



# Kau Mai Tonga, Ke Tau Netipolo

## Netball Australia

Kau Mai Tonga, Ke Tau Netipolo (KMT), which means ‘Come On Tonga! Let’s Play Netball!’, is a sport for health program that has been utilising netball as the primary tool of engagement since 2009. Tonga has the second highest prevalence of obesity in the world — due at least in part to changing lifestyles, worsening diets and declining physical activity levels. KMT is a targeted NCD intervention program that focuses on increasing physical activity levels among 15 to 45-year-old Tongan women, through netball. The program uses integrated mass media and community mobilisation activities to influence socio-cultural attitudes towards women and girls being active. KMT is a joint initiative of the Governments of Australia and Tonga, in partnership with Netball Australia through the Australian Sports Outreach Program (ASOP), with the aim of contributing to the NCD objectives of the Government of Tonga.



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### Background

Women in Tonga are considerably more sedentary than men for a variety of social and cultural reasons, one of which is that sporting activities are often designed for and dominated by men. 54 per cent of Tongan women have low levels of physical activity, compared with 32 per cent of men (WHO 2004). As such, the campaign was designed specifically to redress these issues by making physical activity an acceptable, accessible and desirable option for women and girls, through netball. TNA was a relatively new organisation and after a governance review, recruited and trained three full time female staff members and up-skilled local coaches, umpires, bench officials, administrators and team managers. TNA now has 55 qualified umpires and 32 Level 1 accredited coaches.

### Innovation

The program delivers an annual 6 week mass-media campaign 'phase' followed by large scale netball carnivals across Tonga. These campaigns are designed to raise women's desire to be physically active by increasing their knowledge about the health risk of being inactive, improving their attitude towards physical activity and thus impacting on their health related behaviour. Phase 1 of the campaign in 2012 incorporated a role model, former Australian netballer of Tongan heritage Mo'onia Gerrard, making a call to

action for women to form netball teams and register for the upcoming carnival. Phase 2 used a health threat appeal. The Phase 3 campaign is a 'community appeal' with public figures (including men) encouraging women and their communities to enjoy and support netball. Together with public relations events, the media campaigns comprise television and radio advertisements and programs, outdoor (billboard) and promotional material components. The program provided 200 netball 'toolkits' including equipment, merchandise and rules and information in the local language to teams registering for KMT netball carnivals. TNA has up-skilled 22 Mobilisers so far in netball coaching, umpiring and administration as well as child protection and first aid, and TNA staff provide ongoing mentoring.

### Partnerships

The program is delivered by the Tongan Ministries of Internal Affairs (MIA) and Health (MoH) and the Tonga Netball Association (TNA). The innovative partnership model that involves health, government and sporting partners was recognised by the WHO with a 'Best Practice' award through the Healthy Islands Recognition program.

### Sustainability

KMT works with the MoH's NCD nurses located in clinics throughout Tonga, to provide ongoing links between women and the nurses in their community. The nurses

screen women at netball events and educate them about NCDs. There are then awards for the individuals and teams who have reduced their BMI and mean waist measurement the most across all of TNA's events, to encourage ongoing participation.

### Impact

KMT has significantly increased the understanding of Tongan women of the health risks of physical inactivity, and has contributed to changes in community norms around women and girls being physically active. This is resulting in more women and girls participating in and leading recreational physical activity and thus reducing their risk of acquiring NCDs. KMT is an evidence-based intervention, which uses quantitative and qualitative evidence from previous phase national evaluations to determine the shape and form of the program. This includes assessing changes in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of Tongan women aged 15 to 45 years with regards to physical activity, and netball in particular, using a nationally representative survey and semi-structured interviews. The research findings indicated that 40 per cent of all women in the target age group took part in physical activity on three or more days of the previous week, and overall 58 per cent reported undertaking at least some physical activity in the previous week.