

INCLUSIVE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT IN THE PACIFIC REGION: EMPOWERING DISABLED PEOPLE THROUGH SPORT

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Context

This presentation will describe the Pacific Sport Ability program, an inclusive physical activity and sport programme developed on behalf of the Australian Sports Commission for delivery across the Pacific Region, initially in Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Samoa.

The programme, which started in February 2004, had the following main aims, to:

- raise awareness of the importance of access to physical activity for everyone in the community, including disabled people
- provide sports practitioners in the community with ideas and strategies on how to include more young people, including young disabled people, in their activities
- increase opportunities for disabled people to participate in and enjoy sport
- create a network of confident volunteer presenters who can support the dissemination of the programme throughout the country, and to
- establish an internal support network.

The presentation will outline the ways in which the Pacific Sport Ability programme led to empowering sports practitioners in the participating countries by:

- Sharing with participants a social/environmental approach to inclusion, and
- Encouraging their subsequent ownership of the programme and its principles, enabling its further dissemination within national networks and across the Pacific Region.

Project/Partners

The Pacific Sport Ability programme was developed whilst working as a Senior Consultant at the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). It was funded through the ASC's International Relations section as part of the Australia South Pacific 2006 Sport Program (ASP2006). Important in-country support came from:

- Departments of Education
- National Olympic/Paralympic Associations, and
- Amateur and disability sport programmes.

Results and Discussion/Implications

Unlike previous ASC sport development programmes delivered in the Pacific Region, an alternative strategy based on grassroots inclusive activities targeting whole communities and using the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1996) as a guiding principle was adopted. The presentation will show how this decision resulted in a positive and encouraging response from participating individuals and organisations.

Method

The programme took the form of a four-day workshop, with participants from a wide range of backgrounds including educators, community sport practitioners and volunteers. Disabled people, including current and existing athletes, were particularly encouraged to participate. The presentation will give examples of how an inclusive pedagogy was applied throughout, and give details of the specific resource material that was developed for participants to use post-workshop.

Location

Pacific Sport Ability was piloted in Papua New Guinea through a separate funding mechanism before beginning roll-out across the Region. Four workshops, one in each region of PNG, were held. Potential presenters were identified and mentored, and encouraged to support the delivery of the workshop in other countries. The presentation will explain how an effective 'rolling' mentoring

system was devised and applied in other participating Pacific nations, and how this has enabled the programme to continue throughout 2005 (and beyond).

Outcomes

The main outcomes of the Pacific Sport Ability workshops were as follows:

- Participants took part in activities to raise their awareness of issues around the inclusion of people with disabilities in physical activity and sport
- A practical model for inclusion (TREE), based on the Social Model of Inclusion, was introduced and applied to simple games situations.
- Three specific Paralympic sports were introduced: boccia, goalball and sitting volleyball
- Participants learned how to include a range of abilities in skill development activities
- Participants planned, organised and implemented an inclusive games festival, based on the activities experienced in the workshop, for 80-100 young people with and without disabilities, and
- Potential presenters were identified at each workshop, and following a mentoring process, became part of the programme presenter team.

Discussion

The presentation will conclude some specific experiential results, and their potential for re-application in a European context, including:

- An inclusive social/environmental approach to the teaching and coaching of physical activity can be successfully applied
- Participants can not only take ownership of challenging concepts, but re-shape them for application in their own settings, and that
- Sport empowers.

“To become what we are capable of becoming is the only end in life.” – Robert Louis Stevenson

References

Oliver, M. (1996) *Understanding Disability: From theory to practice*, Basingstoke: Macmillan
Stevenson, R.L. (1882) from *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* London: Chatto & Windus

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