



**PEACE**

**POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION**

**PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES**

**SUNDAY EXPRESS JULY 6-12 P8. VOL17 ISSUE 13.**

## **Politicisation of Unemployment is Not a Solution**

**By POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION (PEACE)**

The issue of unemployment in Lesotho has taken centre stage in recent weeks, becoming a high-profile political matter. This comes after thousands of young people were seen queuing at military recruitment stations across all ten districts of the country to compete for a mere 500 posts advertised by the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF).

The public outcry prompted Prime Minister Sam Matekane to convene a press conference where he made a bold announcement of over 60,000 job opportunities across various sectors. He subsequently hosted a National Youth Indaba, during which he declared youth unemployment a “National Emergency”.

While the Prime Minister’s recognition of the crisis is an important step, Peace as civic organisation argues that, politicising unemployment will do little to solve it. What is not clear was the type of unemployment the PM was exactly referring to since unemployment by its very nature has many dimensions. Lesotho needs a coordinated and bipartisan approach to address the unemployment crisis; Parliament must lead the charge by defining the problem clearly and designing sustainable strategies to manage it—irrespective of which party is in power.

This National emergency that Prime Minister rightly attempts to address is not well defined. In order to arrive at the solution of unemployment facing Lesotho, it must first be well-defined for the Prime Minister to be able to manage and arrest it.



**PEACE**

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

SUNDAY EXPRESS JULY 6-12 P8. VOL17 ISSUE 13.

---

## **Unpacking the Nature of Lesotho's Unemployment**

Though the Prime Minister is constitutionally entitled to declare a national crisis, Peace contends that such a declaration should follow rigorous parliamentary debate. Most importantly the problem must be well defined so that we can arrive at the solution to this pandemic. The nature and dimensions of unemployment in Lesotho must be thoroughly understood before solutions can be applied.

Globally, unemployment has been a persistent challenge since the 1980s—tracing back to the oil crisis, structural adjustment programmes of the 1990s, and more recently, the global disruptions of the Trump-era tariffs. Lesotho is not immune to these broader forces.

Peace argues that without clearly defining the *type* of unemployment facing the nation—be it structural, frictional, cyclical, or voluntary—any response risks being ineffective or short-lived.

---

## **The Many Faces of Unemployment in Lesotho**

Unemployment in Lesotho has various dimensions that must be acknowledged and addressed. The complexity of unemployment is that it reveals other areas of unemployment such as educated unemployment, self-unemployment, women and youth unemployment.



**PEACE**

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

SUNDAY EXPRESS JULY 6-12 P8. VOL17 ISSUE 13.

- **Educated Unemployment:** Lesotho's high literacy rate and free education system have produced a significant number of secondary school and university graduates. Ironically, these groups tend to struggle more with job placement, often due to selective job expectations.
- **Self-Employment Sector:** This includes street vendors, small-scale entrepreneurs, drivers, sex workers, and artisans—many of whom are economically active but not formally recognised in employment statistics.
- **Women's Unemployment:** Women, despite their involvement in stockpiles and various community fundraising projects, still face higher unemployment rates and discrimination in informal and formal sectors alike.
- **Youth Unemployment:** The youth population is another cohort which the government appears to be more concerned about. Both educated and uneducated, increasingly migrate to urban centres with high—but often unrealistic—expectations of employment. Without interventions, this group remains vulnerable to disillusionment and poverty.
- **Voluntary Urban Unemployment:** Unemployment has challenged governments, hence reason why defining it is crucial. For instance, there may be unemployment among urban workers who are voluntarily unemployed by refusing to accept available jobs but searching for specific type of jobs based on their qualifications. These people have other outside financial support from relatives and feel not pressured to find jobs. In fact they are not poor at all.

Some educated individuals refuse available jobs due to perceived job inferiority, while relying on family support. Though unemployed by definition, they are not economically desperate, further complicating unemployment statistics.



## **PEACE**

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

SUNDAY EXPRESS JULY 6-12 P8. VOL17 ISSUE 13.

---

### **Call for a National Dialogue and Strategic Action**

Peace emphasises the need for a national, parliamentary dialogue to clearly define unemployment in Lesotho's specific context. Only through a shared understanding of the crisis can effective policies be crafted.

Unemployment must be treated seriously, because not doing so undermines the urgency and complexity of the issue. It must be treated as a national security threat that requires non-partisan and long-term strategic planning.

---

### **Conclusion**

From the 1980s oil crisis to today's trade disruptions, unemployment has remained a persistent global issue. While the Prime Minister's declaration of youth unemployment as a national crisis is commendable, it must be followed by informed and inclusive parliamentary debate.

Lesotho must avoid the temptation to politicise unemployment. Instead, it must define its nature, understand its causes, and design solutions that are tailored to its realities. Only then can the country begin to tame this economic monster that threatens the futures of so many Basotho.



**PEACE**

**POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION**

**PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES**

**SUNDAY EXPRESS JULY 6-12 P8. VOL17 ISSUE 13.**