

9TH

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LESOTHO

Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)

Opportunities and challenges for entrepreneurship in your country/region

Lesotho by virtue of its geographic position, completely landlocked by South Africa, finds itself in a rather precarious situation with regards to trading freely with its neighbours.

What this urgently requires is for both Lesotho Revenue Authority and South African Revenue Services (SARS) to fast track harmonised customs Tariffs which are usually very complex by nature.

The delays experienced at our boarders turn to be very costly to all entrepreneurs. There is a dire need to introduce the "temporary Admissions" ATA as commonly known a "Merchandise Passports" on international Customs documentation that simplify customs procedure for the temporary importation of various types of all goods.

This would alleviate the currently burdensome impediments or barriers to trade within the SACU region.

In terms of opportunities, our produce, be it in manufacturing of apparel & textile with courtesy of AGOA enjoy free market access. Our produce, if well structured and managed and do conform to required international standards also enjoy market access. Also because of our Least Developed Country's status enjoy favoured nations agreements/convention.

Lesotho has a high rate of literacy and investors seem to prefer to work with the workforce that is trainable and literate.

Description of the Chamber: public or private? Local, regional, national? How many member businesses does your Chamber have? Which sectors?

Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) is a private organisation established in 1976, comprises of 10 districts which each have their own committees. It also has three membership categories namely: Associates, Affiliates and Ordinary Members. Both the Associate and Affiliate Members subscribe directly to the Head Quarters (LCCI) whereas the Ordinary Members affiliate to the District Chambers.

LCCI is in the SADC Region and therefore is an affiliate of a Regional structure called Association of SADC Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCCI), as well as that of the continent called Pan African Chambers of Commerce & Industry (PACCI).

With regards to membership, Associate Members are basically the Corporates i.e Financial Institutions, Insurance Companies, Breweries, Milling companies (Flour Mills) Printing Firms, large Construction Companies etc.

Affiliate Members are those Companies or sectoral groupings that have the constitutions that do not conflict with that of the Chamber i.e Lesotho Liquor and restaurant owners association, Lesotho National Farmers Union, Maseru Region Taxi Organisation, Manufacturing firms (medium sized) Security Companies etc.

Ordinary Members are directly controlled by the District Chambers and can be quite diverse ie convenience shops, motor mechanics workshops, informal sector businesses, butcheries, clothing shops etc.

Which key projects does your Chamber realize?

Not much by way of projects our Chamber is involved in. We were able to instil stability in our membership and ensured that succession is realised so that we maintain institutional memory. We have amongst other things ensured that within our structures we establish a Business Development Unit. This Unit's main objective is to source funds that would enable us to further develop and sustain our operations.

We have also established an investment arm within our structures that is tasked to sought investments within and outside our borders with a view to manage sustainability as well as ultimately sell some shares to our membership. One interesting project that we were involved in was what we called quality groupings that had ten members each. On rotational basis we contributed an agreed amount of money that was given to each member on weekly basis. The money collected was mainly to stock up and ensure that our businesses have all the essentials at any given time. This proved to be very effective as in the process many businesses grew from strength to strength and even expanded their operations.

The most important challenge for your Chamber in the future

Sustainability and relevance as well as growth in all Districts. Forging international relations with other Chambers and potential sponsors.

Any interesting experience or success story your Chamber went through

The Chamber was able to put up its Head Quarters at the city centre and hired it out a good portion of it to reputable tenants, like Banks and others. We achieved stability and international recognition through a lot of interactions with other Regional Structure like ECOWAS and EAC.



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