

The Power of Sport

Mapping the impact of the *Just Play* Sport for Development Programme in the Pacific



unicef 

for every child

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Development Programme in the Pacific

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Just Play has demonstrated notable contributions in development objectives such as reducing primary risk factors associated with non-communicable disease, particularly physical inactivity, and increasing opportunities for women, girls and people living with disability. In addition, the training, capacity and employment opportunities provided through *Just Play* in the region are aligned with the Australian Government's commitment to economic empowerment.

Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific

Bringing 'Learning through sport' to life in the Pacific

It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.

*Paediatrician and psychoanalyst,
Donald W. Winnicott (Playing and Reality, 1971)*

Healthy and safe children create healthy and safe families and communities, which in turn leads to healthy and safe nations. If only the simplicity of this sequence was as easy to replicate in reality.

Just Play, a community engagement sport for development (S4D) programme developed by the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) and supported by UNICEF, is tackling this challenge head on in the Pacific region by ensuring that every child has the building blocks and support systems they need to survive and thrive, including the chance to learn and play in a safe, inclusive environment.

Although play is sometimes undervalued in children's development, much research has shown that it is a fundamental necessity that contributes hugely to cognitive, social and physical development.

As a programme, *Just Play* poses the question: 'what if we could advance play further to benefit children even more'?

The concept of 'learning through sport' uses sport and play as the vehicle to impart critical messages to children on issues such as healthy choices, social inclusion and how to protect themselves. Through their participation, children are exposed not only to the realm of physical activity but also to the opportunity of garnering critical life lessons that help to form habits and behaviours that will last long into adulthood.

In an increasingly complex world, sport can teach positive social behaviours and solidarity, inspire a new generation of role models, ignite passion and skills, be a platform to engage communities, civil society and governments, and crucially, be an agent of positive change to ensure a better future for our children and our children's children.

Sport as a form of play further enhances these contributions by instilling qualities such as teamwork, respect and decision-making, as well as the added health benefits that come from participating in physical activity.

Since 2014, UNICEF Pacific has partnered with the OFC to deliver *Just Play*, with the aim of improving the lives of children and adolescents aged 6-16 years in 11 Pacific Island Countries and Territories (of which UNICEF Pacific supports programming in 6 Pacific Island Countries and Territories and UNICEF Papua New Guinea (PNG) supports programming in PNG, through the powerful and much adored medium of football.

Just Play is regarded as a cost-efficient, outcome-oriented programme with a proven track record of results, integrity and growth. It is strategic in both its mission and in the value it can bring to children and communities. Its non-discriminatory and inclusive principles lead to the breaking down of harmful social barriers, and to the creation of more open, confident, and healthy individuals and communities. Furthermore, the programme is seen as a critical entry point to reach the most vulnerable of children, and to engage adolescents.

The sessions provided by the programme lay a foundation that enables children to become active and socially conscious adults. This ethos has been at the heart of *Just Play* since its inception, and continues to drive it forward today.

Globally, we are now well on our way towards the 2030 milestone of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. How we ultimately measure up to the 17 aspirational Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) laid out before us remains to be seen.

What is clear however, is that S4D and programmes like *Just Play* will have a crucial role in contributing to the achievement of the goals, not least because of the intrinsically positive values associated with sport, affirmed in the 2030 Agenda itself:

Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognise the growing contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives. (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development A/RES/70/1, paragraph 37)

UNICEF, as a pioneer in the use of S4D, has long since recognised sport for its dynamic programming, fundraising and communication functions. Additionally, S4D is regarded as a low-cost, high impact intervention, supporting the holistic well-being and development of children and adolescents, as well as being a dynamic tool to support the broader implementation of crosscutting organisational and global developmental priorities. For example, sport has the potential to contribute to:

- **Child Survival**, by reducing the risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases, and engaging children and adolescents on a range of health issues;
- **Education**, by facilitating the development of important life skills applicable both on and off the field of play, including the acceptance of rules, decision-making, teamwork, overcoming adversity, showing respect, and expressive play;
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**, by supporting the development of positive WASH behaviours and practices in schools, communities and in times of emergencies;
- **Child Protection and Social Inclusion**, by challenging harmful social norms and stereotypes, and creating pathways to empower those disadvantaged on the basis of their gender, identity or ability to realize their potential; and
- **Emergency**, by building reliance and supporting the emotional recovery of children and adolescents following natural disasters and conflict.

UNICEF's work with sport is grounded in its mission to ensure that every child has the right to play, recreation, and sport in a safe and healthy environment – a right founded in Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as in other international treaties.

Just Play has had an innovative and far reaching influence across the Pacific region, positively impacting and enhancing the life-experiences of children, adolescents and communities through a structured, sport-based curriculum. Involvement in *Just Play* equips participants with life skills necessary to make consistent, long-term healthy lifestyle choices that promote health and wellness, gender equality, social inclusion and child protection, especially in post-emergency contexts.

Sport has the power to change the world...it has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair... It laughs in the face of all kinds of discrimination.

Nelson Mandela, 2000

The sentiment of Mr. Mandela's now iconic words remain at the heart of the *Just Play* programme and underline the determination and commitment from the OFC, UNICEF and all our partners to ensure every child not only survives, but has the chance to thrive.

The *Just Play* programme is fun for children. Through simple sporting activities they learn leadership skills and how to work as a team. They also learn that all children, girls, boys, and those with disabilities can play together on a level playing field. We have seen that when children are enjoying themselves they are receptive to learning about social messages which are part of the *Just Play* programme – healthy eating, exercise, respect and being inclusive of everyone

Jonathan Kings, Deputy Secretary, Pacific and Development Group, MFAT

Football is a universal language as well as a universal sport that can be played by almost anyone almost anywhere. The fact that through *Just Play* football included athletes of all abilities has had a profound effect on the wider inclusion of people with disabilities.

David Rutherford, Chief Commissioner, New Zealand Human Rights Commission

From education, to gender, to health, to preventing violence – sport can play an important role in raising awareness and developing the skills and attitudes children and adolescents need to thrive.

Liz Twyford, Sports Programmes Specialist, UNICEF UK

Just Play has served as a valuable case study of an effective sport for development programme that is relevant to sport and government, can be delivered at scale, and aims to effectively monitor and evaluate outputs, and increasingly, impact in order to improve future results.

Oliver Dudfield, Head of Sport for Development and Peace, Youth Division with the Commonwealth Secretariat

Just Play reaches the masses in many ways that we have always wanted sport to be 'Sport For All'.

Henry Tavoia, CEO, VASONOC

Who's on our team?

Focused on the crucial role of partnerships, Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underlines the importance of sharing knowledge and skills while working together to bring about positive change. The strength and success of Just Play is hugely reliant on the strong partnerships forged across every corner of the Pacific region, from grassroots level to Government ministries. Just Play's multisectoral approach across health and wellness, education, gender equality, hygiene and sanitation and equality, enables sustainable progress, specifically in social inclusion and child protection, by engaging actors at all levels. Our shared goal of achieving better outcomes for every child is the driving force that spurs us all on.

Just Play as a vehicle for positive change

- *Just Play* is an agent of positive change because it combines the popularity of Football in an active, fun, organised and engaging way that integrates positive social messages into all sessions and activities.

Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific

- *Just Play* has helped us to deliver our mandate of achieving a better future 'for every child' in the Pacific. Its broad focus and scalability has also been an invaluable part of our humanitarian emergency responses over the last few years, providing a safe space where children can regain a sense of normality through play.

Sheldon Yett, Representative, UNICEF Pacific

- *Just Play* has provided the opportunity to strengthen and expand the delivery of key messages on how physical activity and healthy eating are key components of a healthy lifestyle and prevention of Non Communicable Diseases.

Elizabeth Iro, Former Cook Islands Secretary of Health, and current Chief Nursing Officer for WHO (Geneva)

- Alongside promoting physical activity and teamwork, *Just Play* aims to promote disability awareness, social inclusion and equality through sports.

Jonathan Kings, Deputy Secretary, Pacific and Development Group, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Just Play Teaches

- *Just Play* is an excellent model for encouraging young people to make good decisions in regards to their health and lifestyle.

Elizabeth Iro, Former Cook Islands Secretary of Health, and current Chief Nursing Officer for WHO (Geneva)

- *Just Play* takes a child centred approach, with active learning at the core of the football sessions.
- Oliver Dudfield, Head of Sport for Development and Peace, Youth Division with the Commonwealth Secretariat**

- *Just Play* teaches by creating a fun and inclusive environment, with the entire community engaged in and, therefore, sharing in the creation of positive social play.

Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific

- The programme encourages self-confidence in children, motor skills, social skills, and knowledge on the importance of healthy living through good nutrition and physical activity not only physically and socially but mentally. At a young age this is very important for lifelong learning.

Leausa T Dr. Take Naseri, Director General of Health, Ministry of Health, Samoa

Just Play Engages

- Engaging and investing in local communities, staff and volunteers, *Just Play* provides opportunities and has created a sustainable programme impacting future generations.

**Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells,
Minister for International Development and the Pacific**

- Just Play's* objectives promote inclusion of all abilities, physical environment, information and positive attitudes to all children.
- Mataafa Faatino Utumapu, Office Manager,
NOLA Samoa: Disability Association**
- Alongside promoting physical activity and teamwork, the *Just Play* programme aims to promote disability awareness, social inclusion and equality through sports.

Jonathan Kings, Deputy Secretary, Pacific and Development Group, Ministry of Foreign

Just Play Ignites

- Using large sporting events as a platform, *Just Play* has had a crucial role in igniting and encouraging an important conversation around ending violence in the wider Pacific region. Shining a light on this taboo topic is not easy but *Just Play* has helped in making the invisible, visible.
- Sheldon Yett, Representative, UNICEF Pacific**
- Children and youth are good at copying each other. Children at play always attract other children and gradually they also attract youth, parents, family, community and society. Children are great storytellers and like to teach their peers too. These are and have been a main strength for how programmes like *Just Play* ignite passion and skills in our society and region.
- Henry Tavo, CEO, VASONOC**
- Just Play* is fun and engaging – so at its heart it is an activity that children want to take part in. Once involved, their passion is ignited and harnessed in ways that impact their lives far beyond the field of play, developing the skills they need to thrive.

**Liz Twyford, Sports Programmes Specialist,
UNICEF UK**

Just Play Inspires

- The origins of *Just Play* are rooted in the knowledge that sport, and especially football, are a uniting force for positive change. The collaborative efforts from OFC, UNICEF and the countless other valued partners across the Pacific have seen *Just Play* grow from a powerful idea into an impactful programme that will continue to inspire collaboration to achieve a better future for all children.

**Franck Castillo, Acting General Secretary,
Oceania Football Confederation**

- Just Play* is for every child. Girls, boys, disabled, non-disabled – and in this way it inspires children to live, learn and play together, as well as inspiring future leaders who may have been overlooked or side-lined in other areas of their lives.

Liz Twyford, UNICEF UK

- By focusing on “children” and using them as “role models”, I believe *Just Play* is onto the most critical and strategic pathway of changing our society’s future.

Henry Tavo, CEO, VASONOC

Sport's contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, sets out a 'supremely ambitious and transformational vision' for global development (UNGA 2015, para. 7, p. 3). The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 associated targets are comprehensive and far-reaching in scope and 'balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental' (UNGA 2015, preamble, p. 1). While all of the goals are crucial to creating healthy communities, some of the goals have particular relevance to *Just Play* and the role sport can play in achieving positive social change.



The participation of children and adolescents in sport contributes to Child Survival and the achievement of Good Health and Well-being by preventing or limiting the effects of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity.



Sport influences the achievement of Quality Education not only by improving school attendance, learning performance, and the desire to succeed academically, but by facilitating the development of important life skills applicable both on and off the field, including the acceptance of rules, decision-making, teamwork, respect and fair play.



Sport fosters the achievement of Gender Equality by empowering children and adolescents to develop self-esteem and leadership abilities through the challenging of harmful social norms and gender stereotypes.



Sport facilitates the achievement of Clean Water and Sanitation by engaging children and adolescents on a range of health issues, including the importance of clean water and hygiene, and access to sanitation facilities.



In regions vulnerable to natural disasters and already feeling the effects of climate change, such as the Pacific region, sport can act as a normalising mechanism for the psychosocial support of children in a post-emergency setting. Sport can also integrate messages on disaster risk reduction to increase understanding of climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.



Sport strengthens the means of implementation for the achievement of Partnerships by producing an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels and by all actors through principals founded on partnership and cooperation.



Sport in general and football in particular, provides positive values and life skills messages. Having positive experiences in sport and social messages of health, well-being, inclusion and respect at a young age, helps to change mentalities and to reach the objectives of sustainable development.

Cyril Pellevat, French Senator, UEFA Foundation for Children

Using intentionally designed sport-based interventions, in conjunction with other interventions, contributes to achieving identified development outcomes.

Oliver Dudfield, Head of Sport for Development and Peace, Youth Division with the Commonwealth Secretariat

There has never been a more important time where sport needs humanity and humanity needs sport. Sport and major sporting events can and must be a catalyst to bring together public, private and third sectors to deliver benefits to communities. Beyond the medals, beyond the sporting spectacle, there is enormous potential for athletes to help build peace, sustainability and prosperity, and drive the ambition and impact of all citizens through sport.

David Grevemburg, CEO, Commonwealth Games

Sport has a unique ability to engage and connect with children, opening up opportunities for learning new skills and practicing and developing existing ones. It helps children reflect on their attitudes and practice across a range of areas covered by the SDGs.

Liz Twyford, Sports Programmes Specialist, UNICEF UK

Sport is a globally recognised - and increasingly utilised - vehicle to achieve development outcomes in areas such as health, social cohesion, gender equality and disability inclusion. The Australian Government strongly supports these outcomes through its targeted sport for development programs in the Asia-Pacific region, utilising partners such as Football Federation Australia and Oceania Football Confederation to deliver high impact programs such as Just Play that address and measure outcomes in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific

Just Play promotes sports in an accessible and responsive environment through health living, respecting diversity of individual's needs and abilities.

Mataafa Faatino Utumapu, Office Manager, NOLA Samoa: Disability Association





Positive Change

Just Play – much more than *Just Play*

At its core, *Just Play* is a sport for development programme used to communicate critical messages to children, through the medium of football. In reality it's that and so much more.

It's a programmatic tool, a powerful platform, a behaviour change instigator, a community engagement mechanism, and an emergency response service. This is the story behind *Just Play*.

Describe *Just Play* in three words?

Healthy, children, football.

What is *Just Play*?

Just Play is a community engagement Sport for Development (S4D) programme developed by the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) to improve the lives of children and adolescents aged 6-16 through football.

The programme engages multi-sectoral stakeholders in a series of child-centred interactive football sessions.

Since 2014 UNICEF Pacific has partnered with the OFC to support the delivery of the *Just Play* programme across 6-Pacific Island countries – Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. UNICEF Papua New Guinea also collaborates with OFC to deliver *Just Play*.

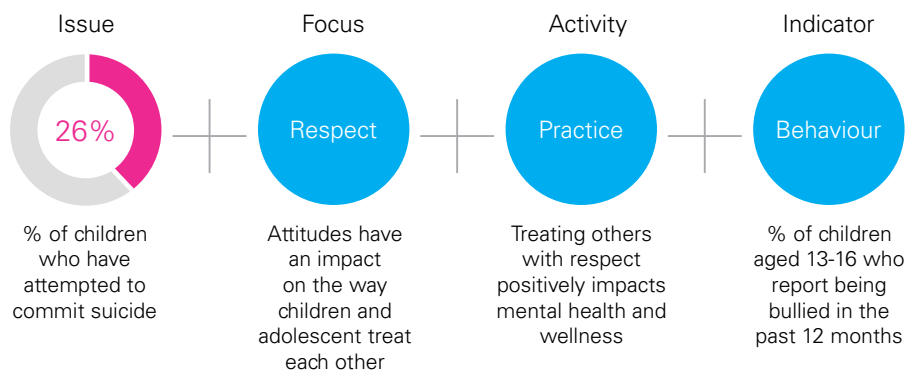
Through the integration of social messages, aligned to the four key programming pillars: health and wellness, gender equality, social inclusion and child protection; the programme engages children in a series of interactive sessions. Through active participation, *Just Play* helps children to develop

healthy lifestyle habits, encourage gender equality, promote social inclusion, insist on sport for all and become confident in their abilities.

What is the purpose of *Just Play*?

The purpose of the programme is to reduce the risk factors associated with, and vulnerability to, endemic social issues, such as the prevalence of violence against women and children, gender inequality and social exclusion, by integrating social messages into the sessions – for example, the importance of reporting incidences of bullying and other types of violence. In doing so, the programme facilitates an understanding of the importance of regular participation in physical fitness and its impact on issues such as bullying, violence and social inclusion to enable positive social and behaviour change.

Just Play also facilitates the development of critical life skills applicable both on and off the field of play, including the acceptance of rules, teamwork, respect, decision- making and fair play.



How does *Just Play* work?

Just Play is implemented with the support of trained coaches and equipment packs containing footballs, cones, bibs, activity manuals and other resources that enable children to learn healthy lifestyle habits and social skills focusing on:

- **Health and Wellness**, by reducing the risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through healthier lifestyle decision-making and choices;
- **Gender Equality**, by changing perceptions towards women and girls, and creating pathways to empower women and girls to realize their human rights;
- **Social Inclusion**, by changing perceptions towards those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity or ability, and creating equal opportunity for their full inclusion in society;
- **Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**, by increasing understanding of the importance of sanitation and hygiene, and supporting the development of positive practices;
- **Child Protection**, by increasing understanding of child protection issues, and the availability of safe/protective environments, including in sport contexts, through tailored advocacy campaigns (i.e. #ENDViolence); and
- **Emergencies**, by building resilience, and supporting the emotional recovery of children following natural disasters and conflict.

How many children has *Just Play* reached in the Pacific region?

With UNICEF's support, *Just Play* is supporting the up-skilling of teachers and community volunteers to enable them to deliver programme activities, which facilitate capacity building, ownership and accountability in social change through a community-based, children-centred approach.

- **58,531:** The number of children and adolescents who have participated in *Just Play* in Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu since 2014
- **43,724:** The number of children and adolescents who have participated in 342 *Just Play* festivals in Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu since 2014
- **2,774:** The number of teachers and community volunteers trained to support the delivery of *Just Play* in Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu since 2014
- **710:** The number of schools which delivered *Just Play* with the support of UNICEF Pacific in Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu since 2014
- **383:** The number of communities impacted by *Just Play* with the support of UNICEF Pacific in Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu since 2014

How much does *Just Play* cost

It costs approximately USD\$20 for one child to be reached through the *Just Play* Programme and approximately USD\$25 for one child to be reached through the *Just Play* Emergency Programme.

How is *Just Play* funded?

UNICEF Pacific acknowledges and sincerely appreciates the generous support of all donors that have contributed to *Just Play*.

The fundraising efforts of and ongoing support from the United Kingdom National Committee for UNICEF, the New Zealand National Committee for UNICEF and the Commonwealth Games Federation specifically have allowed UNICEF Pacific to develop Sport for Development as a critical entry point to enhance the social engagement of children in the Pacific region.

Contributions from the French National Committee for UNICEF have also allowed for expanded engagement in Vanuatu in collaboration with Vanuatu Association of Sport and National Olympic Committee (VASANOC) through the Olympic Values programme.

Who does *Just Play* partner with?

UNICEF Pacific wishes to acknowledge OFC's commitment to the *Just Play* Programme and its partnerships with UNICEF throughout the region, which has created an environment within which children can grow, learn and explore sport in positive and meaningful ways and have also yielded exciting and unique opportunities for collaboration.

In addition, UNICEF Pacific acknowledges UNICEF Papua New Guinea, the Australian Government, the New Zealand Government, the Union of European Football Association Foundation for Children and the Australian Football Federation for their continued support and promotion of *Just Play*.

Just Play's multisectoral approach across health and wellness, education, gender equality, hygiene and sanitation and equality, enables sustainable progress, specifically in social inclusion and child protection, by engaging actors at all levels. Without the valued support of partners throughout Governments and ministries across the Pacific region, *Just Play* would not be able to continue reaching and engaging with children and communities.

How is *Just Play* managed?

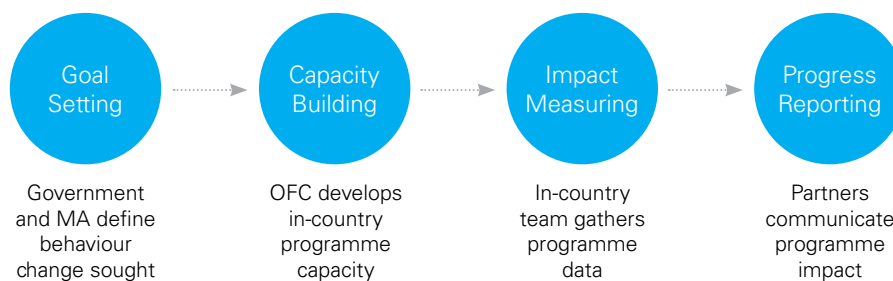
Just Play is managed by the OFC and delivered by local Government and National Football Member Associations (MA), teachers and community volunteers in country.

The local Government and MA first identify the programme needs to address on the basis of the most pressing challenges affecting the community— for example, the importance of practising healthy eating and exercise habits for children and adolescents in Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

The in-country programme is coordinated by a *Just Play* programme team consisting of a Project Manager, Instructors and Coordinators who train the local teachers and community volunteers to implement the programme and measure the impact.

The MA takes ownership of the programme following the successful implementation of the local programme, with the OFC keeping the Intellectual Property rights to the curriculum.

The 16-week school-based programme is delivered in primary schools during class time through the support of teachers; the 48-week community-based programme is delivered outside of school through the support of community stakeholders.



Is *Just Play* only focused on the Pacific region?

Just Play was developed by the OFC in 2009 in partnership with the Government of Australia and its agencies and the Union of European Football Association (UEFA) Foundation for Children.

The programme was originally designed to improve the lives of children and adolescents aged 6-12 in 11 Pacific countries: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Recognized as a leading S4D programme in the Pacific, *Just Play* now delivers S4D programming for children and adolescents aged 6-16 with the additional support from the New Zealand Government and since 2014, from UNICEF.

Based on the success of *Just Play* in the Pacific region, the Government of Australia supported the OFC and the Football Federation of Australia to develop a partnership with the All Indian Football Federation to pilot the programme in India. Activities rolled out in 2016, with the support of the Australian Government and the UEFA Foundation for Children.

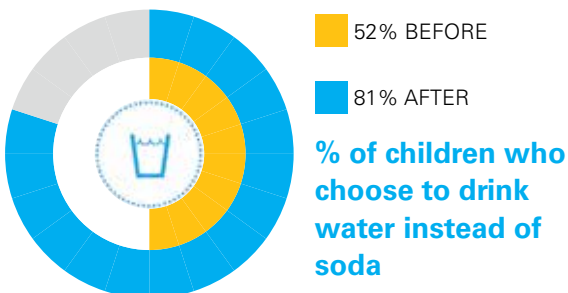
The *Just Play* India Pilot was launched in July 2016 in the State of Kerala by the Kerala Football Association (KFA) in partnership with Government of Kerala, and in the State of Maharashtra by the Western India Football Association (WIFA) in February 2017.

AIFF will expand the programme to other Indian States in partnership with the FFA, the Government of Australia, the OFC, the UEFA Foundation for Children, State governments and private sponsors.

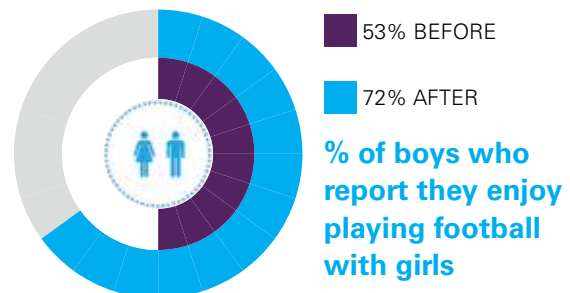
What impact has *Just Play* had so far?

As of the end of 2017, *Just Play* achieved the following programme results with the support of UNICEF Pacific in Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

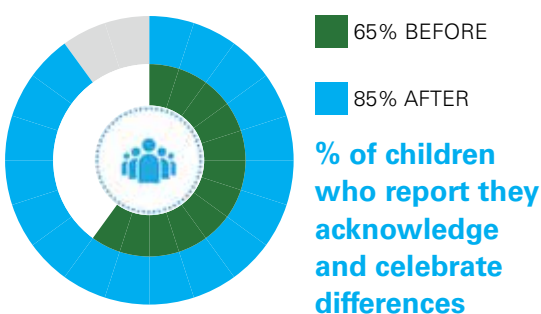
Health and Wellness



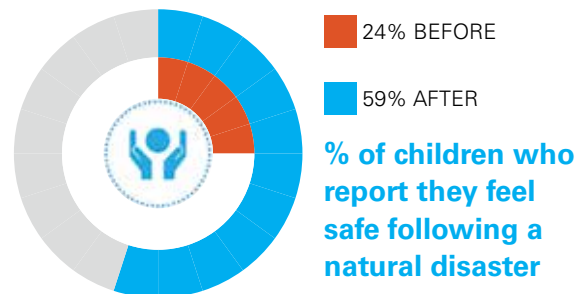
Gender Equality



Social Inclusion



Child Protection



Just Play is positively impacting children and adolescents through a sport-based curriculum which enables them to develop the life skills necessary to make consistent, long-term healthy lifestyle choices that promote Health and Wellness, Gender Equality, Social Inclusion and Child Protection, including in post-emergency contexts.



65%

The % of adolescents who report they now know how to set goals – with 54% knowing how to make those goals SMART

98%

The % of adolescent boys in the *Just Play* programme who see their coach as a positive role model – 44% of all coaches in the *Just Play* 13-16 year programme are female

71%

The % of adolescents who report they have someone they can talk to when they have a problem or need help

93%

The % of adolescents who report they now know what to do in a situation where either they or someone they know is being bullied





How has *Just Play* developed over time?

In March 2015, UNICEF Pacific supported the OFC to develop a child-centred emergency-based programme as part of UNICEF's response to Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu.

This programme, the *Just Play* Emergency Programme, is now a full-scale emergency response programme, which uses football to communicate critical emergency-focused messages around safe water, personal safety and preparedness.

Just Play supports programming activities through collaboration with local stakeholders in areas most likely to be affected by natural disasters.

By focusing on vulnerability, the programme leverages existing programming content to support coping in the wake of a natural disaster and the emotional recovery of children, specifically within an emergency context.

The *Just Play* Emergency Programme was shortlisted for the 2016 Beyond Sport, Best New Innovation Award in recognition of the role that sport can play in supporting the dissemination of critical

What makes *Just Play* different to other programmes?

Just Play's agile model means it has 'many strings to its bow' and can be implemented in a number of different ways – as a programme tool, as an advocacy platform or as a communication mechanism. It can also incorporate all of these elements, simultaneously for maximum reach and impact.

emergency focused messages around safe water, personal safety, food security, health and wellness, preparedness and how to deal with emotional issues resulting from a trauma.

In 2016, building on the success of the original *Just Play* 6-12 year programme model, UNICEF Pacific further supported the OFC to develop a 13-16 year programme, which they supported the piloting of in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa.

The *Just Play* 13-16 Programme integrates concepts of the original *Just Play* programme model and Sport 2 Life, an existing S4D platform developed by UNICEF Namibia, to support the ongoing education of adolescents through sport.

By integrating messages on the four key programme pillars of health and wellness, gender equity, social inclusion and child protection into a sport-based coaching curriculum, the goal of the *Just Play* 13-16 programme is to enable adolescents aged 13-16 to consistently make long-term, healthy lifestyle choices.

What value does *Just Play* add?

The aligned missions and values of the OFC and UNICEF are focused on enhancing the well-being and safety of children, while ensuring no child is left behind.

Just Play is a dynamic tool that enables UNICEF and the OFC, to reach and connect with even more children and communities, in order to help every child reach their full potential. It has the power to amplify critical and life-saving messages and lessons around child survival, education, child protection and emergencies, all through the fun medium of play and sport.

What is the future of *Just Play*?

There is considerable scope to expand the OFC partnership currently in place with UNICEF Pacific to enable UNICEF Country Offices worldwide to adapt *Just Play* to reduce child and adolescent vulnerability in local contexts.

Importantly, evidence suggests that children, who have a positive experience in sport early on, are more likely to participate in sport throughout their lives, providing them with a wide range of physical, social and emotional benefits.

Social indicators established by UNICEF Pacific demonstrate that children and adolescents participating in *Just Play* have a positive affinity to sport, with 94% of participants saying they want to continue to take part in the programme.

Given the important role that sport can play in supporting the psychosocial recovery of children and adolescents after an emergency, and building on the success of *Just Play* Emergency Programme, particular impetus should be given to emergency programming in countries and regions with high exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters.

Feedback from *Just Play* Emergency Programme is supporting the creation of a best practice programming model for the Pacific. The model, including the development and refinement of resources, will build the capacity of programming teams in at risk countries throughout the region, in preparation for future disasters.

Towards this end, the OFC in partnership with UNICEF Pacific is already working to develop a complimentary emergency preparedness programming model which will be integrated into the existing *Just Play* programmes currently being delivered in Pacific Island Countries and Territories

and beyond.

In 2018, the programme will expand to include Kiribati and Tuvalu, with additional interest in Indonesia and other Asian countries.

What is Sport for Development (S4D)?

Seen as a low-cost, high impact intervention, supporting the holistic development of children, S4D is being used as a dynamic tool to support the broader implementation of crosscutting organisation and global developmental priorities (including the Sustainable Development Goals). Adding high-impact value to aspects of protection, education, advocacy, communication, health, nutrition, promotion of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and in humanitarian emergencies, S4D is increasingly seen as one of the more powerful mediums through which to engage children and adolescents globally.

How can sport help children?

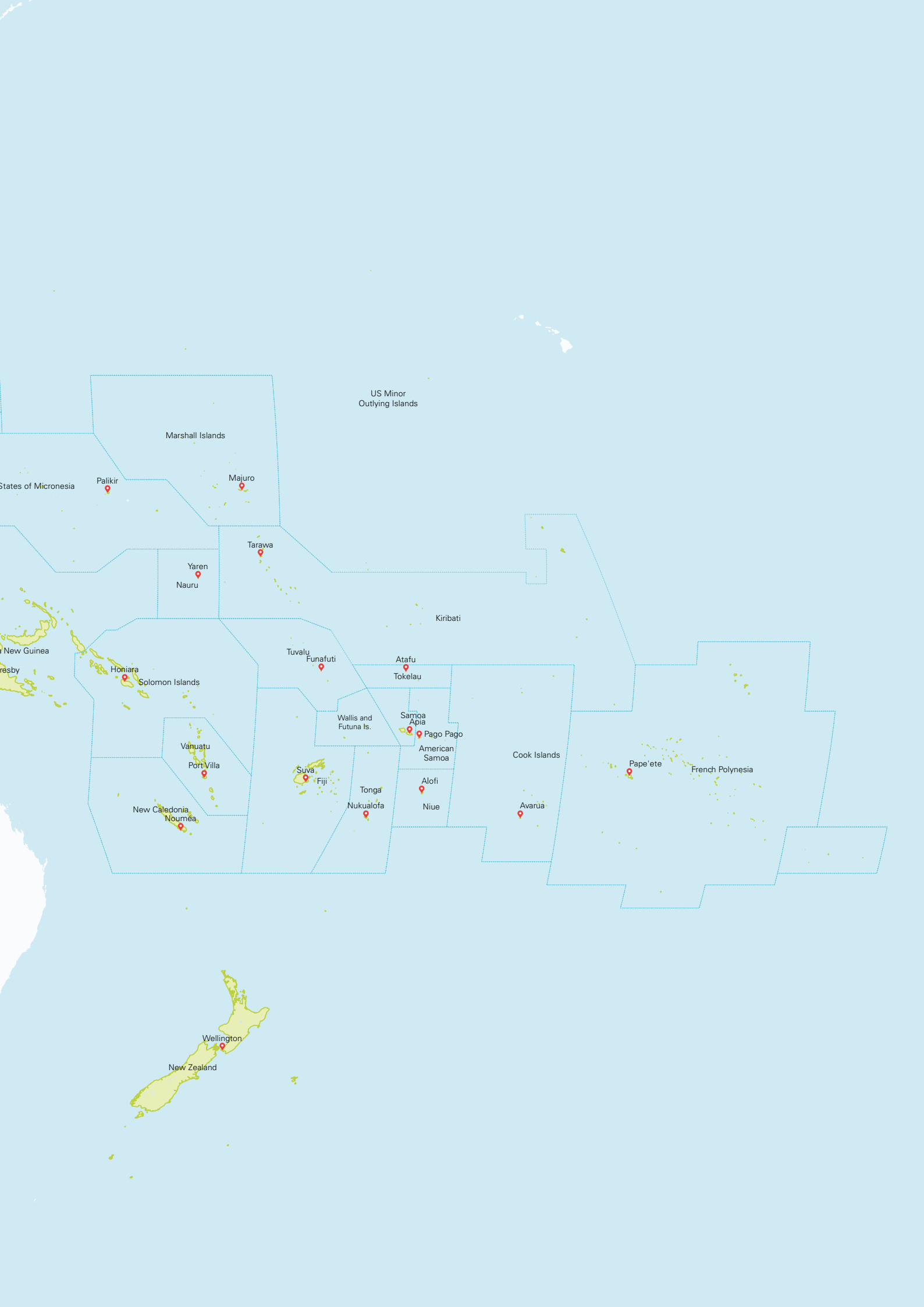
UNICEF is focusing on S4D as one critical area of intervention as part of its overall strategy to reduce vulnerability and address social issues affecting young people in the Pacific region and worldwide. By integrating messages on endemic issues into sport and play activities, UNICEF seeks to reduce exposure to risk factors among children and adolescents.

Through the integration of social messages, aligned to the four key programming pillars: health and wellness, gender equality, social inclusion and child protection, the programme engages children in a series of interactive sessions. Through active participation, *Just Play* helps children to develop healthy lifestyle habits, encourage gender equality, promote social inclusion, insist on sport for all and become confident in their abilities.

Northern Mariana Islands
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Solomon Islands

Tuvalu

Funafuti

Atafu

Tokelau

Wallis and
Futuna Is.

Samoa

Apia

Pago Pago

American
Samoa

Cook Islands

Pape'ete

French Polynesia

Vanuatu

Port Vila

Suva

Fiji

Tonga

Nukualofa

Alofi

Niue

Avarua

New Caledonia

Noumea

Wellington

New Zealand

Leading by example in Fiji

“*Just Play* not only improves children’s lives in Fiji, it also changed my life as a volunteer. Before becoming part of the *Just Play* Programme, I was overweight and I had no confidence. This made it hard for me to interact with people which, led me to having a low self-esteem.”



Maylin, Just Play Volunteer, 23 years old, Fiji

Sadly, Maylin is not alone in her experience. Many countries in the Pacific region are faced with the ‘double burden of malnutrition’, presenting as stunting and obesity. Poor dietary choices and an increased desire for widely available processed and sugar-heavy food and beverages has led to concerning levels of malnutrition, as well as non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, presenting across all demographics.

Data from the Global School-Based Student Survey conducted by the World Health Organisation and participating Governments in Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu reveal some alarming truths about the issues that young people in the Pacific are facing:

- 30 per cent of students spent three or more hours per day sitting and watching television, playing computer games, or talking with friends, when not in school or doing homework during a typical or usual day
- 25 per cent of students were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on all 7 days during the 7 days before the survey
- 39 per cent of students were overweight
- 52 per cent of students usually drank carbonated soft drinks one or more times per day during the 30 days before the survey
- 12 per cent of students did not have any close friends
- 26 per cent of students attempted to commit suicide one or more times during the 30 days before the survey
- 51 per cent of students were bullied on one or more days during the 30 days before the survey

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4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Aimed at children aged 6-16 years, the *Just Play* programme is helping young people across the Pacific region to grow, learn and explore through sport.

Targeting girls and boys, children with and without disabilities and children living in urban and rural communities, *Just Play* is a critical entry point to engage children in a positive and meaningful way.

Through the integration of social messages on health and wellness, gender equality, social inclusion and child protection, the programme engages children in interactive activities that help them to develop healthy lifestyle habits, learn to respect each other and be inclusive in their everyday social interactions. By using a holistic approach, and engagement with multiple stakeholders, *Just Play* is contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a number of ways that positively impact children's lives:

SDG 3 Health and Well-being:

Through *Just Play*, children are motivated to learn to associate physical activity with fun. This positive association makes them more likely to continue to engage in some form of recreation throughout their lives. *Just Play* sessions have also been designed to help children choose healthier food options. Together, these interventions contribute to SDG Target 3.4 aimed at reducing premature mortality from non-communicable disease.

SDG 4 Quality Education: At its

core, *Just Play* sessions work to enhance national Ministry of Education learning outcomes. Children learn to develop healthy lifestyle habits, respect each other, support the inclusion of everyone and keep themselves and their friends safe. A total of 2,400 teachers and community members have improved capacity to deliver quality sports sessions, enhancing the quality of the education environment and relevance of the learning outcomes for all children, the focus of SDG Target 4.1.

SDG 5 Gender Equality: *Just*

Play strongly emphasises the importance of girls and boys engaging and participating as one team, instead of being divided by gender. Through this, girls and boys learn to respect each other and develop tolerance and understanding, which will be crucial in achieving SDG Target 5.1 which aims to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. *Just Play* also promotes the development of female role models and offers girls and women the ability to

acquire skills to help them make a meaningful contribution to their communities.

Goal 6 Clean Water and Sanitation: *Just Play* facilitates the achievement of access to clean water and sanitation (SDG Targets 6.1 and 6.2) by engaging children and adolescents on a range of health issues, including understanding the importance of handwashing, safe drinking water and hygiene practices.

Goal 13 Climate Action: In regions vulnerable to natural disasters and already feeling the effects of climate change, such as the Pacific region, sport can act as a normalising mechanism for the psychosocial support of children in a post-emergency setting. Sport can also integrate messages on disaster risk reduction to increase understanding of climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning, contributing to SDG Targets 13.1 and 13.3.

Goal 17 Partnerships for the Goals: Working directly with government ministries and key stakeholders, such as ministries of education, ensures wider reach and programme scalability. Crosscutting partnerships support the upskilling of teachers and community volunteers to ensure quality-sporting interventions in and out of school. Through engagement with teachers and schools during class time, *Just Play* supports the delivery of a 16-week programme. The 34-week community based programme is delivered after schools with the support of community-based stakeholders.

The programme's multi-sectoral approach (across health and wellness, gender, social inclusion and child protection) engages actors at the local, country and regional levels. The partnerships central to *Just Play* contribute to SDG Target 17.9, focused on capacity building, SDG Target 17.4 on policy coherence, and SDG Targets 17.16 and 17.7 on multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The programme also supports the capacity building of teachers and community volunteers, like Maylin, to deliver quality sports sessions on a weekly basis in primary and secondary schools and in community based settings.

"After hearing about *Just Play* from a friend, I became interested in how this program delivered messages through fun activities in each session. It was an eye opening experience," Maylin recalls.

"Since joining *Just Play*, I have been visiting schools and communities to assist teachers and volunteers in delivering the *Just Play* fun based activities with messages to children around the Suva and Lami areas of Fiji."

Through the active participation model, Maylin saw how girls and boys learned to respect each other, develop tolerance and understanding. "I found it really interesting observing boys and girls in different schools in their arguments with each other about the games based on gender. But after a few sessions I could see that through *Just Play* the students have changed their views and have accepted gender equality and respect."

Maylin too has learned valuable lessons from *Just Play*,

"I've seen that through each session, I've learned more about staying healthy. I've lost a lot weight by being more active and participating in the sessions."

In providing leadership opportunities through sport, *Just Play* promotes the development of female role models and offers girls and women the ability to acquire skills and capacity to make a meaningful contribution to their communities. For Maylin, that means a lot.

"My life would have been different if I didn't join the programme, because I could have suffered from being overweight and having no confidence. I would have locked myself away from the world and wouldn't have found the confidence to face life."

The development of respect, understanding and tolerance among girls and boys, women and men and the community as a whole is key to reducing risk factors associated with gender-based violence in the Pacific. By supporting the development of positive role models, the *Just Play* programme is working hard to change perceptions and showcase the power and potential of women and girls throughout the region.

In 2016 *Just Play* launched the #ENDviolence campaign across the Pacific, with the aim of changing perceptions towards girls and women, and ending violence in all its forms throughout the region. Supporting the development of positive sporting role models in the region and globally, the campaign is working hard to change perceptions and showcase the power and potential of sport, women and girls.

Reflecting on her involvement with *Just Play*, Maylin adds,

"My *Just Play* experience reminds me of the phrase, 'While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about'. Now, I feel very happy, healthy, confident and blessed to be part of the *Just Play* family. I am excited to see what I can achieve next!"

Igniting positive change through sport

In regions of the world where access to information is restricted by poor connectivity, such as the Pacific, UNICEF and the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) have been leveraging the power of sport as a social development tool to advocate and disseminate critical social messages through the medium of football, to an ever-growing audience. This includes sessions as part of the *Just Play* programme for children as well as another added dimension – that of broad-based advocacy campaigns.

Home to over 5 million children, spread over 40 million square kilometres of ocean, children in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) targeted by the *Just Play* programme and supported by UNICEF (Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu), face many challenges as they navigate their way through daily life.

First and foremost, the Pacific region is one of the most disaster prone regions in the world, with incidents in recent years increasing in frequency and severity. The strongest cyclone ever to occur in the southern hemisphere hit Fiji in 2016 (Cyclone Winston), while in 2015 the archipelago nation of Vanuatu, which is the most disaster prone country in the world, was devastated by Severe Tropical Cyclone Pam.

Recovery from emergencies can be difficult and slow for Small Island Developing States. More positively however, it can sometimes present an opportunity to put in place stronger systems to protect children and communities.

The double burden of malnutrition, often manifesting as stunting, and obesity as a result of poor diet, are especially present among younger demographics

throughout the Pacific and can have serious lifelong health implications. Diabetes rates and other non-communicable diseases are also on the rise regionally, taking a huge toll on already stretched health systems.

Children and adults with disabilities frequently experience discrimination, exclusion and barriers to being widely accepted. Girls too are often marginalised, experiencing inequalities in education, decision-making processes and access to health services. Rates of bullying are on the rise, especially in the online cyberbullying sphere.

Of additional concern is the widespread prevalence of violence. Outside of conflict zones, the Pacific region has some of the highest global incidents of violence, especially towards women and children.

A study conducted by UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2015, indicated that approximately 57% of women in the Pacific have been violently harmed by their partners and 75% of adolescent boys surveyed in three PICTs thought it was 'okay to beat your wife'.



The issue of violence itself is shrouded in stigma, making it difficult to confront and put an end to. This, combined with limited access to information and services in the region, has led to the perpetuation of this harmful social practice.

This cycle has a devastating effect on children especially. Research shows us that a girl who witnesses the abuse of her mother is more likely to become a victim of violence when she grows up. Children who are abused are also more likely to become abusers themselves, thus continuing the vicious cycle.

How then do you go about turning the tide on an issue that is barely spoken about publicly? Furthermore, how can society address the roots of an issue that most find too taboo or shameful to acknowledge?

This was the aim of the joint UNICEF Pacific and UNICEF Papua New Guinea #ENDviolence and REDcard campaigns, launched in March 2016 across 11 Pacific countries. Creating awareness about the high prevalence of violence against women and children in the region through key sport events, including the FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup hosted by Papua New Guinea (PNG) in late 2016, was a way to start the conversation and to give a platform to an issue that had mostly been invisible.

The overall goal of the regional #ENDviolence campaign was to change perceptions on the social acceptability of violence against women and children across the region.

Integrating activities into the UNICEF supported OFC *Just Play* programme provided a programming foundation for the campaign, allowing each country to individually develop and tailor their campaign to align with the local context.

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The OFC also leveraged major sporting events in PNG, the OFC Champions League and the OFC Nations Cup, including #ENDviolence branding on the field of play, which was broadcast on television and to YouTube audiences around the Pacific. #ENDviolence messages were communicated to sports spectators by stadium announcers, as well as broadcast as part of the radio and match podcasts. Inserts in the match programme, handed out to all spectators, contained an #ENDviolence information poster and a summary on the campaign. Spectators were called to action during both tournaments to hold up the REDcards, printed on the back of each match programme, in support of ending violence in the Pacific.

In Papua New Guinea, the FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup 2016 semi-final was dedicated to #ENDviolence, with the captains of the two teams playing, the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, asking spectators in the stands to stand together and to: "Be a winner. Be a champion. Help us #ENDviolence against girls, boys, women and men in all its forms. Let's make the invisible, visible."

As part of the REDcard campaign, FIFA supported player engagement with the 16 participating country teams, appointing #ENDviolence champions, who stood up and spoke out against violence. Powerful images of players and regional advocates, taking a stance against #ENDviolence were circulated on social media and shared at a global level.

Fifty of the over 1,000 volunteers of the tournament were selected following the world cup to be #ENDviolence ambassadors in their communities (all volunteers had participated in workshops on ending violence in the community). They received further training and supported a broad-based community awareness campaign in 20 informal settlements in Port Moresby in the months following the games.

In 2016 the #ENDViolence campaign in Vanuatu was launched in front of a large crowd by the Prime Minister, Hon. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmass, during a Port Vila Premier League match between the countries two most popular teams.

Cook Islands garnered support for the campaign through the appointment of high profile ambassadors, including Miss Cook Islands, Natalia Short and FIFA Assistant Referee, Terry Piri, whose #ENDviolence messages were turned into posters and made visible by Government partners, schools and community businesses throughout the Cook Islands.

The latter part of 2016 also saw the campaign launched in American Samoa, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, further emphasising its widespread importance.

Building on the success of the 2016 #ENDviolence and REDcard campaigns, UNICEF and the OFC extended campaign activities and engagement into 2017.

In celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March 2017 in Fiji, more than 500 girls from five regions participated in *Just Play* festivals as part of the campaign's official Fiji launch.

Also in March, *Just Play* in Tonga, in partnership with the Ministry of Policy, launched a campaign called 'Be bold for change: The impossible is possible', that supported dialogue required to eradicate all forms of violence in Tonga.

Following the campaign's launch, the Tonga Police Department reported an increase in the number of cases of violence being reported and the Tonga National Broadcast Corporation radio station, which had featured the launch in regular broadcasts, received reports from the public about violence in schools, including one particular case that resulted in a teacher being arrested and jailed following charges of harming students.

In a similar vein to Tonga, Samoa launched a national campaign, engaging with key Ministry and community partners such as the Ministries of Women, Youth and Children as well as the Australian and New Zealand governments.

Leading up to the OFC Under-19 Women's National Championships held in New Zealand and the Under-16 Women's National Championships held in Samoa in 2017, national women's football teams, representing nine PICTs participated in #ENDviolence awareness workshops delivered by *Just Play* programme country teams. The #ENDviolence campaign was adopted as the theme for both tournaments, amplifying the messages to an even greater audience.

The multiple components of the #ENDviolence campaign illustrate the depth and reach of the sensitive, but critical messages. In the Pacific, radio remains a key communication tool so bringing the topic of violence to the airways and underlining the damage it does to communities, is a powerful mechanism for change.

In order for positive behaviour change to occur, people of all ages need to feel informed and empowered. Sport, an empowering vehicle in itself, is a crucial way to achieve this.

Just Play and the #ENDviolence campaign are getting people talking about violence across the Pacific. The challenge now is to keep the conversation and momentum for change going so that legislation and cultural practice begins to follow suit.

In the Pacific region, UNICEF supports countries and territories to strengthen their laws and policies, build the capacity of services for prevention and response, and change social norms and behaviours that are harmful to children. *Just Play* has proven to be a successful medium to ensure this change.

Data collected from the *Just Play* programme indicates that change has begun to take root in the Pacific, with 45 % of adolescents (children aged 13-16 years) from Tonga reporting that they believe that in a relationship partners should make important decisions together. Notably, 70% of coaches in Tonga are female. In addition, 79% of adolescents engaged in the programme in Tonga acknowledge that a boy/man does not have the right to hit a girl/women.

Teachers in Tonga report observing an increase in positive interactions between boys and girls following the introduction of the *Just Play* programme in their schools. They further noted that following the rollout of the programme; they have seen a decrease in bullying at the school.

In November 2017, *Just Play* supported activities in Solomon Islands related to the introduction of a child protection related legislation. This speaks to the dynamic ways in which *Just Play* can help shine a spotlight on issues affecting children. In an effort to raise awareness among children and communities on the Family Protection Act (2014) and



the Child and Family Welfare Act (2017), which help to protect children from violence, abuse and neglect, UNICEF supported the OFC *Just Play* programme to develop a series of interactive sessions based on simplified key messages from the two acts, delivered through sport-based festivals that helped children to understand what violence is; know who they can talk to and go to for help to a friend or family member if something happens to them; how to identify safe places they can go for help in their community; and how they can help friends and siblings who have been affected by violence.

Cook Islands also signed up to the 1 Million Stars to End all Violence campaign in 2017 where children from Rarotonga and the outer islands of Atiu and Mitiaro learned how to weave stars from paper. These stars will be displayed at the 2018 Commonwealth Games held in the Australian Gold Coast.

At its core, sport has a communal and non-confronting element that brings people together. Sport stars are also role models that wield influence and credibility, allowing them to discuss and explore, traditionally sensitive issues and topics with children and adolescents as part of the broader sporting environment.

By linking advocacy and sport, a unique platform has been created between the OFC and UNICEF that along with strategic partners throughout the region, including governments, non-governmental organisations and communities, are working together to achieve the greatest impact and outcomes for every child in the Pacific.

Creating an even playing field through sport

“Just Play taught me how to play with girls and children with disabilities. I learned that it is important to love and care for each other and that hitting is not good. I have also been able to share what I learned in Just Play with my younger brothers and sisters.”



Henry, Just Play Participant, 9 Years old, Samoa.

A ferry ride from the mainland in Samoa and over an hour drive from where the ferry docks, the primary school attended by Henry and his friends is tucked away in one of the many small villages of Savaii Island.

The first thing you notice about Henry is his bright smile and the mischievous twinkle in his eye. You can tell right away that Henry is full of energy, curiosity and excitement.

This excitement however sometimes turns into disruption in the classroom. *“Henry would be distracting others, not listening, and he did not respect or engage with the girls in his class,”* Henry’s teacher Afulana recalls.

Afulana participated in a *Just Play* teacher training and shortly afterwards began running sessions with Henry and his classmates. At first there was some hesitation from the students but Afulana persevered and by session 4 they were hooked.... including Henry!

At the start of each session Afulana would discuss the session’s theme with her students before taking them outside to participate in the session. *“Henry has always been curious and when we first started the sessions he would ask a lot of questions. He wanted to know why everyone had to play together, instead of girls with girls and boys with boys, as he was used to.”*

As the sessions went on, Afulana began to notice some changes and a shift in attitude and understanding among Henry and her other students. *“Henry was now wanting to include everyone in the session and was helping me assign roles to different students during each of the sessions.”*

This was a hugely positive behavioural shift for Afulana to witness and fortunately it was not the only positive change. She explains, *“There is a child with a disability in our class and before Just Play, Henry did not think she should be included in physical activity because he believed people with a disability don’t play sports. He did not like when she played and they used to argue because of her disability. He now sees the benefits of including everyone in the class, no matter their differing abilities.”*



Just Play promotes social inclusion in all its forms in order to break down barriers related to ability or gender that have in the past led to the marginalisation of certain groups. Everyone benefit by reducing inequalities, but a concerted effort is need to ensure this happens.

Henry himself agrees, “*Just Play* taught me how to play with girls and children with disabilities. I learned that it is import to love and care for each other and that hitting is not good. I have also been able to share what I learned in *Just Play* with my younger brothers and sisters.”

In this Samoan school, it’s not just the students that learned new behaviours through *Just Play*, but the teachers too.

Through the *Just Play* training she participated in, Aufanua learned new non-violent coping mechanisms to deal with disruptions in class. “I have more patience with my students now. During the *Just Play* teacher training session I learned how violence harms children and that there are alternative ways to discipline students. The programme has helped me build a good rapport with my students. Now, when there is an issue, we discuss it first.”

Sport has the potential to positively influence behaviour change in individuals, families, communities, and governments. The concept of ‘learning through sport’ helps to introduce children to powerful ideals and messages through an immersive and enjoyable format.







Teaach

A teacher's take on *Just Play*

The lessons and values we learn at school as children stay with us throughout our adult lives. Focusing on healthy choices and behaviours during these early years leads to increased probability of healthy choices and actions in later years.

In Solomon Islands, it all starts with a ball. But when you add an inspiring coach and a safe place to play, the power of sport takes root. Children are naturally drawn to sport, recreation and play, which are vital parts of childhood.

With just one ball, Lydia Piorick Jonah, a grade 3 teacher, is able to reach out to her students every day. It is with that one *Just Play* ball that Lydia is teaching her students about teamwork and fair play. She is helping girls and boys to play together while promoting the importance of physical activity and exercise.

The *Just Play* programme helps teachers and community volunteers like Lydia attract thousands of children into open playing spaces across the Pacific every day. With a focus on making physical activity fun and enjoyable, *Just Play* uses football to teach children to develop healthy lifestyle habits, encourage gender equality, promote inclusion and become active community citizens.

*"I have been facilitating *Just Play* sessions with my students since 2010 and I find the programme to be one of the most beneficial sports programmes in the Solomon Islands," explains Lydia. "With a focus on changing attitudes and behaviours through their engagement in football-related activities, I have seen many positive changes in my students."*

As part of the *Just Play* programme, Lydia, like so many teachers and community volunteers around the Pacific, is using football to help children in Solomon Islands to more effectively navigate the many challenges they face on a daily basis.

In Solomon Islands, Lydia's football is helping to make a difference for children where:

- Less than 30 per cent play for 60 minutes or more a day.
- 45 per cent of children choose fizzy drinks over water, and 22 per cent of children are overweight or obese as early as 13 years of age.
- Children are affected by high levels of violence at home and school – with 67 per cent of students aged 13-15 years reporting that they have been bullied one or more times in the past 30 days and 68 per cent of children report being seriously injured one or more times in the past 12 months.
- Girls and women are underrepresented at all levels of government and community, with limited abilities to support and advocate for change.
- Access to secondary school education is limited, even in urban settings, leading to high primary school dropout rates and high levels of unemployment.



“Through participation in the programme,” explains Lydia, “there has been a reduction in bullying incidences throughout the school. Students have learned to treat girls and boys equally and to cooperate with each other. The programme has taught students to play together and to respect each other. This is a big achievement,” explains Lydia, as her school, like so many in Solomon Islands has faced high level of bullying.

There has also been an increase in classroom engagement: “Students who participate in the *Just Play* programme are more engaged in the classroom, and as a result demonstrate enhanced academic results,” highlights Lydia.

As Lydia gets ready to deliver her daily *Just Play* session, she grabs her football out of her sports kit and walks out onto the field. With her whistle around her neck and the children gathered around her, eagerly waiting for instructions, it becomes very apparent that the football in her hand has become a very valuable tool.

To her and her students it represents something very special – it is not just a ball – it is a transformative object, supporting changes in perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, something that is providing hope to both teacher and students on a daily basis.

Did you ever think that one football could be so powerful?

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Just Play as a career kick-starter for adults

“Never in my mind did I think that sport would one day be a pathway for me to gain experience and benefit me like it has,”



Suria, Former Just Play Data Officer, 29 Years old, Samoa.

Before becoming involved with *Just Play*, Suria had never been involved with anything sport related. Suria has Muscular Dystrophy and was *Just Play's* proactive and positive stance about including persons with disabilities that first attracted her to the programme.

“I first heard about *Just Play* during the Australian Sport Outreach Programme (ASOP) inclusive sports training and I was eager to learn more about how they also include and involve children and persons with disabilities in their programme activities.”

Social inclusion is one of *Just Play's* core values and principles. No marginalised group should be excluded on the basis of gender, race, disability etc. While the recipients of *Just Play* are children, the same inclusive values are afforded to all that work and interact with the programme.

Suria remembers, “I met with the *Just Play* Project Manager to discuss opportunities to work with the programme as a data entry officer. I was looking to gain experience in data management and was

excited to learn how to capture their programming data into the digital monitoring system they had.”

Monitoring and evaluation is a key component of the *Just Play* model. In each instance base line data is established that all future activity will be measured against. In-country *Just Play* teams then ensures that the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact and sustainability of the programme is regularly assessed and a core component of programming.

Suria began her *Just Play* career as a volunteer and was later offered a job. “It felt great to work with *Just Play* because I always felt like I was part of the team.

“Through my involvement with the *Just Play* team, I also began to play football. This gave me the confidence to try and participate in other sports, something that I never thought I could do due to my disability.

“Being part of the *Just Play* programme empowered me as a person with a disability and also a mother. Previous to this I had found it difficult to find full time employment where I could earn enough to support my daughter.



“Over my time as *Just Play* Data Officer I acquired a new skill set and increased my professional experience. This boost in confidence led me to apply for a role with the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. Previous to working with *Just Play* I had applied for a similar role but had been unsuccessful due to lack of experience. I am now an intern for the Samoa Disability Programme in the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.”

Building local and grassroots capacity is an essential focus of *Just Play* in order to guarantee that the programme lives on and continues to go from strength to strength. The vast network of National Football Member Associations throughout the Pacific are the lifeline that makes this a reality.

Just Play's Project Manager in Samoa, Lynette Laumea Faaiuasoo, says, “The impact *Just Play* has on children and adolescents throughout Samoa is phenomenal, but so is its impact on adults. It's very meaningful to participate in a programme that instils such a great level of pride and self-confidence in people who have a lot to contribute but have often been overlooked.”

Suria hopes her own experience will encourage others to get involved with *Just Play* in order to pursue their hope and dreams, “*Just Play* changed my life forever. It showed me that anything is possible if you work hard and have people around you that can help. So I thank you for a very powerful programme and I believe it will continue to change the lives of people in Samoa and the Pacific.”





inspire!

Finding inspiration in the face adversity

“In life we are all faced with challenges, but it is how we choose to overcome them that really defines who we are,”



Filomena, Just Play Emergency Programme Coordinator, 36 Years old, Fiji

In the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Winston, a severe category five storm that swept across Fiji in 2016, Filomena was one of many *Just Play* Emergency Programme Coordinators that was trained and deployed just eight weeks after the cyclone occurred.

Supporting the emotional recovery of children following a natural disaster is one of the key focus areas of the *Just Play* Emergency Programme and can sometimes be an area that is overlooked or underfunded, given competing urgent needs.

UNICEF has a long history of supporting emotional support for children and much research has been carried out that illustrates how play is a stabilising force in the lives of children who have suffered a traumatic or disruptive life event.

Filomena and her team were deployed to Savusavu, a town in the northeast region of Fiji. Given its close proximity to the coastline, the area had been badly hit by the cyclone.

The devastating effect natural disasters can have on children are far reaching, especially for those that are most vulnerable, including children with disabilities.

In Savusavu, Filomena saw firsthand how important sport and play was in supporting the emotional recovery of children. “It is always hard to watch children struggle in times of upheaval, especially children with disabilities. As part of the emergency programme, following Tropical Cyclone Winston, we encountered many children with disabilities who were attending mainstream schools. Many of the children we met were strong and very determined. Despite their disability, they were eager to participate in *Just Play* activities. Their outlook was inspiring and really helped to broaden my perspective on the definition of ability.”

Through participation in interactive sessions, children in the *Just Play* Emergency Programme learn a series of important life skills. “Children involved in the programme learn how to keep themselves and their families’ safe in the aftermath of a natural disaster. They learn about food safety, nutrition, handwashing and post emergency safety and security. Each session, integrates a different learning objective and allows children to explore aspects such as respect and teamwork, learning how to combine their strengths as a team,” explains Filomena.



“In the programme we teach children that ability does not limit participation. Many children learn, through active participation, that everyone, regardless of ability, has an important role to play. It is this that I found most inspiring”, she explains. “Even if a child cannot play, due to physical limitations, there is always a role that they can have as part of each session. Some love to help coach, while others are in charge of the whistle. Making sure that every child is able to take part, helps to ensure that all children see and value everyone’s contribution – big or small.”

Programme activities, delivered for a period of 8-months following TC Winston, resulted in the training of 385 teachers and community volunteers, who supported the delivery of an 8-week programme, engaging 8,628 children in the 12 most affected regions of Fiji.

Pairing existing *Just Play* programming messages on health and wellness, gender equality, social inclusion and child protection with messages on coping and recovering from emergencies, food safety, nutrition, hand washing and post emergency safety and security, resulted in a rich curriculum and greater learning outcomes for children.

Psychosocial support training, as part of the emergency recovery programme, has allowed teachers and community volunteers to use this play-based platform to help children share their stories, learn how to keep themselves and their families safe and understand better how their community will recover.

Redefining 'ability' in Vanuatu

"I really enjoy *Just Play* because it provides children with disabilities and myself the opportunity to socialise, play and have fun with other children."

Daphenny, Just Play Community Facilitator, 23 years old, Vanuatu



The small island nation of Vanuatu in the Pacific is home to *Just Play* Community Facilitator Daphenny. Born with cerebral palsy, 23-year-old Daphenny is a key member of the *Just Play* team on the island of Espiritu Santo and has made a strong and lasting impression on her local community.

Full of charisma, Daphenny says, "I really enjoy *Just Play* because it provides children with disabilities and myself the opportunity to socialise, play and have fun with other children."

Throughout the Pacific, children with disabilities are often excluded from physical activities. They face discrimination, social exclusion and barriers to acceptance. Sometimes even hidden from view, children with disabilities are seldom given the opportunity to engage in the community, sport, recreation and play.

An inspirational role model, Daphenny is redefining 'ability' in Vanuatu, helping young people to understand that participation in sport is not limited by someone's physical or mental ability. "Daphenny's determination is infectious and she is a 'jack of all trades' on the team. She is just as comfortable conducting evaluations as she is running sessions. Seeing a young person with cerebral palsy like Daphenny in a position of leadership is powerful and something the children haven't been used to seeing before now," explains Vanuatu *Just Play* Project Manager Rorona Kalsakau.

Just Play sessions, with key messages on inclusion, are helping children throughout the Pacific to acknowledge and celebrate their differences. Activities teach them that although we are each different, when we combine our differences, we make a stronger team. Practicing this concept through interactive sessions, children learn to combine their strengths to overcome their weaknesses. By the end of the programme an average of over 80 per cent of children recognise and celebrate their uniqueness.



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Daphenny has witnessed this positive impact occurring over time. “I see many changes occurring in their lives. They tend to respect one and other, work together, eat healthy food instead of junk food and most importantly they tend to help children with disabilities by involving them in the programme.”

Working alongside a local NGO, the Sanma Frangipani Association in Vanuatu, the *Just Play* programme incorporates children with disabilities into mainstream activities. “In Vanuatu, we strongly encourage the *Just Play* principle of everyone playing together, which helps to breakdown barriers that may have existed before. We are really proud of the feedback the programme has received and of how well children with and without disabilities have enjoyed participating,” says Rorona.

For many children with disabilities, *Just Play* is their first organised sport experience. “Through *Just Play* activities many of my friends have put themselves out there in a sporting environment for the first time,” says Daphenny; “It is because of *Just Play* that many of them have had the opportunity to take part in sports.”

2018 marks an important milestone for Daphenny and her country, as it is the first time Vanuatu will be represented by female Para-athletes at the Commonwealth Games on Australia’s Gold Coast. Daphenny will compete in the Women’s T35 100m Sprint in what is the next exciting step in her ambitions sporting career!

Dreaming big with the help of *Just Play*

“I believe healthy communities lead to healthy kids and better citizens of Tonga. *Just Play* gives children the chance to dream big!”



Mele's, Just Play Participant, 15 years old, Tonga

Sport was always a big focus for Mele and her family who live in the Eastern District of Tonga. Mele's mother was a national netball champion and Mele grew up not only admiring her achievements but also sharing the dream of one-day representing Tonga on the playing field.

It was also through her mother that Mele was introduced to *Just Play* when it began in a nearby village in 2009. Mele's mother was a *Just Play* volunteer and encouraged her daughter to attend the weekly sessions. Neither Mele, her mother nor the *Just Play* team knew then that this was the start of turning Mele's dream into a reality.

When Mele first started playing football with *Just Play* she was one of only five girls. She would walk with other children from her village to the nearby town three times a week to participate. Local *Just Play* coordinator Lui Muavesi remembers, “From very early on it was clear that Mele had a lot of natural football skill and talent, as well as determination. She was very determined to play and pushed the boundaries of the game. One of the benefits of *Just Play* is that the programme can help to harness that talent while dispelling the common misconception that only boys can play football and sport.”

Just Play helps to promote gender equality by encouraging often-marginalised groups, such as girls, to participate in sessions and by promoting positive interaction and engagement among boys and girls. There is widespread recognition that sport for development initiatives with a specific focus on gender equality, help to foster self-esteem and self-confidence among girls and adolescent females.

This self-belief can further foster a sense of empowerment and leadership, which has a positive ripple effect throughout the entire community.

A *Just Play* programme began in Mele's own village not long after and she continued to attend with her mum, younger brother and two younger sisters. Mele also began to play in a number of football tournaments throughout Tonga, sometimes as the only girl on the team.

At age thirteen, Mele achieved her dream of representing Tonga when she was selected for the national under-17 team for a tournament in Cook Islands.



Participating in *Just Play* and her many subsequent accomplishments have helped to instil a level of pride in Mele and she relishes her newfound position as a positive and inspirational female sporting role model, not only for her younger siblings but also for people of all ages across Tonga. Now at 15 years old, Mele says, “I believe healthy communities lead to healthy kids and better citizens of Tonga. *Just Play* gives children the chance to dream big!”

Participating in *Just Play* helps to nurture life skills such as decision-making, leadership and respect. Lui adds, “Mele is a strong role model as she worked hard to achieve her dreams. We can see that in her own village more girls and boys are participating in *Just Play* because of her. We’ve also seen more parents getting involved too.”

Mele once again represented her county in 2017 when she headed to Vanuatu to participate in the Pacific Mini Games.

Mele’s success further helps to advance positive attitudes towards girls and female adolescents, while encouraging all children to participate in sport and physical exercise. In 2017 41 per cent of *Just Play* participants were girls, while 38 per cent of coaches in Tonga were female.

Since 2015, *Just Play* has reached 3,366 children in 43 schools and 115 communities on 7 islands across the country.

According to the WHO’s Global School-based Student Health Survey, less than 14% of children in Tonga are getting the recommended daily amount of physical exercise (at least 60 minutes per day) and there is a fear this number may worsen as video and computer games continue to grow in popularity.

In response to this and with support from the Government of Tonga, the *Just Play* 13-16 year programme pilot was rolled out in 2016, providing further opportunities for young Tongans to increase their physical activity while gaining valuable life skills.

In addition to providing sport and play based opportunities, the *Just Play* 16-16 year programme also helps to address critical issues affecting adolescents in Tonga. It also provides opportunities for young women to become advocates and role models in their schools and communities. Who knows, maybe there’s many more female role models like Mele yet to be discovered.





Enyaveve

Learning to live in the shadow of a volcano

“I was so excited when I heard the *Just Play* Emergency Programme team was visiting my community. I could not sleep the night before they came to play with us!”



Rengsy, Just Play Participant, 9 years old, Vanuatu

“When *Just Play* came to my community I learned how we need to do things differently now that the volcano is alive and making lots of scary noises. We played games that showed us how to wash the ash off our food before we eat and cook it. We also learned how to make the water safe to drink by boiling it, and how to keep our food safe by covering and storing it so that the ashes and bugs don’t spoil it.”

UNICEF met Rengsy for the first time on the 13 October 2017 at one of the largest evacuation centres in Santo, following the evacuation of Ambae’s 11,600 residents (including 5,220 children) when the Manaro volcano triggered a State of Emergency. The urgent evacuation forced its citizens to the nearby islands of Santo, Pentacost and Maewo.

The small island state of Vanuatu, home to 272,000 people (of which 105,000 are children), is one of the most at risk countries in the world to natural disasters. Located in the middle of the Pacific ocean, Vanuatu is predisposed to cyclones, tsunamis, flash flooding, typhoons and earthquakes, while also home to active volcanoes which sit along the ring of fire. Between 2009 and 2016 Vanuatu was affected by 10 natural disasters, with the last major disaster presenting as a category 5 Tropical Cyclone in 2015.

Manaro’s eruptions prompted the largest mass evacuation in the history of the small island, forcing Ambae’s total population to be removed within a 1-week period. Managed by the Government of Vanuatu, residents were moved by land, sea and air.

Leveraging its existing development programme and partnerships with the Government of Vanuatu and the Ministry of Education, UNICEF supported the delivery of the *Just Play* Emergency Programme for children and adolescents through the island of Ambae.

While the evacuation of Ambae was deemed a success, the relocation to neighbouring islands of Santo, Pentecost and Maewo and then the repatriation of the same people back to Ambae was not without its own set of challenges. One challenge in particular is the need for psychosocial support for affected communities, especially children.

Significant events including emergencies and natural disasters can deeply impact children’s psychosocial and emotional well-being and can have immediate and long-term consequences for children, families and communities.



Rengsy explains what it was like to leave her home behind when the volcano roared to life. “We saw and heard the volcano on the island puffing out smoke and ash,” said Rengsy as she held out her drawing explaining what she recalls of the events that led to the evacuation of her island. “We had to leave my dog and house behind to get on a ship to get away from Manaro.”

Rengsy’s friend 13 year old Lian, who she met at the evacuation centre in Santo, shared her story titled: ‘Lian’s little story about my volcano’:

During the volcano eruption we were very afraid. During the night we saw the reflection of the watering fire inside the volcanoes big hole. We were very very afraid of that because it was my first time to see the volcano erupting. Many people were worried and crying for their animals when they arrived here in Santo Island. But even now the volcano still throws the dust and sand into the air.

Following repatriation of communities back to Ambae, volunteers from the *Just Play* Emergency Programme travelled to West and North Ambae to support the dissemination of critical post-emergency messages through play-based activities and festivals.

Building on Fiji's experience of Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016, *Just Play* Emergency Programme volunteers from Fiji joined the team in Vanuatu to help support the rollout and delivery of *Just Play* activities and festivals.

"When we first arrived to West Ambae we found the island and villages very quiet and in some cases even deserted. The emptiness was unsettling and we knew right away that we had come at just the right time", explained Meli Yasawa, *Just Play* Emergency Programme Coordinator from Fiji.

"There were very few children around the villages and the ones we found were afraid, quiet and very sad. When our vehicle pulled up to one of the villages, closest to the volcano, the children asked their parents if we had come to tell them they were all going to die because of Manaro."

Much like Meli, Rengsy also noted that upon her return to Ambae, things were not quite the same as when she left. "When we came home from Santo we saw that our house was overgrown with bush and it looked like no one lived there. Trees were dry and dying and it was quite a while before my dog came home," said Rengsy.

One of the biggest challenges following the repatriation of families back to Ambae was the communication of critical information. As a remote tropical island in the middle of South Pacific, Ambae has limited connectivity making the dissemination of key messages difficult. Many villages on Ambae are in hard to reach locations and scattered from the coast line to the rugged interior of the mainland.

With bare village notice boards and vacant churches, community members struggled to understand how best to adapt their lifestyle to live alongside a now active volcano. With limited and often times inaccurate information, spread through the 'coconut wireless', families were scared and uncertain.

Programme's like *Just Play* are crucial following an emergency to help support the spread of critical messages to children, families and villages.

Emma Vira, a mother from West Ambae shared her family's experience. "I feel this programme will help our children to adapt to the new situation the volcano has created. It is really important for parents to help children return to their regular routines, including returning to school, where they will learn how to live with the new environment the volcano has created."

Helping to reinforce Emma's message, Alice Bani, a primary school teacher on West Ambae explains why programmes like *Just Play* are key to helping children and families return to normal. "Because of the uncertainty that Manaro brought, children were afraid to come to school. When they were at school and heard Manaro making noises, they would take their backpacks and want to go home. I am so happy that *Just Play* has come to help the children of Ambae. The messages that the children will learn through participation in the programme will help to give them the confidence to return to school."

Recognising the important role sport can play in supporting the psychosocial recovery of children after an emergency; the *Just Play* Emergency Programme on Ambae reached 828 children and 22 villages or schools.

"Because of *Just Play* I am no longer afraid of the volcano. I have learned that we can live side-by-side with Manaro. I can't wait to go back to school and play with my friends!" said Rengsy.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Re-establishing normality for children, post-emergency

“No matter how the cyclone has affected them, when they take part in the activities, they are just normal, happy children again. It has really helped them forget how scared or sad they were.”



Lia, Just Play Emergency Programme Coordinator, 43 years old, Fiji

“Every time a child smiled I would get very emotional,” said Lia Batirerega, a Just Play Emergency Programme Coordinator with the Fiji Football Association. “It was so nice to see children smile, laugh and have fun after the cyclone.” As a Fiji native herself, Lia knows all too well what the children went through when Tropical Cyclone Winston swept through the country early in 2016.

Recognising the important role that sport can play in supporting the recovery of children after an emergency, the Just Play Emergency Programme, developed by the Oceania Football Confederation in partnership with UNICEF, was developed and introduced as part of the Tropical Cyclone Winston Emergency response in Fiji, to disseminate important messages and support the emotional recovery of children.

Playing a pivotal role in bringing the programme to life and reaching out to affected areas, were Just Play Emergency Programme Coordinators, like Lia. These charismatic individuals helped children to smile, laugh and enjoy the simple act of playing at a critical time in their lives.

“Many of the children we met following the cyclone were scared, sad and withdrawn. Some of the children did not even want to participate in the activities. They were more comfortable standing with a volunteer or teacher and just watching,” explains Lia.

Using football to communicate important messages around safe water, personal safety, and how to deal with emotional issues resulting from a trauma, the programme engaged children through interactive sessions.

“Once we blew the whistle and the activities started, the children relaxed and they were more eager to participate. It did not take long before we could hear yelling and laughing from the children on the field,” said Lia.

Specifically designed sessions and psychosocial training, allowed teachers and community volunteers to use this play-based platform to help children share their stories, learn how to keep themselves and their families safe and understand better how their community would recover.



“Feedback from teachers and communities has been very positive, with many of them telling us how the programme has helped them to talk to the children about their experiences of the cyclone”, explains Lia.

One of the most important things for children after an emergency or natural disaster is to try and re-establish a sense of normality as soon as possible. The regularity of the 8-week programme also helps to provide a sense of security and routine and Just Play quickly becomes a welcome distraction for children and parents alike.

However Lia is clear that there is nothing tokenistic about children’s involvement in the programme. “I think for me, the thing that stands out most is how happy the programme has made the children again. No matter how the cyclone has affected them, when they take part in the activities, they are just normal, happy children again. It has really helped them forget how scared or sad they were.”

Breaking down social inclusion barriers through sport

“Victor has cerebral palsy, the most common motor disability in childhood. Since birth, Victor has not been able to walk or talk and has been carried or pushed around in a pram.”



Victor, Just Play Participant, 8 years old, Cook Islands

Rarotonga, known for its paradise-esque beaches and landscapes, is home to eight-year-old Victor. Victor has cerebral palsy, the most common motor disability in childhood. Since birth, Victor has not been able to walk or talk and has been carried or pushed around in a pram.

Victor attends the same primary school as his brother Jaiden, and has a teacher’s aid named Katreena to help him throughout the day. Amongst other things, Katreena helps Victor participate in classes and activities with his peers.

In 2015, Katreena participated in a Just Play teacher-training course. Shortly after the training she began taking Victor and his entire class for Physical Education (PE) sessions.

At the beginning of the Just Play sessions, Victor was unable to walk but could stand if aided. “Instead of being left to the side to play with a ball we encouraged activities that Victor could be a part of. Victor thrived on the inclusion and it was such a inspiring thing to see,” Katreena says of the sessions.

Around this time, Victor was fortunate to receive a donation of a walking frame, which greatly assisted him in moving around the school unaided.

Katreena added, “It might seem like a small thing but this was a huge factor in building Victor’s strength and confidence. It also hugely contributed to his ability to participate in Just Play with his friends and classmates.”

Actively addressing social inclusion helps to breakdown barriers and marginalising behaviour, while nurturing deeper levels of respect and teamwork.

Victor’s school already had a very positive environment where he was widely accepted, and this has only gone from strength to strength. “Through Just Play, more children in the school are accepting of Victor’s differences while also learning to understand his needs. Victor is included more in the classroom, Just Play activities and in the playground,” says Katreena proudly.



With the continuous hard work, encouragement and development from Katreena along with being more active through Just Play and his walking frame, Victor is now walking unaided and prefers not to use his walking aide. Even though his legs sometimes get tired, he is continuing to gain strength.

Sport is an incredible equaliser for all age groups, but especially for children. Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child underlines that every child has the right to play. Just Play encourages engagement of children from all abilities and focuses more on the benefits of participation rather than competition.



Lessons in grief, hope and recovery

“I am happy now . . . but I will never forget that my father died during the cyclone.”

Nalau, Just Play Participant, 6 years old, Vanuatu



“I remember Tavai. He came to my school and we played football,” says Nalau.

Tavai, a facilitator in the UNICEF-supported Just Play Sport for Development programme in Vanuatu, also remembers Nalau. He was facilitating a Just Play session aimed at helping children to recover emotionally from Tropical Cyclone Pam, when Nalau shared his story.

“We played some games then I ask the children how they felt after Cyclone Pam,” recalls Tavai. “I gently encouraged them to share their experiences, feelings, thoughts and even plans for the future.”

Sitting in a circle, all the children expressed how they felt after Cyclone Pam, a category 5 cyclone, which devastated their communities – but seven-year-old Nalau froze. “When I saw his reaction, I knew I had to give him time to say something and not push him,” explains Tavai. “So I asked the question again and there was a second round of answers from the children. This time, Nalau spoke up, quietly saying: ‘My father died during the cyclone’. I was momentarily lost for words.”

With seven years’ experience working with children, 27-year-old Tavai was able to create a safe environment for Nalau, developing a strong and supportive relationship.

On March 13, 2015, Tropical Cyclone Pam, a category 5 cyclone, hit Vanuatu. The super storm recorded sustained winds and left behind the scars of one of the worst disasters in Vanuatu’s history. Cyclone Pam affecting over 165,000 people, including 82,000 children on 22 islands.

After Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu, UNICEF, in partnership with the Oceania Football Confederation and the Vanuatu Football Federation, organised a special Just Play Emergency Programme.

Over two months, the programme targeted schools in the most affected areas of the country, helping children to recover through sports and emotional support, while also educating them about hygiene, safety and healthy eating habits.



The last activity Tavai organised with the children taking part in the programme was drawing a picture of what makes them happy. “Most of the children in my group were drawing football fields. I could not see what Nalau was drawing, so I waited until everyone was finished,” he recalls. All the children took turns talking about their drawings. Nalau proudly showed us his drawing saying, “Home makes me happy. So I drew my home.”

Tavai did not know at the time that Nalau and his family were living in a tent, as the cyclone had destroyed their home. The money Nalau’s mother made selling vegetables at the market was enough to pay for Nalau’s education, but not to rebuild their home. That she prioritised his education over their home speaks volumes about her love for her child.

After explaining his drawing to Tavai, Nalau added, “I am happy now . . . but I will never forget that my father died during the cyclone.” It is safe to say that Tavai will never forget Nalau, the boy who taught his coach about grief, hope and recovery.

Breakout out box – Birth Registration

In addition to homes, schools, health clinics and crops, Cyclone Pam destroyed or simply blew away many people’s most valued possessions, including vital documents such as birth certificates.

As part of the recovery process, UNICEF and the Ministry of Internal Affairs launched a birth registration campaign around the country aimed at raising awareness on the importance of birth registration. This encompassed registering children and adults who didn’t have birth certificates and reissuing certificates for those who had lost theirs.

In order to reach the widest audience, the campaign used Just Play Emergency Programme festivals to provide a fun, engaging and safe space for children to play while adults registered themselves and/or their children for a birth certificate. By participating in the Just Play session, children were also learning more about disaster preparedness and response.





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The ripple effect of positive change across a community

“In Cook Islands only 14.5 per cent of children aged between 16-17 years old take part in physical activity for at least 60 minutes or more a day.”

Michelle, Just Play Project Manager, 47 years old, Cook Islands



In an area of the world plagued by obesity, diabetes and heart disease, programmes like Just Play are helping children to see sport and physical activity as something positive. Through encouragement and motivation, children learn to associate Just Play, sport and physical activity as something that is positive and fun. This is a big achievement in a country where 71 per cent of children between 16-17 years are overweight and 41 per cent of the same age group are considered obese.

As one of the monthly village festivals kicks off in a remote island community of Cook Islands, Just Play Project Manager, Michelle Paiti is joined by colleagues from the Ministry of Health to promote this month's themes:

- **Hydration: Water is BEST!**
- **Be active for 60 minutes EVERYDAY!**
- **Eat 5+ a day!**

Michelle explains how the programme and messages, included as part of the festivals, are helping children in Cook Islands to make healthier food choices. “In Cook Islands only 14.5 per cent of children aged between 16-17 years old have physically active for at least 60 minutes or more a day.”

“When the village festival programme started in 2013, many children who attended would bring with them fizzy drinks and juice,” explains Michelle.

With the cost of junk food often cheaper than fruit and vegetables, a healthy diet is something that is difficult and costly for families in Cook Islands to maintain. Teaching children how to make healthy food choices is critical. Understanding the importance of physical activity and exercise is not enough. Food and food choices have a big impact on a child's overall health.

With the help of compulsory water breaks and the Ministry of Health, who conduct interactive demonstrations with children – showing them how much sugar is in a bottle of coke – when asked what they drank most of, or what the best drink is, children from Just Play in Cook Islands, unanimously reply: “Water!”

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



Using sport to teach and provide valuable information to children is one of the key elements of Just Play.

“The village festivals in Cook Islands are helping to make sure that children living in remote communities are given the opportunity to participate in a variety of sports codes and learn healthy lifestyle messages,” explains Michelle.

In addition to Just Play, Michelle helps to coordinate the participation of all different sports codes from around Cook Islands in each and every village festival. This gives children, far from the island’s centre, an opportunity to try different sports codes in the hopes of promoting the development of a positive affinity to sport and physical activity from an early age.

“The festivals provide a platform to help us educate children about the importance of physical activity and healthy eating. In a country where 80 per cent of all adult deaths are linked to non-communicable diseases (diabetes, heart disease and stroke, etc.), this is something that is very important.”

As part of each festival, through participation in interactive play sessions, children learn about the importance of hydration, eating fruits and vegetables, respecting themselves, playing as a team (boys and girls together) and including everybody – no matter their ability.

“Children are always excited and looking forward to the next village festival. They respond really well to what we do, how we communicate the information to them and how we engage them in the sessions. When the children leave the festivals, parents tell us that they carry these messages with them, sharing them with their peers, siblings and anyone else who will listen,” Michelle explains.

In recent years the village festivals have grown in popularity and frequency, helping children in Cook Islands to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, building positive lasting relationships that will help impact the way they learn, grow, explore and contribute to the community around them.

Igniting ambition to support children in the wake of a cyclone

“Every morning I would wake up and think how lucky I was to be involved in a programme that focuses on children. It has always been my passion to work with children and through *Just Play* I have been given that opportunity.”



Salaseini, Just Play Emergency Programme Coordinator, 22 years old, Fiji

“We are all Fijians and Cyclone Winston affected our families and communities in lots of different ways. It feels really good to be able to help children throughout Fiji to come to terms with the aftermath of the cyclone and ensure they have the knowledge they need to stay safe and healthy,” said Salaseini, a Just Play Emergency Programme Coordinator from Fiji.

For Salaseini, every morning it all starts with a ball. As a Coordinator in this unique programme, she is playing an important role in ensuring that children affected by Tropical Cyclone Winston have a safe place to play once again.

“The Just Play Emergency Programme has given me the opportunity to visit parts of Fiji I have never been to before, to talk confidently in front of large groups of people and to work with children who have been deeply affected by the cyclone,” noted Salaseini.

Between 2009 and 2016, the Pacific region was affected by 42 natural disasters. Vanuatu and Fiji were hit by category 5 tropical cyclones in 2015 and 2016 that affected nearly 1 million people, including 450,000 children.

Tropical Cyclone Winston, was the strongest cyclone that has ever hit Fiji – sustaining some of the highest wind speeds at landfall recorded globally. Striking the two main islands of Fiji and numerous smaller islands, the super-storm affected over 800,000 people, including just under 300,000 children. Causing significant damage to homes, livelihoods, health and educational services and contaminating and interrupting water supplies, the storm had a substantial impact on children and communities throughout the country.

Since the emergency programme began, children affected by Tropical Cyclone Winston have been flooding school playgrounds around the country. The Just Play Emergency Programme, developed by the Oceania Football Confederation and UNICEF is helping children across Fiji to recover through sport and play.

Just Play uses football as a vehicle to communicate critical emergency focused messages around safe water, personal safety, preparedness and how to deal with emotional issues resulting from a trauma.



For children of all ages throughout Fiji, this was their first and only experience of an extreme tropical cyclone. As well as the physical impact, there was also an emotional impact to bare. Trauma can be difficult for children to process and overcome and it's also difficult for children to express when they are experiencing emotional distress.

"We met lots of children who were noticeably affected by the Cyclone and its aftermath. Many had lost their loved ones, homes and belongings and no longer felt safe or secure. During the Just Play sessions some children were relieved to be away from the stressful recovery and clean-up process, while others were 'out of sorts' and withdrawn. The games helped to bring everyone together and by the end of the sessions children were laughing, smiling and relaxed," Salaseini remembers.

The Just Play Emergency Programme supports the emotional recovery of children after emergencies and is the only child-centred programme of its kind in Fiji. Through participation in sport-based games

and activities, Coordinators like Salaseini are helping to support children to explore their experiences in a safe environment, while also providing them with the opportunity to have fun.

"Every morning I would wake up and think how lucky I was to be involved in a programme that focuses on children. It has always been my passion to work with children and through Just Play I have been given that opportunity," said Salaseini.

Salaseini and 385 volunteers have reached over 10,000 children in the 12 most affected regions of Fiji, and the response they have received from communities has been overwhelmingly positive.

As part of the programme, teachers and community volunteers were trained to use this play-based platform to help more children share their stories, learn how to keep themselves and their families safe and understand better how they can help their community to recover.



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