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WEDNESDAY APRIL 29, 2026

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DCEO IN MELTDOWN:
ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCY
TURNS ON ITS OWN OVER
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LESOTHO'S TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Lesotho's textile and apparel industry is a cornerstone of the country's formal economy and its largest industrial employer, specializing in cut-make-trim (CMT) garment manufacturing for foreign brands rather than large-scale spinning or weaving. The sector focuses mainly on woven and knit garments such as jeans, t-shirts, dresses, tracksuits, and sportswear, which are exported under special trade agreements and bilateral arrangements.

Structure and importance of the industry

Lesotho's textiles, apparel, and footwear manufacturing sector remains the country's largest formal private-sector employer, with around 45,000–46,500 workers, predominantly women. The industry is dominated by a few large

foreign-owned groups, most notably Nien Hsing's three garment plants that produce denim and other woven garments for major U.S. brands such as Levi Strauss, VF Corporation (Lee, Wrangler), Gap, and The Children's Place. In addition, there are roughly 30–40 knit-garment factories, including firms like Hippo Knitting and CGM Industrial, which make casual and sportswear items for export...[See more](#)



DCEO IN MELTDOWN:

Anti-corruption agency turns on its own over Monokoane case!

 Rantau Tlali Makhetha



MASERU- In a move that has sent shockwaves through the legal fraternity and the corridors of power, the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) has taken the extraordinary step of publicly admitting to a fundamental failure in its own litigation processes.

This week , the anti corruption watchdog released a statement that serves as both a sobering admission of internal error and a fierce defence of judicial integrity.

The DCEO has formally withdrawn its application for review before the High Court in the high-profile case of *R v Mohopoli Monokoane and Others* (CRI/T/MSU/1097/24), bringing a dramatic halt to a legal challenge that many now realize was built on a foundation of sand.

This withdrawal is not merely a procedural retreat; it is the culmination of a rigorous, five-month internal investigation that began in December 2025 and concluded in April 2026.

What the Directorate found during this period was nothing short of a betrayal of the very principles it is sworn to uphold. The investigation revealed that the application for review was “fundamentally flawed,” having been built upon factual assertions that were false, misleading, and improperly presented by the prosecutor assigned to

the case. Perhaps most damagingly, these fabrications were used to ground serious allegations of corrupt conduct against the presiding judicial officer who had originally dismissed the case.

The Anatomy of a Flawed Prosecution

The revelation that a prosecutor within the DCEO would resort to misleading the High Court is a bitter pill for the public to swallow. According to the Directorate’s findings, the assertions made by the responsible prosecutor were not merely errors of judgment or simple legal oversights.

Instead, they were characterized as improperly presented facts designed to sway the court under false pretenses.

By weaponizing these inaccuracies to suggest that a member of the judiciary acted corruptly in dismissing the Monokoane case, the prosecutor didn’t just jeopardize a single case; they risked dismantling the delicate bridge of trust between the executive investigative arm and the judicial branch of government.

The DCEO’s internal review highlights a period of five months where the Directorate had to look inward to determine how such a lapse occurred.

It is a rare occurrence in our legal system for an investigative body to admit that its own assertions

were the source of potential injustice. The “comprehensive investigation” conducted between December 2025 and April 2026 was essential to uncovering the depth of the misinformation.

While the specific motives of the prosecutor remain a matter for the now-initiated disciplinary proceedings, the impact of their actions was clear: the DCEO had been led into a legal battle using “false and misleading” ammunition.

This self-correction, while painful and publicly embarrassing, was the only way to prevent a further miscarriage of justice.

A Crisis of Confidence and Judicial Respect

The implications of this withdrawal extend far beyond the case of R v Mohopoli Monokoane. The DCEO itself acknowledged that this situation “risked undermining public confidence toward the Directorate”. In a country where the fight against corruption is often viewed with skepticism, the integrity of the lead anti corruption agency is its most valuable currency.

When that agency is found to be presenting false facts to the High Court, it threatens to invalidate years of hard work and many other legitimate prosecutions.

The public relies on the DCEO to be a beacon of truth and professionalism; any deviation from that

standard provides ammunition to those who wish to see the Directorate fail.

Furthermore, the DCEO has moved swiftly to repair its relationship with the judiciary. By asserting its “full respect for the independence and integrity of the judiciary,” the Directorate is attempting to distance itself from the “serious allegations” previously leveled against the presiding judicial officer.

Those allegations, now revealed to be based on the prosecutor’s false assertions, were an a ront to the judicial office.

The Directorate’s decision to withdraw the review application immediately is a necessary gesture of institutional humility.

It signals to the High Court and the public that the DCEO values the truth more than it values a “win” in the courtroom.

Accountability as a Path Forward

The final pillar of the DCEO’s response is a commitment to internal accountability. The Directorate has confirmed that disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against the prosecutor concerned.

This is a critical step; without holding the individual responsible for the “fundamentally flawed” application accountable, the DCEO’s statement of regret would ring hollow.

The message to other officers within the Directorate is clear: the mandate to combat corruption must be pursued with “integrity and professionalism, without fear or favour,” and it certainly cannot be pursued through deceit.

While the immediate withdrawal of the review application is a decisive action, the DCEO has noted that it remains “subject to considering other grounds for review in view of the history of the case”.

This suggests that while the current path was tainted by falsehoods, the Directorate may still seek legal recourse if valid, untainted grounds exist. However, for now, the focus remains on cleaning house and restoring the Directorate’s tarnished image.

The DCEO’s reaffirmation of its mandate serves as a promise to the public that despite this significant internal failure, the mission to unravel corruption continues - but only through the lens of the law and the absolute truth.

This episode, though dark, may ultimately strengthen the institution if it leads to more robust oversight of the cases it brings before our courts.



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PM warns LHDA to honour its resettlement commitments



Neo Senoko

MASERU-Government has directed the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) to honour its resettlement and livelihood restoration commitments on time and in full.

Prime Minister Ntsokoane Sam Matekane has revealed this week during the official opening of the Senqu Bridge in Pulihali Mokhotlong district.

Matekane admitted to the notion that displacement from ancestral land in the form of resettlement or relocation is a profound disruption, citing that the LHWP Treaty and international best practice require that the standard of living of Project Affected Persons be improved.

“That said is not something we merely want to hear reported, but it is something we expect to be experienced by the communities themselves. To the People of Mokhotlong, we know that Phase II has asked

something significant of you, which is that of making way for the project.

Displacement from ancestral land in the form of resettlement or relocation is a profound disruption.

Therefore, no infrastructure project, however large and significant it may be, should be permitted to treat that disruption as an acceptable cost to be absorbed quietly,” Matekane emphasized.

He added that the Constitution of Lesotho, Lesotho Highlands Water Project Treaty and Lesotho Highlands Development Authority Order of 1986, provide a legal framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of the people affected by the project and those rights include right to development of their living conditions.

“We will continue to monitor compliance, and we will hold the implementing authorities accountable through the Project Legal Instruments

and other innovative means. The Senqu Bridge, the Mabunyaneng Bridge, and the Khubelu Bridge are not concessions, but obligations. Phase II committed to maintaining connectivity for affected communities, and it is delivering on that commitment. These are the first of many bridges in the pipeline.

It has also been reported to me that the Project is currently working on Feeder Roads and other bridges designs to minimize the impacts of the Polihali Dam on normal movement patterns.

I, therefore, urge the Project to ensure that the affected communities participate meaningfully in the identification of bridge locations,” the PM outlined, emphasizing that the project must deepen impact on the people, strengthen accountability in delivery and ensure that its benefits are not abstract, but are felt in the daily lives of the people affected.

Constructed at an estimated cost of R2.4 billion, the Senqu Bridge is the largest of three major crossings being developed under Phase II of the LHWP.

Measuring approximately 825 metres in length and rising about 90 metres above the river valley, the bridge will play a critical role in maintaining connectivity across the Polihali Reservoir once water levels rise.

The bridge forms part of a broader infrastructure programme aimed at supporting both water security and economic development.

The project harnesses the Orange-Senqu River system through a network of dams and transfer tunnels, supplying water to South Africa’s Integrated Vaal River System, which supports the economic hub of Gauteng.

At the same time, Lesotho benefits through hydropower generation, infrastructure development and long-term economic

opportunities.

Phase II of the project is currently under construction and includes the Polihali Dam, a concrete faced rockfill structure approximately 165 metres high, as well as a 38 kilometre transfer tunnel that will connect the Polihali and Katse Reservoirs. Once completed, this phase will increase water supply capacity from 780 million cubic metres per annum to 1 270 million cubic metres per annum, significantly strengthening long-term water security for South Africa.

Beyond its strategic importance, the Senqu Bridge is also a major engineering achievement. It is the first extradosed bridge in Lesotho and was constructed using advanced techniques suited to the region’s mountainous terrain.

HYGIENE PACKS BRING RELIEF TO GIRLS AT ‘MAMPOTA HIGH SCHOOL



Metro Liapeng Raliengoane

BEREA – In a step towards keeping girls in school and reducing absenteeism, Hlokomela Banana Foundation distributed hygiene packs to 62 girls from ‘Mampota High School last Wednesday.

‘Mampota High School is based in the semi-rural community of Ha Mamathe and serves learners who face persistent challenges in accessing basic sanitary products.

Principal Mongale Rasupu says the lack of these essentials has not only affected the girls’

comfort and dignity but has also contributed to rising absenteeism.

Each pack distributed contained six sanitary packets. Speaking on the importance of the donation, Principal Rasupu highlighted that the primary goal is to ensure that girls remain in school during their menstrual periods.

“We want to keep our girls in school and reduce absenteeism during their menstrual cycles. Some learners are under financial pressure and cannot always afford sanitary products, so this support is very important,” he said.

He further explained that the school has also taken steps to ensure that sanitary products are available for emergencies at all times. The need for such support became especially clear following an incident involving a Grade 8 learner in 2025.

The learner experienced her first menstrual cycle at school but did not have access to sanitary products at the time. “That situation showed us how important it is for every girl to have access to these products, whether she has already started her menstrual cycle or not,” Rasupu added.

He added that the provision of hygiene packs is expected to improve not only school attendance but

also the confidence and dignity of the learners.

Rasupu further highlighted that the school remains under-resourced and under-privileged, making external support initiatives critical.

The 2022 Menstrual Health and Hygiene Situational Analysis conducted by the Ministry of Health with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) revealed that challenges facing young girls include limited access to sanitary towels, fear of soiling, misconceptions and menstrual pain.

Hlokoleta Banana, a non-profit organisation, works to provide free sanitary products to school-aged girls to ensure they do not miss school due to menstrual health challenges.

Supported by Her Majesty Queen ‘Masenate Mohato Seeiso’s Trust Fund, the initiative has reached schools across the country.

The Queen’s continued advocacy, alongside partnerships with local businesses, NGOs and international development agencies, has been instrumental in expanding the programme’s reach and impact.

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Neo Senoko

A BREAKDOWN INTO HOW PETROLEUM FUND ADJUST FUEL PRICES

MASERU-While the petroleum sector remains a critical component of Lesotho's socio-economic stability, influencing transport costs, commodity pricing, and overall economic performance, public understanding of petroleum pricing and supply chain dynamics is often shaped by incomplete or misinterpreted information.

Several media outlets in the country are faced with similar challenge of lack of understanding into these matters, thus making it even more difficult for the public to understand these dynamics.

In response, the Petroleum Fund has taken a decisive move to capacitate the media on several dynamics including a detailed breakdown of petroleum products pricing components in the country.

"It is important to understand the petroleum supply chain, from source to pump. This includes importation, transportation, storage, and distribution. Each stage presents its own challenges, which are important for accurate reporting.

Ladies and gentlemen, reporting on petroleum and economic matters requires fairness, accuracy, and responsibility, as misinformation can have serious consequences on public confidence and national stability.

"Through this forum, we expect improved quality and accuracy in petroleum reporting, a better-informed public, and

strengthened trust between the media, the public, and the Petroleum Fund," the Petroleum Fund Chief Executive Officer Adv. 'Makananelo kome said this week during a media forum that was staged in Maseru.

The petroleum products pricing framework in Lesotho constitutes a regulated economic system designed to ensure the long-term sustainability, transparency, and efficiency of the downstream petroleum supply chain.

The framework enables the government to balance several critical policy objectives, including ensuring the security of fuel supply, maintaining affordability for consumers, providing a predictable investment environment for private-sector participants, and mobilizing the fiscal revenues required for national development.

Given Lesotho's status as a fully import-dependent petroleum market with no domestic refining capacity, domestic fuel prices are primarily influenced by developments in the international petroleum market, exchange rate movements, and regional logistics costs.

To ensure fairness, predictability, and accountability, the Government administers a structured fuel pricing build-up model that systematically incorporates international cost benchmarks, domestic logistics costs, regulated industry margins, and

statutory taxes and levies.

"Petroleum pricing and supply systems are not always easy to interpret. They are influenced by several factors, including global oil prices, exchange rates, transport and logistics costs, as well as taxes and levies. It is important to emphasize that pricing is based on structured mechanisms, not arbitrary decisions," the CEO added.

The final regulated pump price is therefore a composite price derived from internationally determined cost inputs, domestic operational expenditures, statutory fiscal instruments, and regulated commercial margins.

Given Lesotho's complete reliance on imported petroleum products, domestic pump prices are directly influenced by international market dynamics. Movements in global oil prices, freight markets, and exchange rates (Loti/Rand to US Dollar) therefore directly transmit into the domestic pricing structure.

Additionally, depot storage and handling charges compensate operators of fuel storage facilities for maintaining operational readiness, infrastructure integrity, safety compliance, and fuel quality assurance systems. These charges enable the continuous availability of storage infrastructure required to support national fuel distribution.

Strategically, adequate storage infrastructure supports supply stability, enhances emergency

preparedness, facilitates strategic stockholding, and improves distribution efficiency.

Furthermore, the Fund opened up on the road delivery charges, revealing that they represent the regulated cost of transporting petroleum products from bulk storage depots to retail service stations across the country. These costs are calculated using a zone-based methodology that reflects geographic and logistical cost differentials associated with distance, terrain, infrastructure conditions, and operational risk.

The zone-based system ensures equitable pricing by allowing realistic cost recovery while preventing excessive regional price disparities. It also ensures that remote or high-cost distribution areas remain commercially viable for fuel supply operators.

However, effective April 2013, the Fund adopted a uniform national pricing approach, under which retail fuel prices are equalized across the country through the subsidization of higher-cost zones. Under this arrangement, Oil Companies submit delivery cost claims to the Fund for reimbursement of the additional distribution costs incurred in supplying these zones.

The regulated fuel price is determined through a structured sequential build-up process designed to ensure transparency, cost recovery, and regulatory consistency. The process begins with the determination of the

international benchmark cost, commonly referred to as the Import Parity Price (IPP), which reflects the estimated cost of importing fuel into the country. Domestic logistics, storage, and infrastructure related costs are then added to account for inland handling and distribution expenses.

Thereafter, regulated industry margins are incorporated to allow for sustainable operations across the supply chain, followed by the application of statutory levies and duties as prescribed by law.

These components collectively determine the Wholesale Selling Price (WSP), representing the regulated price at which wholesalers supply fuel to retail service stations. The dealer margin is subsequently added to compensate retailers for operating service stations, after which Value Added Tax (VAT) is applied.

The cumulative result of these sequential steps forms the final regulated pump price payable by consumers.

Petroleum Fund was established with the mandate to finance petroleum related projects as well as address the objectives of its enabling legislation which looks into the purchase of petroleum products and the improvement of the distribution of petroleum products throughout the country among other things.

The Debt Trap: Lesotho’s Parliamentary Bypass

 **Rantau Tlali Makhetha**



The presentation of the Annual Borrowing Plan (ABP) for the 2026/27 financial year by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning is not merely a technical exercise in fiscal management; it is a profound test of our democratic integrity.

As the Minister of Finance, Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, moves to implement a strategy that involves borrowing a staggering M4,638.8 million for the upcoming year, the question of who truly holds the power of the purse in Lesotho has never been more urgent.

We find ourselves at a crossroads where the Executive, cloaked in the technical jargon of debt-to-GDP ratios and concessionality, continues to sideline the very institution meant to represent the will of the people: Parliament.

This systemic exclusion is not just a procedural oversight; it is an affront to the principle of accountability, especially when one considers that the total debt stock has already reached M22,717.5 million, representing a full 50 percent of our Gross Domestic Product.

The government’s insistence on a presentation model of oversight, rather than a model of active, granular consent, treats the National Assembly like a rubber stamp for decisions that will burden Basotho for generations to come.

It is impossible to discuss this current lack of parliamentary involvement without recalling the poignant warnings issued last year by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairperson, ’Machabana Lemphane-Letsie.

Her assertion was clear and remains unrefuted: there is a desperate, existential need for Parliament to be deeply involved in the mechanics of national borrowing.

Yet, looking at the 2026/27 ABP, it appears the government has learned nothing from her counsel. Instead, they lean on the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution Act, 2025, which requires the Minister to prepare an annual borrowing plan to be presented with the budget for parliamentary approval.

While the government might

point to this as evidence of transparency, the reality is far more cynical. The amendment also permits the Minister to propose new loans for parliamentary approval after the budget has been passed, creating a fragmented and reactive oversight environment where the House is always chasing the Executive’s tail.

This is a far cry from the robust, proactive involvement Lemphane-Letsie and the PAC championed.

The sheer scale of the proposed borrowing for 2026/27 demands more than a cursory glance from the backbenchers. The government plans to raise M1,500 million through domestic bond issuances and another M3,138.8 million from external sources.

Within these billions of Maloti are commitments to a litany of projects - from the Ramarothole Solar Power Generation to the Safe City Project funded by the Export-Import Bank of China. Why is it that these specific, multi-million dollar agreements are signed behind closed doors, only to be presented to Parliament as a *fait accompli* within a broad borrowing plan?

Each of these projects carries its own set of risks and long-term implications for our national sovereignty. For instance, the external debt portfolio already stands at M18,875.3 million, and while the government boasts that 88.4 percent of this is concessional, the truth remains that we are graduating to low-middle-income status.

This graduation brings with it the “hardened” and higher costs of borrowing from international financial markets, a reality that the minister should be explaining in detail to a skeptical Parliament rather than glossing over in a summary document.

Dr Matlanyane and the current administration seem to operate under the illusion that because the Debt-to-GDP ratio has seen a slight decline from 54.3 percent to 50 percent, the requirement for legislative scrutiny has somehow diminished. This is a dangerous fallacy.

The reduction in debt stock was largely influenced by parity gains of M1,127.4 million due to the appreciation of the Loti - a

factor entirely outside the government’s control.

To rely on the volatility of currency exchange rates while simultaneously bypassing the House is a recipe for fiscal disaster.

The government’s own risk assessment identifies exchange rate fluctuations as a primary threat that could necessitate unplanned budget adjustments.

If the representatives of the people are not involved in weighing these risks before the ink is dry on new loan agreements, then the “transparency” the Minister speaks of is nothing more than a carefully curated facade.

Furthermore, the government’s domestic borrowing strategy involves a shift toward long-term instruments, such as the planned issuance of 7-year, 10-year, and 15-year bonds.

While lengthening the maturity profile is a standard debt management goal, it also means that this administration is making choices that will dictate the fiscal space of future governments for the next decade and a half.

When the PAC Chairperson called for involvement, she was calling for the right of Parliament to ask: is this the right mix? Are we crowding out the private sector? The 2026/27 plan admits that Lesotho is currently paying more interest on domestic debt annually than on external debt, despite domestic debt accounting for less than 20 percent of the total portfolio.

This is a glaring inefficiency that cries out for a public, parliamentary debate, not just a ministerial decree.

The lack of granularity in the current “approval” process is perhaps its most insulting feature. The Minister presents a list of “new projects to be signed,” which includes everything from a USD 50

million IDA project for clean energy to USD 30 million from EXIM Bank China for the Safe City Project. These are not mere line items; they are massive policy shifts.

The Safe City Project, for example, has significant implications for privacy and security, yet it is tucked away in an annex of a borrowing plan. Parliament should have the power to deliberate on the merits

of each individual loan, its interest rates, its grace periods, and its specific creditors, rather than being asked to approve a M4.6 billion “package deal.”

By the time the minister “presents” these for approval, the negotiations are often finished, leaving Parliament with the impossible choice of either approving the debt or derailing essential infrastructure projects.

We must also look at the underperformance of capital projects, which the government itself admits was at 62 percent. If the Executive is unable to even spend the money it borrows due to “implementation challenges” and a “lack of capacity,” then why are they allowed to continue contracting more debt without a rigorous, project-by-project defense in the National Assembly?

Parliament’s role should be to act as a gatekeeper, ensuring that debt is only incurred when there is a proven ability to utilize it for the benefit of the Basotho people. Instead, we see a cycle where money is borrowed, interest is paid, yet the projects stagnate, and the debt stock remains a looming shadow over our economy.

The Tenth Amendment was supposed to be a step forward, but in the hands of this government, it has become a tool for containment.

The minister’s ability to propose loans after the budget is passed provides a loophole that can be exploited to avoid the intense heat of the main budget session. This “incremental borrowing” strategy effectively dilutes the power of the PAC and the House at large.

It creates a scenario where the cumulative weight of our national debt is never fully felt or debated in a single, comprehensive moment of accountability.

Dr Matlanyane may argue that this provides “flexibility,” but in a democracy, flexibility should never be a substitute for consent.

The risks outlined in the 2026/27 ABP - from auction underperformance to the contingent liabilities of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) - are risks that the entire nation bears. When utility companies fail to report their full indebtedness, it is the taxpayer who eventually bails them out.

Yet, the government’s solution is simply more executive oversight through “newly enacted legislation” that empowers the minister further, rather than empowering the Parliament to conduct public hearings and demand transparency from these SOEs.

We are moving toward a more centralized, less democratic form of financial governance, and the silence from the government benches is deafening.

Last year, the PAC gave the government a roadmap toward better governance. They were told that the status quo is unsustainable.

The M1,279.1 million we will spend just on domestic debt service this year is money that could have gone to our crumbling hospitals or our struggling schools. Every Maloti spent on interest is a Maloti stolen from our development. When the Executive decides, in isolation, to commit us to these payments, they are effectively legislating our poverty.

Dr Matlanyane and the government must realize that Parliament is not an obstacle to be bypassed; it is the heart of our democracy.

To ignore the House is to ignore the people. We cannot continue to treat national borrowing as a private agreement between the Ministry of Finance and international creditors like the World Bank or EXIM Bank China.

These are public debts, and they require a public mandate. The Annual Borrowing Plan for 2026/27 should be the beginning of a conversation, not the end of one.

It is time for the minister to stop hiding behind the Tenth Amendment and start respecting the spirit of the PAC’s call for involvement.

If we do not restore the power of Parliament to truly scrutinize and reject individual loans, we are not just borrowing money; we are borrowing a future we cannot afford to pay back.

The House must be allowed to speak, and more importantly, the Minister must be forced to listen. Our sovereignty, and our children’s heritage, depend on it.

‘EMOTIONAL’ PETERSON: THAT’S MY GOAL



Bafana Bafana head coach Hugo Broos was in the stands as Kaizer Chiefs goalkeeper Brandon Petersen put on a Man-of-the Match display in the Soweto Derby on Sunday.

Petersen made a number of vital saves as Chiefs and Orlando Pirates played to a 1-1 draw at the FNB stadium.

The 31-year-old did not feature in first Soweto Derby of the season last month, but he reveals making the World Cup squad is still a dream for him. “The only way for me to get there is to perform here, So the most important thing for me is to put in this performance week in, week out,” Petersen told SuperSport when asked about the World Cup. “At the end of

the day, god is in control and that is always in the back of my. One of my goals and pushing towards that.”

Petersen also thanked everyone for supporting him after his improved performances this season. “It’s been emotional, we’ve been working hard throughout the season,” the shot stopper said.

“You get a lot of stick as a goalkeeper. You don’t always get the credit you deserve. It’s not about me, it’s always about the team and I’m just really grateful for everyone that has been supporting me.

“This is for my wife and kids, because people don’t see what they go through behind the scenes.”

- SOCCER LADUMA