



Rowing South Africa (RowSA)

Report to the Parliamentary Committee on Sport and Recreation

14 March 2017

1. Overview and Governance

RowSA is the sole governing body for the sport of rowing in South Africa and is recognised with this status by SASCOC and Sport and Recreation South Africa. RowSA controls, administers, manages and coordinates rowing and rowing competition in South Africa; controls and manages international competition by national representative rowers in international competition and sanctions international competition by non-representative rowers.

The sport of rowing consists of the Olympic and Paralympic disciplines and indoor rowing (on ergo machines) - which represents the mass participation discipline of the sport. All the established structures of RowSA for able bodied rowers incorporate para-rowing as one of the disciplines of rowing.

Rowing is a sport for all and RowSA's activities encompass schools (both rural, semi-rural and urban), junior clubs, universities, masters, and international levels.

RowSA has participated in the Olympic Games since 1928. Since readmission, the Federation has achieved three (3) Olympic medals, (Gold – London 2012, Silver – Rio 2016, Bronze – Athens 2004) and consistent A Final performances (top ranking).

One of the biggest successes for the Federation was qualifying five (5) boat classes for the Olympic Games and two (2) boat classes for the Paralympic Games – the largest squad ever selected to represent South Africa at the Olympics. Furthermore, all five (5) boats at the Olympic Games qualified for the A Final – the only Federation at the Games to qualify all its boats for the top finals.

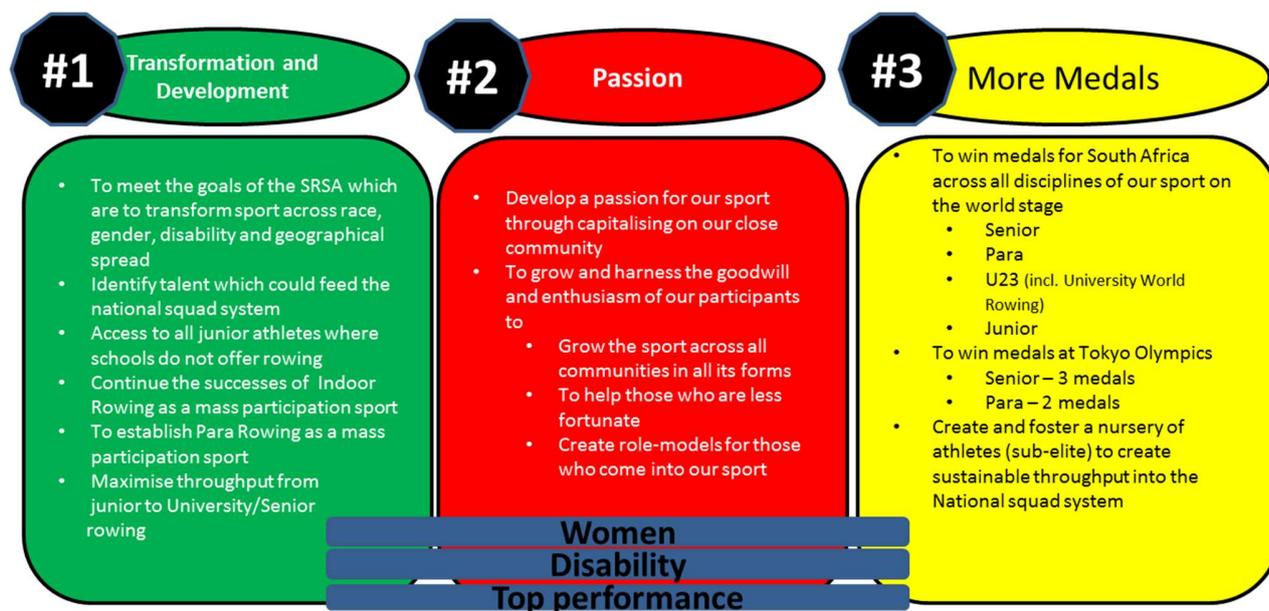
We consider ourselves fortunate to have the best 'home grown' coach in the world. In honour of the Federation's stellar achievements at the Olympic Games, RowSA's Head Coach, Roger Barrow was awarded the FISA World Rowing Coach of the Year Award.

The Federation was honoured at the 2016 SA Sports Awards by being nominated in five (5) categories. The Federation won the School Team of the Year Award.

Finally, the Federation were winners of the Letsema Award in recognition of its para-rowing initiatives and projects.

Our current funders are The Powerhouse Trust which is made up of members of our community and donors who have an interest in sport, SASCOC and the Department of Sport and Recreation.

2. RowSA Goals and how we are organised to deliver



3. Transformation initiatives and plans to 2020

Indoor rowing is a concept that was introduced in 2007 to drive Rowing Development in South Africa. The Project is focused on previously disadvantaged areas throughout all 9 South African Provinces. The focus is not only on the school that run the programme, but we have involved the parents and the community at large to ensure sustainability of the programme by introducing the programme to all the community members as it is not limited by access to rowable water. Internet technology can enable clubs at different ends of the country or the world to run competitions on the web in real time. This is exciting as it exposes everyone to competition.

Through this initiative, we have also employed nearly 40 coaches from the communities. Community coaches are selected and trained by Qualified Rowing Coaches. Amongst those we also include teachers from each school to ensure high level of administration and sustainability of the projects.

The main aims of the project are:

- Create an active Indoor Rowing Program where clubs compete
- Establish Indoor Rowing as a mass participation sport
- Use Indoor Rowing as a vehicle for talent identification
- To meet the goals of the SRSA for all sporting codes, which is to transform the sport of rowing across age, gender, disability and Geographical spread

To date we have reached 17 districts through nearly 40 schools, all of which are from areas which are water sparse and from traditionally previously disadvantaged areas of South Africa.

It is difficult to pin-point how many athletes actually use the indoor rowing machines supplied by RowSA but we have recorded over 1,156 athletes have participated in competitions. We do however know that this number is significantly higher when it comes to those who come down to the schools and community centers to take part.

Below is a representation of where we currently have functioning clubs.



Our plan for the next cycle is to increase the number of clubs in the following Provinces and districts.



The next step : Converting Indoor Rowing Clubs to Water Rowing

The focus for the next 4 year cycle is to convert as many indoor rowing clubs to water rowing clubs in all the 9 districts where our indoor rowing club have access to water. To continue on the conversion process we began In August 12th, 2016 we were successfully converted two schools in the Madibeng district, Madiba-a-toloana and Mmadekete that will be rowing at the Hartbeespoort dam.

The main aims of the project are:

- Create a continuous water rowing Program for clubs to train and compete on water
- To be able to be a feeder to the development squad /juniors/U23
- To meet the goals of the SRSA for all sporting codes, which is to transform the sport of rowing across age, gender, disability and Geographical spread

#TimetoCONVERT... is our tag line for the next 5 years...

4. Development

RowSA has identified the requirement to establish RowSA supported Junior Rowing Clubs in all Provinces. There are many talented athletes who are not attending the traditional rowing schools which, up to now, formed the core of RowSA's junior development programme. Rowing is a sport that is easily accessible to all communities, especially PDI athletes, if RowSA provides and develops a club structure which any junior athlete could join.

Throughout the years rowing clubs have endeavoured to support junior rowing clubs within Gauteng namely Wemmer Pan Junior Rowing Club, Victoria Lake Junior Rowing Club and Soweto Rowing Club; within the Eastern Cape, Zwartskop Rowing Club, Leander Rowing Club and Buffalo Rowing Club, within Western Cape, Grassy Park Rowing Club and Peninsula Girls Rowing Club; within KwaZulu Natal; Durban Rowing Club and within Limpopo Phayizani Rowing Club.

These junior clubs have been the backbone of transformation in RowSA but the lack of dedicated coaching staff and management of these clubs (done by volunteers), lack of equipment resulted in a continuous turnover in athletes who become disillusioned because their potential is not fully developed and they are not competitive against the traditional rowing schools.

RowSA has developed a blue print to establish successful junior rowing clubs in order to provide a club for any Junior (up to 18 years of age) to join.

Goal: Establish Junior Clubs accessible to PDI rowers.

Junior clubs must be further established for children who want to participate in the sport of rowing for schools that do offer rowing as a sport. There are many challenges for junior clubs due to the lack of support of a school infra-structure and parent support. The viability of the clubs are often threatened when the commitment of the few individuals who support the club reduce their involvement when their children no longer participate in the sport.

It is therefore critically important that RowSA as the governing body of the sport develop a long term plan to establish and support junior clubs in order to attract and develop talented children who are not attending rowing schools.

Rowing South Africa has recently acquired a fleet of approximately twenty boats that were either bought or donated. With this, there is also other equipment that will be used to aid developing schools and clubs in their endeavor to perform at a high level in rowing, while meeting the RowSA transformation goals.

During 2016 and 2017 Germiston High School Rowing Club received three top of the range rowing boats from RowSA to reward their efforts as the best performing transformed rowing club. The school went on to win a gold medal at the recent South African Schools Rowing Championship.

RowSA Coaches Commission

RowSA Coaches Commission has developed a comprehensive coaching accreditation program which is aligned to the International Federation program. RowSA has participated in the SASCOC accreditation program and our framework is based on the CASA framework. The accreditation program includes theoretical training, practical training on how to rig boats and peripheral elements such as water safety and motor boat competency.

The annual coaches' conference allows coaches from all over South Africa to share ideas and where RowSA is able to share a common theme and rowing style which allows athletes from all over the country to row in a similar fashion and quickly learn to row with athletes from other regions in the national squads.

5. Para-rowing, Rowing for people with disabilities

Para-Rowing is rowing for people with physical disabilities/limitations. Rowing is an inclusive sport and Para-Rowing events are an integral part of the regatta programme of RowSA. World Championship events are incorporated into the single World Rowing Championship Regattas. RowSA is one of few National Federations that includes disability and able-bodied competition under a unitary federation. RowSA thus takes full responsibility for the administrative support of the development of Para-Rowing in South Africa.

The main aims of the project are:

- Continued development of the Para-Rowing Program;
- Talent identification;
- To meet the goals of the SRSA for all sporting codes, which is to transform the sport of rowing across age, gender, disability and geographical spread; and
- International participation and performance.

Currently the high performance programme is hosted primarily at the University of Johannesburg, as well as having extended programmes in Pretoria, KZN and Cape Town. Indoor rowing is integral for talent identification within para rowing and creates the ability for talent identification in regions do not have access to water.

RowSA is assisting the Olympic movement with the development of Para-rowing both globally and within Africa. This is achieved through the Head Para-Rowing Coach being a representative on the FISA Para commission, in addition to assisting both Kenya and Zimbabwe with coaching and preparation of their athletes who competed at both the International Gavirate Para Rowing Regatta and the Rio Paralympic Games.

Inclusivity and transformation

Inclusivity and transformation is high priority for Rowing South Africa. Para-Rowing is integral to this objective. Para-Rowing is a project focused in both rural and urban areas, targeting learners, clubs and Universities. The project promotes gender equality, through the stipulated gender requirements within the various boat classes.

Way forward

Para-rowing development will be driven through the indoor rowing concept by introducing indoor rowing to special schools, as well as around the current existing able body indoor rowing clubs in the targeted provinces. This will assist in stability and continued growth and support as well as providing the infrastructure and access to competitions.

Para-rowing was the recipient of the Letsema Award, for Para Sport, which has aided financially. RowSA however continues to look for funding opportunities to achieve its goals within para-rowing. Currently our largest funders are SASCOC, SRSA and funding earmarked in Lottery applications.

6. Preparation for Tokyo 2020: Paralympic and Olympic Games

The mission of the South African National Rowing Program during the cycle 2017-2020, is to prepare and train a squad of elite rowing athletes at Senior, Para, Under 23, Junior, and Student levels in order for them to compete at international level culminating in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, with the purpose of ensuring those athletes make A finals and win medals.

The vision of the South African National Rowing Program is to continue building an elite rowing squad with an attitude and culture of winning and performing at international level, based on the success of the last cycle 2017-2020. The development of the athletes has 4 phases comprising **early development, customization, selection** and **consolidation**, with particular emphasis on **transformation** and requiring a strong support team using current best practice in training and coaching, sports science and medical care of the athletes as well as using the best quality equipment possible.

We have learnt a lot from the last 16 years of Olympic performance but are constrained by budgetary restrictions. We have achieved phenomenal results with the resources available but despite our results we continue to struggle to raise the necessary funds to continue making South Africa proud.