spots in their area. They noted that their localities are rich in a myriad of products that can entice tourists and they are looking forward to uncovering them for exploration by tourists.

## BOTHA BOTHE POLICE SENSITISED ON BEST PRACTICES IN TOURISM: TOWARDS A REPUTABLE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN LESOTHO



The tourism industry has been ground to a halt early 2020, with people around the world finding themselves venturing no further than their local essential services and supplies outlets. Now with governments gradually easing travel restrictions and tourism reopening, we are optimistic that tourism in Lesotho will eventually pick up. However, the competition for winning tourists will be fierce and among others, safety, security and good customer care/service at a destination remain the foundation for winning and attracting more tourists for a successful growth of tourism.

In its efforts to intensify safety and good customer service, LTDC regularly holds educational sessions for different publics. In this regard, a workshop was held, in the early weeks of the winter season, for 29 (twenty nine) Botha Bothe Police whereat Police Officers were educated on how to deal with tourists and serve tourists in a manner that indorses hospitality. This was done in anticipation that Botha Bothe is home to Lesotho's only skiing facility and more visitors are anticipated to visit the district during the winter season and should experience the best hospitality.

The main subject of discussion was how to communicate effectively with customers, how to create a positive impression and why safety and security of tourists is important. The seminar was rewarding as most of the participants contributed in the discussions and sought clarifications for specific scenarios that they usually encounter.

While addressing the participants the Public Relations Officer (PRO) –Mr. Molapo Matela urged the participants to extend all possible assistance to the visitors so that positive perception about Lesotho could be created in both domestic and international arena. Matela advocated for tourism ambassadorship and advised the Police to show enthusiasm and learn more on tourism attractions in the country.

“Safety and security of tourists is essential for a destination striving to improve its reputation among visitors and this could be achieved if police, the community, private sector and government all join forces,” the PRO emphasized. “If part of a destination shows some doubt in terms of safety and security, the tourists will not be attracted to visit such a destination explained Matela.



In her remarks Senior Superintendent Mpolokeng Shale, the Botha Bothe DISPOL, lauded LTDC for the workshop, and recommended frequent refresher courses. She echoed the same sentiments and encouraged more collaboration between LTDC and Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) during community gatherings. “The partnership will help in alleviating criminal activities usually perpetrated by various community groups including herd boys”, said the Superintendent.

The DISPOL noted that even though there are still some “never-do-well” police officers, it is not all doom and gloom because she recently received a positive feedback from Afriski Resort Management on hospitable behaviour of the LMPS officers during road traffic operations. The Senior Superintendent further appealed to LTDC to facilitate erection of signage by relevant ministries across the country.

In her remarks, the LTDC’s Public Relations Manager Mrs. Motšoeneng appealed to the Police to employ good communication practices including giving due respect and care in order to build a good rapport while engaging with tourists. “The proper handling of tourists and rendering of quality service to our visitors guarantees more visitors and repeat visits since visitors upon leaving this country will reminisce good memories of destination Lesotho and recommend it to holiday travellers. In turn, Lesotho will receive its fair share of global tourism receipts”, explained the Manager.

“Basotho are renowned for their hospitality and friendliness and should shy away from unsavory behavior such as bribery, intimidation or harassment of travellers which rather taint the image of Lesotho from the travelers’ and investors’ perspectives”, Motšoeneng noted.

The participants thanked LTDC for the workshop and acknowledged that they have gained a wealth of knowledge especially in customer care and undertook to practice what they have learnt.



## LTDC SENSITIZES YOUNG BOURGEONING TOURISM ENTREPRENEURS

Tourism is one of the most promising drivers of growth for the global economy and has a great potential to accelerate progress across the economic sectors. Advancing the next generation of entrepreneurs in tourism by providing opportunity for collaborative inspiration has long been an essential priority for the industry to realize the desired potential.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) established The Entrepreneurs' Network (TEN) within which boot camps under the Enhancing Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development project were organized to train the young entrepreneurs on best practices in business management as well as to sensitize them on available business opportunities in different industries including tourism. A total of 60 young entrepreneurs from all the 10 districts participated and quite a notable number who are business operators in the tourism industry were in attendance.

LTDC took part in this initiative to sensitize the participants on the best practices in tourism business operation as well as available opportunities in tourism for small and medium businesses. The LTDC's Public Relations Manager- 'Manchafalo Motšoeneng during the lecture on tourism illustrated and spelled out various opportunities available in the tourism and hospitality sector that can be considered. Tour guiding, Tour operation, Rural home stay management, Adventure tours & activities and others were among the list. She noted that such opportunities do not require a lot of financial resources for business start-up yet they have a great potential to generate more revenue.

In an interview with one of the participants, a tour operator and a Director of Phumane Tours- Rethabile Phumane said the LTDC's presentation was an eye opener as it uncovered touristic business opportunities that they were not aware of.



*LTDC's PRO during the sessions*

He emphasized the importance of joint ventures among different tourism business operators in order to come with interesting tourism activity packages that can lure more visitors and encourage longer stays at destinations across the country.

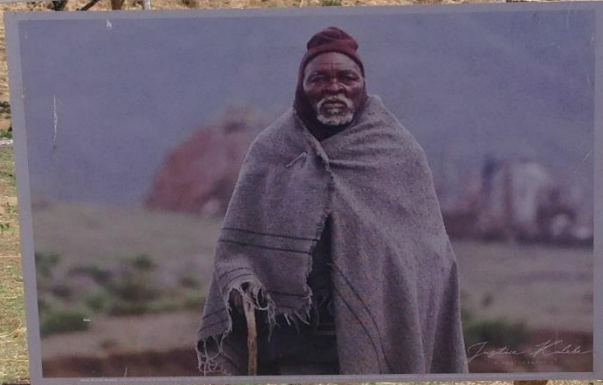
In conclusion, Phumane pleaded the Ministry of Tourism to review tourism policies for consistency in business standards and operation procedures and to promote compliance with the law.



*Participants during the training*



## RENOWNED LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHER SEEKS TO PROMOTE TOURISM AT HA SEKANTŠI



Situated distantly from the A5 road to Semonkong is Ha Sekantši village which sits by the spectacular Thaba-Chitja Mountain, with a population of less than 300. Ha Sekantsi is also home to the cave Motlotloaneng oa Letsie II (formerly a hiding place for King Letsie II) and 'Makhoho Waterfall. Rare animals and birds such as antelopes, porcupines and vultures could make your visit to Ha Sekantsi a memorable one since they still inhabit in the area.

Mr. Justice Kalebe, a renowned local Photographer is forever amazed by the beautiful scenery at Ha Sekantsi whenever he visited his grandmother. He then developed an interest to capture and document the beauty of the village and its people. He later launched a permanent outdoor exhibition which showcases the culture and heritage of the people of Ha Sekantsi, which has attracted local and international tourists.

In response to why he developed the concept of an outdoor exhibition, Mr. Kalebe said “My aspiration is to make Ha Sekantši the next ecotourism destination and to empower the community of Ha Sekantsi through tourism initiatives among others”. Mr. Kalebe further noted that 50% of the revenue collected as gate takings for the outdoor exhibition is donated to the community for developmental projects. “This is mainly to motivate and encourage them to embrace the idea of community development through tourism”, added Kalebe.

“We are hoping to partner with LTDC in carrying out sustainable tourism projects for the community”, Noted Kalebe. He also indicated that their immediate project is to find means to develop tour guiding skills, establish pony trekking routes and crafts making as a start.

In 2018, Mr. Kalebe and his wife ‘Mrs. ‘Makopano Kalebe established a foundation - Possible Dream Foundation (PDF). The objective of this foundation is to empower and strengthen the community of Ha Sekantši and to encourage them to engage in collective community development activities with a view to change their perceptions towards community development initiatives as well as to instil accountability.

The first project under the PDF is the construction of a learning centre at Ha Sekantsi village. In October 2020, a sod turning event in a form of a tree planting activity was held at Ha Sekantsi village. This event was a collaborative effort between the community members, Members of the Lesotho Jeep Legends and Possible Dream Foundation.



*Part of outdoor exhibition at Ha Sekantsi*





The gala was graced by the presence of Lesotho Mounted Police representative, Makhoalipane Council representative, Village Chief, Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC), and Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTCC) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Training and the surrounding villagers.

Mrs. Kalebe in her remarks highlighted that she was immensely touched by the plight of the villagers especially children who have to walk about 2 hours to get to the school. For that reason, her Foundation (PDF) facilitated support from Rise International which was also supported financially by J. Portelli Project from Malta, to build a footbridge that connects Ha Sekantsi to the main road. Mrs Kalebe further indicated that their vision is to construct a community learning centre for pre-primary, primary scholars as well as vocational school for herders and adults without basic education. "The vocational training curricula will include training in tour guiding, sewing, crafts and photography mentorships" explained Mrs Kalebe.

Speaking on behalf of Lesotho Jeep Legends, Mr Seabata Tutuoane said they received a request from Possible Dream Foundation to extend a helping hand in fundraising for the construction of a community learning centre at Ha Sekantši and in their view, it was befitting to support the initiative as their contribution to the improvement of the lives of Basotho. He noted that they have already started accumulating funds for the procurement of building materials and encouraged other stakeholders to support in whichever way possible.

The LTDC's Public Relations Officer- Molapo Matela lauded Possible Dream Foundation and Lesotho Jeep Legends, crediting their initiatives to be in sync with the corporation's domestic tourism concept coined under the mantra "Visit your country First". "Sacrificing time on your busy schedule and traveling to the village, mingling, enjoying traditional cuisine and camping overnight means a lot to the community because you will leave behind financial footprints", says Matela."

The last activity for the day was traditional performances by the villagers after which visitors and villagers were treated to traditional dishes.



*Mr. Kalebe at the outdoor exhibition area*



# SEMONKONG HORSE RACING – A DOMESTIC TOURISM STIMULATION AFFAIR



It is absolutely captivating how the horses behave, their ability to coordinate and how they relate with their masters. Horses have since time immemorial been used in Lesotho for cultural activities, transportation, business transaction, policing, in sports and recreational activities and in war fields, perhaps because of their preeminent skills and at the ready tactic. It is not all about this equine animals, they also have the potential to contribute massively to the tourism industry in Lesotho. Equine tourism though not fully developed, has since been the centre of attraction for destination Lesotho.

This is evident from equestrian events and shows that are regularly hosted across the country by different Basotho communities and organizations including being a major activity during national iconic celebratory events such as King's Birthday and Independence Day.

Since 2005, Semonkong community has been consistent with development of this forte. One may wonder how this is related to tourism. The main catch here is, equestrian events attract spectators and horse fanatics from every corner, to experience this thrilling sport that is horseback racing. Since some participants and fans come from far ends of the country or from abroad, they require accommodation from the host town, thus boosting the hospitality sector. Further, both domestic and international tourism are promoted and the attractions around the event venue gain popularity for future visitation. Artisan businesses are also benefactors since they generate revenue from the sale of artefacts.



The smiles on their (the visitors) thrilled faces as they rode along and manoeuvred the rugged terrain of the 'Maletsunyane valley canopied by the tall trees and indigenous shrubs that are unique to the area; made it clear that horse-riding from the tourism perspective is a magical blend of nature and glee atop the horse back.

It's not all, betting has also been incorporated as a side game whereby jockeys and spectators bet among themselves. According to them, individual choice for a horse depends on its "cool" name, and the horse's colour. Some bettors are very analytical and consider the horses' racing history before placing their bets. Their system of betting is a simple one which involves just three categories being; a win, a place and a show. In a win, your horse has to be in the 1st position and you win, in a place, if your horse finishes 1st or 2nd you win and in a show, your horse has to be in 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place for you to win. On the other hand, spectators marvel at the elaborate decoration of horses and admire the tripling and trotting of horses. Deep roar from men and ululating from women becomes the crux of the occasion as they cheer their horses and jockeys during the race.

LTDC regularly supports Semonkong Community in this noble initiative, thus sponsors with prize money for the winning horses. Speaking on behalf of the organizing committee Mr. Molomo Mohale expressed their gratitude to LTDC for its unwavering support rendered over the years. "With the support from LTDC, we are committed to developing this sport further to make it the crowd puller for tourism to reach greater levels in Semonkong". Declared Mohale.

The Kingdom in the Sky (Lesotho) always has very pleasant surprises up its sleeves, Semonkong is one of the many unexpected high spots in Lesotho; it is home to the epic Maletsunyane water fall; the highest single drop water fall (192m) in the world. The landmark in the area is also the highest (204m) commercial abseiling in the world as recorded in the Guinness book of world records. A visit to Semonkong will have you treated to a myriad of recreational activities including but not limited to fly-fishing, bird-watching, abseiling, hiking, Maluti-beer drinking, donkey pub-crawling and jaw-dropping scenery.







## REASONS TO TRAVEL LOCALLY NOW MORE THAN BEFORE

### CONTRIBUTE IN REBUILDING TOURISM

Cutting out the airfares will save you enough to spend more days away from home after being locked up. your travel will be for a good cause, rebuilding your own through your support to local businesses and communities.

### MORE THAN ONE FOR THE SAME AMOUNT

The price of one big international trip (that exposes you to the pressure of a "lifetime holiday" and may not quite live up to the expectation) can be cut into many holidays locally, spread throughout the year.

### LOCAL IS FAMILIAR

No new language, no culture shock (COVID-19 protocols have become a norm already), same food experiences. You know exactly how it works in Lesotho. The only difference is, you get totally new discoveries that add to your description of home.

### YOU BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY

By spending more of your money here in Lesotho, you are increasing the flow of revenue in this country and boosting local business. Choose to spend at smaller family/community owned businesses and help improve the lives of Basotho.

### YOU HAVE FUN AND NEW PERSPECTIVE

You can take friends/family along and get more relaxed experience all around. Seeing Lesotho from the eyes of fellow citizens and listening to those lockdown local stories will always give you a fresh perspective.

### NO CROSS BORDER PROTOCOLS

Cross border travel amid COVID-19 is tedious as many countries have introduced new travel protocols, so local travel is definitely a major plus.

### YOU DO NOT NEED A PASSPORT

A lot less planning needs to go into local travel - No visas (well except from family). No passport control points. in fact no one is interested in the validity of your passport.

### LET'S MAKE THE HIDDEN GEMS OF LESOTHO FAMOUS

Take nice shots as you get around, share those new discoveries with friends and family to inspire more travel and even more new discoveries, tag us [#visitlesotho](#)

[#maskUp](#), [#sanitize](#), [#getAround](#)

*Enjoy the grandeur & authenticity of Lesotho*





## 54<sup>TH</sup> INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATED AT SEMONKONG HIS MAJESTY LED THE CLEANING ACTIVITY



*His Majesty the King picking debris from the stream*

The Ministry of Home Affairs extended a call to Basotho nationwide to celebrate Lesotho's 54<sup>th</sup> Independence Day by cleaning their surroundings. A cleaning exercise at Semonkong was organized for Maseru district whereat His Majesty King Letsie III, The Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Moeketsi Majoro, Deputy Prime Minister – Hon. Mathibeli Mokhothu, Minister of Tourism Environment and Culture - Hon. Lekhetho Rakuoane, Commander of Lesotho Defence Force - Lieutenant General - Mojalefa Letsoela, CEO of Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation – Sehlabaka Ramafikeng, High ranking government officials and Representatives of Diplomatic Missions in Lesotho were in attendance.

In his opening address, the Honourable Prime Minister said the government of Lesotho launched a cleaning campaign on the 18th September 2020 in Maseru dubbed "Operation Hloekisa". The idea of celebrating the 54th Independence day at Semonkong by way of a cleaning activity was to further promote "Operation Hloekisa" in an effort to protect the environment. In conclusion, he indicated that the cabinet ministers were spearheading similar cleaning activities across the country and pleaded with all Basotho to protect the environment. "We need to keep our villages, towns and cities clean and hygienic, both for this generation and generations to come", He said.

His Majesty King Letsie III in his remarks said the intention of the activity was to advocate for clean environment and enhance public environmental awareness. "Equipping every Mosotho with the necessary environmental knowledge will help in mitigating the effects of climate change through environmental restoration and conservation, which will translate to a healthy nation and livestock". Said His Majesty.

His Majesty appealed to the herd boys to conserve grazing land and wetlands so that there is enough grassland for the cattle and enough water for the people. "We hope that with this initiative we will plant a seed in our people that the environment should be conserved and that similar initiatives will be done regularly henceforth". He said. His Majesty concluded by saying that all that has been said and requested, should be done from the place of pride not necessity.



*The Honourable Prime Minister delivering opening remarks*





Following those short remarks from the King and principals, the event went into a full swing after His Majesty the King picked up a garbage picker together with a refuse bag and initiated a cleaning process. Collectively, the participants picked litters and gathered garbage which was later collected by the district council. There was an aura of ecstasy among the host community as some of them saw the King for the first time.

In an interview with Participants who ardently took part in the event, they expressed their gratitude for the initiative. They said the event served the purpose of making people aware of keeping a clean environment and thereby transforming the country towards cleanliness and healthy nation.



## THE MINISTER OF TOURISM ON PROMOTION OF “OPERATION HLOEKISA” MOVEMENT



Hon. Minister with Katse area Chiefs and Councillors just before the cleaning activity

Still in the spirit of safeguarding environment through “Operation Hloekisa” campaign, The Honourable Minister of Tourism, Environment and Culture, Adv. Lekhetho Rakuane, in collaboration with LTDC led the cleaning activity at Katse in October 2020.

In his opening remarks, the Minister informed members of community in attendance about the “Operation Hloekisa” concept and highlighted that it seeks to enhance the government’s environmental conservational efforts. “This activity fits within the ongoing “Keep Lesotho clean” message that is aired on national radios and television, which forms part of the agenda by The Ministry of Tourism and LTDC at any public platform and shall complement the efforts being made in improving environmental and sanitation conditions in rural and urban areas”. The Minister said.

He also averred that Community Members should always be mindful of the fact that the mission for cleanliness has a beginning, but no end and therefore they need to commit to and uphold the idea of clean environment in Katse area. “Katse has become one of the most attractive places for tourists due to developments made under the Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

In that case clean environment is inevitably a prerequisite to pleasant experiences for visitors to this area, thus we should keep Katse clean and conserve the

Indigenous plants and rare animal species found in this area”, Said the Honorable Minister. He further noted that keeping the environment clean is also beneficial in restoration of infrastructure. “Removing debris, garbage, litter, can help keep our roads in good conditions and safe”, He noted.

“I am very disheartened by the reports I received about some members of the community who uproot and harvest some of the native plants from the mountain ranges for commercial purposes. This behaviour has to stop and we need to collectively implement a well-coordinated and effective effort and strategy to curb this problem”, The Honorable Minister asserted.

As a starter, following the cleaning activity, members of the community were requested by the Honorable Minister to join him to transplant some of the *Pelargonium sidoides* (Khoara) that was confiscated from some people who had harvested it from the nearby mountain. He further pleaded to the local authorizes (Area Chiefs and Councillors) to oversee the implementation of effective measures to protect the environment and conservation of native plants in Katse area, highlighting that, if well conserved, the native plants can form part of tourism products that the community can leverage on to generate revenue.





“The demand for visiting landscapes that have a wide variety of indigenous plants and animal species such as Katse is on the rise for a number of reasons including but not limited to academic research and sightseeing, some people may have heard about certain plants but may have not seen them, therefore they may decide to come to this area to see such plants. This then become an opportunity for the community to generate income through a coordinated and well managed manner”, The Minister concluded.



HON MINISTER  
TRANSPANTING UPROOTED  
NATIVE PLANTS



THE FAMOUS KHOARA  
(PELARGONIUM SIDOIDES)



MINISTER SHOWING HARVESTED  
KHOARA.



## DISCOVERY OF HA MAPAPE SAND DUNES, A CALL FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Developing a new tourism product involves creating value for everybody involved. Following a new discovery of sand dunes at Ha-Mapape village in Leribe, the Ministry of Tourism Environment and Culture and LTDC undertook a trip to Ha-Mapape on a mission to sensitize the community about the relevance of this treasure (sand dunes) in tourism development, how well it can be protected and used for the benefit of the community at large and to encourage the community to establish a tourism development committee which will oversee the development and management of this attraction.



In addressing the Ha-Mapape community, Ms. Mamello Morojele, the Head of Investment Promotion and Product Development Department at LTDC declared that government was making efforts to revive the tourism industry, which was halted by the COVID-19 pandemic, hence their mission to identify domestic tourism sites such as the sand dunes to see how best they could expand tourism diversification and mobilize communities with a view to speed up the industry's recovery. Ms. Morojele also noted that since identification by one of the local tour operators, the Ha-Mapape sand dunes have been attracting scores of travellers who are fascinated by the fact that this attraction is one of a kind in Lesotho and one that we never thought we had. "The neighbouring communities of Ha Mapape, Ha Shepeseli, Ha Mots'oane and Ha Rampai villages should collaborate and appoint representatives from all villages to form the said committee after which LTDC will work closely with the committee to promote this attraction and advice of ways to develop it further in a sustainable manner", Ms. Morojele said.

"There is a need for coordination, collaboration and cooperation among different tourism stakeholders along the tourism value chain, as they can make an enormous positive impact and change lives, if it's done properly" stated Morojele.

Speaking on the same occasion, Khotso Mohapi – Environmental officer from the Ministry of Tourism Environment and Culture emphasized the importance of protecting the sand dunes. "We must carefully consider, maintain and protect our natural environment, so that we can ensure the sustainability for future generations, as well as visitors" said Mohapi.

The Chief of Ha-Mapape, Sempe Mapape revealed that there are other attractions such as caves with bushman's paintings, two at Ha-Mapape and one at Ha-Shepeseli, and a mountain which resembles a train. "The natural assets allow local communities to tell and share amazing stories to visitors and results in economic opportunities", said Mapape. The headman concluded by emphasizing that a concerted advocacy is needed to raise awareness of the importance of our attractions and the need for preservation within local communities.



*Ms Morojele Addressing Ha Mapape community*



## TOURISM AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ROADSHOW AT KATSE SET TO IMPROVE HERDBOYS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS TOURISTS



As part of reputation management strategies, Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation established a community sensitization programme aimed at educating the general public about the concept of tourism, community participation in tourism initiatives and its relevance to improvement of livelihoods as well as the importance of good hospitality towards tourists. Under this initiative, specific messages targeted at different and relevant population groups are communicated through different communication initiatives.

Katse area is one of the most popular tourism spots because of the popular Katse dam. Following a number of tourists' harassment incidences received in the previous years, LTDC regularly sensitizes the Katse area communities on the importance of good hospitality as well as ways in which the communities can benefit from tourists who visit the area. In December 2020, LTDC held roadshows at Ha Rapoeea and Bokong ha Kenene (Katse area). In this occasion, the villagers were sensitized about tourism and its relevance to the transformation of lives to the better, the best practices in tourism, small business opportunities in tourism as well as the importance of embracing the idea of good hospitality towards tourists.

A separate session was held for the Herdboys with a view to sensitize them on the best practices in dealing with tourists wherever they meet them. This was mainly due to the fact that several reports on incidences of tourists' harassment by Herdboys have been received in the past and LTDC seeks to root out that behaviour. The session covered issues on benefits of environmental conservation and encouragement thereof, conduct towards tourists and available small scale opportunities to consider for revenue generation instead of begging from tourists.

In his remarks while addressing the Herdboys, the LTDC's CEO Mr. Sehlabaka Ramafikeng emphasized their value and relevance to the industry. That they are charged with the mammoth responsibility of overseeing the production of dairy products, meats and wool and mohair in the country, commodities which are used for tourists' consumption and for production of crafts which tourists buy. He further noted that over and above their primary responsibilities as Herdboys, they are also charged with overseeing the comfort of tourists who pass by or visit their respective areas of work in the mountains.

"When visitors stop by in this community, their experiences are shaped by the people whom they meet. Their first point of contact are often the Herdboys because most of them like travelling in the mountains. In that case, LTDC views Herdboys across the country as Lesotho's tourism ambassadors and I believe with the information you all received today, you will serve as tourism ambassadors for your areas", averred the CEO. He therefore urged Herdboys to continue being hospitable towards tourists and always aim to put tourists at ease and help them with problems they may encounter or refer them to the relevant authorities to seek assistance help.

To the community, The CEO noted that the tourism industry is packed with a myriad of affordable business opportunities waiting to be tapped by the communities for income generation and job creation. He informed everyone that their interaction with visitors shapes their first impressions and influences the messages and stories shared about their travels in Lesotho. "Every member of this community should strive to paint good picture about Lesotho wherever they go and in whatever they do", Ramafikeng concluded.

Hon. Minister awarding blankets to Herdboys



“With the new developments in the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, prospects are that Katse will attract even more travellers in future, so we should take this opportunity to prepare ourselves and upscale our services so that when the project is complete and more visitors are coming, Katse propels to greater levels in terms of revenue generation and quality services”, Averred the Minister.

Following the educational and sensitization sessions, The Honorable Minister together with the LTDC’s CEO awarded Herdboys with the famous grey Herdboys’ signature blankets, branded with the national tourism logo. “The idea behind awarding of these blankets to Herdboys is to reinforce the ambassadorship role that you play in tourism promotion across the country, thus these blankets should always be a reminder to yourselves that a tourist is a valuable person and should be treated as thus”, Highlighted the CEO.

Speaking on the same event the village head man of Rapoea – Lekula Monaheng conveyed his heartfelt gratitude to LTDC and the Minister of tourism for the gift of blankets to herd boys.

Monaheng echoed the same sentiments and urged the herd boys to refrain from engaging in unbecoming behaviour of harassing visitors as it discourages tourist visits. “Visitors should be given due respect and care so they carry back home unforgettable memories about Kingdom in the sky”, stated the village Chief.

On behalf of Herdboys, Mr. Makhitlela Monaheng in his vote of thanks said in their view, this is a very special appointment which they embrace and will endeavour to uphold the concept of tourism. He also thanked the LTDC for the knowledge imparted to them and acknowledged that, after the session, they have a fresh perception about tourists and therefore committed to protecting tourists and promoting Katse’s beautiful environment and natural resources such as endangered species of plants and animals, pristine crystal-clear waters to mention a few. Mr. Makhitlela concluded by saying that, henceforth, he is going to establish a handicrafts business to make extra cash for his family needs.

The Minister of Tourism, Environment and Culture, Advocate Lekhetho Rakuoane was also in attendance and in his remarks, the Minister urged the community members to protect natural resources. He emphasized that the use of native plants for medicinal purposes and their propagation should go hand in glove. He emphasized that propagation of native plants helps in ensuring that the plants remain available for future generations.

The Minister concluded by urging the villagers to make the tourism a success story at Katse area, which is rich in culture and heritage that can be used to come up with unique cultural activities to entice visitors and promote longer stays at Katse.



LTDC’s CEO awarding blankets to Herdboys





# TOURISM AMBASSADOR TIPS

## 01 Take the lead

- Your leadership and positive experiences that you provide as tourism ambassador will inspire others.
- People may come forward with their own ideas for making the community a welcoming destination or even more attractive.
- Informal networks may grow into formal tourism and economic development strategies.
- Your personal effort may be what it takes to get the ball rolling

## 02 Know your Community

- Develop a thorough knowledge of local activities, events and attractions.
- Make a list of interesting things to do in your area. Better yet, make it a community effort, work with other stakeholders.
- Be keen to continuously discover something new about your community and develop a deep sense of pride in your locality.

## 03 Stock up visitor information

Organizers of local events or festivals may have brochures or flyers that you can distribute to your starter. With examples on hand, its easy to convince and assure visitors on product offering in the locality.

## 04 Take pride in providing help & service to others

- Be courteous and friendly.
- Greet in a welcoming manner.
- Ask how you can help. Listen to them and make them feel important.
- A positive cheerful attitude is pivotal to a great first impression

### **Tourism Ambassadorship benefits**

Promotes a common, shared goal of enhancing visitor experience

Increases the economic impact of tourism - *visitors stay longer & spend more if well informed.*

Enhances the current product while building the future

Promotes partnership and collaboration

Builds a positive brand & overall destination image





The Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC) in its endeavour to stimulate tourism investment in the country, through a tender process, has Identified and selected two (2) companies for management and operation of Botha-Bothe Visitor Comfort facility and the newly constructed Semonkong Visitor Comfort Facility (VCF). The selected operator for Semonkong VCF is Maletsunyane Adventures under the stewardship of Mr. Bokang Kheekhe who will operate the facility for 20 years. The 25 year operation and management contract for Botha-Bothe VCF has been awarded to Southern Express, under the leadership of Mr. Motlatsi and Mrs. 'Mabereng Russell.

In an occasion held at LTDC on the 11th May 2021 for signing of contracts, the LTDC's acting CEO, Mr Sehlabaka Ramafikeng, congratulated 'Maletsunyane Adventures and Southern Express. He noted that he is very optimistic about the success of these facilities. He also expressed his gratitude for the fact that they have been awarded to local investors whom in his view, will strive to turn Semonkong and Botha-Bothe into tourism hubs.

Mr. Ramafikeng also urged the operators to work closely with the host communities, emphasizing the significance of the community involvement in tourism development. "For tourism to thrive at any location, it is critical to build a symbiotic relationship with the host community, LTDC has already levelled the ground at community level and all you need to do is to engage in responsible tourism partnerships with the concerned communities and other relevant stakeholders to enhance your services and tourism product offering", Ramafikeng said. He concluded by pointing out to the Awardees that their appending signatures on the contracts is an undertaking to adhere to the terms and conditions stipulated in the contracts.

In an interview with LTDC's Head Product Development and Investment Promotion, Ms. Mamello Morojele on modus operandi, she indicated that the investors are expected to contribute 2% of revenue collected from hosting events

as contribution to community development fund. She also noted that for Semonkong, the expectation is that within 3 years of operation, the investor should have developed a zip line and a suspension bridge which will enhance outdoor adventure tourism offering in the area. "Maletsunyane Adventures has also undertaken to develop children's theme park and operationalize the performance arena for outdoor and indoor events, the view point and photo booth", Morojele added.

On behalf of Maletsunyane Adventures, the Founder and Director, Bokang conveyed his gratitude to LTDC for being trusted with the responsibility of running Semonkong Visitors Comfort Facility and to contribute in Semonkong tourism development. Mr. Kheekhe indicated that he plans to build direct and indirect employment opportunities for the community of Semonkong.

"My long term plan is to create opportunities for local enterprise development, support local services and skills development. My take is, value chain from pony trekking, crafts making, cooking of traditional cuisine and rural home stays should be at the heart of tourism promotion in Semonkong", Stated Kheekhe. "However, an access road to the VCF and the Maletsunyane falls needs to be constantly maintained in order to successfully attract many tourists", pleaded Kheekhe.

Mr. Motlatsi on behalf of Southern Express said he feels so honoured to have been offered the opportunity and entrusted to run the Botha Bothe VCF. "I am mostly motivated by passion and patriotism I have for this country, Botha Bothe has potential to be the best tourism hub and I endeavour to open the breath-taking scenery, culture and heritage to the world", averred Russell.

"We are already developing programs that will be tailor made to prompt community empowerment and strengthen tourism development in the destination", stated Russell.





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