

RELAY QUESTIONS FOR Wellbeing Workshop.

Executive Summary

The Wellbeing and Leadership Workshops for the Tongan National Olympic Committee (NOC) and Athletes' Commission (AC) delivered a transformative experience for athletes, coaches, and stakeholders. Over three days, participants engaged in reflective, skill-building, and collaborative activities that aligned with Tongan cultural values and promoted inclusivity, resilience, and leadership.

Led by **Dame Valerie Adams**, **Edwina Ricci**, and **Palu Uhatahi Tu'amoheloa**, the workshops emphasised the importance of mental, emotional, and social wellbeing, providing practical tools to help athletes thrive in their personal and sporting lives. Valerie's inspiring stories of perseverance captivated participants, while Edwina's practical strategies and Palu's cultural insights ensured relevance and engagement.

Key achievements included the development of personalised wellbeing plans, the amplification of athlete voices through Talanoa sessions, and the creation of actionable strategies to address barriers and promote inclusivity. Participants left the workshops empowered as ambassadors for wellbeing and safety, ready to inspire their communities. These workshops mark a significant step forward in positioning Tonga as a leader in fostering a thriving, inclusive sporting culture.

Relay Questions

1. Description

Overview of the Wellbeing and Leadership Workshops for the Tongan National Olympic Committee and Athletes' Commission

Purpose

The Wellbeing and Leadership Workshops were designed to empower Tongan athletes to thrive in their personal and sporting lives. Over three days, participants engaged in reflective, skill-building, and collaborative activities, fostering resilience, connection, and leadership skills. These workshops aligned with the values of Tongan culture, prioritising inclusivity, wellbeing, and shared vision.

Workshop Breakdown

Day 1: Wellbeing Essentials 9am - 1pm

- **Objective:** To introduce foundational concepts of wellbeing, encouraging athletes to balance the pressures of competition with resilience and meaningful connections.
- **Key Activities:**
 - *My Identity Wheel:* Understanding personal narratives.

- *Best Future Self*: Creating pathways of hope and resilience.
- *Measuring Mental Health*: Exploring the dual continuum of mental health.
- *The Art of Breathing*: Developing mindfulness practices.
- *Personal Wellbeing Plan*: Mapping actionable steps for improved wellbeing.
- **Learning Objectives:**
 - Develop an understanding of personal and athletic wellbeing.
 - Identify personal values, strengths, and needs.
 - Gain practical strategies for emotional regulation and resilience.
- **Learning Outcomes:**
 - Enhanced self-awareness and the ability to articulate personal values.
 - Application of wellbeing strategies, including mindfulness and gratitude.
 - Development of a personalised wellbeing action plan.

Day 1 Afternoon: Athlete Talanoa Session 2.30pm - 5.30pm

- **Objective:** To amplify athletes' voices in shaping a supportive sporting environment.
- **Key Activities:**
 - *Seen, Heard, and Valued*: Reflecting on recognition, voice, and resources.
 - *Small and Large Group Talanoa*: Sharing challenges and co-creating a vision for improvement.
 - *Visioning Exercise*: Drafting ideas for an ideal sporting system.
- **Learning Objectives:**
 - Create a safe space for open dialogue.
 - Gather meaningful insights from athletes' lived experiences.
 - Co-create a shared vision for Tongan sport.
- **Learning Outcomes:**
 - A sense of empowerment among athletes.
 - Collection of actionable ideas for systemic improvement.
 - Strengthened community bonds and shared purpose.

Day 2: Strengthening Links 9.00am - 4.30pm

- **Objective:** To transform insights from Day 1 into actionable strategies, bridging wellbeing and performance.
- **Key Activities:**
 - *Reflection on Current State*: Identifying strengths and challenges.
 - *Opportunities for Growth*: Brainstorming initiatives for training, participation, and international representation.
 - *Strategic Planning*: Developing priorities using a prioritisation matrix.
 - *Implementation Planning*: Crafting action plans with timelines and responsibilities.
- **Learning Objectives:**
 - Analyse wellbeing needs and priorities.
 - Collaborate on strategic plans to support athlete wellbeing.
 - Empower athletes to lead community-building initiatives.
- **Learning Outcomes:**
 - Creation of a strategic wellbeing plan for presentation to stakeholders.

- Clear understanding of challenges and opportunities in Tongan sport.
- Personal and collective commitments to wellbeing goals.

Day 3: Leading for Wellbeing 9.00am - 1.30pm

- **Objective:** To finalise a unified action plan and align it with Tongan sporting excellence.
- **Key Activities:**
 - *Presentation of Wellbeing Plans:* Athletes shared insights and action steps.
 - *Collaborative Action Planning:* Addressing priorities for participation, training, and international representation.
 - *Commitment Statements:* Participants pledged to champion wellbeing initiatives.
- **Learning Objectives:**
 - Reflect on priorities and align them with organisational goals.
 - Develop actionable steps for implementing the wellbeing vision.
 - Reinforce accountability through personal and organisational commitments.
- **Learning Outcomes:**
 - Consolidated action plans with clear timelines and resource needs.
 - A strengthened sense of unity and collaboration among stakeholders.
 - Documented commitments ensuring ongoing progress and accountability.

Day 3 Evening: Celebration Event 5.00pm - 9.00pm

- **Objective:** To celebrate the athletes' achievement in their participation in the three day workshop
- **Key Activities:**
 - *Reflection on the week - sharing of the impacts*
 - *Acknowledgement of the athlete's contributions*
 - *Handing out of certificates*
 - *Celebration and fun sharing and karaoke*

Impact Summary

These workshops empowered Tongan athletes to take ownership of their wellbeing and leadership roles. Through a blend of cultural alignment, practical strategies, and collaborative planning, participants developed the skills and confidence to advocate for systemic change, fostering a supportive and thriving sporting community.

2. In what ways did the activities organised assist your NOC Athletes' Commission to fulfill its objectives?

How the Workshops Supported the NOC Athletes' Commission Objectives

The Wellbeing and Leadership Workshops provided the foundation for the NOC Athletes' Commission (AC) to meet its objectives effectively, empowering athletes and stakeholders through targeted activities aligned with their needs and aspirations. The integration of cultural values, participatory approaches, and strategic planning ensured the workshops addressed key priorities while supporting long-term goals.

1. Amplifying Athlete Voices and Representation

- **Key Activities:** The Talanoa sessions allowed athletes to articulate their experiences, with themes such as being "seen, heard, and valued" resonating strongly.
- **Impact:** Athletes felt empowered to contribute to decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are central to shaping the AC's priorities and actions.

2. Developing a Shared Vision for Tongan Sport

- **Key Activities:** Workshops facilitated strategic visioning exercises, including setting pathways for athlete development, addressing resource gaps, and improving inclusivity.
- **Impact:** These activities aligned with the AC's vision of fostering fairness, inclusivity, and excellence, as highlighted in its guiding principles.

3. Building Leadership Capacity and Inclusivity

- **Key Activities:** Training on topics such as wellbeing essentials and leadership helped athletes develop resilience, discipline, and effective communication skills.
- **Impact:** Para-athletes and underrepresented groups were actively included, demonstrating the AC's commitment to inclusivity and equitable representation.

4. Addressing Resource Constraints and Barriers

- **Key Activities:** Strategic planning sessions identified gaps in facilities, funding, and equipment, with actionable steps to secure resources through sponsorships, government support, and international partnerships.
- **Impact:** These plans aligned with the AC's objective to improve training environments and provide sustainable opportunities for athletes.

5. Creating Pathways for Sustainable Growth

- **Key Activities:** Initiatives such as the "Give Back Program" and "Life After Sport" career pathways were developed to support athlete progression and post-competition opportunities.

- **Impact:** By focusing on long-term athlete development, the AC ensured alignment with its goals of building stronger structures and fostering global recognition.

Key Outcomes

- **Empowerment:** Athletes gained confidence and a stronger sense of agency, with many expressing the value of shared experiences and collaborative decision-making.
- **Strategic Plans:** Actionable strategies were developed to improve participation, training, and international representation, providing a clear roadmap for the AC's activities.
- **Cultural Integration:** The use of Tongan language and values created a sense of belonging, aligning the workshops with the cultural context of Tongan sport.

Conclusion

The Wellbeing and Leadership Workshops successfully equipped the Tonga Athletes' Commission with the insights, tools, and strategic plans needed to fulfill its objectives. By amplifying athlete voices in these workshops, fostering inclusivity, and addressing systemic gaps, the AC is well-positioned to lead the development of a thriving and sustainable sporting environment in Tonga in partnership with other key stakeholders. This will revitalise the Commission who have had many years without strong leadership and a meaningful link to their NOC. With a large group of new inductees to the very small existing commission we have the opportunity to increase our capacity, capability and impact. We will use the insights gained from the week as the foundation for building for the future together as we look forward to hosting a successful Mini Games in 2031 where many tongan athletes excel and participate in an Olympics in Oceania in 2032 where we hope Tongan athletes will qualify in their own sport across a number of sports.

3. Additional comments/information:

Facilitation and Resource Development

How did the workshops empower athletes and stakeholders?

The Wellbeing and Leadership Workshops provided a transformative experience for Tongan athletes and stakeholders, driven by the leadership of **Dame Valerie Adams, Edwina Ricci, and Palu Uhatahi Tu'amoheloa**. Dame Valerie Adams, a two-time Olympic gold medallist, shared deeply personal and inspiring stories about resilience, perseverance, and mental wellbeing. Her insights resonated profoundly with participants, who hung on her every word, viewing her as a role model for excellence in sport and life.

Edwina Ricci, Director of **Total Teams**, complemented Valerie's inspiration with practical tools for wellbeing and leadership. Her expertise in wellbeing education resulted in the development of an excellent mix of learning by doing to build capacity not just in the participants but within the NOC too. Palu Uhatahi Tu'amoheloa, Oceania Football's Wellbeing and Safety Officer, brought cultural relevance to the workshops, ensuring they aligned with Tongan values and addressed the unique needs of the participants.

Together, they created a safe and inclusive environment where athletes felt "seen, heard, and valued," amplifying their voices and encouraging them to take ownership of their wellbeing and leadership roles.

What role did the facilitators play in ensuring the success of the workshops?

The success of the workshops was a direct result of the collaboration between Dame Valerie Adams, Edwina Ricci, and Palu Uhatahi Tu'amoheloa. Valerie's powerful presence and relatability inspired athletes to reflect on their own journeys and embrace leadership roles. Edwina provided structured activities and some teaching, equipping participants with practical strategies for resilience and emotional regulation. Palu ensured that the sessions were culturally meaningful and accessible, fostering a sense of belonging and unity.

Their combined efforts bridged the gap between personal growth and community impact, reinforcing the importance of wellbeing in sport and life.

What impact will this initiative have on Tongan sport?

This initiative marks a significant step forward for Tongan sport, empowering athletes to serve as ambassadors for wellbeing and safety. The workshops laid a strong foundation for grassroots development, inclusion, and elite performance. Dame Valerie Adams' inspirational leadership instilled confidence in participants to set and achieve ambitious goals. Edwina Ricci's practical insights provided the tools to integrate wellbeing into daily routines, while Palu Uhatahi Tu'amoheloa's cultural expertise ensured the workshops were deeply connected to Tongan values.

The outcomes will ripple across communities, strengthening grassroots participation, improving training environments, and preparing athletes for international representation. This initiative

positions Tonga for long-term success in the **2031 Mini Games** and **2032 Olympics**, showcasing the nation's commitment to fostering a thriving, inclusive sporting culture.

Insights from the Workshops

1. Athlete Empowerment

- Athletes expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share their stories and challenges openly, emphasising that they felt "seen, heard, and valued."
- Many participants highlighted how the workshops reinforced their sense of purpose, inspiring them to take ownership of their wellbeing and leadership roles.

2. Cultural Alignment

- The workshops effectively integrated Tongan values and traditions, such as the use of the Tongan language and cultural practices, making the sessions more relatable and engaging for participants.
- The focus on collective wellbeing resonated deeply, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.

3. Practical Tools and Strategies

- Practical exercises like *The Art of Breathing* and *Personal Wellbeing Plans* provided athletes with actionable tools to manage stress and build resilience.
- Participants particularly appreciated learning techniques to balance personal and athletic lives, such as goal-setting and mindfulness practices.

4. Inclusivity and Representation

- Para-athletes and underrepresented groups voiced their appreciation for being included, with some sharing how this was their first experience feeling truly integrated into a sports development initiative.
- The workshops highlighted the importance of addressing gender biases and fostering equal opportunities for all athletes.

5. Leadership Development

- The sessions on strategic planning and implementation encouraged athletes to think beyond their individual roles and consider their impact on the broader sporting community.
- Athletes expressed interest in ongoing leadership training, including WELL Champion programs, to continue building their capacity to advocate for others.

6. Challenges and Opportunities

- Some participants mentioned that breaks could be better structured to avoid fatigue, particularly during longer sessions.

- The importance of clear guidelines (e.g., phone use policies) was identified to maintain focus and engagement.
- Opportunities to delve deeper into terms like "seen, heard, and valued" were identified, with participants suggesting more time be allocated for discussions and examples.

7. Ripple Effects

- Athletes recognised the potential for their new skills and insights to benefit not only their teams but also their families and communities.
- Many expressed excitement about becoming ambassadors for wellbeing and safety, with plans to share what they learned with younger athletes and grassroots groups.

8. Suggestions for Future Workshops

- Include more interactive activities and games to maintain energy and engagement, particularly for younger participants.
- Provide follow-up sessions to track progress and offer continued support for the initiatives developed during the workshops.
- Expand collaboration opportunities by involving more stakeholders, such as families, coaches, and community leaders, in future workshops.

These insights highlight the transformative potential of the workshops, showcasing how they equipped athletes with practical tools and a renewed sense of purpose while fostering a supportive and inclusive sports community in Tonga.

4. How many people do you expect to benefit from the activity indirectly?

Indirect Beneficiaries and Impact of Implementing the Strategic Plan

If the strategic plan is effectively implemented, the ripple effect will positively influence a wide range of individuals and communities across Tonga, creating lasting benefits at all levels of sport. By empowering athletes to act as ambassadors for wellbeing and safety in sport, the impact will extend far beyond the athletic community.

Who Will Benefit Indirectly?

1. Grassroots Communities

- **Young Athletes:** Gaining access to structured pathways from grassroots to elite levels, fostering development and motivation.
- **Schools and Families:** Benefiting from enhanced opportunities for participation and exposure to the values of wellbeing and safety in sport.
- **Broader Community:** Encouraged by role models promoting healthy, safe, and inclusive sports environments.

2. Athletes and Coaches

- **Athletes as Wellbeing Ambassadors:** Sharing messages of wellbeing and safety within their teams and local communities, becoming leaders both on and off the field.
- **Coaches:** Receiving professional development, fostering safer and more inclusive training environments.

3. Local Communities

- **Community Health and Wellbeing:** Improved through greater participation in sports and exposure to positive values of discipline, teamwork, and resilience.
- **Social Unity:** Strengthened as sports become a vehicle for promoting equality, inclusion, and shared pride.

4. Sports Organisations and Governance

- **National Federations and Clubs:** Enhanced reputation and engagement through athlete-driven initiatives promoting safety and wellbeing.
- **Government and Policy Makers:** Meeting public health, youth development, and equality objectives, while bolstering national pride through sporting success.

5. Underrepresented Groups

- **Women and Para-Athletes:** Greater representation and inclusion, creating a more equitable and supportive sporting environment.

- **Marginalised Communities:** Access to sports programs that offer equal opportunities for engagement and growth.

Benefits of a Fully Implemented Strategic Plan

1. Athletes as Changemakers:

- Athletes will be equipped with tools and training to act as ambassadors for wellbeing and safety in sports, spreading these values to their communities.
- By embodying the principles of wellbeing, they will inspire cultural change, particularly in underrepresented or marginalised groups.

2. At the Grassroots Level:

- Increased sports participation and improved facilities will foster community engagement and pride.
- Families and young athletes will adopt values of safety, inclusivity, and personal growth.

3. At the Elite Level:

- Development of globally competitive athletes who represent Tonga with pride and bring messages of wellbeing to international platforms.
- Role models inspiring younger generations to pursue excellence while prioritising holistic health.

4. Community Empowerment:

- Enhanced community collaboration as athletes advocate for safe sporting environments.
- Greater awareness of the benefits of sport for physical and mental health, uniting communities under shared values.

By implementing this strategic plan, Tonga's athletes will not only achieve sporting success but will also lead transformative change in their communities. They will champion wellbeing and safety, inspiring a healthier, more inclusive, and thriving sporting culture across the nation including education that addresses the causes of gender based violence.

Conclusion

The Wellbeing and Leadership Workshops successfully equipped Tongan athletes with the tools, skills, and confidence to lead both on and off the field. Through the collective expertise of Dame Valerie Adams, Edwina Ricci, and Palu Uhatahi Tu'amoheloa, the program fostered resilience, inclusivity, and cultural alignment. The insights gained will serve as a foundation for the AC to achieve its objectives, strengthen grassroots participation, and prepare athletes for international excellence. As Tonga looks ahead to the **2031 Mini Games** and **2032 Olympics**, these workshops pave the way for a sustainable and inclusive future in sport.

