

Minister Recognises LHDA Rangelands Rehabilitation as Exemplary at Mokhotlong Launch of International Year of Rangelands



The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority's (LHDA) rangelands rehabilitation work in the Thaba-Phats'oa area—an important sub-catchment for water production in the Sehonghong River, a tributary of the Polihali Dam—was formally commended by the Minister of Environment and Forestry Honourable Letsema Adonts'i, during the national launch of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. The event was held at Thaba-Phats'oa in Mokhotlong on 21 January 2026.

Honourable Adonts'i led the day's activities, which commenced with brush control on rangelands. The Minister, together with the Principal Chief of Mokhotlong and the Member of Parliament for Bobatsi, expressed appreciation for LHDA's Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) Programme. The programme focuses on controlling soil erosion, eliminating invasive alien species, and promoting the regeneration of indigenous grasses to enhance water retention and ensure the flow of clean water to the Polihali Dam and surrounding communities that depend largely on livestock rearing for their livelihoods.

“LHDA's rangelands rehabilitation efforts in this area are exemplary, and we also commend pastoralists for their commitment to protecting the rehabilitated areas by refraining from grazing,” said Honourable Adonts'i.

“The initiative is creating temporary employment opportunities for local communities, providing much-needed financial relief. However, in the long term, communities should be able to rehabilitate and protect these areas without expecting wages, as this work is ultimately for their own benefit,” said the Principal Chief Honourable Lerotholi Seeiso.

According to Mrs 'Mats'episo Tlebere, Senior Officer - Integrated Catchment Management at Polihali, LHDA began rehabilitation works at Thaba-Phats'oa in 2024. She noted that the area forms a critical part of the Sehonghong River catchment, making its rehabilitation essential for downstream water security. Mrs Tlebere attributed the success of the initiative to strong collaboration between LHDA, the Ministry, and pastoralists, and Local Authorities who are actively safeguarding the area and promoting sustainable grazing practices.

Community leaders and representatives of grazing associations raised concerns with lawmakers about the low fines imposed for illegal grazing in rehabilitated areas. They indicated that minimal penalties encourage non-compliance, as some individuals are willing to be taken to court to pay the nominal fines. The leaders further highlighted resistance from perpetrators when their livestock is confiscated, which poses a threat to the Rangers. They also acknowledged ongoing collaboration with the Ministry, LHDA, and other stakeholders to raise awareness about unsustainable grazing practices and their negative impact on wool and mohair production.

The BKB Group, which markets Lesotho's wool and mohair, was represented at the event by Messrs Lebitso Thinyane and Khauhelo Khethoa. They emphasised that buyers increasingly assess not only the quality of produce, but also rangeland conservation practices, animal welfare, treatment of herders, and the broader environmental conditions under which livestock are raised. They also underscored the need to reduce pollution from plastics and disposable nappies in rangelands and water sources.

Thaba-Phats'oa is one of 18 sub-catchments currently being rehabilitated by LHDA. To date, 864 hectares have been rehabilitated in Thaba-Phats'oa alone, alongside the construction of 1,758 infiltration pits to enhance moisture retention and promote grass regrowth. Across Mokhotlong, restoration efforts are ongoing and or completed in areas, including Mots'eremeli, Malingoaneng, Malubalube, Molalana, Ts'ilants'o, and Makhomalong.

