AfriVest and the Traditional Leaders of Southern Africa Sign Master Tokenization Partnership Agreement

A regulated route for community-held assets to reach formal capital markets, with a financial literacy programme built in

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, August 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- AfriVest, LLC and the Traditional Leaders of Southern Africa (TLSA) have signed a Master Tokenization Partnership Agreement, executed on 30 July 2026. The agreement sets the framework under which assets held by and on behalf of traditional communities can be structured, verified, and issued as regulated digital instruments, with each individual issuance agreed between the parties on its own terms.

The agreement was signed for TLSA by King Ramatlhare Pilane, President of the Traditional Leaders of Southern Africa, together with Gideon van der Schyff, Chief Executive Officer of the Traditional Leaders Technology Agency, and for AfriVest by Duane Herholdt, Chief Executive Officer of DAMREV.

Southern Africa's traditional communities hold assets of genuine economic weight. What they have seldom held is access to the markets that price such assets elsewhere in the world. Those markets were not designed around communal ownership. They assume a corporate form, an audit history, and a settlement infrastructure that community structures were never positioned to provide, and so the distance between what a community owns and what it can finance has stayed open for decades.

Tokenization changes the mechanics of that problem rather than its principle. An asset is verified, valued, and represented as a digital instrument that can be issued, held, transferred, and settled under the same compliance obligations that govern any regulated financial product. Ownership stays where it is. What becomes possible is raising against that ownership, and distributing economic participation, under rules an institutional counterparty already recognises.

King Ramatlhare Pilane said: "The wealth of our communities has never been in question. What has been in question is whether that wealth could be recognised on terms we ourselves set. This agreement does not ask us to surrender ownership, and it does not ask our people to become something they are not. It gives them an instrument, and it gives their children a record of what was theirs. That is what I have put my hand to."

Inside a regulated perimeter

Every activity the agreement contemplates takes place inside a licensed regulated perimeter in South Africa. Onboarding, identity verification, sanctions and anti-money laundering screening, custody, settlement, and cross-border movement are conducted under a single set of financial services authorisations rather than across a chain of intermediaries.

Most tokenization work assembles its perimeter from separate providers, one for identity, another for custody, a third for payments, and every handover is a point at which accountability blurs. AfriVest was built the other way round, with the licensing position established first and the platform second.

The platform is built on the Stellar network and uses Soroban, Stellar's smart contract framework. Every action taken on it creates a timestamped, attributable record that cannot be altered. Documents, models, and public-facing material carry version numbers and change logs, and material steps are subject to four-eyes review, with a third independent validator applied where the six-eyes standard is required.

Gideon van der Schyff, who led the technical review for TLSA, said: "We did not sign this quickly. Our team went through the architecture, the security posture, the audit trail, the recovery position, and the question of who owns what, and we asked for a great deal of detail before we were satisfied. We found a platform on which the compliance work had already been done rather than promised. Our data remains ours, and the record cannot be altered after the fact. Those two answers weighed more with us than anything else in the document."

Financial literacy as part of the structure

An instrument is only useful to the people who understand it. Financial exclusion persists at least as often through unfamiliarity as through design, and a community handed an interest in an asset it cannot interpret has received a document rather than an opportunity. Understanding is the difference between the two.

The partnership therefore carries a financial education programme alongside the financial structuring, delivered through the Academy. It teaches the fundamentals: what an asset is worth and why, what ownership entitles the holder to, what a digital instrument does, and what it does not do.

The programme runs on a learn-to-earn model. Participants are rewarded for completing structured learning rather than for transacting, which keeps the incentive attached to understanding.

Financial inclusion is not a by-product of this partnership. It is a condition of it.

"This begins from a position of respect," said Duane Herholdt, Chief Executive Officer of DAMREV. "Traditional leadership has stewarded these assets for generations. Our role is not to reinterpret that stewardship but to give it an instrument that global capital can transact with, and to make sure the people it belongs to understand exactly what they are holding. We have built the regulated infrastructure. TLSA brings the mandate and the assets. The work now is to prove the model properly, on the ground, one issuance at a time."

What follows

The parties will now work through a joint programme beginning with asset identification and structuring. TLSA retains ownership of its data and of any token commissioned under the agreement; the platform itself remains AfriVest's intellectual property. A working group drawn from both organisations, including AfriVest's compliance office, has been constituted to oversee delivery.

Neither party has announced a timetable for a first issuance. Any such issuance will be subject to its own structuring, verification, and regulatory process.

About AfriVest

AfriVest, LLC is the African tokenization arm of the DAMREV Group. It structures, verifies, and issues regulated digital instruments for asset owners across the continent, operating within a licensed financial services perimeter in South Africa.

About the Traditional Leaders of Southern Africa

The Traditional Leaders of Southern Africa is led by its President, King Ramatlhare Pilane. Its technology arm, the Traditional Leaders Technology Agency, is responsible for identifying and originating projects on behalf of the communities TLSA represents, and for coordinating the due diligence that supports them.

About DAMREV

DAMREV builds programmable financial infrastructure for tokenized assets: identity, compliance, treasury, and settlement systems designed for institutional use and settled on Stellar.

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