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Young Pacific Leaders Women's Sport Programme Announces Selection of 14 Emerging Female Leaders in Sport

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 Young Pacific Leaders Women's Sport Programme Announces Selection of 14 Emerging Female Leaders in Sport

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 Women in Sport Aotearoa

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- **Women in Sport Aotearoa (WISPA) and Pasifika Sisters in Sport (SiS) with support from the U.S. Department of State running a leadership programme for young Pacific Women working in Sport and Physical Activity.**
- **14 emerging young pacific leaders residing in the Pacific Island nations have been chosen.**
- **The programme is in its second year and will run from Monday 10 March to Saturday 29 March in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand.**

Women in Sport Aotearoa and Pasifika Sisters in Sport are proud to announce the 14 selected participants for the second cohort of the Young Pacific Leaders Women's Sports Programme.

This unique mentorship and cultural exchange programme, supported by the U.S. Department of State, empowers young Pacific women working in sport, physical activity, and related fields. The 14 women selected represent a diverse range of Pacific Island nations and come from various sports, including soccer, netball, athletics, rugby, and more. Each participant is dedicated to making a difference in their communities through sport and leadership.

Meet the Selected Participants:

Esther Wendy Huruiia – *Solomon Islands*

Sport: Soccer

Role: Project Accountant, Solomon Islands Water Authority

Esther is passionate about empowering women in soccer and leadership. She aims to inspire young girls to develop leadership skills both on and off the field.

Debbie Melsul – *Vanuatu*

Sport: Netball

Role: Biology and Chemistry Facilitator, University of the South Pacific; Netball Convenor, Shefa Netball Association

A dedicated educator, Debbie is committed to empowering women and girls through sports and is eager to further develop her leadership skills.

Jackie Lorraine Travertz – *Papua New Guinea*

Sport: Athletics (Throws)

Role: Former Athlete, Coach

Jackie has been a strong advocate for disability sports in Papua New Guinea. Her goal is to use sports as a tool for unity, growth, and empowerment of women and girls in her community.

Salote Sukakinamena – *Fiji*

Sport: Rugby League

Role: Game Development Officer, NRL Fiji

Salote is passionate about empowering women in rugby and sports leadership. She sees this programme as an opportunity to grow and eventually mentor future leaders.

Aline Teumohenga – *Tonga*

Sport: Health and Wellness

Role: Doctor/Medical Officer, Ministry of Health, Tonga

Aline is focused on transforming health outcomes and advocating for women and children, particularly addressing non-communicable diseases and mental health.

Jamie Haro – Papua New Guinea
Sport: Touch Football, Rugby Union
Role: Sports Journalist (Freelance)

As a sports journalist, Jamie is dedicated to celebrating the achievements of women in sports and using her platform to promote female inclusion in sporting media.

Lavelua Taulahi – Tonga
Sport: Netball
Role: Technical Development Officer, Tonga Netball Association

Lavelua is committed to strengthening leadership and providing development opportunities for girls and women in her community through netball.

Aditamana Senirewa – Fiji
Sport: Physical Education (PE)
Role: PEMAC Teacher, Ministry of Education

Aditamana's work in schools focuses on empowering young women and promoting physical activity. She aims to inspire the next generation of female athletes and leaders.

Tutumanu Piuiki Mata'utia - Matalavea – Samoa
Sport: Field Hockey, Netball, Rugby
Role: Quality Assurance Team Leader

As a national field hockey representative, Tutumanu is passionate about supporting women in sports and creating pathways for girls to lead and thrive.

Tanya Kalsakau – Vanuatu
Sport: Netball
Role: Project Admin, World Bank Project (VC RTP)

Tanya serves as vice treasurer of Shefa Netball Association and is passionate about empowering women and girls in Vanuatu through sports and leadership.

Eskella Joseph – Marshall Islands
Sport: Basketball
Role: Tourism Assistant, RMI Office of Commerce, Investment and Tourism

Eskella aims to increase female participation in basketball in the Marshall Islands, overcoming challenges like lack of equipment and facilities to support local athletes.

Matagali Limaalofa – Tuvalu
Sport: Community Youth Leadership
Role: Civil Servant

Matagali is committed to empowering women and youth in Tuvalu. She believes that this programme will help strengthen her leadership skills to support social, economic, and cultural change.

Rabunatetaake Kevin – Kiribati
Sport: Various (General Advocate)
Role: Assistant Administration Officer, Kiribati National Olympic Committee (KNOC)

Rabunatetaake works with the Kiribati National Olympic Committee and is passionate about advocating for women's participation in sports at all levels.

Kathleen Kostka – Federated States of Micronesia
Sport: Swimming
Role: Evaluator, Department of Health and Social Affairs

Kathleen is passionate about sports as a tool for community development and youth engagement. She actively supports the FSM Swimming Association and aims to empower young athletes.

About the Programme

The Young Pacific Leaders Women's Sports Programme is designed to empower emerging female leaders from the Pacific Islands in sport and physical activity through mentorship and cultural exchange. Now in its second year, the programme will run from 10 March to 29 March 2025 in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Participants will engage in a residential week focusing on leadership development, followed by a mentorship phase where they will work with a host organisation to implement a project in their home country. The programme concludes with a final three-day gathering where participants will share their learnings and action plans for the future.

The programme is made possible by the generous support of the U.S. Department of State and is part of the Young Pacific Leaders initiative, which aims to strengthen leadership and networking in the Pacific.

“We are excited to support these 14 outstanding women who represent the future of women’s leadership in sport across the Pacific,” said Nicky van den Bos, WISPA CEO. “The Young Pacific Leaders Women’s Sports Programme provides a unique platform for these emerging leaders to grow, connect, and create lasting change in their communities.”

Pasifika Sisters in Sport Co-Chair Candice Apelu Mariner said: "The Pacific Women’s Leadership Programme is not just about personal growth, but about creating pathways for these emerging leaders to bring back tangible, lasting change to their communities. By empowering these women with the tools, mentorship, and networks they need, we are helping to build stronger, more resilient sports cultures across the Pacific. They will return home not just as leaders, but as catalysts for the next generation of women in sport."

“Sports as a platform can champion priorities such as inclusion, youth empowerment, gender equality, health and wellness, and conflict resolution. We’re proud to support this program for Young Pacific Leaders!” – U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand, Tom Udall

Women in Sport Aotearoa Ngā Wāhine Hākinakina o Aotearoa

Women in Sport Aotearoa (WISPA) is a charity that exists to transform society through leadership, advocacy and research, ensuring that all women and girls gain equity of opportunity to participate, compete and build careers in play, active recreation and sport in Aotearoa New Zealand.


Pasifika Sisters in Sport (SiS)


Pasifika Sisters in Sport (SiS) is a culturally driven collective. The organisational vision is to establish a leadership network of Pacific women and girls in sport to elevate, inspire, advocate and create equal opportunities at all levels and holistic development outcomes in Aotearoa and Oceania.


Young Pacific Leaders (YPL)

Young Pacific Leaders (YPL) program is the U.S. government’s signature program to strengthen leadership development and networking in the Pacific. Through a variety of programs and engagements including U.S. educational and cultural exchanges, regional exchanges, and seed funding, YPL seeks to build the leadership capabilities of youth in the region and strengthen ties between the United States and the Pacific. YPL focuses on critical topics identified by youth in the region: education, environment and resource management, civic leadership, economic and social development.

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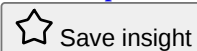
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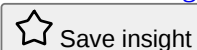


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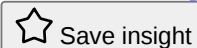


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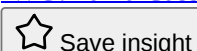
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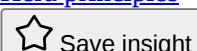
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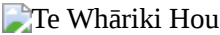
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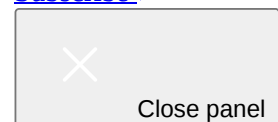
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