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Project Name: Review of Lesotho National Olympic Committee High Performance Strategy for optimum elite and upcoming athletes' performance and talent development.

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Abstract

The aim of this project is to research factors that could contribute to the review of the Lesotho National Olympic Committee High Performance Strategy for optimum elite and upcoming athletes' performance and talent development. The thesis consists of a literature review detailing success factors for a High Performance Programme and Talent Development. Qualitative research method is applied to collect, analyse and interpret data, with the data sources being the Lesotho National Olympic Committee key stakeholders.

The research findings conclude that the current High Performance Strategy does not incorporate crucial elements that contribute to a successful High Performance Programme – Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success Model (SPLISS), a model based on nine pillars. The conclusion is therefore to bring on board the organisation stakeholders representative and experts to review the strategy, and then follows the orientation of the new strategy. For talent development, it is of importance to follow a sport-based model of talent development; the model emphasises four steps for a successful talent development programme.

Résumé

L'objectif de ce projet est de rechercher les facteurs qui pourraient contribuer à la révision de la stratégie de haute performance du Comité national olympique du Lesotho afin d'optimiser les performances et le développement des talents des athlètes d'élite et des futurs athlètes. La thèse consiste en une analyse documentaire détaillant les facteurs de réussite d'un programme de haute performance et de développement des talents. Une méthode de recherche qualitative est appliquée pour collecter, analyser et interpréter les données, les sources de données étant les principales parties prenantes du Comité national olympique du Lesotho.

Les résultats de la recherche concluent que la stratégie de haute performance actuelle n'intègre pas les éléments cruciaux qui contribuent à la réussite d'un programme de haute performance - le modèle SPLISS (Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success Model), un modèle basé sur neuf piliers. La conclusion est donc de faire appel à des représentants des parties prenantes de l'organisation et à des experts pour revoir la stratégie, puis de suivre l'orientation de la nouvelle stratégie. Pour le développement des talents, il est important de suivre un modèle de développement des talents basé sur le sport ; le modèle met l'accent sur quatre étapes pour un programme de développement des talents réussi.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Problem Statement.....	5
Research Aims.....	5
Research Questions.....	5
Literature Review.....	6
<i>What is High Performance Sport?.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Successful High Performance Sport Policy/Strategy.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Talent Development.....</i>	<i>9</i>
Literature Review Analysis.....	10
Methodology.....	12
Introduction.....	12
<i>Research Paradigm.....</i>	<i>12</i>
Selection of Data Sources.....	12
<i>Lesotho National Olympic Committee.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>National Federations.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Government of Lesotho.....</i>	<i>12</i>
Lesotho NOC/High Performance Strategy SWOT Analysis.....	13
Data Collection.....	14
Structured Interviews.....	14
Semi-structured Interviews.....	14
Interview Questions.....	14
Data Analysis.....	15
<i>Interviews.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Lesotho NOC High Performance Strategy Awareness.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Benefits derived from the NOC High Performance Programme.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>High Performance Programme delivery.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Challenges hindering performance and talent development.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Changes needed to improve performance and develop talent.....</i>	<i>18</i>
Interviews Limitations.....	18
Data Critique.....	18
Proposal.....	20
<i>Objectives.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Expected outcomes.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Budget.....</i>	<i>21</i>
Recommendations.....	22
Project Limitations.....	26
Areas of Research in the Project.....	26
Conclusions of the thesis.....	27
References.....	28
Summary of Interviews.....	30

Appendix A.....	36
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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Sport in Lesotho over the years has failed to live up to the expectations of the stakeholders and the public. The performance of Lesotho at the international platforms has not been satisfactory. Lesotho National Olympic Committee (LNOC) had in 2017 developed a High Performance Strategy with the objective to deliver a High Performance Programme that is Athlete-Centred, in collaboration with relevant National Federations to afford athletes with the support required. The programme focuses and directs investments and efforts to athletes and sports with potential to bring home medals. However LNOC faces challenges in optimizing the delivery of the High Performance Strategy for elite athletes' performance as well as identifying talent for Podium Performance.

Research Objectives

Lesotho has proven to have a lot of talent more specially in individual sports within the continent; with a well-resourced High Performance Programmes guided by a well-structured High Performance Strategy such talent can be nurtured and groomed to achieve the LNOC mission of being ranked Top five in African countries in Olympic and Commonwealth Games. The research therefore aims to:

- Encourage the review of the High Performance Strategy;
- Identify the Lesotho National Olympic Committee stakeholder that will contribute to the success of elite athletes' performance and talent development.

Research Questions

General Question

How can the Lesotho National Olympic Committee optimize the High Performance Strategy for elite and upcoming athletes' performance and talent development?

Sub-Questions

- Who amongst the Lesotho NOC stakeholders are relevant to the High Performance Programme? What are their roles in the Programme?
- What constitutes a successful High Performance Strategy?
- What are the gaps resulting to failure for athletes to reach podium performance?
- How can Lesotho NOC go about reviewing the current strategy?

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

What is High Performance Sport?

High Performance Sport (HP sport) can be seen as the top end of sport development and encapsulates any athlete or team that competes at an international or national level. The field includes Olympic and non-Olympic sports, professional sport and team sports; the High Performance process commences with attracting athletes, retaining or transition and nurturing (ARTN process) them in the sport system (Green, 2005; Sotiriadou & Shilbury, 2009). In these processes, a great number of organizations and stakeholders offer opportunities for competitions, training in specialized facilities, coaching and skill development, talent identification, selection, development and transition to higher levels of competition (Rees et al., 2016). Hence, HP sport hinges on the successful ARTN sport development processes and stakeholder input. These processes represent the first unique characteristic of HP sport that is the sport development reciprocity where, in most cases, success at the top does not occur in a vacuum. Success is the result of everything that takes place at the early stage of selecting and developing talented athletes who aim to reach the zenith of their athletic performances.

Secondly, HP sport operates in a fast paced, highly dynamic environment, this creates a second unique characteristic of HP sport; the open system reciprocity. Specifically, while on one hand, HP sport is influenced by the social, cultural and economic conditions of the community in which it operates (Chelladurai, 2009), on the other hand, these performances and elite athletes in general, have a pervasive effect on society, economy, government decisions and policy direction (Houlihan, 2013). As such, managing High Performance is a complex process that operates at and is influenced by macro-, meso- and micro-level factors (De Bosscher et al., 2006).

The macro-level factors reflect economic, social and cultural aspects of nations such as:- population, wealth, urbanization, religion, geography, as well as the different political ideologies. These macro-level factors impact on sport systems, policies and athlete pathways. HP sport management at an organizational or sport policy level is **meso-level** where sport organizations develop strategies and policies. Well-designed and implemented strategies and well-considered sports policies support long-term performance. Performances resonate on managing individual athletes, coaches and their close environment as well as the processes that would attract, retain/transition and nurture athletes - **micro-level**.

Sotiriadou and De Bosscher (2013) drew attention to the complex and fast paced environment in which HP sport operates where specific pressures from media, sponsors and society influence the management of HP sport (e.g. commercialization of elite sport, doping, match fixing, corruption) and how individuals or organizations deal with it. Houlihan (2013) stated that these factors are closely intertwined and influence how national and international organizations at the public, not-for-profit or commercial sectors manage HP sport.

Successful High Performance Sport Policy/Strategy:

De Bosscher et al. (2006) developed Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success Model (SPLISS), the model is based on nine pillars:

Pillar 1 is the financial support for the sport and for HP sport. The availability of financial resources in high performance sport increases the opportunities for athletes to develop and train in ideal circumstances, creating greater opportunities to achieve success in international events.

Pillar 2 is how a country organizes its structure, develops the sport policies and determines its goals. For a sport development, national policies should have at least a strategic long-term planning, a clear description of sport organisations roles and integration among them. Regardless of centralized or decentralized policies, greater government control or not, in the quest for international success high performance sport systems are converging to models, with some space for variation (Shibli et al., 2013).

Pillar 3 is the culture and sport participation of a population. There is a consensus that a large base of participants in various sport practices is positively correlated with the amount of results in the international competitions (Digel, 2005; Green and Oakley, 2001).

Pillar 4 entails existence of procedures for the detection, selection and promotion of sport talents, who will be top athletes in the future. When promoted to a main top teams, the career and the end of an athletic career comes into question; athletes who seek high performance must be dedicated only to training and in most cases are required to forfeit academic learning that would enable a professional activity at the end of their athletic career.

Pillar 5 considers a holistic support for athletes, which will provide full training conditions and a good transition between the end of the athlete's career and the continuity of their personal or professional life.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) runs a program that guides Olympic athletes into education with the goal of a better postretirement life. The IOC works in collaboration with Adecco, a global human resources company, in preparing athletes for their transition into the labour market (Olympic.org, 2009a, 2009b). The European Commission (EC) indicates that participating in sports promotes good physical and psychological health and personal growth and influences positive social values and economic growth; acknowledging the importance of balancing education and sport commitments, the EC (2007) emphasizes the importance of the dual career for young high-performance athletes —. in order to ensure the reintegration of professional sportspersons into the labour market at the end of their sporting careers.”

In Germany, the National Sport Federation, the University Sports Association, and several higher education institutions offer the services of 48 elite sport universities across the country for the purposes of a dual career for High Performance Athletes (Aquilina & Henry, 2010). In this framework, elite athletes benefit from carefully established entry criteria, flexible study and examination timetables, alternative means of completing courses, tutoring, monitoring,

and counselling. In the United Kingdom, an athlete has the opportunity to benefit from the services of the performance lifestyle advisor, who usually is eligible to negotiate directly with the teaching staff on behalf of the athlete (Aquilina & Henry, 2010).

Pillar 6 considers the existence of sporting facilities for practice and training.

Pillar 7 is the support and development of coaches. In this pillar two factors are crucial, namely; Training and Context of the Profession:

Training – quality of education and the opportunities for the professionals to become experts in the international level.

Context of the Profession – relate to the social importance of the coaches, including status, financial support, social security services and other initiative that make this skill more attractive as a profession.

Pillar 8 is about the national and international competitions. The role of competition is linked to the training and development process of athletes because it is through participation in the high quality and technical events where different important expertise for sports performance can be acquired,

Pillar 9 is concerned with the scientific contribution to high performance sport and the respective dissemination of scientific information. It can provide competitive advantages, because innovation and the use of applied sport science can be decisive in international sports performance.

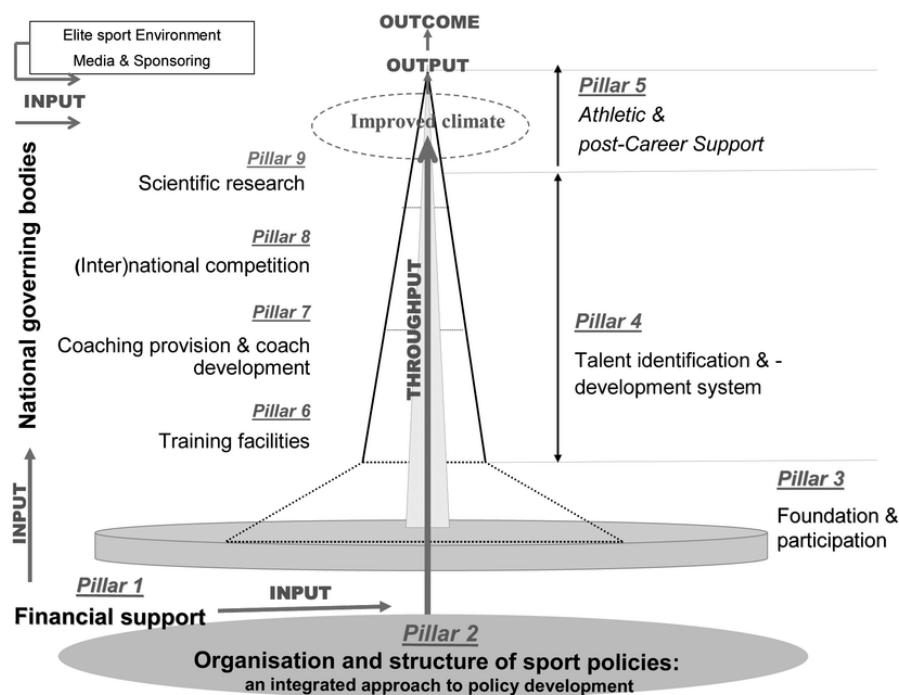


Figure 1. The nine pillars of the SPLISS strategy

Talent Development

According to R. Bailey and D. Morley (2006) abilities act as building blocks of talent or defining features and the process of talent development occurs when the child experiences period of structured learning. This process can be informal, that is self-taught, but more likely to take place within formal setting such as school. Gagne (1993) emphasized that learning, training and practise illustrate best the longitudinal dimension of talent development.

Williams and Reilly (2000) offer a sport-based model of talent development:



Figure 2. A Sport – Based Model of Talent Development

There are a number of characteristics that influence children talent development:

Environmental – Bloom (1985, p.3) emphasized that no matter what the initial characteristics or gifts of the individuals, unless there is a long and intensive process of encouragement, nurturance, education and training, the individuals will not attain extreme levels of capability in these particular fields.

Personal - Within the contexts of physical education and sporting activities, the role of fundamental movement skills may also be important (Abbott et al., 2002). The specialised movements of different activities are built on a foundation of basic skills, such as running, jumping, balancing and turning (Bailey, 2000). Children who lack these basic skills are often relegated to a life of exclusion from organised and free play experiences of their peers, and subsequently, to a lifetime of inactivity because of their frustration in early movement behaviour‘ (Seefeldt et al., cited in Abbott et al., 2002, p. 19). Whilst it is difficult to envisage a causative relationship, and as there is little empirical work in this area, it seems unarguable that high-level performance in any formalised physical activity will be impossible without an adequate foundation of fundamental movement skills.

Access and opportunity - Access to certain types of learning environment can be very influential in terms of achievement. The opportunity to study in a school with high expectations of its students and to be taught by teachers and coaches with specialist skills makes a significant contribution to later performance in specific domains. Conversely, children deprived of the necessary equipment and support to participate at even a rudimentary level will struggle to become aware of whatever talents they might possess. This may go some way to account for the reported difference in patterns of identification of gifted children among social economic groups (Eyre, 1997).

Talent identification procedures are frequently reduced to levels of current performance. However, as Abbott and her colleagues (2002, p. 26; emphasis in original) rightly emphasise, ‘there is a need to distinguish between determinants of performance and determinants of potential/skill acquisition’. Individual development is the result of an interaction between inherited abilities, social and cultural learning (Scarr & McCartney, 1983; Oyama, 2000; Bailey, 2003), and it is this interaction of processes that undermines simplistic correlations of ability and performance.

Literature Review Analysis

As stated in the literature, for effective and successful High Performance Strategy the Lesotho National Olympic Committee needs to incorporate in elements entail in High Performance Sport as well as Talent Development with the strategy to need the expectations of the stake holder; strategy is the direction and scope of an organisation over the long term through its configuration of resources and competences with the aim of fulfilling stakeholder expectations (Johnson et al., 2008).

Sporting Success Pillars	NOC/Lesotho Situation
1 – Financial Support	NOC Currently reliant on Olympic Solidarity funding, Commonwealth Sport and Government.
2 – Country Sport Structures	The Government through the Ministry of Sport recently (September 2022) published the Sport Policy which is meant to guide sport in Lesotho.
3 – Population participation in sport	The most popular sport in the country is Football and it's the most that the public pay attention to.
4 and 5– Athlete Career Transition	The NOC does not have structures/plan in regard to athlete transition either youth to elite sport or life after being an athlete.
6 – Sport Infrastructure	Lack of sporting facilities is one of the factors that hinder development of sport in the country; those that exist are either not in good condition or are not qualified by the International Federations.
7- Coaches Capacity building	The NOC take opportunities offered by Olympic Solidarity for coaches' capacity building, however there is massive loss of such investment as sport is still at a voluntary basis rather than a career.
8- National and International Competitions	A limited number of athletes- those identified as elite have access to international competitions. Fewer National Federations have funds to host National championships,
9 – Sport Science	The concept of sport science is still new in the sporting fraternity.

Table 1. SPLISS vs Lesotho National Olympic Committee Situation

The current High Performance Strategy is mostly reliant on programmes and funding available at Commonwealth Games Federation and International Olympic Committee - Olympic Solidarity programmes. Such programmes include: Games grants, athletes support, Coaches and administrators support.

The literature highlights that for a successful High Performance Sport, all stakeholders should play part, from government to athletes themselves. While the existing strategy was adopted by the General Assembly, it has implemented by the LNOC.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

Introduction

Research methodology is defined as the systematic, scientific and detailed problem – solving procedure. Research methodology requires a comprehensive analysis of a research problem and development or adoption of appropriate procedures in addressing the problem (Kothari, 2002)

Research Paradigm

The project will employ a pragmatic research approach and anticipates to apply qualitative research methods to collect, analyse and interpret data. According to (Mertens, 2009), pragmatism provides a philosophical framework for the qualitative research method, where qualitative data collecting method can be utilized with the intention of answering the research questions.

Selection of Data Sources

The methodological approach is to identify data sources that are key stakeholders to the success of the Lesotho National Olympic Committee High Performance Program through descriptive qualitative method.

Lesotho National Olympic Committee

The Lesotho NOC as a mother body in sport is entrusted to design and implement structures and programs for development and betterment of sport in the country, alongside all relevant stakeholders as mandated by the Olympic Charter; to encourage the development of high performance sport as well as sport for all (International Olympic Committee, 2020).

National Federations

The focus will be on five National Federations, namely; Athletics, Boxing, Cycling, Taekwondo and Weightlifting. The selected National Federations have proven to have potential athletes' talent pull and have managed in several competitions to show case such potential. Additionally, the five sports have been from 2017 direct beneficiaries of the High Performance Program through: athletes' scholarships, athletes' assistance to qualify and compete at major Games, coaches and administrators' capacity building.

Government of Lesotho

The Government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Sport is the main financier of Team Lesotho to major Games. The Ministry of Sport is also responsible through its implementing arm – Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission for grass root sport and talent identification. The government is also responsible to regulate laws that govern sport in Lesotho.

Organisation	Data Source
Lesotho National Olympic Committee	Secretary General/Chief Executive Officer
National Federations	Secretaries General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Athletics - Boxing - Taekwondo - Cycling - Weightlifting
Government of Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Director of Sport - Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission Chief Executive Officer

Table 2. Research Data Sources

Lesotho NOC/High Performance Strategy SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis reviews the environment that Lesotho NOC is currently operating under in as far as the High Performance Program is concerned.

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High Performance initiatives to support athletes, coaches and administrators; - Government support for participation to major Games; - Partnerships 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of financial resources; - Lack of sponsors; - Sport not perceived as a career opportunity; - Lack of sport facilities
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sponsorship deals; - Review of the High Performance Strategy; - Sport infrastructure 	Treats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Athletes career transition; - Doping, athletes safe guiding, harassment, competition manipulation - Loss of talent

Table 3. Organisation SWOT Analysis

CHAPTER 3

Data Collection

Interviews will be used as data collection tool for the project. The interviews will be structured in such a way that allows the flexibility of the use of structured and semi-structured way of interviewing:

- **Structured** - are essentially, verbally administered questionnaires, in which a list of predetermined questions are asked, with little or no variation and with no scope for follow-up questions to responses that warrant further elaboration. Consequently, they are relatively quick and easy to administer and may be of particular use if clarification of certain questions are required or if there are likely to be literacy or numeracy problems with the respondents. However, by their very nature, they only allow for limited participant responses and are, therefore, of little use if ‘_depth’ is required (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008).
- **Semi-Structured** - consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail. This interview format provides participants with some guidance on what to talk about. The flexibility of this approach, particularly compared to structured interviews, also allows for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the research team (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008).

Interview Questions

Question	Purpose	Possible follow up
1. Are you familiar with the Lesotho NOC High Performance Programme?	To pick if the interviewee is aware of the programme.	
2. Can you describe how your organisation has benefited/been involved in the NOC High Performance Programme?	To understand the interviewee's understanding of the programme.	
3. From your office point of view can you describe in your experience what is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Working well with the programme;- Not working well with the program.	To pick some of the issues and concerns raised.	Ask the interviewee why they think the aspects they raised are the way they are.

4. What are challenges hindering elite athletes' performance and talent development in Lesotho?	Depending on the answers, risks can also be identified; the question can also open up to more discussions and follow up questions.	How can they be solved? What can be the role of your office in solving the challenges?
5. In brief, what are some of the causes of the challenges you just raised?	Allows the interviewee to give opinion on the source and causes of the challenges.	
6. If you had complete power to change the High Performance Programme for improved athletes performance and talent development, what would you change?	Allows the interviewee to use their imagination to bring out issues and solutions.	Why they brought up the changes they did.
7. Is there anything else you can add to the discussion?	Allows to gather a few more insights from the interviewee that may have not been covered.	

Table 4. Interview Questions

For all questions the interviewer will be on the lookout for keywords in the interviewee's responses that may need further probing for clarification.

Data Analysis

Interviews

The below organisations were interviewed using virtual – zoom, methods of communication:

- Federation of Athletics Lesotho – Secretary General;
- Lesotho Boxing Association – Secretary General;
- Lesotho Weightlifting Federation – Secretary General;
- Federation of Cycling Lesotho – President;
- Lesotho Taekwondo Association – Secretary General;
- Lesotho National Olympic Committee – Secretary General/ Chief Executive Officer;
- Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission - President;
- Lesotho Athletes Commission Chair.

Lesotho National Olympic Committee High Performance Strategy Awareness:

National Federations

Generally, the five National Federations indicated are not aware of the strategy as an available document but rather aware of the benefits afforded by the Lesotho NOC through the High Performance Programme for development of athletes, coaches and administrators. They alluded that the strategy maybe known by the passed committees – given its adoption was in 2017, and the new committees were not oriented on the document.

Government of Lesotho - Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission

The Commission is fully aware of the Lesotho NOC High Performance Strategy. The President indicted that the Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission is running a similar programme to the High Performance Programme but at the development level.

Athletes Commission

The Commission is aware of the strategy and the athletes. Majority of the members of the commission are beneficiaries or have been in the past of the High Performance Programme.

Benefits derived from the NOC High Performance Programme:

The five interviewed National Federations are current beneficiaries of the Programme, mainly through athletes' scholarships in preparation for Games; Boxing secretary general indicated that the programmes enables boxers to have exposure and therefore improving their performance. The Taekwondo secretary general emphasized that through the programme they currently have an international female athlete who is working on qualifying for Paris 2024 Olympic Games;

---I think we are now having a real potential that she will also qualify directly if the program will still have enough funding to help facilitate her to compete and end points."

The National Federations have had coaches' capacitation under the programme through technical courses for coaches and international coaching courses. National Federations administrators are also attend the Sport Administration Courses and Advanced Sport Management Course offered by the NOC.

The Lesotho National Olympic Committee secretary general explained that the NOC is responsible for preparation and delivery of athletes to the Games;

"We champion everything, from planning up until to the very last execution of team delivery. We have the HP strategy, which augments and, provides direction, strategic direction of the organization. And then underneath, uh, we have segments because the NOC is actually a two purpose led organization. Its primary function is to ensure, uh, the propagation of in the

country. And then the second one is to ensure, um, the service delivery, uh, through performance programming so that we can help to represent in the country at the different platforms, starting with the youth category, the senior ones at different levels or at different, games... ”

Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission alluded that in collaboration with the NOC they are able to produce athletes at the development level for transition into elite level which is the sole responsibility of the NOC.

High Performance Programme delivery:

What is working well with the programme:

All stakeholders believe that the programme is consistent in affording support to athletes in preparation for competitions and Games and support towards officials' capacity building (coaches and administrators).

What is not working well with the programme:

“Firstly, the, the High Performance Program is, is a good initiative, but I think it's severely under-resourced.”, explained the Federation of Weightlifting Secretary General.

The Chair of Athletes Commission further mentioned that there is lack of monitoring and evaluation of the programme and therefore beneficiaries cannot be held accountable for not producing expected results. The National Federations indicated that the programme seem to be selective with trainings of officials; only coaches are afforded the opportunity while other important sections of officiating are neglected and such are; referees and judges.

Boxing indicated that the programme lacks the element of athletes' transition – preparation of athlete for life after their athletic career.

Challenges hindering performance and talent development:

The interviewee mentioned that lack of resources is one of the main challenges hindering elite athletes' performance and talent development in Lesotho, such resources include:

Finances – Sport is mostly reliant on government for support for participation in major Games. Private companies are reluctant to support sport as they believe there is no commercial benefit in sponsoring sport.

Time – Sport in Lesotho is still at an amateur level and therefore majority of athletes and officials are involved in sport as volunteers. Most of their time they spend serving their employer and sport is given a minimum time after work and/or on weekends.

Infrastructure - there is currently lack of competition and training facilities.

Human – The High Performance Programme is under staffed. We lack qualified high level coaches that can be entrusted with podium performance.

Changes needed to improve performance and develop talent:

The emphasis was made by most of the interviewees of the need for sports academy in Lesotho. They also mentioned the importance of the government recognising and affording sport the support needed; such support include:

- Timely support to athletes preparation for the major games; government usually avails funding at the eleventh hour as such athletes more often participate in competitions less prepared.
- Availability of infrastructure for athletes training and competition.

The data collected also indicated that the Lesotho National Olympic Committee should have an increase in the number of scholarships offered to athletes. And while the Lesotho NOC capacitate in large numbers the sports administrators and coaches through programmes availed by Olympic Solidarity, similar support should be afforded to the judges and empires.

Interviews Limitations

- Again, it was difficult to secure appointments due to busy schedules of those identified interviewees.
- Some of the identified interviewee could not agree to the interview as the mentioned they were new in those positions of interest while others were on leave.

Data Critique

It is apparent from the research that majority of Lesotho National Olympic Committee stakeholders are well informed about the benefits offered by High Performance Programme (High Performance Strategy). However, the collected data highlights few pillars that according to the research are crucial for successful High Performance Sport Policy/Strategy:

- Pillar 1, 7 and 8: there is emphasis on the benefits offered by the NOC through the High Performance Programme, financial support towards athletes' participation to competitions and Games and day to day preparations for competitions. Support towards coaches and administrators for capacity building.

However, the data collected does not mention the importance of other pillars that the research has proven crucial for athletes' performance and talent development. The research has shown the importance of:

- Culture and population participation in the success of sport – The nation support to athletes brings about positive mind set to athletes entrusted to deliver good performance at international competitions and thereof positive results;

- The benefits of a Long Term Athletes Development Programme – Is both a guide for developing athletes and physical activity participants and a powerful tool for change within sport system. It's goals are to make sport more inclusive, more integrated and of higher quality while making the development of high performance athletes more systematic. Istvan BALYI, Richard WAY and Colin HIGGS (2013);

- The importance of sport fraternities having Athletes Transition Strategies - The strategy entails a road map and guidance for an athlete's life during and posts their sporting career. Having such strategies in plans helps manage frustrations post athletic career as many athlete feel stranded with what to do next in their lives. The International Olympic Committee has introduced Athlete 365 and one of the programme initiatives is Career+; the initiative offers tailored advice, workshops, learning tools and resources to help athletes plan their career path and navigate towards success. It further empowers athletes to explore the importance of pursuing education and preparing for the labour market in order to stride more confidently into a dual and post sports career, through:
 - Career planning and guidance;
 - Skills building;
 - Employment support;
 - Networking opportunities

- Science has proven as an essential in sport and it is crucial to be incorporated for the benefit of athletes - : Sport science is a multidisciplinary field, that is, exercise physiology, biomechanics, motor control and motor development, sport psychology and sports nutrition, concerned with the understanding and enhancement of sports performance. Sport science can be thought of as using the scientific process to guide the practice of sport with the ultimate aim of improving sports performance, Bishop D (2008).

The Talent Development model as per the study emphasises the four stages that contribute to suitable development of talent. The data does not highlight the processes involved in talent development. The research also indicates that characteristics that contribute to children's talent development should be taken into consideration in nurturing and developing talent for awarding performance:

- Environmental – the environment in which a child grows in builds them as humans and therefore shapes their future and interests in what is offered by such surroundings.
- Personal – when it comes to sports it is advantageous to target children who already have athletic skills; nurturing and channelling such children become easy for both coaches being talent developers and athletes themselves.
- Access and opportunities – when there is access to resources such as infrastructure and finances, participating and taking part in sports becomes motivating for the upcoming talent.

Proposal

Through the research and data collected, it can be concluded that there are gaps in the current Lesotho National Olympic Committee High Performance Strategy. The strategy in place is silent on crucial elements contributing to a successful athletes programme and therefore compromising the LNOC's mission of becoming top five in Africa. It is therefore important for the Strategy to be reviewed.

Objectives

- To involve all stakeholders in the development of the strategy: it is crucial to engage the NOC stakeholders to shape up the High Performance strategy so they can have ownership of the programme and to have their support in the implementation; thereof obtaining the set objectives of the organisation;
- To improve the existing document for better results: the current strategy does not include elements that have been proven by the research to be essential for a successful delivery of a high performance programme.

Expected Outcomes

- A reviewed High Performance Strategy – With the current Strategic Plan, the NOC is mandated to be in the top 5 African Countries in terms of performance. The reviewed strategy will ensure improved athletes performances and medals winning; the engaged stakeholders will support monitor the programmes for successful results. Again, the Ministry of Sport being the main funder for preparation of athletes for the games will be more understanding on our requests for the programmes funding when more informed and engaged in its development. The National Federations will be no understanding and appreciative of the NOC High Performance programmes if included and engaged in the processes.
- New strategy adopted by the General Assembly
- Stakeholders oriented on the new strategy

Budget

Description	Quantity	Frequency	Unit Cost (\$)	Total (\$)
<i>Expenses</i>				
Review Sessions	20	2	100.00	4,000.00
Stakeholders Orientation	100	1	44.00	4,400.00
Experts fee	2	1	1,380.00	2,760.00
<i>Total Expenses</i>				<u>11,160.00</u>
<i>Income</i>				
ANOCA grant - NOC Activities				12,000.00

Table 5. Project Budget

Notes:

- The review of the strategy will be carried out by the appointed experts by the NOC.
- Representatives of the National Federations, Ministry of Sport, High Performance Staff, Board members.
- All stakeholders will undergo orientation of the strategy.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are being suggested from the findings of the study:

Priority	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Resources	Timescale	Critical Success Factors
1	Engage Stakeholders for High Performance Strategy development and implementation.	The NOC should classify its stakeholders in such a way that it informs their engagement in the High Performance Programme through the Stakeholders' Interest versus Influence matrix.	Secretary General/Chief Executive Officer	Time	October 2023	A well informed High Performance Programme that will yield results for the organisation.
2	Appoint experts for the reversion of the High Performance Strategy.	Call for proposals for experts to assist review the existing strategy.	Chief Operations Officer	Financial	March 2024	A reviewed document that assists and ensures better performance for athletes.
3	Design Outreach programmes for other sporting codes other than the five already benefiting from the programme.	Implement a programme that targets other NFs should be developed and implemented in order to increase the appetite to be part of the LNOC High Performance Programme to increase chances of obtaining medals as mandated by the mission.	High Performance Coordinator	Time Financial Human	March 2024	More National Federations benefiting or enrolled in the High Performance Programme.
4	Engage Government for support to	Lobby government through	Secretary	Time	March 2024	Government through the Ministry of

	sport development	the Ministry of Sport to develop sporting infrastructure in Lesotho because sport cannot be played or developed with limited or below standard sporting facilities.	General/Chief Executive Officer			Sport commitment to support sport to improve athletes' performance and for talent development in the country.
5	Develop Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy	Implement the High Performance Monitoring and Evaluation tool to keep track where the programme is delivered as outlined in the strategy and aligned with the organisation strategic plan. It is also a good management tool which should, if used properly, provide continuous feedback on the project implementation as well assist in the identification of potential successes and constraints to facilitate timely decisions....Evaluation can be defined as a process which determines as systematically and as objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of activities in the light of a project / programme performance, focusing on the	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	Time	April 2024	Successful implementation of the High Performance Programme – objectives met as outlined in the strategy

		analysis of the progress made towards the achievement of the stated objectives.' Dama Academic Scholarly & Scientific Research Society (2019).				
6	Develop Sponsorship packages for potential sponsors:	Approach potential sponsors to invest in sports. The packages developed should entail return on investment for such companies and the tax rebate associated with sponsoring sporting activities.	Marketing Officer and High Performance Coordinator	Time Human Financial	March 2023	More sponsorship scored for athletes support.
7	Design a model earmarked to retaining current sponsors.	Implement sponsors retention model.	Marketing Officer	Time	December 2023	More sponsors on board as opposed to losing the already existing.

Table 6. Recommendations

Stakeholders' Interest versus Influence matrix:

Stakeholders' Influence	Public	National Federations Government Sponsors Athletes
	Partners	Media
Stakeholders' Interest		

Figure 3. Stakeholders' Interest versus Influence matrix

A stakeholder matrix is important because it can help identify the level of each stakeholder's power and interest. Additional benefits include providing guidance for communication goals, confirming interest in the project, and identifying key personnel. A stakeholder analysis map is a way to identify your project stakeholders and the impact they might have on the project based on two key aspects: stakeholder impact and stakeholder interest. A stakeholder map can help you understand which stakeholders have a high and low impact on your project and which stakeholders have a high or low interest in your work. That way, you can effectively communicate with all of your project stakeholders—in the way that works best for them, Martins J. (2023).

Project Limitations

The research proposes the review of the Lesotho National Olympic Committee High Performance Strategy for an impactful High Performance Programme. It proposes the inclusion of model of a successful high performance programme and model to develop a talent development programme. It is however important to compare the strategy before and after review with neighbouring countries that seem to be successful in reaching the podium; such maybe Botswana and South Africa.

Areas of Research in the Project

Further research needs to be conducted to establish the relevance of the research to Lesotho, more especially with the proposed models to be introduced.

Conclusions of the thesis

It can therefore be concluded from this research that National Federation benefit from the High Performance Programme which is guided by the High Performance Strategy; however there are specific tasks to be carried out as mentioned in the recommendations in order to achieve the purpose of the strategy. All interviewed National Federations indicated that they benefit mostly financially and through educational programmes organised by Lesotho National Olympic Committee.

The interviewees further illustrated that the athletes related opportunities availed by the Lesotho National Olympic Committee ensures athletes access to adequate trainings, competitions and major games, such opportunities are however limited to a limited number of athletes which results in limiting chances of achieving podium performance.

The study discovered that for the Lesotho National Olympic Committee to realise its mission to be amongst the top five African countries, it is of great importance to implement all models necessary for elite athletes' performance and models for impactful talent development.

It is also evident that for a successful delivery of a programme all stakeholders need to be on board and engaged throughout the implementation using the stakeholder interest matrix model.

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Interviews Summary

The following were recordings from the interviews

1. Name of the organisation: Federation of Athletics Lesotho

Interviewee 1

- 1.1 On question of familiarity and knowledge about the High Performance Programme, the interviewee responded that he is aware of the programme as his National Federation has been benefiting.
- 1.2 The interviewee described that his National Federation has benefited from the High Performance Programme through scholarships awarded to the top athletes and capacitaion of administrators.
- 1.3 When asked what does work well with the programme, he mentioned the support given to administrators and athletes. And what does not work well is lack of discipline for most athletes under the High Performance programme, both the NOC and NF need to come up with measures to cab the misconduct of those athletes under the programme.
- 1.4 The interviewee's response on what is hindering elite athletes' performance and talent development was lack of financial support.
- 1.5 When asked what he would change is he had complete power, the interviewee mentioned that he would bring sponsors to support sport and invest in sport infrastructure to benefit athletes.

2. Name of the organisation: Lesotho Boxing Association

Interviewee 2

- 2.1 The interviewee mentioned he is aware of the programme since Boxing has benefited a lot from it.
- 2.2 He explained that Boxing has a number of coaches trained through the High Performance Programme. Again both coaches and athletes are support to get international exposure by attending competitions.
- 2.3 When asked what is working well with the programme, the Boxing Secretary General mentioned that the NOC has dedicated High Performance Personnel that guide National Federations on the available opportunities for their benefit. What is not working well however is the absence of athletes transition programme.
- 2.4 Lack of resources he mentioned as a result of the hindered athletes performance and talent development.
- 2.5 If he was in complete power he explained he would develop a multi-sport academy.
- 2.6 He further mentioned that lack of highly qualified officials hampers the sports growth in the country; during major games he mentioned they have to seek assistance from other countries.

3. Name of the organisation: Federation of Cycling Lesotho

Interviewee 3

- 3.1 The interviewee mentioned he is aware of the programme as Cycling has been beneficiaries for years.
- 3.2 He described the benefits they receive as being in three phases: Athletes support, Administrators support and Coaches support.
- 3.3 The interview mentioned that the support they get from the programme is what is working well for the National Federation; however such support is not sufficient which is what is not working well with the programme.
- 3.4 Limited resources he mentioned as the main problem hindering elite athletes' performance and talent development in the country.

4. Name of the organisation: Lesotho Taekwondo Association

Interviewee 4

- 4.1 When asked whether he is familiar with the high Performance programme and how the National Federation has benefited, the Secretary General indicated that they have a female top ranking athlete because of the support through athletes' scholarships. He further explained that it is through the programme they have athletes placed at International High Performance Centres (Taekwondo Competence Centre, Germany).
- 4.2 He also mentioned that athletes transition is what is lacking with the programme, and the absence of such leaves athletes stranded more especially after retirement or if an injury occurs.

5. Name of the organisation: Lesotho Weightlifting Federation

Interviewee 5

- 5.1 The interviewee was asked if they are aware of the High Performance Programme; the Secretary General indicated she is aware as they are beneficiaries of the programme.
- 5.2 When asked how the National federation benefited from the programme, the interviewee explained that they have athletes on scholarship, athletes are supported to attend international competitions and thereof improve their rankings. It is though the programme that the National Federation has its coaches trained – technical courses for coaches and international coaching courses.
- 5.3 While the interviewee narrated support offered through the programmes as what is working well, she mentioned that the budgets allocated to support National Federations or athletes are not clear as a result planning on their part becomes difficult.

- 5.4 She explained that the absence of athletes' development programmes within both Lesotho National Olympic Committee and the National Federations is what is hindering elite athletes performance and talent development.
- 5.5 When asked what she would change if in complete power, the interviewee indicated that she could source for other funding streams and not be reliant on Olympic Solidarity and Commonwealth Games grants only.
- 5.6 She further mentioned that, high performance does not only mean those National Federations the NOC has identified to support, that other National Federations should be afforded similar support for growth,

6. Name of the organisation: Lesotho Athletes Commission

Interviewee 6

- 6.1 The chair of the athletes' commission explained that he is fully aware of the High Performance Programme because he is a beneficiary as he is still an active boxer.
- 6.2 When asked how the commission has benefited from the programme, the interviewee mentioned that he was the scholarship holder in preparation for the Olympic Games. The support assisted him to qualify for Rio 2016 Olympic Games and has been representing Lesotho on international Games.
- 6.3 While there is a lot of support offered by the programme, the interviewee explained that there is lack of monitoring and evaluation of those benefiting from the programme; hence there is less results yield from athletes who are expected to rather be performing at their best.
- 6.4 On the question of what is hindering elite athletes performance and talent development, the interviewee explained that there is no government support and such is caused by the appointment of Sports Minister who have less interest in sports because they may not have sporting background.

7. Name of the organisation: Lesotho Sports and Recreation Commission

Interviewee 7

- 7.1 On the question of whether he is aware of the High Performance Programme, the interview mention that he is given that his organisation is running a similar programme but at development level.
- 7.2 He mentioned that he does not know in deep details what benefits the programme has but is aware it supports athletes to attend competitions and assists talent identification.
- 7.3 When asked what is hindering elite athletes performance and talent development, the interviewee mentioned: infrastructure, insufficient funding and lack of support.
- 7.4 The interviewee mentioned that he would invest in infrastructure if he had complete power.

8. Name of the organisation: Lesotho National Olympic Committee

Interviewee 8

- 8.1 When asked what is the role of the Lesotho National Olympic Committee in the High Performance Programme, the interviewee explained that the NOC is responsible for planning through to execution of the programme. He further illustrated that the NOC through the High Performance unit is responsible for athletes' preparation and delivery of Team Lesotho to major Games.
- 8.2 The interview further indicated that it is through the High Performance Programme that support is afforded to athletes as the programme entails a group of experts whose role is to attend to athletes daily needs:



8.3 On what is not working well with the programme, the Secretary General indicated that when the NOC introduce the High Performance unit the appointed coordinator had to be capacited to perform the new task and that took time for the unit to take shape. What is working well with the programme, the interviewee explained that the programme was designed to address five problems with the seven key priorities:

Problems Addressed:

- Athletes do not feel supported.
- No easy access to facilities and services.
- Talent loss through injury, finances.
- Duplication of efforts.
- Resources poorly managed.

Key priorities:

- Lead a highly effective High-Performance System that ensures resources are targeted and prioritised to deliver performance outcomes.
- Work in partnership to increase the stability and technical capacity of National Federations.
- Maximise opportunities and partnerships to see our athletes training at world-class high-performance centres.
- Deliver a comprehensive high-performance training, performance and recovery support system to meet the requirements of elite sport.
- Empower high-performance athletes and coaches to focus on daily training and competitions (Scholarships).
- Employ effective channels of communication that ensure that the athlete gets prompt, efficient and professional assistance.
- Exploit the advantage of innovation, technology and shared-knowledge to increase performance.

8.4 The NOC Chief Executive was further asked what is hindering elite athletes' performance and talent development in the country; his response was that there is inadequate number of qualified coaches that can be entrusted with the athletes' podium performance. The current less qualified coaches being engaged do not add value to the performance and discipline of athletes attached to them, for example, they listen to athletes on the way they wish to be trained as opposed to taking control of the training programme and engage the athletes where necessary. Lack of resources such as infrastructure and finances still remain a major challenge. Lack of technical knowledge for technical personnel also remains a challenge.

The other challenge is the two sport mother bodies being Lesotho National Olympic Committee and Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission do not work hand in hand. The Sports Commission focuses on its programme (Region 5 Games and African Games) while the NOC focuses on the Games managed by it (Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Beach Games and African Youth Games). The two bodies

working individually results in efforts being duplicated as same athletes are selected to represent the country at the games mentioned.

8.5 On the question of what he would change if in complete power; he mentioned that he would:

- Invest in athletes being exposed to international competitions.
- Have a pull of qualified technical personnel.
- Build relations with international offices to assist athletes access to competition and training, he made an example of the female Taekwondo athlete having challenges obtaining Belgium visa for her placement in a training center.

8.6 The interviewee mentioned that the NOC is aware of the challenges is strategies will be put in place to address them. Investments will be made geared towards athletes' performance and talent development.

Appendix A

Interview 1

Interviewee: Hello.

Interviewer: Hello and welcome to the interview and thank you very much for agreeing to it.

Interviewee: Ok.

Interviewer: My name is Likeleko Lepitla, I'm the high performance coordinator at the Lesotho National Olympic Committee, and I'm currently doing MEMOS and my project title is s Review of the National Olympic Committee High Performance Strategy for Optimum Elite and Upcoming Athletes Performance and Talent Development. I have a total of six questions that we're going to go through. Uh, may you please introduce yourself.

Interviewee: My name is Moroke Mokhotho, I am the Athletes Commission chairperson at National Olympic Committee and high Performance Scholarship holder. That's all.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you very much. I did mention, uh, we have a total of six questions. So our first question goes, can you please describe how your office, your office being you as the chair of athletes commission, how is the commission involved with the Lesotho National Olympic Committee High Performance Program? Or how do you know about the program? How does your office know about the program?

Interviewee: All right, National Olympic Committee has a program through high performance that aims to help athletes, active athletes through, different opportunities such as, funding them, through their trainings, giving them support and exposing them to high performance centers worldwide. And the National Olympic Committee makes this available through their workshops with the athletes and the National Federations involvement.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you very much. You did mention that, other than being the chair of the commission that you have benefited from the program. So, can you please describe what you find working well with the program? That's one and what you find not working so well with the program?

Interviewee: I find it working where the athletes benefit are benefiting successfully from high performance programs because they are getting their monthly allowances, they are getting their equipment and even the trainings are progressing quite well since it pays up the membership to the trainings to, to the gym. And I find it not working where there are lack of follow up with the project such as, following up whether the athletes are training well, whether they submitted programs made by National Federations and coaches are being followed up done well.

Interviewer: Okay. Our third question is basically a follow up, on our second question. So our third question goes, what are challenges? What do you think are challenges hindering

elite athletes performance and talent development in Lesotho? In your view, what are the challenges hindering elite athletes performance and talent development in our country?

Interviewee: I think, our government, is the one responsible for the hindrance of the performance of the athletes. Because, it doesn't seem like our government is supporting sport in general. So by that Lesotho cannot perform well due to finances, infrastructure and diet, I can say because for athletes to perform at high level he or she has to have a certain diet. And in this case, it is not happening in our country. So I think even the development as well, they, young athletes are lacking motivation because they see their senior athletes suffering like them, whereas they are representing country worldwide. So I think we cannot progress under the circumstances.

Interviewer: Okay. That, so just a follow up question, what do you think is the role of your office in solving that problem you have just raised, you're heading a very quickly, so how do you think you can go about attempting to solve this problem?

Interviewee: Well, I guess in our action, we are drawing action plan that serves as a link between government, the Olympic committee, as well as athletes and National Federations. So we are trying to sensitize the government about the importance of sport in general in the country. And then we are making sure that even the athletes as well know about their responsibilities and their dos and Donts. So I think, I think in that aspect we are going to reach what we are looking for that is having a government being involved both financially and supporting them emotionally. Because our problem is not on the performance, it's only support that we have as a nation.

Interviewer: Okay. Question four, I think you just emphasized on our previous questions that, you don't think our government, is really paying attention in as far as sport is concerned. And one would feel, we have the minister of sport for the purpose of paying attention to sport. So what do you think is the cause of this challenge where we find our government not really knowing what's happening as far as sport is concerned, yet we have a ministry responsible for sport?

Interviewee: I think that that the appointment of minister responsible for sport is the main concern. And it seems like sport is given a minister that is clueless on sport. So whenever they come to that office and occupy that office they want to polish and want to reward themselves politically and neglecting the core values of sport and their mandate as the ministry. So that's then we are getting a problem.

Interviewer: Okay. And that, so our second last question, So if you were in complete power to change the N O C high performance program to improve athletes performance and for purposes of talent development, what would you change and why those changes?

Interviewee: First of all I would put an higher administer of sport based on merits. In the appropriate, field of sport administration, administration wise and performance wise, because that's where he has to perfect his job. Because if he's not at all cost administrated from sport, I think, that's what we are getting problem there.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Last question, is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion, we have maybe left something that you may wish to share?

Interviewee: Well, I think we have already touched that our athletes doesn't have any problem based on the performance. It's just that the lack of motivation, the lack exposure. So having being satisfied on that, I guess, our performance and our athletes can good worldwide athletes, not only our national athletes. Yes. So I think getting motivation and support that will be the best way to, to have athletes in.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. I did say our interview won't be that long. And that's basically the end of it. And if you may wish and, um, would want to have this recording, I, I'm more than willing to share that.

Interviewee: Okay. Thank you very much.

Interviewee: Thank you for your time. Bye-bye.

Interview 2

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you, sir, for creating time for this interview. I will start off by introducing myself. I am Likeleko Lepitla I work for the Lesotho National Olympic Committee as a high-performance coordinator, and, u you may be aware that I am currently doing MEMOS and my research topic is around high performance. I would like you to introduce yourself that day.

Interviewee: My name is name Lehlohonolo Snyman. I am the Secretary General of the Association.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much. I basically have a total of six questions that we are going to go through. The first question goes, can you describe how your NF has benefited or is being involved with the N O C High Performance Program?

Interviewee: Our NF boxing has benefited a lot through the program. We had several members of boxers who have been part of the program and we are happy to say their performance in the ring have improved due to the program. The program has exposed our athletes to a higher level of preparation, trainings and to a pool of experts that helps to shape up the athletes. And not only that, the involved or the consent athletes in the program benefited, also their peers in that they were able to transfer the skills and the techniques that they have acquired through the program to, to their fellow boxes. Well, these are the benefit, of that program and they do not only go to the boxers as players, it also extends the coaches. The coaches get trained, they get exposure and they acquire new techniques. They get to perform or operate at different higher level they get to, to interact with the coaches of the higher calibre. We also as the association and I think the sporting fraternity in the benefited from the program in that as the sports administrator, as a non-technical and technical as well have gotten some training on sports sport management at different levels. And I think we have benefited as I said earlier that we have benefited a lot, and then I am hoping that we'll still benefit through the program.

Interviewer: Thank you. Next question, those, from your office point of view, what do you see working with the program? That's one and two, what do you see not working so well with the program? I'm sure one least and gaps you, you may have seen with the program, and what do you see working perfect with the program? I know you have highlighted some of the good things that the program does for your national federation, but if you still want to add more, please do. But do say what's not working so well with the program. Thank you.

Interviewee: What's working for the program is, well, I think first of all, our N O C has got a dedicated staff, and then I think they openly give information with transparency and present opportunities and guide us through in getting the appropriate effortless of personnel for the programs. Actually, just like I said the programs helps us in performance, both in the ring and outside the ring that is, administration wise, what is not working well, not necessarily working well, but the improvement that I would ask would be the resources. As much as the program is good, we are limited on financial resources, I suppose and also the expertise as well. Yes, we do have expertise in how to support the program, but I also think

that if they can be trained further in some other fields or aspect of the sporting fraternity be introduced into the program would be good for us. For example I know our N O C is working tirelessly to see to it that we have got the transition program, what do you call it? This program that after sporting program, so that our athletes do not get look like abandoned after the sporting career.

Interviewer: Athletes transition program.

Interviewee: Athletes transition program. I think if that, those elements can be put into the program and be part of the curriculum and then be monitored for the implementation that would help a lot in that we don't lose talent. Talent in terms of technical and the talent in terms of emotions of the boxers, which boils down into the wellbeing of the society.

Interviewer: Thank you. Moving on to question three, what are the challenges hindering elite athletes performance and talent development in the country?

Interviewee: Is the resources. I think the responsible most dwell around the resources. We lack financial resources, which will boil down into equipment and all other supporting resources. We also lack time because we don't have like a clear program of maybe concentrating on or making the athletes concentrate on the sport while they are also progressing with other aspects of lives. So given that maybe lack of resources financial resource our athletes have to shackle between building the future outside sport and also performing within the sports. So if ever we could have a program where we develop the athletes technically to perform good in sport and also is able to develop other aspects of life like education and building a career outside sports, if ever be, which will in the end boil down into helping sport.

I'll make an example. If say we have got a brilliant athlete who is elite and good performing and also good academically, maybe with the understanding and ambition in sport would be a doctor, say he is got good and then he becomes a doctor, then he would be able through the program, we would be able to channel his academic endeavour into being a sporting medical practitioner. Maybe with technical expertise and this experience that he acquired while he was still an active player, I would say a boxer in our case.

Interviewer: Just a follow up question, narrowing it down to just boxing. How do you feel the challenges that you have mentioned can be solved? How, looking at the role that you are playing within the federation, being the sg, your role, how do you follow or you can be able to, to solve those challenges for boxers benefit?

Interviewee: Thank you, I think if we have, if ever, we could have a center, some sort of a center because we cannot go away from the fact that we operate from the city that the capital city in Maseru. So indeed, we have the good talent in Butha-Buthe, definitely it is difficult for us to move all the resources from Maseru to Butha-Buthe, So it would be economically viable to move a boxer from Butha-Buthe to Maseru if you ever could have an arrangement where as we develop the boxer technically we could also have an arrangement where athlete is in Maseru doing boxing, and then he could, he can be continuing the studies without any

problems. I think that would help us a lot in building the capacity in the ring and building the future capacity as a professional and the responsible adult.

Interviewer: Okay. Moving on to question four, still somehow related to question three, you did mention that the challenges that are hindering athletes performance and talent development basically are lack of resources. You did mention funding, time and human. What do you think cause that, why do we lack resources?

Interviewee: we lack resources as a nation. Because we are developing country, we are poor. We locally and the olympic solidarity, yes, it gives us funds. I'm not even complaining, but they are not enough to cover all what is planned.

Interviewer: Yeah. True.

Interviewee: Also lack of resources. I think we boxing specifically this time, we have got IOC, we have got suspension because of the IBA governance and that hampers mobilization of resources maybe into the program because of the not so good relationships between those two mother bodies. So I think if we could mobilize the resources maybe say directed into the program through coordination of IBA and the I O C would be better. But as from locally I'm not an economist, but I am the financial planner. In the financing field, and I can attest that our country economic performance is very poor and is not developing anytime soon. So as from mobilizing the resources locally, it would be a challenge that would be overcome not in the near future, maybe after four or five years. So as we just talking, I cannot actually invest, anything or promise anything that you can mobilize some resources from locally. But like I said if they can be a smooth coordination between I O C and IBA, then that could be better. I don't know if I have answered the question.

Interviewer: No, you did. Thank you. And second last question. If you were in complete power to change the now existing high performance program to improve our athletes performance and for the benefit of talent development, what would you change? Why those changes?

Interviewee: Okay. Power. I would mobilize resources to build not only the high performance center, but let me say the sporting center, big facility in which one component would be a high performance center. And my system would be the technical section where we develop athletes with supporting experts and also having some sort of the academy that is academy in sense of education, formal education, where there is a clear and smooth coordination between the athlete or this person as the athlete and this person as a student and the human being. So in that case would be able to identify talent. I'm answering the second part of the question, why these changes and so in this case would be able to in fact, after the talent has been identified, would be able to evaluate the challenge, as that happened, being able to build the, the human being into becoming the responsible and the resourceful adult into not only sport, but the economy and the wellbeing of the nation as well.

Interviewer: Okay. So our last question goes do you feel like there's anything we might have left out in our discussion that you feel you want to, you know, talk about?

Interviewee: Not, not really. I think it would be, maybe the reinforcement of the main points. We are happy, very much happy with the program. We like it and love it. Okay. Actually, I have left out, I have realized that not if I'm not aware that in boxing we have got this other technical section or part of the refereeing and the judging

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Interviewee: Refereeing and judging. So locally we don't have qualified ranking officials. Not in ranking because mentioning IBA directly here with the situation, IBA, IOC situation. I should say the qualified officials that would be considered for international judging and refereeing, we don't have that kind of people here. So it looks like the program does not include judging or referee officials. So if ever the program can include that, then I think it'll be somehow complete in that it taking, it, it's taking all the aspect of the sporting us I will make an example if we develop a boxer through the program, and he becomes a good boxer or in his way of becoming a good boxer he goes through a series of evaluation, including regional, I mean local, regional and international tournaments, championships and games. So if we don't have qualified, fair and understanding refereeing and judging that's going to hamper the development of box in that there might be a wrongs due to unqualified or lack of experience or lack of technical expertise of the referees and judge. So that might demoralize the boxer and maybe promote the wrong or the not so good performing boxer because of the inexperience and unqualified official.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you.

Interview 3

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you for agreeing to this interview, for making time. I start off by introducing myself, my name is Likeleko Lepitla. I work for the National Olympic Committee as the High performance Coordinator. As you know, I'm currently doing MEMOS and my project is around, high performance and talent development. May you please introduce yourself.

Interviewee: Okay, Thank you very much. Um, my name is Makatile Rammotang. I am the president of Federation of Cycling Lesotho.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much. We have a total of six questions that we will go through, so I guess we can get to it. Our first question, can you please describe how your National Federation has benefited or has been involved in the high performance program of the National Olympic Committee?

Interviewee: Okay. Yes. Our federation did benefit, from the Lesotho National Olympic Committee High Performance Program. So we know about it. It's actually a music to our ears. Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: How have you benefited?

Interviewee: Okay. We have benefited in three phases. I know that people may only think that this program is based on development of an athlete but it's not like that. Cycling has benefited in other two things, which I will say this program assisted our athletes to achieve let me say as the Nation of Federation, we need athletes who are understanding, we need technical officials, that are skilled and which are trained and we need people who understand the sport and who can market the sport. So other than this thing of the program benefiting the athletes in their training needs and their competition needs, we have benefited because this program also assisted our persons in terms of converting them into technical officials. And the third point is this, we are training athletes to be known, to be seen by other people so that they'll be sellable to other high clubs or teams that may adopt them as their team members. So this program assisted our athletes because it's now acting as an agent that makes our athletes to be known or to be seen. Because the anyone who is in the program can go abroad, can go anywhere where those people can see him so is actually an agent to us. Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, thank you very much. Our second question; from your office point of view how can you describe the program? Okay, let me rephrase this from your office point of view in can you please describe how you see the program working? Well, that's one and where the program is not working so well.

Interviewee: Okay. From our point of view this program is working well because it's helping us to analyze the future of our athletes. If you want to gauge our performance or the performance of our athletes, we are using the same standards that are being used in this program. If the program will say maybe we need a 16 year old boy who is doing a certain, maybe an average of 20 kilometers per hour. We know that this standard is for athletes who will, whom we think they will compete better and they will they will raise our country's flag.

So we use that, those standards to monitor our athlete performance. From there, if an athlete is within this program and fails to perform the obligations of this program, we know that this athlete is not liable or is not eligible to compete as an athlete. So it's helping us to see the future of our athletes. If they're failing the standards, then when it comes to the National Federation, now we see that, okay our athletes is actually having the shots in this portion, this portion, and this portion from there, these athletes. It's working well because, like I said, it's acting as an urgent. Let me make an, let me make an example. One of our athletes is a beneficiary to this program and cause of this program, he was able to attend the World Championships. He was able to attend the bigger the competitions, the bigger events, and the competitions that will help, will assist him and make him to be known or seen by people who might be interested in him.

And because of that, he was able to get a team. So this program actually worked on behalf of us as an agent, you see from there us as the National Federations, we don't have enough resources. We don't have enough finance to finance our athletes to go anywhere they want to go. So this program is actually assisting us a lot because any athlete with who is in this program, will be able to attend the competitions that they, that they're of bigger target, yes.

From there as the National Federation. To us, this program is working very well for us, because other than this, development of cycle development of athletes towards their high performance goals, I've seen nowadays that this program is assisting our athletes. Because he's now a, a level three coach. So, it'll be possible for the, for the National Federation to also use Tumelo as the technical official of the federation, because other than him being an athlete, now, he has been converted into a technical official. So it's actually helping us.

Interviewer: Okay. And any limitations? The support is sufficient?

Interviewee: No. let me say the support it's actually average because it's not sufficient because in cycling, what makes our efforts to be more competitive is when they are attending competition time to time week to week and because of the financial constraints, I think the program can't afford to cover the cost of our athletes going to competitions week to week but at least once a month we have seen that it's actually assisting, but it has a shortage, actually.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Moving on to question three, what are the challenges, hindering elite athletes performance and talent development in Lesotho?

Interviewee: Okay. in the context of Lesotho as a country we are having a challenge of limited resources. this high performance program is working for us, but it's also limited because it's taking limited number of elite athletes whereas when it was broader, it would help us to broaden our base of elite athletes. making example of cycling, Tumelo is the only, athlete who is benefiting from this program and if we had more than three or more than four, athletes who are benefiting from this program, it would say that the broader base of our athletes, it's much bigger. We are not only having confidence that Tumelo will work for the country, but we'll be talking about more than five athletes who will be raising our flag our country's flag, national, international competition.

So that is hindering their performance because athletes cannot compete alone and the performance improves when we have more athletes of the same level. If you get to me from there one of the challenges that maybe I didn't mention is because of these limited resources, the program, it's focusing more on development of athletes forgetting that these athletes are having some stakeholders surrounding them. Let me make an example of a coach, for an athlete to perform well every time he needs to have his coach with him every time you see, but if we are having the limited resources, it would say the coach will only draw a training program and the athlete will go to the training alone. But when we had sufficient resources, it would mean if the coach had to follow the rider, put a training, if the coach has to have enough fuel will to drive or to monitor the speed of the, of other through during training, he can't afford to that because the program, it's actually covering most of the costs of the athletes, not the technical officials.

Interviewer: Ok. You did mention, the challenges ,narrowing it down to only cycling your, specialty. What do you think is the role that your office can play in order to overcome these challenges? What do you think your office can actually do? You're saying the program is very limiting when it comes to a number of athletes, what do you think you as cycling can actually do to overcome such challenges?

Interviewee: Okay. Okay. Thank you very much. It's actually the role of each and every national federation to make sure that it recruits, it makes talent identification programs. It holds as many competitions as possible and because of the financial constraints, because of the financial challenges you see that our national federations here in Lesotho don't have sufficient funds to cover all their program needs. Soto be fair it's a function of each and every national federation. Let me talk of cycling to make sure that we try to make, mobilize more funds that will support this high performance program that we are already having you see we, shouldn't only focus on having this high performance projects being funded by the N O C, but if the national federations are wise enough, it's high time that even the national federations make sure that they're having their support programs that will support this major high performance program that we're having. As a cycling, we have identified that we should do that. And we have started because we are now having some small projects that are helping to recruiting women into a sport. We are developing youth, specifically youth from 14 to 16 years into cycling. So that whenever there is a need to promote this athletes to a higher program, we have the base of athletes that we know that we can take from there. So we are actually focusing to have our own academy which will support this high performance program of the country.

Interviewer: Oh, wow. Okay. Okay. Okay. Thank you. Moving on to question four I know you have actually highlighted some of the courses of the challenges that you brought up, but question four actually, says can you say some of the causes of the challenges that you have raised?

Interviewee: There is only one cause to our challenges lack of resources, insufficient resources that we're having and insufficient finance that we're having. And if we had enough finance, it means we would actually be able to finance our projects as much as possible. But

because we are having limited resources, we're having limited funds it narrows down into a point where the whole system is failing.

Interviewer: Ok. And then question five, if you were in complete power to change this program, the high performance program, to improve athlete performance and talent development, what would you change and why those changes?

Interviewee: Let me see. it's one of the things that I have seen that it's making our high performance program not doing good every time. This high performance program should, should be age specific, if you get me, one of the things that I would actually come and change immediately is to make sure that this high performance program is targeted for youth between the age of 17 while they're and when they're reaching 20, 21, 23, they should be full elites. And from there, we should go back down there to focus on recruiting more elites. So I have seen that here at home it's not working like that. Even if 36 old athlete sometimes become a beneficiary of this program, whereas we are hoping that someone between the age of 26, maybe 35, has benefited from the program from the start. And by then, we should be hoping that person is mature enough to handle his own financial activities and to do everything because it's actually bringing no sense to take a 30 a year old athlete to be a beneficiary of the program. Whereas the age of an athletes to be an elite starts from 19. So it means that we are not doing enough recruitment programs down there. So what I would actually come and cut is to make sure that this program is actually benefiting young athletes so that we target on mobilizing young talent every time because if we are having a 20 year athlete and we're having a 33 year athlete, and the beneficiary is the 33 year athlete, it's making a lot of I don't have a word, we can't invest our money into someone who is approaching at home to resign in the sport. We should target people who we think they're having 10 years, twenty years future in the sport. And it's bringing lots and lots and lots of motivation to this young athletes.

Interviewer: Okay. And our last question goes is there anything you think we haven't discussed that you may wish that we discuss from the interview? Anything?

Interviewee: Yes. They should be something because while we are in the sport we are actually improving because we are watching our colleagues from other countries and while you watch their high performance projects, their high performance program, it starts as seeing athletes from the ages of 12, you see? But here, when it comes to, to context of our country, Lesotho, you will see that it's only putting more force on the life of elite athletes which is not working for us. Because while you're looking for eight other countries, you'll see that they start where they are recruiting elites. They are not training elites to compete. They are training them to win. They are training elites to motivate other elites. So their program starts, way back before ours can start. So this is why they will always have the brighter results than us.

Interviewer: Okay. Is the end of our interview. Thank you very much for your time. And should you wish to have this recording I'm more than willing to share that day.

Interviewee: Thank you very much, ma. Um, uh, for the share of time and this music, the high performance program that we have been talking about is actually a box to us waiting for,

it's waiting for our national federation. So, it was actually a nice time to be discussing issues around this, uh, program. Thank you.

Interview 4

Interviewer: Okay. Good afternoon. Thank you very much for allowing for this interview to happen. I will reintroduce myself I'm working for the National Olympic Committee as a high performance coordinator, and I'm currently doing MEMOS and my research project is basically around high performance, which is something you are very familiar with, given that we work almost every day. So I have a total of six questions. Our interview is basically going to be more interactive, so please introduce yourself as well.

Interviewee: I am Teboho Masimong the SG of Lesotho Taekwondo Association. That is enough for the purposes of the interview.

Interviewer: Yes, that, thank you. So we are studying now, uh, the first question as you know, um, can you please, uh, describe how your organization has benefited or is involved in the high performance program?

Interviewee: We, we benefited through the high performance, I think we, we have just had new rankings released. Now we have our athlete ranked in the top seven, the seventh best athlete in the world in minus 40, 46 female category. And this is a benefit we wouldn't have derived in anywhere whatsoever, but for the higher performance program, because she has, Michelle do, in this case, she has an assistance from the program. I think it is for the second time, because the first time she was based here locally. Maybe that is what, for the current result, we are now seeing, you see with the high performance, the high performance invested in us because we, we had had an international coach based in the country that is accredited TaeKwondo instructor. So the high performance program reinvented itself so that it can avail itself also to the opportunity that had already had a, a TaeKwondo coach delegate based in Lesotho. And then Michelle, this is the athlete now that is ranked in the top seventh in the world, benefited locally.

She was actually trained locally by that coach via the same program. I know we signed a locally based contract on behalf of Michelle and some other athlete that is, whilst we had had Marumo now under the very same program was based in Germany then So the high performance was for us too pronged. Maybe it was because of the potential our sport then because it was also picked for amongst the top in the triple P program sport amongst the top best three sporting goals in the country. So I think the high performance program decided to say, okay, how can we now also push the same program under us? Because, you know, you have the Lesotho sport and recreation commission which was maybe the steering body of the triple P program.

Then we had the two athletes Ramosoeu and then Marumo. And by, not Marumo, but Michelle, and by the way, Ramosoeu also is having one of the best clubs in the country now. Post the program. So Ramosoeu is having, is coaching new millennium and millennium TaeKwonDo club. And you know, I think it was in the last day, it performed very well in a tournament, And I think it scooped all, even a cup there. Most of the gold medals were obtained by that club. So you see even by extension, your benefiting

Interviewee: Oh, that's nice.

Interviewer: Now we are having, at the international arena, we are having Michelle delivering in a way that we have never seen before. I think we are aiming for a direct now qualification into the Olympic sports, in the top athletes that will be selected for Olympic Games. I think we are now having a real potential that she will also qualify directly if the program will still have enough funding to help facilitate her to compete and earn points. Because with the new system earlier, you see, that's why I'm the high performance is worth to be congratulated in this regard. It was able to adapt to the new realities, particularly for our sports with the pointing system, the high performance adapted itself. And then we are having this program to help us deliver in accordance with this new pointing system. You know, in the old, old olden days, you know, you had to attend maybe the African championships and then also the African Olympic qualifiers. Then you would be guaranteed a sport in the Olympic games. But with the new things that have changed with acquisition and points and the ranking of athletes and everything, we are now competing at the global level. You, you see the, is an underdeveloped country, not even a least developed country, but the one that came before this one where she obtained the bronze medal. She was a silver medalist and now a bronze medalist. She has been ranked in third in Africa for some time, and then second, and now she's the number one athlete in Africa through the high performance program assistance. That is how things are for now. So I think with our benefit, I have highlighted three athletes that benefited by the high performance program.

But for his role now to assist Michelle, because Michelle is who she is now because she learned from the experiences of Marumo. So we can't say didn't help in this regard as the first beneficiary of the high performance program. She was able to translate his experiences to Marumo and then was able to translate that all also to, because they're co-coaching, new millennium Taekwondo club. So we are benefiting Yes, indeed. Marumo. What he does, he goes there as a guest instructor, not necessarily a full-time instructor, but as a guest instructor. But you can see the impact that he's having. You know, even I think we had a, a very good athlete when Michelle was here, she managed to introduce the new style that she has been practicing while based in the high performance center in Germany in the, during the, the first period while she was under the localized sporting program, high performance program.

You know, when she finished her degree with the assistance of her mother, she would end the high performance program. She was able to go to, to live in Germany because I know she was still benefiting then even under the localized program. It wasn't said. Now she has gone, the mother has sponsored her to go to Germany. We are not assisting. I know I have a copy of the contract that we signed here that Michelle benefited under a localized program. And then when the, when she went abroad, there was an amendment that was done, even if it was not at least reduced into writing, the benefit was increased. It was by resolution of the agm. I can remember the current now vice president of N O C administration, he was the one who spearheaded that. He assisted us thus far in ensuring that we are able to assist or to get assisted by the high performance program even when she was far. So that is, I think that is in a nutshell how we benefited. You see there is a coaching department that we benefited is also

this athlete program that, because I can say coaching because now we have translated those athletes coaches.

Interviewer: Thank you very much to the second question after you have said all about the program. Okay. Our second question is in your view, can you describe in your experience where you see the program not working? That's one and where you think it's working? I think you have already highlighted, the this second part in, in your first question on how you, you see the program working though, but we want to see where do you see the program lacking or where is it not working Well,

Interviewee: I think with this one the transition, the transition is where there has to be a deliberate effort to ensure that this athletes post their exposure as athletes. They is that room for transition, you see. Transition, whether, you know, being an athlete, you spend your energies and everything. And then when you are done and then it's over with you, there is not that clear excess or that robust plan between when you are an athlete and when you become an administrator or something else, post your life, post being an athlete. That's what is, there has to be more emphasis on that because I think this has to be a full package. Because I, you see this transition of Michelle, she was able to be grown locally and then she became this elite athlete of the elite. Then she was elite by our standards locally, but then now she's elite international, can we see the transition from the, that elite level, the international level then can see, okay, she's being able to be transit, to be given an opportunity to make that smooth transition, you see into becoming something different.

You see, we mentioned Marumo who benefited and then he becomes a guest coach or instructor in other clubs which are more successful. Ramosoeu likewise. But there is not that deliberate or clear mechanism for which these athletes transited from whatever they have been. And to become also, you know, when you have been successful, you have become famous, you become everything. And then that fame, we say that is all that there was. I think there's to be something more that is done. If they have to be absorbed somewhere or they have to be agreements signed, then with these schools that teach these programs, then they, that will be able to accommodate this, our new athletes. Then I think those things have to be worked out so that we can have a more holistic development of this human being.

Because I think even managing that limelight, that in itself, you see when you become an elite athlete, then there is a limelight that follows you. And then there should be sessions or other teachings that these athletes have to be exposed to during their lives as great athletes by our standards that they are being taught. This is how you handle the limelight. And post that we prepare you into becoming someone else other than what you have been as an athlete, but not as low as they were before they could have been exposed to the limelight or to this early level as athletes. I think in a nutshell, that is what I, I can cover, but also if we involve parents or any other stakeholder, I think the, the program you see now is single handled.

Where are the partners that will say, okay, we see you NOC, we see all the high performance program. You are able to, your muscle can take you this far because I think for us, this is too expensive. It's very expensive for the, I wonder if for team sports can work or for more

athletes. Had we had more athletes in the program that would've qualified like it was in the case. Because if we had athletes based locally here, I wonder if they would be given same attention as this one that is based internationally. So I think there should be a way, maybe even the federation capitation in that regard, all those other people that are surrounding the athletes. This is how, because now you see, we, I've just alluded to the fact that there is like, there should be something that is done to complement or assist further in the development or in enhancing the reach of the benefit from the program heard about the national federation.

What is it doing to assist in the achievement of the same objective? Does it need, does it need to be also capacitated the parents or other people that are associated with the athlete? What has to be done? How can they be assisted? You get my point. So I think that is a room that needs to be improved. We look at, there's this athlete centered approach, but what are the people or the affecters at the prey of this athlete that may also need to be given some skills so that they, they also compliment what the program has. You see, that is an area for improvement. I think that transition, the factor. Yes. Thanks

Interviewer: I hear your hammering more on athlete transition program, but how, how do you think we can go about transition?

Interviewee: Yeah. I would say for now I can't have like a clear, straightforward answer to that. Safe to say that maybe if you would consider assisting, you know, when you open the eyes of these athletes or all these other stakeholders like say it is not the sole responsibility of the NOC if you have to have to hold symposiums or whatever. But there has to be something that you can say you have to match benchmark on a certain idea. I don't know, you know, in the old olden days when we are not leaving this kind of setup in the free economy setups, you know, they would even be absorbed into workforces of government as a major to ensure transition you see amongst others.

Yes, Something. Yeah. Even us with the likes of medically determined and the likes, you know, the army used to employ those people that have shown great athletic abilities, you see. So I don't know now what, what, what can happen. But because this thing is not only that they're doing sport, there are also other things that are been done. We can also make sure that even the private sector, if Michelle has other skills, how can, with the skills that she have, she has how, what else can we do that we maybe rob in the private sector to assist? That's why we say move the transition. Then we brand this athlete or the company, that brand that can say support her. And then that company is saying, okay, with the skillset, with this CV that we have of her, then we can offer her maybe certain an opportunity.

Then she will have to prove herself maybe say a two year contract of employment or anything like it or whatever. And then say after she has proven her or otherwise, then we can say, okay, maybe we can move her into a permanent and pensionable position if that is the case. If it's not even in government, but because other stakeholders that we may have to approach as the high performance program providers. Who can we approach and then maybe model a certain proposal, say we're not just saying we are giving you maybe as part of your

social corporate responsibility as a company, why can't you consider this athlete that has this credentials that is well known maybe such things. Yes ma'am. Okay.

Interviewer: Moving on to our third question. What are the challenges? What do you think are the challenges that are hindering elite as athletes performance and talent development in our country?

Interviewee: You see for us, maybe you see for us mainly socio-political factors, that is the higher the number one problem you see, even our economy is not performing that well. Our politics, we are not classified as a stable country because, you know, I would usually tell my international federation that you know, in a space of five years when we are supposed to have had just one government ourself have had three elections in a period of five years, when we are supposed to have at least one elections per five year period, we have had three and then sport and you know, that is an indicator doesn't show us to be a stable country that can attract investment or you know, investors also get frustrated when the politics in the country are frustrating.

So I wonder now for the NOC I know we are also the NOC affected because we were, you know, sometimes we were supposed to even pay our subscriptions as the NF to them. We were unable to do such things. So you see the financial position of the NOC is also getting compromised. National federations. Likewise. So socio-political factors are number one factors that are hinder. Also our geographic location, you know, ranked international events for us are normally requiring us to travel. So you see we are far away from where ranked international events are. That is where our athletes earn points. You know, in the old good days, we would sell is a powerhouse of Taekwondo simply because we would have maybe one or two tournaments, international tournaments in Africa and then world championships, you know, even with the world championships, we are supported by the World Taekwondo federation.

You see because maybe the WT did see that to enhance participation we have to support at least two athletes and the coach so that the president could go there is also mixed with an a gm. I don't know if that can work under the high performance program, but like we are saying, we have to attend so many ranked events to earn more points to ensure that, you know, the difference we are with Michelle is that she's competing in multiple international events. Since, she's able to earn points via the program. So if you unable to compete international, I would even remember in the old good days when was still considered the powers of know we would the likes.

Interview 5

Interviewer: Thank you very much for agreeing to this interview. Let me reintroduce myself. I work for the National Olympic Committee as the High performance Coordinator. I'm currently doing MEMOS, as you are aware and my project is basically around high performance. And I've chosen you as my subject given that weightlifting is one of our biggest beneficiaries of high performance program. Please introduce yourself.

Interviewee: Iam Bothobile Shebe, the SG of Weightlifting Federation.

Interviewer: Let's get to it now. I have a total of six questions, and my first question goes, can you describe how your National Federation has benefited or has been involved with the N O C High Performance Program?

Interviewee: Okay. The weightlifting Federation has benefited from the High Performance Program in a number of ways. Firstly, by getting support for athletes to travel to competitions in the various categories and various competitions outside of the country. Another aspect is the coaching courses that we have received from the High Performance Department. Another, a third one would be the support, the scholarships that are a couple of our athletes have gotten to try and qualify for Olympic Games and Commonwealth Games in the various categories that they were in. I think that's a, that's about it. The, the, the three types of supports that I've been showing, I think we have received for over four years, over a period of four years. It goes back for over four years now.

Interviewer: Thank you. My second question from your office point of view can you describe in your experience what you think is working well with the High Performance program? That's one and what you think is not working so well with the program?

Interviewee: Okay. Firstly the High Performance Program is a good initiative but I think it's, it's severely under-resourced. So what is working well is that it is an existing initiative that seeks to support athletes in the individuals putting coats. But the allocation of resources, perhaps it needs to be more transparent and more clear as to how resources are allocated. And also I don't know, maybe taking also into consideration the type of sports that we are supporting and the individual sports needs so that maybe sufficient, sufficient resources can be allocated to any one individual athlete or individual sport. For example, under the scholarship, under the scholarships, the different scholarships, high performance scholarships. Maybe it is not really clear how much one individual, like my weightlifting athlete, I'm not sure, I cannot necessarily say for example, that for this year this guys is supported or about for a certain amount of money. But I know that he's supposed to get a certain amount of monthly stipend.

But I'm not quite sure exactly of the actual amount of money per year that is covering him to an extent that then he tends to miss competitions, because every now and then there'll be issues of insufficient funds.

And also I think for the coaching courses and such, I think more could be done in terms of also monitoring our performance in terms of training coaches and ensuring that coaches

actually get to perform the skills to apply the skills that they have acquired. For example if we apply for the first the level one coaching course, some, there should be some mechanisms put in place to ensure that within a specific period of time the coaches which were trained for level one have, would be eligible to go for level two within a certain period of time. So that associations are forced to some extent to ensure that there is continuous training of coaches, and also they will be forced to use the train coaches in the various competitions.

So that as associations, we don't find ourselves depending on only one coach to train. And also we are not left to have to our own devices to decide, or, well, this year I feel like I can hold the coaching course. It should be mandatory that each association after level one, within a specific timeline, you should have held a level two, you should have held a level three. Apart from that, I think the fact that there are resources available for us now it's working. It's a bit beneficial, but a bit more focused strategy to, should be put in place on as to how to implement effectively the program.

Interviewer: And madam, just a follow up question. You have been around how easy do you think it is to force a federation to, to stick to a particular plan? Do you think N O C is capable of making national federations to do stuff?

Interviewee: I think, I think if it is intentional, it can force national federations to comply with that but in the current situation that we are in where political favours take more precedence I think that is where our problem is. Remember in the past, there was a tool that was designed, but because it might seem as if some associations which are underperforming might not benefit from certain programs. That tool is not being implemented. But if we were intentional and deliberate about things, associations can be forced to, to comply.

Interviewer: Ok. Thank you, moving on to question three. What challenges do you think, are hindering elite athletes performance and talent development in Lesotho?

Interviewee: I think first of all, it's preparation. As Lesotho, I think in the whole country, in all associations, we don't have athletic development plans. We do not have clear development plans for our individual associations. Individual, I don't necessarily mean sporting associations individual sports, I mean as national sports associations. I doubt even the L N O C has an envisaged athlete development plan or a development, a sport performance development plan. They don't have it. So for, for example, we can't, we don't even have a clear a simple strategy of saying, okay, if you want to go to the what is that, 2024 Olympic Games, Paris 2024. We should have, by 2020, have perhaps had a team that we, we would've said this year, then we are sending the youth to Youth Olympic Games.

We have, so that we would have it. Eh, there are, there are those youth games, youth Commonwealth, youth Olympic Games. We shouldn't, we do not pay too much attention to. But I think those would've been the best, the best the youth games could, could serve as sort of a roadmap for the L N O C to say, associations, if you can be able to enter your athletes into these competitions, the same athletes can be taken to elite. The senior competitions after a certain period of time, provided they have been, they have been trained or developed towards that pathway, But as the L N O C, we don't even look into that. We just, we don't

even consider, we don't talk about Youth Olympic games until three, four months before they are supposed to be held, I guess. So that says to me, L N O C does not have a plan, therefore associations cannot have a plan.

But the despite that also in terms of preparations, we do not give adequate resources in terms of time allocation, financial allocation, and allocation for preparations for athletes to get to competitions. We do not even consider the different sporting codes that we enter into. Because if we are saying as, so we have, say we take four sporting codes, we say athletics, boxing, weightlifting, cycling. We take them to the competitions. We even failed to consider the fact that some of these sporting codes in some instances, some use body weight and body performance, while some use equipment and something else, other things, other items that are necessary for that performance. We do not look out for accessibility and availability of infrastructure for preparation of athletes. We do not have structured means of monitoring individual sports performance, athletes sports performance. We just rely on, oh, okay, today they went to long content for competition. All right, they came out number three, five, and let's continue tomorrow. What is happening? So I think that is where our problem is. Our main problem monitoring, lack of monitoring and evaluation of how we are doing in general as sports.

Interviewer: Looking at weightlifting your sport how do you think your office can better the situation? What role do you think you can play weightlifting for talent development and good athlete performance.

Interviewee: We are struggling as well, because all of these things, I think the main issue is the lack of preparation. We, which we have tried to mitigate by, we have eventually secured a, a room or a place where we, uh, we have set up a gym where athletes can get, can access free of charge from 5:00 AM to 7:00 PM in the evening. But the challenge is some of the athletes would be telling you that they don't have transport to go, which we have tried to mitigate by sometimes giving them money to get there. But the problem also is for, for example, for those of them, but who is under scholarship, the frustration of every now and then not being able to attend competition. Has since led him to feel like he has so much time mm-hmm. Such that he does not even focus that much on training.

Now that on its own phase, we tend to lose athletes sometimes. Right now our pool is a bit limited. So what we have done is we have talked to sports science. Yes, we've been in talks with him to assist us in designing an athletic development plan and informed athletic development plan, wherein we want to start with a youth and juniors so that we see how we can transition the plan for about a period of 12 hour or 12 years, see how we can start the young athletes so that they get to the elite level where we think we can be able to get sufficient years. Sufficient performance and under monetary. Because right now, like I said, we don't have specific skills to, to monitor performance and also we have seen that we are losing athletes. So we want to come up and raise a lot, a big number of athletes. For example, in weightlifting, I guess when you take one of the requirements is, you have to take a team of about 10 athletes. But since they know that some of us from developing countries, we can't afford to take a team of 10 athletes. We'll take one or two, and a girl and a boy and female,

and a manager. But now what we want to do with the athlete development plan is to try to ensure that in the next four to 12 years, we'll be in a position to say every time there is a competition, at least we have 10, 10 women, 10 men, whom we would be able to say, okay, these are the people who can be able to represent us at competitions. We are also working on proposals to try to secure support from the local business people. And some international federations to help us to build structured structure, to put structures in place in terms of coaching technical officials, and also outside development. So that we see growth, we are able to monitor growth.

Interviewer: Okay. Nice. Okay. Moving on to question four. I think you might have touched on the causes of the challenges you mentioned, but if you have any can you also add on last question four. It basically says we should say they, the causes of the challenges you raised.

Interviewee: I think to be fair, is that our supporting fraternity is a hundred percent volunteer based. So most of us, I think we come in as volunteers not necessarily equipped or skilled in, or capacitated in sport management and sport administration, technical aspects of them. So I think that might be the problem we need perhaps we need to focus also more on, I don't know, I guess we have sport administration courses, we have coaching courses but I think there's a gap between sport administration and actually coordinating the sport develop sport performance aspect of it. So if you could get that right, I think we'd be in a position to better make clear plans of development of getting the needs in terms of resources of ensuring that sport performance, the actual sport performance that we anticipate will be achieved.

The second thing is, I did indicate earlier that there are resources, even as limited as we might deem them to be but my belief is the resources that are available are not correctly allocated to sports performance. That is why we are struggling. And also if you were to say to, either I, if you were to say to the L O C, how much of your budget goes to sport performance, I doubt you would get that. Yeah. Clear, clear specifics on if you have a hundred million per year, does 60 million go to sport performance? You could, you won't get an accurate answer. So if we could get that, I think that is the main challenge. The LNOC budget is not mainly focused on sport performance. The associations do not have constant income to ensure that sport performance needs are met. So that is also another, the biggest hurdle. We as associations, we, we rely too much a hundred percent on the National Olympic Committee, especially for competitions outside of the country, which also makes a bit of a problem for the LNOC and for us as well as associations. So we need to find a way to create various forms of income generation.

Interviewer: And Thank you madam. Question five. If you were in complete power to change the high performance program for improved athlete performance and talent development, what changes would you introduce and why?

Interviewee: Those changes? unfortunately, I don't even know what goes into a high performance structure, but not from my perspective. I would first of all try to find a facility, high performance facility, get a high performance facility with a director and the other

officers, the other subsidiary officers to operationalize the facility. Facility with all the other things that are necessary to ensure the strength athletes, those things with technology and what, what. And then in terms of administration, I would say director, I based somebody with skills, not office administration per say, but sport performance skills, I guess. Administration, so that they design a clear plan athlete development in line with the vision. Design a clear plan. That so each and every association can align with in line with the vision. Anyway, really, they also have a department that would go out and solicit funding and support for the operationalization and actualization of plan syndrome from that facility. Because I think also we, it should operate as like, for example. I think it would better perform rather than when it is housed under 1 director. I don't know what that is. My, that is my vision, I think.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Uh, and our last question is, uh, any other thing you wish to add that we have left discussion?

Interviewee: I think, well, I, I actually think high performance department is understaffed. Because I think it should be the one department that is hands on for, to assist associations face-to-face individually and full-time. Especially for Olympic sport associations.

Interviewer: Because if there is 21 associations and every other time, I that's my belief. I truly believe that we need assistance a continuous from the inception of saying, if you're saying weightlifting, we anticipate, or we, we wish you would perform. You would have a, an athlete in the 2024 Olympics. I think our journey should start from the day, maybe from soon as 2020. We design a program together, we identify competitions together. I submit budget, I guess we do, we go along the, and if the department is understaffed, that means only two people cannot be able to serve all their associations.

I also believe that when we talk about high performance, we don't necessarily talk about the six sporting associations, sporting associations that have been identified for that one specific association. I mean, for that specific competition. For example, this year there are more than four competitions, I guess. There was Commonwealth Games last year. There are youth games this year. There are beach games. There are what, what also all sorts of competitions. So my belief is if the high performance department is sufficiently staffed with knowledgeable capacitated people, associations will be able to perform and achieve the vision. Yeah. I don't know. See, because then I would know that I have for example, to guide weightlifting for the period of four years, I guess. Football would be able to know that to guide them for that period.

We would be in a position to be able to say the, would then be able to say when you were, you were the new assisted you in, in developing an athletic development plan. How come you haven't been implementing this. We have as, allocated resources for you. How come you haven't been plan implementing this? Why have you failed? But in this case, in the current situation, we are in a position where even when you ask me, I would still turn the question back on you and say, but you failed me as well. Yeah. What have you done to ensure that I'm able to do that? And when you come back to me and say, but I gave you athlete a scholarship, I come back and tell you, but have missed three competitions because you said you don't have

man. So I think lack of sufficient planning, we don't plan, we do not, we do not strategize adequately.

Interviewer: That's about it. Uh, thank you very much for, for your time. Thank you, madam. Have a good day. If you, you wish to have the recording, um, I'm more than happy to share. All right. All right. Have a good one.

Interview 6

Interviewer: Thank you very much for allowing for this interview to happen. As I mentioned I'm the high performance coordinator at the National Olympic Committee. I'm currently doing MEMOS as you may be aware. My project title review of the National Olympic Committee, high performance strategy for Optimum Elite and upcoming athletes performance and Talent development. So I have a total of six questions that will go through, of course, follow up questions here and there, as we have our discussions, may you introduce yourself.

Interviewee: Thank you for, giving me the opportunity for the interview. I am currently occupying the position of the presidency at the Lesotho Sports and Recreation Commission. Thank you, madam.

Interviewer: Thank you. My first question, we are basically aware that Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission kind of has a similar, if I may say, that, program has though, um, for LSRC more about development, but I kind of thought it's more or less about athletes performance. And so how do you feel the Podium performance Program is collaborating with the high performance program for betterment of athletes performance and talent development?

Interviewee: Actually I think it's one and the same thing. It's just that the high performance started identifying the talent when the player is an elite athlete or maybe at the, at the age of 18. But with, as Sport Commission, we start first by identifying a talent down there at the cross level. And then we such talent, the athlete or the athletes the competitive stage whereby now we focus aims into the competition, the national competition from national competition. We send them regionally, from regionally. Then we want them to part, participate or compete in the international stage, or appear on the international international stage, which is the high performance style. So that is, that is basically our route. So they are more of the similar, it's just that we start at the cross and then use that at the competitive level.

Interviewer: I'm happy that, you are both familiar with the high performance and the Triple P program, so this will be easier for us. So our second question goes from your office point of view, what could you describe what is working well with the high performance program? That's one and two, can you describe what is currently not working so well with the program?

Interviewee: Apparently, according to my little observation, of course, I would say what is working well, I would start with what is working Well first is us identifying the talent and then sustain our resources and our money to that kind of athlete so that they end up being on the podium performance stage. You know, do you understand that is really working well for now. And of course, when we are grooming such an athlete, we sometimes take them out for the experience or exposure for of the international stage outside Lesotho so that they have that exposure. And what is not working well is lack of funding and lack of facilities, infrastructure of sport within the country. Because we do have an opportunity of the higher Altitude Center here in Lesotho, but we don't have the necessary equipment or the needy equipment so that we can send our athletes into those high altitude training center in Lesotho.

We send them out outside the country, but they needed to practice and stay in. So, because we have that altitude. So that is not working well for us. It's lack of infrastructure.

Interviewer: Okay. So thank you very much. You already I think you already touching on some of the challenges that is basic, that are basically hindering athletes performance. You talked of, uh, infrastructure, which brings us to our third question. What are challenges hindering our elite assist performance and talent development in the Lesotho? And how do you think those challenges can be solved? Especially looking at your office

Interviewee: Beside infrastructure, I'll go straight into the rather I'll be direct what is hindering our progress and the performance of our, the high performance office to be fair and honest, is a lack of funding, like lack of support. We are a small country which doesn't have a lot of big companies like any other developing country. So we kind of struggle securing funds from local business owners and some international business owners. Because they don't know when they support us, they want to get something in return. But looking at, looking at our countries business power, it our people don't believe that sport can actually create living or someone can create a living out of sport. So we're still trying to educate our business men and women to understand that sport. Its not only a hobby, but it could tend to be a professional career by supporting the athletes from cross until they're now in the high performance level.

Interviewer: Yes. Okay. Thank you. So are you saying that's basically what you are doing the education part through your president office or how is the education part program going through.

Interviewee: The Recreation commission and National Olympic Committee have signed the Memorandum of understanding between the two mother bodies. So we are working together, the two CEOs and the two presidents and the two deputy presidents. They're working together to educate the business sector and also the government about the importance of the sport within the country. So basically that's what we've been doing. And so far, so good. We have got, we have had our first workshops and meetings on one-on-one basis, and then we have succeeded and I would say out of five business men and women that we have approached so far, we are impressed and we have got the positive results out of those meetings. So we are positive that within two, three years down the line, we'll notice the difference and we'll repeat the positive results.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much. On the first question, you have already mentioned education being one of the challenges that hinders athlete's performance. What do you think are some of the causes of the challenges that you have mentioned apart from that business people don't really have education, even the public, I think what could be some of the challenges?

Interviewee: Remember when I first respond to our first question, I mentioned, or I stated that Recreation commission started, identified the talent from cross level. So while we are doing that, we realized that actually a problem emanate from our schools and our villages. You go to the school, you won't find any infrastructure. You'll only get the football field and the netball field, which are not in good condition as well. So basically all these young boys

and girls, they grow up introduced into football and netball, and if they're not talented into those two sport codes that they're doing at schools, they're being neglected. And then we just leave that talent as well. So infrastructure from school, it's the one in entering our, our talent and also it's the major contributor into our athletes not to participate. Well, so football, it is the only famous and non-sport within the country. Either sport are not well known.

Interviewer: Ok. Thank you. So, second last question. If you were incomplete power, meaning if you didn't have to report to the general assembly to run businesses of your office, that you're in complete power, what would you change? In as far as the high performance program is concerned for purposes of athletes performance and talent development.

Interviewee: One of the first thing that I will do is to have a high performance infrastructure. I, will built in some infrastructure in rural areas whereby we are easily on the high highest altitude in Africa or maybe in the world. So I would build that and that will make sure that our athletes perform. Then the, the rest will follow. If you have that infrastructure, the rest will follow. The rest are just on, on our fingertips. Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Last question. do you feel there's anything we might have left out that you wish to contribute to our discussion? Anything you would want to add?

Interviewee: Nothing much, but I think we should at least share our vision with other people so that when they understand our vision and our sport fraternity will change. We don't have to fight for power, but we have to share the vision so that we understand each other. will change and will make a difference in our country, in our region, in our continent. And worldwide. Africa will start gaining more medals and gold medals on the apex of the, of the games, which is the Olympic Olympics games.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much. That is that, that brings us to the end of our interview. And once again, thank you very much for your time and your contribution to my project.

Interview 7

Interviewer: Welcome. Thank you very much for agreeing to interview. Kindly know that we are recording our meeting or our interview, so if you feel like having the audio or the recording, please feel free to request for it. I'm willing to share. I'm the high performance coordinator at the Lesotho National Olympic Committee, and I'm currently doing MEMOS, as you are aware. And my project, my research project is around high performance and talent development. May you please introduce yourself.

Interviewee: Thank you, My name is Makara Thibinyane I'm the Secretary General of the Federation of Athletics.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much. We have a total of six questions that we are going to go through. So I'll start now. Question one. Can you please describe how your federation has been benefiting, has benefited or is involved with the high performance program of the National Olympic Committee?

Interviewee: We have benefited a lot from this program, from many sectors, departments of my federation in part of the athletes acquiring the scholarships, the high performance and the Olympic solidarity. And the other part that we benefited a lot from is that of the coaches or coaching courses. Yes. Okay. And of course, the sports administration courses as well.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much. Moving on to question two. Okay. From your office point of view of view, your office being the Secretary General's office, can you please describe what you see working well with the program and what you feel is not working so well with the program?

Interviewee: Okay. Looking at one, the trainings and the courses, trainings or courses and, the scholarships for athletes that side we are doing quite well. But there is this other part, which I think is also very crucial in as much as athletics is concerned. These are the technical officials workshops or courses which the program does not sponsor. So for us we encounter a very huge, huge challenge as to trying to hold these courses nationally. So if the program also catered for technical officials trainings or courses, then we say, no, everything is fine.

Interviewer: Does it mean your international federation doesn't assist in, in that regard?

Interviewee: The International Federation slightly does that. Because currently they have introduced an online platform for individuals who'd like to undertake technical officiating courses and for physical courses is not going to be an easy task from now onwards.

Interviewer: Oh, but that's something, yes, that's something. Okay. Thank you very much. Question three. what are the challenges hindering elite performance and talent development in the country?

Interviewee: So number one know our elite athletes most of them are not behaving like elite athletes. That's number one behaviour, we need to work on the behaviour. And sometimes it is ill-discipline.

And number two, of course, they are elite athletes, but I think we should also, uh, allow them or give them ample time to work with elite coaches. Because if you look at our coaches, we have high level coaches who are not very practical to work with such athletes.

Interviewer: Talent development?

Interviewee: Talent development. The one major thing there were was finances, to have training for our local people here for instance, teachers. because most of these athletes those that we can get raw talent from at a young age are still at school. So if you don't have finances, then it becomes a problem to have that kind of program running. But now we have secured funding from our international federation where we are going to have the program running the grassroots program and kids athletics.

Interviewer: That was basically my follow up question. I was going to ask you what role do you feel your office in order for us to overcome the challenges that you have mentioned? So you mentioned that you are going to get funding for grassroots. That is in as far as talent development is concerned. How about elite athletes, you did say one of the things that is hindering their performances behavior. How do you, for your office can be able to resolve that?

Interviewee: So as we speak, we have established an oversight coaches committee that is going to deal with all the coaches and the national team athletes who have been selected to represent Lesotho internationally. So that being the case, we think the role of that oversight committee they'll deal with this athletes. We also have what do you call that? We have a very close working relationship now with the Lesotho Defense Force because we want to instil, patriotism within our athletes. So we think it might work if we work with the, the military.

Interviewer: How are you going to, how are you going to force your athletes to undergo whatever program that your office and the defense force will come up with that force them to say for you to be a member of the federation, you need to have gone through a training of some sort. How is it going to work?

Interviewee: Just when they, they're in camp we invite the defense force to try to give what do you call that Patriotism sort of education, To put their country first, before themselves.

Interviewer: Okay. Moving on to question four. What are some of the causes of the challenges? You have just mentioned

Interviewee: I think generally it's just lack of education to our athletes. We need to make sure we educate them. Because sometimes we find you need to clear the misconceptions that they have.

Interviewer: Okay. Our second last question. If you were incomplete power to change the high performance problem, to improve athlete's performance and for talent development, what would you change and why those changes?

Interviewee: No sponsors need funding. Facilities and equipment. We need to have the stadium that was refurbished, but it was not fully done. There's still some gaps here and there, that need to be completed. We have stadium but there's no electricity, no water. So having this new equipment under those conditions actually I was in power then I would make sure that the stadium conditions are improved. I would make sure that the sports organizations of federations have grants that will enable them to take athletes outside of the country to play internationally and regionally.

Interviewer: And question six is, um, do you feel like there's anything that we have left out from our discussions, anything that you may wish to add on?

Interviewee: I think we have covered everything.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time.

Interview 8

Interviewer: Welcome Sir. Thank you very much for agreeing to this interview. My name is Likeleko Lepitla I work for the National Olympic Committee as a high performance coordinator. I'm currently doing, uh, Masters in Sport Management. And my project is, the review of the National Olympic Committee High Performance Strategy to, for Optimum Elite and upcoming Athletes Performance and Talent Development. And so basically I'm doing this so that I advise where a strategy is lacking. So I have a total of six questions that we'll go through. But before that may you please introduce yourself.

Interviewee: Of course. My name is Morake Raleaka. I'm the Chief executive of the Lesotho National Olympic Committee.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Our first question, what is the role of the N O C through its high performance program in elite athlete performance and talent development?

Interviewee: We champion everything, from planning up until to the very last execution of team delivery. We have the NOC strategy, which provides direction, the overall strategic direction of the organization. And then underneath we have segments because the N O C is actually a two purpose led organization. Its primary function is to ensure the propagation of in the country. And then the second one is to ensure the service delivery through performance programming so that we can help to represent in the country at the different platforms, starting with the youth category, the senior ones at different levels or at different games. We have the Olympic Games, the Commonwealth Games and the Continent games. So the role of Olympic Committee is one to draw a pathway to ensure that athletes, once its talent has been and they're now on structured programming to prepare them and actually now get them ready so that now when they card and the specific card of their games, it's being held, then they can easily be able to participate and not only just participate, but that compete be able to put up a show.

So ideally, yes, that's our role. So we do that through our high performance unit whereby, um, there are couple of intervention or support areas that have been activated. We have a pool of experts which are meant to service the athletes. And then in other cases the athletes have been placed out at different centers and the our role is to ensure coordination. So technically we mobilize the resources on their behalf and ensure that they get them as when they're needed. . And then deliver them to the games and come back and report. That's it.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much. Um, moving on to question two. My understanding is the strategy was launched in 2017. What would you say has been working well with the strategy? That's one and two, what would you say is not working so well with the strategy or the, the high performance program?

Interviewee: Let's start with the high performance coordinator. There's a lot of work that needs to be done there. She has been falling short on certain areas that needs a part of picking up, you know, shaking her up so that she could just wake up and run with the program. Okay. So there was a lot of shaking that was needed there to some extent you didn't think she's

asleep, you know while she's on duty. You know what it's always the case whenever you, you start in something new. For the longest time the Olympic Committee has just been, you know doing things without necessarily having like a clear plan. So yes, having a supplement of high performance strategy, it sounds like a duplication cause one is saying, listen, there's already a strategy of the NOC, why are you having a strategy for high performance but refer like high performance, they take center stage of what the NOC's mandate is about. Hence we felt it's essential that, let's unpack it a bit for high performance and ideally so because we're saying that's where the nation is looking at the nation's pride. It's actually behind, or it's actually centered on the athletic performance of our athletes, especially when we put in the major games. So ideally, yeah, we felt it, it's essential. So ever since this has been established, yes, there are a lot of challenges that we experienced, which will come later too. But now there's a certain success areas that we've also seen. We have now one from internal, we now have a coordinated, desk which is helping us to ensure that issues of high performance, they've been prioritized.

And of course they're taking, what was the term they're taking the bigger chunk of the budget of everything that we have a lot of funding or resources that are mobilized by the N O C, because of that desk. They are being channelled towards high performance support couple programs. So that I think is the number one. Whereas in the past to realize that there are lots of resources mobilized, but a bigger chunk of that one went to admin and not so much has gone high performance. We have other stakeholders that were working with, which are actually enshrined from the strategy. This is pool of, of experts. We're talking about independent companies or individuals that are experts in their own fields. People that are really mindful of every single minute on the clock. So appointments have been coordinated to ensure that, athletes are there at the right time.

And again, also check on in terms of the support or the service that they're offering. We paying for what the athletes are in need is an impact on. And of course the whole issue of managing the process of games administration processes ever since. Now we have the high performance strategy, which managed to strengthen the office here. High performance unit, things are kind of smoother now. There isn't that much of a trouble when you get to deal with games. because we already have people that are switch, they're ready to run and things happen. And again, even the engagement with the nation of federations, especially those that proved to be providing us with the athletes for the games that has made our life and job easier. But on the challenges side, of course, one, it's the first time that we implementing this.

So there was a lot of rambling and fumbling. When we started losing, didn't know what you're doing. People are proclaiming and thinking this is like the solution for, it's not, you know there was a lot of gaps from those that were already implemented. Not expert in the field, but happens to be meaning the department in particular. And, uh, she didn't know what she was doing and uh, she had to find her way. So now she's being capacitated and we think now she's going to be more resourceful. Of course probably in the second year. That's when now we realize that, oh, okay. I think that's when she got a grip of things moving and coordination or at least the department was starting to be orderly. But we believe through this opportunity, things perhaps are going to be even much better.

And then we take it from there. Uh, but other than that the whole issue of also now, uh, trying to put the federations to order. In the past, federations used to be kings and kings. They've called the shots. They say we are the one that produces, we do what we want. You are just the vehicle to get us to the games. But now we're like, Hey, things are being in control here. We don't just do as they please. Because there's coordination. So that also brought a lot of unpleasant appetites. Uh, because now things were now being put differently from what people are popularly used to. But other than that, it's the issue of funding, having a strategy and you can't have sufficient resources to can now deliver that. It brings such a, such a load on somebody who's on the desk.

Because one moment thinks that there may be certain resources, but find that, this has not actually been assessed. So that has been one of the challenges. And then again, it's the issue of policy perhaps that addresses the issues to do with high performance. You can have a strategy, but without clear policy as to what is it that you want to achieve on a bigger scale, through whatever that you do. You may find that yes, you're making certain investment, but it's not well calculated and coordinated to the point that even when things, are going right, it's hard to make a decision to say, you know what? It's time for us to exit this one. Because the policy, give the direction to see what you have not gained. Now it's time to call it the will just give you to say here as a direction, this is what we're achieve. So essentially, yeah, there's been the good and of course I would say the mild cons as well.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank You. Question three is basically on challenges, but on a broader basis. So what are the challenges hindering elite athletes performance and talent development in Lesotho?

Interviewee: Well the biggest challenge is we are not a country that has been that is so resourced, especially the technical knowledge. The biggest challenge that we're having is athletes are more on the, I would say self or sub racing when it comes to athletic performance. We don't have qualified coaches that are having and adequate hours on the ground whom can stand here and say, listen, you see that particular individual? He or she's my product and this is the, we're not there yet as a country. So a lot of our athletes are controlling the coaches that are, yes, we do have coaches that have qualifications because they've done level ones, level twos or whatever of their respective international federations, but you find that they don't have experience. So their work ethic is very much compromised because our athletes of today, they are, they're very, very, very modern, they, you know, they're advanced, you know? So they know how to find things on their own. And when a coach is not strong and firm enough to say, listen, this is how things going happen, this is how to, so they literally push them around. So technically we are poor. There's no better way to say we're still poor and we need to improve. And there's a lot of work that needs to be done so that then we can position ourselves. That's number one.

Now number two is an issue of resources as well, and then lead athlete, if you were to actually comparatively take those athletes that actually hit the podium and you ask, how much have you actually invested for you to have had this gold medal, they'll tell the proper

figures. And, and we are, we're not there here, there's the country every time when we need to make substantial investment on athletes.

It's been interpreted differently even when the resources are there, let alone to say the country over the recent probably 15 years recent today, basically like the recent 15 years now, the country has been facing serious economical meltdown and what whatnot, of course, covid , but even when now resources were there, those that are in authority, then in particular, the minister suppose when you seek funding and you say, we need to invest in athletes, they, they perceive as like, you're enriching these athlete. They just don't find why. They just, no matter how much you've experienced. So I think the issue of knowledge of those that are in authority in terms of understanding their responsibility and ensuring that resources are being availed to athletes and not just only avail, but availed on time, giving out million two weeks before the game start, it's not gonna yield anything. But if you take that 1 million and you give it away two years ahead, it can actually be fragmented and then be split in such a way that it'll even make an optimum impact. So yeah, that's, I think challenge number two.

Challenge number three is the issue of coordination of the national sports federations. When it comes to athletes, in most cases you find that either the National Federation is not sure what the athlete is actually doing, or the athletes is being a bit of rebellious from the administration of the national federations. So in most cases, the NOC is caught up in the whole silly politics and there's a lot of time wasted trying to make sense of things. It's just, just very silly. But technically, I think, that's what takes the center stage.

Interviewer: Okay, just a follow up question. You did mention coordination, nfs being a problem. What would you say the working relationship between the two mother bodies, Can you say there is a bit of a challenge that might be hindering where we need to be?

Interviewee: I think that's another challenge. Well, it used to be because things are different now. Perhaps, maybe that's why I missed it over the years. The two mother bodies are seeing eye to eye. So you find that instead the two trying to do a join in terms of what's the term combining whatever little resources they have so that then they can roll the bigger something, then you find they're being competitive, uh, competitive in a not even in a constructive way. In a sense that one needs to prove that I can do better than you are. And you find athletes are taking advantage of that and totally they lose their grip in terms of what they should be focusing on. So yeah, things are different now. We are working together as a joint, so we are managing things from one center, I mean from one table, which is my desk, and I think yes, on issues of high performance, I'm the one who then gives them what needs to happen from their side. What they will then have to do is to give us now the resources so that then we implement. That's what we've agreed on. And the unfortunate part, they've never had access to funding for almost a year now.

Interviewer: Okay. Moving on to question four. What can you say are some of the causes of the challenges you just mentioned, you did mention coaches lack of experience, resources, coordination of nfs

Interviewee: The courses of the challenges. Okay. Make an example. Maybe I don't understand your question. It's not clear.

Interviewer: Okay. If you are saying our coaches lack experience, the cost for that may be could our coaches are not exposed, don't get enough exposure.

Interviewee: Okay. Alright. Obviously when it comes to the technical expertise I think the country as a state needs to have structures that helps to monitor and coordinate and ensure that they are structural programming when it comes to delivery of technical services to our athletes. Unfortunately up to now every coach is a solo and is a king in his own castle. We don't have a structure like a coaching whether you may call it a coaching board or, you know, call it a high performance coaching cluster. Something that solely monitors the performances of coaches or whether it would be for referees or it would be for empires. So it be for all others that are, we don't have those kind of structures that regulates their performance so much that now when there's misconduct and malpractice and all that then they can actually put to where they will account.

Not only that, when somebody's not doing what is right, then their certificates are even be at stake to be withdrawn. We don't have it. So that on its own has now jeopardized the system, which is not there obviously. Because there is no system everybody's just doing as in how they see fit and perhaps how they discuss and talk in the federation level. And then that's it. So it says then people are not feeling any obligation. They'll find any reason and excuses that says, I can't be able to attend the training session because I'm broke. I don't have transport, I don't have this. But when you're having bodies like that one, they tie you to a certain contract and they're saying, unless you meet these minimum objectives you donot qualify your number of hours as a credible hours that you have earned being in the field. So you can't claim to say I'm a five years coach on the ground because you have not attained minimum requirements. So ultimately I think that's the one. And it's sad that we still there. Uh, but it's, that's the situation right now. But other that, what are other ones? What are other challenges? I've got,

Interviewer: Okay. Oh, thank you. Question five, second last question. I understand your office has some power to a certain degree, but if you had complete power where you didn't have to go to a board for approval or even the general assembly what would you change on a high performance program for the improvement of our athletes performance?

Interviewee: So that's a space that is a paradigm shift. There's a lot of development or a lot of improvement that we can account for, ever since we introduced this strategy. But can we say it's offering us sufficient enough to can proudly say it is, it's not, our athletes not reaching the podium as long as we are not able to can yield and get to that level. It says there's a lot of work. So hence what I'm saying. And it's a paradigm shift. If I had absolute power to make things, I would restructure the whole thing. Starting with putting up a body that will regulate the technical side of things and making sure that athletes pathway programming as well It's not being contaminated with different things. So that we classify, if we dealing with academies, let's put an academy program, the schools are following an academic programs

And then now we are helping elite athletes that are meant to actually represent the country. So that then there's a straight channel of feeders. And when athletes are moving from these primary schools and whatnot, they jump in into this programing like that. But now at the same time, the coaches this side, there's a body that regulates and then make sure that they're doing what they're supposed to be done. And then again, money, you can't expect to have a gold medal or to reach a podium without investing substantial enough. Other countries have actually gone to an extent where they calculate how much it actually request actually put in the talking series months in dollars. So, those are the avenues that one can actually subject to say, you know what, it's not about enriching an athlete. It's about ensuring that you give these athlete equal opportunity enough to can subject yourself and be able to gauge yourself if it's excellent adequately to stand in the heat of what's happening with the world.

And I'm sure that these efforts attending is as many competitions as possible, particularly where the standards are actually meeting the qualifiers and perhaps the, records of the international federations at either world champion and all that. So, that could be my appetite. That could be my intervention. Now internally here, within the N O C would definitely have to now pump in more qualified staff. To ensure that they are also resourced so they can actually do their job. Uh, we can't afford to be on boarding consultants in almost everything. We need to actually have people that have been empowered, give them enough space to actually have a work. And they then you see them when now they're pushing and then they're taking control of things.

You know, the other thing is this one, because you know, when it comes to athletes that are representing countries, especially outside the country we need to have strong relations with our international partners. This whole issue of countries struggling every time, whenever we are going in all that, even sometimes in affecting at athlete's lives, they're stranded in airports or whatnot and all that mass country in general must utilize diplomatic relations or high performance unit must up the game must talk with these ambassadors and tell them, listen, these people are ambassadors. They're come in there to represent the country. Help us with the tax clearances. Help us with these, help us with that. We shouldn't, we shouldn't be panicking. You know every time when you have to go, everybody say there's no money. There's no money. No, we need to move and make things happen. So ideally that's now way I could actually put a shaker and try to move things and make things happen. But we're limited for now. Because I don't have absolute power.

Interviewer: Okay. Our last question. Um, is there anything you feel we have left out in our discussion, that you for maybe you can contribute?

Interviewee: Not really. Perhaps my appetite will be more on the, the house side after your completion of studies. Yeah the house side, this then will translate to impact on the ground. Because what we need is models with a lot of admin, we are Okay.

We want to translate the investment that has been done into getting into getting real medals. We've already laid down the challenges and whatnot and all that. Perhaps is, is for you now to say okay, from other sources of your status, these, the avenues that we have seen maybe as

the NOC or other countries having adopted perhaps that are sharing similar challenges with us, particularly the funding part. Those that may seem to have limited funding, these are some of the avenues that they adopted and ultimately to manage, to push them to get to this.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you very much for, for your time. Thank you.

Interviewee: You're welcome. You're welcome. All the best of your studies, so please don't, don't, don't embarrass me.