

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



SAMOA COUNTRY SUMMARY

Updated November 2020

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 lifetime.**¹ Recent dataⁱⁱ indicates **20 percent 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.





2020-2021 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): Equal Playing Field Community Rugby 7s Tournament and Workshop** – partnering with Samoa Rugby Union through Oceania Rugby on the Rugby PLUS programme to promote gender equality, raise awareness on gender-based violence, identify intimate partner violence and abusive relationships, and understand the dynamics of online bullying and stereotyping of female athletes in social media.
- **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

- Undertaking research, in partnership with Oceania Rugby and Samoa Rugby Union to **understand the connections between gender inequality, violence against women and girls and sports participation.** This research involves three programme countries: Samoa and Fiji. This research will contribute to the body of knowledge around women and

girls in sport, motivations and barriers to their participation in all aspects of sport and the connections between this and violence against women and girls. The **findings will be used to inform future programming** on changing social norms through sports and engaging more sports and sport activities in preventing violence against women and girls programming and guide the development of relevant policy and programming interventions.

- **Community of Practice to promote knowledge sharing and coordination:** Linking Samoan partners to a Pacific regional Community of Practice to strengthen coordination and build a collaborative and supportive communities of practice across the region, in partnership with other key agencies and networks working in this space. This supports and encourages knowledge sharing of social norms and primary prevention programming, including 'what works' to end violence against women and girls in the Pacific.

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)ⁱⁱ; 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.

2020-2021 initiatives supported by UN Women include:

Supporting national coordination mechanisms and development of guidelines

- Partnering with MWCSO and other UN Agencies to strengthen multi-sector service delivery coordination, including **developing the Interagency Essential Services Guidelines (IESG) for Responding to Cases of Gender-Based Violence.** 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)

2020-21 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 the overall approaches supported by UN Women. In 2020, the NSA programme supported the **active engagement of CSOs** like the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO) and **women's CSOs** like the Samoa Victims' Support Group (SVSG) to engage in PIFS consultative mechanisms including the Annual Regional CSO Forum, 2020 Virtual Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting (FEMM), CROP Heads and NSA Executive Meetings. NSAs also participated in other activities including the Regional Non-State Actor Capacity Building Workshop, the development and validation of a **Policy Monitoring Toolkit on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, strategic planning toward a Leaders and Mentors Initiative for 'Gender Equality Agents for Change'** and providing technical input toward training modules for NSAs and governments on gender responsive budgeting.

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.ⁱⁱⁱ 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.

ⁱSamoa 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>

ⁱⁱNational 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

ⁱⁱⁱSOGISEC 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.

^{iv}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>

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

