



# Just Play

## Oceania Football Confederation

Established in 2009 by Oceania Football Confederation and Football Federation of Australia, in collaboration with the Australian Government, Australian Sports Commission, the Union of European Football Association (UEFA), UNICEF and the Ministries of Education, Youth, Sport and Health in the Pacific, the Just Play programme has been engaging children aged 6-12 years in football related activities, while also addressing endemic issues. Under the motto “Improving Pacific Children’s Lives Through Football”, Just Play focuses on incorporating key messages into all sessions and activities, helping teachers and volunteers to engage children through active participation.



## Just Play

### Background

Young people of the Pacific have numerous challenges which expose them to many risk factors as they navigate their way through life. With over 150,000 children participating in Just Play, the programme has identified a critical entry point which works to capitalize on the use of sport as a social development tool. With a focus on four (4) key development objectives, Just Play seeks to address risk factors affecting children in the Pacific. These include:

- Increasing healthy lifestyle choices and the reduction of risk factors associated with NCDs;
- The promotion of gender equality, change in perception of active role players (children, teachers, volunteers, broader community), and the creation of opportunities and pathways to promote the empowerment of girls and women;
- The creation of opportunities, change of perception of active role players (children, teachers, volunteers, broader community) and the promotion of social inclusion of persons with special needs and;
- Increasing understanding of child protection issues and the promotion of safe/protective environments.

### Innovation

Making sport fun is the main philosophy guiding Just Play. Recognising that the first ten years of any young person's life is critical to holistic development, Just Play focuses on encouraging children to participate no matter what their skill level. Through the engagement of

children in a series of thirty-four progressive sessions that focus on issues relevant to them and their communities, Just Play focuses on creating a quality environment within which children can learn, grow and play. With the integration of key messages, children learn about healthy lifestyle habits, gender equality, social inclusion, disability awareness and child protection in a positive and meaningful way.

### Partnerships

In collaboration with key stakeholders, Just Play has worked hard to become one of the leading sports for development organisation in the Pacific. With key role players including Ministries of Education, Health, Youth and Sport, Just Play is widely recognised for their contribution to sport and broader development objectives. Just Play's contribution has been highlighted on several platforms, including through the Communiqués from the Pacific Island Leader Forum Meetings in Vanuatu in 2010 and Cook Islands in 2012; in publications produced by UEFA; and through the Pacific Youth and Sport Conference.

### Sustainability

With the support of the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) Member Associations in each of the 11-Pacific region countries, the Just Play programme is supported by an in country team. Each Just Play team includes: a Project Manager, Development Officer and Instructor, who are trained and

accredited by both the Just Play programme and the OFC Technical Department. The Just Play programme team in each country works hand-in-hand with their Member Association to implement and adapt the Just Play programme to fit the country context and to develop key partnerships with Ministries, nongovernmental organisations, bodies and institutions that help to enhance programme delivery. Part of Just Play's overall objective is to increase the capacity of teachers and volunteers to deliver quality, meaningful sport interventions. As the direct link between

An external evaluation of Just Play noted that “shared objectives promote a positive relationship between the people of Australia and Pacific Island Countries”, while diplomatically, the programme is seen as a “low risk programme, which includes minimum input and maximum gains.

### Impact

151,355 children have participated in the Just Play programme in 11-Pacific Island countries since October 2009; 2,612 teachers and volunteers have been trained; 44 percent of programme participants are girls; and 55 jobs have been created to support Just Play.