

# Spotlight

**SAMOA**

STORIES OF CHANGE

JAN 2020 - JUN 2022

PHASE 1



# Talofa Lava & Welcome

to the Spotlight SAMOA Phase 1 Journey of Impacts Magazine highlighting the stories of change since implementing this transformative project to end violence against women and girls in Samoa from January 2020 to June 2022.

This publication is an initiative by the Samoa Spotlight Initiative Country team led by the UNRC Office and UNDP to document the major milestones achieved in the first 2 years of the Spotlight Initiative Samoa Country Programme.

Samoa encountered many significant challenges in this time frame, from the 2019 Measles outbreak, COVID-19 and the national stalemate during the prolonged General Elections. However, these setbacks did not dampen the spirit of national implementing partners, government ministries and civil society actors at the forefront of EAWG efforts in the country with the technical support by Spotlight Recipient UN Organisations (RUNOs) UNWomen, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNICEF.

Through strengthened partnerships and effective coordination, the European Union, United Nations and the Government of Samoa and its CSO Stakeholders delivered transformational impacts with community driven interventions to address violence and facilitating a nation wide Spotlight movement to end all forms of violence against women and girls.





Stories featured in this publication were submitted by Spotlight RUNOs coordinated through the UNRC Office & UNDP. They are accounts collected throughout Phase 1 as part of the Samoa programme joint Communication Strategy compiled under the UNDP / UNRCO Spotlight Multi-Media Communications project for Phase 1 Lessons Learned

Commissioned by UNDP with technical support from the UNRC Office.

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## **VIOLENCE is not inevitable, it can and must be **PREVENTED!****

A world without violence is possible, and this moment demands unparalleled courage and joint action to make this vision, a reality.

What can we individually and collectively do to enhance awareness of gender-based violence ?

Stopping this violence starts with believing survivors, adopting comprehensive and inclusive approaches that tackle the root causes, transform harmful social norms, and empower women and girls.

With survivor centered essential services across policing, justice, health and social sectors, and sufficient financing for the women's right agenda, we can end gender-based violence.

Statistics tells us that nearly 1 in 3 women have been abused in their lifetime. In times of crises, the numbers rise as seen during the Covid 19 pandemic and recent humanitarian crises, conflicts and climate disasters.

While pervasive, gender-based violence is not inevitable. It can and must be prevented.

Let us continue to strive for a world without Violence and help erase this global hidden crisis. We can change the harmful beliefs at the core of this problem.

What was learned, can be unlearned.

It is time for us all, to end violence against women and girls.



Honorable Fiame Naomi Mataafa  
Prime Minister of the Independent  
State of Samoa



# Message from the United Nations Deputy Secretary General

**Ms. Amina J. Mohammed**  
Deputy Secretary-General  
of the United Nations and  
Chair of the United Nations  
Sustainable Development Group.



Although I have yet to visit Samoa, I was fortunate to visit the beautiful Pacific region before the Covid 19 travel restrictions to commemorate the international women's day.

On that occasion I met with strong vocal women and drew attention to a difficult issue that affects us all – Violence Against Women and Girls.

Since the outbreak of COVID 19, Gender Based Violence has increased globally.

The Pacific, where rates of violence were already amongst the highest in the world, has not been spared.

Collective and comprehensive action could not be more urgent.

In 2017, the European Union and the United Nations launched the Spotlight Initiative, a global partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030.

In Samoa, the Spotlight Initiative focuses on Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence, working closely with communities, joining and complementing existing efforts led by civil societies and human rights groups who have always been at the vanguard of change.

The Spotlight Initiative in Samoa is a powerful demonstration of a community driven prevention approach. It is premised on the notion of dialogue and sharing, and highlights diverse voices and experiences, from survivors, advocates and influencers.

The Spotlight Initiative reminds us, that it is the responsibility of each of us to prevent and end this violence.

The solution is with us, it starts with us and we are all in this together.

*Soifua ma ia Manuia.*



Mailo Helen Tanielu  
CSNRG Academic & Researchers Representative with Young  
Women Academics from the  
National University of Samoa  
16 Days of Healing Campaign 2020

# Message from the United Nations Resident Coordinator

**Dr. Simona Marinescu**  
UN Resident Coordinator  
Multi-Country Office  
Cook Islands, Niue  
Samoa, and Tokelau



Empowering women and recognizing their matriarchal prowess to nurture, lead and protect their families and communities are drowned out by discrimination and injustices.

The World Health Organisation tells us that about 1 in 3 women (over 30%) worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

There are roughly 738 million women who have been victims of violence by the people they love and care for, In Samoa, this rate stands at over 53% (1 in 2 women and almost double the global rate) as the Demographic and Health – Multi Indicator Cluster Survey of 2019 – 2020 has identified. That is enough evidence for us to say, the problem is severe, it is worsening, and we need to act together, and act now.

Upholding and restoring the dignity of every woman and girl within their homes and communities as their fundamental right in this world, is a commitment the United Nations will never walk away from.

In 2017, the United Nations joined the European Union to launch the Spotlight Initiative, a 500 million Euro global project to end violence against women and girls. Spotlight Initiative is not meant to reinvent to wheel.

The Spotlight Initiative came in to strengthen existing national efforts to end violence against women and girls through whole of country sector, starting from policies, institutions, prevention, services, data and civil society and women's movements.

However, the Spotlight Initiative places great emphasis on the role of the Civil Society in bringing about social transformation.

The Spotlight Initiative has indeed redesigned the partnership landscape at

the community level, empowering civil activism for social good and generating more sustainable results than projects alone can ever achieve.

The highly active Civil Society National Reference Group that the Spotlight has established has taught us a great lesson about the importance of effecting change through the hearts and the hands of those who operate where change is needed, deep in the community where policy and law alone can hardly make an impact.

The role that the National Reference Group on behalf of the CSOs in Samoa has played to date can be seen through everything that the Spotlight has achieved over the last two years – increasing awareness and respect for women's rights, providing a space for CSOs to mobilize their advocacy and service delivery programmes, facilitating country-wide consultations on the prevention framework, assessing the work of village safety committees and, very importantly, monitoring the relevance and effectiveness of UN-led interventions across the 6 pillars of the Spotlight.

In recognition of the valuable role played by the National Reference Group, we involved its representatives in the review of the human rights account of Samoa for the 3rd UPR this year and, through the Joint Steering Committee of our programmes, in the Social Protection initiative among others.

The joint work to date includes assessing capacity gaps in the EVAWG space, enhanced support to survivors of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic including strengthening the 24-hour helplines through Samoa Victim Support Group and Faataua le Ola during the State of Emergencies, ensuring access to information, services and support for vulnerable families.

During the 2020 period, the help lines assisted 3,467 people of which 617 men, 643 women and 2,167 children.

The Talanoa/Let's Talk' Forum in 28 villages, the Transformational Leadership Training for 300 women & girls, the Psycho-Social Support Training of Trainers for CSO representatives, amplifying the voices of survivors through Project Rahab as well as the consultations hosted by the CSOs for the Law & Justice Sector Plan 2021 – 2025, the National Policy on Gender Equality & Rights of Women and Girls 2021 – 2031, the National Policy on Inclusive Governance 2021 – 2031, the Inter-Agency Essential Services Guidelines for Out-of-School Continuing Sexuality Education are just a few examples of the important contribution made by the civil society on the EVAWG agenda in Samoa.

We are deeply thankful to SUNGO for its role in leading the civil society movement in Samoa for leaving no one behind as the country is addressing some of the most pressing socio-economic issues.

As we are about to learn some critical lessons from this first phase of the Spotlight through the ongoing Mid-Term Assessment, we do hope that our partnership with the civil society will gain in quality in the next phase of the Initiative.

The Healing Campaign activism that the civil society has conducted in partnership with the United Nations over the last 2 years in Samoa has been labeled by the Spotlight Secretariat as best practice in using culture and art as a form of expression towards enabling societal change.

We must stand united to end the abuse of women and girls, one of the most pervasive and unaddressed human rights violations on earth.

Soifua

# Message from the EUROPEAN UNION

**Mr Sujiro Seams.**

European Union  
Ambassador to the Pacific



Talofa lava

It is a bittersweet moment for me to participate in any event organized by Spotlight Initiative in Samoa.

I still remember on the 6 March 2020, more than one year and 8 months ago. My visit to Samoa for the launch of the Spotlight Initiative was my last time I was able to take an international flight before the COVID19 pandemic set upon us.

It is with great pleasure today, for me to participate in the 16 Days of Healing Orange Samoa, End violence against women Now. The pandemic which is an immediate threat to the world may make us lose sight of the issue on violence against women.

But it should not be the case! Because the problem remains a high priority for the European Union especially in the Pacific where the rates of incidents of violence against women remains one of the highest in the world.

This is the reason why the European Union maintains ending violence against women as a high priority with the adoption a year ago of its gender action plan and its translation into the pacific region into two major programs; the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women which benefits from a budget of more than 27 million Euros. And now the Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women a partnership between the European Union and the United Nation organizations, governments, and civil society. The investment of the European Union into the Spotlight represents half a billion euros worldwide, including 50 million euros in the Pacific and 3.5million euros or more than 10 million Samoa tala for the country specific program in Samoa.

It is to date the most ambitious initiative to led by the European Union end violence



Sapapali'i Women's Committee  
Samoa National Council of Women  
SNCW

Vaitoa Toelupe UNWomen

against women. Acting on the whole spectrum of actions which is required to address the issue from legislations and policies to institution and coordination. To prevention, services to the victim, data collection and the empowerment of civil society and women's organizations.

I would like to commend today SUNGO for its initiative because this is only in the context of the widest possible partnership that we will manage to succeed in this task to end violence against women.

I would also like to take my hat off to the Honorable Prime Minister because fighting violence against women and girls requires

leadership. It requires role models like the Honorable Prime Minister.

Finally, I would like to say, even though we are marking 16 Days of Activism, of course the fight against violence against women and girls is 365 days a year priority for us. So, I invite you to keep raising awareness during these 16 days of healing without forgetting that it is everyday that we need to mobilize.

Faafetai lava.  
Mr Sujiro Seams. European Union  
Ambassador to the Pacific

The Spotlight Initiative aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

The Spotlight Samoa Country Programme has contextualized international best practices in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls to strengthen existing and emerging practices that work in Samoa.

The UN agencies for the Spotlight Initiative in Samoa are UNDP, UNESCO, UN Women, UNFPA, and UNICEF. These UN agencies bring a wealth of technical and programmatic support to the SI, with strong existing partnerships with Government ministries and CSOs in Samoa and across the Pacific in the area of EVAWG, including with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Pacific Community (SPC).

As UN agencies, they provide both regional and global experience and learning which can be drawn on throughout the implementation of the SI.

The key Government partner is the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD) as the responsible agency for women's empowerment and gender equality in Samoa, along with other core agencies responsible for health, justice, police, law reform and finance. Civil society partners for the Spotlight Initiative in Samoa include the NGO umbrella body (SUNGO), National Council of Churches, National Council of Women, Samoa Victim Support Group as well as front line service providers, all of which have a wealth of grassroots experience in prevention and response to VAWG in the Samoan context.



Goals we are supporting through this initiative

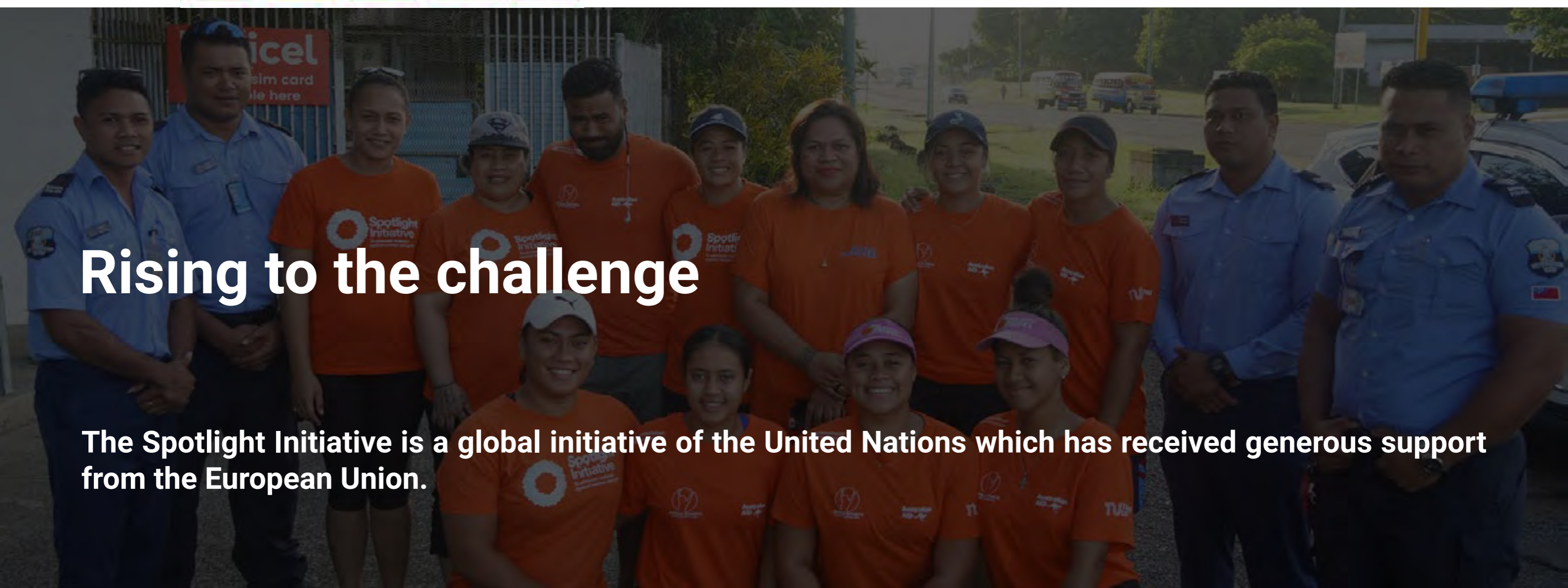


**Spotlight Initiative**



# Rising to the challenge

**The Spotlight Initiative is a global initiative of the United Nations which has received generous support from the European Union.**





**Apia, Samoa** – The new challenges presented by COVID-19 in relation to domestic violence has led to the Spotlight Initiative having to reprogramme some of its funding towards supporting national efforts to respond to gender-based violence.

Since the SOE lockdown, the latest figures from the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) and Fa'ataua le Ola (FLO) helplines reflect many women, children and men reaching out for counseling/ psycho-social, safety, protection and welfare assistance.

The data shows more than 100 calls combined that the two organizations responded to, with nine intimate partner violence-related matters reported within one week of lockdown. The scope of support services by SVSG has extended beyond mobile support to connecting clients to health, safe accommodation and services including case management with the Ministry of Police and access to protection orders.

The State of Emergency has resulted in the demand for supporting the innovative use of safe digital platforms to connect with vulnerable populations, which has been the focus of the support by UNDP to the SVSG and FLO to run free helplines. “

The main objective of the Spotlight Initiative is to eliminate violence against women and girls, in particular intimate partner violence and domestic violence. We have not deviated from that goal even during these challenging times.

COVID-19 is a global pandemic, Spotlight being a global programme is providing a global response that is being filtered at national level,” said Jorn Sorensen, UNDP’s Resident Representative.

The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate

# Spotlight Initiative steps in to help with COVID-19 response

By Louisa Apelu UNDP

all forms of violence against women and girls. It represents an unprecedented global effort backed by €500 million of funding to invest in gender equality and women’s empowerment as a driver for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). €3 million (USD 4 million) of these funds have been allocated for UN programs in Samoa.

The UN agencies involved in the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative



UNICEF Samoa

include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF. As part of the EU’s strong commitment to combating COVID-19 and the evidence worldwide that instances of intimate partner violence and domestic violence have jumped in connection with the quarantine, they have encouraged the UN to reprogramme a portion of the Spotlight funding to the COVID-19 response. “Thus under UNDP support, SI have moved very quickly to engage with key civil society partners in using the digital platforms to their full capacity, to respond to gender-based violence whilst recognizing the restrictions imposed by the SOE lockdown to ensure the safety and protection of women, children and families during these times and ensure the service is still accessible post COVID-19,” said Mr Sorensen.

Only two anti-domestic violence free helplines existed before COVID-19 (apart from the Samoa Police’s 911), managed by two qualified CSOs who have worked in this space for over 10 years. SVSG and FLO have for many years partnered and supported Government’s efforts to better address violence against women, children and vulnerable groups from a prevention, early detection and response lens. The helplines go beyond just reaching out via a phone call, Facebook and email, but also to ensure

access to protective services by the many women, children, persons with disabilities, including vulnerable men and young boys.

Since the beginning of the SOE lockdown, UNDP Spotlight has worked in partnership with SVSG and FLO to ensure help is available 24/7 through initial funding support of \$10,000USD with an additional \$30,000USD earmarked to scale up advocacy and response implementation. These two organizations are part of a holistic GBV responsive service mechanism, working closing with the Ministry of Police to intervene as quickly as possible and as necessary. They have also made urgent referrals to the police in high risk cases.

UNDP’s contribution is part of a bigger support package delivered by the UN Agencies – UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, and UNESCO that forms the One UN Spotlight assistance that will be directed to the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development and other key line Ministries that are operating at national level for COVID-19. While current priority is centered on COVID, it does not take away the focus of the programme from the rest of its objectives where the rest of the lead implementing Government agencies are working in specific areas, beyond COVID-19.

**Rosa\* and Simi\*** have five children together. Until recently, Simi was able to support the family through his carpentry work while Rosa stayed home to raise their children. Like many others, Simi lost his job when a state of emergency was declared to slow the spread of Corona virus (COVID-19).

Over time, the financial stress of making ends meet began to wear on both husband and wife. As tensions in the house rose, Rosa blamed her husband for letting the family down while he accused her of being unsupportive. He began to intimidate her, as well as humiliating her with verbal

abuse. Rosa, realizing that the arguments were likely to escalate, called the Spotlight-supported Fa'ataua Le Ola (FLO) lifeline. "I don't know what else to do," she said.

After establishing that Rosa wasn't in immediate danger, FLO's team of counselors engaged her in a series of conversations over several days about how she wanted to address the situation. They provided information on referral services and police action, offered financial counseling, and developed a contingency plan in case Simi did become violent. Rosa ultimately decided to speak to her husband about the situation

**"Our family has found peace and order again after sharing my problems with Fa'ataua Le Ola (FLO)" - Rosa\*, FLO client**

and he agreed to work on the marriage by improving their communication.

A week later, FLO followed up with Rosa, who said the relationship was significantly better. She and her husband had decided to move to their family plantation to earn an income while the state of emergency was in place, and they were committed to communicating in a respectful and empathetic way.

"Our family has found peace and order again after sharing my problems with Faataua Le Ola," said Rosa.

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a red t-shirt, seen from behind. She is holding a young child with curly hair. They are standing on a wooden structure, possibly a porch or walkway, with a blurred background of green trees and a clear sky. The lighting is bright, suggesting daytime.

**In Samoa, phone counselling provides support to at-risk women from a distance**

While some FLO clients wish to remain anonymous, most willingly divulge their contact details so that FLO staff can continue checking in with them. This ongoing support is a crucial step in ensuring that vulnerable women and girls don't fall through the cracks. FLO remains available to Rosa, Simi and their children 24/7 should any of them wish to talk.

“People living in Samoa are being challenged by many and varied forms of violence and abuse within the family unit” - **FLO Executive Director Papali'i Carol Ah Chong**

**Remote support is critical**

Six out of ten Samoan women experience some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime, while nine in ten children experience some form of verbal, physical or sexual violence, according to data from the National Public Inquiry into Family Violence 2018. This makes the work of survivor-centered organizations like FLO critically important.

Since January, FLO has counseled 135 people across the country, 70 per cent of them women. Primarily established as a suicide prevention helpline, FLO often receives calls from women experiencing violence.



Temukisa Tuaimau  
FLO Case Officer & Counselor



“People living in Samoa are being challenged by many and varied forms of violence and abuse within the family unit, village communities, church communities and in schools,” explains FLO Executive Director Papali'i Carol Ah Chong. “FLO has documented that the majority of suicide cases derive from relationship issues and violence within families... In Samoan society, family connections are of utmost importance and the severing of this connection or link is a significant risk factor for suicide.”

To ensure that help reaches those who need it most, Spotlight Initiative has invested US\$20,000 in supporting FLO to meet the increased demand for counseling. This includes establishing safe digital platforms for vulnerable populations to seek help, a national gender-based violence awareness campaign, and support for FLO staff to do field work, including counseling sessions and suicide prevention outreach.

*\*Names have been changed to protect privacy. Photo: James Mephram/UNICEF Samoa.*

# A second chance at life....

## (Mele's story)

By Faataua Le Ola FLO

Mele\* is an extremely humble woman who normally keeps to herself. Mele befriended a young man Isaako, both work for the same company and whom she got pregnant to. Mele was forced to let go of her job after giving birth and Isaako continued to work in order to support Mele and her baby. Deductions were made from Isaako's wages to buy basic necessities for the baby, and his angered Isaako's family members because they too relied on Isaako's wages to care for their family's needs.

Mele suffered post-natal depression, resented Isaako's family and was still very

angry over losing her job. Feeling anxious and alone with no one to turn to for help, Mele attempted to end her and baby's lives. Luckily a group of young men from the village came upon them and witnessed the attempt, immediately ran to stop Mele.

They took her back to the village to her family and whom were very grateful to these young men for saving Mele and her baby's lives. The police were called for their help immediately who made an instant counseling referral through the FLO's Lifeline 8005433.

Since then, Mele has received confidential counseling sessions with the FLO counselor. The counselor continues to visit Mele and her baby in her home who report that Mele is happier than ever, has found a new job and is being supported by her family. she testified to her parents that her life had changed for the better due to her counseling sessions with her FLO counselor. These are treasured times for her and she is forever grateful to the young men, police and FLO who saved her and her baby.

*to God for the second chance that she has been given.*

The EU & UN Spotlight Initiative through UNDP is currently supporting the 24/7 FLO lifeline for counseling services and post intervention counseling sessions out in the field. In addition to weekly national TV and radio programs by FLO.

*Today Mele\* is thankful*

# Shining the light on the shadow pandemic of violence against women & girls during COVID-19

“We are committed to supporting strategic efforts to put an end to this scourge in our society – DV and GBV. Our women and girls deserve to live in a world where they are safe and well protected, especially in their own homes,” said UNDP Resident Representative to Samoa, Jorn Sorensen.

Apia, Samoa – When the government first declared the COVID-19 State of Emergency lockdown in March 2020, it was expected that many things would change. The country had its first experience of SOE conditions just a few months earlier when Samoa was hit by the measles pandemic.

People knew that there would be changes, but not to the level and magnitude that eventually unfolded especially in terms of domestic violence (DV) and gender-based violence (GBV). From March to May 2020, the European Union and the United Nations Spotlight Initiative through UNDP worked with the Samoa Victims Support Group (SVSG) on a project offering virtual support via toll free helplines. The aim was to make these accessible to those in need, building on a survivor-centered principle and ‘do no harm’ approach. It was also to strengthen virtual response mechanisms within SVSG as an intervention against GBV and the provision of support services in the COVID-19 context.

The number of cases that came through



**Mr. Jorn Sorensen**  
UNDP Resident Representative  
Multi Country Office  
Cook Island Niue Samoa Tokelau

those helplines were alarming. With the imposition of the State of Emergency on March 22, 2020, case management data from SVSG shows that between March and May this year, become a part of the COVID-19 world as we now know it, and have given rise to a shadow pandemic – worsening violence against women and girls.

It is why the commemoration of days like the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25th, and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign from November 25th to December 10th, is more important than ever. This year’s theme, as part of the UN Secretary-General’s UNiTE Campaign, is ‘Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!’ led by our sister agency UN Women.

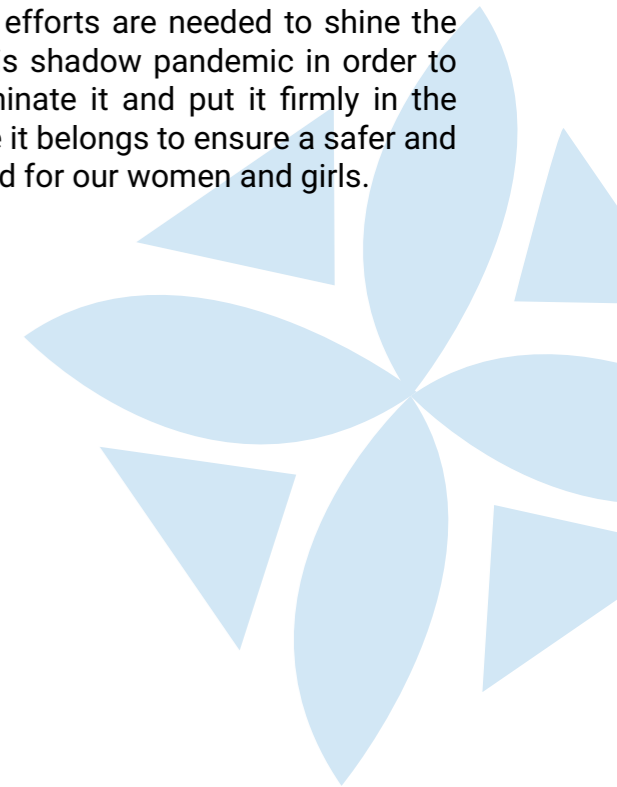
The campaign focuses on the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women and girls, particularly when it comes to GBV. “Even before COVID-19 hit, 28 percent of people thought it was justifiable for a man to beat his partner, according to UNDP’s Gender Social Norms Index. Now, as violence hides behind the closed doors of lockdowns, reports of all forms of violence - particularly domestic violence - are on the rise, with calls to helplines increasing up to fivefold,” said UNDP’s Administrator, Achim Steiner.

*“COVID-19 has exposed the fractures that existed in our society long before the pandemic hit but it has also opened the door to change, including to end violence against women and girls - the most pervasive and insidious inequalities all.”*

UNDP currently supports more than 80 countries on gender as part of its Beyond Recovery, Towards 2030 response plan, including its work as part of the global Spotlight Initiative, a partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eradicate violence against women and girls across the world.

In Samoa, UNDP continues to support efforts towards the eradication of DV and GBV through the evaluable work done by organizations like SVSG and Faataua Le Ola.

Concerted efforts are needed to shine the light on this shadow pandemic in order to totally eliminate it and put it firmly in the past where it belongs to ensure a safer and better world for our women and girls.





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# Help is not on lockdown: Samoan shelters and helplines continue operating through the pandemic

SEPTEMBER 2020  
By Laufa Lesa UNDP and Louisa Apelu UNDP

“Today will be different, I just know it.” These were the words Rita\* uttered as she prepared to leave Campus of Hope, the domestic violence shelter that had been her sanctuary for the past three months. After suffering physical and emotional abuse throughout her 13-year marriage, the 51-year-old mother of nine had sought refuge at Campus of Hope as a last resort.

The violence had come to a head one night during the COVID-19 lockdown, when Rita’s husband began swearing at her and threatened to beat her. Rita fled next door to her sister-in-law’s house, where her niece told her about ads she’d seen on social media for Spotlight Initiative-supported helplines for women experiencing violence. Samoa Victims Support Group (SVSG), who run the help line, immediately responded to Rita’s call and offered her a space at SVSG’s Campus of Hope, where she also received counseling. Rita’s husband was taken into

**“Don’t be afraid to take that step to seek help. You will take courage when you look into the eyes of your children” - Rita\*, SVSG client and violence survivor**

Police custody and SVSG filed a protection order on Rita’s behalf, as well as supporting her through the legal process.

“I am so glad I sought refuge with SVSG when I did,” says Rita. “They not only protected me, they also facilitated counseling for my husband and me which has led to the change that I have seen in him and in our relationship.”

During her time at the shelter, Rita struggled with being separated from her children but remained determined to create a better future for herself and her family. She says she’d encourage other women experiencing violence to do the same.

“Don’t be afraid to take that step to seek help,” she says. “You will take courage when you look into the eyes of your children.”

After leaving Campus of Hope, Rita and her children initially moved in with Rita’s family while her husband underwent counseling for anger management and alcohol addiction through the SVSG Men Against Violence

Programme. His counseling continues, and he is sometimes accompanied to sessions by Rita. Rita says her speaking out motivated him to get help and has made him a better husband and father. Given the positive shift, Rita has moved back in with him though she continues to check in regularly with SVSG.

Rita often returns to the shelter, but these days it’s for a very different reason - she brings baskets of coconuts from her family plantation to help feed the women and children at Campus of Hope. It’s her way of giving back to those who helped her during her darkest moments.

“Promoting the services of the 24/7 helpline, online counseling and access to help via social platforms sent a message loud and clear: help is not on shut down” - **Siliniu Lina Chang, President of SVSG**

Four million US dollars have been allocated through the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls in Samoa. This includes support to develop legislation and policies to eliminate violence against women, and to strengthen national and sub-national institutions in responding to the needs of victims and survivors.

“We are grateful for the timely partnership between SVSG and UNDP through the Spotlight Initiative,” says Siliniu Lina Chang, President of SVSG. “It allowed a virtual connection to be widely established in promoting the services of the 24/7 helpline, online counseling and access to help via social platforms. The message was loud and clear: help is not on shut down.”

During the first six weeks of lockdown, SVSG responded to 415 calls through the helpline, with 46 distress calls resulting in police intervention to stop domestic violence in the home. Seventeen cases

went to the courts for interim protection orders, and 42 cases of violence against women and children resulted in care from the SVSG shelter.

To respond to the spike in violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Initiative has programmed US\$20,000 to support SVSG as a frontline civil society organization. It is essential that gender-based violence support services remain available and accessible to women, children and at-risk groups at all times, including during the country’s state of emergency.



**“MAMA LINA”**  
as she is affectionately known  
Siliniu Lina Chang  
President of the Samoa Victim  
Support Group SVSG

Samoa Observer





# ARE YOU #WITH HER

MARCH 2020  
By Louisa Apelu UNDP

Me\* a 26-year-old single mother is a survivor of violence abuse speaks about how the helpline saved her and her 10-month-old baby. Me\* is a primary school teacher, and is the one of the two main breadwinners for her family of 12.

*She was one of the many working women who were temporary unemployed when the schools shut down in early March.*

The lack of income resulted in an escalation of an unhealthy relationship between Me\* and her mother. Me\* was constantly ridiculed for not providing for the family, name calling and often received physical beatings from her mother.

To escape her mother's wrath, 'fia maua se mapusaga, and ou fefe i koe fasi foi au' – I wanted a safe haven and I was scared of getting another beating' Me with her baby left the house without any options of where to go and what to do. While she was sitting at the bus stop, a woman approached her, knowing that something did not look right with this young mother with her baby looking lost.

Me after sharing her story with good Samaritan woman, was given the SVSG free HELPLINE to call.

*Me's call was answered on the first ring and was picked up by SVSG from the bus stop and taken to the SVSG shelter where they were both taken care of.*

When Spotlight spoke to, she was receiving counseling support, with SVSG reaching out to her mother and family for a group mediation and counseling support.



The poster features the Spotlight Initiative logo at the top. Below it is a yellow banner with the text "COVID-19 LOCK DOWN VIOLENCE IS NOT TOLERATED" and "HELP IS NOT ON SHUTDOWN". The central graphic is a large orange handprint with the text "Call SVSG Help Line", "800-7874", "It's Free!", and "24 HOURS". At the bottom, there are logos for the European Union, the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Women logo, and the SVSG logo.

# RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES DURING COVID - SVSG

APRIL 2020  
By Louisa Apelu UNDP

## HUSBAND SEEKS HELP !

It is often a rare thing for a man to recognize that he does not always have the solutions to all the issues in his life, whether it be his professional life, family or community. It is a big step to seek assistance outside of a trusted circle and we would like to acknowledge the wisdom and courage of this brave husband in actively looking for a solution that is not violence.

Simi\* reached out to the SVSG Helpline for their support in mediating and counseling for both him and his wife so they may be able to move forward in their family life without causing each other, or their children harm.

They were then invited to the SVSG Shelter

where together with their young children, they went through an intervention.

It was indeed a successful intervention and Siliniu Lina Chang the President of SVSG said, " we are grateful for the courage of this man in utilizing the free helpline".

Samoa's lockdown has seen a limitation to freedom of movement for individuals and households, denying them an outlet for their



frustrations and stresses, such as exercise, catch up with other family members as evidenced in this particular case.

The setup of the FREE HELPLINES has allowed for members of our communities to seek assistance from outside of the family circle in an effort to maintain peace and love within the family home.

## COVID WORRIES OF A GRANDMOTHER

The EU UN Spotlight Initiative under UNDP with SVSG Samoa provides support in all areas where safety, and security is a concern.

A team from SVSG Samoa was deployed to this elderly lady's residence to provide alternative solutions in the meantime. They drove for 35 minutes off the main road to an isolated home away from normal means of public transport. This family was then provided food parcels and counseling giving them hope and a respite from an extremely stressful situation.

COVID 19 is an unprecedented time and it is heartening to see our Free Helplines being utilized by families and communities.

## PREVENTING A SENIOR STUDENT FROM SELF HARM

Recently, a young person, 18 years old attempted to take her own life. The incident was called in by the Village Representative through the Free Helpline.

The support and networking of the village council evidenced in reaching out those qualified to handle cases such as this came into effect and they notified the SVSG Samoa team.

A senior in high school, this young student was safely evacuated to the SVSG Shelter and is now undergoing counseling and support. We are thankful the village and family members were able to intervene and seek help immediately for this young person. The Free Helpline has become an extremely important tool that not only immediate family members or friends are using but also the extended community.

Recently an elderly grandmother, rang the Free Helpline requesting assistance for her 12 grandchildren all under the age of 15.

Unfortunately, during our SOE not only in Samoa but overseas as well means her two sons are unable to send financial aid due to New Zealand's lockdown and restrictions on seasonal work.

# Staying informed COVID-19

SEPTEMBER 2020

By Aterina Samasoni Pele UNRCO and Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

Preventing COVID-19 and violence against women and girls: reaching women and girls in Savai'i, Samoa

The impact of COVID-19 has had severe consequences for women and girls experiencing gender-based violence around the world and in Samoa. Reaching out to women and girls with accurate information on COVID-19 and gender-based violence, information on available services for both and materials to prevent COVID-19 as well as ensure their dignity is crucial.

Led by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO) with support from UN Women through the Spotlight Initiative's Samoa Country Programme, a community engagement drive was mobilized to educate women and girls, especially those who live in rural areas, are head of household or are experiencing intersecting/multiple forms for inequalities, with information on 'what to do' and 'where to go for help' in domestic and intimate partner violence situations.

Equally important, the drive was intended to motivate a 'whole of community' commitment to end violence against women and girls. Posters, the children's game "snake and ladders", pamphlets

and a small booklet with info-graphics and information in Samoan was provided to women, girls and their communities. Helpline numbers from Samoa's GBV front line service providers, including how to access psychosocial support, were distributed as well as highlighting key information on the impact on women and girls in times of COVID-19.

Apart from the information and knowledge sharing, women and girls were also provided with a Prevention Pack consisting of hygiene products, menstrual hygiene materials and a bucket to address water storage challenges and water insecurity.

The Prevention Pack composition centers around the realities of vulnerable communities based on the MWCSO's vulnerability criteria and at the intersections of multiple inequalities, especially women and girls in rural areas and women with

**400 isolated Women and Girls in SAVAII received COVID-19 GBV Prevention Packs**

disabilities.

400 women and girls in Savai'i, Samoa were reached through this drive. Six teams of a tireless and hardworking staff of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO), rounded the island of Savai'i from the 31st August to the 9th September 2020, guided by Village Women Representatives to distribute the Prevention Packs and to frame the mindsets of communities towards ending violence against women and girls. The teams prioritized engaging and supporting the most vulnerable and the 'most-furthest to reach' families.

Former MWCSO Associate Minister Salausa Dr. John Ah Ching stressed the importance of in-depth vulnerability assessment that utilizes the local knowledge and expertise of village women representatives to identify and support difficult to reach and isolated families. In his motivational remarks to the MWCSO distribution Teams he reminded us: "Please take sufficient time to thoroughly demonstrate the accurate use of the hygiene products and explain in detail the Knowledge Products so our vulnerable women and girls are aware of the support that is available and how to access essential services for ending violence."

In one of the villages, a 25-year-old single mother was emotional and said,

***"we live so far away from town, thank you for thinking of us. Thank you, for now I know, there is help"***

This community engagement has been a COVID-19 response priority for the Ministry in both Upolu and Savai'i to provide support for already vulnerable families adapting to the social and economic and shadow impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and pandemic of violence against women and



Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

girls. This is also a priority for the Spotlight Initiative to respond to all forms of violence against women and girls focusing on domestic and family violence, sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices especially in times of crisis where women and girls face disproportionate impacts with far reaching consequences.

The Spotlight Initiative's Samoa Country Programme re-purposed \$20,000 USD through UN Women to support this MWCSO initiative of ensuring no woman or girl is left behind with national efforts to respond to the social and economic realities of local communities to COVID-19.

UN Women's Samoa Office congratulates the former MWCSO CEO Afamasaga Fa'auiga Mulitalo, Management and Staff for their tireless efforts to respond to the needs of our vulnerable communities and facilitate awareness and access to information for sustainable recovery.

*The Spotlight COVID-19 GBV Prevention Pack was co-created by the MWCSO Social Development Division ACEO Sauoaga Olive Kaio and staff with translation by Principal Programmes & Training Officer Rosalina Ah Sue and the UNWomen Spotlight Team Vaito'a Toelupe & Frank Lesa.*



Mother & her child in Tufutafoe Savaii. She has a physical disability but stood up to take her photo after receiving her COVID-19 GBV Prevention Pack

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

# MWCSD COVID-19 Response Preps

SEPTEMBER 2020  
By Frank Lesa UNWomen

The Ministry of Women Community and Social Development MWCSD in its delivery of the EVAWG COVID-19 Prevention Packs conducted a preparatory training for the staff on the content of the Prevention packs and the appropriate manner and approach to the distribution of the packs to the 400 venerable women and girls in Savaii.

The Former Associate Minister Dr. Leusa John Ah Ching is a SRHR Champion in Samoa and was vigilant in educating the staff on the contents of the Prevention Packs.

The bucket composed of dignity and Hygiene products catering to the menstrual health of women and girls. It consisted of soap, sanitizers, pads, condoms and more directly addressing the health and hygiene needs of women who are isolated and stuck in rural communities due to the lockdown. Dr Leusa encouraged the staff to observe cultural sensitivities when discussing these products but to also clearly inform

beneficiaries of their important and correct use. Holding a pad up he warned the staff not to take for granted in rural communities some men may mistake this as a Mask. Even the sanitizers which are packaged in a fancy way needs to be shown as a sanitizer but not a beverage drink or styling gel. These are important information that staff responsible for the distribution of the Prevention Packs must highlight to beneficiaries.

Dr. Leusa also directed the attention of the staff to the significance of the Taulogologo Booklet, Posters and Knowledge Products that are in the Prevention Packs. Recipients of the Packs are rural women with limited to no access to radio TV or any other source of information. These knowledge products can assist them to understand COVID and the risks and vulnerability of women and girls from any form of violence due to

lockdown. The Booklet provides tips on how to prevent violence, identify perpetrators and alert family members, neighbors or local authority when one is at risk.

MWCSD Staff were paired up in teams of two and spread across the whole of Savaii to distribute the Prevention Packs. For a whole week the staff worked tirelessly to reach the most vulnerable and the most isolated women and girls who are the most relevant recipients of the Packs. The 400 recipients of the Prevention packs were from locations all over Savaii both at the coast and inland. In some situations, there was no access road for the Ministry vehicles and the staff would walk 5 to 6 miles inland to reach vulnerable households.

In one of these inland locations in the village of Gataivai, the staff reached a disabled mother with only her 10 year old nephew

to care for her. The living conditions and situation for this mother moved the staff to tears but her gratitude and excitement for the Prevention Packs lifted everyone's spirit. She was particularly excited about the Snakes and Ladder Game in the Pack which she said will keep her nephew occupied and at the same time the information on the game will be good learning.

By the end of the week of distribution, MWCSD staff would spot the Prevention pack posters being displayed in front of local shops, in front of fale and in front of some Church Halls. The posters has all the direct phone numbers for key Response services to VAWG / GBV and basic information on the purpose of the Spotlight Initiative Samoa Country Programme.

Dr. Leusa John Ah Ching presentation to MWCSD Staff on the content of the PREVENTION PACKS.  
MWCSD Office Salelologa Savai'i.

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen





# Spotlight Initiative



**“A comprehensive and global response to the COVID-19 pandemic must include interventions to **prevent violence against women and girls.**”**



# JUMP-STARTING ACTION

MARCH 2022

By Louisa Apelu UNDP

Immediately after coordination for the Spotlight response to COVID-19, partners were beginning to find ways to operate in the “new normal”. All the necessary precautions with border control and keeping Samoa COVID-FREE was in place and in that window of opportunity it was time to jump-start ACTION with the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative Samoa Country Programme.

The first national activity for the initiative was conducted by the Samoa National Council of Women SNCW led by their President and at the time Deputy Prime Minister Honorable Fiamē Naomi Mataafa. SNCW rolled out a series of Transformational Leadership Trainings for rural women contributing to 300 rural women trained in Phase 1.

SNCW demonstrated the impact of joint programming and sustaining learning opportunities by using the Women in Leadership (WILS) Transformational Leadership Training-VLDI Village Leadership Development Initiative as a capacity building tool to address the imbalance of power dynamics within village settings, the root causes and contributing factors to violence and empowerment of village women with their traditional roles as agents of change in their own surroundings. A significant



*Initiated by the European Union  
and the United Nations:*



HOTEL MILLENIA  
SAMOA

Spotlight  
Initiative

*Eliminate violence  
against women and girls*





Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

role and contribution that resonates with the Spotlight Initiative Theory of Change of a coherent and coordinated response to VAWG.

As a result, the trained women were able to identify harmful norms behaviors and attitudes that perpetuates violence at the village level. They were also able to address the stigma and shame that comes with taking accountability for any violation that is often swept under the mat. Due to cultural barriers, holding perpetrators accountable has always been a sensitive issue at the village level because of family ties, upholding family honor and the many connections amongst village members. Rethinking, Learning and UNLEARNING these barriers are fundamental steps to addressing VAWG and more importantly HOW TO PREVENT AND END IT!.

In 2017, SNCW rolled out a national programme in Upolu and Savaii called Community Conversations on GBV using traditional learning methods through dance, spoken word, story telling and performance to address the uncomfortable but necessary conversations around violence. In particular Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Domestic Violence and sexual exploitation and abuse of young girls and boys. This outreach was a success but was abruptly ended due to funding reprogramming by Government.

Through the Spotlight Initiative, SNCW was able to revive this initiative and rekindle these conversations and the appropriate and contextualized methods of dialogue talanoa and sharing that communities relate to and rural women can comfortably lead and sustain. "We are very clear SNCW members and rural women are not qualified doctors or counselors or expert responders to VAWG.

***But they are qualified mothers, they are qualified daughters, they are qualified sisters they are qualified wives and their contribution and traditional role as Faletua ma Tausi, Sa'oo ma Tama'itai and Ava a Taulelea in society is transformational.***

Therefore, the approach is to use these existing skills with some capacity building like the Transformational Leadership to up-skill their ability to respond, manage counsel, and prevent violence in their homes, villages and communities using the power of conversations" SNCW Technical Advisor Palanitina Tupuimatagi Toelupe

The Spotlight Initiative through UNDP funded with technical support from UNWomen, trainings for Upolu and Savaii members of the SNCW. In his opening remarks Mr Jorn Sorensen UNDP Representative to Samoa reiterated UNDP's commitment under Spotlight to end all forms of violence against women and girls. But it is a collective effort which requires the contribution of multiple partners and stakeholders so the assistance is reaching vulnerable women and girls as demonstrated by the SNCW training.

***Leaving no one Behind in practice is essential for Spotlight to work and the meaningful engagement, leadership and advise of civil society actors like SNCW is very important.***

Established in 1953, SNCW is the first formally organized and registered women's movement in Samoa addressing women's civic and political participation, good governance, primary health care and the rights of Samoan women and girls in all aspects of life and within its living culture the Fa'a Samoa.



Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen



# Deep dive conversations to **end violence** against women and girls in 'paradise'

MARCH 2022

By: Laufaleaina Lesa and Louisa Apelu, UNDP

Samoa, situated in the great Pacific Ocean, has a tropical climate that lends it fair, mild weather all year round. It ticks all the boxes for a preferred tourist destination – naturally beautiful, lush environment, gorgeous beaches, breezy days and nights, and it is mostly safe and secure. It is a paradise in many ways, but even 'paradise' has its problems. Violence against women and girls is a significant problem in Samoa.

These alarming figures gave rise to UNDP Samoa, in partnership with the Samoa Spotlight Initiative and the Samoa National Council of Women (SNCW), coming together to work on a program intervention to promote village leadership and accountability that aims to reduce violence against women and girls, and gender inequalities.



UN Women findings show that overall, 46 of Samoan women who have ever been in a relationship have experienced one or more kinds of partner abuse. The most common form is physical abuse (38%), followed by sexual abuse (20%) and emotional abuse (19%). Of the women who reported being victims of violence, 78% said they had experienced domestic violence, and 11% had experienced indecent assault(1).

## **The Samoan Village Context**

The Samoan way of life, or fa'aSamoa, is premised on its rich cultural traditions and values of communal living which continues to evolve as Samoa becomes more connected with the rest of the world.

With a total population of about 200,000, with at least half being females, Samoa comprises four islands and consists of about approximately 300 villages. Samoan villages are mainly self-governing under the leadership of the council of chiefs who are heads of families.

As such, the village council, are supported by well-defined structures based on gender, age, status and capability such as daughters of the village, wives/spouses of the chiefs (the women's groups as a collective form the women's committee) and untitled young men and women.



## A Deep Dive Approach

The national government heavily depends on this system for village order, prosperity, cohesion and safety, and more women are now taking up local governing roles-The National Council of Women being the oldest all-women, non-government organisation in Samoa which has been active since 1953 and is an integral influencer in local village governance systems. The council has over 5,000 members with the capacity to reach the farthest in terms of village numbers and geographical location. Despite years of campaigning at local and international levels, the relentless and increasing cases of domestic violence have required us to take a deep dive approach into sensitive and complex issues from a participatory lens and envisioning the future together. In other terms; community-led innovative approaches, embedded within the cultural and institutional governance landscape of the fa'aSamoa.

In September 2020, the SNCW, with support from UNDP through the Global Spotlight Initiative (funded by the European Union and the United Nations), hosted a transformational leadership development training to end violence against women and girls for selected members in 20 rural villages across the country. The SNCW believes that creating a cohort of women leaders to work in their respective villages is the enabler element that would facilitate social change for ending violence against women and girls. The women were encouraged to work in two to three village teams instead of individually to achieve their main goals of lobbying for village council and village mayor as equal partners in addressing domestic violence, adopt a STOP VAW policy, share knowledge and ideas with their village women's committee, and provide community-based support for those at risk/survivors of violence by connecting them to available services.



The training included how to engage meaningfully with other intersectional individuals and groups in the community whilst maintaining a greater appreciation of the diversity of village members based on 'leaving no one behind' and inclusive principles. The assigned village teams were made aware of potential new alliances with some of the agencies working in the gender-based violence space including those working directly with survivors of violence, disability, (SOGIESC) sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics and men's support programmes. As a result, the teams will be able to leverage existing partnerships outside of and create a new network of village ambassadors and response agencies.

Some of the immediate outcomes are two villages on the island of Upolu, which reflect social transformation influenced by a strong women's movement that is village-

led. The women were given the equal space to dialogue with the village council on issues impacting the peace and security of the village. Women's committees are part of the village council decision-making forum – normally women have their own meeting and one person can take the issues through a nominated chief representative. For the first time, the women's committee were able to sit with the council of chiefs during the village council meeting. As normally it is two separate meetings in two different locations. Signs of social transformation amongst the men leaders have also been identified. High chiefs (men) and church Ministers spoke strongly of their support to tackle the issue, acknowledged violence is a significant problem in the village and are taking steps to enforce penalties and establish village safety committees.

This committee will work with young people who have intergenerational behavioral problems and strengthen women's

leadership roles based on the principle of inclusion and leaving no one behind. They will also ensure the introduction of harsher penalties and enforcement by the village council to deter physical and sexual violence, the involvement of youth and men's voices to advocate for support and for everyone to work together. The empowerment of women's movement organisations through technical and financial resources that work at the grassroots as influencers are critical for ensuring effective and sustainable approaches that address behavior change.

To tackle the intergenerational violence against women, we need to start with deep-dive conversations and brave social movements at the leadership level. The Spotlight Initiative Training is the initial platform to begin discussions and make decisions by the Samoans for the Samoans. UNDP is determined to fully realize the importance of their role and core functions in raising awareness of violence against women and girls, gender-based violence and intimate partner violence and its prevalence in Samoa and finally bring an end to GBV. The conversations will have to continue to ensure there is an intergenerational solution to domestic violence, and then we can fully say we have won, and only then we can genuinely reclaim our status as a real paradise.





Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations:



**Spotlight Initiative**

To eliminate violence against women and girls



#SpotlightEndViolence

Members of the Samoa CSNRG during their Induction Training and initial in person meeting September 2020

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

# CSO-NRG ready

SEPTEMBER 2020  
By Aterina Samasoni Pele UNRCO

*to progress its role in the Spotlight Initiative Samoa programme*

Ten individuals with diverse expertise in gender equality and women empowerment, have reaffirmed their commitment to serve as members of Civil Society Organisation-National Reference Group (CSO-NRG) for the Spotlight Samoa Initiative, when they endorsed the mandate and functions designed for the CSO-NRG to undertake, that were thoroughly deliberated in the CSO-NRG Induction Training, held at the Saletoga Resort on the 10 and 11 of September.

These functions, calls for the CSO-NRG to provide advice, to advocate, to partner and to ensure meaningful engagement with all stakeholders, for the realization of the Spotlight Initiative Samoa objectives, and to hold the Spotlight Initiative programme accountable, for its commitments.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator for the UN Multi Country Office for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau, Dr. Simona Marinescu who addressed the CSO-NRG through a virtual connection from New York, commended their dedication to be part of one of the critical bodies, in the governing architecture of the Spotlight Initiative Samoa programme.

The European Union Spotlight Initiative Team leader based in Fiji, Ms Ingrid Swinnen, also connected virtually to congratulate the selected CSO-NRG members. She also acknowledged the UN agencies for convening and facilitating this important training that aims to familiarize the CSO-NRG with the Spotlight Initiative programme and the expectations of their roles.

The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

Launched with a seed funding commitment of €500 million from the European Union, the Pacific region has one regional programme and four country programmes of which Samoa is one of them that has received USD 4.3 million under the Spotlight Initiative's €50 million envelope for the Pacific region. The Spotlight Initiative's focus for the Pacific Region, including Samoa, is Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

The Spotlight Initiative places an emphasis on the role, leadership and engagement of civil society organisations to leverage the

government ongoing efforts in soliciting people's commitment to address DV/IPV.

The CSO-NRG is also very crucial as it is a body that is 'people-centered'. The intersectional and intergenerational composition of the CSO-NRG in terms of age, gender and disability, the nature of their work, makes it a promising institutional mechanism that will provide quality advise in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation and meaningful engagement of all CSO and partners to achieve the goals of the Spotlight Initiative.

The CSO-NRG members in their institutional capacities have initiated or are involved in life-changing outreach and community programmes. They join the CSO-NRG not because of their own interests, but to advance opportunities that will benefit all, especially the 'people', who are vulnerable, under-resourced, marginalized and furthest to reach.

The CSO-NRG is now ready to take up their responsibilities to advance the course of the Spotlight Initiative Samoa with a tentative Work Plan in place, that will guide the delivery of their functions and to facilitate meaningful collaborations with the UN, the partners and stakeholders in the implementation of all interventions and activities to address DV/IPV in Samoa.

The Induction Training was jointly coordinated and facilitated by the United Nations Resident Coordinators Office with the UN Women as the Technical Lead Agency for the Spotlight Initiative, and the support of the UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNESCO.



**Lemau Palaamo**  
Faith Based Organisations Representative  
Pronouns She/Her



**Mailo Helen Tanielu**  
Academics & Researchers Representative  
Pronouns She/Her



**Samuel Fruean**  
Essential Services & Human Rights Representative  
Pronouns: He/Him



**Fuatino Pamela Sua**  
Women's Movements Representative  
Pronouns She/Her



**Fagalima Tuatagaloa**  
Fa'afafine & SOGIESC Representative  
Pronouns She/Her

# SAMOA CSNRG HIGHLIGHTS



**Mataafa Faatino Utumapu**  
Persons with Disabilities Representative  
Pronouns She/Her



**Taimalelagi Ramona Tugaga**  
Young Women Leaders & Youth Representative  
Pronouns She/Her



**Gabrielle Apelu**  
Women in Sports & Media Representative  
Pronouns She/Her



**Lualua Namulauulu Tautu**  
Rural Communities & Traditional Leaders  
Representative Pronouns He/Him



**Dr. Walter Vermeulen**  
Engaging Men & Boys  
Pronouns He/Him



**Spotlight Initiative Pacific Regional Programme Launch October 2022**

Left to Right: Latoya Lee UNRCO Lemau Palaamo CSNRG Dr. Walter Vermeulen CSNRG, Louisa Apelu UNDP, Ronke UNFPA, Frank Lesa UNWomen, Tupe Elisara UNICEF, Emile Adams UNFPA, Elisapeta Eteuati Kerslake UNRCO,



**CSNRG Meet the RUNOs initial meeting October 2022**

Left to Right: Fagalima Tuatagaloa CSNRG, Taimalelagi Ramona Tugaga CSNRG, Gabrielle Apelu CSNRG, Fuatino Pam Sua CSNRG, Mailo Helen Tanielu CSNRG, Louisa Apelu UNDP, Ellen Lekka UNESCO, Emile Adams UNFPA, Mele Maualaivao UNWomen

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen



Spotlight  
Initiative

# 16 DAYS OF HEALING

25th November - 10th December 2020

Community Conversations for Preventing  
Violence Against Women and Girls

*Samoa e, lo'u Atunu'u pele i le loto e,  
E mitamita lo'u agaga ia te oe!*





Aterina Samasoni Pele UNRCO

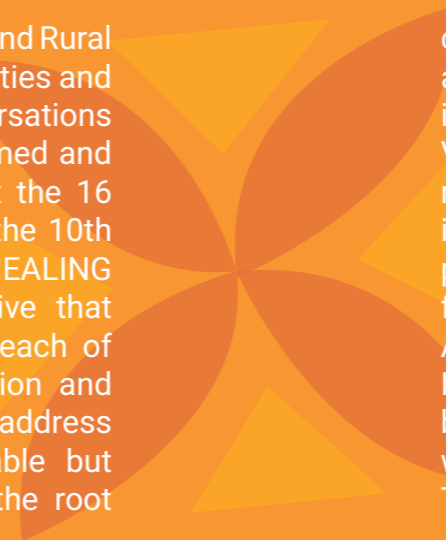
# 16 Days of HEALING Movement

Within 2 months of establishment in 2020 the CSNRG initiated a nation wide SPOTLIGHT Campaign for the 2020 16 Days of Activism called the 16 DAYS OF HEALING Campaign. It focused on reviving Community Conversations at and within different community settings represented by the CSNRG on VAWG Prevention. The Campaign included Women's Movements, Young Women Leaders and Youth, Women in Sports and Media, Fa'afafine & SOGIESC, Academics and Researchers, Essential Services and Human Rights, Engagement of

Men and Boys, Traditional Leaders and Rural Communities, Persons with Disabilities and Faith Based Organisations. Conversations in these different settings were filmed and broadcasted nationally throughout the 16 Days from the 25th November to the 10th December. The 16 DAYS OF HEALING Campaign was a Samoan initiative that demonstrated the influence and reach of civil society community mobilization and engagement across Samoa to address EVAWG. It prompted uncomfortable but necessary conversations around the root

causes and contributing factors to violence as well as community relevant and targeted interventions to prevent and respond to VAWG. The Campaign was not only well received in Samoa but it also made an impact in the regional and the global Spotlight programme with an encouraging Message from the UN Deputy Director General Ms. Amina J. Mohammed. The 16 DAYS OF HEALING CAMPAIGN was jointly funded by UNWomen, UNDP and the UNRCO. It was conceptualized and directed by Vaito'a Toelupe of UNWomen and CSNRG Focal

point with the support of Elisapeta Eteuati Kerslake UNRCO, Latoya Lee UNRCO, Aterina Samasoni Pele UNRCO, Louisa Apelu UNDP, Desmond Tauati UNDP, Frank Lesa UNWomen with Technical support by Sonia Rastogi UNWomen and overarching guidance by Resident Coordinator Dr. Simona Marinescu. The production of the 11 Videos was filmed and co-produced by David Unoi of Jandal Media and the Samoa Spotlight Team. Watch the full videos on [www.facebook.com/spotsamoa](https://www.facebook.com/spotsamoa)



# 16 DAYS OF HEALING through 10 diverse Community Settings

The Spotlight Initiative started in Samoa at a difficult time for the nation. Over 80 young lives were taken by the 2019 Measels epidemic, political instability was on the rise leading up to the General Elections and an increase in extreme domestic violence cases resulting in death severely affected the country.

The people were hurting and there was a strong sense of instability in the air. The 16 Days of Healing Campaign was a response to this particular space in time when the people needed healing, peace, inspiration

and love. Using the “Samoa lo’u atunu’u pele” song and siva (dance) which reflects being proud of Samoa a place that is dear to the heart with its rich culture and people, the campaign spoke to the hearts of the people in diverse settings. Using faces, language, gestures and opinions relatable to each setting by people from those experiences to deliver the message of VAWG Prevention through community conversations was impactful.

The campaign introduced the Spotlight Initiative to the whole of Samoa and

gauged the support and attention of the country from community leaders to young girls to government officials and politicians. The whole country danced to the campaign and listened and adapted the key messages that were discussed by the different panels for each setting in a manner that is relatable and resonates with its target audience. After showcasing all 10 videos on national television and social media, Spotlight officially became a household topic of conversation and the foundation to kick start implementation was established.

The Spotlight Initiative leverages the latest evidence and thinking on violence against women and girls (VAWG) and works to apply it within the context of country-specific insight and analysis.







## WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

Malae i Tiafau, Samoa Parliament House

The Samoa women's rights movement has a deep history from the Women's Mau movement 1929 Pre-Independence to their formal mobilization under the Samoa National Council of Women in 1953. The conversation therefore was also deep rooted on the significant role women play in preventing violence in the homes, villages and communities. The traditional role and structure for womens engagement in decision making and village development continues to be the main pillar for their advocacy for EVAWG. "Our role as *fautua* (advisors) to the *pule* (authority) is not an insignificant role. It is the backbone of a peaceful, credible and happy society accountable to its women and children." Taufanua Nati Lemanu



## FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS

Malua Theological College

Faith Based Organisations play a vital role in changing harmful social norms, violent behavior and discriminatory attitudes in villages and communities. Their conversation highlighted the need for church leaders to account for the systemic violence upon women and girls due to the patriarchal structures of leadership in the church. Often biblical interpretation perpetuates harmful norms that discriminate and undermine the status, and contribution of women and girls in the church. Church leaders have the influence to change this culture and make a difference. "We have to complete the narrative, many men use as an excuse that the bible states women obey your husbands to justify their behavior, but it also says in the bible, husbands LOVE your wives like Jesus loved the church. We need to preach more about that love, how powerful it is and how it has no room for violence" Rev Fineaso Crawley.

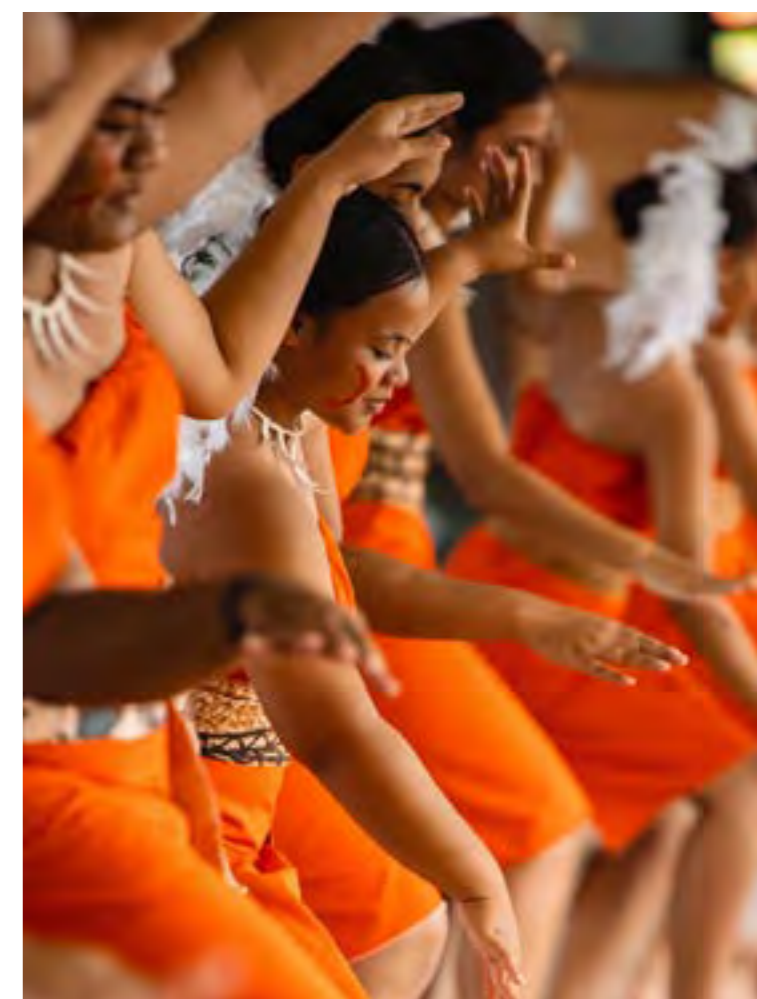




## ACADEMICS & RESEARCHERS

Le Papaigalagala National University  
of Samoa

The perspective of Academic women surfaced the need to educate and build awareness around preventing VAWG at all levels. Research and evidence based interventions for EAWG is critical for more targeted and impactful change. The conversation also highlighted the need for more investment in studies and research on EAWG prevention and the social and economic impacts on society. “It’s important to take an ecological approach to preventing VAWG and consider all the contributing factors that promotes and perpetuates this behavior”. Mailo Helen Tanielu. The conversation also highlighted the major gap in mental health awareness and the psychological violence that many women and girls suffer daily undetected.



## TRADITIONAL LEADERS & RURAL COMMUNITIES

Asaga, Village

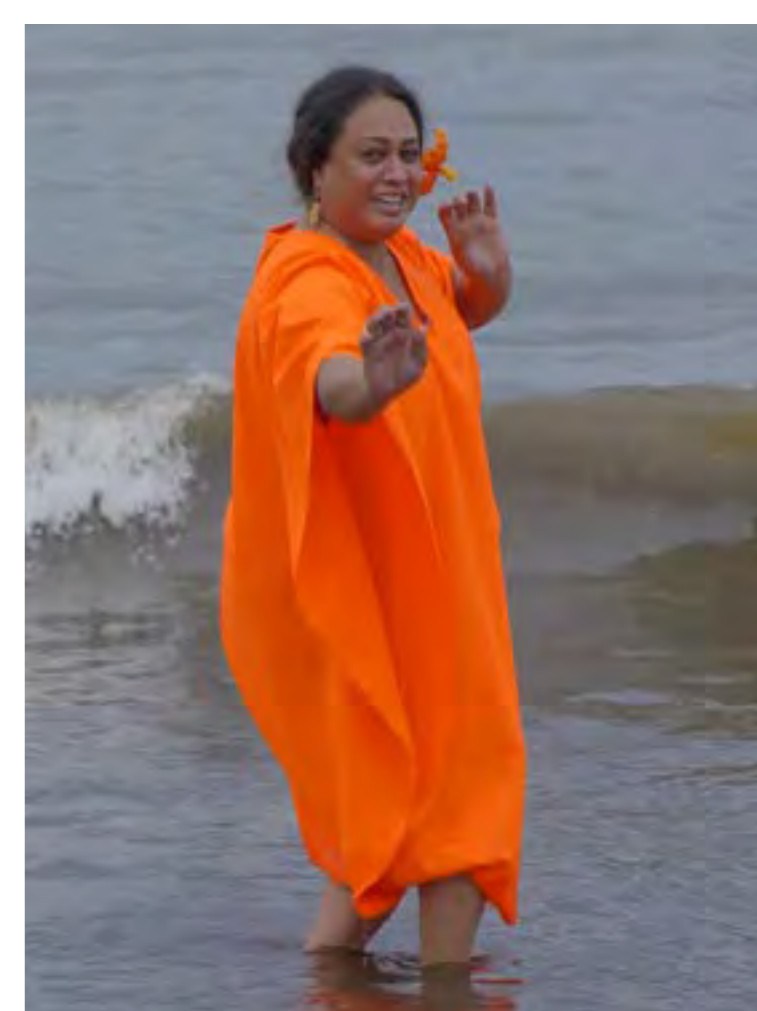
The conversation included all key pillars of a village set up with representation of Matais, High Chief, Church Ministers, persons with disability and womens leadership. Rural and isolated communities are fully aware their isolation encourages them to take the lead and build their resilience as a community with little to no support. This conversation put emphasis on village governance and all the key actors that make up the village structure to work together to end violence. The Matai Council are critical in introducing and enforcing village by-laws that holds perpetrators accountable. “Perpetrators have changed their behaviors because they are scared of the village governance and penalties. This is an effective way to promote change especially for women and girls who are far away from government services” Matafeo





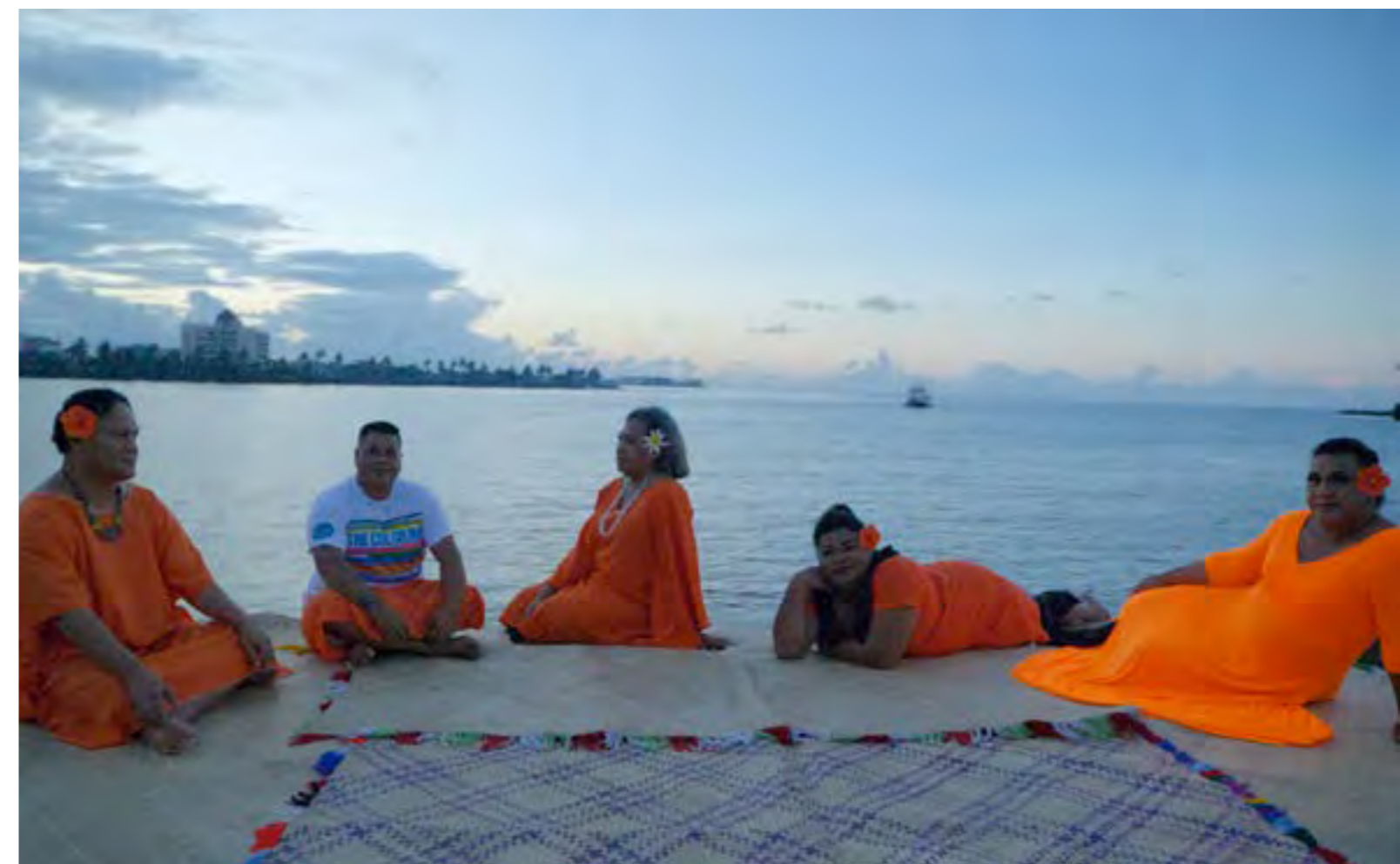
**FA'AFINE, SOGIE LGBTQI+**  
Black Sand Beach, Apia

“Our community has been advocating for the elimination of violence stigma and discrimination based on ones gender or sexual orientation for a very long time. From our experience, prevention that focuses on the real issues of communities and their needs is the type of prevention that will have a lasting impact. We have been able to change the attitudes and mindsets of our people towards us by showing and demonstrating positive co-existence and through our service or tautua”. Keyonce Lee Hang. This conversation touched on the sensitivities of gender diverse people in advocating for an equal and just society. One of the key prevention strategies that works is ensuring a seat at the decision making table and having our voices heard.



**WOMEN IN SPORTS & MEDIA**  
Tuanaimato Sports Complex

Breaking the barriers for women in sports is a daily battle. The conversation by these pioneering women in sports reflected on their personal struggles to gain respect in their respective sport as a career choice. The physical and mental violence on and off the field is real and dealing with it needs personal confidence and self esteem with the relevant support and encouragement from peers. Women in sports face the same challenges with unequal opportunities, pay and resources like any other professional setting. “I was never encouraged to persue Sports as a career, my parents did not believe this is a feasible career path especially for a woman to play Rugby League. But I kept persuing my dream and continued to demonstrate that I have the same capacity the same knowledge and the same passion for the game like anyone else. Im a rugby league player and I love it !” Lakaika





## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Robert Louis Stevenson Museum, Vailima

Facilitated by Mataafa Faatino Utumapu the conversation by persons with disabilities unveiled the terrifying violence that women and girls with disabilities face. Perpetrators take advantage of their vulnerability and majority of serious cases are unreported. "We need to break the silence and have more conversations like this. We have to be brave to talk and share about our experiences so we can find solutions and prevent the next women or girl with a disability from being violated. For me this starts with language. We need more people to understand how to communicate with persons with disabilities and the sign language is our way of communicating. Having awareness that is delivered in sign language or specifically catered for persons with disabilities is necessary and should be mandatory.



## ESSENTIAL SERVICES & HUMAN RIGHTS

SVSG Campus of Hope Shelter,

The reality for essential services is a lot of their time and work focuses on the Response phase to a case of Domestic Violence or Intimate Partner Violence. This conversation highlighted the cost of prevention and the need for more dedicated investment for purely prevention efforts. Prevention is a long term process that should be well resourced. Effective prevention is affected when resources are limited. Response takes priority as expected. Therefore more actors should be involved in prevention and for SVSG, mobilizing their village reps across Samoa and specifically within the different denominations to build awareness around EVAWG is one effective approach to prevention. This approach places the leadership and ownership on communities to lead their own prevention efforts with the assurance if anyone is in need of help there is a service available for them 24/7





## ENGAGING MEN & BOYS

Mulifanua

The conversation focused on encouraging parents especially fathers to step up and play their role in the home in the village and community to teach, educate and be an example for non violent behavior. Men need to demonstrate to other men how to communicate with words but not their fists. To control and manage their anger when there is a conflict. More importantly to demonstrate what a man should be. A Samoan man respects and honors his sisters his wife and women in general. "We should be proud of our women and respect our women. The words of the song for the campaign talks about pride in our culture in our people and for our country. Beating up your wife is not a demonstration of pride but it only shows how stupid you are as a weak man!" Maiava.



## YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS & YOUTH

MT Vaea Summit.

The leadership of these young women came through in their conversation reflecting the community work they do for their families, church and communities. The conversation spoke about giving young women the opportunity to contribute to relevant programmes and activities to prevent violence by having their voices heard and validated. "We need to create more spaces for young women to take the lead in preventing violence against women and girls. Our advocacy is directly to other young women and girls and we share the same language the same interests and this is an effective way to promote the change of mindsets and behaviors." Muliagatele. This also means supporting survivors of violence at any cost and when they agree, to use their voice to draw the spotlight on these issues that are often swept under the mat.



# Faith-Based Organisations

## working to End Violence Against Women and Girls

By Lemau Palaamo  
CSNRG  
Faith Based Organisations Representative

“Fa’avae i Le Atua Samoa” We base all our emphasis on our Faith and our Christian values that we as Samoan people first and foremost rely whole heartedly on the guidance and protection from God. How does this relate to ending violence against women and girls here in Samoa? We resort back to the our experiences and knowledge of God and how God would expect us to interact with one another. We reflect on the on-going work of the clergy and their wives to deal with this important issue for individuals, families, communities and church groups. Every village in Samoa has a church community so what better way to communicate and educate our people from ending violence against women and girls.

Through the church we have Sunday school, Youth groups, men and woman fellowships that have continuous programs and presentations to discuss on ways to deal with various social issues including violence. 16 days of healing was the first campaign for the Civil Society Organisation National reference group Samoa (CSNRG) through each members perspective seat we

created the campaign through traditional Samoan dance.

The faith base seat that I hold gave the opportunity for Malua Theological College fourth year students’ wives to perform the traditional dance to remind our people who we are and where we come from. The panel discussion sand thoughts on a theological perspective gave the spiritual aspect of ending violence against women and girls.

Through our organisation Soul Talk Samoa Trust - Train the trainers program in partnership with Samoa Umbrella non-governmental organisation (SUNGO) funded by UNDP, worked with non-government organisations in relation to psycho-social support and psychological first aid. These

trainings provided various skills and exercises in relation to counseling, and helping the survivors and perpetrator to deal with all different types of emotions, anxiety, stress and depression. More importantly, these trainings assisted volunteers of the non-government organisations to self-care and seek supervision for their outreach programs in the communities. Where to for the future? The direction of our work must continue in dialogue with our clients and partners on how to deal with personal emotions especially anger.

John 14:27 (NRSV)

27” Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid”.



Faletua Lemau Palaamo and the Graduating Class of 2020  
Faletua Fa'ai'uaso 2020  
Malua Theological College

David Unoi Jandal Media



Mata'afa Faatino Utumapu  
CSNRG  
Persons with Disability Representative

# LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND:

## Spotlight on women and girls with disabilities in Samoa

By Michael Noonan & Louisa Apelu UNDP

At the forefront of national and community advocacy for rights of persons with disabilities is the resilient and powerhouse Mata'afa Faatino Utumapu. A champion for women and persons with disabilities always at the frontline, Ms Utumapu is the head of the Nuanua o le Alofa, National Council for Persons with Disabilities in Samoa, representative of women with disabilities on the Spotlight CSO Reference Group and is a holder of the chief title Mata'afa from the village of Vailoa Palauli Savaii.

To celebrate 20 years since NOLA was established for and by persons with disabilities, the organization hosted a two-day interactive consultation on 29 – 30 September 2021 in partnership with UNDP. The gathering of selected village women and men from around Samoa representing physical, hearing impairment, blind and low vision impairment as well as intellectual forms of disabilities to deep dive into issues and solutions pertaining to their lived realities was part of the organisation's program for their 20 years of anniversary.

The initial deep dive consultations with funding assistance from the Spotlight Initiative is part of an ongoing process to develop a new strategic plan for NOLA, with a stronger focus on the protection of women and children with disabilities from all forms of violence and abuse. Mata'afa emphasized in her opening remarks on the day,

*“today's process is about highlighting key achievements and reaffirming the organization's priorities for the next 5 years. We intend to have a stronger focus on addressing the multiple layers of discrimination on the basis of disability and gender inequality which is the root cause of violence against persons with disabilities.”*

*The main strategic discussions centered on the realization of cross cutting priorities of safety, access to law and justice and ensuring a violence free Samoa for all citizens.*

As a member of the National Civil Society Reference group under Spotlight, Mata'afa personally was able to ensure that women, persons with disabilities are included not only in the services that have been offered under Spotlight, but also in making sure that their needs and reasonable accommodations are met to ensure that they are present. Not just to participate but as equal participants of programs. Examples of those reasonable accommodations include but are not limited to the availability of sign language and also the availability of braille for persons who are blind, low vision impairment and persons who are deaf and with hearing impairments.



## What was different about the assistance provided under Spotlight compared to other funding?

What was different was Spotlight was touching on the issues affecting the disability community, using a twin-track approach, where they provided capacity building opportunities to the community, and they also listened to the community needs. Through listening to the community's needs, they continued to change their approach to work and approach to inclusion.

Mata'afa acknowledged the support of Spotlight by enabling NOLA to develop and discuss with its members their Strategic Plan to inform the direction of the organisation going forward. Furthermore, it enabled the NOLA to reach out to its rural members through the work that we have done with the Law & Justice sector to reach out to members of Manono Island on the significance of ending violence against woman and girls.

*"The trust given to the organisation as the lead agency in advocacy and awareness through conducting an exit audit of the UN premises in Samoa and as witnessed through the establishment of an exit walkway for people with physical disabilities. These critical results and as well the translation of materials through other activities that have been implemented under Spotlight" according to Mata'afa.*



The availability of sign language in all Spotlight events is a result of a well-established network. These results can be used as best practices in terms of securing more support for people with disabilities. I believe the work that we have done under the Spotlight initiative in all of its forms, signifies the commitment by NOLA as the lead advocacy organisation to make sure that the UN commitment under the International Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities which was ratified by Samoa in 2016, is made real.

### Where do you see support for gender-based violence work in the future?

With the availability of frameworks to tackle gender-based violence, what needs to be done now is to ensure that these frameworks are then translated into actions. Noting that the frameworks have been developed in accordance with the practical needs of woman and girls with disabilities in relation to gender based violence. What

must happen next is, programs should be developed to target specific needs and there should be resource mobilization available to support the GBV mechanisms.

If there is an opportunity to develop these programs, there must be a high involvement of people with diverse disabilities because they are the best people to make informed decisions about their own issues and needs. They are the best people to tell the people developing programs how to do them and how they can be better supported.

The support to organizations working in the disability sector falls under the Spotlight EU & UN Initiative Outcome 6, strengthening engagement with civil society and women's movement. The Spotlight Initiative aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls with particular attention to the most marginalized women and girls premised on the 'leaving no one behind' principle.







Fuatino Pam Sua  
CSNRG  
Women's Movements Representative  
UNDP Samoa

# The Role of the Village Woman in EVAWG

## Samoa National Council of Women



*"My responsibilities expanded, and I was in charge of managing the organization and trying to live up to the expectations and vision of the Samoan matriarchs that came before us and paved the way for the women's movement in Samoa for generations that followed.*

*As you witnessed, our perseverance bore fruit with the President of the Samoa National Council of Women (SNCW), becoming the first woman Prime Minister for this country,"*

Fuatino Pam Sua – Secretary General, National Council of Women, 2022.

Meet the brave and resilient Fuatino Pamela Sua, the Secretary General of the oldest women's non-government organization in Samoa. Pamela, or more affectionately known 'Pam', is at the heart of mobilizing and uniting women from the villages around Samoa under the umbrella of the Samoa National Council of Women since she was a young woman. The SNCW was set up in 1953 and is an umbrella organization for village women's committees in Samoa. The SNCW is premised on the value of Samoan women's traditional statuses and social standing, namely 'Sa'o Ao (daughters of village men and women), faletua ma tausii (wives of paramount chiefs and orators), and āvā a taulele'a (wives of untitled men).

This social group plays an integral role in supporting the village's local governance with its developments and advocacies

filtering across to the other influential players of the village, namely, the village council, untitled men and the youth. Pam fondly recalls the day that she became an official member of the Council. "In the beginning, Fiame (current Honorable Prime Minister of Samoa) and I had no choice, we were bound by duty and roles. My aunty Fetau – the late Masiifo Lualu Fetauimalemau Mata'afa – was a force of nature. She was Fiame's mother and the president of the SNCW. It was a joy to be part of the women's gatherings because the relationship with our elders was warm and the wisdom passed on was amazing. In 1972, I was sent home after schooling in New Zealand. While in NZ, I taught myself how to drive. Thankfully, I had the driving skills because Aunty Fetau called me to come, drive her around and do the bidding of the olomatutua or old ladies of the SNCW, taking them to meetings and so forth. Thankfully, there were not many cars in Samoa back then. I then moved on to look after the organization's finances.

Fast forward to 2012, just before Samoa's celebration of its independence, I was organizing lunch and making transportation arrangements for the SNCW, including our members who traveled from the island of Savaii. I was about to leave, but the Honorable Fiame called me over and said, "Before you leave, you've just been appointed the new secretary. Just like that my responsibilities multiplied, and I was in charge of managing the organization and trying to live up to the expectations and vision of the Samoan matriarchs that came before us and paved the way for the women's movement in Samoa for generations that followed.

As you witnessed, our perseverance bore fruit with the President of the SNCW becoming the first woman Prime Minister for this country," Fuatino Pam Sua – Secretary General, National Council of Women, 2012. The rest is history.

In 2015, the SNCW embarked on an institutional strengthening programme to redefine its purpose and review the organization's constitution and to explore whether its purpose and existence was still relevant. At the time, the SNCW was a member of the CRC and CEDAW Partnership Committees coordinated under the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO). One of the key development issues requiring a whole-of-country approach, was family violence. The SNCW received funding from the Government of Australia to fund the Samoa Shaping Women's Development programme through MWCSO to implement a nationwide advocacy campaign on the prevention of violence against women and girls using traditional learning methods through the art of community conversations. Spearheaded with technical assistance from Palanitina Tupuimatagi Toelupe, 41 villages were covered, and we collaborated with the women's committees, women's church fellowship, including youth groups to deliver this advocacy with the hope that the women themselves will drive their own destiny

and facilitate social change through this movement. This community-centered programme was our steppingstone into reviving our focus on ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) and linking it to good governance and leadership.

Building on from the momentum in 2015, the support from the EU & UN Spotlight Initiative in 2020 has elevated this work with 16 women's committees from Upolu and Savaii engaging and joining in the movement. The Spotlight's involvement added weight to the community conversations to strengthen the advocacy of eliminating violence against women and girls. And the Spotlight focus was through leadership programmes to empower the women's committees to gain confidence as they are the gatekeepers of what is happening within their own communities.

We utilized the Samoan ways and tools we have in place to put a focus on bringing to light the violence against women, girls and children and advocating for a better change. Contextualized trainings were offered to

women members of the SNCW on EVAWG using the transformational leadership tool to advocate and disseminate the information and learnings to women in their villages to address violence against women and girls including intimate partner violence.

Our training content and practical exercises worked on confidence and advocacy building within their own women's committee settings and when advocating for support from the village council of chiefs. For instance, they were reminded through the programme to remember and understand the order of the Alii ma Faipule – village council of chiefs. There was nothing worse than coming in only just to be chased out.

The Spotlight Initiative programme was well received, the lessons learned, and the work of the trained women was effective to create awareness and advocacy for other committees to grow the need and the urge to be part of the SNCW.

A testimony from Mrs Vine Sefo Samia, Samatau Council Women, participant in the SNCW leadership trainings - Spotlight gave us the tools to run our own advocacy activities in the village reaching all age groups, especially the young men and women, who have a better understanding than before. We visit families and encourage mothers to not be afraid to speak out and seek help. We encourage open communication and dialogue between the mothers and their daughters on sexual reproductive health and rights of women and girls, and how to prevent sexual and physical violence. We lobbied for leadership and good governance support from our Alii and Faipule and church ministers which led to having in place village policy and laws to address violence against women and girls, we remind the families and fathers about their duty to protect and keep the peace in the village. Conversations are being made, collaborations amongst the traditional

structures of the village and women have been made stronger. We do not see nor hear of any new incidents of violence these are the good changes that have come about due to the strong advocacy by the women of the Samatau council. We cannot afford to be complacent, we have to continue the advocacy as we are the Spotlight champions in our village to effect the change in norms, attitudes and behavior to end violence.

The leadership training was to advance the work we had already started and become self-reliant to not wait for handouts but to stand up and lead from the home and from the community, to be caregivers and oversee their communities and the issues that pertain to women and girls. This all tied in when in times of crisis especially when the measles epidemic hit Samoa in 2019, the committees mobilized into action in terms of ensuring sanitation and caring support to prevent the spread of measles amongst our most vulnerable groups, our children.

The Spotlight Initiative-UNDP partnership with SNCW dovetailed into the community conversation programme and expanded it. The leadership programme under Spotlight allowed the committees of women and girls to flourish and build confidence in themselves to such a degree it enabled them to lobby, speak out and empower the traditional village setting to listen and take into account their needs and issues. Women and girls must lead from the front, because they are the ones who understand what is needed and to collaborate with each other, amplify and complement each other's work. They have the capacity and know how to carry out their work and the leadership programme through the Spotlight Initiative brought about the change in confidence and know-how to be the voice for women, girls, and children.



Samatau Women's Committee

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen



Apelu Sports participating in the 2021 Spotlight Torch of Hope campaign. led by CSNRG Co-Chair Gabrielle Apelu.

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

## Aiga – Family.

When the European Union and the United Nations announced its campaign for the Spotlight Initiative with the inclusion of the sports sector, it brought a strengthening element that allowed us to be recognized in a technical nationwide effort to eliminate violence against women and girls.

*Sports has long been a champion of gender equality before Spotlight and we had long preserved and campaigned in our efforts to address this issue. Violence within sports is not only the physical but encompasses all forms from on the field to off the field.*



# GAME PLAN

By Gabrielle Apelu  
CSNRG Co-Chair  
Women in Sports & Media Representative

A man once said, “no cause is lost if there was but one fool left to fight for it. Sports is the only other vehicle in Samoa that has the same reach and impact as our Religion and Culture and it closely mirrors the values that our culture holds dear.

*Faaaloalo – Respect,  
Lagolago – Support,*



Women in Sports & Media Panel discussion and performance in the 2020 16 Days of Healing Campaign led by Kolisi Viki renown sports and media personality in Samoa at the Tuanaimato Sports Complex.

Aterina Samasoni-Pele UNRCO

The technical expertise and support from The Spotlight Initiative through gender responsive budgeting, 16 Days of healing community conversations, psychosocial support and psychological first aid trainings just to mention a few, fortified the existing programs through the Voices of the Athletes, Safeguarding of Children in Sports and leveling the playing field.

The solid basis of creating elite national representative teams is to ensure the base of that sport is bountiful and informed. Thus the elite athletes then are able to champion and perform at their peak. And such is the parallel to the Spotlight Initiative. "A rising tide lifts all boats" With the implementation of Spotlight Initiative Samoa Country program, the base for the sports sectors which includes, families, communities and country, has been informed, empowered and emboldened and thus the rising tide.



# Women in Sports & Media advancing EVAWG



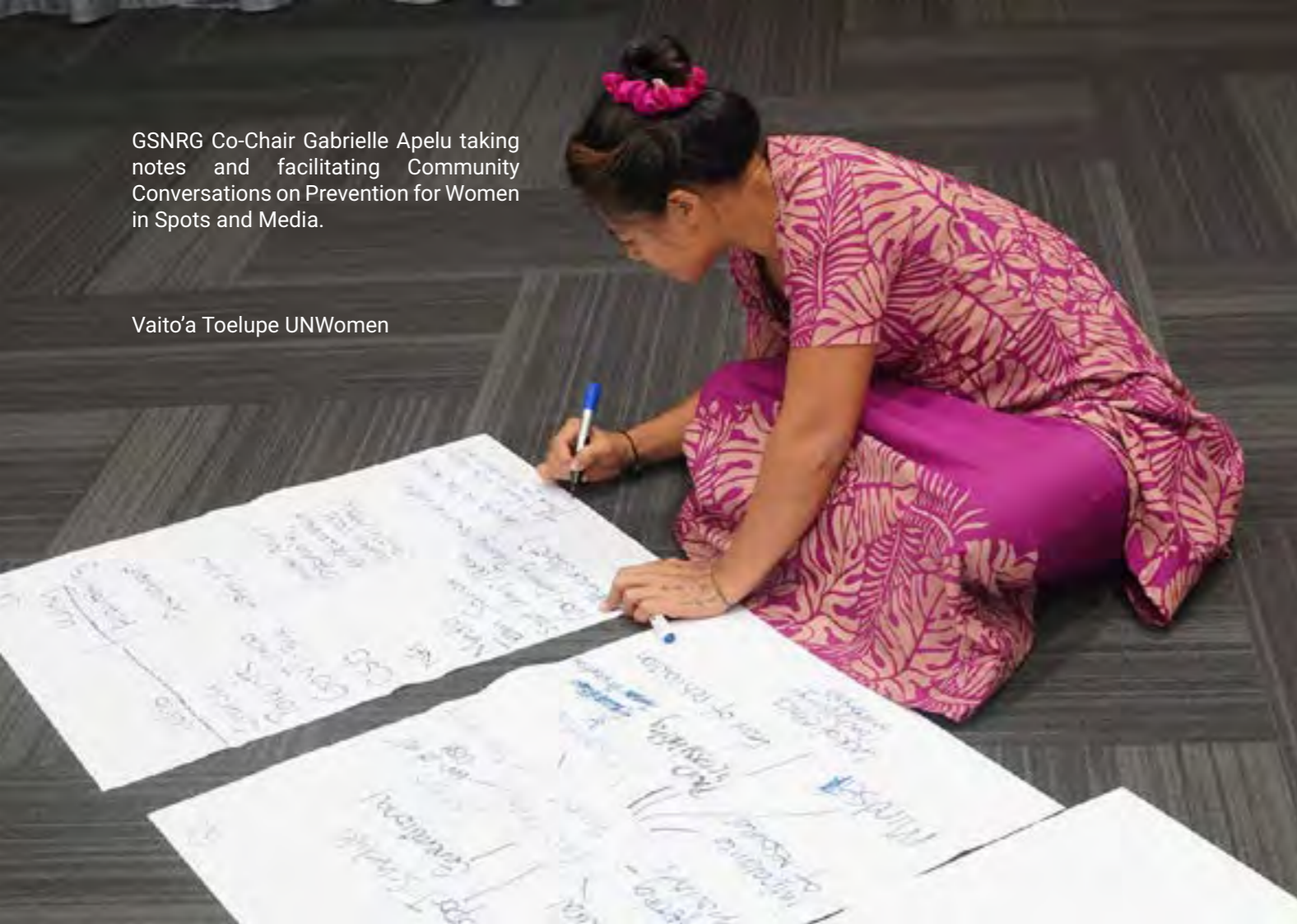
Advocacy on and off the field for a Samoa free of violence continues to be the drive for influential women leaders in Sports. It is the same drive prominent journalists and media personnel in Samoa share as

Women in Sports and Media have important conversations to address the root causes and contributing factors of violence. In an area dominated by men, the Spotlight Initiative has enabled more visibility of women in sports and media. Creating safe spaces for women to freely express and voice their opinions is critical in the EVAWG efforts nationally and ensure the representation and participation of women and girls is resourced and supported.



GSNRG Co-Chair Gabrielle Apelu taking notes and facilitating Community Conversations on Prevention for Women in Sports and Media.

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen



As the CSNRG Women in Sports & Media Representative, I am constantly exploring new ways to engage my constituency. Traditionally I have well established networks with the different Sports Bodies and Sports Federations and work closely with SASNOC. But I am grateful for the guidance and support of Media vetrans like Lagi Kerisoma and Maina Misa who give their 200% to promote engagement amongs their media colleagues with EVAWG programmes in Samoa.

Through the Spotlight Initiative, the allocation of resources to mobilize women in Sports and Media has resulted in exciting new partnerships and revival of old ones that promotes our collective efforts in our respective fields to EVAWG.

Building these linkages is important not only for Women in Sports and Media but across other thematic areas that need visibility

and to shine a spotlight on only the Samoa Media can do.

In particular are informal movements at village level generally brought together by sports. Policy makers in government can learn from experiences of these groups in better responding and preventing violence.

Breaking down barriers in the area of sports will continue to be an uphill battle. But at least we know we are not climbiing alone and through the partnerships and alliances that have been formed through the Spotlight Initiative, we are confident Samoa will reach a summit of a island nation that has zero tolerance for violence and that every man woman and child will live free and prosperous lives.



**Sports is a powerful medium for prevention and it's important we ensure the policies and frameworks that guide sports bodies nationally, adapt, understand and action the prevention of violence at all levels**

**Tuala Mathew Vaea**  
**Samoa Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee (SASNOC)**

"To Empower and Provide Opportunities for All People of Samoa to Achieve Personal Aspirations and Excellence through Sports"



**Spotlight Initiative**  
To eliminate violence against women and girls



Civil Society Consultations for the development of the National Prevention Framework for ending violence against women and girls. The Prevention Framework is a whole of Samoa Framework led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development and the Community Development Sector partners and funded by the Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen.



# Fa'afafine

# SOGIE in the SPOTLIGHT

By Fagalima Tuatagaloa & Vaitoa Toelupe UNWomen  
CSNRG  
Fa'afafine SOGIE/LGBTQI+  
Representative

The fa'afafine community have been visible and pioneering advocates and champions of GBV/EVAWG awareness and prevention due to its linkages with HIV/AIDS Prevention since the late 1980s. As the poster children of HIV/AIDS advocacy in Samoa, the fa'afafine community have been addressing the root causes of discrimination, stigma and gender based violence to promote a change of mindset and challenge the ignorance and inequalities that exist in society.

With over 20 years of advocacy, the fa'afafine community have recognized a significant change in how they are perceived, received, accepted and embraced by the Samoan people as persons with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. But despite this progress there are still gaps in policy, employment, outdated legislations, data and the general attitudes and behaviors that perpetuates violence stigma and discrimination.

Therefore to maintain progress the work continues and the advocacy does not stop. From experience, the fa'afafine community believes change comes with genuine and sustained community engagement and participation. It is about taking the messages of VAWG Prevention to the community level in a community friendly manner led by community champions and advocates. Changing the mindset of people takes time but it is possible and Violence therefore can be prevented. As a vulnerable group facing intersecting forms of discrimination, the Spotlight Initiative has highlighted the significant role of the fa'afafine community in advocating for sensitive issues that affect society.

The Initiative supported the recognition of the voices, experience and expertise of the Fa'afafine community as valuable agents of change in their families, villages and communities.



Samoa Fa'afafine SOGIE community after the filming of their 16 Days of Healing conversation on the Black Sand Beach Apia Town.



Having a SOGIE Fa'afafine Representative in the CSNRG has demonstrated inclusivity in practice and Samoa's commitment for all members of society to live full and meaningful lives despite their socio-economic standing, level of education, gender or sexual orientation.

As Fagalima Tuatagaloa said " As a proud Fa'afafine, a Trans Woman of Color and a child of Samoa, I never thought I will be in a national mechanism like the CSNRG that has a huge say in the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative. We have been involved for so long with development projects but always as bystanders and watching from the sidelines while other people plan and decide for us. The Spotlight Initiative has given us the power to meaningfully contribute to change that focuses on leaving no one behind and addressing the priorities of marginalized populations like the Fa'afafine, SOGIE / LGBTQI+ communities. This specific focus is transformational and the right stepping stones to the right direction for a more inclusive, equal and just society."

The participation of a SOGIE Rep has also placed a spotlight on SOGIE/LGBTQI+ women and girls in Samoa. It challenges the status quo where there is a delusion perception there are no LGBTQI+ women or individuals in Samoa.

A lot of these women and girls are in hiding with limited to no courage and self esteem to live free. It has impacted their mental well being, their ability to earn an income or employment and are highly vulnerable to violence in their families and communities. The denial by society has also presented limitations to accessing health care and services with majority refusing to seek help out of fear. Responding to these concerns is what the Spotlight Initiative has enabled at a national scale drawing the attention of multiple partners and stakeholders.

It is a critical outcome that will benefit the very few and under-resourced CSOs that are working on gender equality and social inclusion. For Samoa, the Samoa Fa'afafine Association SFA, MY GIRLS CLUB, THRIVE and FAIVA Manaia are the only NGOs with mandated functions to address issues pertaining to SOGIE. They have been traditionally supported by the Ministry of Health and loyal and supportive CSO partners such as Samoa Red Cross SRC, Samoa Family Health Association SFHA, Samoa Victim Support Group SVSG, Samoa AIDS Foundation SAF, Nuanua o le Alofa NOLA, Young Women Christian Association YWCA and Brown Girl Woke.

But this is not enough ! Evident in Phase 1, the Spotlight Initiative has provided resources for CSOs at the forefront of EAWG and this needs to be sustained in order for these activists, feminists and champions to continue.

The fa'afafine SOGIE community in Samoa applauds the Spotlight Initiative for all the positive impacts it has produced in Phase 1. We also encourage the initiative to continue to focus on the most vulnerable women and girls of all diversities in Samoa.



**“Inclusion and equality are at the core of Spotlight. This means investing in reaching those who are most left behind and recognizing the intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression faced by women and girls, that differentiate their experiences and needs.”**



Lualua Namulauulu Tautu  
CSNRG  
Traditional Leaders &  
Rural Community  
Representative

UNDP Samoa

# I am a *weaver, a healer, a matai,* and **EVAWG starts with me !**

Lualua needs no introduction in the Community Development Sector and to partners of the Spotlight Initiative. He has been a Male Champion for Gender Equality for over three decades pioneering significant changes in his village and district in Savai'i.

As the village mayor for his village Asaga, Lualua was challenged in the early days of his community work when it came to supporting Gender Equality efforts in his village. In pushing for income generating opportunities for the women in his village, Lualua signed up their Asaga Women's Committee to the National le Samoa (Fine Mat) Project. A project implemented by MWCSO to not only revive the traditional art of weaving but create income for the weavers. The Fine Mat Project secured funding to host an annual Fa'alelega Pepe (Fine Mat Display where participating Women's Committees from across Samoa were compensated by Government for their craft and markets were secured regionally to sell off this rare and expensive commodity.

Unfortunately for Lualua, the art of weaving the traditional fine mat has disappeared from his village for years. The women of the village not only lacked the skills to weave this fine art, but were also reluctant due to the strenuous hard labour that is require to produce it. For instance, it takes six to eight months to weave one mat. It is not an easy undertaking.

To encourage the women of his village, Lualua started a Falelalaga "Weaving Initiative" with the Women's Committee in his village although this activity is traditionally performed only by women. Without hesitation, Lualua wanted to lead by example and be the first male Matuau'u (Traditional Weaver) a title that has only been given to women who are experts in the art of weaving.

With training support from Master weavers from MWCSO and Women in Business Inc.

(WIBDI) Lualua and his newly established FaleLalaga not only successfully completed over five fine mats but proudly displayed them in the national Faalelegapee Fine Mat Display with their debut appearance in 1998.

Since then, Lualua has continued to champion local initiatives to EVAWG informed by national programmes and activities led by the MWCSO. One only has to drive through Asaga village to appreciate the obvious developments for women, youth and children that are thriving in the village due to Lualua's passionate commitment to make a difference.

In 2020, a public advertisement was issued on television radio and newspaper regarding submissions of Expressions of Interests EOIs for the Spotlight Initiative Civil Society National Reference Group CSNRG. The MWCSO staff in Savaii, disseminated this advertisement to village mayors and community leaders on the island.

Lualua was immediately drawn to the advertisement and with limited access to technology, Lualua hand-wrote his EOI and took a 30 minute bus to Salelologa to look for a way to submit his EOI which had to be emailed to the UNRC Office. He did not have an email address or any social media accounts except his written application.

After a few failed attempts for help, Lualua ended up at Samoa Stationery and Books SSAB Salelologa and left his handwritten note to one of the customer service staff with a request to send it to the UNRCO email address.

At the close of the CSNRG EOI advertisement, out of the many applicants that showed interest only one submission came from Savaii. It was an email from a SSAB staff with a scanned copy of a handwritten EOI from a gentleman who left no contacts except his name Lualua Namulauulu Tautu

from the village of Asaga.

After close examination of his application, the CSNRG Selection Committee unanimously agreed, he is the perfect fit for the Traditional Leaders and Rural Community Representative of the CSNRG.

Like the manner of his EOI submission, Lualua turned up in the CSNRG Induction Meeting an unbecoming and humble man. However, before the morning tea break of the first day of the CSNRG Induction, it was well established Lualua has been operating in the EVAWG space for a very long time. His wisdom and real practical experience as a EVAWG Champion in the last thirty years was a welcomed spirit in the newly formed CSNRG.

From the beginning of his role, Lualua

continues to advocate for the RUNOs and CSNRG to keep a firm eye on the delicate balance of exciting new initiatives and what can be realistically sustained and owned by our people in rural communities.

Often from experience, projects enter Samoa with a bang and then die a natural death leaving communities confused and neglected. As the representative of Traditional Leaders and Rural Communities it was important for Lualua to ensure the Spotlight Initiative was a Samoa driven and owned initiative. It focused on the urgent needs and priorities of Samoan women and girls and its interventions are relevant to the Samoan context. Lualua was also vocal in stressing the sustainability of the Spotlight Initiative lies in the hands and hearts of the Samoan people. If the people do not believe this initiative will make a difference,

it wont. However if the people believe in this initiative as their own and drive it in our own Samoan way, it will be successful.

Lualua was a prominent advisor in the approach delivery and production of the 16 Days of Healing Campaign. His traditional knowledge and expertise assisted in producing a campaign that will reach the hearts of Samoan people and gauge their buy in to be Champions themselves for EVAWG where ever they may be in Samoa.

Despite the challenges of being the only CSNRG representative from Savaii, Lualua continues to be a beacon of hope and inspiration for the Initiative attending every event, workshop, training mostly at his own expense which has been a remarkable example of a true leader and Champion for EVAWG.





Mailo Helen Tanielu  
CSNRG  
Academics & Researcher  
Representative

# Evidence based interventions is key for preventing VAWG

By Mailo Helen Tanielu  
CSNRG  
Academic & Researchers Representative

Preventing VAWG in the long-term requires more than changing individual behaviors. It requires changing the norms that uphold the imbalance of power between women and men and allow VAWG to continue.

Preventing VAWG requires comprehensive, gender transformative interventions based on a strong analysis of the root cause and drivers of VAWG and addresses norms, attitudes and beliefs that sustain violence. Reaching this understanding requires comprehensive research and data so we can make informed decisions that will make a difference.

This is why evidence based interventions is key for preventing VAWG and brings to the surface the latest evidence of what works in our context and with our people. The challenge was the research is available but it is not fully utilized by policy makers and programmers in government ministries and civil society operating in the VAWG / Gender space.

This is the biggest impact from an academic perspective of the Spotlight Initiative. It brought to the forefront the significant need for evidence based and well researched interventions and the benefits of working closely with academic institutions such as the National University of Samoa and the University of the South Pacific.

As a GBV Advocate and Researcher, my work starts within my institution. I encourage my students to do research on GBV and it is also a sensitisation process for them. When young minds have a deep dive into power struggle and inequalities, it sparks a new way of thinking for them so they may be more analytical and revisit the root causes of violence from gender lenses.

During the Community Conversations on Prevention, 15 of my students studying Gender and Development participated. This was an enlightening experience for them



available research that informs opinions and perspectives on preventing violence being disseminated through global social media platforms is yet another milestone for the Spotlight Initiative in Samoa.

In addition to this achievement, the Spotlight Initiative through UNESCO is dedicating real resources and attention to proper research on EVAWG and promoting the conduct of surveys, desk reviews, formative research or similar exercises in order to analyse the causes and solutions to violence. It is putting under the microscope issues such as contributing factors related to men and boys and their use of VAWG. Understanding and unpacking the most common norms and stereotypes that promotes violence and inequality in power dynamics and analysing specific risks facing particular groups of women and girls.

to engage in frank and open conversations about Prevention and Response to VAWG.

It was also a unique opportunity for students to casually engage with the titans in the Academic field who were present and in many ways bridge the generational divide in perspectives and mindsets associated to the role of Academic and Education Institutions in the prevention of violence.

As an outcome of these small but significant steps, my student have become VAWG role models and champions in their circle of friends, families and communities. Their advocacy continues with emphasis on evidence based and well informed strategies to target the youth on EVAWG.

This has also translated into what is relevant to the youth today with the use of Social media as an influential tool to advocate for EVAWG. This combination of



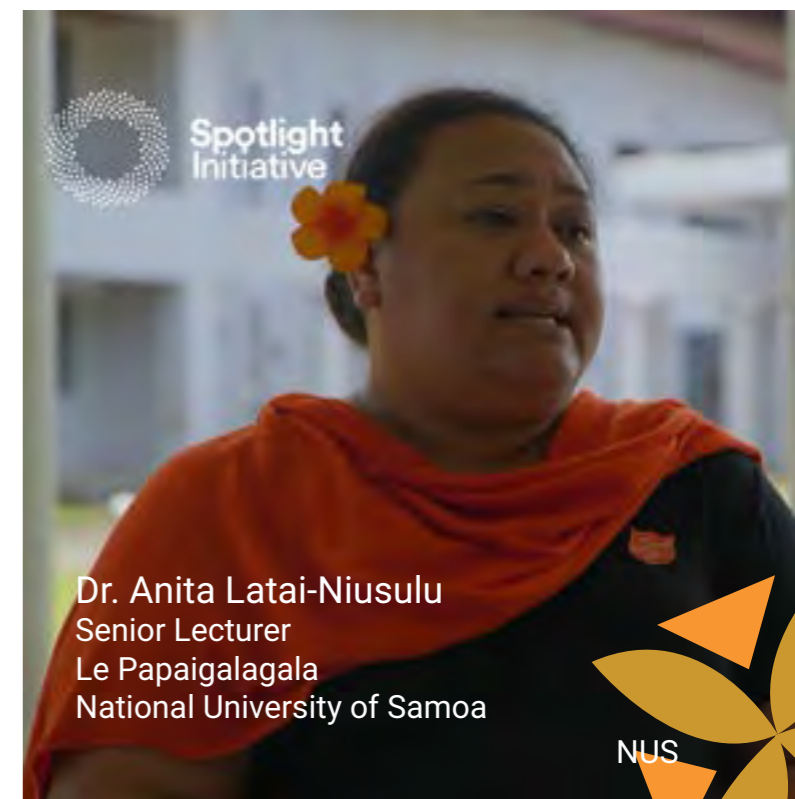
# Improving Education for Young men and Boys is a solution to change violent habits

Mailo Helen Tanielu of the CSO NRG holds a talanoa session with Dr Anita Latai-Niusulu of the National University of Samoa One of the problems in our society today is that young males and boys are lacking behind in education. Teachers and educators have a powerful role and are in a position to change that mindset. I believe

that the reason why people revert to violent acts is because they do not have adequate understanding of words to express their anger. The literacy problem and trying to improve the education of our young men and boys is one of the solutions.

Another solution is shifting awareness programs away from just talking and mentioning gender-based violence but towards stories of victims and the long-term implications of violence on themselves and their families. Easier said than done, it is a very difficult step and also the people to acknowledge this as a huge problem. It is not just the immediate impact that can be fixed and healed tomorrow. However, it is about a life that gets denied and opportunities like good education, health and safe families to grow up with.

Another solution is for young parents to start thinking about ways and model loving behaviour to your children particularly to our male children. Teaching them the importance of boundaries, they have equal and same rights with their sisters and other females in society.



Dr. Anita Latai-Niusulu  
Senior Lecturer  
Le Papaigalagala  
National University of Samoa





Sina Ah Sam  
Vailele EFKS Youth Representative

# Youth are the connecting bridge for the younger generation ....

Talanoa session with Sina Ah Sam, Vailele EFKS Youth representative. As a young Samoan woman of today, we need to break the misconception that there cannot be change.

That change cannot exist today. First of all, Behaviours are taught and are based on values and principles first within a family and where you are grown into. O le aiga e fofoa maaputiputi mai ai le fanau seia o'ona ua matua. That is the first school and classroom for any child. We have to go right back to this root and start within our families. I really value the Spotlight Program

as it opens up the conversation; it opens the chance to talanoa about these issues that seems to be taboo in our society. It is time to open and time to break these barriers and be vocal about it.

This is the one thing about us youth, these are issues we are passionate about because it affects our futures. So with moving of the tide and these global advancements, the youth have become the voice and great advocates for these topical issues at the moment. In moving forward, 'e mafai ona suia amio', behaviours can be changed. Bring back our culture, our culture is not a father feeding the family and beating the wife.

However, it is a culture of love and respect. We bring in our Christian principles, Samoa is founded on God. As this talanoa is about collective responsibility, it is about bringing back our cultural and Christian values and as a community to open and talk freely about these issues and not bury them. We become the bridge for our younger sisters, for the younger generation.

*As a youth today, my responsibility is building that bridge that it is a safe net that we are living in. It allows the children to see that they are valued at such a young age and that we have equal opportunities for both girls and boys growing up.*



# Spotlight Initiative



**“Violence against women and girls is not normal. Attitudes and mindsets are not eternal. Raising public awareness and **shifting mindsets around violence is possible.**”**





# VILLAGE FAMILY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Piloting the Village Family Safety Committee Programme. Taking policy advocacy into the heart of the village and transferring the responsibility to the village leadership for the care, protection and safety of its people.

The National Inquiry into Family Violence (NIFV), initiated by the Office of the Ombudsman in 2018, the increasing trends in the prevalence of family violence in Samoa. Family violence was seen as a systemic issue which affected most families in the country. The NIFV focused on violence against women and girls and the impact of the upbringing of boys and girls. It looked at root causes, triggers and solutions for family violence. One of the key recommendations from the NIFV was to establish village family safety committees. This recommendation was proposed from

the extensive Samoa-wide consultations with communities. This was also reaffirmed by the Samoa Family Safety Study by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO) in 2017.

The rationale behind a village-based solution, was simply because most villages already had village committees that placed importance on development issues such as education, water and sanitation, health and infrastructure; so why not have a committee for family safety and ending violence if this issue was

considered important? There was also an emphasis on the issue of sustainability and continuity of interventions to make a long-term difference at the village level so that it is not forgotten.

The recommendation from the NIFV was to have in place a village-based mechanism that fits with the people living in the village. Hence, the idea of the Village Family Safety Committee (VFSC) programme was born and developed into turning it into a pilot programme for six villages across Samoa. Recommendation 20 of the NIFV placed the importance on the role of the Village Fono to lead advocacy efforts to stop family violence in the communities.

The VFSC pilot programme modelled the significance of the 'fa'a Samoa', which uses a culturally responsive, centered approach to empower village leaders and members to proactively be the vanguards of change in the prevention of domestic violence within their villages. The programme was piloted in 2018 and was jointly funded by the SPC (Secretariat of the Pacific Community), UK-Commonwealth, Sisters for Change and later the European Union and Nations Spotlight Initiative via the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women.

The NHRI partnership with UNDP through the Spotlight Initiative started in 2020 at the brink of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NHRI, together with civil society partners as well as the key support from the Spotlight Initiative through UNDP, rolled out the pilot programme activities at the beginning of 2020, establishing the VFSCs in six villages: Asau, Saleia, Taga, Vaie'e, Lotopu'e, and Lalovi, Mulifanua. The VFSC were to advocate for zero tolerance, and to work alongside the village council as an accountability mechanism towards care and protection of its citizens from all forms of violence. The work with the VFSC involved

building their capacity around topics of understanding root causes of gender-based violence (GBV), violence against women and girls (VAWG), gender equality and social inclusion, positive parenting, good governance and human rights, social media bullying and so forth. This is also so that they are able to carry out the work as a committee and raise awareness to their village members, understand services available and be able to make referrals to specialized services. One of the key criteria for the composition of the VFSC by the NHRI was to ensure gender inclusion of membership. The composition ranged from 15 to 18 members based on the preference of the village itself. The VFSC were assisted to develop their own safety plans according to specific family violence issues pertaining to their own realities and village context, focused on the strong engagement of the village council, women and girls, persons with disabilities, fa'afafine or Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE).

According to Mrs Loukinikini Vili Lewaravu, Director of Human Rights at NHRI: "This was considered a success as it provided the villages with a roadmap of what they wanted to do to come up with relevant solutions to address the issues of family violence".

NHRI assisted the VFSC to implement their activities. The pilot ended with the launching of the five villages' bylaws in December 2021, which aim to address family violence in each village context, incorporating laws that protect women, children and persons with disabilities from violence, including the enforcement of protection laws especially if the victim or survivor lives in the village.

"I would like to congratulate the Fono mamalu a Alii ma Faipule of these villages for being champions for family violence prevention within their villages by ensuring the inclusion of bylaws on violence against



Loukinikini Vili Lewaravu,  
Director of Human Rights  
Samoa National Human Rights Institute NHRI  
Office of the Ombudsman

UNDP Samoa





women and girls, which highlight their commitment to zero tolerance towards family violence. Such commitment recognizes the pivotal role of village leaders in family violence, prevention and the protection of women and girls at the village level,” said the Prime Minister of Samoa, Honorable Fiame Naomi Mata’afa.

“Ever since the programme was introduced, I have noticed the smooth operation of the village activities. Village council members in the committee should lead by example, enforcing a violence-free environment”.



Launch of the Taga Village Family Safety Committee  
NHRI Samoa

## TAGA VILLAGE, SAVAI'I

**Village Profile:** Taga is a village situated on the south coast of the island of Savaii in the electoral district of Palauli. Taga village is popular with its blowholes where the waves can fly away into the sky. The population of Taga village in the 2016 population census is 785, with 393 males and 392 females. The village is dependent on agriculture for daily living as well as domestic markets. Apart from agricultural produce, the village also receives remittances from their Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) workers sent overseas every year. There are six different religious denominations in the village: the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, Seventh Day Adventist,

Latter-Day Saints, Assemblies of God, Nazarene and Jehovah’s Witnesses; other members attend other denominations in the nearby villages.

### Empowerment through VFSC:

The composition of the VFSC in Taga is predominately men, with a few women. Village activities are governed by the overall guidance of village council of chiefs. Different village groups in Taga have been empowered by the workshops and trainings implemented throughout the VFSC project. The impact of the VFSC programme resulted in transformational behavior change visible throughout the village and recorded as part of the independent review of the NHRI VFSC funded by the Spotlight Initiative through UNDP. The VFSC admitted that there were

many different views about the programme in the beginning and it was not easy. However, at the end of the programme, there was a noticeable major change in the village because the village council stood firm in enforcing the bylaws and punishing those who did not follow the village rules. The village council members present at the time, who are also the key decision-makers for the village, gave the assurance that it is their responsibility to continue enforcing their recently developed village bylaws, to ensure that their village is violence free.

### Transformational Impact:

I have noticed some positive changes amongst our youths. Since the commencement of programme, I have identified a huge, positive impact in our village. ( Taga VFSC member) Positive changes have been observed and experienced by the village members and VFSC since the pilot programme started in 2020 at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 15 village members were interviewed as part of the VFSC end-of-project review. 67% of those interviewed responded that many positive changes occurred in the village since the programme. Some of the comments by Taga village members:

“I recommend continuing the programme as it has benefitted me and my family in so many ways. I have enough patience to address issues with my children rather than beating them up.”

*“My husband no longer lashes out at me and the children with violence ever since he attended the training.”*

*“Ever since my husband had given up alcohol, our marriage has greatly improved, and he no longer beats me and the children.”*

*“The different denominations in our village can work together as a result of this programme and we recommend for it to be continued.”*



Launch of the Taga - Village Family Safety Committee Wookplan  
NHRI Samoa

## VAIE'E VILLAGE, UPOLU

Village Profile: Vaie'e is a village located on the central south coast of the Upolu islands, situated in the district of Safata. The village population recorded in the 2016 Population was 565, with 304 males and 261 females. Farming is their main source of income and for daily living, with many village members employed in the public service, and private companies in Samoa. The village has only one established and recognized religious denomination, the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. The advocacy and village prevention campaigns throughout Samoa have been extensive through the work of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development and several other partners in the previous years. Vaie'e had established a village family safety committee prior to the NHRI program, making Vaie'e the first village to set up such a committee and put in place a village law with heavy penalties to prevent and respond to domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

Empowerment through VFSC: The village family safety committee (VFSC) composition is dominated by women and most of the activities were driven by women inclusive of nofotane (village men's wives). The capacity building and trainings provided by NHRI to the VFSC empowered not only the committee members but the village residents in different ways.

Transformational impact: Various positive changes had occurred in the lives of Vaie'e village members as a result of this VFSC pilot programme as well as other programmes conducted before. UNDP Spotlight conducted an in-person interview with one of the key influencers of the Vaie'e VFSC – Maiava Visekota Tuiā who testified;

*“The main difference with the NHRI Village Family Safety program and establishment of village safety committees, is that it has brought the advocacy and placed the advocacy responsibility on the shoulders of the members of the community. It has brought together all the different organs of the village namely, the council of chiefs, daughters of the village (nu'u o sa'oao), faletua ma tausī (wives of chiefs and orators), untitled men and women (nu'u o aumaga)”.*

Maiava Visekota Tuia, Vaie'e VFSC member, 2022.

What transformation has occurred because of the VFSC empowerment? “The NHRI program came at an opportune time when the village was ready for it, to re-think attitudes and beliefs. The greatest obstacle when advocating for ending domestic violence is to do with the attitudes, beliefs and changing social norms. The change in attitudes comes with a daily reminder, just reminding each other that we have a village safety committee and that we do not condone violence in any form”.

The awareness is at grassroots level, made up of four groups, whose members are actively keeping an eye out and have been trained to counsel and to remind people that DV is against the law. The people are aware of how to access a protection order when required and where to seek help. As part of the day-to-day work, the VFSC have



Maiava Visekota Tuia, Vaie'e VFSC Member

UNDP Samoa

normalized this responsibility and are able to speak to people of the village on issues of DV and its consequences.

They also remind the village that violence in our families if it can be eliminated, brings peace within the family. From your family, this peace can extend to the village. In addition, there are penalties (penalties can be up to \$2,000 Tala, with Vaie'e being the first village to penalise perpetrators of intimate partner violence, violence against women and children in Samoa) that the Vaie'e committee had instilled as part of the village bylaws.

The village bylaws were agreed to by the village, recorded by the village and for the first time ensures consistency in decision making as it is recorded and has to be followed through with the penalties and decisions made in relation to domestic violence incidents. Since the establishment of the committee and the village bylaws, the number of domestic violence cases reported to the village council has drastically been reduced. The level of awareness has increased immensely, and the village is now taking serious responsibility for the protection and care of its citizens.

The NHRI review of the VFSC also spoke to some of the village committee members who had observed many positive behavioural changes in the village since the programme started. Some of those changes include:

- Continue the programme because it helped a lot in keeping peace in the village
- This programme has many benefits which will greatly assist the families in our village
- Recommend continuing the programme in our village because it has prevented women and girls from being abused
- There is a decrease in the amount of violence in the village as well as punishing offenders
- I have noticed the huge success of this programme in our village in eliminating violence and abuse; as a result, I no longer resort to my old ways of beating up my children because I fear the law in place

- Gaining a better understanding from this programme has enabled me to have a great life by refraining from abusing my wife and children
- This programme has been very helpful for the village, changing men from being abusive husbands and fathers to being more caring, including my husband, due mainly to the knowledge they had obtained from these awareness programmes



Saleia Village Family Safety Committee Launch

Louisa Apelu UNDP

its positive impact amongst the villagers with how they work together and harmoniously. The participating village council members had confirmed these improvements observed in the village, during the focus group discussion.

More importantly, around 90% of the village members, inclusive of village council members, emphasized the responsibility of the Village Council as the key body in pushing through all these initiatives. Some participants highlighted that the alii ma faipule of their village should lead and set good examples for the whole village to follow, as well as enforcing the recently passed village bylaws.

In addition, from the VFSC members' responses, all five of them from Salei'a provided good changes that they had observed in their village since the programme started. The following are some of their comments provided through their questionnaires:

- Continue this programme because there are many good changes that have happened in the village
- Lately, we rarely have any more cases of wives being beaten by their husbands in our village, therefore the programme should be continued
- There should be more training on the programme in the future to enable the villagers to understand its importance
- This programme is appreciated because it has allowed parents to refrain from beating their children
- I recommend continuing the programme due to its positive impact in the village.

*"I have learned a lot from this programme and I never want to go back to my old abusive ways."*

- Further changes observed were recorded during the focus group discussion with the village. These include the punishment by the village council of some fathers for beating up their wives, discussing violence prevention matters during the monthly village meetings, and there was no violence case for the whole of 2021. Discussing the violence prevention matters during the village council meetings is a good start for sustaining the implementation of the programme.

## SALEI'A VILLAGE, UPOLU

Village profile: Salei'a is a small sub-village of the larger traditional village district of Matautu situated on the north central coast of Savaii Island. It forms part of the larger constituency district of Gaga'emauga. Its total population after the 2016 national census is 221, with 120 males and 101 females. The economy of the village is mainly dependent on farming and youths employed at the beach fales and neighbouring beach resorts. The Voice of Christ is the only denomination located in the village and other members of the village attend the Congregational Christian Church and Methodist Church located in nearby villages.

Empowerment through VFSC: The composition of the VFSC for Saleia was 50/50 men and women including a church minister's wife and a fa'afafine. The training received by the committee members, workshops attended by village members and the resources they received through the lifetime of the project increased their knowledge and skill set, which empowered and encouraged everyone to change for the better.

Transformational Impact: There were transformational changes observed in the village by VFSC members and the village council of chiefs who participated

in the end of VFSC project evaluation survey. From the 15 village members who completed the questionnaires, almost 50% of them responded that the VFSC programme should be continued because there were many families in their village that had changed for the better because of the programme. Some of the village members reported that 'ua tele aiga ua fealofani ona o le polokalame; this programme helped a lot in decreasing violence in the village; and, tele o matou ulugalii laiti ua iai suiga lelei talu ona amata le polokalame'.

In addition, there were four members from Salei'a who said "yes" they had experienced violence in the families in the last two to three years. All of them testified:

- I normally beat up my children when they misbehave but now, ua tele lava ina nofo i lalo ma mafaufau (I normally beat my children when they misbehave. But now, I have changed and I sit down to think first)
- Most of us young couples have changed since the programme started
- Ua tele lava ina fealofani aiga o lo matou nuu ona o lenei polokalame manaia tele, ma ua le toe vaaia foi ni sauaga i totonu o le nuu (Since the programme started, I have noticed

**Prevention is about  
nurturing-*fa'afailele*  
our children with our  
cultural values **that do  
not condone, promote  
or tolerate violence**  
These are OUR values  
we have always had as  
Samoan people  
we need to revive**

**Namulauulu Maria Levi  
Pasefika Mana**

Pasefika Mana Samoa Social Services develops culturally tailored and appropriate programmes to overcome the increase of social problems facing Samoa today in particular sexual violence and child abuse.



**Spotlight  
Initiative**  
To eliminate violence  
against women and girls



Civil Society Consultations for the development of the National Prevention Framework for ending violence against women and girls. The Prevention Framework is a whole of Samoa Framework led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development and the Community Development Sector partners and funded by the Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen.





# The Academic, Gender Specialist & CEO

By Louisa Apelu UNDP

Dr. Mema Motusaga is a strong gender and human rights advocate, married and a mother of four. She hails from the villages of Saleilua Falealili, Salani, Tuanai and Iva in Savaii. She served under the former Ministry of Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs in the Youth Division from 2000 to 2003 and continued as the Senior Youth Officer from 2003 to 2006 under the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, after the Samoan government's realignment where the Division of Youth was merged with the Department of Women Affairs and Internal Affairs to formulate the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO). Dr. Motusaga left to do her Master's Degree and upon return,

she served at the National University of Samoa (NUS) from 2008 to 2009. She rejoined the MWCSO from December 2009 to 2011 as the Samoa Country Focal Officer to manage the Legislative Change Project on Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls, a project funded by the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT). Upon completion of her PhD in Gender Studies, she held the portfolio of Samoa Gender Specialist and Programme Manager from 2015 to 2018 for the Samoa Women Shaping Development programme, under the Division for Women of the MWCSO, that funded and commissioned the 2017 Samoa Family Safety Study on family violence. She worked as a Senior Lecturer for Gender and

Dr. Mema Motusaga  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ministry of Women Community & Social Development

UNDP Samoa

*"O le fuata ma lona lou, o le lou ma lona fuata." (Each crop has its own harvesting pole, yet the harvest pole for April may not be used for December.)"*



Development Studies at NUS before joining the Secretariat of the Pacific Community as the Team Leader for Youth and Social Inclusion under the Social Development Programme, from November 2018 to 2021, before heading back home to take up the current leadership role for the MWCSO.

“O le fuata ma lona lou, o le lou ma lona fuata.” (Each crop has its own harvesting pole, yet the harvest pole April may not be used for December.)

Such were the reflections of Dr. Mema Motusaga, Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, when the United Nations Development Programme Spotlight Initiative sat down with her recently to discuss how the joint European Union and United Nations Spotlight Initiative has impacted the Ministry’s work. “The Spotlight Initiative has been a real blessing; it has enabled the Ministry to put in place and enact some of its mandated functions as the lead Ministry on the work of gender equality through the pathway of ending violence. To reflect on the Samoan proverb mentioned earlier, and its synchronization with the Spotlight Initiative, it has allowed through its approach, or ‘harvest pole’ if you will, to view Samoa National Gender Equality and Rights of Women and Girls Policy framework to encompass all areas that impact on the quality of life of a person. It is not just about ending violence, but ensuring Samoan women and girls are capable, qualified and have the abilities to lead within their own communities at any given time or season,” said Dr. Mema.

“Through the partnership with UNDP, the Samoa Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) initiative that is ongoing, it will help us operationalize the policy vision for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. It will help us advance this work through the key line ministries such as Finance, Health, Education and Agriculture, as these



Samoa GRB Core Group  
Launch of the Samoa GRB Core Group as an outcome of the GRB Introductory Training for Government Officials and Civil Society Representatives

are the traditional ministries where most of the resources are channeled and areas where gender lens are hardly activated. We now have for the first time, as a result of the work with UNDP, produced a manual on gender responsive budgeting and set up a multisectoral Gender Responsive Budgeting core group with a government and civil society. The group completed an introductory training on understanding and applying in practice the tools of GRB to the budgetary process to identify areas of gaps and needs of both financial and technical resources within and across ministries or sectors. The core group will also be able to assist with translating into action at the national level the future recommendations from the gender rapid assessments undertaken with UN Women’s SDG Financing project support including the Spotlight Initiative-supported national prevention framework.”

“The gender responsive budgeting work is very timely for Ministry and the government, as we are also rolling out

the district development project. We have a responsibility to ensure the criteria for funding allocation and areas of work incorporate a gender perspective to promote gender equality that responds to the different needs of men, women and Samoa’s diverse population, and center help to those who first need it the most. This where the work of the Spotlight Initiative has been a blessing as it comes at a critical juncture to support the Ministry of Women, as the gender focal point, to develop and implement a budget strategy that benefits everyone.”

Regarding how the Ministry can sustain its work in the EAWG, or ending violence against women, space, Dr. Mema believes that: “We have in our hands the key and solutions to fix our problems. We should go back to our Samoan philosophies. Over the years, we’ve looked outside to bring in the solutions and interventions, but we also have in Samoa our own approaches that are much more relevant in our context, in the reality and practicality of issue in Samoa.

In the cultural space, our philosophies range far and impact greatly in formulating our guiding principles that guide norms and behaviors such as alofa (love), va fetausi a’i (sacred relations), fa’aaloalo (respect). Our responsibility is to fine tune where the gaps are and contextualize approaches in accordance to their relevance and practicality in relation to issues. Samoans believe that in everything and anything you have your place in time. And this is why our beliefs and practices have been criticized over the years.

A lot of work in EAWG has really got to do with interpretation and spirit of the human being where it is trying to rule something that is not his or hers. And where that is crucial is where the church comes in, and I urge Spotlight to invest in the work of our churches, our NGOs through the churches and the work of the National Council of Churches. In this work, we often hear that there are two main barriers, the interpretation of the Bible in relation to



Rosalina Ah Sue  
Principal Programmes & Training Officer MWCSO  
Samoa Prevention Framework for EVAWG CSO Consultation  
Vaitoa Toelupe UNWomen

women, and the myths and legends of our fa'aSamoa that are used as a threat or weapons against women's empowerment and freedom."

In going forward, Dr. Mema said: "The Ministry's mandate is vital at the strategic and practical levels, right down to the grassroots. The lessons learned from the last two years, is for Spotlight to strengthen the alignment of its policy and operational framework and assistance to that of the government. It is very important to recognize there are already existing mechanisms in place to do the work. To ensure sustainable interventions that work, we need to contextualize the programme within our culture, and the spiritual realm. Some of our interventions are donor-driven and I encourage the focus of Spotlight Phase 2 to build on the direction of the framework that is there in the cultural and biblical space.

Secondly, to help the Ministry in the driver's seat, to effectively support the community and grassroots level representation. There has been assistance at government and civil society. We need now to turn our efforts to build our community workers representation

which is the strength of the Ministry of Women in informing its policy work and carrying out the implementation arm of the Ministry." The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development is a lead implementing partner under the joint European Union and United Nations Spotlight Initiative Samoa country programme.

UNDP is supporting MWCSO through Pillar 2 – strengthening institutions of the Spotlight Initiative. The focus of the Spotlight Initiative is to eliminate violence against women and girls, as well as domestic intimate partner violence. guide norms and behaviors such as alofa (love), va fetausi a'i (sacred relations), fa'aaloalo (respect). Our responsibility is to fine tune where the gaps are and contextualize approaches in accordance to their relevance and practicality in relation to issues. Samoans believe that in everything and anything you have your place in time. And this is why our beliefs and practices have been criticized over the years.

A lot of work in EVAWG has really got to do with interpretation and spirit of the human being where it is trying to rule something that is not his or hers. And where that

is crucial is where the church comes in, and I urge Spotlight to invest in the work of our churches, our NGOs through the churches and the work of the National Council of Churches. In this work, we often hear that there are two main barriers, the interpretation of the Bible in relation to women, and the myths and legends of our fa'aSamoa that are used as a threat or weapons against women's empowerment and freedom."

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CSO Stakeholders & Partners  
Samoa Prevention Framework for EVAWG CSO Consultation

Vaitoa Toelupe UNWomen

# Journey to the Samoa National PREVENTION Framework for EVAWG



the Framework to promote favorable social norms, attitudes and behaviors at societal, community and individual levels through multiple strategies.

In a Technical Working Group session to progress on the Framework Sonia emphasized “Prevention is critical because violence against women and girls is preventable. The core drivers of VAWG are socially determined rather than biological, which means they can change. Preventing violence from occurring in the first place is the best way to ensure protection of women and girls. Prevention efforts complement actions of the response system to avert repeated cycles of violence.”

The team recognized Primary Prevention has the potential to significantly reduce morbidity and mortality. Preventing violence improves the health of girls, women and their children, including as related to maternal-child health and sexual and reproductive health and rights (e.g. reduced risk of acquiring STIs and HIV; unwanted pregnancies). In addition, Prevention is cost-effective. It helps avert repeated cycles of violence, and the social, economic and human rights costs of ongoing violence against women. It allows for savings within the health care, police and judiciary systems, as well as child and welfare sectors, and reduces the costs associated with violence such as absenteeism from work, and overall erosion of human capital. Supporting the role of the MWCSO as the national Technical Lead for developing the Prevention Framework, the Samoa CSNRG

embarked on a series of consultations to kick start dialogue, debate and community conversations on PREVENTION. The CSNRG mobilized the civil society sector from their respective settings to participate and provide their perspective on Prevention of VAWG based on the realities on the ground and the lived experiences of communities across Samoa. Following the format of the 16 Days of Healing campaign, 10 diverse community settings took part in the 5 day series of valuable exchange and sharing.



**Sonia Rastogi**  
Spotlight Initiative  
Technical Coherence  
Specialist UNWomen

Developing the first National Prevention Framework for EVAWG is one of the key outcomes for the Spotlight Initiative that is aligned to Samoa’s national priorities for Gender Equality and EVAWG. Led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development, the Framework will articulate Prevention priorities for EVAWG across all levels and the multiple partners that will champion its realization.

Providing Technical Coherence support to the Spotlight RUNOs and MWCSO is the Spotlight Initiative Technical Coherence Specialist Sonia Rastogi.

Sonia worked closely with the Samoa team to find a coherent approach to developing the framework that engages a diversity of partners and stakeholders in a meaningful way.

The Prevention Framework will focus on addressing the root causes of violence against women, including discrimination against women and girls and gender inequality in the distribution of power/resources. Such divisions are formed and reinforced through social norms, behaviors and practices. Therefore it is essential for



# Listening to communities to guide the development of the **National Prevention Framework**

Including communities to lead the process of change

Actions and programmes to prevent violence against women and girls in Samoa will be more coordinated, focused and relevant under a National Prevention Framework that is informed by fundamental cultural and religious principles and the knowledge and lived experience of every person within a community.

The Ministry of Women Community and Social Development leads the development of the Framework with the support of the Spotlight Initiative United Nations (UN) delivering agencies including the UN Women, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF.

*“The idea behind the Framework is that it is designed based on the issues, needs and solutions identified by the communities on how to best prevent violence against women and girls,”*

said Afamasaga Faauga Afamasaga, Former Chief Executive Officer for the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development.



Community Conversations on Prevention

Aterina Samasoni-Pele UNRCO



"It is very important to understand the cultural, religious and social attitudes that drive intimate partner violence and domestic violence in Samoa," says Simona Marinescu, Resident Coordinator for the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau.

*"We also need to better appreciate what is preventing women and girls from seeking help and being able to identify the gaps within the response services – and how the government and its partners can better offer assistance. This requires speaking to and listening to the voices of all groups within a community, including those that are traditionally marginalized and silenced."*

These conversations enabled an understanding of perspectives on intimate partner violence and domestic violence from diverse groups – including women, young people, the elderly, people with disabilities, men and boys, academics and researchers, persons with diverse gender and sexual orientations, and village matai (chiefs).

These conversations did not leave out the communities of persons with disabilities and persons with diverse gender and sexual orientations. These are some of the most vulnerable demographic groups when it comes to intimate partner violence and domestic violence in Samoa.



To listen and understand the perspectives of the communities on the issue of violence against women and girls, the Spotlight Initiative Civil Society Organization National Reference Groups (CSO-NRG) created a safe space for the communities through a series of community conversations where they were able to share their knowledge and experiences on the causes and types of violence and solutions to prevent violence against women and girls.

The conversations enabled the Spotlight Initiative UN delivering agencies to compile a collection of information, community opinions, indigenous and cultural perspectives and stories that will inform the design, content and actioning of the Framework.





violence from an intimate partner, with 18.7 per cent experiencing it in the last 12 months. 21.7 per cent say they have experienced sexual violence, with half of saying that this has occurred in the last 12 months. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the privations caused by the COVID-19 crisis may have exacerbated this issue.

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative Samoa programme is a partnership that supports the development of policies, institutional strengthening, prevention, data collection, response services, and civil society engagement to end violence against women and girls.



Community activists and organizations are already expressing why they are often vulnerable to violence and abuse through consultations - and this information will be invaluable to the development of the framework.

*"Because of our disabilities, we cannot protect ourselves from physical violence and sexual violence, and it is hard for us to report," says a community activist campaigning for people with disabilities. "Prevention measures that are appropriate for persons with disabilities, will help us very much."*

According to data collected before the COVID-19 pandemic, 52 per cent of Samoan women and girls between the ages of 15-49 say they have experienced physical



# Prevention Framework TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP



National Prevention Framework for EVAWG  
TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP  
Inception Meeting

Following the Community Conversations on Prevention, the technical aspects of developing the National Prevention Framework were set in motion.

Guided by the MWCSD Team with technical Support by the UNWomen Spotlight Team and Prevention Consultant Leautuliilagi Vanessa Barlow Schuster, a Technical Working Group was established to support the development of the Framework.

One of the key functions of the TWG is to advise, support and contribute to the progress of activities in the development and implementation phase of the Framework. It is a concerted effort to ensure the Framework is representative of the needs and priorities of Samoan women and girls and that its key components are informed by local context.

The Prevention Framework Technical

Working Group TWG is made up of Prevention experts in both government and civil society with a wealth of experience in prevention efforts across Samoa. In particular Prevention initiatives through the Health Sector with an established record of national prevention strategies and policies with HIV/AIDS, NCD Prevention and Community development in Health. It also included front line EAWG practitioners and service providers who play an important role in prevention efforts to date.

The TWG is comprised of Representative from Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health Samoa Police Prison & Correction Services Ministry of Women Community & Social Development, National Human Rights Institute, Samoa National Council of Women Young Women Christian Association, Nuanua o le Alofa Disability Advocacy Group with specific invitations to Community Champions for SRHR Dr. Leausa John Ah

Ching, HIV AIDS Prevention and Health Promotion Palanitina Tupuimatagi Toelupe and in the Justice Sector District Court Judge Matautia Leota Raymond Schuster.

*“VAWG is a caused by Humans and therefore it is important the Prevention Framework places a strong focus on early childhood development and education so we can raise and nurture humans who do not condone violence!”  
Dr. Leausa John Ah Ching*

The collaboration support from the TWG will strengthen the development phase of the Framework to ensure diversity and inclusion through a variety of expertise and lived experiences within the group. Guidance on the consultation process for the Framework is another major role of the TWG to support the technical tasks of the Prevention Consultant.

In addition, adhering to the LNOB principle it is important to engage key advisors, and relevant community stakeholders to develop the approach for prevention that is relevant to Samoa.

Through this process, there will be clear guidance on identifying the type(s) of VAWG to address, collectively review the existing evidence, ideas and learning from our own context, openly discuss existing program models and decide whether its effective to replicate an existing program approach or create a new approach, or some combination of the two, noting that both adaptation and development of something new require significant investment of time and resources.

The Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development National Prevention

Consultant presented to the members of the TWG the Desktop Review that has been completed to inform the development of the Framework. In the Desktop Review there are 4 key features to guide the development of the Framework are:

- 1) Prevention
- 2) Victims/Survivors
- 3) Perpetrators
- 4) Prevention Infrastructure

Members of the TWG anticipate a fruitful and productive process to unpack these key areas during the consultations for the Framework.

*“From a village woman’s perspective, we should promote the focus of the Prevention Framework on primary prevention that can be understood and sustained by communities themselves. Similar to the health continuum, we should concentrate on primary prevention before any violence occurs and learn from those examples and identify what we can mirror across society in terms of what a violent-free family, home village and community looks like”*  
**Palanitina Tupuimatagi Toelupe**  
**SNCW Technical Advisor**

Members of the TWG look forward to supporting the development of the Prevention Framework with particular attention to the meaningful engagement of the group moving forward.



Prevention Consultant Leautuilagi Vanessa Barlow Schuster & TWG Co-Chair Saoaiga Olive  
 Kaio ACEO Social Development Division MWCS

Vaito’a Toelupe UNWomen



Honorable Leota Laki Lamositele  
Minister of Women Community  
and Social Development

Aterina Samasoni-Pele UNRCO



Minister of Women Community and Social Development Honorable Leota Laki Lamositele,  
Minister of Justice Honorable Lefau Harry Schuster and CSNRG Co-Chair Mailo Helen  
Tanielu

# Government Press Launch on the development of the first *Samoa National Prevention Framework for EVAWG*

The Framework will also guide the administration and spending of the \$1 million tala allocated under the National Budget to fund all Gender-Based Violence (GBV) initiatives in the country.

The development of a framework to strategically guide the planning and delivery of all efforts to prevent and end all forms of violence that affects every woman and girl in Samoa, is a crucial task taken up by the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development (MWCSO), with the strong backing of the European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) Spotlight Initiative global programme.

The Minister of MWCSO, Honorable Leota Laki Lamositele in officiating the start of this crucial milestone said,

*“the National Prevention Framework is a whole of Samoa Framework that must be informed by the realities and lived experiences of our people to find the most immediate and long-term solutions to ending violence targeting our women and girl.”*

The build up to the development of the Prevention Framework since the Community Conversations on Prevention and the set up of the Prevention Framework Technical Working Group was elevated with a national declaration from Political leaders on the whole of government support for this significant undertaking. In a Press Conference hosted by the Minister of Women Community and Social Development Honorable Leota Laki Lamositele, Minister of Justice Honorable Lefau Harry Schuster and CSNRG Co-Chair Mailo Helen Tanielu, the development of the Prevention Framework was officially launched.

He added that the Framework will also guide the administration and spending of the \$1 million tala allocated under the National Budget to fund all Gender Based Violence (GBV) efforts through community led and owned Action Plans and solutions.

“This is also a contributing mechanism to the Governments development efforts at district level for the next 5 years.”

The move by the MWCSO to develop the Framework is timely and crucial considering the high economic cost and the severity of this issue.

“The economic costs of family violence is estimated to be between \$98m and \$132m, which is approximately 6 to 7% of our GDP,” the Minister referred to the Findings of the Samoa Family Safety Study in 2017.

*Hon. Leota Laki made an urgent call to the people of Samoa - the church and traditional leaders, parents, youth, women's movement, academics and researchers, and survivors to have their say and share their ideas on how Samoa can design a robust and effective Framework.*

He acknowledged the support and the crucial role of the newly established Prevention Technical Working Group made of experts and advocates of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, who will provide oversight, validate and monitor the progress of activities in the planning and implementation phases of the National Prevention Framework.

The Co-Chair of the Prevention Technical



Working Group Autagavaia Olive Kaio Assistant Chief Executive Officer of the MWCSO said that the Prevention Technical Working Group is an expert group comprised of key actors and decision-makers working in a multi-sector multi-layered approach to ending violence against women and girls. It will provide high-level oversight and act as a forum to better coordinate and facilitate the prevention framework design, development and implementation.”

The Minister for the Ministry for Police, Prisons and Corrections (MPPC), Honorable Lefau Harry Schuster who joined Hon. Leota Laki at the media event to launch the development of the Framework said that while the Family Safety Act 2013 emphasizes the role of the Ministry of Police in family violence, the safety of everyone including women and children, from all forms of violence is a paramount function of the Ministry.

He added that the Framework will be a very useful tool for the Police to strategize and design their own prevention programmes to contribute to national efforts to ending violence.

Mailo Helen Tanielu who represented the Spotlight Initiative Civil Society Organisations National Reference Group as another member of the panel also spoke on the crucial role that the NRG plays in advocating and in monitoring all activities towards ending violence against women and girls, to ensure they are relevant and are impactful.

The process of development of the Samoa National Prevention Framework is being funded by the Spotlight Initiative. Lefau Harry Schuster

The Spotlight Initiative (SI) is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030 and it is being implemented in Samoa through a tripartite partnership between the Government of Samoa, UN agencies and Civil Society Organizations.

Silvio Lazzari on behalf of the EU extended gratitude to the MWCSO for their commitment to lead the development of the National Prevention Framework.

The UN Resident Coordinator Simona Marinescu also reaffirms the support of the UN agencies implementing the Spotlight Initiative towards the Government of Samoa and all the partners that are involved in the development of the Framework.

Sandra Bernklau, the Office

Representative of the UN Women Multi-Country Office in Fiji, that is working closely with the MWCSO in the development of the Framework, acknowledges the partners and donors’ support that had led to the commencement of work on the Framework, it is a great achievement for Samoa.

Hon. Leota Laki expressed the political support and commitment to complete the Samoa National Prevention Framework for EVAWG by December with consequent well-resourced and sustainable Action Plans to follow putting to practice the priorities in the Framework.

*“This is only the beginning, I invite other sectors, youth leaders, church leaders, community champions, development partners and stakeholders to work together in a concerted effort and with a coordinated and coherent approach for transformative change in Samoa. Ending violence against women and girls is everyone's responsibility” Hon. Leota Laki said.*



Frank Lesa UNWomen, Elisapeta Eteuati Kerslake UNRCO with MWCSO Team and Prevention Consultant

# PREVENTION FRAMEWORK Community & Stakeholder CONSULTATIONS

Civil Society Consultations for the development of the Samoa National Prevention Framework for Ending Violence Against Women & Girls !15th - 16th October

Valuable contributions from the CSO actors and champions informing Primary prevention as the core of the Framework.

Led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development the consultation provided space for interaction dialogue and debate by CSO partners in the Community Development Sector to "Have their Say" and voices heard in the development of the Framework.

Changing social norms and attitudes is a communal effort that requires community mobilization and a diversity of approaches and interventions to STOP Violence before it Starts !!



Civil Society partners and Stakeholders  
Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen



Continuing the in-depth conversations on harmful social norms in our culture and way of life that are contributing factors to the inter-generational cycle of violence.

Community leaders and village champions from Urban Upolu validated in many levels the Key Messages of ZERO TOLERANCE TO VIOLENCE and STOP IT BEFORE IT HAPPENS, TAOFI E LE'I TUPU as fundamental stepping stones to effective Prevention.

Discussions around healthy family relationships between couples, parents, and their children as well as neighbors and communities is an immediate measure to preventing violence before it happens.

*Rev. Nuuausala Siaosi of the Apia Protestant Church reiterated the application of the Bible scripture Ephesians 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her".*

It is overwhelming love that does not hate, is not jealous, and has no room for violence. This is a powerful prevention tool that should be the norm with how men take care and love their wives' daughters and women and girls in general.

The development of the National Prevention Framework is led by the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development MWCSO supported by the Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen



Urban Upolu Consultations for the development of the National Prevention Framework

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

Changing harmful social norms attitudes and behaviors that promote violence against women and girls takes the whole village, districts, and country. This was the collective message in the community consultations for the development of the Prevention Framework from representatives of rural Upolu.

Community participants envision a Prevention Framework that emphasizes primary prevention interventions to

**"STOP IT BEFORE IT HAPPENS!"**  
**"TAOFI E LE'I TUPU".**

Violence is preventable and recognizing harmful social norms and replacing or reviving positive affirming and culturally relevant ones that have zero tolerance for violence is key.

Ms Rosalina Ah Sue the MWCSO Team Leader for the Prevention Framework Consultations facilitated the importance of focusing on Primary Prevention and how this is understood and applied by communities. The consultation took participants on a journey of first identifying the harmful social norms and after discussing what the potential "primary prevention" activities, initiatives could be to address these situations. It opened uncomfortable but necessary conversations about harmful practices and how it is deeply ingrained and interwoven into culture and religion.

Communities have the solutions to change harmful norms and in the process end violence. Their insight and sharing of their community context and lived realities will inform the development of the Framework so we can better prevent violence at all levels before it happens.



# The Prevention Framework for ending violence against women and girls must strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships between boys and girls

**Tavu'i Anne Laumea**  
**President - Tofasinasina Inc.**

NGO comprised of former Police Women focusing on social justice and EAWG through advocacy on accessible services for survivors of violence.



**Spotlight Initiative**  
To eliminate violence against women and girls



Civil Society Consultations for the development of the National Prevention Framework for ending violence against women and girls. The Prevention Framework is a whole of Samoa Framework led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development and the Community Development Sector partners and funded by the Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen.



Gains made by women's movement and leadership at the village level are significant when there are meaningful conversations and participation of women.

AUGUST 2020  
By Louisa Apelu UNDP

# Women's leadership at Village level paves way for Gender Equality



Saliwo Gafo Kaisa  
SNCW Vice President for Savaii  
SIUTU VILLAGE

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

This is demonstrated through the Samoa National Council of Women as seen in the village of Siutu from the district of Palauli No. 1 on the southern side of the big island of Savaii. Siutu's Village Women's Leadership Team (VWLT), which consists of 10 women and three male high chiefs, were mobilized two weeks after their five-days training using an integrated approach by adapting the transformational leadership tool offered under the Women in Leadership Project (WILS) and the Spotlight Initiative ending violence against women prevention Package. WILS is a joint programme between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women. Spotlight Initiative is a global joint European Union and United Nations program implemented through UNDP, UNWomen, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNFPA.

Participants of this training intervened and provided support for two young female university students who were disowned and physically assaulted by their families due to unplanned pregnancies. The VWLT provided shelter and care for the young women whilst simultaneously instigating dialogue with the parents and families, to inculcate for "compassion and support" for their pregnant daughters and to restore familial reconciliation and to further encourage the continuation of education. The VWLT connected the young women with counseling experts from the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) as part of their strong advocacy of ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG). Strengthening women's confidence and visionary strategic thinking to problem-solving was also part of this intervention.

Furthermore, the VWLT are now part of the Village council meetings, where the women leaders from the VWLT are able to sit with the male chiefs and dialogue on problems, but more importantly, solutions. This is a milestone achievement for women who are not originally from Siutu; they are only tied to the village by marital relations (that

is, they married into the village). Although they are at the forefront of and drive village developments, they do not participate in village council meetings until now. The Siutu women leaders acknowledged that women's leadership roles in their village is finally recognised and achieved.

Five women leaders who are members of the Samoa National Council of Women (SNCW) from the village of Siutu attended two trainings which turned into an integrated women's programme that merged the WILS Project and the Spotlight Initiative's EVAWG campaign. This helped advance the advocacy and strengthen primary prevention to end violence against women and girls led by the SNCW in 2020. A similar achievement of women's leadership roles in advocating for a sustainable tomorrow is also evident in the village of Vavau, Aleipata situated on the southern coast of the island of Upolu. The trainings involving SNCW members from Vavau's village committee led to meaningful conversations and prevention interventions, spearheaded by the late Falenaoti Kolutia Ailuai and her committee, to end violence against women that are being enforced by both the women's committee and the village council. The women persevered and kept raising the issue with their husbands, brothers and fathers who sit in the village council.

To ensure a sustainable tomorrow with the results of the women's movement today, where there is meaningful engagement in transforming village developments to stop violence, the women continue to encourage women to work together, amplify each other's voices and continue to improve their knowledge through trainings. The trainings for women members of the Samoa National Council of Women were supported by UNDP through the European Union and United Nations Spotlight Initiative under Pillar 6, which focuses on strengthening women's movements.

# FAUTASI



Fautasi o Toa  
Samoa Observer

Apia, Samoa – The Fautasi o Toa crew will be rowing their way into the history books at the end of this week, when they become the first ever all-women’s crew for a fautasi or traditional longboat. Translated as the Longboat of Legends, the Fautasi o Toa brings together women of different ages and backgrounds who want to be part of an age old tradition, and to be a fautasi rower. That passion is now combined with a powerful message of shining the spotlight on violence against women and building women champions. The vessel used to get that message across – the fautasi, which literally translates to build as one. The All Women’s crew will go up against men’s teams in this Friday’s fautasi race which was birthed out of a challenge to the legendary Master Skipper, Vaimasanu’u Zita Martel, by the Marist Old Boys Association as part of their 70th year celebrations.

It will be the first time such a race will take place. The United Nations Development Programme’s COVID- 19 Response & Recovery Project, and the United Nations and European Union’s Spotlight Initiative – in response to the surge in domestic violence cases during this COVID- 19 period – have partnered with the Zita Martel Fautasi Legacy to make this race happen. Says Zita Martel; “I chose the name “Fautasi o Toa”, or the Longboat of Legends, because it is an empowering name. It clearly states that this longboat team is made up of legendary women, of women champions, of women who are scared but doing it anyway, of



Fautasi o Toa  
Samoa Observer

## O TOA

Challenge  
launched to  
**COMBAT**  
VIOLENCE  
against women

By Laufaleaina Lesa UNDP

*This article was written prior to the launch in 2020 of the Fautasi o Toa campaign – the first of its kind in Samoa. It was funded under the Spotlight Initiative and the UNDP COVID-19 Response & Recovery project. The campaign generated a lot of national and international interest and attention, and shone an even bigger spotlight on the fight to stop violence against women and girls.*

women who are fiercely protective of their own. The team love the name. Because it drives them to excel to becoming a courageous Lady Toa”.

This is part of an outreach and awareness campaign to highlight the issue of violence against women and children and building women champions. It also coincides with the onset of the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Campaign which promotes zero tolerance for violence against women and children, from November 25th to December

10th. The Fautasi o Toa Challenge hits right at the heart of this global campaign.

“This is an excellent example of using traditional sports as a vehicle to address the issue of domestic violence – which saw a concerning spike during the COVID-19 lockdown period – and gender biases that continue to discriminate against and prevent women and girls from reaching their full potential,” said UNDP Resident Representative, Jorn Sorensen.



Fautasi o Toa Celebration

Jordan Kwan

“The fact that the longboat is made up entirely of women, and captained by a champion female skipper, and competing with the men in the same competition under the same rules, sends a strong message that women’s equal participation, and levelling the playing field for both men and women, is very much possible.”

The Fautasi o Toa will be launched at an event to be held at the Apia Black Sand Beach, in front of the Sheraton Aggie Grey’s Hotel on Tuesday, November 3rd 2020, at 1pm.

# Resourcing grassroot organisations to reach marginalised groups.



In line with the LNOB principle and aligning with the objectives of the Spotlight Initiative, work with grassroots organisations through a UNDP public call for proposal enabled further reach to the women and girls and persons who are left furthest behind and facing interesting forms of discrimination. Direct ACCESS to grants assisted four

local grassroots civil society organisations representing; girls and women living with albinism/disability; young women, peer counselling programs; boys, young men who are victims and perpetrators of violence; SOGI/LGBTQI, non-binary men and women and sex workers.) This brings a total of 8 small to medium size 100% locally based

non-government, civil society organisations in partnership with UNDP supported under the Spotlight Initiative. Reflected as a good practice engagement model, support to non-mainstream small sized civil society organisations who can reach the minority individuals and groups who normally are left behind because of their existence in small numbers or due to indirect discrimination was facilitated through this flexible fit for purpose funding approach. The support falls under Pillar 6 of strengthening grassroots civil society engagement. With a total grant value of USD26,000 the grants helped the organisations with the implementation of their gender equality and prevention, advocacy or response initiatives in the context of the socio-economic COVID19 response.



## SAMOA FA'AFIINE ASSOCIATION

Partnership with Samoa Fa'afafine Association led to the implementation of Project RAHAB - lacing of the Scarlett thread, offered as a closed off session from the media and public given the sensitivities. The conversations around sex work for women, LGBTQI and non-binary citizens, is normally a very sensitive and taboo subject in Samoa. It is associated with strong cultural and religious beliefs and practices. However, addressing the gender biases, discrimination and stigmatisation and understanding the root causes and circumstances of why these women engage in this space are usually the first steps to addressing the harmful practices and gender inequalities based on the leaving no one behind principle.

The project with funding and facilitation support from the Spotlight Initiative, created a safe space that brought together 12 voluntary women employed in sex work to dialogue on their lived experiences, their paths shaped by childhood experiences



of trauma, sexual exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Nina who was one of the participants shared her story. 'I started sex work when I was 16. I am now 19 and six months pregnant with my fourth child. All I want in this world is for my baby to be born healthy, but for now, I'm only after a place to sleep, food to eat and a place to clean myself daily. Life is a struggle, and my line of work is the only opportunity a woman like me can have. I don't know any other option,' said another participant. Guided by the group of facilitators using the story of Rahab the heroine from the bible to inspire faith and self-worth amongst the women.

Through the art of story-telling and dialogue depicted by weaving three strands of cloths (mirrored to the lacing of Rahab's scarlet thread) the women learned about self-worth and restoring dignity despite one's circumstances.

## VOICES FROM THE SHADOW

The Clarence Sebastian Foundation supported with a small grant of USD5,000 to implement their 'Voices from the Shadows' or 'Leo mai le paolo' project funded under the UNDP Spotlight Initiative worked with a total of 106 direct beneficiaries who will be able to shine the spotlight on the darkness and treatment of albino children and adults in Samoa so they can safely and freely come out of the shadows. According to Reverend Siaso Salesulu, the title of the program voices from the shadows indicates how young people with albinism especially females feel in Samoa. They stay in the shadows because they are the subject of ridicule and scorn.

Children, women and all persons with albinism suffer multiple forms of violence and neglect. As a survival mechanism, they often tolerate the abuse and preserver on their own without any or very minimal support. What is very important in this context is, the funding from the Spotlight

Initiative is helping us raise awareness through the engagement with the children at an early age to nurture 'good values, behavior and responsible practices' within the family and community environment to break the gender misconceptions and beliefs that discriminates against women and persons with albinism.

" We are a family, a village, community and we are Samoans. Long after we are gone then our legacy will remain as testament to a time when we fought hard and long to remove us from the shadows (Reverend Siaso Salesulu CSF).

The CSF were supported to have in place for the first time in Samoa a promotional 'guideline which helps organisations deal appropriately and sensitively with females with albinism in communities and schools. The guideline launched on 30 September 2021 was developed to assist young people with albinism living in Samoa .

## BROWN GIRL WOKE

BGW was supported through a direct grant of USD5,000 to develop a youth friendly peer counselling service for youth relationships through gender- based violence prevention youth services. According to BGW while there has been increased acceptance of the unmarried youth relationships, commonly called dating in other countries, it still remains a difficult subject to broach and discuss.

These have direct impacts on access to family planning services, open discussion on healthy dating relationships, seeking counselling support and potentially reporting of violence to the police. UNDP Spotlight funded a twelve (12) weeks' training sessions and awards certification of 11 peer/ youth counsellors by a qualified counselor who graduated in a small ceremony on 2 December 2021. There were five (5) men aged 18 years and above and

six( 6 )women in the same age group. Upon the successful completion of the training the peer counselors are expected to provide referral advice to unmarried youth in dating relationships and implement programs on healthy communication/dealing with anger and challenges in relationships.

Six (6) of the graduating participants are connected to a school environment where they will be able to assist where relevant, four (4) are university students with two (2) secondary school teachers.



## TEEN CHALLENGE

Work with Samoa Teen Challenge to reduce re-offending through counselling (psycho-social and spiritual healing counselling) and rehabilitation services provided for 120 youth and adults; of this number 106 were males with 14 females. These are direct referrals from the Samoa Youth and family courts to the non- government organisations without core budget support from government work with young and adult offenders including their families.

From the 120 individual cases, 96 were gender- based violence primarily constituting of physical assault, with 99% males and 1% female. The 42 of the 96 are directly related to intimate partner violence, experienced between married couples with 23 of the offenders who are in de-facto relationships.

There were 17 survivors of violence who were also supported through the counselling and home visit support. A grant value of USD8,000 was awarded to provide counselling programs and home visit support, including establishing community support groups amongst church ministers, youth leaders and village women representatives) for reintegration of clients back into their family and community environment through Teen Challenge Samoa program. With the high number of males perpetuating violence, it does re-emphasis the need to increase programs for men/boys which has an impact on reducing and prevention of violence against women and girls.





# VOICES FROM THE SHADOWS

November 2 2021  
By Reverend Siaso & Sou Salesulu  
(Press Release)

The Clarence Sebastian Foundation is an organisation dedicated to assisting young people with albinism living in Samoa. The organisation relies solely on grants, donations, fundraising events and the support of the community for its sustainability.

*Under the Spotlight initiative programme we (CSF) were able to implement a programme which had as its Primary Objective: To promote a guideline (text) which helps organisation deal (appropriately and sensitively) with females with albinism in communities/schools.*

The Clarence Sebastian Foundation is the first of its kind to be established in Samoa.



There are no other organisations in Samoa that specifically deals with the needs of people with albinism. There are other organisations from abroad who work with people who have albinism in the Pacific but The Clarence Sebastian Foundation (based in Samoa) is the only organisation for Samoans with albinism.

The Clarence Sebastian Foundation (CSF) was registered in Samoa on the 2nd July 2012 as a Charitable Trust. I have been the Chairman of the Clarence Sebastian foundation since its establishment in 2012. On the 30th September 2021 we launched a guideline (text) which supports group deal (appropriately and sensitively) with females with albinism in communities/ schools. I was buoyed and confident after the launch. The guests were moved by a great spiritual message by Rev Mauga. The speeches by Faaofonuu and Hazel were powerful and

moving. However, I can only caution that with the “hoopla” over we are now tasked with working hard to build on a spectacular start.

The title of the programme- Voices from the shadows indicated how young people with albinism especially females feel in Samoa. They stay in the “shadows” because the Sun is injurious to their skin but they also stay in the shadows because they are the subject of ridicule and scorn.

People in Samoa are generally ignorant of the causes of Albinism. Furthermore, the unfounded information and negative comments further fuel hearsay and negativity towards these young people. They are classed as “Palagi” or Caucasians or worst they are listed as “cursed”/malaia. This is hurtful for the young people and their families who grapple with the issues and challenges that albinism bring for them. They have special needs and their need should also be respected and protected.



Louisa Apelu of UNDP underlined the focus of the Spotlight Initiative by putting a spotlight on the foundations and causative factors leading to violence against ALL females. The Spotlight initiatives strives to ensure that all women and girls of all diversities live a life free from violence.

Alofaaga mo outou uma, ia sautualasi le manuia mai le LAGI ona faatumu ane e Keriso e tusa ma lo outou agalelei.

Ia faamanuia atu le Atua I tou Susuga ma tou aiga mo leni tausaga.

- Special Acknowledgment
- Louisa Apelu - Spotlight Initiative UNDP Project Coordinator
  - (Hon) Toesulusulu Cedric Schuster (MP)
  - Rev Mauga Motu (FS)-Samoa National Council of Churches
  - Tuifaasisina Sieni Voorwinden (SIFA)

# Youth friendly Peer counselling Training



Graduation ceremony and introduction of peer counseling program with undergraduate students from NUS , USP and Young professionals who recently completed basic training on counseling.

This training opportunity was generously funded by the Spotlight Initiative and delivered through Brown Girl Woke, a local NGO which supports initiatives that empower youth. Several students at NUS, USP And young professionals responded to the open call for applicants and recently completed the three month training program.

The graduates of the program are able to assist in the referral of their peers to the existing counseling support provided by NUS and to be a sounding board to other students in need of a listening ear. They are also able to know the boundaries of what support they can provide and to prevent burnout.



It is critical to provide physical and virtual spaces to amplify youth voices on creative and innovative ways to prevent violence against young women and boys

**Doris Tulifau**  
Brown Girl Woke

Youth movement for young people empowerment and access to services for survivors of violence and education on fostering positive social norms through media platforms that are relevant to young people.



Civil Society Consultations for the development of the National Prevention Framework for ending violence against women and girls. The Prevention Framework is a whole of Samoa Framework led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development and the Community Development Sector partners and funded by the Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen.

# The *Lacing* of the *Scarlet* *Thread*



The Samoa Faafafine Association Project RAHAB funded by Spotlight Initiative through UNDP was a day of 'reflection, healing and self-care'.

Following the storyline of Rahab the Harlot, the girls went through a journey of self-discovery, unlearning and learning about self – worth, and restoring dignity and respect. Dr Taomi Quliho told the story of Rahab and the biblical reference and message behind it reminding

' When God chooses to use a person for his purpose, he will call upon you wherever you are at, no matter how low, how poor, how weak or unworthy you may feel. Like Rahab who was prostitute, a harlot, a nobody, God used her and with her obedience



faith, hope and act of kindness, in return God blessed her and her family.

Using three strands of scarlet material the "girls" wrote and reflected about their identity and self worth, their inner fears and external challenges and lastly their hopes and dreams . Guided by the team of facilitators the "girls" were able to unpack the three strands of their lives with reference to the story of Rahab which was an emotional and difficult process. The day concluded with the weaving of these three strands to form a thread depicting Rahab's scarlet thread as a symbolic act of restorative justice, healing, peace, and triumph.

A powerful presentation by Tuisina Yamanía Brown brought home the message of the Project to highlight the focus on health and wellbeing safety and protection and to restore faith in one's spirit regardless of their situation or circumstances.

She encouraged the girls to put themselves first, take a cooking or hospitality course at APTC, learn to save money and remember you





Spotlight Initiative

cannot be young and desirable forever. Louisa Apelu also highlighted the focus of the Spotlight Initiative by putting a spotlight on the root causes and contributing factors to violence against ALL women and girls and because sex-workers are unregulated, under the radar and taboo, they are extremely vulnerable and experience some of the most horrific undocumented types of physical, sexual and emotional violence. This is why Spotlight exists so that all women and girls of all diversities live a life free from violence.

*“When my mother died, there was no one to look after me and I was 8 years old. My father left and I was the only girl with 7 brothers. I was left in town and I was starving with no place to stay. Many men used me for sex and in the end, gave me money. I soon realized this was the only way I could survive and so I have been doing it ever since. I now have 10 children so I am now doing this work to support them”*



Project RAHAB is funded by Spotlight Initiative through UNDP. The Spotlight Initiative is a joint UN and European Union programme to END all forms of violence against ALL women and girls. Targeting in particular women and girls who are left furthest behind and facing intersecting forms of discrimination.

*Special Acknowledgment; Tuisina Ymania Brown -SFA Global Ambassador / ILGA World Co-Secretary General, Louisa Apelu - Spotlight Initiative UNDP Project Coordinator, Dr. Taomi Qiliho - Spiritual & Cultura Advisor , Aterina Samasoni Pele - UN Resident Coordinator Office-Communication Specialist*

# Providing targeted help and support services when it mattered most: Samoa Victim Support Group

At the start of the nation-wide lockdowns in 2020, \*Rita reached out to the Samoa Victim's Support Group (SVSG) for help, through their free help lines, funded by the Spotlight Initiative (SI). "Don't be afraid to take that step to seek help. You will take courage when you look into the eyes of your children" - Rita\*, SVSG client and violence survivor. Her husband had hit her, and she feared for her life and that of her children. SVSG were able to evacuate her during the first national lockdown, and she stayed at the Sakura House – SVSG's shelter for victims of domestic violence for eight weeks. Rita's story was first featured in Spotlight's newsletter in 2020.

"We are grateful for the timely partnership between SVSG and UNDP through the Spotlight Initiative," said Siliniu Lina Chang, President of SVSG. "It allowed a virtual

connection to be widely established in promoting the services of the 24/7 helpline, online counselling and access to help via social platforms. The message was loud and clear: help is not on shut down."

During the time Rita was with SVSG, she underwent counselling support. At the same time, her husband attended an anger management programme for perpetrators of violence. In the end, the couple managed to work out their differences and were reunited. Currently, the couple are providing staple food supply for the children at SVSG. During her time at the shelter, Rita saw that those were some of the pressing needs – taro, bananas, and other staples – and together with her husband, they are now by: Laufaleaina Lesa and Louisa Apelu donating these to the shelter.

Pepe Tevaga

SVSG Program Manager

Performing with children of the Campus of Hope Shelter who are survivors of Violence during the 16 DAYS OF HEALING Campaign

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

“It’s also a good way for us to monitor them. The couple are now working together, and they’ve patched things up. Their problems started when the husband was laid off from work, and it was a distressing time. They now have their own plantation, and they are now selling to provide for themselves as this has now become an income-generation activity for them, and they are also able to share with the children the excess of those supplies,” said Ms. Pepe Tevaga, SVSG’s Program Manager.

The helpline enabled the community to reach out to SVSG for help during the lockdown, a period which saw an increase in the risk of violence, abuse, and domestic violence, as both the parents and children were home together. Through the helpline, a total of over 3,000 women, men and children were able to reach out in times of distress from being unemployed and other factors, and SVSG was able to provide them with counselling. This support by the Spotlight Initiative through UNDP enabled the SVSG staff to be able to provide this critical service and reach out to the survivors of gender-based violence on time.

*“The assistance we received from the Spotlight Initiative was different in the sense that it really put the spotlight on the support services needed at the time, especially in light of COVID and the lockdown in 2020. The Spotlight Initiative enabled SVSG to become a frontline service provider through its virtual connection through the helpline, Facebook, and email. Instead of us being there out*



Essential Services & Human Rights Panel  
16 DAYS of HEALING Campaign  
Community Conversations on Responding and Preventing VAWG  
Vaito’a Toelupe UNWomen

*there in the community, we were able to work from home or from our office, connecting to the survivors through the virtual connection that was made possible through SI,” said Ms. Tevaga.*

These are some of the many ‘success stories’ to have come out of SVSG, especially in relation to the Spotlight Initiative via UNDP’s assistance to the organization, at the height of the COVID pandemic in Samoa.

“There were a lot of success stories throughout this time even though it was a challenging time. There were also a lot of lessons learnt,” said Ms. Tevaga. The SVSG partnership with the Spotlight Initiative also led to the formation of SVSG’s Domestic Violence Policy, which provides overall direction for its domestic violence work. It also provides practical guidelines on how to use the Sakura House, the domestic violence shelter for women.

The policy also ensures that SVSG complies with its vision and mission concerning survivors of violence. Another notable achievement to come from the SVSG-SI

partnership, is the support to the nofotane project with women who are married and are living with their husband’s family, during the COVID state of emergency lockdown.

*Through SI and the UNDP Covid Response Programme, funding assistance enabled the women to sew reusable cloth masks from the confines and the safety of their*



Spotlight Initiative



**Siliniu Lina Chang “MAMA LINA”**

Presidnet - Samoa Victim Support Group

Background by the brave survivors of the Campus of Hope Tuanaimato

Vaito’a Toelupe UNWomen

*own homes, and through this, they were encouraged to earn.*

“The SI helped boost the self-esteem of nofotane women who were in business, especially at the time of lockdowns. These women became the breadwinners for their families,” said Ms. Tevaga. Ms. Tevaga also said the SI provided an enabling environment during COVID which encouraged the women survivors of violence to become the breadwinners.

This was at a time when their husbands, who were usually the main income earners, were laid off from work due to border closure and lockdowns. The SI provided an enabling environment by putting the spotlight on what was needed at the time. The Nofotane project is funded by the European Union through the Government of Samoa’s Civil Society Support Programme, in partnership with SVSG.

With a focus on the promotion of gender equality through economic development, the ‘Nofotane’ launched in August last year their digital or online market, which SI was invited to participate in.

*“The need at this stage is to continue the momentum. We already have response services through helplines and case management, we also have early intervention through the Positive Discipline Parenting and Adolescent Development programmes, as well as community prevention through*

*engaging the community. The need at this stage is to continue being accessible; for our services to be accessible; to continue being relevant with the services we provide and continue to engage the community because through engaging the communities, this ensures sustainability.*



**Leilua Lino**  
 Ambassador for CHANGE  
 Performing at her "PEACE Garden"  
 an initiative to support Mental Health  
 and Healing for  
 survivors of violence

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

*It's a matter of continuing the momentum and getting the community to engage more,"* said Ms. Tevaga.

To respond to the spike in violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Initiative has programmed US\$51,000 to support SVSG as a frontline civil society organization. It is essential that gender-based violence support services remain available and accessible to women, children and at-risk groups at all times, including during the country's state of emergency.

The Spotlight Initiative has certainly lived up to its name, by focusing attention on the most pertinent issues at hand.

\*Rita – not her real name, her story being reprinted below. "Don't be afraid to take that step to seek help, you will take courage when you look into the eyes of your children." Rita a survivor of violence and a SVSG client. "Today will be different, I just know it." These were the words Rita\* uttered as she prepared to leave Campus of Hope, the domestic violence shelter that had been her sanctuary for the past three months.

After suffering physical and emotional abuse throughout her 13-year marriage, the 51-year-old mother of nine had sought refuge at Campus of Hope as a last resort.

The violence had come to a head one night during the COVID-19 lockdown, when Rita's husband began swearing at her and threatened to beat her. Rita fled next door to her sister-in-law's house, where her niece told her about ads she'd seen on social media for Spotlight Initiativesupported helplines for women experiencing violence. Samoa Victims Support Group (SVSG), who run the help line, immediately responded to Rita's call and offered her a space at SVSG's Campus of Hope, where she also received counselling. Rita's husband was taken into police custody and SVSG filed a protection order on Rita's behalf, as well as supporting her through the legal process. "I am so glad I sought refuge with SVSG when I did," says Rita.

*"They not only protected me, they also facilitated counselling for my husband and me which has led to the change that I*

*have seen in him and in our relationship."*

During her time at the shelter, Rita struggled with being separated from her children but remained determined to create a better future for herself and her family. She says she'd encourage other women experiencing violence to do the same.

*"Don't be afraid to take that step to seek help," she says. "You will take courage when you look into the eyes of your children."*

After leaving Campus of Hope, Rita and her children initially moved in with Rita's family while her husband underwent counselling for anger management and alcohol addiction through the SVSG Men Against Violence Programme.

His counselling continues, and he is sometimes accompanied to sessions by Rita. Rita says her speaking out motivated him to get help and has made him a better husband and father. Given the positive shift, Rita has moved back in with him though she continues to check in regularly with SVSG. Rita often returns to the shelter, but these days it's for a very different reason - she brings baskets of coconuts from her family plantation to help feed the women and children at Campus of Hope. It's her way of giving back to those who helped her during her darkest moments.

*"Promoting the services of the 24/7 helpline, online counselling and access to help via social platforms sent a message loud and clear:*

*help is not on shut down" - Siliniu Lina Chang, President of SVSG Spotlight Initiative in Samoa.*

Four million US dollars have been allocated through the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls in Samoa. This includes support to develop legislation and policies to eliminate violence against women, and to strengthen national and sub-national institutions in responding to the needs of victims and survivors.

**During the first six weeks of lockdown, SVSG responded to 415 calls through the helpline, with 46 distress calls resulting in police intervention to stop domestic violence in the home. Seventeen cases went to the courts for interim protection orders, and 42 cases of violence against women and children resulted in care from the SVSG shelter.**





# Spotlight Initiative



**“Peace, justice and sustainable development. None are possible without **gender equality and women's empowerment.**”**

**UN SG António Guterres,  
20 September 2017.**



Molie Simi-Vaai  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ministry of Justice & Court Administration

UNDP Samoa

# Law & Justice Sector prioritises the **PROTECTION** of women and girls

As a strong Samoan woman, mother, CEO and chairperson of the Law and Justice sector, Mrs Molie Simi-Vaai puts the 'spotlight' on the Law and Justice Sector's vision and speaks towards the Samoa we want. "The protection and safety of our people, including the protection of women and girls, is fundamental to the work of the Law and Justice Sector".

The Spotlight Initiative is coming to us at a crucial time of the Law and Justice Sector's work was a miracle. It was good timing as we were at a point in our journey where we were reflecting on our previous work and contemplating the purpose and how we were going to take this purpose to the future for the sector. The Samoa we were operating in ten or five years ago, is not the same. It was imperative the sector adjusted and rethink its purpose according to the emerging times and needs of the people and communities rather than doing the same thing over again.

Law and Justice is one of the 15 sectors in Samoa. The law and justice sector is made up of 15 diverse members from Government: Five seats are occupied by the Ministry of Police, Prisons and Corrections, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration (lead Ministry and secretariat for the sector). Six Non-Government Organisations or Civil Society: Samoa Umbrella for Non-Government Organizations, Samoa National Council of Churches, Village Matai (Council of Chiefs) Representative, Village Women Committee Representative, Village Representative, Samoa Law Society and four constitutional bodies: Office of the Attorney General, Public Service Commission, Office of the Ombudsman and the Samoa Law Reform Commission

The Spotlight Initiative's partnership through UNDP was very timely as it



Launch of the Law & Justice Sector Plan

Louisa Apelu UNDP

provided us with the financial and technical means to review and revamp the work of the sector through four key milestone achievements: (1) Samoa Law and Justice Sector Plan 2020/21 – 2025/26, (2) review and recommendations for strengthening the sector coordination mechanisms through its LJS coordination unit and steering governance committee, (3) REACH (Rights, Empowerment and Cohesion) outreach to remote villages and; (4) Sector Guide on how to respond to survivors.

The CEO testified to the great support from Spotlight which provided them with much-needed information and specifically what the Spotlight was bringing into this equation.

*“The protection of women and girls is such a fundamental issue that speaks to most of the themes and objectives of the Law and Justice Sector and we are so blessed with this partnership. It was pre-ordained. It lifted our hopes and enhanced the vision and prospects and where the sector was going with that support”.*

The process undertaken for the review and development of the new sector plan created the foundation and opened up the future direction of areas of focus and strengthening multisectoral partnerships for coordination and delivery, the whole review was done through wide, intensive consultations at national and community levels. The support of Spotlight helped us to reach our communities, our service delivery partners, civil society partners working with survivors of violence, persons with disabilities, gender diversities, marginalised groups.

The plan encompasses the prevention of domestic violence and gender-based violence as often we overlook the importance of prevention interventions from a gender lens in this sector. In relation to gender-based violence, it is part of breaking the law, and we must ensure laws and regulations are framed accordingly, making the connection with the current review of family laws, including laws on domestic violence, which are extremely important. Ensuring the accessibility of the services to our people, women and girls when in time of crisis, we were able to talk to victims and perpetrators and communities who were involved about domestic violence and being able to bring the awareness of what the sector is about and how people across all levels of the community are aware of such services and it was such a huge find for us in assisting in this service.

The weaknesses of the previous sector plan and coordinating mechanism was that we were more on our own journey as a Ministry, and less about inclusion and collaboration. Building the unity of the sector through capacity building and mentoring support, we were able to stay in the driver’s seat and effectively apply and link the leave no one behind principles of gender equality and inclusion in their everyday scope of work and coordinating functions. The unit is primarily responsible for coordinating the Steering Committee and the sector plan. The review of the unit and the governance steering committee has brought reinforced the awareness of the sector partners and agencies in how they can better work together.



MJCA Staff

Louisa Apelu UNDP



Government Officials & Law and Justice Sector Partners

Louisa Apelu UNDP



Law & Justice Sector Partners at the REACH Outreach led by MJCA

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

The REACH programme, taking advocacy of legal services to Tufutafoe, Savaii and Manono Island (covering the sub-villages of Lepuiai, Faleū, Apai, Salua) implemented during the 16 Days of Activism Orange Samoa in November 2021, brought all the sector partners, communities and Spotlight together. Manono Island, a remote community separated by an ocean of water, was an experience for the sector that opened up our eyes. "Being able to reach all of Manono Island by small dingy boats, and then we walked from one village to the other. It was extremely poignant because the sector had never been to Manono Island before. We give thanks to the community, to their committees and churches for utilizing this opportunity to voice their stories and to allow the sector to inform on the services we can provide in times of crisis".

Our duties and programmes cannot advance if one support beam is missing. Our main support beam for the sector is the civil society organizations. CSOs are the life link between the government and the people of Samoa. We cannot perform our functions as a sector if not for the CSOs. In the review of the sector plan, the coordinating unit worked hard to build this relationship with the relevant CSOs so it can be strengthened and we can work together in harmony. We needed to enable that, so we are all

singing from the same song sheet. It is a work in progress but the foundation that we started on from all the consultations and collaboration has been all positive. As the lead agency, we have made the effort to attend and see first-hand what they are doing. For example, we participated in the SUNGO CSO Taskforce meetings; at the same time, we are encouraging the participation of their expertise in terms of contributing to the work of the Ministry and the sector.



The guide is a practical tool to make it easy for the sector and agencies that are part of the work to have a collaborative approach in terms of dealing with the issue of DV from survivors' perspective. And the completion of the guide is much appreciated because it aligns with the national framework that is being set across the board being led by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. It filters down to the sector what we can do, from the lenses of the survivor and the means to put it in place and carry it through.



Furthermore, we have linked the areas of border security to gender-based violence. There is a massive, all-encompassing reach of the sector in the upholding of peace and safety of our people not only at our borders but also within our communities, and the application of the law in the protection of women and girls". Sharing her thoughts on some of the challenges, Ms. Vaai said, some that were brought to light were hard to swallow as they were honest reflections of the past and current performance. "But they are life lessons that we learnt, and it was never about putting blame on any Ministry or partner, however, it was about finding a way forward for the sector to meet the needs of Samoans".



Peseta Afoa Arasi Tiotio  
MJCA Consultant for the development of the GUIDE & Lead Trainer

Louisa Apelu UNDP

In the practical implementation of the plan, it is our hope to raise the bar of friendship and collaboration so our people, victims, survivors and at some point, the perpetrators, can receive the highest standard of service because the end goal is to prevent violence from occurring in the future.



Law & Justice Sector Partners at the Training of the LJS Response Service GUIDE

Louisa Apelu UNDP



# Spotlight Initiative



**Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating **human rights violations** in our world today.**



# Ambassador for CHANGE



## Leilua Lino, joins the 16 Days Orange Samoa End Violence Against Women and Girls NOW campaign.



My name is Leilua Lino and I am 22 years old. I am the voice for the girls and young women who survived sexual violence. I am the beacon of hope for the voiceless.

I live at the School of Hope, a home and safe haven for girls and young women who are, have experienced and impacted by physical, sexual and emotional violence and abuse. The school of hope is managed by Samoa Victim Support Group. I advocate for children, girls who are victims of violence and abuse.

I was only 9 years old when I went to live at the School of Hope because of the childhood violence I suffered at the hands of my abuser, known to me. You are all aware of my childhood circumstances as I have been advocating since I was a child. My story has been publicized and I have spoken out at many national including regional events.

I want to ask you this question? Why does violence happen in our homes and church settings?

**You know the answer, I also have the answer.**

The School of Hope is a safe place and refuge that has saved and transformed the

lives of many girls and women victims and survivors. We thank God for this place, which gives us hope and faith during our darkest moments, builds our resilience for a better future. A place where we are free, happy and we are survivors and overcomers.

Samoa, we need to be one in spirit and work together to STOP violence against women and girls Now.

Samoa Umbrella for Non-government organisations (SUNGO) key partner whose mandate is to advocate, mobilize and strengthen capacities of CSOs and communities hosted the 16 Days of Healing knowledge and sharing forum for CSOs to coincide with the global 16 Days of Activism centering on the theme Orange Samoa, End Violence Against Women and Girls Now. This is SUNGO's contribution to the collective efforts to bring together groups of champions with a shared goal and interest to showcase promising practices to encourage future partnerships and new initiatives as well as dialogue on their challenges. The space was created for CSO dialogue, and the advocacy platform was used to deliver strong messages to inspire confidence and hope in the hearts of those present for change, and that violence is a societal learned behaviour that can be unlearned. Samoa Victim Support Group was one of the technical partners during

this forum and Ms Leilua Lino was a keynote speaker alongside, the Honorable Prime Minister of Samoa, Afioga Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Ambassador for the European Union to the Pacific- Sujiro Seams, United Nations Resident Coordinator Samoa Dr. Simona Marinescu and Reverend Siaosi Salesulu Congregational Christian Church of Samoa.



Miss Leilua Lino works for abused children under the Samoa Victim Support Group. She is the Peace Ambassador of Change and Commonwealth No More Campaign. She uses her voice to share her resilient journey of advocacy and change to students, girl survivors of violence and public to make a difference and end violence against women and girls. In 2017, Leilua created a Peace Garden a space for peace, healing and joy for other girls and boys. Leilua was one of the 5 winners for the Commonwealth 70th Anniversary Innovative Sustainable Development Awards. Leilua has spoken at Spotlight Initiative national and grassroots level events, a partnership through the Samoa Victim Support Group and EU & UN Spotlight Initiative.

# Training the Trainers to respond to violence against women

By Laufaleaina Lesa UNDP

*How the Spotlight Initiative offered psychosocial support and psychological first aid training to local CSOs*



Participants and facilitators of the Training of Trainers on Psychosocial Support and Psychological First Aid to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, held at the Millenia Hotel, Apia in May 2021 with UNDP Resident Representative, Jorn Sorensen, Vice President, Peseta Arasi Tiotio and Chief Executive Officer of the Samoa Umbrella for Non Government Organisations, Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofoia (middle front).

UNDP Samoa

If the words 'psychosocial support and psychological first aid' are a mouthful, they are rightly so if you consider the magnitude of their meaning. Put simply, the phrase refers to the humane, supportive and practical help given to fellow human beings suffering serious crisis events.

It points to the kind of support offered by those who are in a position to do so, when terrible things happen to other people

they can reach. More importantly, it gives a framework for supporting people in ways that respect their dignity, culture and abilities.

The Samoa Umbrella for Non Government Organisations (SUNGO) and 23 other NGOs identified the provision of psychosocial support and psychological first aid as a glaring gap in the provision of services of most entities responding to people in the

communities in the immediate aftermath of extremely stressful events, such as violence against women and girls.

The need to train qualified trainers was highlighted in a capacity assessment for civil society (CSOs) and non government organisations (NGOs) conducted by the Spotlight Initiative in partnership with SUNGO in 2019.



The Samoa Victims Support Group (SVSG) is the largest local organisation that responds on a regular basis to cases of violence against women and children. SVSG President, Siliniu Lina Chang (3rd from left) is pictured here with UNDP Resident Representative (RR), Jorn Sorensen (in blue) and SVSG staff at their HQ – Campus of Hope – during the RR's visit to the campus in 2020. The UNDP component of the Spotlight Initiative helped fund some of the organisation's response during COVID-19.

UNDP Samoa

The Spotlight Initiative is coordinated under UNDP Samoa's Governance and Poverty Reduction Unit and works with UN Women, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office to deliver on the SDGs in a comprehensive manner to leverage comparative expertise.

It was launched in February 2019 in Samoa, at a high-level event attended by the then European Union Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, and the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) Executive Director, Dr Natalie Kanem.





European Union Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica looks on as the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) Executive Director, Dr Natalie Kanem speaks during the launch of the Spotlight Initiative in Samoa in 2019. Photo: UNDP Samoa

The Spotlight Initiative (SI) is funded by the European Union and the United Nations, committing €50 million (T\$148 million) to end violence against Pacific women and girls under this programme. Several UN agencies, including UNDP, are involved in implementing this Initiative.

The Pacific region has the highest recorded rates of violence against women and girls in the world. Seven countries in the region have prevalence rates above 50 per cent. Women's lifetime experience of violence, including sexual violence in the Pacific, ranges from 25 per cent to as high as 68 per cent.

Dealing with the women behind these shocking statistics was what the Training of Trainers (TOT) in May 2021 was all about.

"This is an initiative of SUNGO under the Spotlight Initiative to enhance the capacity of CSO trainers in the area of psychosocial support and psychological first aid. This is a skillset that is highly valuable in this time of COVID-19 and its social, economic and mental impact on everyone, in particular our women and girls," said SUNGO CEO, Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofoia.

The training mainly utilised the services of qualified local counsellors and trainers.

"The Psychological First Aid training for our Samoan people is of vital importance: we ask the question "Why" Aiseā? To know how to enhance emotional and Spiritual well being in order to continue with everyday life." The world is hurting in many ways Psychologically, Emotionally and Physically. Add into the mix a pandemic such as the one that we are facing, some will feel that life is just too much.



(l-r) UN Women's Spotlight Coordinator, Vaito'a Toelupe, SUNGO CEO, Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofoia, UNDP Resident Representative, Jorn Sorensen, and UNDP Spotlight Coordinator, Louisa Apelu at the TOT. Photo: UNDP Samoa/L.Lesa

Psychological first aid training offers various coping strategies that is culturally appropriate to Samoans. At the centre of supporting our Samoan people, spiritually based approaches in addition to emotional support work together in helping our people deal with stressful situations," said faletua Lemau Palaamo (Lead Co-Trainer).

About 50 participants from more than 15 CSOs attended the three-day training.



Lemau Palaamo (standing) of SoulTalk, a faith-based counselling organisation. She was one of the lead trainers for the TOT. Photo: UNDP Samoa/L.Lesa





Apelu Sports participants at the completion of the Training of Trainers course: (l-r) Marie Seumanu, Barbara Roache and Anasis Saipele. "We are honoured to up-skill so we may be able to provide quality services for our community." Photo: APELU Sports

*"Women and girls in sport continue to be victims and survivors of violence and we as a sport organisation must be able to offer support. We take our role as a sport organisation seriously in pushing gender equality within the sports sector and we will continue to strive for a safe and secure environment for all our female athletes – that's why being part of this training is crucial for us," said Anasis Saipele of Apelu Sports, an organisation that delivers programmes in the areas of Leadership, Gender and Sports.*

The training focused on the following key areas:

- mental health and psychosocial support
- guidelines from Pacific/Samoan approaches to counselling and support
- psychosocial first aid (PFA) action principles of Prepare & Look, and Listen & Link
- considerations prior to providing PFA and assistance
- rapid safety audit and assessment of urgent needs
- ethical guidelines
- self-care and team support.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing and new inequalities and vulnerabilities that have made progress to end violence insufficient. The loss of income, economic challenges and increased stress levels are risk factors that have contributed to high levels of reported domestic violence experienced by women and children. Any national response

and crisis management must include interventions to prevent violence against women and children," said UNDP Resident Representative, Jorn Sorensen.

Ending violence against women and realising gender equality are top priorities for UNDP and is an integral part of its work in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 5 of gender equality .

*"UNDP is very happy to support SUNGO's efforts as a CSO coordination mechanism to elevate capacity development opportunities to address violence against women and girls, through trainings such as these."*

The Spotlight Initiative's work is premised on the belief that when women and girls are empowered and can live lives free of violence and discrimination, society can take greater steps together to achieve the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.



Group work during the training gave participants the chance to break down the root causes of violence against women and girls, and how they can respond to these. Photo: Samoa Spotlight Initiative



# Changing the “NORM”

*Male champions for gender equality.*

By Louisa Apelu UNDP

This is the ‘Gender Equality today for a sustainable tomorrow’ journey by Saimasi, a male champion of the village of Nuusuatia on the southern coast of Upolu:

“I am a son of Nuusuatia. I used to treat family violence as a private matter like how my father used to treat it. But I’ve learnt and now understand that violence against women is not private, it is everybody’s business. I have a responsibility as I am connected to the issue”.

Saimasi Suataga Aso is a Male Champion from the village of Nuusuatia, Safata, a deeply traditional rural village with a proud history of Samoa’s culture and ways and home to 465 residents.

Saimasi reflected on his spotlight journey, in the early years, the issue of violence against women and children was not given the priority and seriousness it deserved. Some

**Saimasi Suataga**  
Nuusuatia Village Mayor / Pulenu’u  
SUNGO Community Trainer  
Spotlight Initiative Male Champion

UNDP Samoa

families would quarrel, a woman would be beaten up by her husband and the village treated it as a private family matter. No one had a right to intervene in domestic matters between husband and wife even when it comes to physical disciplining or smacking of children. It was perceived and common practice that families, couples deal with their own personal matters and does not involve the wider community compared to other non-domestic violence issues that are of common practice to bring before the council of chiefs. Even if one wanted to intervene, it was not justified nor seen as normal to get involved. This knowledge, behavior and social norms filtered to the village level, where these types of domestic matters were not seen to warrant village council intervention to discuss, resolve and put a stop too.

Upon my participation in the trainings, I realized we have been doing it wrong for years, we were held by social beliefs that we had normalized as the right pathway. I was given a reality awakening by the Spotlight that There is a village and community responsibility to prevent and stop violence. I have a responsibility to intervene and help a woman who is being beaten and smacked around by her husband including children. The Spotlight Initiative provided the necessary trainings to help place the responsibility back to the people and give them the confidence to be the solution.

Saimasi is a Community Trainer with the Samoa Umbrella for Non Government Organization (SUNGO) under the Spotlight Initiative. He has undertaken trainings to help him understand gender-based violence, empowerment of women, psycho-social support and First Aid psychological trainings to address violence. Armed with his new-found knowledge, Saimasi testifies through the Samoan proverb, "E afua mai mauga manuia o nuú" – The blessings and prosperity of a village springs and flows from the top of the mountains.

The trainings helped me go back to my village, have informal conversations with other village members and then officially took it up as part of the village council conversations in their meeting agenda. With the village council I have some influence as I am also a chief and the village mayor, and as my entry point to head straight to the top of the village hierarchy. The prosperity of a village where there is zero violence starts from its leadership. What was interesting with the first village council meeting, was there was an interest and growing awareness to tackle the issue of domestic violence but lacked the commitment and how to make it happen.

*Our village never used to talk about these issues openly before. Now the council are taking the issues of intimate partner violence and child abuse seriously, when we gather to discuss issues, we would put violence against women and girls (VAWG) on the meeting agenda. As a result, the village council implemented a Village Safety Committee to look into intimate partner violence (IPV) and VAWG.*

The committee is made up of all church ministers, senior village council and senior women representatives who are leaders and respected in the village. The committee support the operationalizing of the council's commitment to tackling domestic violence, keeping peace and harmony in our village. The committee has intervened in 10 cases of disputes between couples, which could have escalated had they not. The council

have been convinced, and now they have reinforced a village rule,

*"No more hitting of women and children".*

Furthermore, a historical village first has also occurred where women and the village council meet together to dialogue on matters and bring solutions to the table in a collective collaboration.

"Bringing women into the decision-making forum is an empowerment milestone for our women. And as a result, after 35 years, the village council has instigated the goal of building a women's center which has been constructed," said Saimasi.

We need to continue and take the program to the village level to support the village council in doing their part to eliminate all forms of violence.

Saimasi attended four trainings coordinated by SUNGO, in partnership with UNDP and supported by UN Women and UNICEF. The trainings fall under Pillar 6 of the Spotlight Initiative with a strong focus on strengthening civil society engagement to address gender norms and behaviours to prevent violence against women. A total of 23 organizations including Saimasi, a trained male community facilitator under SUNGO, attended all the trainings.



# *Pioneering the* **Women's** **Movement** *in Samoa*

By Louisa Apelu UNDP

She's a legend in the women's movement in Samoa, an influential member of the Vailele Council of Women, and a proud mother of two. She's a former Assistant Chief Executive Officer for the Programs, Training and Community Development Division of the former Ministry of Women Affairs. Palanitina Tupuimatagi Toelupe, at the national and community level, pioneered the domestication of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). She continued to hold the same senior executive management role for the then newly set up Division for Women under the revamped Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. She then moved to the Ministry of Health to take up the Chief Executive Officer position, and later, the Director General of National Health Services post.



**Palanitina Tupuimatagi Toelupe**  
SNCW Technical Advisor  
Vailele Village Women's Committee member  
Consultant | T&T Consult

UNDP Samoa

Palanitina is a deacon for the Vailele Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, a Director on the Board for Land Transport Authority, and continues to shape women's development in Samoa as a technical consultant, under which falls her recent work on the 'contextualization' of the Spotlight Initiative's gender-responsive budgeting initiative.

The gender equality trailblazer shared with UNDP how her partnership with UNDP, through the joint European Union and United Nations Spotlight Initiative, has impacted the work of women's movement in Samoa. Reflecting on the experience that has been and is particular to her work with the Samoa National Council of Women (NCW), Palanitina said: "I am their technical advisor, I am tasked to ensure programmes are developed and implemented, as well as ensure these programmes enhance and advance the capacity of women, not only traditionally but technically as well."



Taufanua Nati Lemanu  
Vailele Sui Tamaitai o le Nu'u  
Government Women Representative

Palanitina's involvement with NCW is a natural progression. In fact, she regards it as more of a calling: "Our grandmothers and mothers were part of this movement, so naturally we would be too. The NCW is the longest non-government women's movement in Samoa. In 2015, I was recruited to design and support the implementation of the institutional revival of the NCW, with a constitutional focus on local governance by advancing women's leadership skills in political and public life. The institutional strengthening initiative focused on the women members of the council. In the same year, the NCW received financial support to implement across 40 villages in Samoa, a grassroots advocacy campaign to prevent violence against women and children. I was tasked to integrate the two programmes, build the leadership capacity of women and through good governance they will be able to advocate for the protection of women from all forms of violence. These leadership characteristics are linked to women's traditional roles as the daughters of the village, wives of high chiefs and orators, and wives of untitled men. These gendered roles are integral when it comes to local governance and development in their families and villages.

It is envisioned that empowering women with leadership skills through family and village welfare activities for example, is the pathway to the betterment of women's lives. That has been the technical coherence and integration approach with programmes I was fortunate to support NCW with. The NCW is also privileged to have been given support from AusAID, and the EU and UN Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women through UNDP and UN Women." Palanitina regards her role as Technical Assistant as critical in ensuring linkages are made, and that all these projects are integrated. "With the Samoa Spotlight Initiative through UNDP, the assistance was quite substantial. We were able to train 10 NCW women each from seven villages



Vailele Women's Committee  
SNCW Member

in Savaii and 10 NCW members in eight villages in Upolu. We trained more than 300 women. The trainings incorporated concepts of transformational leadership with the principles of Spotlight: Leaving No One Behind, Do No Harm, gender transformation, informed by local context and ensuring that through the village women, they can identify the women who have fallen through the gaps. We explained the purpose and outcomes of Spotlight and emphasized it was not only about domestic violence prevention but being able to target and identify those who need it most. It was extremely important that the language and training content was unpacked and tailored to suit the community women, otherwise it is easy to get cross cutting issues overlapping with each other and then application becomes difficult.

Naturally, in the village setting, it is the older generation of women who attend the trainings. A strategic call went out to the women's councils that it was mandatory for participants to have a young woman and

an untitled woman that is married into the village (nofotane). Through the training of the 10 women from each village, we were then able to pair them up after the training, the older women from the initial training and the younger women having come in for the first time. There were five pairs in each village, and they were tasked to do five informal conversations on any issues that relate to domestic violence, whether it be alcohol use, family harmony, family dynamics, relations, or poverty, they were encouraged to talk about it. The women were tasked to facilitate conversations that would concentrate on primary prevention. The important thing was to remind the women that they are not qualified trained specialists, but they were qualified mothers. And their conversations had to be done from a maternal approach, or a woman approach or a sister approach.

It was important that with all our singing from Spotlight at the national level, that we reach the nofotane woman (married woman living with husband), the woman

with disability or the fa'afatama woman (woman who identifies as male), and that the villages know. The results of the women's advocacy within their own villages triggered conversations and what came through their sharing with me was that the women were picking up a whole lot of problems that would not have been forthcoming if they were invited to attend a forum, symposium, training, or national conference.

People were starting to warm up to the idea of having someone to talk to. And they were starting to converse about the differences they were having as couples, problems they were having with children, children who said parents had too high expectations, and problems of children not wanting to go to church, and not believing in the church,

that it was helping them at all. Somehow, the conversations achieved the purpose that we planned for; what we wanted to do was take the women back to basics and start from basics, even if the basics mean having difficult conversations. The basics are community conversations which are focused on primary and primordial prevention. What is good continues to be good and what is bad, they can do something to address it.

The women were encouraged to use their roles as daughters of the village, and wives of paramount chiefs and orators to continue to have a say, as that is the pathway to village governance. It was also strategic to engage the women village representatives (Sui Tamaitai o le Nu'u), as she has a spot



Elders of the Vailele Women's Committee



in the village council and an opportunity to speak, being the intermediary between government and the village in relation to matters pertaining to women and children's development. The women advocated through this movement and presented requests directly to the council of chiefs that there be an in-house village policy to address domestic violence and ban domestic violence.

Women have reported that villages like Vavau, Siutu, Vailele, Taga, Asaga, Samatau, Siumu i Sisifo and Faleapuna have now adopted anti domestic violence or intimate partner violence policies and interventions." Palanitina believes the support for continuity of programmes must be ongoing, as well as the mentoring and capacity building for women council members. The work of building sustainable women leaders and influencers so that it becomes intergenerational must be ongoing and supported by direct access to technical and financial resources.

*"O Samoa ua uma ona tofi – Samoa has been defined. Therefore, the women in the village are comfortable and happy in their roles as long as we support them in their leadership roles, because when we come away at the end of the day, they still live in the village, still in the confines of the traditional make-up, that should be one of peace and harmony in the village."*

The support for strengthening women's movement is under Pillar 6 of the joint EU & UN Spotlight Initiative programme. The focus of the Spotlight Initiative is to eliminate violence against women and girls as well as domestic intimate partner violence. The Samoa National Council of Women is a lead implementing partner for UNDP under the Spotlight Initiative.



Vailele Women's Committee  
Malae o Niniva ma Punialava'a



# Spotlight Initiative



**“The first step in eliminating violence is for all the key players – in a family, in a community, in society – to begin to have conversations and say **‘this is not right, and it must stop.’**” –**

**UN Deputy Secretary-General  
Amina Mohammed,  
15 September, Al Jazeera  
‘Inside Story’**



# FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION



## Samoa Family Health Association

The Samoa Family Health Association (SFHA) collaboration with the Ministry of Education Sports & Culture to implement in and out of school comprehensive sexuality and Family Life Education under Pillars 3 and 4 of the Spotlight Initiative Samoa Country Program,



SFHA Partners, Lealaiauloto Liai Siitia CEO & Leulua'ialiiotumua Faagutu Samuelu Vaalotu MJCA



## CSE Training of Trainers

The Samoa Family Health Association, as chair of the OOS CSE, hosted its first local facilitators training to equip facilitators with the relevant knowledge and skills to deliver CSE programs for young people in Samoa. The training commenced on the 12th- 13th with its first lot of participants and it's second lot on the 19th- 20th of May.

including: Ministry of Women Community & Social development (MWCSD), Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, Ministry of Health (MOH), Samoa Red Cross Society (SRCS) Nuanua o le Alofa (NOLA), Faataua le Ola (FLO), Samoa Family Health Association (SFHA), Samoa Victim Support (SVSG), SEN- METI and Apelu Sports.

Participants were made up of representatives from various organisations

This training was done in collaboration with the FLE consultant and MESC.

through UNFPA. The partnership resulted in the Training for Trainers for Out of School Family Life Education consisting of youth from village communities and facilitators from the government, civil society and sports networks.

who has been at the forefront of advancing and promoting women's sexual and reproductive health and rights including survivors of sexual violence at the national and community levels.

The SFHA assisted the Ministry of Health to roll-out their GBV Standard of Operating Procedures for the health sector. The Samoa Family Health Association (SFHA) is a member affiliate of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and is led by the strong and courageous Lealaiauloto Liai Iosefa-Siitia a genderquality champion

In addition, Mr Gutu Michael Faasau the president of the SFHA Youth Advisory committee who is also a trained facilitator for the FLE program was the youth representative for the Samoa Spotlight delegation to the Global Symposium held in Cancun Mexico in September 2022.



SFHA Partners, Namulauulu Tautala Mauala SRC, Tracey Mikaele NHRI, Gatoloai Tili Afamasaga Consultant, Lealaiauloto Liai Siitia CEO

# FLE Curricular

## on Prevention of Violence

Samoa Family Health Association as Chair of the Out Of School CSE subcommittee hosted a workshop for representatives from various organizations to worked together in developing a curricular on the prevention of violence for out of school family life education.

Informative and in-depth conversations were shared in jointly developing this curricular as one of the key outcomes of the Spotlight Initiative supported by UNFPA.



Charles Dean NHRI & UNFPA Consultant  
Mae'e Ualesi Silva with SFHA Team



SRHR & Education Champions Leiloa Aasa & Samasoni Moala  
Both have been active leaders in the education sector advancing the FLE, CSE and DV IPV Research under the Spotlight Initiative



Namulauulu Tautala Mauala Secretary General Samoa Red Cross with  
Rowena Faaiuas-Brown of Apelu Sports



Emile Adams UNFPA Spotlight Focal Point with UNFPA Consultant Gatoloai Tili Afamasaga  
supporting the work of the SFHA CEO Lealaiauloto Liai Siitia

**Accessible education  
and awareness of  
men, women and  
young people about  
Reproductive Health  
and Rights is  
fundamental for  
effective primary  
Prevention against  
Violence!**

**Leiloa Talosaga Asaasa  
Samoa Family Health Association**

As the leading sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services provider in Samoa, the Samoa Family Health Association (SFHA) delivers family planning (FP) and reproductive health (RH) services in Samoa



**Spotlight Initiative**  
To eliminate violence  
against women and girls



Civil Society Consultations for the development of the National Prevention Framework for ending violence against women and girls. The Prevention Framework is a whole of Samoa Framework led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development and the Community Development Sector partners and funded by the Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen.



# MESC Taking the lead in Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Research & Trainings

Presentations by participants of the Training



European Union in the Pacific and UN Samoa #Spotlight Initiative team up with the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture Samoa in a number of consultations that are putting the spotlight on students, teachers, staff in the education system and how they are affected by Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence.

This activity is supported by the UNESCO Pacific Office

Research on the impact of DV/IP on the education sector is in progress with consultations commencing in 2021. The partnership with MESC focuses on promoting a better understanding of how issues of DV/IPV affect the education sector and in developing prevention measures by engaging teachers and supporting students.

The aim is to assist in identifying possible institutional solutions that would help prevent and respond to issues of DV/IPV. While internal recruitment processes led to some delays in commencement of research, the required technical experts were mobilized. The initial stage included the design and

Spotlight Champion in the Education Sector Samasoni Moala Welcoming the participants to the Training



MESC ACEO Tuiloma Inipene Simanu facilitating group discussions



planning of the research to be carried out in schools where students, teaching and non-teaching staff participated and helped in a better understanding of the impact of DV/IPV. The research also explored knowledge, beliefs and behaviors (KBB) of students and staff on issues of gender equality and DV/IPV. Finally, it was designed to identify ways through which students and staff can be supported within the education system providing a safe environment.

The research team engaged with 37 children, 33 principals, 34 teachers and 48 non-teaching staff from 60 primary and secondary schools in Savaii and Upolu. The outcome and recommendation from this research will inform the research allocation and programming to address DV/IPV in education institutions and on required support for children impacted by family violence. A training package is developed based on the research results and the



Spotlight UNESCO/ MESC Consultant Matā'afā Desmond Amosa



MESC ACEO Tuiloma Inipene Simanu



MESC Team Asiata Melvin Solomona



Presentations by Principals and Senior Teachers from across Samoa.

produced Training Needs Analysis (TNA). The TNA made use of the research outcomes to help the trainer identify the individuals' current level of competency, skill or knowledge in the area of Gender Based Violence (GBV) Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in school context. The TNA will also inform the needs assessment and policy decisions for the protection of children in school environment.

The findings and recommendation of the research project also informed the development of a training package for Training of Trainers which aims to build the capacity of teachers and non-teaching staff to improve their understanding of children's family context in terms of DV/IPV, and the ability to engage with them and alert contact points in their social protection systems.



“ We need to put the  
'SPOTLIGHT on village governance  
churches, government, parents,  
and all our partners, so we can  
unite and end the violence affecting  
our children, NOW.

#16DaysOfActivism2021

Hon. Seuula Ioane Tua'au  
Minister of Education, Sports and Culture

Launching of the MESC & UNESCO  
Research Finding on the Impact of  
Domestic Violence & Intimate Partner Violence  
on Education in Samoa.

Photo © MESC | Meritiana Oti





# The role of Academia and Research in eliminating violence against women and girls.

By Louisa Apelu UNDP & Mailo Helen Tanielu CSNRG

Mailo Helen Tanielu of the CSO NRG holds a talanoa session with Dr. Torise Sau - Neemia of the National University of Samoa Academics and Researchers.

The root causes of violence is the result of uncontrolled anger and the desire to have power over a person and to dominate a person. It is to do with the precondition of the mindsets of our people. Our mindsets have been conditioned by Christianity in the

past. Where we went from being the people who were conditioned by the setting of a family where the 'matai' or chief was the head of the family.

*However, with the arrival of Christianity, we were given the analogy of the family from the Christian teachings and that analogy had the father as the head of the family. The heads of our families became specifically gendered for men.*

This androcentrism we have with our upbringing with religion and culture which is inseparable for a Samoan has conditioned our children to grow with this mindset to believe that the imbalance of the patriarchal system gender wise is normal and natural.

We now have the sustainable development goals that we are trying to achieve and one of the critical goals is SDG 5 focusing on Gender Equality. With this huge imbalance we need to deal with that conditioning.

At the National University of Samoa, we have curriculum advisory groups, and the center for Samoan studies driving the research on issues that are important. One of the most important issues to the university right now is gender equality. We are always trying to balance out this imbalance, this androcentrism conditioning that our students are coming with, by bringing in new text books written and developed by women. This is allowing both our male and female students to understand the narratives from these women's perspective. It is also empowering not only for girls, women but for our men too. It is a new wave of information that they are picking up and help their minds develop.

Young women Academics studying at the National University of Samoa





# Performing arts and creative actions to end violence against women and girls.

Aterina Samasoni Pele - UNRCO

By Aterina Samasoni-Pele UNRCO

My Village, My Pride brings church and traditional leaders, women and youth to take courageous and creative actions to end DV and IPV.

Lagi Pula a 56-year-old mother in Satitooa Aleipata believes that performing arts has always been a traditional platform of communication to transpire messages and lessons that drive social change and reinforces unity.

*"Performing arts is even more exhilarating because it accentuates our insights of issues and our natural creativity to address these issues, through the art of song and dance," she added.*

Satitooa, a village situated around the east coast of Upolu with over 500 residents, is one of the eight villages working with the Samoa Victim Support Group in the 'My Village, My Pride' advocacy campaign to mobilize the creative sector and traditional institutions for ending domestic violence and Intimate partner violence. This campaign brings the church and traditional leaders, youth and women to lead and take courageous and creative actions to end domestic and intimate partner violence.

It was like any other celebratory event of songs and dances for Satitooa, except for

this event on the last weekend of July, it was about a village uniting to end domestic violence and intimate partner violence.

It was a full house, honoured with the presence of church leaders, traditional leaders, women - young and old, the youth and children. This audience was truly captivated by contemporary dances and the performance of traditional folklores through dance and songs. But through these performances was the key message, My Village, My Pride and it is their pride as residents to ensure that Satitooa is a village where every woman is respected, is safe, is



empowered and protected from all forms of violence.

It is believed that traditional Samoan culture supports male respect for women and girls. However, Samoan society has been changing, which has created another reality that legitimizes violence as traditional values give way. Despite this, there is very little discussion about Samoan culture and what it has to offer for respect for women and girls in families and intimate relationships. Often "culture" itself is attributed as a factor of violence. Using

our cultural traditional arts as a medium to discuss sensitive issues such as gender-based violence is community-oriented and appropriate.

The campaign informs the magnitude of the issue through the key messages including; domestic and intimate partner violence is a widespread, persistent and devastating reality in the country but this is not Samoan culture, women and girls are cherished members of the Samoan society and they are not to be subjected to physical or sexual violence and it is our responsibility to stop

it; Samoan tradition teaches boys and men to respect women and girls, not to kill or abuse them.

The Campaigns encourage 'new thinking' to use traditional values to prevent domestic and intimate partner violence and must call on everyone to stand with domestic and intimate partner violence survivors.

The Satitooa event programme included a debate on the topic that Women is the lifeline of a Family, Women's and Youth Performing Arts Competition, based on the

different artefacts from Satitooa that either address violence or promotes peace and pride in one's community.

The Spotlight Initiative Samoa - Victim Support Group Advocacy Campaign on "Mobilizing Creative Sector and Traditional Institutions For Ending Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence" is led by UNESCO with the support of the Resident Coordinators Office, the UN Women and the UNDP.



Aterina Samasoni Pele - UNRCO



# Promoting performance art forms to galvanise Samoan communities for **EVAWG ACTION**



Dr. Fetaomi Tapu-Qiliho  
UNESCO Spotlight Coordinator  
Consultant

Combatting an intersectional modern social issue through traditional knowledge forms specific to indigenous platforms is a novel and apt approach for our context. The strength of the methodology utilised in the concerted effort toward eliminating domestic violence through the 'My Village My Pride' campaign was its applicability. The place-based approach to information sharing and knowledge brokering enabled localised intergenerational awareness raising and advocacy for a devastating global phenomenon. In this approach, stories specific to geography and genealogy were animated through the arts as cultural currency in a global conversation about gender and development.

Hampered national development is attributed to high instances of domestic violence in our villages which are a cornerstone of our society and the bedrock of our nation-building. Any attempts therefore to curb the trends in increased domestic violence in our Samoan homes required a contextual approach.

The notion that one's village is a source of pride for one indicates the significance of place and space to a Samoan. Context is critical to success in any endeavour. In a Samoan understanding, one's indigenous space anchor's one's identity and orientates

one relationally. Place-based knowledge and spatial context inform one's personhood. Fundamental aspects of our daily lives and how the world is framed are informed by our local knowledge forms honed through the wisdom of our ancestors. Deeply embedded in our place-based knowledge systems transmitted over centuries through our art forms are significant markers of identity.

In a structured society in which gerontocracy is valued and within which group boundaries are status and gender-dependent, the use of traditional performing art forms animates messaging conducive to fostering intergenerational knowledge brokering. The use of place-based knowledge and context-specific performance art forms to galvanise Samoan communities into action for ending domestic and intimate partner violence was critical to advocacy and awareness raising in the Spotlight project.

The traditional art forms of oratory and storytelling are repositories of knowledge and combined with the performance and visual arts were an effective medium for contextual information sharing through advocacy and awareness during the Spotlight campaign. The participants and communities gathered to witness creative Spotlight-specific messaging through multi-sensory arts approaches to advocacy on a sensitive issue that cuts across all aspects of daily life. The intergenerational, diverse and ecumenical gatherings that eventuated over the campaign cycle were indicative of the appropriateness of the intervention made through this Spotlight activity.

*The interface between the arts and advocacy creates space for intra-generational and gendered participation in activism.*

The intervention design incorporated women, men and youth groups and its effectiveness for advocacy was evident. Its utilitarian and educational value were strengths of the approach as communities were enabled to receive traditionally coded messages and empowered to re-evaluate the impact of violence and build capacity in a non-confrontational platform. Youth participation crucial to the sustainability of this campaign was incorporated into this methodology for advocacy and awareness raising and was exceptionally well implemented.

My Village My Pride and its underlying methodology which utilised creative arts and traditional knowledge for advocacy in Spotlight was relevant to the context, appropriate to the sensitivities surrounding the issue and an invaluable contribution at the local level to a global campaign.





UN Resident Coordinator Dr. Simona Marinescu with Senior Journalists & Chief Editors from the Media Industry

and sustainable. It is important the media is afforded the space to learn about development projects from its inception to implementation so we understand the full story but not brought in only to report on events. There has been adequate training for the media to cover sensitive issues such as violence against women and girls. But the engagement of the media needs improvement so the stories, terminology and awareness is consistent.

*I applaud the Spotlight Initiative for consistently engaging the different mediums of the media and using these platforms to spread awareness and advocacy to communities with different access to television, radio or newspaper.*

*This Breakfast with the Media is a great follow up from the Community Conversations on Prevention which had a specific session on the role of the Media in EVAWG"*

The UN Resident Coordinator Dr. Simona Marinescu provided an overview of the Spotlight Initiative Samoa Country Programme and the significant role of the media in Pillar 3 focusing on Prevention. Dr. Simona reiterated the unique make up of the Spotlight Initiative with 5 Recipient UN Organisations (UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO and UNICEF) coordinated by the UNRC Office working closely with the Government of Samoa and Civil Society Actors to achieve the goals of the initiative

# The critical ROLE of the MEDIA in EVAWG

The EU - UN Spotlight Initiative programme has initiated a series of media engagement activities to reinforce the role of the media as an essential partner of the UN in the implementation of all its development programmes and support.

The Breakfast with the Media event is the first of these media activities. It was the opportunity to meet the media and where they were well informed of the scope, the results and the challenges of the Spotlight Initiative programme. The activity also facilitated a conversation on the challenges the media continue to face as they report on Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence.

Lagi Kerisoma a respected senior Samoan Journalist and President of the Samoa Media Council JAWS stated " Every opportunity to engage the media is critical but the engagement has to be consistent





#2: Illustrate and promote the impact and results of Spotlight Initiative-supported interventions: by finding, sharing and promoting the stories of women and girls whose lives have been positively transformed by Spotlight Initiative-supported interventions.

#3: Provide communications for development support to strengthen Spotlight Initiative's programme design and implementation: by influencing the creation and delivery of behaviour-change and culture-shift activities, campaigns and initiatives.

#4: Ensure visibility for the Spotlight Initiative Implementing partners in (Government CSO etc) and its donors and partners.

Galumalemana Rona Lee of the University of the South Pacific invited three of her Media Students to participate in the session.

*"The orientation for fair, inclusive and accurate reporting on gender issues for the next generation of journalists is so important and spaces like this Breakfast with the Media can provide this exchange of knowledge, best practice and experiences. Bridging this generational gap even within the Media sector is an essential first step to address the power dynamics, inequalities and stereotypes within the media profession that affects female journalist before moving to report on GBV & EVAWG in general to the public."*

in meeting Samoa's priorities for EVAWG.

Dr. Simona also reminded the well attended session with the Media, the intention of Spotlight is to complement and build on existing efforts by Samoa on GBV/EVAWG particularly focusing on Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence. The media plays a powerful role in changing mindsets and supporting Prevention efforts nationally because of their direct access to individuals and communities. The content the media disseminates to the public in its different platforms can be well supported with the latest evidence on the impacts of violence on women and girls and society in general.

According to Dr. Simona the Media plays a major role to

#1: Raise awareness of violence against women and girls and its prevalence by publicizing data and supportive facts, creative messaging to key audiences, exhibiting thought leadership on violence against women and girls, and media sensitization and training.

As a result of the Breakfast with the Media, the Spotlight Initiative has been well reported and covered nationally. Spotlight events have been featured in both private and government press, TV Stations and Social Media platforms.

Spotlight has become a household name with a direct reference to being the leading initiative for EVAWG in the country.

The work of the media in covering the implementation of Spotlight has also facilitated national ownership of the programme with representation from all levels particularly the isolated and rural communities seeing their community level initiatives represented on national television or newspaper.

Enabling future spaces like this Breakfast with the Media funded by the UNRCO with support from the Spotlight RUNOs will become a priority for the Spotlight Initiative moving forward.



Lagi Kerisoma JAWS President & Talamua with Jack Seumanutafa of SBC TV1



Adele Fruean Samoa Observer Reporter



Maina Misa of Samoa Global News with Samoa Observer Editor Alexander Reeney



Mautia Leota Raymond Schuster  
Samoa District Court Judge

# Putting the Spotlight on *Domestic Violence* in Savai'i

*District Court Judge Mautia Leota Raymond Schuster*



The presence and engagement of District Court Judge Mautia Leota Raymond Schuster and the UN Resident Coordinator Simona Marinescu on Day 2 of the CSO National Reference Group (NRG) Quarter 3 2021 Meeting elevated the value of the role that the NRG plays in the Spotlight Initiative programme.

The conversation with the Judge touched on the challenges and the support needed for rehabilitation and reintegration programmes; CSO voluntarily provides the services, and alcohol is the contributing factor to about 80% of Domestic Violence DV cases.

The Judge shared an alarming number of DV cases per month in Savaii as evidence that supports, addressing DV in Savaii needs to be a priority as well.

Savaii is the largest (area 1,694 km<sup>2</sup>) and highest (Mt Silisili at 1,858 m) island both in Samoa and in the Samoan Islands chain. The island is home to 43,958 people (2016 census), and they make up 24% of the population of Samoa. The island's

only township and ferry terminal is called Salelologa. It is the main point of entry to the island, and is situated at the east end of Savaii. Women and Girls who live in Savaii are extremely isolated from the GBV/ EAWG and access to justice services available in Salelologa. This is also the reason for prioritising the 400 COVID-19 GBV Prevention Packs for women and girls in Savaii during the COVID Lockdown.

The remarks by District Court Judge Schuster resonates with the priorities of Spotlight and the principle of LNOB. As a result of this critical intervention from the Justice Sector, the development of the National Prevention Framework for EAWG led by the MWCSO and funded by UNWomen conducted thorough community consultations in urban Savai'i - Salelologa and the Rural Savaii in Asau. Maximum effort and planning was in place to ensure the participation of women and girls from the most isolated locations in Savaii was resourced and enabled. In addition to this, the 16 Days of Healing ORANGE SAMOA Torch of Hope campaign led by the MWCSO and the Samoa Police &



CSNRG In Person Meeting

Prison Correction Services SPPCS together with the Community Development Sector partners focused an adequate period of time in Savaii. The Torch of Hope was circulated to every rural and isolated village in the coastal and inland areas of Savaii. An extremely challenging feat for MWCS and SPPCS but necessary in reaching the most vulnerable and LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND. The Torch of Hope campaign across the whole of Samoa including three islands was supported by UNWomen and supported by UNDP and UNESCO with coordination by the UNRC Office.

Equally important at the CSNRG meeting was the presence of the CSO representatives and members of Village Safety Committees that are involved in the implementation of the Village Safety Plans and Women's Transformational Leadership. They shared the success of their prevention programmes and indicated their needs for further support.



CSNRG Lualua Namulauulu Tautu

Namulauulu Lualua Tautu CSNRG Representative for Traditional Leaders and Rural Communities spoke on the importance of channeling resources to those who need it the most in the most accessible and direct way.

***Lualua brought to the table the need for RUNOs to revisit its funding modalities for rural communities and informal groups who do not meet the very high criterias by the UN Agencies.***

Resourcing local initiative for EVAWG is fundamental to sustain the impacts made by the Spotlight Initiative at the village and community level.

This feedback was well received by UNDP responsible for PILLAR 6 with a grant system to support CSOs both NGOs and CBOs (Community Based Organisations). An important outcome of this consistent feedback from community partners is UNDP and Spotlight RUNOs reassessing community friendly and accessible modalities to engage and resource CSOs at the community level. The formation of collectives between CBOs and established NGOs with the acceptable systems in the UN System was encouraged with hands on support and guidance by the UNDP Spotlight Team.

This approach was evident through the Samoa National Council of Women SNCW whereby resources were channeled to SNCW as the mother body and fiscal host of spotlight grants who then distributes resources to its women led CBO affiliates. It enabled the access of 14 village women committees and 300 individual rural women and girls to GBV EVAWG training and capacity building as well as resourcing their active participation in national spotlight Forums and conveying in Apia.

The member of Siutu Women's Committee Saliua reflected on this impact which has given them the courage skills and capacity to support, counsel and refer survivors of violence in their villages and districts.

***It has transformed their traditional roles to a more informed level of understanding where they can confidently perform their duty of care for the people of their community.***

The CSNRG quarterly in person meetings is one of the key opportunities to centralize feedback from RUNOs and partners on the status of implementation. Although limited because of the time inbetween quarters but it has set a platform for the CSNRG to effectively perform its function to hold the initiative accountable, to advise and foster national partners and potential donors for the programme.



CSNRG Gabrielle Apelu





Teleiai Dr. Lalotoa Mulitalo  
Chief Executive Officer  
Samoa Law Reform Commission

# State to adopt Laws that provide for gender equality

Despite efforts and significant progress in Samoa with its legal system and introduced/reviewed legislations to address violence, like most countries major challenges remain. Including limited implementation of laws and policies, inadequate enforcement of laws, the persistence of discriminatory laws as well as a lack of resources and coordination.

The Samoa Law Reform Commission through the Spotlight Initiative completed the review of six of its Family Safety legislations to better cater to the needs and priorities of survivors of violence. The Spotlight Initiative through UNDP enabled the SLRC to conduct thorough community and stakeholder consultations in both Upolu and Savaii to gather opinions and feedback from beneficiaries of these laws and their relevance and application.

According to the SLRC Chief Executive Officer Teleiai Dr. Lalotoa Mulitalo to address gender inequality, as the root cause and consequence of violence, it is essential for the state to adopt laws that provide for gender equality and minimum age in marriage, divorce, property, inheritance, access to/control over assets and services, identity, nationality, child custody. Addressing discriminatory laws/policies is a crucial component of state obligations.

Equally important are the Ministries who are the custodians, enforcers and implementors of these laws to ensure the appropriate and consistent execution of their mandated functions becomes a priority.

From the fabric of laws that govern Samoa, each law is a mandated function of a particular Ministry or Government entity. The implementation of these laws therefore lie heavily on the organisation or ministry with the mandate to implement that law. When these laws are up for review under the SLRC, the experience feedback and contribution of these respective ministries





SLRC Chief Executive Officer Teleiai Dr. Lalotoa Mulitalo, Management & Staff with Minister of Justice Matamua Seumanu Vasati Sili Pulufana Hon. and Associate Minister of Justice Fesola'i Apulu Tusiupu Tuigamala

Samoa Law Reform Commission

on the successes, challenges and shortfalls of these legislations is extremely vital. Through their lenses as executing authorities we can determine areas that need improvement, how to improve service delivery and facilitate the public awareness on how these laws / legislations will benefit them and support their access to the justice system.

Most countries experience major challenges in implementing and enforcing relevant laws, yet this is an area that receives little focus. Samoa shares the same challenges. The SLRC despite its significant role is underresourced. This directly impacts the ability of SLRC to conduct wide spread consultations with multiple stakeholders when a law is up for review or a new law is being developed.

This is the significant contribution of the Spotlight Initiative through UNDP which has provided adequate resources / funding

that has enabled the SLRC to conduct a series of Consultations across Samoa. Through these consultations the voice of vulnerable and isolated communities was recognized and more women and girls had the opportunity to contribute and share their experiences with the Samoa justice system.

It was evident from the consultations, the lack of a consolidated data management system in the Law and Justice Sector LJS is an area that needs further support. Building the synergies amongst LJS with regards to data and information management supports all pillars and legal framework in Samoa. Available and real time data from the Courts can significantly inform how laws are reviewed and developed.

This information system will also highlight patterns of cases related to violence from both a survivor and perpetrator angle. Reoffending is considered a high risk in

Samoa and perpetrators of violence must be held accountable at all costs. However targeted interventions for perpetrators should not in any shape or form compromise resources to support survivors.

The SLRC applauds the efforts by the Spotlight Initiative and its specific focus on PILLAR 1 Law and Policies. The Spotlight Initiative enabled the Samoa Law Reform Commission (SLRC) to complete phase 2 of a three-phase comprehensive reform process in progress for six core family legislations administered by the MJCA. Collaboration amongst the Law and Justice Sector (LJS) steering committee facilitated in-depth consultations with village stakeholders in Upolu Island, essential to ensuring those most directly affected by this law were engaged.

Under phase 2 of the reform framework adopted for this review, the continuation and completion of public stakeholder

consultations on laws' that impact the 'family as an institution' and to advance the reform process have been difficult due to recent setbacks, including the measles epidemic, COVID19 lockdown, and preparations for the general elections followed by the political transition (post elections from April to November 2022 have contributed to new timeframes for completion).

However, the Initiative is continuing to support the development of the final report, which is the phase 3 outcome of the reform process. This is considered a significant step forward for the realization of gender equality and human rights commitments, with the aim for it to be completed in June 2022 and tabled in parliament



# STRENGTHENING

*multi-stakeholder  
dialogue, partnerships &  
advocacy*



Louisa Apelu  
Spotlight Initiative Coordinator  
UNDP

Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofoia  
Chief Executive Officer  
SUNGO

The elimination of VAWG cannot be achieved without strong and empowered civil society and autonomous women's movements. Under PILLAR 6 of the Spotlight Initiative it focuses on drawing upon and strengthening the knowledge, expertise and capacities of CSOs and Women's Movements by expanding and protecting spaces that are free and conducive to their work. More importantly is to promote and resource establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks at community, local, and national level.

Applying this understanding in practice has been the joint mission of the Samoa Umbrella



for Non-Governmental Organisations SUNGO, CEO Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofoia and the UNDP Spotlight Initiative Coordinator Louisa Apelu. Through the UNDP and SUNGO collaboration championed by these two individuals, the Spotlight Initiative has made significant contributions to support the role, functions and advocacy of civil society actors and individuals in the EVAWG space.

Support was channeled through a variety of capacity building opportunities with knowledge exchange and sharing of best practice amongst CSO actors who are at the front line of responding and preventing violence at local and community level. The overarching goal of these interventions was to strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration amongst CSOs and other actors in government and private sector.

*“Women and girls and vulnerable groups representing the most marginalized are often overlooked, excluded, or discriminated against. Working with Fuimaono and his team*



*at SUNGO was to strengthen inclusion and diversity in practice and unpack what it entails for CSOs. It meant examining existing partnerships, identifying who is left out and developing clear and deliberate strategies to reach, engage and collaborate with them in a meaningful way”*

Louisa Apelu  
UNDP Spotlight Initiative Coordinator

Through the Spotlight Initiative SUNGO was able to expand its capacity building reach and engage more actors. This work was realized through the second Phase of the Psycho Social support training for civil society representatives working in the EVAWG space. Led by qualified trainers from Soul Talk and attended by 24 organisations consisting of the following sectors- faith based, essential services and human rights, counseling, youth, disabilities, engaging men and boys, SOGIE, women’s movement, sports, and rehabilitation services.





Moloo Fonoti Pio Moli SVSG, Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofoia SUNGO, Moliei Simi-Vaai MJCA, Papalii Monalisa Ketu Deputy Police Commissioner, Tavu'i Ame Laumea - Tofasinasina Inc.

The CSO Capacity Assessment is a vital tool to support CSO engagement and ensure capacity building meets the needs identified by CSOs.

The CSO Capacity Assessment was developed through technical support from UNDP in collaboration with UNWomen. Many follow through activities were informed by this Assessment and SUNGO has taken the lead to address the key recommendations moving forward.

The CSNRG were also invited to provide feedback and comment on the assessment and identify areas to support work in the different settings the CSNRG represent.

The launch of the CSO Capacity Assessment also facilitated the engagement of other partners from Government in support of the role CSOs play for EVWAG.

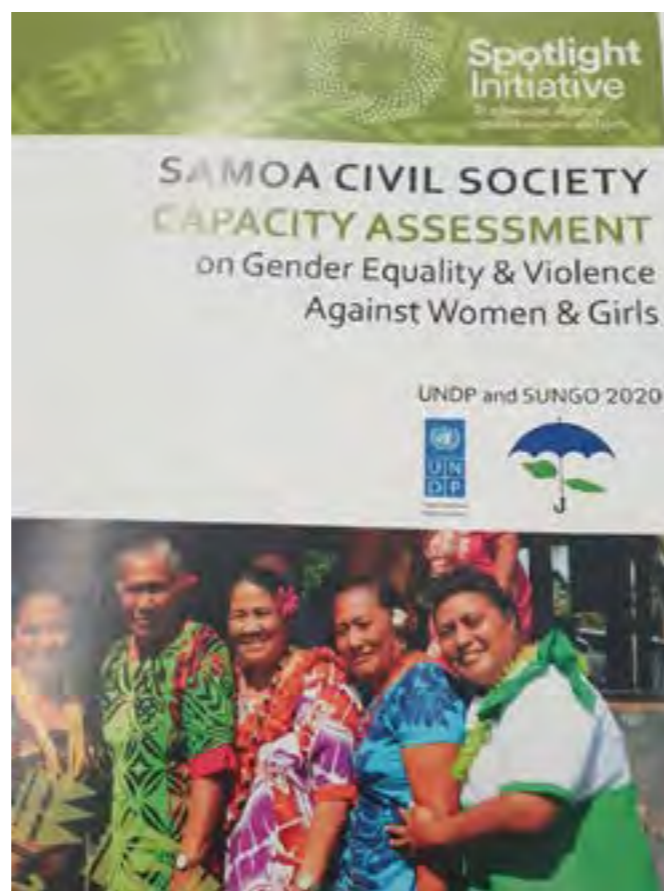
*immeasurable. In the Law and Justice Sector, NGOs play a major role in supporting survivors of violence access to justice, including dedicated programs for perpetrators. This CSO Capacity Assessment will definitely inform government ministries of the gaps and needs of our CSO partners so we can better support them in our joint efforts and service delivery for VAWG. It is a tool to support a more effective and coordinated approach to EVAWG between and amongst partners and stakeholders"*

Moliei Vaai Simi CEO MJCA

*"The contribution of our limited but active and committed Civil Society partners to responding and preventing violence is*

*"The Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organizations is committed to the fight to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls. Through the Spotlight Initiative funding from UNDP we have developed and launched the Civil Society Capacity Assessment for VAWG 2020. A document that will guide CSO interventions and activities as well as areas that need improvement to effectively change mind sets and behavior and drive the elimination of harmful social norms"*

Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofia, CEO SUNGO



One of the key highlights of the CSO Capacity Assessment was the set up of a coordination mechanism for SUNGO members that operate in the EVAWG space known as the SPOTLIGHT NATIONAL TASKFORCE. The intention of this Taskforce for SUNGO members and partners is to open space for dialogue to share information and resources. Ultimately to collaborate for a more effective approach to EVAWG interventions at local and national level to avoid duplication of efforts and resources.

The SUNGO Spotlight National Taskforce include Tofasinasina Samoa Association of Counsellors, Faataua le Ola, Soul Talk Samoa, National Human Rights Institution, Samoa Victim Support Group, Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc, Civil Society Support Programme, Women In Business Development Inc. The Taskforce is coordinated through SUNGO with technical support from UNDP.

This is also another milestone for Fuimaono and Louisa driving the set up of necessary systems and mechanisms that promote multi stakeholder engagement for EVAWG.

At its inaugural meeting, the Taskforce members stressed the importance of this mechanism and the need to consolidate and coordinate efforts nationally.

In expanding the efforts to support CSO convening and dialogue one of the success stories of the SUNGO and UNDP collaboration was the conduct of the 2021 SUNGO 16 DAYS OF HEALING CSO FORUM. The Forum brought together over one hundred civil society actors representing the diverse SUNGO membership to share best practice and experiences in their effort to end violence against women and girls.

The UN Resident Coordinator Dr. Simona Marinescu presented the Keynote Address for the Forum and highlighted the firm support by the UN through the Spotlight Initiative to support CSO engagement and resource their participation in the EVAWG space.

Faith Based Organisations and church leaders were well represented and key actors in Samoa's fight against violence.

*"We have to get our act together and continue to have frank conversations of how we can support each other better, so our efforts are targeted, our resources are coordinated and as a collective strive to ensure our services is reaching those who need it the most. The Taskforce is an important platform for more effective coordination by SUNGO members working in EVAWG"*  
 Peseta Afoa Arasi Tiotio - SUNGO Vice President



SUNGO EVAWG Taskforce





# SUNGO 16 DAYS OF HEALING CSO FORUM 2021

Pastor Papali'i Sonia Hunter of the Samoa All Saints Anglican Church spoke about the critical role church leaders play in promoting positive and affirming social norms that do not condone violence. As a member of the Pacific National Council of Churches, Papalii has also been instrumental in advocating with Church leaders in the elimination of violence against women and girls. During the Forum, Church leaders encouraged community leaders and CSOs to continue the advocacy on EAWG and promote the use of Church Youth Groups and Church institutions within villages as an effect driver of change. These church institutions include the Mafutaga a Tina (Womens Church Committee) the Tupulaga Talavou (Church Youth Groups) which are spaces that engage a lot of youth and families

across Samoa. The Satittoa Catholic Youth Group was a positive example of this with their participation and performance during the Forum. The Satittoa Catholic Youth Group used performing arts to demonstrate Key Messages on VAWG Prevention. This is part of their My Village My Pride campaign with SVSG with funding support from UNESCO.

The collaboration between SUNGO and UNDP driven by Fuimaono and Louisa have definitely made and impact int he CSO sector and their meaningful enaggement and leadership in the Spotlight Initiative. This work will only strengthen future partnerships in the future !



# The critical role and support of civil societies in delivering the Spotlight Initiative.

16 Days of Healing

Reverend Siasia Salesulu,

Honourable Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa, Prime Minister of Samoa

Excellency Sujiro Seam, Ambassador of the European Union for the Pacific,

Taua Faamoemoe Taua, President of SUNGO

Fuimaono Ofoia, CEO of SUNGO

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

UN Colleagues & Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Country Team in Samoa, I wish to thank SUNGO for the organization of the Forum as part of the 16 days of Activism



Vavau Women’s Committee

against Gender-based Violence, a landmark annual campaign of the United Nations and of our humanity. This campaign serves as a reminder every year that the world is still not a livable place for so many people who continue to face discrimination and violence on gender grounds.

WHO estimates that about 1 in 3 women (over 30%) worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Furthermore, 27% of women aged 15-49 who have been in a relationship have experienced violence by their intimate partner. There are roughly 738 million women who have been victims of violence by the people they love and care for. In Samoa, this rate stands at over 53% (1 in 2 women and almost double the global rate) as the Demographic and Health – Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey of 2019-2020 has identified.

Worse off, globally, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2–17, have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in the past year, a large part of it is domestic violence. In Samoa, these are 90.8% of all children.

This is a shadow pandemic that, unlike

many others, is actually preventable at no additional cost for society.

Yet, changing this reality seems to be more complicated as triggers of stress in family relationships continue to multiply at this time of compounding challenges for our humanity and the planet.

We commend the commitment of Samoa across the Government, civil society and the community to end violence against women and girls and continue progress on recognition and protection of human rights to ultimately end all forms of discrimination in the society.

We take this opportunity to once again express our appreciation to our partner, the European Union for its vision and dedication to more inclusive, violence-free societies that drive the Spotlight Initiative globally and for the substantial investment made through the Spotlight and the Pacific Partnership towards ending suffering for women and girls across the region.

In addition to addressing one of the most complex dynamics in the society, the Spotlight Programme aligns with the reform

of the United Nations through enabling integrated programming and action and full oversight by the Resident Coordinator system.

But above all, by placing great emphasis on the role of the Civil Society in bringing about social transformation, the two programmes funded by the European Union are redesigning the partnership landscape at the community level, empowering civil activism for social good and generating more sustainable results than projects alone can ever achieve.

The highly active Civil Society National Reference Group that the Spotlight has established has taught us a great lesson about the importance of effecting change through the hearts and the hands of those who operate where change is needed, deep in the community where policy and law alone can hardly make an impact.



Spiritual Performance by the youth during the SUNGO CSO Forum



2021 – 2031, the Inter-Agency Essential Services Guidelines for Out-of-School Continuing Sexuality Education are just a few examples of the important contribution made by the civil society on the EVAWG agenda in Samoa.

We are deeply thankful to SUNGO for its role in leading the civil society movement in Samoa for leaving no one behind as the country is addressing some of the most pressing socio-economic issues.

As we are about to learn some critical lessons from this first phase of the Spotlight through the ongoing Mid-Term Assessment, we do hope that our partnership with the civil society will gain in quality in the next phase of the Initiative.

*over the last 2 years in Samoa has been labelled by the Spotlight Secretariat as best practice in using culture and art as a form of expression towards enabling societal change.*

We must stand united to end the abuse of women and girls, one of the most pervasive and unaddressed human rights violations on earth.

We wish SUNGO and the Forum great success and look forward to learning more from you all as to how best to serve the cause of freeing women and girls from all forms of insecurity, inequity and injustice.

Faafetai Tele Lava. Soifua.

Dr. Simona Marinescu  
UN Resident Coordinator

*The Healing Campaign activism that the civil society has conducted in partnership with the United Nations*

The role that the National Reference Group on behalf of the CSOs in Samoa has played to date can be seen through everything that the Spotlight has achieved over the last two years – increasing awareness and respect for women’s rights, providing a space for CSOs to mobilize their advocacy and service delivery programmes, facilitating country-wide consultations on the prevention framework, assessing the work of village safety committees and, very importantly, monitoring the relevance and effectiveness of UN-led interventions across the 6 pillars of the Spotlight.

In recognition of the valuable role played by the National Reference Group, we involved its representatives in the review of the human rights account of Samoa for the 3rd UPR this year and, through the Joint Steering Committee of our programmes, in the Social Protection initiative among others.

The joint work to date includes assessing capacity gaps in the EVAWG space, enhanced support to survivors of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic including strengthening the 24-hour helplines through Samoa Victim Support Group and Faataua le Ola during the State of Emergencies, ensuring access to information, services and support for vulnerable families. During the 2020 period, the help lines assisted 3,467 people of which 617 men, 643 women and 2,167 children.

The Talanoa/Let’s Talk’ Forum in 28 villages, the Transformational Leadership Training for 300 women & girls, the Psycho-Social Support Training of Trainers for CSO representatives, amplifying the voices of survivors through ProjectRahab as well as the consultations hosted by the CSOs for the Law & Justice Sector Plan 2021 – 2025, the National Policy on Gender Equality & Rights of Women and Girls 2021 – 2031, the National Policy on Inclusive Governance



UN Resident Coordinator & Samoa Spotlight Champion  
Dr. Simona Marinescu

**Preventing violence is  
a collective  
responsibility of the  
civil society,  
government, and  
individuals.**

**Empower our women to  
speak up about the  
repercussions of  
violence without fear!**

**Fuimaono Vaitolo Ofoia  
Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental  
Organisations (SUNGO)**

Focusing around capacity building and training for CSO members based on researching issues which concern civil society, treatment and prevention.



**Spotlight  
Initiative**  
To eliminate violence  
against women and girls



Civil Society Consultations for the development of the National Prevention Framework for ending violence against women and girls. The Prevention Framework is a whole of Samoa Framework led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development and the Community Development Sector partners and funded by the Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen.







# GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING



MINISTRY OF WOMEN COMMUNITY & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Gender-responsive budgeting GRB is essentially both a political and technical undertaking, with the potential to be a powerful tool for social transformation and eliminating inequality.

The Spotlight Initiative through UNDP collaborated with the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development MWCSO to conduct the first lot of national trainings

on Gender Responsive Budgeting for Civil Society representatives and Government Officials. The technical and financial support from UNDP enabled the MWCSO to successfully complete a series of Introductory trainings to the basic concepts and application of GRB in Samoa.

As a result of this activity under PILLAR 2 focusing on Institutional Strengthening the

“LUFILUFILIMA LELEI” initiative was born as a Samoan initiative to contextualize GRB in a manner that resonates with its people, culture and systems.

It also officiated the translation of GRB in the Samoan language as LUFILUFILIMA LELEI. The concept was coined by the MWCSO CEO Dr. Mema Motusaga which she describes as an appropriate cultural reference to articulate the principles and intentions of GRB as one of the key tools for Gender Mainstreaming.

*“O Lufilufi o le Susuga iloga i Tumua, o faiva o tamaitai Samoa e mafuli i galuega tapuaao ma alofilima, e lima mafola ma iloa fai le lufilufiga lima lelei. O le lufilufilima lelei o nafa o Tamaitai, o nafa o taitai, o nafa o tulatoa, o poutu o aiga, afioaga, faalapotopotoga ma le Malo. The ability to ensure that budget allocations are gender*

*responsive is the equivalent of the Samoan Concept – Lufilufilima Lelei”*

Dr. Mema Motusaga,  
Chief Executive Officer MWCSO

In 2015, the MWCSO in partnership with the Pacific Community SPC conducted a “Stocktake of the gender mainstreaming capacity in Samoa”. Findings showed despite significant progress in Samoa, there is a lack of gender analysis and there are no clear strategies for how gender issues can be addressed in some sectors. An important part of this process requires the adoption of GRB tools across ministries to ensure the successful mainstreaming of gender into public finance.

This is a gap the Spotlight Initiative has dedicated support through UNDP to complement national efforts led by MWCSO and the Ministry of Finance MOF. It is particularly relevant and crucial in Samoa’s efforts to end violence because Gender-responsive budgeting helps to ensure that VAWG priorities and programmes are adequately financed and that the impact of government spending can be monitored.



Palanitina Tupuimatagi Toelupe  
UNDP Consultant delivering the GRB Introductory Trainings for CSO Representatives & Government officials



CSO Representatives at the GRB Introductory Training

The GRB Introductory Training focused on the basics and for most participants introduced them to the concepts of GRB.

At the beginning of the Training, a practical Pre-Test was conducted to assess the level of knowledge of participants on GRB. After each pre-test it was clear not one person has completed a GRB Training. This is also a reflection of the fact the only GRB trainings offered were to government officials conducted in a foreign country.

Therefore, the GRB Introductory Trainings is a real breakthrough and one of the key milestones and achievements of the Spotlight Initiative.

***“After this training, we will never look at Budgets the same way again. The Gender Analysis skills and tools that critically analyses the different needs of men and women and therefore catering to those different needs in an equitable way makes us rethink how we allocated resources and funds.”***

Cassandra Teo, Project Manager, Adventist Development and Relief Agency ADRA Samoa.

***“The potential to introduce a GRB assessment of the national budget in the future is promising. Through this training we now understand where we can be most influential as government officials in the budget cycle to ensure stronger gender considerations of budget allocations and how it benefits women and men, boys and girls differently.”***

Feagaimaleata Tafunai-Maafi. ACEO Finance Sector Coordination MOF.

Participants understood GRB can be done with many different groups including government, civil society, academia and NGOs. It aims at mainstreaming gender into public finance. The process of gender responsive budgeting eventually results in gender responsive budgets. It is not separate budgets for women, but instead, general budgets that are planned, approved, executed, monitored and audited in a gender-sensitive way.

After the 2 Lufi Lufi Lima Lelei GRB Introductory Trainings, 46 senior management level participants were trained. 22 CSO representatives from 11 NGOs and 5 Sui Tamaitai o Nu'u STN (Village Women Representatives) with 24 Government officials from 8 Ministries successfully completed the Trainings and received Certificates. The composition of participants included 2 Officer Level, 10 Senior Level, 8 Principal Level and 4 Assistant CEO Level officials from government and all management and executive council representation from CSOs.



GRB Core Group motivational speech by the MWCSO CEO Dr. Mema Motusaga





Samoa GRB Core Group Inception Meeting

# GRB CORE GROUP

## *A Samoa GRB Initiative!*

In addition to the successful completion of the Lufi Lufi Lima Lelei GRB Introductory Trainings, each participant proposed a GRB Initiative they will implement in their respective organization. One of the significant outcomes of this exercise was the collective agreement for the groundbreaking establishment of the Samoa GRB Core Group.

The GRB Core Group is made up of 10 representatives (6 Government and 4 CSOs) Co Chaired by MWCSO & MOF with secretariat support from the MWCSO Programs & Training Unit. The main goal of the group is to advance the mainstreaming of gender in the finance sector through GRB. The main functions and strategic outcomes of the Core Group are;

in particular the Finance Sector that is responsive to the needs of government officials at the forefront of Budget systems.

3. To promote the practical application of **Gender Mainstreaming** articulated in national policies and frameworks as the strategy to achieving Gender Equality across sectors
4. To spearhead **resource mobilization and networking** to support the GRB Core Group engagement across sectors on Gender Equality and the application of critical tools such as GRB
5. To lead support and advocate for general budgets that are planned, approved, executed, monitored and audited in a **gender-sensitive way**.

The GRB Core Group convened its first official meeting on the 9th June 2022 and finalized its Work Plan and priorities for the next 12 months. Technical and funding support for the Core Group will be facilitated by the MWCSO, MOF and UNDP Spotlight Initiative.



1. To lead and support efforts to **institutionalized and formalize GRB** in Samoa by facilitating and influencing the support and buy in of Government.
2. To support and promote **capacity building across sectors** on GRB

# Op-Ed: Gender Responsive Budgeting The Way Forward

Our commitment to advancing gender equality and promoting women's empowerment is only as good as our actions. To effect real change, we need to "walk the talk". At the time when Parliament has just passed the 2022/23 budget proposed by the Government of Samoa, it is hoped that we will see a marked shift to gender-responsive budgeting through actual and significant allocations towards gender outcomes. We acknowledge that elements of gender-responsive budgeting are already part of broader budget policy conversations. Simply, it's putting your money where your mouth is.

Gender-responsive budgeting involves analysing budget proposals for their specific and differentiated effect on women and girls, and transforming these budgets

in a deliberate way to ensure that Samoa's international commitments and national development priorities on gender equality are realized, benefitting especially the most vulnerable. It means including a gender perspective in all steps of the budget process and reflecting the gender ambition in the choices, priorities and resource allocation decisions. It means distributing public funds in a way that creates equal opportunities for all Samoans, while levelling the playing field for women and girls. As such, it is an important contribution to the Pathway for the Development of Samoa, which provides for social inclusion, gender equality, and the protection and empowerment of society's most vulnerable including survivors of domestic violence. Investing in robust gender-disaggregated statistics is important for tracking and analyzing developments.

Moving from policy statements on gender to actual change requires in-depth technical knowledge and understanding of how to do budgeting in a way that achieves concrete outcomes for the most vulnerable.

*The United Nations family – UNDP under the Spotlight Initiative, along with our sister agencies UN Women and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – have therefore invested significantly in capacity development on gender-responsive budgeting for government officials and civil society in Samoa as part of our commitment to realizing gender equality and mainstreaming.*

We recognize the critical role the government plays as the duty bearer for ensuring that the human rights of women and girls are respected, promoted and realized, and civil society as a catalyst for driving positive change on gender issues, including domestic violence, through advocacy, engagement, and holding the government accountable for how it spends public funds.

Political will and political leadership are essential to ensure that gender-responsive budgeting takes root, as is the commitment to embracing a whole-of-society approach to it. I am therefore encouraged to see that following the recent training initiative that UNDP undertook through the Spotlight Initiative in May 2022 in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO), an Informal Core Group to advocate for Gender Responsive Budgeting was established.

This group comprises representatives from Civil Society Organizations and Government Ministries, and held their first dialogue on 9 June to confirm membership, reach agreement on the group's roles and responsibilities, and co-create a practical work plan for the next 12 months. The Informal Core Group is overseen by a committee consisting of the CEO of SUNGO, CEO of MWCSO and CEO of the Ministry of Finance.

I hope that with these strong foundations laid, gender-responsive budgeting will gain increasing momentum in the next 1-3 years, and we will see in real time how translating Samoa's gender commitments into hard fiscal commitments advances gender equality, and creates tangible benefits for the Samoan women and girls.



Verena Linneweber  
Deputy Resident Representative  
UNDP Multi-Country Office Samoa



# “COVID19 has widened the gender inequalities and requires all of us to join hands to prevent and respond to GBV”

Josphine Candiru is no stranger to the work on gender equality. Growing up in a family-oriented environment with six sisters definitely shaped the pathway that led her to the center of the South Pacific. With a passion for the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment with her skills expertise in Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Responsive budgeting, capacity building/training/mentorship on gender and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) programming.

Josphine has worked with Government and the UNDP on gender and development

aspects, ranging from the UNDP Uganda Country office, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD\RSS Regional Initiative Project- Phase II South Sudan), Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in Uganda, and the Arua District Local Government in Uganda. She is also supporting the UNDP Pacific countries with the set up and implementation of their Gender Seal initiatives.

It was this passion and experience to help other countries drive forward their gender commitments that landed her in Samoa earlier on this year. This is Josphine’s first time to Samoa or to this part of the Pacific, and she has quickly adapted. Her close network with her Pacific counterparts has certainly helped make her feel at home as she takes up a critical role such as the Subregional Gender Specialist, located in the UNDP Samoa Multi-Country Office. Her technical role puts her in the heart of the Pacific’s GBV programming to support the Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste Country Offices, and report back to the Bangkok Regional Hub Gender Team and UNDP Spotlight’s Regional Focal Point for the Pacific Region (PNG, Samoa, Timor- Leste and Vanuatu).

Josphine shared that the highlight of her Spotlight journey thus far is the coordination of the Pacific region for improved GBV prevention and response interventions for women and girls especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has widened gender inequalities and revealed that women and girls are not safe in their own homes and communities, and how crucial it is for all of us to join hands to prevent and respond to GBV. Timely reporting and accountability of resources is crucial for value for money. Sharing of best practices among the countries acts as a great platform for lessons learnt for better programming. The Phase II Spotlight Initiative provides opportunity

for sustainability of interventions of GBV prevention and response and integration of GBV programming in other sectors.

Sharing some of the work she has experienced so far in Samoa, Josphine testified that there should be strengthened capacity of institutions along the GBV referral pathway to offer better services to GBV survivors, which include the Law and Justice Sector and the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. Built capacity of both Government and CSOs on Gender responsive budgeting to ensure that all development interventions ensure that the needs of women and men are planned and implemented with clear budget allocations.

The development of the National Guide to Respond to Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls for the Law and Justice sector, and the work with the traditional institutions, including the chiefs, is a game changer for social norms change, in addition to the establishment of village safety committees that provide safe spaces for women and girls at the community level.

This is also reflected in the support provided to the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) in newly established shelters to accommodate women and their children seeking refuge and support services. The work with small-scaled organisations representing girls and women living with albinism and disability, young women, peer counselling programmes, boys and young men who are victims and perpetrators of violence, SOGI/LGBTQI, non-binary men and women and sex workers prompted inclusion of diversity in GBV prevention and response and strengthening small CSOs to offer services to survivors of GBV.

Josphine reflected with a smile wearing her beautiful sei or flower that: “Women and girls deserve a life free of violence. I am hoping that through my role as the Spotlight

Coordinator for the Pacific region, it will lead to strengthened coordination of GBV prevention and response services.” For example, improved GBV referral pathways where girls, boys and women will have equal access to justice, health services, psychosocial support and economic support. Secondly, accelerate transformative social norms change in traditional, religious and public institutions for gender equality and women’s empowerment and create safe spaces for women and girls.

Male engagement, and working with spiritual leadership is key for driving change in the communities with women groups and civil society taking active roles as change makers for women and girls. It is also important for Government and Civil Society organizations to allocate some resources for GBV prevention and response.



Josphine Candiru  
UNDP Gender  
Specialist



ADRA Country Director Su'a Julia Wallwork with UN Resident Coordinator Dr. Simona Marinescu and the ADRA Team Samoa Observer

# Anti-violence project targets families' heart strings Samoa

SAMOA OBSERVER  
By Adel Fruean • 13 August 2021, 1:00PM

With reports of violence against women and girls increasing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, a project appealing to Samoan families' hearts to eradicate violence was launched on Thursday.

A small ceremony was held at the Seventh Day Adventist Samoa-Tokelau Mission Office, Lalovaea to mark the occasion.

Non-government organisations such as the Samoa Education Network (S.E.N.) and the Adventist Development Relief Agency (A.D.R.A.) Samoa are jointly implementing an education and awareness programme funded by the UNESCO.

The S.D.A. Samoa-Tokelau Mission President, Pastor Sione Ausage and Dr. Walter Vermeulen

The project aims to promote peace-building and conflict resolution within families and communities through life skills training and public conversations led by community leaders.

It is titled: "Teu Fatu" [To hold in my Heart] which aims to promote positive change in attitudes and behaviour within families and to create awareness on the importance of open communication in families and in communities.

It comes under Spotlight Initiative's third pillar of prevention, and aims to support the training of young adults and out-of-school male and female youth in rural areas through targeted engagement with church and community groups.



METI Director Dr. Walter Vermeulen & CSNRG Engaging Men & Boys Representative

Samoa Observer

It seeks to build the capacity of traditional authorities to serve as resources in their communities in relation to domestic violence/intimate partner violence and advocate for the prevention of DV and IPV through leading public discussions.

The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

According to the A.D.R.A. Samoa country director, Sua Julia Wallwork,

*“there is a need for widely accessible and available information about a variety of topics, all aimed at encouraging greater communication amongst families.”*  
*The project is targeting the hearts of families to eradicate violence.*  
*“It is our hope to reduce domestic violence because it’s not ending with reports.”*

When asked about how effective the project will be in eliminating violence, Su’a said that, “there is no 100 per cent guarantee but we can’t just sit around we have to do something.”

*“We have to work with young people because we’re trying to break the cycle of violence,”* she added.

She said that by working closely with the media, there can be open dialogue about urgent social problems that are often difficult to discuss within the cultural context and which prevents confronting

sensitive issues in a more personal way.

“We will be using the media via television, radio and newspaper so we can go into homes and reach their hearts and minds to bring about a positive change.”

The coordinator of S.E.N., Dr. Walter Vermeulen said that there will be ten villages participating in the programme with six from Upolu and four from Savai’i.

He spoke about the need to help the youths that have dropped out of school with certified life skills training.

The slogan for the programme is:

*“Let your home be the gym to practice love, tolerance and forgiveness.”*

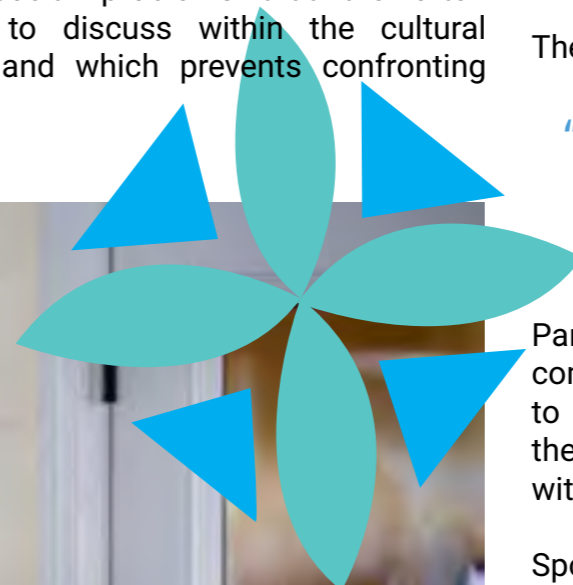
Participants are equipped with communication and problem solving skills to prevent or control violent episodes in their lives, thus fostering a ‘culture of peace’ within their homes and village communities.

Spotlight initiative was launched with a seed funding commitment of €500 million from the European Union, the Pacific region has one regional programme and four country programmes of which Samoa is one of them that has received US \$4.3 million under the Spotlight Initiative’s €50 million envelope for the Pacific region. The Spotlight Initiative’s focus for the Pacific Region, including Samoa, is Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).



ADRA Country Director Su’a Julia Wallwork with UN Resident Coordinator Dr. Simona Marinescu

Samoa Observer





Faleapuna Village residence participating in the Spotlight Torch of Hope

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

# 16 DAYS OF HEALING 2021 ORANGE SAMOA

# SPOTLIGHT TORCH OF HOPE





Official Launch of the 16 Days of Healing  
ORANGE SAMOA Spotlight Torch of Hope

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

While Upolu officiates the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development and opened by the Honorable Minister Leota Laki Lamositele in the Soccer Fields of Tuanaimato Sports Complex. A corresponding celebration took over the big island of Savai'i.

The Community Development Sector and the Law & Justice Sector came together as one to officially launch the ORANGE SAMOA – Spotlight Torch campaign. The Spotlight Torch will travel all over Savaii and Upolu from the 25th of November to the 10th of December.



Lakapi Samoa supporting the  
Torch of Hope for EVAWG in  
the big island of Savai'i

As Reverend Falaula Ierome shared “The Torch represents unity and our collective efforts to end violence against women and girls. But the Flame, depicts the importance of our key message for preventing violence which is to

**“STOP IT BEFORE IT STARTS”  
“TAOFI AE E LE’I TUPU”.**

This is the essence of the Spotlight Torch that through a united country we spread flames of prevention messages like wildfire to STOP violence before it happens. It is a critical primary prevention approach, and the Torch will carry this message of hope across Samoa.

This initiative is part of the overall awareness of the Samoa National Prevention Framework for EVAWG led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development and partners facilitating a change in harmful social norms, attitudes and behaviors that perpetuates violence.

It promotes community ownership and leadership in reinforcing key messages that Violence is Preventable and we need to STOP IT BEFORE IT STARTS in families, villages, churches, and local communities. MWCSD Assistant CEO Sauoauga Olive Kaio promoted the uniqueness of the Spotlight Torch whereby community representatives will carry the torch in their own settings and be champions of sharing Key Messages of Prevention “TAOFI AE E LEI TUPU SAUAGA”. CSO partners will also participate throughout the campaign through their respective activities for 16 Days of Activism. Leading the CSO engagement is Lakapi Samoa Get into Rugby GIR+ who kick-started the

Spotlight Torch run in Savaii.

Complementing the aspirations of the National Prevention Framework is the move for effective sector coordination to prevent and respond to VAWG by the Law & Justice Sector driven through their community outreach programme REACH. Led by the Ministry of Justice Courts & Administration and partners the Launch of the ORANGE SAMOA- Spotlight Torch was followed by a community consultation to solicit community inputs and buy-in to effective law enforcement, access to justice, and promoting a survivor-centered approach to service provision and prevention.

It highlighted the significant role village council, women’s committees, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups within villages play in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. “Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence are sensitive issues to discuss but unforgivable before the law. Perpetrators of violence must be held accountable with relevant punishable laws and legislations. At the same time, the law and justice sector endeavors to ensure survivors of violence have not only access but a wider and clearer understanding of available legal and justice services to protect and support them by sector partners” says MJCA Assistant CEO Liusuavai Kerisiano.

Shadowing these efforts is the oversight role of the Samoa Police, Prisons & Correction Services as the leading agency for law enforcement and the safety and security of Samoa. Deputy Commissioner Papali’i Monalisa Tiai-Keti stressed the importance of their engagement with these initiatives which aligns with their leading role in the Domestic Violence Unit and as a key response service for VAWG. The launch of the Spotlight Torch also complements White Ribbon Day which has been an annual activity of the Ministry to spread awareness

and visibility on the devastating impacts of Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence in Samoa. The Samoa Police, Prisons & Correction Services will escort the Spotlight Torch throughout Samoa for all the 16 Days of Activism.

The joint effort by the Community development sector and law & justice sector demonstrated a multi-sector approach to preventing violence and the application of core ministries working together to share resources, share ideas, and share the delivery of preventing violence against women and girls with funding support from the Spotlight Initiative through UNDP & UNWomen.

## Mobilizing communities

to be engaged in the 16 Days of Activism with the promotion of Key Prevention Messages is the objective of the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development (MWCSO) and Samoa Police Prison & Correction Services (SPPCS) joint activity of the ORANGE SAMOA – Spotlight Torch of Hope.

The campaign is delivered through a national run of the Spotlight Torch across Savaii, Manono, and Upolu from the 25th of November until the 10th of December 2021. These are the identified 16 Days of Activism globally and the ORANGE Samoa campaign is a national effort to bring this message home and to rural and isolated communities.

In past years, activities for 16 Days have engaged mainly urban communities. The Ministry's vision for wider community participation and involvement is to use the Spotlight Torch of Hope to channel key messages across Samoa and encourage communities to take ownership and leadership in spreading awareness and the prevention of VAWG in their own respective settings and environments. The ORANGE Samoa Spotlight Torch of Hope was officially launched in Salelologa Savai'i before taking its journey across the beautiful big island of Savaii. Inspector Tofilau of SPPCS and Leausa A Taala of MWCSO co-led the teams in Savaii and witnessed the excitement of communities in particular women's committees who turned up in style to welcome the torch. Joining the fun is spreading the STOP IT BEFORE IT HAPPENS TAOFI E LEI TUPU message to the many school children that were lined up on the roadside cheering on the Spotlight Torch of Hope.



MWCSO Salelologa Office, Savai'i



MJCA ACEO Liusuavai Kerisiano, MWCSO Mase Kisa Poiiliu & Samoa Police Inspector Tofilau



Youth Torch Bearers Falelima Savaii

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen



Falelima Lava fields Savai'i

Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

The ORANGE SAMOA – Spotlight Torch of Hope is led by MWCSO and SPPCS with support from the Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen. Aligning this great initiative is also the contribution of the Law & Justice Sector through MJCA also funded by the Spotlight Initiative through UNDP.

Sui Tamaitai (Government Women Representative) of the village of Asaga Savaii Leaa Ausia Aifai took over the megaphone and imitated a 2AP radio announcer broadcasted to her whole village

***“VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE... STOP IT NOW BEFORE IT HAPPENS...I challenge every woman of our village to be an agent of change and END VIOLENCE NOW..use your skills use your talents use your VOICE to build awareness around the harmful impacts of violence to our women and girls. BREAK THE CULTURE OF SILENCE and speak to your neighbors, speak to your children, speak to your extended family, speak to your friends. If your husbands don't listen...BE CREATIVE and use the power of PILLOW TALK to get him to be a champion for ending violence “***

This was the contagious spirit and message carried across the last leg of the Spotlight Torch in the big island of Savaii. Communities rose to the occasion and celebrated the ORANGE SAMOA Spotlight Torch of Hope campaign. Children of all ages took turns to carry the torch and have discussions around the message of the Torch that as a village a community everyone needs to work together to STOP VIOLENCE BEFORE IT HAPPENS TAOFI SAUAGA AE E LE'I TUPU





Auala Village, Savai'i

SAVAII as expected did not disappoint turning up in numbers to welcome the Spotlight Torch of Hope delivering the Key prevention message of "STOP IT BEFORE IT HAPPENS" 'TAOFI AE E LEI TUPU'.

The Village of Auala demonstrated the true spirit and tenacity of Samoan women with their singing and cheering as the Torch reached their village. There was no need for modern speakers or amplifiers, just the beating sounds of biscuit tins and the enticing chants of village songs echoing across the Asau Bay.

One of the women insisted the Torch stays with them overnight and because their request was not successful, they followed the torch to the far end of the Auala village calling out to the SPPCS and MWCSO team to come back to Auala!

Engaging rural communities in the 16 Days of Activism through the Orange Samoa Spotlight Torch campaign is one of the key objectives of the MWCSO and SPPCS and more importantly, highlighting key prevention messages that are the basis of the National Prevention Framework for EAWG developed by the MWCSO and community development sector partners and stakeholders.



Manono is an island of Samoa, situated in the Apolima Strait between the main islands of Savai'i and Upolu. There are four villages (A'apai, Salua, Faleu & Lepuia'i) on the island with a total population of 889 (2006 Census). Electricity was only introduced in 1995 and the boat trip from Upolu island takes about 20 minutes.

Despite the distance, the ORANGE SAMOA Spotlight Torch in the spirit of Leaving NO ONE BEHIND took a detour from Savaii to touch base with the people of Manono. The arrival of the Spotlight Torch coincided with the Law & Justice Sector REACH programme led by the Ministry of Justice Courts and Administration. In the village of Lepuia'i, MJCA and MWCSO partner Nuanua o le Alofa NOLA was facilitating the Workshop highlighting the importance of the accessible and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development.

CSO-NRG Disability Rep Matafaa Fa'atino Utumapu and the Chief Executive Officer of NOLA preceded the consultations making linkages to the importance of dedicated attention to violence against women and girls with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are often neglected by family members elevating their level of risk and vulnerability to violence. This ignorance must end now, and NOLA endeavors to empower communities by educating them on how to care recognize, appreciate and acknowledge persons with disabilities.

Ms. Sau Leota a participant of the Workshop shared

*"We take so much for granted when it comes to persons with disabilities. We only focus on their inability, but we fail to recognize the many talents, gifts, and skills they have been blessed with."*



Sua Leota of Manono Island





*We also turn a blind eye to the abuse that women and girls with disabilities face. Perpetrators take advantage of their disability and as a community, we need to hold perpetrators accountable and stand up for those without voices or influence"*

Heker P Matai Senior Programs & Training Officer of the MWCSD reflected on Sau's comments in his speech as the Team Leader for the Spotlight Torch. "The Orange Samoa Spotlight Torch of Hope is a great initiative to engage communities. But what is more important are the conversations, the discussions and the sharing of experiences on how as a village, a community and Samoa as a country can END VIOLENCE BEFORE IT HAPPENS. Violence is Preventable especially for persons with disabilities. The Ministry and its sector partners is dedicated to ensuring persons with disabilities are not left behind and their voices are heard and appreciated."

The ORANGE SAMOA – Spotlight Torch of Hope is led by MWCSD and SPPCS with support from the Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen & UNDP.



Vaito'a Toelupe UNWomen

In revamping the Law & Justice Sector REACH Programme funded by Spotlight through UNDP the village of Tufutafoe was selected as one of the pilot villages. The Ministry of Justice Courts and Administration MJCA led this Law & Justice Sector activity which received a traditional welcome and enthusiasm from the village community.

The ORANGE SAMOA-Spotlight Torch of Hope joined this community initiative and aligned efforts by MJCA, MWCSO and SPPCS together with the Community Development sector and Law & Justice Sector partners and stakeholders in government and civil society.

The day enabled Talanoa Sessions on prevention and service provision for VAWG and the role the multiple partners play in promoting prevention initiatives and quality services that are survivor-centered and relevant to the Samoan legal and social context.

The ultimate goal is the shift of harmful social norms that perpetuates violence and the imbalance of power dynamics at all levels in families, communities, villages, and national level institutions. Changing ingrained and deep-rooted harmful norms and beliefs requires communal mobilization and interventions so there is a collective effort to STOP VIOLENCE BEFORE IT HAPPENS.

In a traditional banter of High chiefs one of the Orators proclaimed there is no violence in Tufutafoe and if there is, it is done discretely so no one knows. The Church Minister interrupted the casual exchange to highlight that this is the very attitude, mindset and behavior that needs to change.

*“If a father is beating up his wife discretely his son will also learn the same behavior. As elders of the community, you must take leadership in educating our children this is a serious matter and to have zero tolerance for violence”. The chiefs acknowledged the advice from the Minister and added, “There are wives who are also discretely violating their husbands, but the men are too ashamed to tell anyone!”.*



Law & Justice Sector Partners at the Tufutafoe REACH Program.





The conversations brought to the forefront uncomfortable topics to discuss but most important to unpacking the root causes and contributing factors of violence. The day ended with a renewed commitment by the Chiefs and elders of Tufutafoe to be champions in ending violence in their homes, village, and community.



# HOME RUN

The Torch of Hope led by the Ministry of Women Community & Social Development in partnership with the Samoa Police, Prisons and Correction Services supported by Spotlight Initiative through UNWomen and UNDP has completed its 16 Days journey across Savaii Manono and Upolu.

The Torch carried the prevention message across Samoa of STOPPING VIOLENCE BEFORE IT HAPPENS TAOFI AE E LEI TUPU which are some of the many efforts by the Ministry to advocate for a change in behavior promoted in the developing National Prevention Framework for EVAWG

Congratulations to MWCSO and SPPCS and all sector partners who contributed to the 16 days journey in particular the CSO partners for their passion and dedication to ending violence against women and girls in Samoa



High Chiefs of Fagalii Village participating in the Torch of Hope for EVAWG towards the last leg of the Torch across the whole of Samoa.



CSNRG Co-Chair Mailo Helen Tanielu handling the Torch of Hope to the Prime Minister of Samoa at the Closing Ceremony of the 16 Days of Activism 2021

Honorable Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mataafa the last Torch bearer to complete the 16 Days of Healing ORANGE SAMOA Spotlight Torch of Hope for 2021. She concluded the 16 days of the Torch traveling across Samoa by lighting a beacon to symbolize the flame of advocacy for EVAWG continues.



# Samoa *READY* for PHASE 2



Phase 1 of the Samoa Spotlight Initiative Country Programme will end in June 2022 completing its initial 2 years of implementation with a no cost extension from 2020 – 2022. USD 2.9 million<sup>2</sup> was assigned to the implementation of Phase 1 channeled through the Spotlight UN modality of 5 Recipient UN Agencies (RUNOs) – UNWomen, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNECO coordinated through the UNRC Office.

A lot has been achieved throughout the 2 years of implementation reflected in the Mid Term Assessment Report highlighting achievements in 4 priority areas. This included active engagement of relevant stakeholders in particular Civil Society actors in the Programme Design. An established Governance System made up of a Joint Steering Committee Co-chaired by UN Resident Coordinator and MFAT Chief Executive Officer, the Technical Working Group led by the UNWomen Technical Specialist enabling technical coherence of the initiative and coordinated through the Samoa Spotlight National Coordinator in the UNRC Office.

The Samoa Civil Society National Reference Group CSO-NRG was also established as an institutional mechanism to hold the initiative accountable, advice, advocate and form partnerships for the sustainability of the programme.

The UN Resident Coordinator and her office effectively lead overall management, co-ordination, strategic direction, and oversight of the programme, including support for planning, implementation, communication, monitoring and reporting and enabling collaboration among stakeholders.

Programme Management relied heavily on the leadership and dedication of individual RUNOs with overarching coordination by the UNRC Office. This contributed effectively to Programme Implementation and Results with clear milestones of achievements making measurable impacts in normative shift and change in addressing intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls in Samoa specifically focusing on Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partners Violence (IPV) as the prominent types of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Samoa.



To support the development of the second phase of the initiative, the UNRCO hired consultant to facilitate consultations of key Spotlight partners and stakeholders from government and civil society.

Kick starting our preparations with the CSO partners the UNDP Resident Representative Jorn Sorensen, acknowledged the crucial role of CSO as partners of the initiative.

CSO leadership and support towards the Spotlight Initiative extended into the sports arena, into churches, into the space of our transgender communities, into the education sector and many others. CSO have ensured that through Spotlight Initiative, we are not leaving anyone behind.

Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development Dr.Mema Motusaga reaffirmed the support of the Ministry and stands with the CSO sector for stronger collective and impactful actions to end violence before it begins.



MWCSD CEO Dr. Mema Motusaga presenting her Keynote Address and reaffirming the MWCSD's commitment to Spotlight Phase 2



Government Stakeholders and Spotlight Implementing Partners Consultation



CSO Representatives Consultations for Phase 2 building on the lessons from Phase 1



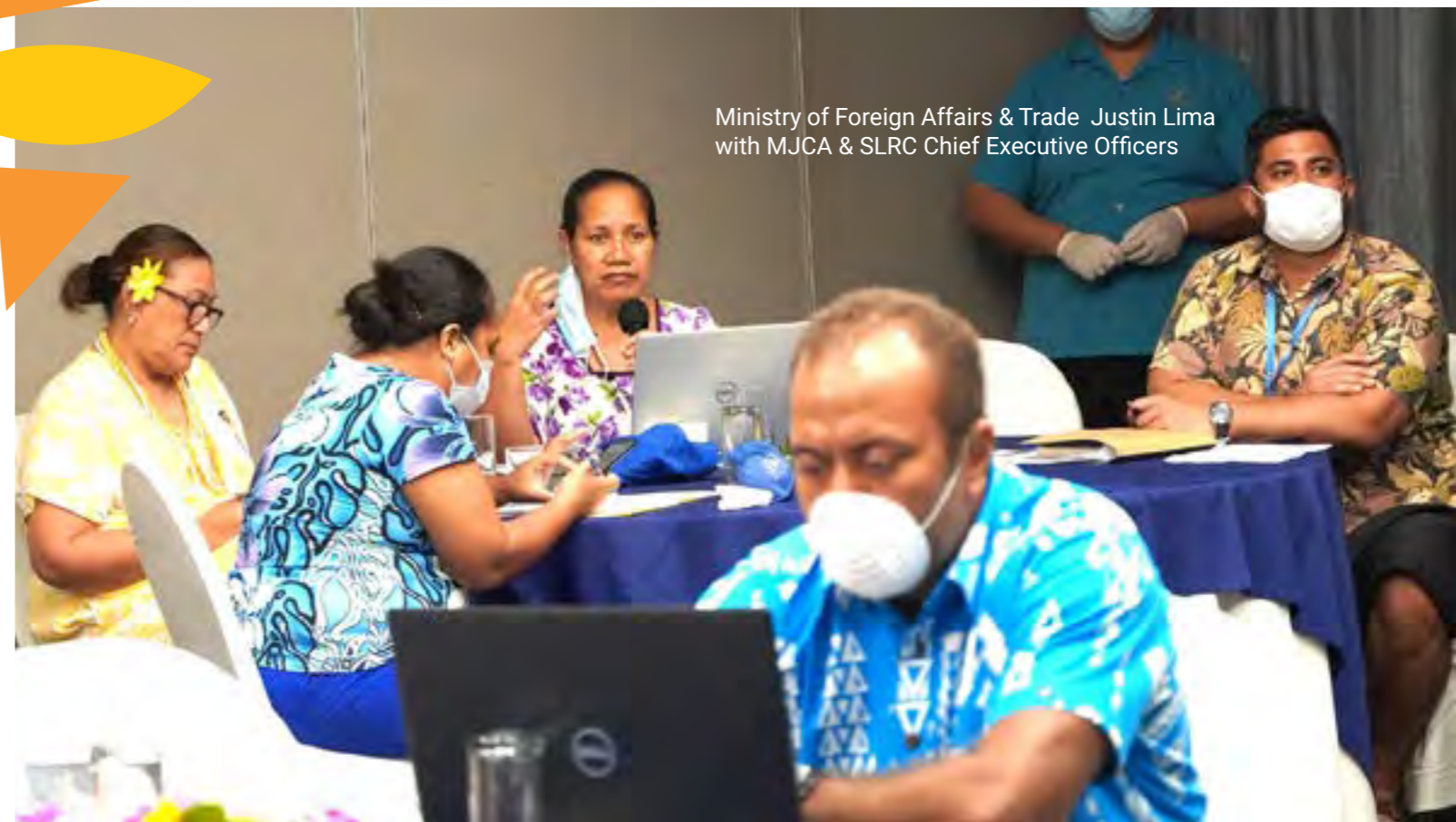
Vaito'a Toelupe UNRCO Consultant for the development of the Spotlight Initiative Phase 2

**Snapshot of Recommendations from Spotlight RUNOs**

- Commitment to explore accessible modalities for CSO engagement
- Note the improvement of RUNO systems and HR to support implementation
- Commitment for coordination and joint programming in practice
- Better understanding of implementing the Initiative after Phase I experience and lessons learned
- Confidence to achieve proposed outputs by December 2023.

**Snapshot of Recommendations from the National Implementing Partners Consultations**

- Ensure dedicated support to CSOs and CSNRG
- Promote Realistic outputs that can be achieved from July 2022 – December 2023
- National IPs consulted and agree on Programme Outputs
- Establish a coordination mechanism for the UN to address the challenges of the delivery as one approach and coherence of efforts with national partners.
- Sustainability Plan to be in place and the premise for Phase II interventions
- Promote national ownership of the programme with the genuine engagement of national IPs



Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade Justin Lima with MJCA & SLRC Chief Executive Officers

# Representing Samoan YOUTH in the global spotlight

By Gutu Pasikala Fa'asau  
SFHA Youth Group Vice President

It would have been an awesome experience for anybody who got to go. I was fortunate enough to have been selected through the Samoa Family Health Association to attend the Global Spotlight Learning Symposium in Cancun city, Mexico.

I was privileged enough to join a delegation of four lead by Dr. Mema Motusaga, the CEO of MWCSO, alongside Fagalima Tuatagloa, and Gabrielle Apelu Jones for CSO reference group. I participated in the conference as the Youth representative for Samoa, advocating as the youth champion for my brothers and sister back home.



Samoa Delegation receiving the Global Spotlight Leave No One Behind Award with Ms Erin Kenny - Head of the Technical Unit & Senior Technical Adviser Spotlight Initiative



Samoa Delegation to Cancun Mexico Fagalima Tuatagaloa, CSNRC Co-Chair, Dr. Mema Motusaga MWCSO, Gabrielle Apelu CSNRG & Gutu P Faasau SFHA Youth Representative

Our party of four started our journey from the Faleolo Airport, to the Fiji international Airport in Nadi before taking a 10-hour long flight to Los Angeles. I parted ways with the rest of the team and continued on to Mexico City and then to Cancun city. Between the two flights, I had a lay-over of about 7 hours and took the opportunity to peruse through the Mexico City airport, admiring the many different foreign produces not available in my own country.

The language barrier was an obvious issue but being able to navigate using basic sign language and awkward hand gestures was enough for to get around and back on my plane to Cancun City. After arriving at the Paradisus Cancun Hotel, I managed to check in and rest up for the conference

scheduled to start the next day. By then the Samoan Delegation had arrived and retired for the night in the hopes of receiving ample rest for the symposium.

The Spotlight initiative is a global effort to end violence against women through a United Nation and European Union collaboration. The government of Samoa and Civil society are working today to end violence against women and girls in Samoa. My attendance was to bring to the global stage the voice of the youth in Samoa, the work done by my colleagues and I over the duration of the Spotlight program in Samoa. The Samoa Family Health Association are actively involved with this initiative through their community outreach programs. Youth Volunteers accompany these programs out

to the rural areas to deliver to other youths.

These community outreach programs deliver essential knowledge and training on Sexual Reproductive Health, Gender Based Violence, and so much more.

The main audience we try to cater to the most are to Women and young girls. The youth volunteers help deliver to the youth through divided sessions for boys and girls that touch on gender roles, puberty (changes to the body) and Family life education. We want to also create a safe space where they can share and ask questions without the worry of being ridiculed by parents and elders alike due to cultural norms.

My time in Mexico allowed for me to also learn from others that attended the conference. We got to choose the sessions we found interest in and I was able to sit in on some very impressive presentations. I found interest in sessions such as improving on Leadership, storytelling, writing captivating stories and Influencing influencers. I hoped to improve on my writing and reporting skills through these gatherings, to bolster any piece I write, in order to create more awareness on the pressing subjects, captivating the audience and having them join the cause for ending violence against women and girls.

I admired the work and success that each panelist on the podium shared on and how it related to the work done back home. A lot of technical words were used and to follow along tested all my grammatical skills and what not. All in all, I think that as I was presented with such an opportunity, I am also presented with the responsibility to help with the development of the local youth, preaching on ending violence against women and girls, creating the urgency amongst the youth to move together as one in order to achieve more than what is required of us.

Youth Volunteer Vice President and representative on our Governing Board -Mr. Gutu Pasikala Faasau

*I want to continue with the momentum that the spotlight initiative has built thus far and capitalize on the support already put in to this initiative. Focusing on capacity building for the youth, better equipping them for the next step they must take as future leaders of this country.*

One particular session I enjoyed was the session on Leadership, and I learnt that leading can only be made possible if there is a following, and a better following is the responsibility of the leader. It is by serving others and being hands on with this cause can you garner the interest of many and help contribute to the ultimate goal that we hope to achieve.



Pacific Delegation with Spotlight Initiative Teams from across the Pacific

# *hola desde* Cancun!

Samoa Spotlight Initiative programme wins the Leave No One Behind Award that recognizes a team's commitment to the Leave No One Behind principle of the 2030 Agenda. The programme is assisted in Samoa by UNDP, UNESCO, UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and the UN Resident Coordinator Office working closely with the Civil Society National Reference Group, a mechanism of 10 CSO representatives aiming to ensure that, in ending domestic and intimate partner violence in Samoa, dignity of victims is protected including through high-quality services while root causes of violence are being identified and addressed.



MWCSD CEO Dr. Mema Motusaga conveying the Government of Samoa's appreciation for the Global Spotlight Initiative LNOB Award which is a success story for the first UN Joint Programme premised on the One UN Delivery that is necessary to better support national implementing partners and government's drive for EVAWG



partnership with the United Nations to end violence against women and girls.

*"The programme continues to achieve results because the Spotlight Initiative Team listened and designed interventions to suit the context of our communities, their level of knowledge and their capacities to deliver", Fagalima added.*

Dr Mema Motusaga, Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development added that "the Award recognises the collective effort and partnerships within the Spotlight programme built on relevant policies, grounded on the concept of family, enhanced by cultural and religious values and a load made lighter with everyone committed to ending violence against women and girls as their main goal."

UN Resident Coordinator Simona Marinescu, cheering from Samoa on social media was highly emotional stating that "the award is the highest recognition of Samoa's work under the Spotlight Initiative. We have come a long way, yet more is needed for women and children everywhere to live without fear."

The five programmes nominated for the "Leave No One Behind" Award included Samoa, Liberia, Tajikistan, Honduras and Zimbabwe.

The Award recognises the Spotlight Initiative programme team's commitment to the Leave No One Behind principle of the 2030 Agenda.

## The four walls of the Paradisus Conference Hall in Cancun, Mexico shook

at the sound of the Samoan celebratory singing as the delegation was called on stage to receive the "Leaving No One Behind" prestigious award of the Global Spotlight Initiative.

Through singing and dancing, both in the Pacific and on the global stage, Samoan women express their love of life, their love for the family and the values keeping the community together.

And on the global stage, they sang for the world to hear that Samoa leads the way in ending violence against women and children.

It's Sunday, 18 September early evening in Samoa, Saturday 17 September late at night in Cancun, but nobody is sleeping as the great news come out – the Spotlight Initiative programme in Samoa received global recognition for its inclusive dialogue approach around a dramatic reality of increasing numbers of victims of domestic and intimate partner violence.

"In many ways, the award gives voice to the painful silence surrounding victims of domestic violence, women and children who are denied the basic right to a dignified life," says UN Resident Coordinator in Samoa, Simona Marinescu.

Gratitude and tears of joy overwhelmed the Samoan delegation led by the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Women

Community and Social Development, Dr. Mema Motusaga, Co-Chair of the CSO National Reference Group Fagalima Tuatagaloa, Gabrielle Apelu of Apelu Sports representing the Regional CSO NRG and Youth Representative Gutu Faasau, as they gracefully danced their way to the stage to receive the award.

*"Finally, Samoa and our efforts towards ending violence against women have been recognised" said Civil Society National Reference Group Co-Chair Fagalima Tuatagaloa when receiving the award.*

The Spotlight Initiative in Samoa is a nationally owned programme funded by the European Union through a dedicated





# Spotlight Initiative



**“I believe in a world in which every woman and girl is safe, where her voice is heard and her choices are respected.” -**

**European Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen, 5 March 2020, at the launch of the Spotlight Initiative’s #WithHer campaign.**



Spotlight Initiative



# BTS

## BEHIND THE SCENE

A journey in photos of the Spotlight Initiative Samoa Country Programme Behind the Scene ACTION in facilitating a social movement by mobilizing stakeholders partners and communities to collectively END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS.

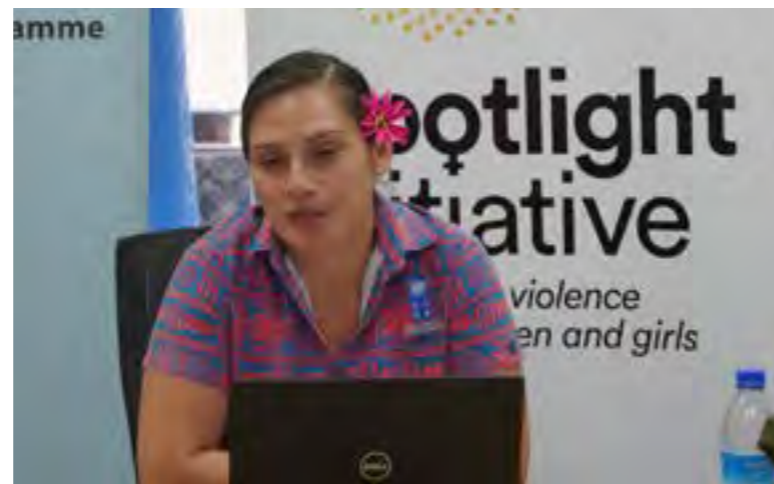






















## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The significant milestones of the Spotlight Initiative Phase 1 to advance and build on existing efforts to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Samoa is the outcome of genuine collaboration and partnership amongst RUNOs, Government Implementing Partners and Civil Society Actors to deliver as one under the guidance and coordination of the Joint Steering Committee Co-Chairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade Chief Executive Officer Peseta Noumea Simi and UN Resident Coordinator Dr. Simona Marinescu. As the demonstration fund for the UN Reform the implementation infrastructure of the Spotlight Initiatives encountered major set backs from the start. The practical application of the “new way of working” and delivering as one UN required

time, open dialogue and patience. However in true Samoan spirit, the resilience of the UN Spotlight Team and leadership of the implementing partners prevailed. Despite the barriers, connecting the dots and making the linkages across sectors and aligning the Theory of Change from PILLAR 1 to 6 has produced significant results for the programme. EVAWG requires multiple partners and actors engaged in diverse and innovative interventions to be successful. The Spotlight Initiative has demonstrated this and has ignited the flame of a powerful social movement to ensure Samoan Women and Girls live in a country Free from violence. This publication is dedicated to all the survivors of violence and the unsung heroes who dedicate their lives to EVAWG.

# Spotlight Initiative

EVERYONE'S BUSINESS  
Ending VIOLENCE

Spotlight Initiative

