



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **OMBUDSMAN TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGED FAILURES IN LESOTHO'S HEALTH SYSTEM**

The Office of the Ombudsman (OoO) has noted with increasing concern a growing number of reports from patients, family members, healthcare professionals, civil society organisations and the media regarding the deteriorating state of healthcare delivery in Lesotho.

These reports paint a troubling picture of delayed referrals, prolonged waiting times for specialist treatment, shortages of medicines and medical equipment, overcrowded facilities, inadequate emergency services and patients allegedly suffering avoidable harm while waiting for treatment.

Particularly alarming are reports involving cancer patients awaiting referral or treatment, stroke victims who fail to receive urgent intervention within critical treatment windows, accident victims whose conditions deteriorate while awaiting specialist care and patients who allegedly die before receiving necessary medical attention.

For many conditions, modern medicine recognises that time is often the difference between recovery and disability, between life and death. Delays in treatment can result in irreversible neurological damage, permanent disability, avoidable complications, prolonged suffering or death.

The OoO has further noted concerns raised publicly regarding the functioning of Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital and other health facilities across the country, as well as reports describing Lesotho's healthcare system as being under severe strain.

Healthcare is not a privilege; it is instead, a fundamental human right. The Constitution of Lesotho protects the dignity and welfare of every person, while international human rights instruments impose obligations upon the State to progressively realise the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

Where citizens suffer harm because systems fail to provide timely, accessible and effective healthcare, questions arise regarding accountability, governance, resource allocation and administrative justice.

Accordingly, the Ombudsman is considering the initiation of an own motion investigation into systemic challenges affecting healthcare delivery in Lesotho.

The proposed investigation will seek to determine:

- (a) Whether patients are receiving healthcare services within reasonable and medically acceptable timeframes;
- (b) Whether referral systems are functioning effectively and equitably;
- (c) Whether shortages of medicines, equipment, personnel and hospital capacity are adversely affecting patient outcomes;
- (d) Whether complaints by patients and families are adequately received, investigated and addressed;
- (e) Whether current administrative arrangements adequately protect the rights, dignity and wellbeing of patients;
- (f) Whether avoidable deaths, disabilities and deterioration of medical conditions are occurring as a result of systemic failures within the healthcare system.

The investigation will not seek to attribute blame to individual healthcare professionals who continue to serve under often difficult circumstances. Rather, it will examine whether broader systemic and administrative shortcomings are undermining the ability of healthcare workers to provide quality care.

The Ombudsman acknowledges the dedication and sacrifices of many doctors, nurses, emergency personnel and other healthcare workers who continue to serve the nation despite significant resource constraints. The purpose of the investigation is to identify root causes, promote accountability, strengthen public confidence and make recommendations aimed at improving healthcare delivery for all Basotho.

The OoO therefore invites patients, families, healthcare workers, professional associations, civil society organisations and members of the public to submit information relating to experiences of delayed treatment, referral failures, medicine shortages, emergency care challenges, preventable harm or other systemic concerns affecting access to healthcare services.

A nation's health system should not determine whether a patient lives or dies simply because help arrived too late. The people of Lesotho deserve a healthcare system that preserves life, protects dignity and inspires confidence. The time has come to examine whether our healthcare system is meeting that standard.

**Media and Complaints Enquiries:**

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Issued at Maseru on this **8th day of JUNE 2026**

**ADV. TLOTLISO POLAKI**

**OMBUDSMAN**