

# Lesotho to unveil Africa's first sustainable timber stadium

A 1,280-seater football stadium, primarily constructed from sustainably sourced timber, is taking shape in Maseru. Dubbed the "Stadium of Life," this innovative project is a testament to the potential of sustainable construction. It's driven by a collaboration between local charity and football club Kick4Life (K4L), non-profit organisation Relationships Inspiring Social Enterprise (rise International), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and certification body DNV.



Prototype spectator stand

The Stadium of Life notches several firsts. It will be Africa's first FSC-certified timber stadium and the first FSC-certified project (FSC-P001979) in southern Africa. A €75,000 sponsorship by FSC International has secured the naming rights for the next five years. The structure, certified by DNV as an FSC project (DNV-PRO-002776), sets a new standard for responsible construction practices.

"Project certification verifies that the forest materials come from responsibly managed forests, ensuring the promotion of environmental stewardship and community development," says Gerard Busse, FSC Southern Africa marketing and communications manager.



## Critical role of glass recycling in sustainable demolition practices

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The wooden poles used in construction come from MTO Forestry's FSC-certified plantations in Mpumalanga, South Africa. By choosing FSC-certified timber, the project directly supports responsible forestry practices.

Steve Fleming, co-founder of K4L, highlights the stadium's significance: "The new facility will extend the impact of K4L's existing centre, serving as both a home ground for football teams and a platform for social change through football-based programmes."

## Community hub

Beyond sport, the stadium is a multi-purpose hub designed for climate change education, gender empowerment, academic tutoring, health testing, and entrepreneurship training, adds Motlatsi Nkhahle, country director of K4L.

The Stadium of Life fosters a connection between football and the environment. Its design, developed through a collaboration with rise's in loco design and build training programme, features 8,584 treated Eucalyptus poles, minimising concrete use and highlighting the potential of sustainable building materials.

"As the construction sector seeks materials with a lower carbon footprint, eyes are turning towards forest products," explains Pedro Clarke, in loco programme director and project lead architect.

*“ Wood acts as a long-life carbon storage mechanism, with one cubic metre of Eucalyptus wood capturing 880kg of atmospheric carbon dioxide ”*



The project also features a "Biodiversity Stand" showcasing indigenous plants, enhancing K4L's climate education work. Repurposed shipping containers, solar-powered lighting, and a focus on indigenous landscaping further underscore the project's commitment to environmental responsibility.

"This stadium exemplifies a paradigm shift in sports infrastructure, combining sustainability, social impact, and cultural representation," says Daniela Gusman, founder and executive director of rise International.

Construction began in August 2023, with the grand opening anticipated for December 2024. The Stadium of Life is poised to inspire communities across Africa and beyond, demonstrating the power of sustainable choices in sports

development.

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