



## Main contributor and related people

## **TEVITA PEKIPAKI, NUKU'ALOFA, TONGA**

### Story summary:

#### **Safety Beyond the Finish Line – Tevita's Story**

Tevita Pekipaki isn't a teacher by title, but you'll find him at nearly every school athletics event in Tongatapu. As a committed volunteer with the Tonga Athletics Sports Association (TASA), Tevita is the one trying to ensure that races run smoothly. However, he is also the person many students turn to when they feel dizzy, exhausted, or injured after their events.

"I'm usually the first to check on the students after their races," Tevita explains. "A lot of them do more than two events, and I try to help them recover safely. Before this training, I would hesitate. I'd ask myself—am I doing this right? Am I helping, or making it worse?"

That all changed after Tevita joined the First Aid Training for Sports Masters and Coaches, a two-day hands-on workshop delivered by the Tonga Red Cross Society in partnership with Save the Children. The training was part of a wider effort under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) to build safer environments for children in schools and sports settings across Tonga.



*Photo: Maa'imoa Mafileo/Save the Children Australia*

The course brought together teachers, coaches, and sports volunteers from government and non-government schools, both middle level and high schools, across Tongatapu to build the knowledge and confidence needed to respond to injuries and emergencies on the field. It also forms a vital component of Save the Children's child protection work:



ensuring that the adults responsible for students during high-risk events like inter-school competitions are prepared to act swiftly and safely when incidents occur.

“For me, the course confirmed what I already knew from years of working in sports,” Tevita says. “But it also filled in the gaps. Now I know exactly how to respond if a student faints, coughs uncontrollably, or suffers a minor injury. I’ve learnt how to *ha’i lavea* - how to support someone who’s hurt.”

What surprised Tevita most was the practical style of the course. “It wasn’t just talk; we got to practice what to do. That’s how it stayed with me. I think refresher sessions would really help too especially after the sports competitions, so we can reflect on what worked and what we’ve used.”

More than just an emergency response, these skills reflect a broader commitment to child safeguarding. Through programs like ANCP, Save the Children is working closely with the Government of Tonga and local partners to build child-safe schools, strengthen community resilience, and ensure that children are protected, not just in the classroom, but in every space where they learn and grow.

**“Ko e skills ia ko ‘eni ‘oku mahu’inga ‘aupito ia he ‘oku ou ngaue’aki ma’u pe ‘e au ‘i ‘api pe ko e feitu’u feohianga,”** *“These skills are very important because I use them all the time—at home or wherever I’m with people.”*

For someone who has quietly supported the development and safety of young athletes for years, this training brought more than knowledge, it brought peace of mind.

“Now I don’t second guess. I know what to do, and I know I can help.”