



FÉDÉRATION
INTERNATIONALE
DE NATATION

Published on [fina.org](https://www.fina.org) - Official FINA website (<https://www.fina.org>)

For countries with no swimming pools, creativity and support is the key to success

By Julia Adams

It's a year of firsts at the World Aquatics Championships in Gwangju and not just world record times. Some swimmers are either representing their country or competing on a worldwide stage for the first time, including swimmers from Bhutan, Vanuatu and St. Kitts and Nevis.

Young athletes now more than ever have the opportunity to participate in competitive swimming thanks to FINA's development program. The program boasts 80 scholarships annually to athletes who don't have the financial or technical means to compete in the sport at a higher level.

Sangay Tenzin and Kinley Lhendup and are the two swimmers representing Bhutan in this year's competition. They were selected to compete after a short course swim competition put on by FINA in Bhutan just three months ago.

"It's my first international competition. To represent Bhutan, it was my dream and being part of this FINA competition, I'm very privileged," Tenzin said.

FINA's development program provided scholarships for Tenzin and Lhendup to compete. In addition to the scholarships, FINA has also provided funding for an Olympic size pool in Bhutan. Many developing countries like Bhutan don't have the financial resources to build a pool, so usually athletes have to learn how to swim and train in the ocean.

"There is no swimming life in Bhutan. We got our FINA scholarship, which I am very thankful to FINA. FINA gave us a big opportunity to swim. I'm so happy," Lhendup said.

FINA particularly gears its support towards developing countries like Bhutan that are unable to allocate money needed for swimming at a grassroots level.

FINA's development program will allocate approximately 8 million USD to scholarships in their development budget from now until 2021, according to their current strategic plan.

Vanuatu's Wolul Hollingsworth, 20, also received a scholarship from FINA to compete in this year's world championship.

Because of the lack of a proper size pool in Vanuatu, Hollingsworth did most of training in the ocean and on dry land. He

said the transition from swimming in the ocean to an Olympic pool is very challenging.

“When your swimming in the ocean you will be going a little bit faster then when you’re swimming in a pool,” Hollingsworth said. “A pool is dead water and an ocean is live water. Another thing is the salt water in the ocean. It’s very different. When we come in the pool we’re feeling like we sink.”

As the only swimmer representing Vanuatu in this year’s competition, he hopes to bring more recognition to swimming in the country.

“I think we are looking forward to developing swimming in Vanuatu, cause many people like swimming back in Vanuatu,” Hollingsworth said. “A lot of people live near the sea and every day they usually go diving with the fish or swimming in the sea.”

Due to lack of a proper size pool, Hollingsworth trained in Australia before the competition while Tenzin and Lhendup trained in Thailand.

But Hollingsworth has competed at one other FINA competition before the world championships. He said he enjoys meeting swimmers from other countries.

“Last time I made a lot of friends from different countries,” Hollingsworth said. “Maybe seven countries. So when I’m coming back on this year they see me and they seem really happy.”

Through the development program, FINA plans to continue to give athletes like Tenzin, Lhendup and Hollingsworth the opportunity to swim competitively as well as bring more recognition for and participation in the sport in developing countries.
