

Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership)



SAMOA COUNTRY SUMMARY

Updated June 2022

Samoa is a focus country of the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (Pacific Partnership) programme.

Violence against women and girls is recognised worldwide as a social, political, and public health problem as well as a fundamental violation of human rights. As across the Pacific, violence against women is a pervasive problem with nearly half of all women in Samoa experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime¹. Data indicates **20 percentⁱⁱ of the female population has experienced rape, and 86 percent of women in relationships have experienced some form of intimate partner violence.**

The Pacific Partnership programme brings together governments, civil society organisations, communities and other partners to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), and increase access to quality response services for survivors.

Pacific Partnership Priorities in Samoa

There are three key outcomes being prioritised for Samoa, under the programme:

1. Transforming harmful social norms to prevent violence against women and girls (led by UN Women)

Increasing evidence demonstrates that violence against women and girls is preventable, and preventable within years, not lifetimes, through appropriate and comprehensive prevention work. Stopping violence before it starts is vital as response services alone cannot address a complex social problem of this size and scope. This is best achieved by addressing the root causes of violence, using a whole-of-population level approach.

Evidence indicates that prevention interventions are more effective if they: address social norms, attitudes and behaviour

that perpetuate violence against women and girls; challenge dominant notions of masculinity linked to violent and controlling behaviours; involve all community members; and include long-term, systematic engagement across all levels of society in multiple settings.

Through Pacific Partnership, the UN Women Ending Violence Against Women and Girls programme is focussing on areas identified as powerful channels of influence in Samoa – faith, village governance and sports- and working across individual, community and societal levels.

ABOUT PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

The Pacific Partnership is funded primarily by the European Union, and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, and UN Women, and is led by the Pacific Community (SPC), UN Women and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

In Samoa, two of the three coordinating agencies have Pacific Partnership activities: UN Women and PIFS.

In addition to Samoa, other countries and territories in the Pacific region benefiting from the five-year programme include, but are not limited to Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.





2022-2023 prevention initiatives supported by UN Women include:

Supporting national coordination mechanisms and implementation

- **Supporting the implementation of recommendations 2 and 18 from the National Inquiry into Family Violence Report 2018 released by the Samoa Office of the Ombudsman/National Human Rights Institute (NHRI)** - these recommendations focus on supporting community-based Violence Free Village prevention programmes and six Village Safety Committees (three in Savaii and three in Upolu). The NHRI report highlights the issue of family violence in Samoa based on evidence collected from testimonies and village visitations, during its National Inquiry held in 2017, during which almost 9 in 10 women consulted said they had experienced physical or emotional violence at the hands of family members. Support to the NHRI in implementing its recommendations are in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA.

Using a whole-of-community approach to prevention

- **Community (rugby):** Partnering with Oceania Rugby to design and implement the Get into Rugby PLUS programme in Samoa and Fiji in primary and secondary schools respectively to address violence against women and girls through sport as a tool to promote positive gender equitable norms, attitudes, and behaviours. Building on World Rugby's Get Into Rugby development programme, it uses a safe playing environment and a **life skills component delivered by rugby coaches to support young people aged 10-14 years in 13 schools** in a process of critical thinking and reflection around issues of gender, power relationships and healthy, respectful relationships all built around the rugby values of integrity, solidarity, respect, discipline and passion. Get into Rugby PLUS is a Sport for Development programme jointly developed and implemented by Oceania Rugby, UN Women, Fiji Rugby Union and ChildFund Rugby, and Lakapi Samoa.
- **Supporting the National Human Rights Institute (NHRI) to develop a gender-based violence toolkit.** The Samoa-specific toolkit will support the learning of relevant prevention methodologies to support community-led interventions that are human right based and survivor-centred. It aims to train village-based individuals to support nationally approved referral mechanisms and provide strengthened gender-based violence response in rural areas.

Strengthening evidence to prevent violence against women and girls in the Pacific

- **Rugby:** Completed research in partnership with Oceania Rugby and the University of the South Pacific to **understand the connections between gender inequality, violence against women and girls and sports** participation in rugby and netball across two countries: **Fiji and Samoa**. This research contributes to the body of knowledge around how to make the field of sports, safe, fair, and accessible to women and girls across Pacific Island nations. It also aims to influence policy and practice of the sport sector to improve safe and equal access to sports; inform programme design to change social norms; and influence and convene organisations nationally and regionally to guide advocacy, social marketing, and communication campaigns on preventing violence against women and girls and promoting gender equality. The research is an internal document that will inform future programming.

2. Improving access to quality, essential services for survivors of gender-based violence (led by UN Women)

The programme advances international best practice, adapted to the Pacific context, to strengthen quality and access to essential services for survivors of gender-based violence. Under this area of work, UN Women provides technical support and funding to improve the overall governance and coordination of essential services (health, police and justice, social services) and technical and financial support to improve social services. This involves work with local front-line service providers to strengthen access to, and quality of social services for survivors, including but not limited to: strengthening disability inclusive services; adapting services to meet the needs of women and girls with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGISEC)ⁱⁱⁱ; improving gender-based violence counselling and shelter responses; and supporting innovative models to increase access for women and girls in remote and hard to reach locations.

2022-2023 initiatives supported by UN Women include:

Supporting national coordination mechanisms and development of guidelines

- Partnering with the Ministry of Women, Communities and Social Development (MWCSO) and other UN Agencies to strengthen multi-sector service delivery coordination, including **implementing the Interagency Essential Services Guidelines (IESG) for Responding to Cases of Gender-**



Based Violence (developed in 2021). This involves civil society and government organisations across all sectors from health to justice and police, agreeing on referral pathways and procedures to streamline the assistance provided to gender-based violence survivors to support better access to timely and quality essential services.

- Supporting government-led **awareness raising for the Family Safety Act 2013** and its associated Family Protection Orders especially in rural areas, including participating in the EViS Roundtables and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign. This approach also promotes access to justice through community engagement, media relations and MWCS District Committees' public advocacy.
- Linking, where possible, with **Samoan partners within regional processes on gender-based violence counselling**, including convenings to discuss the **technical implementation of the Family Safety Act 2013** including the Act's associated Family Protection Orders and counselling standards and training.

3. Monitoring and reporting government commitments to gender equality and EVAWG (coordinated by PIFS)

2022/23 Initiatives targeting non-state actors supported by PIFS include:

Samoan non-state actors (NSAs), including civil society organisations and women's groups, also benefit from Pacific Partnership through **strategic engagement, capacity development for monitoring the implementation of national commitments on gender equality, and projects support through small grants**. The PIFS' NSA component of the Pacific Partnership programme works in close concert with agencies on the following key areas (with overall approaches supported by UN Women):

- Encouraging CSO partners to participate in upcoming PIFS consultative mechanisms including the Annual Regional CSO Forum; the Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting (FEMM); and the CROP Heads and NSA Executive meetings.
- 2022/2023 Consultations for the revitalized Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
- 2022 Gender Economic and Financial Workshop
- 2023 Young People's Mock Forums – sub-regions and regional

BACKGROUND

In Samoa, the 2006 National Family Health and Safety Study shows that family violence affects almost all families in Samoa with high numbers of people experiencing extreme violence in their lifetime. Recent data from the 2018 National Inquiry into Family Violence reveals that almost 9 in 10 people report having experienced physical or emotional violence within the family in their lifetime. Six out of ten women report experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime, violence at the hands of a non-partner is almost as prevalent as intimate partner violence.

There is strong political will in Samoa to progress national action to end violence against women and girls. Service provision for women and girls experiencing violence in Samoa is overseen by the Ministry of Women, Communities and Social Development (MWCS), which has committed to improving coordination between service providers. The Family Safety Act 2013 provides the means for a more effective response to domestic violence by providing a specific legal framework for addressing incidences of violence in the domestic arena in Samoa. The Act specifically outlines the procedures to apply for protection orders in the case of domestic violence.

'Samoa Family Health and Safety Study (SFHSS) shows that 46.4% of respondents were impacted by 'any form of abuse'. The study was funded by UNFPA in 2001 and implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC): <https://pacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/samoa-family-health-safety-study>

'National Inquiry into Family Violence Report by the Samoa Office of the Ombudsman/ National Human Rights Institute (NHRI), released 12 September 2018, highlights the issue of family violence in Samoa based on evidence collected from testimonies and village visitations, during its National Inquiry held in 2017. The Inquiry was pursuant to s.34 of the Ombudsman Act 2013. Online: <https://ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/National-Inquiry-Report-into-Family-Violence-State-of-Human-Rights-Report-2018-English.pdf>

'SOGISEC is a term that has evolved from the more commonly known acronym LGBTQI+ which is for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex. UN Women is now using this term to ensure we are using terms most preferred by the communities themselves.

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For more information about Pacific Partnership, email: comms.pac@unwomen.org

Imagery inspired by empowering female-specific tattoo motifs used in the Pacific region.

