



# BUILDING LESOTHO

NEWS LETTER  
ISSUE 2



## Note from the Editor **Mpho Sefali**

I cannot be more pleased to announce the 2nd Edition of Building Lesotho- an LSP Construction newsletter. What started out as a concept has now become a tangible publication that we are confident will grow from strength to strength, continuing to deliver LSP stories to our staff and stakeholders.

Whilst the challenges that come from the Covid 19 crisis are far from allayed, in this issue we have decided to focus more on the positives. We look back into the story of LSP and learn from the founding partners how what started as just a dream has now become a giant that continues to transform the landscape of Lesotho.

We also profile our Managing Director Mr. Louis Fourie who in 2019 took over reins from Mr. Andre Thabo Bothma, and is now steering the LSP ship through exciting and challenging times.

Also, in this issue we learn of the technological advances being fully utilised within the company, and of course more tidbits and anecdotes from our departments and staff. Likhomo!



**BL.**

## Note from the Chief Operating Officer **Sam Ntene**

Just like that the financial year has come to an end and what a year it has been! 2020 came with challenges that none of us could have foreseen or prepared for. The Covid-19 crisis not only affected the way we do work but staff morale as well and it is understandable. Being classified as an essential service during the second lockdown meant our employees had to keep on working despite the concerns they had for their safety during a time when the Covid 19 cases kept rising and social media, newspapers and other media were filled with announcements of deaths. However, our employees bravely soldiered on and it is for these reason that LSP Construction has grown over the years, the willingness of our staff members to go boldly where many are afraid to tread in order to deliver reliable and excellent service and for that, we say thank you.

It was not all doom and gloom however, this past financial year we saw good progress with the Polihali Diversion Tunnels currently under construction for LHDA Phase II proving our ability to triumph even during the most unprecedented of times. The only way to perfectly sum up this past financial year would be to borrow from Dickens "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times."

Whilst we are still very much in the midst of challenges brought about by Covid 19, as a company we are the better for it. We have had to grow and adapt tremendously in a short period of time and here at LSP Construction we firmly believe that it is only through challenges that we are moulded to become our best selves.

To our staff members, industry partners, suppliers as well as the public we are as always thankful for your support and as we usher in this new financial year, we are truly excited to see what the new year brings.



**BL.**

# A Legacy etched in

# brick and mortar

## – The story of LSP Construction.

The story of LSP construction starts in the late 70s, 1976 to be exact when a determined trio comprised of brothers Abe and Danny Bothma later joined by George Monaheng invested in a 75% stake in what was at the time Lesotho Steel Products, a company owned by LNDC which was being run by Clifford Trading. As Monaheng describes it, he had been part of Lesotho Steel Products merely by being in the employ of LNDC but instead of leaving when his employer left, he was advised by Danny Bothma to stay behind, luring him with the promise of shares. It was the best offer he had ever gotten and this brotherly conspiratorial relationship that developed between him and Danny Bothma would result in a construction giant that would change the face of Lesotho and bring all of them years of victories and some challenges.

Theirs was a dynamic trio and they had what must have seemed somewhat lofty dreams especially as back then the major players in the construction industry were mainly foreign owned companies and not many Basotho owned companies could hope to compete. Danny Bothma recounts the story with more than a little mirth. "When we started, we were mainly in the manufacturing of steel for big construction

companies, it was challenging because we could only get awarded subcontracts and were therefore at the mercy of the whims of the main contractors." He says. That they would end up becoming the biggest construction company in Lesotho could not have been further from their mind.

These sentiments are echoed by Monaheng, for his part Mr George Monaheng is an avid storyteller who walked us through the 40 plus year journey with anecdotes and grandfatherly advice. He speaks of a time during the formative years when they realised, they could not compete against big companies, so they ended up diversifying into paints, which did not work out as well. One thing that the trio was determined never to do was give up. So, when paints did not work out, they tried something else, furniture manufacturing to be exact. So, they started tendering for the manufacturing of furniture for schools.

Their biggest competitor in this was Selkol which had a long history of working on these projects. Things began to turn around for the company when they won their first tender for the manufacturing of school furniture. Mr Monaheng says they kept winning tender after tender and were so busy that they had to work in 24-hour shifts until the day came when they lost out and the tender was awarded to a different company. "We were crestfallen but those are the challenges that come in business, it was back to the drawing board to regroup and try again".

With the passing of years came new technology and Mr Danny Bothma says he is quite impressed with new technological advances in the field of construction "In our heyday everything was done by hand, men lifted steel by hand, after a hard day one came back home with calloused

hands and an aching back" he laughs. He does however admit that these new developments led to quicker and better work and he is excited about the changing face of construction and what it means for future projects. He tells us that he himself has adjusted to new ways of doing business that were not available back then and he is very much enjoying the flexibility they bring especially in these unprecedented Covid-19 times. Speaking of Covid 19 Mr Bothma saddens a little, "We were not as a company prepared for Covid 19. Neither was the industry, the country and the whole world and as an employer I was sad to lose good employees when lockdowns happened, but I am proud to say that LSP construction learnt very much from the first wave and has geared up to protect jobs and employees in the event of a third wave".

Both Monaheng and Bothma admit to feeling more than a little pride in the way that what started as their dream has changed the landscape of Lesotho and how they have managed to empower many Basotho. Indeed, they should give themselves a congratulatory pat on the back, one cannot walk down Maseru, the capital without seeing towering structures that are testament to their legacy. How weird, Monaheng remarks that when we started, we were not interested in buildings, but our legacy will be remembered in buildings. And what legacy it is, one etched in bricks and mortar which will endure for generations to come.

The two businessmen agree that their biggest regret is that one of the trio Mr Abe Bothma is not around to see what they have carved as he passed on in October 2010 but he would no doubt be proud of the result of that kinship that began in the 70s.

Speaking of generations, the reins of LSP were handed over to Mr Thabo Bothma, Danny's son who joined the company in 1992 and ascended to the Managing Director position in the next two years. It was under his stewardship that LSP moved to a category A contractor that continues to change the construction field in Lesotho.

**BL.**





# ▶ Steering LSP Construction Forward



While it is virtually impossible to talk about LSP Construction without thinking about Mr. Andre Thabo Bothma who has steered LSP Construction through a series of landmark changes for over 24 years, Mr Bothma has since 2017 handed reins to the equally high profile, experienced and capable hands of Mr Louis Fourie who has now been serving as MD for two years.

## Profile - Managing Director

LSP's Managing Director, Louis Fourie is a 48-year-old father of two daughters - Lu-Mari (15) and Elsje (13) - who has been happily married to Anne-Marie for 22 years. He is a keen endurance athlete.

Mr Fourie started his career as a Civil Engineer with Consulting Engineers back in 1997 before he came to Lesotho and registered as a Professional Project Manager in 2009. He worked for Aurecon in the same year under the MCA Health Improvement Project before joining LSP Construction in 2015 as Contracts Manager until 2018 when he was appointed the Managing Director of LSP.

He describes his experiences at the helm of LSP as "certainly challenging, but also exciting". By far the greatest challenge for him has been steering the LSP ship through the uncharted waters of the Covid-19 era. Mr Fourie says the pandemic came at a time

when the construction sector was already struggling with infrastructure development in the country.

"Even before Covid-19, the Construction Industry was going through a very difficult time with inadequate

infrastructure development. Then Covid-19 and the lockdown came last year and the biggest challenge by far was to steer the LSP ship through those troubled waters.

"It was during this period that we certainly had to make the most difficult business decisions ever in a very short time. LSP is surviving the storm and we are, without a doubt, leaner, but meaner," he adds looking back at the past year.

Among the milestones in his career since joining LSP, Mr Fourie cites the Let'seng Workshop Complex and the Polihali Diversion Tunnels as among the most prominent.

"The Let'seng Workshop Complex was one of them where we had to cast concrete throughout winter at 3 000m altitude and sub-zero temperatures. In August 2018 we could only work for 10 days due to strong winds yet LSP successfully delivered a state-of-the-art mechanical workshop despite all the challenges.

"Another very interesting project is the Polihali Diversion Tunnels currently under construction for LHDA Phase II where LSP is part of the SCLC Joint Venture building two tunnels of just about 1km each. Despite a setback caused by floods which caused severe damage to the works and equipment in late January 2021, the project is progressing well again.

Mr Fourie says among LSP's

short-term goals is the drive to achieve ISO 9001 quality accreditation, while in the long term the company seeks to diversify further into other fields of construction to better spread their risk.

"Very simply, to deliver a quality project to a satisfied client," is Mr Fourie's motto when asked to define his view of success in the country's construction industry.

As the captain of the LSP ship Mr Fourie has a lot of strategic plans up his sleeve, especially given that the construction giant has for decades witnessed exponential growth while being largely run as a family enterprise.

"The company was run for a long time largely as a family-owned business. I want to change that style of management to a corporate style of management. LSP Construction will have to diversify more in order to grow and we are currently considering other options available," he says.

Being a home-grown and responsible corporate citizen, LSP runs several social responsibility programmes around the country across different sectors.

"LSP has been running a feeding scheme at Ha Moletsane for a number of years now and in 2017 we provided clean water to each household in the village, and established a health post with two full-time nurses, complete with electricity and water pumps. The total expenditure to date on this programme exceeds M2 million. Our aim is to develop the health post to a full-fledged health care centre over time," Mr Fourie states.

Since 2017, LSP has also been working in partnership with BEDCO, to run an entrepreneurship programme for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

**BL.**





Committed to the development of Lesotho.



"..as a strong and unified team we will conquer!" - Louis Fourie



Human Resource Department



IT Department



Polihali Diversion Tunnel (October 2020)





# THE FUTURE IS HERE

## LSP CONSTRUCTION'S MOVE TOWARDS A GIS FOCUSED APPROACH

Tsépo Machobane

No one can deny that construction is one of the most important industries in Lesotho and when one thinks of construction in Lesotho LSP Construction comes to mind. While we pride ourselves on tradition, we also seek to constantly embrace new and innovative ideas and that is why the company is leaning more and more towards the use of innovative IT tool e.g., Microsoft project management, AutoCAD and GIS which are making it much easier and reliable to manage projects.

### What is GIS?

GIS is "A geographic information system (GIS) that integrates hardware, software, and data for capturing, managing, analysing, and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information". GIS provides a useful tool for managing and coordinating many project elements such as, project tracking, cost estimating and site selection. Google Earth, a tool widely used by many, is a form of GIS, but at an extremely simplified level, lacking many of the robust analytical tools of more sophisticated GIS applications.

GIS has not been widely used in managing projects, but recently engineers have started to think about the GIS concept. The GIS can generate graphic maps, which could be very useful for engineers, including charts, bar charts, histograms, and scatter plots. It can also assist logistics

departments to properly manage their fleets and cut down on fuel costs by properly planning routes and times for the movement of their vehicles. It even assists surveyors by adding another layer of information to what surveying reveals. These days it is used frequently for natural resource management, developing simulations for things like water retention, and soil erosion. It assists engineers working to design and build tunnels, sewer systems, and highways. GIS is used by professionals charged with locating potholes that need repair, and land that is available for development, estimating stormwater runoff, inventorying utility poles, managing utility networks, and creating subsurface 3D utility models.

As GIS is one of the fast-emerging fields being utilised in various engineering projects, its complete potential to the construction industry has not been realised yet. GIS is generally not being associated with construction industry; therefore, professionals need education and training on the use of GIS technologies in construction. There are big opportunities to start utilizing GIS well beyond this which should hopefully come to fruition in the near future.

**BL.**

# Construction in the *DIGITAL* age

Thakane Rethabile Shale



With the onset of Covid-19 and with the major advancements that have been made in the technology sphere most businesses have had no choice but to move into digitizing or be left behind. Over the past couple of decades many companies that failed to keep up with the global digitization trend have collapsed. Photography giant Kodak is one such example and with a pandemic sweeping across the world many businesses have also had to adapt or die. Another example of a business that opted to focus more on their traditional way with very little done to promote their digital content is South African Publishing House Associated Media which had a stable of household names such as Cosmopolitan and House and Leisure behind it.

While both of these companies tried to get into digitization one tried too late and the other did too little. The lesson to be learned here is that it is not just

enough to digitize but it must be timely, and companies need to do more than the bare minimum or risk obscurity and perhaps even closure.

In June 2017, The World Economic Forum in conjunction with Boston Consulting Group hosted a workshop in Berlin and by using the "Thinking inside new boxes approach" came up with three different to predict the future of construction and while the impact of full-on digitization cannot as yet be predicted due to the speed at which new products are being developed one thing that can be agreed on is that digitization certainly means the industry will never be the same.

This begs the question however if traditional businesses like construction for example will also benefit from digitization and what has been dubbed the 4th Industrial revolution. For many years, the

construction industry has operated as it always has, being labour intensive and while this has been adequate, even profitable, perhaps the introduction of new technological advances can serve not only to cut costs but also to increase revenue. The connectivity that comes with the digital revolution has already transformed many of the supporting departments across the construction industry. Asset and fleet management for example has benefited from tracking apps making it as easy as logging in to a computer to know where which truck or equipment is at any given time. The ability to track vehicles means less unauthorised detours and therefore less frivolous spend on fuel but it also comes with the added advantage of predicting traffic trends on routes meaning delivery times can be better estimated.

Another benefit of the digital age that is impacting the bottom line is web-based meeting applications which have significantly cut travel costs. With this cut on travel comes the added benefit of less carbon emissions. Digitization is therefore not only good for profitability but also for the environment as well. Not only has running an environmentally friendly construction site become easier than before there are applications that aid in the efficacy of the environmental departments making the advent of digitization harmonious with a greener more environmentally friendly way of doing business.

The way work is performed has already changed in the past few years, things like drone surveying, digital mapping and building visualization has made things not only easier but more efficient. Many worry that these advances will spell a downsizing in human capital especially for an industry that has traditionally been labour intensive and that may very well be true. For those with some forethought though now is the perfect time to upskill so as to take advantage of the looming changes sweeping across the industry and indeed the whole world of work.

While it is easy to see what digitization means for the supporting functions of the construction business the question remains; "what about the



core aspects of the built environment, after all buildings of concrete and mortar cannot be replaced with an application, or can they?" If current working trends are anything to go by then perhaps. With more people working from home and companies switching to flexi hours then there is going to be very little need for huge corporate offices. Online shopping is also gaining traction with a growth rate of 19% as compared to instore retailing which grew by 5% from 2013 to 2018 meaning there is less need to build malls and stores, the need to build cinemas and other entertainment centres will also decrease as services like Netflix and Showmax offer the same shows in the comfort of one's own home. It is however not all doom and gloom for the industry. More time spent at home means that people will very much need better residential structures as they will be spending more time there, digital infrastructure building will also likely see a surge as more and more facilities need to be brought even to the remotest of areas to enable usage. Goods brought via E-commerce still need to be delivered and this will obviously mean that road infrastructure will need to be improved.

Rather than kill the construction industry the 4th industrial revolution means construction companies should instead shift their focus to infrastructure that supports the changing face of the world.

**BL.**



From the Department of

## Health and Safety

Phakiso Ranoana



The Covid-19 crisis has confronted societies with unprecedented challenges to both their economies and health systems.

I encourage staff to continue compliance to Health and Safety policies and regulations.

Let us continue our practices of:

- Discussing COVID 19 effects and control measures at all meetings.
- Screening daily and testing where necessary
- Keeping social distance
- Using sanitizer or washing hands with water with soap as per the guidelines of WHO and Ministry of Health.

LSP is committed to continue investing in health and safety improvements and care for the overall well-being of employees. This provides benefits not only to the company, but more to us the employees.

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## Employee Feature

### One on One

with Nimase Tséane



Nimase Tséane (30), is one of LSP's younger employees, working as a Foreman at the Polihali Dam project. Nimase joined LSP Construction as a labourer six years ago, at the age of 25. He hails from Ha Manteko Thaba-Bosiu in Qacha's Nek. He is a married father of one son.

#### **Q. How was the experience of working for one of Lesotho's biggest construction companies as one of the youngest employees?**

It has been the most amazing experience. I have grown from strength to strength since joining the company and gained valuable experience.

#### **Q. What drove you as a young person?**

All my life I dreamed of becoming a useful citizen in my country. I longed to contribute towards the socio-economic growth and development of Lesotho, and so my determination came from knowing that if I remained focused and passionate in my career and responsibilities my dreams would be fulfilled.

#### **Q. What could you say is your greatest wish for the construction industry in Lesotho?**

I witnessed LSP's transform an empty rural landscape to a thriving city dotted with an array of high-rise buildings. I wish the industry continues to develop local skills, which will soon lead to less need of foreign skill set.

#### **Q. Any words for young people in the industry?**

Respect for self and others, humility, and confidence go a long way towards building a note worthy career.

**BL.**

## Best Employee

LSP recognizes its human resources as the most important asset. As a result, the company offersemployee value proposition which includes employee recognition and rewards for the highlyperforming employees. With our unique organizational culture, we are able to attract and retain talents which in turn enhances our organizational performance.

We wish to thank all staff. You have all shown commitment, passion, and the desire to excel in your different duties. I have full confidence that if we all continue to perform our responsibilities, if nothing is neglected, and if the best commitment is put forth, we shall continue to conquer against all odds.

Thapelo Mateisi (Human Resources Manager).  
The season's best performing employee is Mr. Lehlohonolo Suhlane.

**Position:** Steel Structural and Erector Foreman

**ENG Date:** 01.Sept. 2004

#### **Projects completed:**

1. Letseng Recovery Workshop
2. M-Hoek Litsoeneng Substation
3. 33kv Powerline
4. Infrastructure Polihali Water-shed Building
5. 132kv Lqhobong Powerline
6. Pioneer Mall
7. SA High Commission

Mr. Suhlane has exhibited outstanding commitment and integrity. He specializes with steel structure, steel erection, tower Crane erection and roofing and sheeting.





REMEMBERING

# FAKO MORETLO

We pay tribute  
to the late Fako Moretlo.

**His experience in the challenging profession for the leading construction company reputed for tackling huge high-end building projects in Lesotho and beyond will be sorely missed.**

As a site agent, also known as a construction manager, building manager or site manager, Moretlo oversaw operations on a day-to-day basis, ensuring that work is done safely, on time, within the budget and to the required quality standards. He is survived by his wife 'Mateboho Moretlo, a daughter and a son.

## **Career with LSP**

Moretlo joined LSP construction on January 13, 1992 when the company was still trading as Lesotho Steel Products.

In an interview before his passing Moretlo said he always remembered the first two years of service to the company as the most critical in nurturing his experience in steel works.

In 1994, he took over the running of the workshop as the steel workshop manager. The watershed moment in his career came in 2007 when he got promoted to supervise construction work.





"It is in construction where my greatest motivation came. This was not really about earning a huge salary but, importantly, it was an opportunity to pick up skills that made me understand the field better and excel in my tasks," he said in an interview two years ago.

He added: "In those years of working with LSP I was greatly motivated. The strong leadership in the company played a crucial role in encouraging me in becoming a valuable asset to the company, and today I am proud to say I am part of LSP's management team."

He acquired professional skills as a coated welder, boilermaker and project manager, all thanks to LSP's policy of empowering employees through critical skills training on the job.

Asked what his views were on the qualities expected of LSP workers, he had this to say: "For one to work at LSP they must be hard-working and committed to continuous improvement. The high quality of work LSP offers on all the projects is because everyone is working very hard and surely one wouldn't want to leave a company like that," he said.

True to his word Moretlo remained with the company until his last days.

Monetary rewards aside, for which LSP is known as a fair employer, Moretlo used to say like his colleagues in the sector he was motivated by the unique nature of the industry where the team gets to see a completed project and derive satisfaction which cannot be quantified, knowing they contributed their brains and efforts to something tangible and lasting.

He once said: "I can assure you, and hopefully many in the same industry would agree, that nothing beats the sense of achievement and pride when one sees completed construction projects and monuments functioning at 100% knowing you had a hand in its making. That is the most beautiful thing about the construction industry."

**Moretlo was part** of almost every project LSP did from 1992 until the time of his death including the projects which he was actively involved:

- ABB distribution network and substations
- Muela Power Hydro Station (powerhouse)
- steel manufacturing and erection (in charge)
- Pioneer Mall Phase 2
- Letseng headquarters Maseru
- Letseng phase 1 and 1,1 Mokhotlong
- South African High Commission in Maseru

Asked how he viewed his future with LSP, the highly driven Moretlo said in the same interview: "At the rate that LSP construction is growing, I envision myself running a project valued at a billion Maloti or more in the coming years. In a nutshell, I am looking at growing with the company, learning from the best and ultimately when ready taking on more responsibilities."

He was one person who found it hard to pin down on the most difficult challenges he faced at work because he believed in proper planning which, according to him, helped ensure hardly any impediments.

Moretlo was a strong advocate of upskilling of workers, which is why he said: "The company (LSP Construction) has always prided itself in its workers, therefore, creating diverse advancement programs for staff betterment was always seen as an improvement in the right direction.

"This would not only shape LSP construction but would shift the landscape of construction as we have come to know it. It is also extremely important that the Lesotho industry challenges construction employees to advance their skills."

He left valuable advice to job-seeking youths in an age of high unemployment and serious competition. "Young people should learn to apply a positive mindset before considering what it takes to participate and succeed in a new age of exponential growth and disruption. They need to understand what it takes to become an asset since the world is moving so quickly that one day technology will take over almost everything. They need not to cling to the past but start working hard to learn new skills all the time," he advised.

An avid team player, he always advised managers and work colleagues alike to remember co-workers are very important stakeholders in the workplace. For this reason, his guiding principle was to always respect the next person for their skills and unique individuality which should complement your own.

"Respect each of them for their unique set of skills and you will tackle every challenge with a very solid team," he said.

**BL**



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