

**Heading**

Play On: How the Gender Equality Playbook is moving Oceania towards gender equality

**Organisation**

Oceania Football Confederation

**Country/ Region**

New Zealand, Oceania

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**Key Words**

Agency and Empowerment

Gender Equality and Gender Equity in and through PEPAS

Empowerment of Women and Girls in and through PEPAS

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and/or Violence against

Women and Girls (VAWG)

Football, Evidence-based, Oceania, Pasifika, Media

**Summary/ Overview**

The Gender Equality Playbook developed by Oceania Football Confederation explores the barriers and strategic actions required to deliver greater equality in the region across the following interconnected areas: Participation, Coaching, Leadership, Media and Visibility, Sport Policy, Promoting Equality and Preventing Violence. It is a resource designed for sport administrators who are interested in increasing women's participation and performance, developing equitable sport organisations and addressing social inequalities through sport programming. This resource includes important information, guidance and resources (i.e. templates, gender equality score cards) to guide practice in Oceania.

Development of women's sport requires intentional and strategic action that acknowledges the unique Pasifika context including specific challenges and opportunities. While there has been a great deal of research globally looking at how we can grow women's sport and promote a more equitable society through sport, there has been little research focusing directly on the Oceania region.

**Problem Statement**

Women and girls have traditionally been and continue to be underrepresented in all areas of sport – as participants, administrators, officials and leaders. When women and girls are excluded from sport, they are also excluded from the benefits of sport including finding peer support, accessing new networks, leading, mastering new skills, enjoying better health and overall wellbeing, and building their profile in the community. This gap contributes to gender inequality in all areas of life through an

unequal power distribution between women and men, exacerbated by ongoing discrimination, weaknesses in policies and systems, and social relations that normalise inequality.

While there are few reliable statistics about female sport participation in the Pacific, it is generally known that women and girls' engagement in sport has been much lower than that of men and boys<sup>1</sup>. Sport is viewed with passion and national pride. One only needs to look at the reaction to the Fijiana Rugby 7s successes at the Tokyo Olympic Games to see the opportunity to enrich this collective passion through providing equal opportunities for women and girls.

Women and girls have been integral to the successful development of sport, however, evidence suggests that there still lacks acceptance of them in the sporting arena<sup>2</sup>. With male domination the norm. Barriers for women and girls' participation in other elements of society are also barriers to their participation in sport. For example, family obligations, marriage, caring for children, parents and family members with a disability, managing a household and contributing to the family income.

There are additional practical limitations including lack of access to: safe toilets or capacity to manage menstruation health; discretionary money to pay for uniform and travel costs; safe transport and playing surfaces; dedicated fields; equipment; and trusted, technically skilled coaches, sport health care professionals and administrators.

In Oceania the level of gender-based violence (GBV) are stark: it's estimated that over two thirds of girls and women in the region are impacted by GBV. Football is seen as a valuable site for primary prevention in changing knowledge, attitudes and practices to stop violence before it starts and to stamp out GBV in sporting contexts.

## **About the Gender Equality Playbook**

Launched ahead of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, the first senior FIFA tournament to be hosted in the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) region, the Gender Equality Playbook (GEP) is a comprehensive resource for Oceania grounded in evidence-based steps or 'plays' for sports administrators to help the region work towards gender equality and prevent GBV. The GEP is part of OFC's Pacific Legacy from the Women's World Cup, taking advantage of the spotlight placed on the sport and the region by the tournament, and tapping into sport's capacity to deliver meaningful and enduring change.

Developing women's sport requires strategic action that acknowledges the unique Pasifika context including specific challenges and opportunities. While there's research conducted globally looking at how to grow women's sport and promote a more equitable society through sport, little work focuses directly on the Oceania region. The GEP addresses this gap.

The GEP covers six focus areas: Participation, Coaching, Leadership, Media & Visibility, Promoting Gender Equality & Preventing Violence Against Women & Girls, and Policy, and the areas are all closely interrelated. The GEP also give examples of how the GEP can be used to prompt specific actions, as well as case studies demonstrating the actions at work.

A significant part of the GEP is the Gender Equality Scorecard. A self-assessment tool developed to help organisations identify how gender-equal they are across the six focus areas and identify areas for improvement. Organisations are categorized as gender negative, gender blind, gender targeted, gender responsive and gender transformative, indicating how 'gender equal' they are.

Adapted from the Evaluation of UNDP contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, the Scorecard was developed to assess the current level of action and commitment to gender equality and the prevention and response to GBV. This tool enables easy identification of areas requiring further attention.

### Challenges

- Low participation of women and girls in sport. compounded by traditional gender roles, motherhood, sexual and reproductive health, including menstrual health, access to safe spaces, limited access to sporting facilities and spaces.
- Low representation of female coaches in the Pacific (excluding New Zealand).
- Ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in sport in Oceania.
- Ensuring equal coverage of male and female sport in the media across Oceania to raise the profile of women's sport and inspire future generations.
- Ensuring all sports have policies for gender equality, inclusion, safeguarding and associated ring-fenced budget for women's sport.

### Successes

Since the GEP's launch, several key plays have been successfully enacted:

- Seven GEP workshops or activations have taken place, which have reached over 300 football administrators, players, and coaches. Workshop participants return to their communities (such as national governing bodies or football clubs) equipped to identify key plays to better enable female participation across football
- Gender equality plays have been integrated into coaching courses, media workshops and player development workshops.
- This Is How We Football (TIHWF), a female youth participation programme for 13-18-year-olds, and social media campaign showcasing girls and women's football was launched in 2023. As of 2024, TIHWF is expanding from the three pilot programmes in Samoa, Fiji and Tonga, which reached over 500 girls, to eight additional programmes throughout the region.
- OFC is linked to the organisation's Strategy 2023-2026. For the commercial and communications department, the GEP has informed how they will achieve key results: 'Create 30% more positive experience across brand, communications and OFC activities'. Central to this are gender considerations, i.e. to assist MAs to develop a marketing, digital, TV and communications strategy for women's football linked with the OFC Strategy 2023-2026, and implementing equal marketing, communications, coverage and broadcast standards at all OFC Men's and women's competitions.
- 24 women took part in the Women in Media programme, with 12 participants upskilled in commentary and 12 upskilled in mobile journalism. Participants have been able to secure

employment following the programme, such as at the 2023 Pacific Games and the 2024 OFC Women's Champions League, and there was an all-female commentary team for the 2022 OFC Women's Nations Cup. During the 2024 OFC Women's Champions League in March, Solomon Islands Football Federation (SIFF) hosted a two-day Women's Football Symposium on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

## Lessons

- Importance of collecting and using evidence-based practices to inform action. Using evidence that draws from the Oceania context to inform and drive context-specific action.
- Importance of ensuring organisations understand how responsibility for promoting gender equality and preventing gender-based violence lies with everyone and is ongoing work. In particular, the importance of engaging men and boys as allies in gender inclusion programmes across the Pacific.
- The work of gender equality and intended outcomes are integrated into the rest of the organization and how they do their work. Gender equality strategies should not be siloed in larger organisational settings and should be core business.
- A life-cycle approach is key as women and girls have different needs at different stages of their playing experience. It is important that women and girls can see a pathway for their participation, both recreationally and competitively.
- Key stakeholders and partners should be identified to support the development, implementation and tracking of the strategy. This includes women and girls as well as key stakeholders involved in delivery including suppliers of equipment and facilities. Research in Oceania suggests community groups and the church are also valuable stakeholders to include in this process.

## Additional Resources

Gender Equality Playbook (available in French and English) <https://www.oceaniafootball.com/gender-equality-playbook/>

OFC Strategy 2023-2026 - <https://www.oceaniafootball.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OFC-Strategy-2023-2026-Final-English.pdf>

FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 Pacific Legacy - <https://www.oceaniafootball.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FIFA-Womens-World-Cup-2023-Pacific-Legacy.pdf>

This Is How We Football Facebook and Instagram accounts  
- <https://www.facebook.com/ThisIsHowWeFootball>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/thisishowwefootball/>

## References

1. Sugden, J.T., Kanemasu, Y., & Adair, D. (2019). Indo-Fijian women and sportive activity: A critical race feminism approach. *International Journal for the Sociology of Sport*, 55(6), 767-787.
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OFC Strategy 2023-2026: Re equal marketing and broadcast standards, p. 55

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