

Question time with Motselisi Ramakoe, participant in LSE's Programme for African Leadership

The first ever Programme for African Leadership is underway at LSE. The programme, which is being generously supported by Firoz and Najma Lalji, is providing emerging leaders with an opportunity to spend time with some of LSE's academic thinkers and debate topics such as globalisation, development, climate change etc. Already, Professors Thandika Mkandawire, Stuart Corbridge, Saul Estrin and Robert Wade are among those to have addressed the participants. I caught up with Motselisi Ramakoe who is one of two people from Lesotho attending the executive training course.



Tell me about yourself

My background is in Environmental Studies. I did my masters at the University of Stellenbosch, specialised in Geographical Information Systems, but have since moved away from that. I currently work for a diamond mining company called Mothae Diamonds, jointly owned by a Canadian diamond company and the Lesotho government. I have two different titles: Chief Compliance officer or Chief Administrative officer. I liaise with the government, I deal with HR, I take care of administration. I am also the corporate secretary. It's a small company, so everyone has multiple roles. I also run a small **guesthouse** in which I am a partner. There's a bit of an entrepreneur in me.

Tell me about some of your leadership activities



My friends and I recently decided to set up the Barali business association. Barali is a Sesotho word which means daughters. The idea is to bring together professional and business women to take on investment ventures and mentor young girls and boys. We only set up the association last year, so it is still very much in the early stages.

We have a partnership with the football charity, Kick 4 Life. They take young girls who have had a history of prostitution or AIDS orphans who are taking care of their younger siblings and teach them basic life skills. Barali will take up a mentoring role with a few of these girls, to help them discover an alternative lifestyle and assist them to find jobs using our networks.

If you had the power to change just one thing, what would it be?

It would be the current political situation in Lesotho. We are one nation, we have one language, yet we have 25 political parties. Ideologically, they are more or less the same. If they all have the same ideas about how to resolve our problems such as poverty, there is no reason why we should have that many parties. I would like to see us thinking and acting as one nation. In the 1980s, Lesotho was going somewhere, now as a country, we are going backwards. Unfortunately, our politicians are primarily interested in personal gain.

What is your highlight of PfAL so far?

Tuesday was a real eye-opener for me. Professor Robert Wade revealed just how powerful the G20 nations are. Although the G20 is not a representative body, it wields huge influence including dictating the actions of organisations like the IMF and World Bank. The question Professor Wade put to us was : "What are Africans doing about that?" I never realised before that the G20 had so much power and it is certainly very thought-provoking. I also found Professor Thandika Mkandawire's comments very refreshing. He didn't say anything new in particular, but he was very objective and spoke honestly about the problems in Africa and possible resolutions.

After a day like that, I started to have ideas about what to do when I get back home. In Barali's constitution, it states that we would like to influence national policy, but we haven't actually thought about how we can do this. Now I have this idea of holding public debates. There is no platform in Lesotho for anything like this, but debates can make a big difference.

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