



GOVERNMENT OF SAMOA

Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development

Beijing +30

Samoa National Report

**Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and
Platform for Action (BPfA) 2024**



Foreword



As we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment to reflect on Samoa's journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment. This comprehensive report encapsulates the progress we have made and the challenges we continue to face in realizing the ambitious commitments set forth in Beijing three decades ago.

"Women are the silent weavers of the social fabric, creating a tapestry of strength, resilience, and hope."

The Beijing Platform for Action remains a seminal blueprint for advancing gender equality globally. Its call to action has resonated deeply within our shores, guiding policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at dismantling systemic barriers to gender equity. Samoa's progress is a testament to our unwavering commitment to these principles and our dedication to fostering an inclusive society where every individual can thrive regardless of gender.

This report highlights significant achievements: legislative reforms, the establishment of institutional mechanisms for gender equality, increased participation of women in decision-making processes and improved access to education and healthcare for women and girls. These milestones result from the concerted efforts of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and international partners.

However, persistent challenges impede our progress. Gender-based violence, economic disparities, and cultural norms that perpetuate inequality remain pressing issues demanding our continued focus and action. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, underscoring the need for resilient and adaptable strategies to safeguard the gains we have made.

Moving forward, the insights gained from this review will be instrumental in shaping our future strategies and policies. It is imperative to harness the momentum generated by the Beijing Platform for Action to accelerate our efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment. As gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that requires multi-sectoral engagement, this report highlights the empowerment of women and girls and efforts to promote gender equality across all 14 sectors of Samoa's economy.

We are grateful to all who contributed to this review. Your voices are vital in shaping a more equitable future for Samoa.

In closing, let us reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Beijing Platform for Action and redouble our efforts to create a society where gender equality is not merely an aspiration but a lived reality. Together, we can walk hand in hand towards a brighter, more inclusive future for all Samoans, united in our understanding and commitment to equality.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ale Molioo', written in a cursive style.

Honourable Mulipola Anarosa Ale Molioo

Minister for Women, Community and Social Development



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List of Abbreviation

COC	Samoa Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CSSP	Civil Society Support Program
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MCIL	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour
MJCA	Minister of Justice and Courts Administration
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health
MWCSD	Ministry of Women Community and Social Development
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NOLA	Nuanua O Le Alofa, Disability Advocacy Organisation
OOTR	Office of the Regulator
PSC	Samoa Public Service Commission
SBS	Samoa Bureau of Statistics
SUNGO	The Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations Inc



Section One: Highlights

This report provides a review of Samoa's progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through implementation of the Beijing Declaration Platform for Action (BPfA). Samoa joins regional and international collaborative efforts to share best practices and lessons learned on gender equality and women's empowerment in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the 10 years anniversary of the 2030 Agenda.

In support of this review, Samoa has presented an overview which includes an assessment of achievements, progress and challenges during the implementation of the BPfA, with respect to national efforts towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO) is the national focal point for the advancement of women and girls. As gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that requires multi-sectoral engagement, this report highlights the empowerment of women and girls as well as efforts to promote gender equality across all the 14 sectors of Samoa's economy.

In preparation for this report, the MWCSO was tasked to coordinate the BPfA report in February 2024. In March, Samoa through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) hosted a Voluntary National Review (VNR) workshop. The VNR is a process where countries voluntarily provide reports on their progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations and it has close linkages with the BPfA. In realising that the BPfA will be an additional international reporting process, the MWCSO reached out to UNWomen in April 2024 for assistance with the consultation workshops. Throughout April, the MWCSO carried out data collection using the BPfA survey questionnaire with leading agencies of all the 14 sectors. The MWCSO also used the same process to collect relevant data on its legislative compliance review for the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The MWCSO hosted a validation workshop in May 2024 with representation from stakeholders including Government Ministries and non-government organisations. The MWCSO also drew information from development partners through their website publications for annual and program reports on gender equality and women empowerment projects and activities. The final report was circulated via email for validation in June and received further enhancement and endorsement from all stakeholders. This report only provides an overview of women empowerment and gender equality actions that were either directly financed, or supported and endorsed by the Government of Samoa in line with its legislations and national policies, during the reporting period.



Figure 1: Consultative Workshop on BPfA, May 2024

Section Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

The Government of Samoa is a member state to multiple global and regional treaties that promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Samoa was the first Pacific Island to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1992. Following from this, Samoa is also a member to the Beijing Platform of Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A) Pathway, the Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, the Pacific Women Leaders Forum, the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights among others.

The Government of Samoa through its Pathway for the Development of Samoa FY2021/2022-FY2025/2026 (PDS) articulates the strategic outcomes for community, social and human development, ensuring that all Samoans including women, youth and rural communities have equal access to economic and livelihoods opportunities for development. Empowering women and ensuring that they are protected and benefit from development is addressed across the five Key Strategic Outcomes of the PDS, but specifically reflected in Key Strategic Outcome 1: Improved Social Development (Key Priority Area [KPA] 1: Alleviating Hardship and KPA 4: People Empowerment); and Strategic Outcome 2: Diversified and Sustainable Economy. (KPA 6: Community Development). The strategic approach of the PDS is human-development centred and focused on equitable distribution of development benefits with a specific focus on vulnerable people.

To support the vision of the PDS, the Government has financed from its national budget and implemented the District Development Program (DDP) through the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. The DDP is a significant investment that provides WST1million annually for the 51 electoral constituencies to finance their priority developments. The DDP is governed by the recently established 51 District Councils who are responsible for leading sustainable development across each district. The aim is to enhance the social, economic

and intellectual development of its population by addressing the most pressing needs of the community especially the most vulnerable such as persons with disability, youth, children, elderly and women. While the composition of the 51 District Councils are an equal representation of men and women, there are currently 66% males and 43% females. To date, the DDP is implemented across all 51 districts and has benefitted an estimate of 53,918 households. The program has supported approximately 139 development projects specifically for women empowerment ranging from cultural and tourism development, education, health initiatives, small businesses, projects for improving social wellbeing and many others¹. The DDP is well into its second year of implementation. To promote more targeted support to vulnerable populations, a mandatory requirement is now in place for districts to allocate 20% of the annual project funds for all 51 districts to supporting gender equality developments.

Within the reporting period, Samoa elected its first female Prime Minister, Honourable Fiame Naomi Mataafa II who is also the first female PM of a Pacific Island State. Between 2021 and 2023, Samoa appointed the first female Minister of Finance Hon Mulipola Anarosa Ale-Molio'o and has now taken over the Ministry of Women portfolio. Following the application of the Temporary Special Measures after the 2021 national elections, women currently hold 6 of the 51 seats in Samoa's parliament with three females as cabinet ministers. About 44.3% of women are employed as managers and legislators². Women were most likely to work as CEOs in state-owned enterprises (31%). By sector, the highest proportion of female CEOs was found in the utilities (67%) and finance (33%) sectors.

Samoa has also developed policies to ensure the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The includes the National Policy for Gender Equality and the Rights of Women and Girls (2021 – 2031), Family Safety Policy: Elimination of Family Violence (2021 – 2031), the 2023 Amendment to the Labour and Employment Relations Act, Inter-agency Essential Services Guide, GBV Administrative Database and National Prevention Framework to name a few. However, despite efforts to strengthen the policy landscape and enabling environment, development outcomes remain gender imbalanced and relatively low for women.

Within the population aged 15 years and over, most young people within the educational attainment category from 'None' to 'Primary' were male, indicating that significant numbers of young boys tend to leave formal education after completion of the primary level. More females completed secondary and tertiary education, with females making up 54 percent of total population that completed tertiary education. Child marriage before age 18 is at 7.4% while violence against women by an intimate partner in the last 12 months is at 31.5%³. The population aged 25 and older with at least some secondary education are 71.6% males and 79.1% females⁴. The labour force participation rate highlights 54.2% males and 30.7% females with 31% females that are economically active and a significant 69% of females categorised as economically inactive⁵.

¹ MWCS update, May 2024

² Census SBS, 2019

³ DHS-MICS, 2020

⁴ SBS, 2020

⁵ *ibid*

Women make up a large portion of the informal sector and 60% of unpaid domestic care work. Despite government efforts to reduce the gender gap through policy and legislative reforms, incidences of child labour and income inequality remain. Hardship and vulnerability are higher among the unemployed and individuals working in the informal sector.

The advancement of women’s rights and gender equality is a significant part of our national endeavours to achieve the overarching vision of the Pathway for the Development of Samoa – to foster social harmony, safety and freedom for all. The government is working with its multi-sectoral and development partners and national stakeholders to address the challenges of gender equality and women empowerment.

Section Three: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

1. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- F. Women and the economy
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labour (MCIL) continues to strengthen and enforce laws and workplace policies and practices that promote gender equality across the public and private sectors. The Labour and Employment Relations Amendment 2023⁶ prohibits discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women and legislates equal pay amongst men and women.

The Ministry of Women Community and Social Development (MWCSO) has since administered six (6) national policies⁷ that were endorsed by Cabinet in 2021. The policies have a common goal to strengthen programs and practices that promote economic and income generating opportunities for women of all ages including women with disabilities in the communities and at the national level. One of the specific initiatives is through the *Ie Samoa*⁸ Program which promotes gender-responsive job creation and active labour market policies for women in the communities under the *Ie Samoa* Regulation 2013⁹. The *Ie Samoa* Program is a government initiative implemented since 2003 to revive the production of the *Ie Samoa* and *siapo* (bark cloth) recognizing the significance of women’s participation in inclusive economic development. This year marked the twenty-one-year anniversary of the Program. To incentivise the weaving of the *Ie Samoa*, the Government provides financial support towards the *falelalaga* (women’s committees) for the sustainable production of the *Ie Samoa*. The long-term goal is for women and men to weave and use the *Ie Samoa* for family obligations (*fa’alavelave*) and sustainable income generation. This initiative is

⁶ <https://www.mcil.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Labour-and-Employment-Relations-Act-2013.pdf>

⁷ National Policy on Community Economic Development 2021-2030; National Policy on Family Safety: Elimination of Family Violence 2021-2030; National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030; National Policy on Gender Equality and Rights of Women and Girls; National Policy on Inclusive Governance 2021-2030, and National Policy on Child Care and Protection 2021-2030 sourced from <https://mwcsd.gov.ws/publications/>

⁸ *Ie Samoa* is a traditional fine mat hand-woven and fastened at the hem with two rows of green and red feathers.

⁹ <https://mwcsd.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Ie-Samoa-Regulation.pdf>

linked to the No Poverty and Economic Growth SDG Alleviation indicator¹⁰. Within the reporting period, the Ie Samoa program has supported 1,264 traditional fine mats with a total budget of WST1,400,000¹¹



Moreover, the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labour (MCIL) continues to strengthen gender-responsive job creation and active labour market policies through the implementation of relevant strategies under the Samoa National Employment Policy 2022 - 2026 and Active Labour Market Programs. The 2022 Labour Market Survey reported a total of 14,044 employees engaged in the Formal Private Sector. The male participation rate represented 54 % of the total workforce with females at 46%. This pattern remains unchanged over the last three surveys with males dominating the workforce across all industries¹². Some of the initiatives include education and training, skills building and subsidies under the Annual Jobseekers Training¹³.

Samoa is also an implementing partner of the Markets for Change (M4C) project in collaboration with the UNWomen and the Samoa Land Corporation. The project aims to ensure that the three public marketplaces are safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory while fostering gender equality and women's empowerment. The M4C Project has supported the development of plans and strategies to address identified issues at the marketplaces. These include the supply of cleaning equipment and installation of security cameras and first aid kits. In addition, the project has also invested in addressing health and safety issues for women vendors in both the Salelologa and Fugalei market.

“Market vendors are very busy and do not have the time to visit the hospitals for health check-ups but this morning I am very happy to have the opportunity to check my health for free especially the glucose and blood levels, family planning consultations and more importantly the dignity kits we received which will help immensely in maintaining good health and welfare. Some of the market vendors who were at the high-risk level received free healthcare advice and referred to the public hospitals for further support”. (Woman Market Vendor, Salelologa).

¹⁰ https://mwcsd.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Annual-Report-FY2223_-Eng.pdf

¹¹ MWCSD Annual Reports FY20/21, FY21/22, FY22/23

¹² Labor Market Survey Report 2022 <https://www.mcil.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/LMS-2022-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>

¹³ https://www.mcil.gov.ws/?page_id=2814

Furthermore, Samoa through M4C has installed recycling and solar powered lights in the same marketplaces, contributing to reducing greenhouse gas emission and mitigating climate change and energy efficient. At the same time, the solar lights provides added security and safety for students attending the National University of Samoa (NUS) night school on the second floor of the Salelologa market. 75% of these students are women. This is a step towards creating more economic opportunities and a sense of security which will allow women to sell their goods and attend class without feeling at risk. These intentional and sustained investments are pivotal in accelerating Samoa's journey towards gender equality and sustainable development¹⁴.

The MWCSO also administers the District Development Program (DDP) which is a new initiative promoting community-led developments. Since the DDP inception in 2021, the government has financed the establishment of District Councils with a policy target of equitable representation for both men and women across the 51 electoral constituencies. To date, the DDP has supported job creation and income generating opportunities for 457 men and 253 women at the District Councils' level and 46 men and 59 women employed as office staff within the 51 districts. In addition, the MWCSO also coordinates job creation opportunities for village government representatives comprising of 214 men and 180 women that act as liaison support between the Government, districts and the villages across Samoa¹⁵.



2. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through MCIL has included the collection of national statistics on unpaid care, domestic work and accounting of time with time-use surveys, valuation exercises, and satellite accounts. The collection of statistics capturing domestic worker (both foreign and nationals) and their working terms and conditions are also included in the Labour Market Surveys¹⁶. Moreover, the Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS) also continues to collect data

¹⁴ <https://www.undp.org/samoa/stories/investing-women-accelerate-progress-gender-equality-samoa#:~:text=The%20Markets%20for%20Change%20project%20promotes%20gender%20equality%20through%20the,society%20organizations%20and%20UN%20agencies.>

¹⁵ MWCSO update, May 2024

¹⁶ https://www.mcil.gov.ws/?page_id=2812

of the labour force disaggregated by sex, main activity, occupation and industry through the Population and Housing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey 2022¹⁷.

The MCIL has enacted the Labour and Employment Relations Act 2013 and Amendments 2023¹⁸ which has strengthened maternity, paternity, parental leave and other types of family leave and leave entitlements for both the private sector and for workers of the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). The Public Service Commission (PSC) also revised the Working Conditions and Entitlements Manual 2015 (WCEM)¹⁹ to strengthen maternity, paternity, parental leave and other types of family leave for workers of the Government Ministries.

In 2022, the MWCSO participated in a UNDP-led pilot Time Use study to examine the relevance of gender-sensitive time-use considerations. The research focused on the small business incubator (SBI) initiative of the Economic Wide Adaptation to Climate Change (EWACC) Project.²⁰ The study was to better understand how time dedicated to unpaid care and household work may affect families and/or individuals' ability to apply for, and absorb, financing support and/or how the extra financing may impact the provision of care (and time dedicated to it) within the household of beneficiaries and in their communities. The report provides insights into the relevance of gender-sensitive time-use considerations and provides a basis for a framework for rapid time-use appraisal in Samoa. The Government has the potential to apply the framework to better support the situation of unpaid care and domestic work which are mainly occupied by women in its future actions to address unpaid care and domestic work.

3. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

Samoa through the Samoa Information Technology Association (SITA) participated in a regional study on Pacific Digital Gender Gaps²¹ that was completed in 2022. The scorecards measured the state of women's digital inclusion and empowerment across five key themes – internet access and women's empowerment, affordability, digital skills and education, relevant content and services for women, and online safety. Based on this study, Samoa's gender gap was scored at 71% across all thematic areas and provides appropriate recommendations for Samoa to consider. The report also acknowledges that while Samoa has national policies that reference the use of technology to reverse gender inequality, there is a lack of data on specific programs that were implemented and on their impacts on women and girls. The MWCSO, Ministry of Communications, Information and Technology (MCIT) and the Office of the Regulator (OTR) has potential to take forward the findings of the study to ensure the gender gap in the digital space is closed.

¹⁷ <https://www.sbs.gov.ws/local-market-survey/>

¹⁸ <https://www.mcil.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Labour-and-Employment-Relations-Act-2013.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.psc.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/WCEM-MASTER-COPY-AS-OF-NOVEMBER-2023.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.undp.org/samoa/publications/samoa-pilot-time-use-study-report>

²¹ <https://www.pacificpsdi.org/news-and-insights/news/read/psdi-supports-pacific-digital-gender-gap-study>

4. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

Since 2020, the Public Service Commission (PSC) introduced fiscal consolidation measures such as cuts in public expenditure and right-sizing the public sector. The PSC is currently conducting a review of the public service with a particular focus on organisational structures and functions. The State of Service Assessment aims to identify baseline of the crosscutting issues including the mainstreaming of gender in government processes. The Public Administration Sector Plan (PASP) is also under review which includes the development of a Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion Analysis (GEDSI) Policy across government, the review of the job descriptions for Senior Executives to reflect and include appropriate requirements around gender and crosscutting issues. The PSC also contributes by circulating Circular Memorandums to support and enforce gender-focussed initiatives of all other Government Ministries such as the annual breast-feeding programs and the ending violence *Malu I Fale*²² Campaign.

In 2022, Samoa through the support of UNDP Spotlight Initiative launched a Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) Training Manual for the public service. The manual is a strategic instrument for achieving the Government's gender equality policy objectives, by including a gender perspective in all steps of the budget process and reflecting the gender ambition in the choices, priorities and resource allocation decisions. The MWCSO also coordinated the establishment of the GRB core-group and continued training for the selected public servants in 2023.

The COVID-19 Support Package was administered by the Samoa Ministry of Finance between 2020 and 2022 to cushion the socio-economic impacts of the global pandemic. A specific initiative to support gender-equal economy was the provision of grants to women's committees (*komiti o tina ma taimaitai*) for community outreach. A total of 191 traditional village *Komiti Tina and Tamaitai* program conducted (77 Savaii & 114 Upolu). Out of 45 non-traditional villages only 33 programs conducted in Upolu as there are no non-traditional villages in Savaii. Total of 224 programs conducted and there were 7,688 women's participated (4,828 Upolu & 2,860 Savaii) received WST \$129,150.00 to implement within 51 districts communities²³.

Under the DDP Policy Framework and its implementation, the priority on equitable community-led development is the main objective of the program. This means that MWCSO has ensured that 20 percent of the DDP funds is earmarked specifically for projects on social wellbeing, women's empowerment and disability-inclusive development projects. To date, the DDP has supported approximately 139 projects specifically for women's empowerment across the 51 districts.

²² Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Campaign

²³ COVID-19 Preparedness & Response Report 2020

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

5. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- C. Women and health
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through the UNESCAP Catalysing Women Entrepreneurship Project aims to promote women's access to decent work through active labour market policies such as job training, skills, and employment subsidies. Targeted measures through the implementation of the Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) Development Policy 2021²⁴. In 2023, MCIL conducted awareness program for 30 women entrepreneurs from the informal sector who are members of different private sector organisations, M4C vendors and program beneficiaries under the MWCSD. Most of the participants operate small businesses in the rural areas. The training raised their knowledge of the existing services that could provide continuous support and to help transition into the formal sector. It was also reported that 21 women vendors from rural community made sales and found markets in 2022 during the launch of the M4C project. A total of 25 business owners including 19 female entrepreneurs from the two main islands were also provided with business training opportunities²⁵. This increased the number of women owned MSMEs and the number of MSMEs participating in the formal sector recorded in March 2024 quarter was 25,843; of which 54.1% were males and 45.9% were females. ²⁶ reported that 4,000-6,000 SMEs use one or more financial services in Samoa (2020).

The Samoa Women's Association of Growers (SWAG) weekly Saturday markets is a popular initiative with up to seven thousand followers and likes on their Facebook Page. SWAG was established in 2018 to empower women organic growers running small local businesses. Its vision is to provide opportunities for accessing local and international markets, training and sharing best business practices, and socializing in a supportive and open environment for sharing traditional, organic, and environmentally safe solutions to modern day agricultural needs. To date, the SWAG consists of forty (40) vendors who come together every Saturday morning to not only sell their products but to also dialogue on the value of organic farming and adopting environmentally conscious practices²⁷.




²⁴ <https://www.mcil.gov.ws/?p=6009>

²⁵ MWCSD Annual Report FY22/23

²⁶ <https://www.samoagovt.ws/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AWARENESS-PROGRAM-CWE-Project-1.pdf>

²⁷ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/c08e9669-9726-4d3f-808b-e500a6288296/content>



The Small Business Incubator (SBI) scheme administered by MWCS D aims to reduce vulnerability of families by increasing skills and knowledge on product development and business operations, access to relevant services as well as marketing skills. In 2021, the scheme supported 86 new families to start their business developments across the Upolu and Savaii islands. The Samoa Disability Partnerships Programme²⁸ supported 30 new families and 56 families were supported through the EWACC Project²⁹. In 2022, the scheme was able to assist 65 individuals from both Upolu and Savaii into jobs, with 25 of them securing permanent employment. Some of the assistance from the scheme included facilitating soft skills trainings targeting customer services and communication skills in partnership with the Samoa Business Hub and Chamber of Commerce. The E-Youth Platform was launched in June 2022, and it has since provided a platform for youth looking for employment to apply and submit applications to opened vacancies online. The registered businesses and companies can view and match the job vacancies with the right skills of the youth that have expressed interest³⁰. In 2023, the scheme extended its support to 54 families and individuals including 8 women-headed families.

6. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

Samoa through the Ministry of Finance launched its first National Social Protection Policy Framework in 2023. The National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) aims to establish the guiding principles for policies and programs implemented by various Government Agencies to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable citizens, while providing timely response and targeted assistance in the face of external shocks. Existing social protection measures in Samoa are ad hoc and fragmented, therefore this policy framework provides an integrated framework for existing social protection policies and programs, as well as to direct the development of social protection in Samoa, encompassing both formal and informal social protection.

The disability benefit scheme commenced in 2021 providing monthly allowance of WST100 for registered persons with disabilities to enhance their social protection. As of March 2024, a total of 2,556 persons with disabilities have registered under the scheme comprising of 1,513 males and 1,043 females³¹. The Samoan Parliament has also enacted the National Provident Fund Amendment Act 2023 to allow for the transition of the disability scheme benefit under the existing National Provident Fund disbursement system. In 2024, efforts are well underway to expand the disability social protection program to provide for free public medical and health care for women and men with disabilities as well as free travel between the two main islands via the public ferries. This is envisaged to come into effect by December 2024.

The COVID19 Support Package provided budget support and grants for NGOs like Mapuifagalele and Mapuipulotu (Home of the Elderly), Goshen Trust (for the mental health support), and SVSG.

²⁸ <https://mwcsd.gov.ws/sdpp/>

²⁹ MWCS D Annual Report FY20/21

³⁰ MWCS D Annual Report FY21/22

³¹ MWCS D Update, March 2024

7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through Ministry of Health (MOH) continues to promote women's access to health services through the expansion of universal health coverage or public health services. We note that the average life expectancy for females is (73.7 years) remains higher than that of males (76 years) over the years. The MOH has been conducting prevention programs in collaboration with the village women's committees and community public health committees through the PEN Fa'a-Samoa program roll-out³². The MOH has also expanded specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, maternal health and HIV services through the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Program. Within the reporting period, MOH also developed gender-sensitive approaches to the prevention and treatment of chronic and non-communicable diseases (e.g. cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, and diabetes). The PEN³³ Fa'a Samoa program develops the capacity of women in the village to measure key noncommunicable disease (NCD) metrics since the 1920s, continuing the legacy and highlighting the critical role that Village Women's Committees play in health promotion³⁴.

In 2021, Samoa published a Needs Assessment of sexual and reproductive health rights, gender-based violence and access to essential services for women (and young people with disabilities)³⁵. The assessment highlights priority issues impacting human rights at the intersection of gender and disability – sexual reproductive health rights, legal capacity and GBV. According to the Census 2021, the population of 5 years and above with disabilities was 4,488 with the number of females slightly higher than males. While the assessment is the first of its kind in Samoa, it provides general and issue-specific recommendations for Samoa, particularly for the health and community sector to take forward. Having adequate and immediate access to sexual reproductive health services or people with disabilities including women and young people, are critical in addressing legal and policy barriers, social and attitudinal barriers, physical access and information and communication challenges.

8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) continues to implement measures to increase girls' access to, retention in and completion of primary and secondary education. To address the gender gaps in education outcomes, MEC has taken measures to increase girls' access to, retention in and completion of technical and vocational

³² MOH Annual Report FY20/21 https://www.health.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/MOH-AR-20-21_ENGLISH-VERSION.pdf

³³ Package of Essential Non-communicable Disease Interventions Samoa (PEN)

³⁴ <https://www.improvingphc.org/samoa-population-health-management>

³⁵ United Nations Population Fund, Women Enabled International, Pacific Disability Forum. Women and young people with disabilities in Samoa: Needs assessment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and access to essential services (2021).

education and training (TVET) and skills development programmes. Some of the specific initiatives include the renewed focus to strengthen the TVET areas in the primary schools. A TVET training for primary teachers was conducted in November 2020 targeting numeracy and literacy skills specifically for the TVET fields. Specific objectives and skills were on using the Samoan traditional artworks, experimenting with a variety of materials, the linkage of lifestyles on non-communicable diseases and movement and physical skills³⁶.




The Ministry has continued to strengthen 98% of government secondary schools to provide their TVET campaign post-COVID19 and the recovery phase. The campaign includes the provision of physical materials and resources in 2021, to support the teaching of TVET subjects such as Design Technology (DT), Health and Physical Education (HPE), Food, Textiles and Technology (FTT), Agriculture Science, Visual Arts and Music.



To further expand the campaign, MEC launched its TVET Online Awareness Program as a platform for teachers, parents, communities and institutions to dialogue on the importance of *TVET skills for a brighter future*. The main target was the years 12 and 13 students, teachers (secondary level), but also parents and communities, to encourage the children to stay in school and to recognise the career pathways and potential salaries from TVET



³⁶ MESG, Annual Report FY21/22



employment opportunities including the teaching profession. To guide these initiatives, MEC continues to administer the National TVET Policy 2018-2023 to improve employability of school leavers as a result of education and training responding to national economic, social and cultural needs. The Policy provides a flexible, clear, coordinated and quality assured structure for the transformation and improvement of TVET in secondary schools and sets out to establish pathways for students after secondary level³⁷.

The Ministry and its partners continue to enforce the Samoa Education Act 2009 and Amendment 2019 for the compulsory attendance of children from ages 4 to 16 years. One of the new initiatives was the celebration of the Compulsory Education Day which has now become an annual event to draw the public's attention and create awareness on the importance of children attending school.

The teacher qualification upgrade programs provide quarterly professional support to all teachers to ensure quality teaching and learning programs are implemented. The male and female teachers have an equal opportunity to access these trainings and opportunities to upgrade their professional skills. The upgrade program varies from analysing assessment results, literacy and numeracy to Moodle trainings and curriculum contents to name a few.

In 2022, the Spotlight Initiative Program conducted a training of enumerators as a prevention program for women, girls and children from domestic violence and harmful practices. The training targeted school principals, senior teachers and MEC staff personnel providing them with the relevant skills to identify and collect significant data that can be used to effectively help students who are victims of domestic violence, intimate-partner violence and gender-based violence. This is part of the Ministry's efforts to streamline effective response to cases of violence in schools and in particular isolated schools in rural communities.

The Ministry conducted Moodle cloud trainings and refresher workshops to enable teachers and students to communicate and access assignments for their classes. The dissemination of IT resources to the schools during the COVID pandemic enabled the Ministry to train and equip the teachers with ICT resources and especially on how to use the resources³⁸, 70% (99 out of 142) of primary schools are using the Moodle learning management platform, 78% (18 out of 23) of secondary schools are using the Moodle learning management platform³⁹

At the outset of COVID-19, the Samoa Information Technology Association (SITA) with UNDP financial assistance developed an E-learning platform⁴⁰ to enable the school children to continue learning during the national lockdown period. SITA was able to pilot the platform to Avelle College, Samoa College and Vaiala Beach School in 2022. The platform provides learning materials and lessons for primary and college students (boys and girls) in various subjects.

The Ministry in partnership with the Kingdom, a local non-government organisation that launched a schools challenge during the 2021 Annual Teachers Conference⁴¹. The challenge was about


³⁷ MESC, Annual Report FY21/22

³⁸ MESC, Annual Report FY21/22

³⁹ Source: MEC AR 2022-2023

⁴⁰ <https://elearning.sita.ws/>

⁴¹ MESC, Annual Report FY20/21



promoting hygiene and safety in schools as part of strengthening school compliance with Minimum Service Standards (MSS) in schools. The competition was for school communities to renovate existing toilet blocks and transform the usually sad looking and dark spaces into welcoming, positive and safe spaces that advocate healthy living and education. It was recorded that 182 schools (168 government and 14 mission & private) participated in this competition.

The Ministry implemented a Greenhouse Garden Project for sixty (60) schools to provide students with valuable hands-on learning opportunities while also engaging teachers and the larger school community. The project highlighted collaborative efforts of school committees, parents, and the entire community. The schools were selected based on their achievement of MSS for significant community support and a reliable water supply, which were critical to the project's success. The project provided learning opportunity on essential skills and specific knowledge on planting fruit trees and growing vegetables. The fruits and vegetables provided nutritious and healthy breakfast and lunch options for all students.

On a higher level, the Samoa-Australia Partnership Program (SAPP) has supported 128 members of the Samoa Police Service (80 males and 48 females) under its scholarship program between 2015 to 2022. The staff have been able to graduate from tertiary training including policing and police management. As of 2022, the SAPP has provided training to 246 members (inclusive of females and males) on areas such as cyber investigations training, digital forensics, drone training, first aid and executive coaching.

9. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

The MWCSD with assistance from UNFPA, disseminated customised Dignity Kits for Vulnerable Women and Girls in 2022 under Samoa's COVID-19 community response. The dignity kits were to ensure that women and girls continue to have access to sexual and reproductive health commodities during the lock-down periods and post-recovery. The dignity kits targeted women and girls in emergency situations, providing hygiene packs, inclusive of women with disabilities. The project provided 1,350 customised Dignity Kits and 100 Dignity Kits for vulnerable families (429 Upolu & 821 Savaii)⁴².

Since 2021, the Government continues to implement the COVID19 Support Package and its recovery support. While majority of this support is inclusive of all genders, the main national support that is assisting economic recovery post-COVID-19 is now provided through the District Development Program (DDP). As of March 2024, it was estimated that about 48% of women in Samoa are benefitting from the DDP through the provision of equipment and resources, receiving capacity building support or through special initiatives such as higher education scholarship assistance.

⁴² MWCSD Annual Report FY22/23 https://mwcsd.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Annual-Report-FY2223_-_Eng.pdf

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

10. Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritised for action?

Critical areas of concern:

- D. Violence against women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through coordinated efforts by multiple sectors have contributed to address gender-based violence and other forms of violence. The Ministry of Health (MOH) with support from UNFPA developed a Gender Base Violence (GBV) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Clinical Management of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Violence (SV) for all health facilities. This is the first SOP developed to guide the proper processes and documentation of appropriate responses to cases of GBV and SV⁴³. The National Policy on Family Safety: Elimination of Family Violence 2021-2031 includes a priority action on addressing intimate partner violence. The Inter-agency Essential Services Guide (IESG) was also launched to guide a multi-sectoral response system to gender-based violence and child protection⁴⁴. The Ministry of Police (MOP) continues to prioritise the addressing of intimate partner violence, including sexual violence and marital rape, domestic violence committed by other family or household members and sexual harassment and violence in public places, educational settings and workplaces. The MOP website has since improved to include public information, legal definition and factsheets on sexual violence and domestic violence⁴⁵. Moreover, The MCIL continues to monitor and address complaints of sexual harassment and violence in public places, educational settings and workplaces in accordance with the Labour and Employment Relations Act 2013⁴⁶

In the past 5 years, the Government of Samoa through support to the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) has prioritised actions against intimate partner violence, including sexual violence and marital rape, domestic violence committed by other family or household members and violence against women and girls facilitated by technology through the implementation of various projects. The SVSG led a study focusing on Evidence for Violence prevention in the Extreme (EVE) from 2020 -2024. The EVE Project study was conducted in partnership with local villages to develop a Samoa approach to preventing violence against women. The study was based on 10 villages and in partnership with the NUS and the Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS). In April 2023, the research was published as: Love Shouldn't Hurt – E le Sauā le Alofa: Co-designing a theory of change for preventing violence against women in Samoa⁴⁷. The relevant multi-stakeholders have potential in taking the findings of the study further into policy actions.

⁴³ GBV SOB https://www.health.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/GBV-SOP-Samoa-final_SOP_28Sept-final-final-for-printing-June-1.pdf

⁴⁴ IESG

<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAAsia/Docs/Publications/2021/02/English%20-%20WEB%20-%20Samoa%20IESG%20for%20Responding%20to%20Gender-Based%20Violence%20and%20Child%20Protection.pdf>

⁴⁵ MOP DV <https://www.samoapolice.ws/our-service/crime/domestic-violence/>

⁴⁶ LERA Act <https://www.mcil.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Labour-and-Employment-Relations-Act-2013.pdf>

⁴⁷ www.tandfonline.com/journals/rgph20

11. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritised to address gender-based violence?

In 2021, the Cabinet endorsed the *Malu i Fale* – Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Campaign whereby all public offices were encouraged to wear black attire to show their support for EVAWG. The Legislative Assembly, MWCSO, Public Service Commission, Ministry of Finance, the Samoa Water Authority, and Electric Power Corporation are some of the public agencies, alongside the villages, faith based, and private sector communities have showed their commitment to the campaign by wearing black attire every Thursdays⁴⁸.

In the same reporting period, the commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism has since become a national annual program. In 2022, MWCSO led a community-based dialogue using the *talanoa* methodology to stimulate community conversations on EVAWG. The campaign attracted the participation of 7,670 individuals from around Samoa and from online viewers. From this total, about 4,000 individuals from various government sectors, NGOs, private sectors, and community-based groups, joined a series of activities across the communities⁴⁹. The SVSG with support from the Spotlight Initiative and its partners led the Torch of Peace march that went around all the 51 districts of both Upolu and Savaii as the kick-off of the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The initiative reached over 50,000 Samoans⁵⁰.

In addition, the commemoration of the International Women's Day (IWD) has also become another national annual program since 2021. For IWD, the approach is more focused on public and private agencies across Samoa running their own programs to celebrate the contribution and value of women and girls. These agencies include the Samoa Police Service⁵¹, SBS⁵², Samoa Audit Office⁵³, MWCSO⁵⁴ and many others.

Since 2021, the Government of Samoa has provided budget support towards the SVSG to continue to provide services to strengthened measures to increase women's access to justice, continue to strengthen services for survivors of violence. The monitoring and evaluation of impact, including evidence generation and data collection are carried out through services such as case management, shelter management and operation for abused women and children, rehabilitative counselling for offenders of violence referred from the Family and Youth Courts. The budget support assistance has also expanded to other NGOs working on EVAWG such as the National Council of Women, Soul Talk, Samoa Family Health Association and others.

⁴⁸ MWCSO Annual Report FY22/23

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ <https://www.samoaoobserver.ws/category/samoa/106629>

⁵¹ <https://www.samoapolice.ws/community/programs/>

⁵² <https://www.sbs.gov.ws/happy-international-womens-day-2024/>

⁵³ <https://www.audit.gov.ws/index.php/news-events/290-international-women-s-day-iwd-2023>

⁵⁴ <https://mwcsd.gov.ws/2024/03/14/>

12. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?

Since 2021, there has been a notable increase and focus on meaningful partnerships, solidarity and collaboration between public bodies with NGOs, district councils, faith-based organisations and the private sector. The EVAWG campaign is increasingly viewed as a country-wide issue rather than just a responsibility of a few Government agencies and NGOs. Between 2020 and 2023, the SVSG in partnership with UNESCO



Spotlight Initiative has been running the “My village, My pride” Performing Arts Awareness Program. The initiative uses traditional and modern cultural expressions and innovating ideas to promote favourable social norms attitudes and behaviour to help eliminate GBV in Samoa. The program was hosted by 7 selected communities in 2021 and 5 selected communities in 2023. Under the UNDP Samoa Spotlight Initiative, further assistance was provided to SVSG on its institutional strengthening framework for the establishment of a Crisis Care Centre for GBV and EVAWG survivors soon. Another objective is to mobilise the grassroots community and existing SVSG change-making communities to keep the Torch of Peace 16 Days of Activism momentum going post-2023.



Through the Samoa Gender Partnership Program between the Australia and Samoa Governments, the SVSG provided training on primary prevention programs to address GBV for 200 of its village representatives across Upolu, Savaii and Manono Tai islands. The training assisted village representatives to better respond to cases of GBV that come through the SVSG 24/7 Helpline and shelter care and support the helpline rehabilitative program for violence perpetrators. The 24/7 Helpline has been the main responder to GBV and family violence cases in Samoa at the outset of COVID-19 with a diversity of transformation stories provided here⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-10/Spotlight%20Initiative.pdf>

The Samoa Civil Society Support Program (CSSP) has been providing grants for NGOs to implement programs and activities on EVAWG. The SVSG Nofotane Project was awarded a CSSP grant to continue to empower women and girls by promoting their economic independence and access to resources, and promote equitable relations within households, communities and society from 2020 to 2022. The project supports the sustainability of the income generation activities of 1,573 nofotane women survivors of violence, supporting them with micro financing, marketing and product development. The project also launched an online market for the Nofotane women's products.



13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?

The Samoa Police, Prisons and Corrections Service (SPPCS) has continued to post public information about cyber awareness on their website⁵⁶. Moreover, SPPCS entered five teams in the 13th annual Perimeter Relay in August 2021, representing the largest Emergency Services field in the events history. The teams representing different sections of the SPPCS were on a mission to promote cyber safety and safe online attitude to the community by raising awareness of Cyber Safety Pasifika (CSP). The CSP is delivered by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) under the Samoa-Australia Police Partnership Program (SAPP). The objective of the CSP is to increase cyber safety awareness and education of vulnerable communities in the Pacific region with tips and fact sheets for kids, parents and teachers⁵⁷.

14. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women's organisations working to prevent and respond to GBV?

Since 2020, the government of Samoa through MWCSO and Ministry of Finance extended its financial assistance as part of the Phase II of its COVID-19 Stimulus Package to selected non-profit organisations who work towards providing support services to citizens deemed as most vulnerable and with GBV as very common during this period. The Government of Samoa understands that these organisations rely heavily on donations from the public to finance their operations and that these resources may have trickled or completely stopped during COVID19 and

⁵⁶ <https://www.samoapolicews.com/your-safety/cyber-awareness/>

⁵⁷ www.cybersafetypasifika.org

post-recovery period. The breakdown of NGOs from 2020 to 2024 with resourcing support from Government of Samoa is provided below.

NGO /Website /Background information	Mission	Grant received (WST)
Mapuifagalele https://www.samoobserver.ws/category/samoa/15114	home for the elderly	50,000
SVSG https://svsg.org.ws/	to provide integrated, personalised, professional services for victims of crime and all forms of violence	1,000,000
Nuanua o le Alofa https://pacificdisability.org/members/our-members/samoa/	Advocacy organization by persons with disabilities	400,000

The assistance provided ensured that these organisations continued their services to their clients who may find that they need assistance even more during these unprecedented times. The Government of Samoa continues to support and commend the efforts of these non-government organisations in their services to the nation and to its citizens. The assistance disbursed today represents approximately 70% of the total Government provision and the opportunity therefore to request for assistance under this package remains open and will be subject to criteria as laid out within the usual Government of Samoa policy processes.

15. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

At the time of drafting this report, there was no data made available for this question. The national focal point will work with the relevant partners to ensure progressive implementation to respond to this question.

16. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?

In 2020 the United Nations Population Fund Pacific Sub-Regional Office (UNFPA Pacific) engaged Women Enabled International (WEI) – in collaboration with the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) and Nuanua O Le Alofa (NOLA) – to conduct a needs assessment research to identify the barriers preventing women and young people with disabilities living in Samoa from fully realising their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and their rights to legal capacity and to be free of gender-based violence (GBV). The report summarizes research findings and priority recommendations for the State to eradicate those barriers and advance the fundamental rights of women and young people with disabilities. Barriers manifest in a multitude of ways including

informal deprivations of legal capacity, encumbered access to justice, and weak referral pathways between SRH, GBV and disability-service providers. Moreover, women and young people with disabilities in Samoa experience pervasive stigma and discrimination, especially people with intellectual disabilities. Physical and telecommunication barriers further impede communicating with service providers and access to facilities. Coupled with inaccessible SRH and GBV awareness raising programmes and information, education, and communication materials, the absence of disability-inclusive sexuality education create even more entrenched barriers. Nevertheless, Samoa’s commitment to community and to realising its duties under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), along with the robust network of organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), Samoa has potential to address the barriers by providing comprehensive disability-inclusive SRH and GBV services.

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

17. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country to promote women’s participation in public life and decision-making?

Critical areas of concern:

- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

Since the past 5 years, the Government of Samoa through the SBS continues to collect and analyse data on women’s political participation, including in appointed and elected positions through the Population House Census (PHC) 2021⁵⁸ and LFS 2022⁵⁹. The Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS) developed a Samoa Gender Dynamics Monograph in 2020⁶⁰ which provides a breakdown of gender focused and specific data such as number of women in parliament, head of executives, entity within sectoral ministry and sub-ministerial level.

The Constitution Amendment Act 2013 that introduced a 10% quota of women representatives into the Legislative Assembly, was activated following the national general elections in 2021. This followed suit with the Supreme Court interpretation of the 10% quota as not less than 6 women representatives or Members of Parliament, in the parliament of Samoa⁶¹.

18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women’s access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through the Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet (MPMC) have taken measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls (e.g. free Wi-Fi hubs, community technology centres). MPMC collaborated with employers in the media and ICT field to improve internal policies and hiring practices on a voluntary basis

⁵⁸ PHC 2021 https://sbs.gov.ws/documents/census/2021/Census-2021-Final-Report_221122_051222.pdf

⁵⁹ LFS 2022 https://www.sbs.gov.ws/documents/social/LFS/2022_SLFCLS_Report.pdf

⁶⁰ Samoa Gender Dynamic Monograph https://www.sbs.gov.ws/images/sbs-documents/info-graphics/SGM/SGM_FINAL_web_4oct.pdf

⁶¹ Constitution Amendment Act 2013

https://www.palemene.ws/PDFfiles/Constitution%20Amendment%20Act%202013%20-%20Eng_English.pdf

such as National ICT Policy 2017 - 2022 and provided support to women's media networks and organisations under program. The MCIT commemorate the national day for women in ICT for the first time in Samoa 2020⁶² and continue to strengthen the provision of formal and TVET in media and ICTs, including in areas of management and leadership during the Digital Week to promote the responsible use of technology and close the gender digital divide⁶³.



Figure 2: Celebration of Digital Week


19. Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.

The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO) is the national machinery for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Over the past 5 years, MWCSO has undergone multiple changes to its organisational structures, systems as well as expanded its scope of work. While there were previous efforts to streamline the focus of the Ministry to thematic areas such as social development, economic empowerment and inclusive governance, evidence show that it has not done justice to promoting the principles and compliance to CEDAW, CRPD (for articles related to gender). Nevertheless, the DDP is currently the largest Government investment administered by the MWCSO, and this approach if used strategically, will provide diverse opportunities for promoting gender equality and women empowerment.

The Pathway for the Development of Samoa 2021-2026 (PDS) sets out our national priorities, which highlights social development at the forefront with a particular focus on the vulnerable groups and communities. During this fiscal year, the current administration adopted a change of

⁶² Girls in ICT <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/2019-PR20.aspx#:~:text=Over%20the%20past%20decade%2C%20more,held%20in%20the%20southern%20hemisphere.>

⁶³ Commemoration of Digital Week <https://www.samoagovt.ws/2023/04/press-release-inaugural-digital-week-in-samoa-opens/>



approach to ensure equal partnerships with the villages. This meant providing public financial and technical assistance directly to the communities to identify their priorities through the District Development Project. This approach complements the vision of the Community Development Sector Plan (2021-26) – “Empowering communities to lead their inclusive developments”. While we have these frameworks in place, we also acknowledge that there is a lot more work that needs to be done to fully realise this dream.

Our mission to empower communities to lead their own inclusive developments for a quality of life for all remains crucial to the work we do. This can only be realised when proper systems are in place and that the staff are well equipped to respond to the evolving political economy and the needs of the Samoan people. The Ministry also delivered on its regional and international obligations during the past twelve months, with the availability of technology. As such, Honorable Minister led Samoa’s delegation to the 66th and 68th Commission on the Status of Women, the Commonwealth Women Affairs Minister’s Action Group. Samoa through the Ministry is also preparing to host the Commonwealth Women’s Forum in October 2024. These high-level meetings were significant in that Samoa provided an update of progress on gender equality and women empowerment in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs. Samoa’s experience from the social perspective during the global pandemic, was also shared through these high-level forums.

The Ministry remains focused on its commitment and overall performance for the achievement of community and social development outcomes through 1) Policy Advice and Development on community development issues 2) Strategic Corporate Planning on community development issues 3) Monitoring and Evaluation on community development issues 4) Analysis and Reporting of community social, economic and governance development processes and procedures 5) Resource mobilization for community social, economic and governance development 6) Coordination of community development processes and procedures 7) Provision of Government Printing service

The reporting period is significant with the shift of approach towards social development and empowering vulnerable groups through the Pathway for the Development of Samoa and the roll out of the District Development Project (DDP). The MWCSO was directed to take the lead for the DDP in close partnership with its sector partners. With this approach, the Ministry and its partners, are striving collaboratively towards ending violence, promoting gender equality, care, protection and development of our children, persons with disabilities, elderlies, and person with diverse backgrounds. This complements the work of *Sui o Nuu* (male village representative), *Sui Tama’ita’i o Nuu* (female village representative) in mobilising and disseminating support packages to provide some social protection for the vulnerable population. The Ministry also increased its financial assistance to non-government organisations and reviving the *Komiti a Tina ma Tama’ita’i* in recognition that a holistic approach yields better results.

Since 2020, the Ministry has implemented its new structure as approved by the Public Service Commission. The new changes were the establishment of the new Division for Communication and Information Technology while the Sector Coordination functions have been integrated into the Division for Policy and Planning. Further to this, roles and responsibilities within 5 Divisions

were reshuffled to align with the new structure. During this reporting period, the Ministry consists of eight (8) Output divisions with the additional Division for Corporate Services which enables financial, capacity building and performance management systems of the Ministry and Sector. These Output divisions are Policy Advice to Minister (OCEO), Ministerial Support (MS), Social Development (DSD), Governance (DFG), Economic Empowerment (DEE), Printing (DFG), Policy and Planning (DPP), Communication & Information Technology (DCIT) and Corporate Services (DCS). In 2021, a new division was established as the Program Management Unit (PMU) to coordinate the District Development Program (DDP) in close partnership with the Ministry of Finance and other key sector partners. To enable the DDP, the government established District Councils (DCs) and chaired by Members of Parliament, to provide oversight and governance of the project within the 51 electoral districts. All district offices were also equipped with three (3) project officers to coordinate, manage and monitor the developments at the district level. While the District Councils and district offices staff are funded by the district funds, they are not a structural arm of the MWCSD. The Ministry also has coordination responsibilities for 202 *Sui Tamaitai o Nu'u* and 226 *Sui o Nuu*.

Because of the re-alignment, the Ministry's annual budget increased by 64% and the scope of work expanded to include the administration and establishment of the District Development Project as a new policy priority. This change of scope required enormous commitment of the Ministry's time and resources to re-align and steer the staff and normal operations to the desired outcome. As of 30th June 2022, a total workforce of hundred and fifteen (115) were employed where forty percent (40%) are males and sixty percent (60%) are females.

20. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women's organisations)

The Samoa Umbrella for Non-Government Organisations (SUNGO) in partnership with the Spotlight Initiative CSO Capacity Assessment findings, developed a gender equality and gender mainstreaming toolkit in 2021. The main objective of the toolkit is to increase the capacity of CSO's to design innovative projects that adequately address domestic violence and violence against women and girls. SUNGO works under the auspice of collaboration and encouraging genuine partnerships amongst all its members through joint programming, trainings, and communication activities. SUNGO's objectives include the integration and mainstreaming efforts amongst its members, with government and other relevant partners to better complement efforts. The development of a gender equality CSO user-centred toolkit focusing on gender equality mainstreaming in project design and management is a handy resource for the civil society members comprising of advocates, women's rights movement, community-based organisations or local grassroot organisations, youth, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity groups. This will include survivors of domestic violence, women, men, youth groups, persons with disabilities, faafafine/faafatama, and faith-based organisations.

21. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

The Office of Ombudsman was originally established under the Komesina o Sulufaiga (Ombudsman) Act 1988 with one core function being Good Governance. The Act was amended in 2013 to insert two additional core functions namely, the Special Investigation Unit and the Human Rights Unit. The amendment created the existence of a National Human Rights Institution in Samoa.

This amendment was to provide functions, duties and powers relating to human rights for ensuring the dignity, equality and worth of individuals and recognizing that individuals have the right to life, liberty and freedom from discrimination. Such amendment also allowed the Office to carry out inspection on places of detention. As such, the office is now known as the Office of Ombudsman and National Human Rights Institution of Samoa (OMB/NHRI).

Following from the National Inquiry on Family Violence 2017-2018, the Office pursuant to section 34 and 36 of the Ombudsman's Act 2013 carried out a National Public Inquiry on Family Violence which was reported in 2018. The Office chose to focus its first Inquiry on 'Family Violence' with the emphasis on violence against women and girls and the impact of violence in the upbringing of children.⁶⁴ The report has detailed findings with testimonials from real life women, teenage girls, men, and members of the vulnerable groups such as *fa'afafine and persons with disabilities*. As a result of the seriousness of the violations of rights, the Office produced several recommendations for duty bearers being the State to immediately address these issues. Some of these recommendations have been actioned during the reporting period and are detailed below.

Recommendation 20 led to the creation of The Village Family Safety Committee which was a pilot project led by the Office with the assistance of its working partners.⁶⁵ The VFSC was designed to be a credible mechanism solely responsible for all matters relating to family violence prevention within the villages.

This was piloted in the 6 villages namely, Lotopue, Vaiee, Lalovi-Mulifanua, Taga, Asau and Saleia. In actioning this initiative, the Office carried out capacity building workshops to educate and strengthen the knowledge of the committees in understanding human rights, the essence of the need to eliminate all forms of violence and ensure the protection of women, girls and the vulnerable groups such as the SOGIEs and persons with disability. It allowed the Office to enlighten the committee members (who were local community people) as to the rationale of establishing a VFSC. In doing so, the Office proactively was negating the existence of violence against everyone within the village, from the grassroot level being the family unit. It was an action to engrave awareness and proper action under the solidarity of the village council.

With the existence of VFSC, villages such as Saleia, Taga and Vaiee moved to enact their village by laws. These by-laws were well crafted to suit each village. These by laws included the provisions stipulating penalties for acts of rape and grievous bodily harm against children and also

⁶⁴ National Public Inquiry into Family Violence in Samoa/State of Human Rights Report 2018, page 43

⁶⁵ Working Partners of this project were Spotlight Initiative, Commonwealth Forum

any form of abuse between spouses whether it be physical or emotional caused by one against the other. These provisions further expresses that the village council will assist the victim in pursuing justice under the law.

In 2021, one of the pilot villages, Taga from the Savaii Island launched its revised Village by-law booklet with technical assistance from the NHRI, MWCSO and MJCA. Section 2 of the by-law booklet has a specific focus on protection from family violence including violence against children and intimate partner violence. Section 3 further extends to other types of violence such as violence against other family members, neighbours, rape and marital violence, murder and assault. Taga has become a success story of the village ownership of reviewing their village by-law to incorporate strategies and penalties against perpetrators of violence, set clear boundaries between village members as well clear reference to existing laws, policies and systems in place. This includes reference in the Taga village by-laws of protection orders for the appropriate protection of victims of violence from their perpetrators.

A review of the pilot project was carried out where it was concluded that out of the 6 villages, 3 villages being Saleia, Taga and Vaiee can be the model villages for ending violence in the village communities.⁶⁶ Additionally, the report also provided details that with the existence of this mechanism there has been a decrease in family violence within the villages over the year as shown in the following extractions.

To date, these VFSC continue to exist for the benefit of ensuring that women and girls are protected from violence and to ensure that the family unit is a haven which fosters the mentality of gender equality. Equal treatment and opportunity for both the man and wife, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties and vice versa.

Recommendation 2 was actioned when the Office created a Parliamentary Dialogue with the sole focus of capacity building for the Parliamentarians. This dialogue was carried out in September 2020, a first of its kind which was an excellent step forward from the VFSC that were piloted. The dialogue included the discussion on the status of human rights reports ranging from 2015 to 2019. The village council need the support of the higher level, those with the political will to drive and recognize that there are real issues of violence against women and girls and gender equality.



First Parliamentary Dialogue on Human Rights, September 2020

⁶⁶ Ibid above 66, page 25

During this two-day session, awareness on sexual reproductive health rights was discussed with the real intention to clear the misconception that the Office was not promoting physical acts of sex rather it is the education and awareness for all about the health and development of both men and women, about their accessibility to health services and information to make proper and informed decisions about their sexual health. To be able to protect and ensure violence against women and girls can be eliminated, this information is essential for the young people so that sexual harm and violations against women and girls are prevented and avoided. Further, Ms. Ibrionke Oyatoye representing United Nations Population Fund, indicated that “*Having well-informed Parliamentarians of human rights issues and challenges mean a better appreciation and debate of human rights issues for the benefit of people*”.⁶⁷

The Parliament heard from Ms Katalaina Sapolu, a former Ombudsman of the said office about their important role of being the Guardians of human rights. She stressed “*well democracies have a system of checks and balances at the executive, legislative and judicial levels, and each of these levels play its own unique and vital role in this democratic balance. Alongside this system is the Ombudsman acting as the National Human Rights Institution, an additional, accountability layer that checks to see if the system is working to the benefit of people*”⁶⁸

As a result, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament acknowledged the usefulness of the sessions as it has assisted them to understand the issues being reported by the Office. He also highlighted the need for a shift of mindset in the system for such to work smoothly. The Office also carried out a second (2nd) Parliamentary Dialogue in September 2022 the expected outcomes that included:

1. *Parliamentarians [can] identify, discuss and dispel common misconceptions around common human rights issues in Samoa and develop a greater appreciation of the true purpose and principles of these rights; and*
2. *Parliamentarians are aware of some of the key recommendations raised in the past SHRRs and the National Inquiry including recommendations around addressing sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR)*⁶⁹

These two outcomes highlighted the measures that the Office has taken in order to ensure that violence against women and girls are addressed and that parliamentarians also are aware of the issues of gender equality.

As a result, the dialogue recognized the gender equality in one of its recommendations:

- *Member of Parliament to consider incorporating into District Development Plans awareness on human rights application, Sexual reproductive health rights, rights on persons with disabilities and fa’afafine etc.*⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Press Release, Friday 11 September 2020, <https://www.ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/PR-Omb-Parliament-Roundtable-Dialogue-September-2020-english.pdf>

⁶⁸ Press Release, Friday 11 September 2020, <https://www.ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/PR-Omb-Parliament-Roundtable-Dialogue-September-2020-english.pdf>

⁶⁹ Full Report OMBNHRI and Parliamentarian Dialogue Outcome Summary Report 2023

⁷⁰ Full Report OMBNHRI and Parliamentarian Dialogue Outcome Summary Report 2023



Second Parliamentary Dialogue, September 2022

Recommendations 6, 7, & 9 are actioned by the Office through its advocacy roles by way of:

- ***Ongoing and Annual Community Consultations.*** This happens when the Office engages with our local communities for responses on a thematic human rights issue for the annual reporting of Status of Human Rights Report. In total, the office has carried out more than 50 consultations with the local community, government, non-governmental organizations and all other stakeholders.
- ***Creating Toolkits:*** A Talanoa tool kit was developed by the Office, to address recommendations 6, 7 and 9. It also derives from the existence of the VFSC as it follows through the way to effectively facilitate conversations and dialogues in addressing family violence in Samoan communities and families. The tool kit is a mechanism to prevent violence within the homes.⁷¹
- ***Engaging with children through Schools:*** There have been engagements with various primary and secondary schools in Savaii, Upolu, Manono and Apolima. During these sessions, the Office speaks to the children at their level of understanding of what human rights are and also avail the opportunity to the children to relay their concerns and or their feelings as to the existence of human rights. A children’s forum was held in 2022 where representatives from various schools within Samoa attended a safe space where they could voice how children felt when they are exercising their human rights.
- ***National and international Collaborations***

Around August 2023, the Office in assisting with capacity building on Human Rights Advocate for an non-governmental organization, Brown Girl Woke, presented on the roles of the Office

⁷¹ Talanoa Tool Kit <https://www.ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/FINAL-A4-VBA-Toolkit-ENGLISH-comprehensive-version-print-WEB.pdf>

and more detailed on human rights and what they were. This was carried out in one of the premises at the National University of Samoa. Sessions that were discussed included the importance of understanding what human rights were to be protected and void violations of those rights.

In November 2023, the Office together with the District of Aana No.1 in piloting the project which is known as a Human Rights Community Led Project discussed in its sessions the impacts of Climate Change on families including women and girls. The negative impacts of climate change on the young generation and for the solution by the community to upskill and understand ways to adapt and further prevent these impacts on their community.

Not only that but through the realization and annual celebration of Human Rights Day on 10 December whereby a particular human rights issue is unpacked and where the Office contextualizes the said human right into the Samoan way of life. For instance, in 2023, the office conducted a poem and tiktok competition with the theme surround *human rights education*. During the lead up to the 10th December 2023, the Office together with the United Nations Office of the Resident Coordinator showcased the importance of inclusivity of persons with disabilities and how as a community we can uplift the vulnerable. Then on the actual Human rights day, a candle light service was held to celebrate the importance of recognizing that we enjoy our human rights and remember those that are persecuted because of the merely exercising the same.

➤ ***Place of Detention Inspection & Monitoring***

As the National Human Rights Institution, we are mandated to ensure that the protection and promotion of human rights of all especially the disadvantaged people are protected with a particular focus on well-being and safety of female prisoners. On an annual basis, the Office conducts annual inspection and monitoring of all places of detention and other places of confinement. Inspection and monitoring reports cover areas that require urgent consideration that are not in line with the Mandela rules and prison international standards and best practices.

Overall, the above are some of the measures that the office of the Ombudsman/NHRI has taken to ensure that violence against women and girls are either decreased or eliminated, and at the same time promote awareness on the actual meaning and cause of gender inequality.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

22. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

Critical areas of concern:

- E. Women and armed conflict
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

Since 2020, the government of Samoa through the Ministry of Justice and Courts and Administration (MJCA) adopted and/or implemented a National Action Plan on women, peace and security. One of the Law and Justice Sector Plan 2020/21-2024/25's National Goals taken

from the SDS 2020/21-24/25's Key Priority 8.2 is to promote community wellbeing, security and Fairness. As a result, this has become one of the priorities that the Law and Justice Sector are aiming to achieve through ongoing focus on Crime Prevention and Crime Management, Access to Justice and Improved Governance, and strengthening of Border Security and Safety responses. While these goals are not specifically linked to women, they are working towards sustaining peace and security, and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. Moreover, integrated women, peace and security commitments into key national and inter-ministerial policy, planning and monitoring frameworks such as the protection of women and girls is a main priority emphasized throughout the Law and Justice Sector Plan 2020/21-2024/25. Particularly in relation to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as per the Sustainable Development Goal 5. To achieve this goal, various policies, programs and laws have been put in place which are administered by other Law and Justice Agencies. Such as the Samoa National Policy for Gender Equality 2021-2031 recognised the need for gender equality in the context of a developing Samoa and the Safer Families Stronger Communities Policy: *Aiga Saogalemu, Samoa Manuia* emphasized the elimination of violence in Samoa, namely violence against women, children and other vulnerable people as a long-term commitment requiring coordination, vision and determination. Furthermore, the Law and Justice Sector Plan's goals, outcomes, outputs and activities are now informed by the gender equality and social inclusion lens. Crime prevention strategies implemented now include evidence-based programs that prevent and respond to the needs and priorities of victims of domestic violence/ violence against women. Increased access to justice, legal protection and support services for women and others vulnerable to domestic and gender-based violence. Lastly, the MJCA used communication strategies, including social media, to increase awareness of the women, peace and security agenda. Such as the Rights Empowerment and CoHesion (REACH) program that was coordinated by the Law and Justice Sector provided the opportunity for LJS agencies such as the MJCA to travel to rural areas of Upolu, Savaii, Manono and Apolima to provide awareness for these communities about the roles and responsibilities of Crime Preventers. The MJCA now has a Facebook page, which is a social media platform, used to provide awareness for services that are available for destitute persons, which in this case, are women and girls. Finally, the MJCA have had on-air programs (Radio and TV talk shows) in the past five years as part of awareness to publicise the services we provide for our community, which includes women and young girls.

23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through the MJCA Judiciary have a good representation of women in decision making roles with a good number of female judges. The Ministry has had females who took the role of Minister of Justice and had its first female CEO from 2019 – 2022. The Ministry's current executive team consists of 50% women and 56% of the MJCA's workforce are also women. This goes to show the high female representation at all levels of the Ministry.

24. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through the MJCA have taken accountability for violations of international humanitarian law through implementing its Law and Justice Sector Plan Goals, which links to Goals 5 Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls and Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions of the Sustainable Development Goals. These goals have informed much of the goals, outputs, activities, and outcomes for the MJCA through the Law and Justice Sector Plan, as well as the Ministry Corporate Plan 2021-2025.

25. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through the MJCA administers the legal mandates that legalises the protection of women: The Maintenance and Affiliation Act 1967, Amendment Act 2010 to provide for the maintenance of destitute persons, illegitimate children, deserted wives and children, and to facilitate the enforcement of local and foreign maintenance orders. The Divorce and Matrimony Causes Ordinance 1961, Amendment Act 2010 to make provision for Divorce and other Matrimonial Causes and ensure fairness for women and men. The Family Safety Act 2013 to provide for greater protection of families and the handling of domestic violence and related matter.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

26. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?


Critical areas of concern:

- I. Human rights of women
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl child

At the time of drafting this report, there was no data made available for this question. The national focal point will work with the relevant partners to ensure progressive implementation to respond to this question.

27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?

Since 2020, the Government of Samoa through Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has supported women's participation and leadership in over 70 programs delivered to build community resilience against climate change impacts through disaster risk reduction training and awareness. With the support of our development partners ADRA has delivered Participatory



Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA), Build Back Safer (BBS), and Community Disaster and Climate Risk Management (CDCRM) training in Upolu, Savaii and Manono. ADRA partners with the MWCSD through its elected village representatives, to encourage the active participation of people from all sectors of society, including women, men. ADRA's community programs emphasise gender equality through the equal participation of women and marginalise men (e.g. people with disabilities and fa'afafine). Capacity strengthening for ADRA staff in recent times has included gender equality and social inclusion training and awareness delivered by local gender experts and civil society actors advocating for the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Section Four: National institutions and processes

28. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

Samoa's national strategy for gender equality is encapsulated in the "National Policy on Gender Equality and Rights of Women and Girls". The timeframe of this policy is 10 years between 2021 and 2031. This policy is designed to advance gender equality and empower women and girls in Samoa, aligning with global commitments including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its targets under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5. The purpose of this Policy is to provide a comprehensive framework for accelerating and enhancing gender equality and the well-being of women in Samoa, in accordance with the "Sustainable Development Goal 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". The main areas of this Policy are: Safe families and communities, Healthy women and girls, Equal economic opportunities for women, Increased access to education, Enhanced gender equality approaches to community resilience and disaster preparedness and strengthened institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality. While the information on the specific funding is not explicitly articulated within the policy most gender related activities within the policy is funded by UN Agencies, local budget, sectoral budget. The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD) is the primary agency responsible for the implementation, coordination, and monitoring of the policy. This involves collaboration with various government ministries, civil society organisations, and international partners. Regular monitoring and evaluation reports are produced to assess progress and identify areas needing further attention. This policy serves as a framework to guide efforts towards achieving SDG 5 targets in Samoa. We also acknowledge the contribution of other government ministries on gender related initiatives.

29. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

Samoa manages its public finance through the Finance One System. While the system was developed several decades ago it does not make gender analysis easily available. However, there are positive indications that Samoa is moving towards implementing gender-responsive

budgeting through its Gender Responsive Budgeting Trainings⁷² in 2022 coordinated by the MWCSO with the technical support of UNDP Spotlight Initiative. The development and publication of the Gender Responsive Budgeting Manual⁷³, indicates Samoa's commitment to incorporating gender equality into budgeting practices. There are ongoing public reforms that provide opportunities for a more gender responsive finance system.

30. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Samoa has established several formal mechanisms to ensure various stakeholders can participate in implementing and monitoring the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, alongside the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). Here's a breakdown of some key structures:

National Steering Committee for the SDGs: This committee, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), brings together representatives from key government ministries, civil society organisations (CSOs), and the private sector. It plays a crucial role in coordinating national efforts towards achieving the SDGs and likely includes discussions on gender equality, aligning with both the Beijing Declaration and SDG 5. **National Women's Machinery:** Samoa, like many countries, has a dedicated government body focused on women's issues. This machinery, often referred to as the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO) in Samoa, plays a central role in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. It likely collaborates with CSOs and other stakeholders in its work. **Village Women Representatives:** Samoa has a unique system where each village has a designated woman representative. These representatives act as a vital link between the government and rural communities, ensuring women's voices are heard in planning and implementation processes. **Parliamentary Committees:** Committees within the Samoan Parliament may address issues related to gender equality and sustainable development. These committees can provide a platform for public scrutiny and stakeholder engagement on relevant policies and legislation.

31. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.

Samoa's national report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is prepared through extensive stakeholder engagement. This process ensures that the report reflects a comprehensive and accurate picture of progress and challenges in gender equality.

The preparation of Samoa's national report is a collaborative effort involving structured consultations, data collection, and feedback mechanisms. This approach captures diverse perspectives and provides a thorough account of Samoa's progress and challenges in advancing gender equality and sustainable development.

⁷²GoS GRB Training <https://www.samoagovt.ws/2022/06/press-release-ministry-of-women-community-and-social-development-mwcsd/>

⁷³ Samoa GRB Manual https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-01/spotlight_samoa_grb_manual_publication_2022.pdf

32. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

Samoa, as a State Party to CEDAW since 1992, undergoes periodic reviews of its progress on gender equality. The latest review occurred in 2018. While Samoa has a strong commitment to gender equality, the CEDAW Committee identified areas for improvement. Samoa has addressed these through the development of National Policy Framework: The National Policy on Gender Equality 2021-2031 serves as the blueprint for action. It emphasizes including women in decision-making at all levels, particularly at the village level. The Policy acknowledges the need for clear implementation strategies, which are currently lacking for many past recommendations.

Addressing Key Areas: Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Samoa aims to strengthen the legal framework by potentially criminalizing marital rape and expanding the definition of sexual harassment in the workplace. Women's Economic Empowerment: The government works with NGOs to promote programs focused on rural women's economic opportunities. Public Awareness: Collaborative efforts with NGOs aim to raise awareness about gender stereotypes and their impact on both men and women.

Challenges and Next Steps: While Samoa outlines goals, translating them into concrete action plans with budgets and timelines remains a challenge. Increased focus is needed on data collection and monitoring progress towards achieving gender equality goals.

Looking Ahead: Samoa recognizes the importance of ongoing collaboration with UN agencies and NGOs to effectively implement CEDAW recommendations. The NPG highlights the need for meaningful engagement with women and marginalized groups to ensure their voices are heard in shaping future policies and programs.

Section Five: Data and statistics

33. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?

Samoa's Gender Statistics - Population: Samoa has close to a balanced gender ratio, with roughly 51% male and 49% female⁷⁴ (SBS 2020). This ratio has fluctuated slightly over time, but generally stays within a few percentage points. Labor Force Participation: There is a gap in labour force participation, with 67.3% of males participating compared to 41.4% of females

⁷⁴ Gender Population Dynamics Monograph 2020 https://www.sbs.gov.ws/images/sbs-documents/info-graphics/SGM/SGM_PB1_Demographics_PRINT_19aug.pdf

as of 2023 (WB), while this gap is lower than the regional average, it still shows more men participating in the formal workforce⁷⁵. Political Representation: Women hold a minority of seats in parliament, at 13% as of 2022. Samoa has seen a slight increase in women's representation in parliament in recent years. Family and Health: Fertility rates are relatively high, with around 59% of women aged 15-49 having given birth (SBS)⁷⁶ Unpaid care work also falls more heavily on women, with three out of four people engaged in such work being female (UNFPA Pacific). Education: There might be progress in girls' educational attainment. The National Policy on Gender Equality (2021-2031) emphasizes increasing access to education for women.

34. Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

Samoa's priorities for the next five years are outlined in the Samoa Statistics Strategy 2022 – 2026 aligned with the Pathway for the Development of Samoa 21/22 – 25/26. This includes crosscutting themes such as Gender in national census and surveys with timeframes to be implemented⁷⁷.

People empowerment indicators	o Updated information on women in managerial and leadership positions	2024
	o Ensure statistics on gender, youth, women and children is captured in survey programs	2024
	o Number of community livelihood initiatives implemented	2023

Regarding priorities for Strengthening National Gender Statistics Next Five Year, strengthening data collection systems to capture gender-disaggregated data across various sectors like health, education, and economic participation is crucial. Ensuring data is collected and disseminated more frequently to provide a clearer picture of progress on gender equality. Lastly making gender data more accessible to the public through user-friendly reports and online platforms can improve transparency and inform advocacy efforts.

35. What gender-specific indicators⁷⁸ has your country prioritised for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

⁷⁵ World Bank Samoa Gender Data Portal <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/samoa>

⁷⁶ Gender and Health https://www.sbs.gov.ws/images/sbs-documents/info-graphics/SGM/SGM_PB3_Health_2aug.pdf

⁷⁷ SBS Strategy 22 -26 https://sbs.gov.ws/images/sbs-documents/SBS-Statistics-Strategy/Samoa_Statistics_Strategy-22-26.pdf

⁷⁸ The term 'gender-specific indicators' is used to refer to indicators that explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and/or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. For example, SDG indicator 5.c.1 captures the percentage of countries with systems to track public allocations that are directed towards policies and programmes that promote gender equality—the underlying objective is the promotion of gender equality. The term is also used for indicators where women and girls are specified within the indicator as the targeted population (see UN Women. 2018. *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York).

Prioritised Gender-Specific Indicators for Monitoring SDGs: Samoa likely prioritises indicators aligned with the National Policy on Gender Equality (2021-2031) and SDG 5 targets. These might include Ministry of Education: Enrolment and completion rates for girls at all levels of education. Ministry of Health: Maternal mortality rates, adolescent birth rates, and access to reproductive healthcare services. Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labor on Economic Participation: Labor force participation rates for women and men, representation of women in leadership positions. Ministry of Women on Violence against Women: Prevalence of violence against women and girls Family safety study.

36. Which data disaggregation⁷⁹ are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

- Disaggregation by sex (male/female) is likely the most common in Samoa's major surveys.
- Depending on the survey, data might also be disaggregated by Age. This allows for analysis of gender gaps across different age groups.
- Location (urban/rural): This helps identify potential disparities between urban and rural areas.
- Socioeconomic status: This allows for understanding how gender equality issues intersect with poverty or wealth.

Section Six: Conclusion and next steps

Key Takeaways from the Review Process

Lessons Learned

The review process has been instrumental in providing critical insights into the current state of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Samoa. One of the significant lessons learned is the importance of sustained and adequate funding for gender equality initiatives. The Government of Samoa has recognised that a lack of dedicated financial resources has significantly hindered the effective implementation of various gender equality programs. This gap in funding not only affects the scope and reach of these initiatives but also undermines their potential impact. To address this, the government is committed to exploring innovative funding mechanisms and enhancing budget allocations specifically earmarked for gender-related activities.

Additionally, the review has highlighted the challenges posed by the ad hoc nature of donor funding. Often, donors request the implementation of their action plans within very tight timeframes, which strains the capacity of local institutions and leads to suboptimal outcomes. This sporadic approach to funding and implementation creates a reactive rather than a proactive environment, where long-term strategic planning is compromised. Moving forward, the Government of Samoa aims to engage more effectively with donors to ensure that funding is aligned with national priorities and allows for more flexible and realistic timelines.

⁷⁹ As specified in A/RES/70/1, with the addition of education, marital status, religion and sexual orientation.



Ongoing and Future Challenges


Despite progress in certain areas, Samoa continues to face significant challenges in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. These challenges include cultural and societal norms that perpetuate gender disparities, limited access to education and economic opportunities for women, and a lack of comprehensive data to inform policy decisions. Furthermore, the impacts of climate change and natural disasters disproportionately affect women and girls, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities.

To address these challenges, the Government of Samoa acknowledges the need for a multi-faceted approach that includes policy reforms, community engagement, and capacity building. Efforts must be made to shift societal attitudes towards gender roles, enhance educational and economic opportunities for women, and improve data collection and analysis to better understand and address gender disparities.

Priority Actions to Accelerate Implementation

To accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the 2030 Agenda, particularly as part of the Decade of Action for sustainable development, the Government of Samoa has identified several priority actions:

1. **Increase Funding for Gender Equality Initiatives:** A dedicated budget for gender equality programs is crucial. The government will work towards securing sustainable funding sources and ensuring that a significant portion of the national budget is allocated to gender-related initiatives.
2. **Strengthen Partnerships with Donors:** Effective collaboration with international donors is essential. The government will advocate for funding that aligns with national priorities and allows for adequate implementation timeframes, ensuring that programs can be executed effectively and sustainably.
3. **Policy and Legislative Reforms:** Continued efforts to revise and enact laws that promote gender equality and protect the rights of women and girls are necessary. This includes addressing gaps in legislation related to violence against women, economic participation, and political representation.
4. **Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening:** Enhancing the capacities of local institutions to implement gender equality programs is vital. Training and resources should be provided to ensure that institutions can plan, execute, and monitor these programs effectively.
5. **Community Engagement and Advocacy:** Engaging communities in the promotion of gender equality is crucial. Public awareness campaigns and community-based programs should be expanded to challenge and change harmful gender norms and stereotypes.
6. **Improving Data Collection and Monitoring:** Developing a comprehensive system for collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data will enable better-informed policy decisions. This will also help in tracking progress and identifying areas that need more focused interventions.

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7. **Addressing Climate Change and Disaster Risks:** Implementing gender-responsive strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change and natural disasters is essential. Women and girls should be involved in the planning and implementation of these strategies to ensure their specific needs and perspectives are considered.

By focusing on these priority actions, Samoa aims to make significant strides towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, in line with the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda. The government remains committed to overcoming the challenges identified and working collaboratively with all stakeholders to create a more equitable and inclusive society.

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