



# Pacific in Union

## Australian Rugby Union

The Pacific in Union (PiU) project falls under the banner of the Pacific Sports Partnerships. The PiU program launched in 2012 and involved the Australian Rugby Union working in conjunction with the International Rugby Board (IRB) and National Rugby Union Federations to deliver three key program objectives: contribution to social development outcomes; increased participation in rugby union and; developing the capacity of the National Rugby Union.



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### Background

Using the Pacific in Union program as a good example, the role that the ASOP plays in adhering to key factors influencing development can be identified. The PiU program allows community involvement from a grass roots level and empowers local people to become involved in their community whether it be as a participant, official or parent. The program is holistic and builds independence by creating enjoyable and sustainable outlets for social inclusion. Perhaps most importantly the program is apolitical and creates cohesion rather than tensions. Rather than forming any kind of dependency, the approach used by PiU demonstrates that capability enhancing local communities will lead to natural development. These programs are run on small budgets and require minimal staffing so locals are given the chance to take ownership of the concept. PiU consists of a number of programs including; Rugby4Schools, Rugby4Communities, teaching programs, Adopt a School and Talent Development Programs (TDP).

### Innovation

Working with local communities and schools, Rugby4Schools and teaching programs are tailored to the local cultural and social environment. This is achieved through a participatory approach, for example, when establishing pilot school programs, first steps involve engaging teachers and principals

through meetings to tailor programs to the school. PiU provide mechanisms and structures to increase participation in physical activity through rugby and educate students through lesson plans on various healthy lifestyle practices. PiU also provides education through professional development for staff and encourages community participation through opportunities for volunteers, in particular parents, youth, and women.

### Partnerships

PiU staff are encouraged to build relationships with local stakeholders and not-for-profit organisations including the local Rotary International, Cancer Society and DFAT representatives, to encourage mutually beneficial partnerships and integrate the programs as much as possible with the community. Improving health outcomes and education in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Samoa are central to PiU and align with their aim of contributing to social development outcomes.

### Sustainability

Pacific in Union is an example of the effective use of sport incorporating participatory practices to enhance social capital and foster local ownership of programs, to work towards social development outcomes.

### Impact

Reporting and accountability are also central practices within PiU, and essential

elements of an effective development program. This occurs through staff being responsible for interim reports, targets and action plans and ultimate accountability occurs through reporting mechanisms mandated by the PSP, ASOP and Australian Government.

There is evidence however, to suggest that the project has enabled some greater participatory success. Bougainville is a good example of this.

In the specific case of Bougainville, the local Rugby Union reports the following progress:

- Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARoB) Rugby Union wrote a strategic plan to use Rugby as a means to “bring people together” in early 2013, following the civil war of the late 1990’s.
- With the assistance of PNG Rugby Football Union (PNGRFU) they approached the local Ministry of Education and had the PiU classroom and field curriculum endorsed for the schooling system.
- In March 2014 the ARoB Rugby Union sent two female 7’s teams to the National 7’s championships in Port Moresby and both the U16 and U19 teams won the championships.
- In 2014, ARoB Development staff have provided Rugby activities for 560 children under 9 years; 637 children from 10-15 years and 1,292 children over 16 years. They have also in-serviced 20 teachers across the region.