

## Pacific Sports Partnerships



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# Case Study: Strengthening governance in Pacific National Sports Federations - with a focus on Tonga and Fiji



*All photos courtesy Aaron Kearney, ABCID*

# Executive Summary



This report examines Phase 2 of the Pacific Sports Partnerships (PSP) through a focus on governance in Pacific National Sports Federations, particularly Tonga and Fiji. The PSP Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning Framework (MERLF) December 2015 data collection plan identified the potential value of preparing an evaluative Case Study about the contribution of improved governance for in-country sporting federations to sustainable and effective delivery of sport for development programs. This report aims to fulfill this niche and summarises the findings of the case study along with presenting recommendations for the future.

The Case Study involved a review of relevant academic literature, primary data collected through semi structured interviews with 56 key informants representing 8 National Sport Federations (NFs), 7 Regional or Australian Sport Organisations (RSOs/ASOs), 3 National and Regional sport governing bodies, 2 National government sport agencies and a selection of other sport partners.

*'It is clear that good governance practice in NFs is not static. The most effective NFs pay regular attention to their governance practice and endeavour to maintain boards with a high level of integrity, understanding that in 'small' operating environments reputations are easily damaged with poor practice.'*

## Overall Influence of PSP funds

There is strong evidence of a clear link between the availability of PSP funds, the implementation of efforts to strengthen governance in NFs, increasingly better governance practiced by all of the sample NFs and increased capacity to implement Sport for Development programs by the NFs. PSP funding has helped NFs to employ individuals to support PSP programs and to make significant contributions to the broader development of sport in the Pacific. PSP funded NFs have helped to increase knowledge and understanding of Sport for Development throughout the region, and have created a link between Sport for Development activities and athlete development structures and pathways. However, it is important to note that it takes time and commitment to achieve results.

*"I think all of this is credit to PSP. Even though the programs that are running, our teams going overseas and everything, it's all happening because of PSP. The foundation that those people at the office working, we have programs running, and it's from all that. Everything else builds upon it"* NF General Manager

## Evaluation Question 1

*To what extent are Pacific In-Country Sport Federations or National/Regional Sports Organisations practicing effective governance? To what extent has stronger governance contributed to better partnerships and more diverse and reliable opportunities for funding sports programs?*

### Findings

It was found that good governance practice takes time to implement and continued commitment. It was clear that the extent to which the sampled NFs are practicing effective governance relates to the length of time they have been in existence as organisations and the quantum and duration of support that has been provided over time to establish, or strengthen existing, governance arrangements.

Leadership also emerged as important. The presence of capable, motivated people with leadership skills within the organisation, either on the board or as paid staff within the NF, is a key ingredient to building effective governance. However, it is evident that PSP support has made a significant contribution to the establishment and practice of effective governance for most of the sampled NFs.

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## Evaluation Question 2

*What has worked, for whom and why? In what context?*

### Findings

Factors that led to strengthened governance were varied but consisted of the following three main factors:

- A driver to change
  - The right support for facilitating change
  - The availability and commitment of resources for embedding change
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## Evaluation Question 3

*What is the quality and sustainability of the partnerships? What factors have contributed to partnerships being sustainable?*

### Findings

It is evident that those NFs who are practicing more effective governance are equally more effective in establishing and maintaining the partnerships that are available in their operating environments, acknowledging that the scale of opportunities for partnerships is significantly different in Fiji compared to Tonga. For several of the NFs this has led to accessing a diverse range of alternative funding opportunities.

Most NFs demonstrated that they have partnerships in place, or are exploring the opportunities. NFs with a diverse range of partnerships demonstrated a high level of commitment and understanding of how to establish and manage partnerships. Those NFs indicated that they allocated resources to securing and maintaining those partnerships. It was also evident that they were seen as trusted and predictable organisations.

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## Evaluation Question 4

*To what extent are partnerships contributing to health related and other desired program outcomes?*

### Findings

It is clear that there are many activities being implemented by the sampled NFs through effective long term partnerships with other civil society or government organisations, which are strongly focused on contributing to health and social inclusion outcomes. There is substantial evidence that these programs are achieving social inclusion through increased opportunities to participate in sports in remote areas, while being exposed to positive health and social inclusion messages and practices. There is a growing body of evidence that these programs are leading to increased knowledge and awareness of positive health behaviours and social inclusiveness and at least some initial behavioural change. Research to determine the extent to which participation in sport is contributing to behavioural change and actual health outcomes is currently being conducted by Netball Australia.



## **It is recommended that NFs and RSOs/ASOs:**

- Start using, or continue to use, appropriate, dialogue based governance assessment tools (such as the Readiness Assessment Tool) for understanding your current level of internal governance, committing to a staged plan of implementing recommended actions for improvement. Commit to good governance, keep this on your agenda and review six monthly.
- Ensure you are aware of funding and training opportunities that are offered by your National Olympic Committees (NOC) or Government sports agencies. Build and maintain a strong relationship with these institutions. It is essential to provide professional development for board members and staff to develop facilitation and governance skills and provide opportunities to continually practice these skills.
- Be prepared to seek assistance from your NOC, RSO/ASO and/or International Federation if you are facing a challenge.
- Have a clear strategy for seeking out those partnerships that are available in your domain and understand what you bring to the partnership. Take time to develop partnerships and learn how to be a good partner.
- Seek to deeply engage with your Sport for Development target audiences. Build an understanding of their opportunities, constraints and motivations for participating in your proposed Sport for Development program. Where NFs & RSOs/ASOs have conducted formative research, or accessed existing social data, they have delivered more structured and effective Sport for Development programs.
- Collaborate internally and with your partners and stakeholders to develop a strategic plan that has achievable outcomes and a finite set of actions, feasible within available resources. Make sure your strategic plan is well socialised and that your members understand it.
- Collaborate and network with other NFs - learn from each other and work together to share resources. Look for opportunities to work together to conduct mutually relevant evaluative research that adds to the body of existing evaluative research, rather than repeating work done by other sports. Make sure the knowledge and understanding gained is shared.

## **It is recommended that PSP Program Management:**

- Allocate resources to building a knowledge and information sharing, networking, culture of collaboration and coordination. Provide an accessible PSP website where knowledge sharing is encouraged, where useful NF tools and research findings are shared in the public domain and, where transparency and accountability practices are modelled.
- Support opportunities for all partners to develop facilitation and working with people skills.
- Provide assistance with some form of local training around different forms of governance and how this may fit each sport and their situation.

## **It is recommended for the PSP 3 design, that DFAT:**

- Continue to invest in opportunities for strengthening governance in NFs, which could be based on a situation analysis or rigorous participatory assessment of the stage of NF development.
- Work out ways to engage more authentically with Oceania National Olympic Committees, the in-country NOCs, the various National Government institutions (e.g. Fiji National Sports Commission & Tonga Ministry of Internal Affairs etc.) for consultation, coordination and oversight. Have them at the table for proper dialogue and to ensure coherence with National policies and plans for sport for development. Consider a Regional Coordination Committee.
- Consider allocating resources to in-country coordination in collaboration with the NOC and National Government sports agencies; make sure PSP is coherent with in-country policies, institutions and practices.
- PSP project grants could be tailored to fit the different stage of organisation development of the NF - more resourcing may be needed for an emerging NF, possibly reducing overtime as the NF is strengthened. Make sure grants are sufficient to provide for the quantum and quality of the desired outcome.
- Ensure that PSP investment principles are in the public domain to model transparency and accountability, while providing predictability.
- Partner with a research institution to test different models of governance for sport in the Pacific e.g. collaborative governance (Refer: Shilbury, D., Boyle, I., & Ferkins, L. (2016) Towards a research agenda in collaborative sport governance. *Sport Management Review*, In press)