

# **Gender Profile**

## **Samoa**

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## Gender Context

According to the Government of Samoa's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> report to the CEDAW Committee in 2009, Samoa has a total population of 180,741 of which 93,724 are males and females are numbered at 87, 017. Thirty eight percent (38%) are females under the age of 15 with 40% of males under the same age group. Samoa is made up of 10 islands of which 4 are inhabited with approximately 300 villages. Villages are self-governing under the direction of the village council of chiefs who are heads of extended family groups in the village. Chiefs can be either male or female although traditionally, chiefs (matai) have been predominantly males because of prevailing cultural attitudes and beliefs. However, more and more females are being bestowed chiefly titles as potential leaders for families and village communities evident in a marked increase in female chief numbers in recent years. The Samoan way of life places great importance on the dignity and achievements of the group rather than the individual.<sup>1</sup>Female average life expectancy improved from 73.8 in 2001 to 74.2 for 2006. Male life expectancy on the other hand experienced a slight decrease in the same period from 71.8 to 71.5. Total average life expectancy increased from 72.8 in 2001 to 73.2 in 2006.

The role of women and girls in Samoan society remain largely unchanged at village levels despite the relatively high educational attainment of girls compared to boys. Girls who do not achieve tertiary education and do not have formal employment remain with their families and assume a place in the village auluma (social institutions for young women). Female-headed households are more likely to be in hardship when compared to male-headed households. Conditions of financial hardship whilst not widespread do nevertheless have the potential of leading to increased social and domestic tensions, rising crime and a deteriorating quality of life for those most affected.<sup>2</sup>

The 2006 Population and Housing census noted that out of a total of 38,297 people in paid employment, 42 percent were employed in the Private Sector. Of this total 54.8 percent were females and 45.2 percent males. Twenty percent were employed in the public service with 26.7 percent being females and 17.3 percent males. In terms of salary levels, the percentage of females in the salary range of \$15,000 Samoan Tala and over had increased from 12 percent in 2001 to 21 percent in 2006 as opposed to only a six percent increase for males over the same period. One can infer that there is a shifting away of women from the lower paid jobs. The 2010 Samoa MDG Progress Report states that this trend could also be a direct result of a major salary raise adjustment of 42 percent implemented over 3 years across the public sector. This had a positive impact on female dominated professions such as nursing and teaching.<sup>3</sup>

The highest proportion of persons employed was in the agriculture sector (32 percent) with women accounting for 7 percent of agricultural work. There is the contention that women's role in agriculture is under reported and warrants the conducting of a gender analysis of the division of labour for all levels of agricultural work. The Government in partnership with the private sector and its Development partners is currently supporting programs to expand the livelihood options and other income generating opportunities for women. These include micro finance supporting schemes

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<sup>2</sup> Samoa Millennium Development Goals Progress Report, 2010, page 16

<sup>3</sup> Samoa Millennium Development Goals Progress Report, 2010

through South Pacific Business Development, Small Business Enterprise Centre, Development Bank of Samoa and organic farming and fine mat weaving through Women in Business Development Incorporation.<sup>4</sup>

## **Gender Issues**

### **Women in Decision making**

Women held only 8 per cent of seats in Parliament in 2008. Since all seats in Parliament, besides two, belong to *matais*, it is relevant to quantify the proportion of female *matais*. Women only count for 20.2 per cent of all *matai* (2006 estimate), but this is increasing. At present Samoa have 6.1% women in parliament. In a recent breakthrough, Samoa amended its Constitution to reserve five seats or 10% of the 49 parliament seats for women electoral candidates. According to the 2013 Regional MDG Tracking Report the low representation of women in Parliament reflects significant obstacles including a political system where only a chief (*matai*) can run for elections. Until a wider amendment of the Constitution to change this political system interim measures are being implemented by government such as a programme to appoint a woman representative in every village council.

The Government is also undertaking a *matai* leadership survey. Once completed it will present valuable information on the number of women and men *matai* and factors to contribute towards women taking chiefly positions. Social and customary attitudes about the traditional role of women continue to limit women in leadership at all levels.

### **Gender Based Violence**

The Samoa Family Health and Safety Study conducted in 2001 shows there is a high level of violence against women in Samoa, with almost half of the women surveyed experiencing some form of partner abuse (46%). The most common form of partner abuse is physical (38%) followed by sexual abuse (20%) and emotional abuse (19%). Around 60% of women have been physically abused by someone other than a partner, with the most common perpetrator being a female family member (39%).

The study also shows widespread acceptance of violence, particularly among women. About half of the men and 70% of women agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife in at least one situation. Around 70% of women think not wanting sex is an insufficient reason for refusing sex with her husband. Samoan women are expected to be obedient, with the vast majority of both sexes agreeing that 'a good woman obeys her husband'. The most frequently mentioned causes of violence against women were: the survivor's behaviour (e.g. disobeying husband), male use of alcohol or drugs, economic problems, problems with partner's family, sexual jealousy, lack of communication, gender role expectations and modernization. Samoa passed the Family Safety Act which provides preventative measure and protection orders for women.

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<sup>4</sup>Samoa Millennium Development Goals Progress Report, 2010

### **Land and access to and control over assets and economical resources**

In practice Samoan women have limited access to customary land and are largely excluded from dealings in customary land, such as customary leases. Although Samoan women have equal rights over freehold land, they do not fare well in practice, as women do not often avail themselves of the right to be included on the title as a registered owner. With customary land unavailable for collateral and only 4 percent of Samoa's land comprising freehold, obtaining credit is a problem for everyone. Women have benefited from micro-credit and stand to gain from a planned new regime to strengthen asset-based lending in Samoa.<sup>5</sup> Current divorce and inheritance laws do not give adequate protection and rights to women to property. There is a need to update the archaic family law, at present the Law Reform Commission has a dedicated staff providing technical expertise on integration of CEDAW within domestic law.

Samoa's 2006 National Census shows that just under a third of the economically active population are women, with most women focusing instead on domestic work. The low level of participation can be attributed to gender role expectations within a traditional Samoan household where men deal mostly with work outside the house, while women are involved mainly in work in the house including domestic chores, caring for children, the sick, and the elderly, cleaning, and cooking.<sup>6</sup> The Women Economic Opportunity Index assesses a range of underlying factors affecting women's economic opportunities in the formal sector which includes access to finance, education and training, women's legal and social status for which Samoa has a ranking of 99/128 which has placed it at the bottom quintile.

The Samoa Demographic and Health Survey, 2009 identified that forty percent of married women who are employed say that they mainly control their cash earnings, and an additional 40 percent say that they and their husband jointly decide how the woman's earnings are used, while 15 percent say that their husband mainly controls the woman's cash earnings. Younger women are markedly more likely than older women to control their own cash earnings. Currently married women with no children or with four or fewer children are also more likely to decide themselves how their cash earnings are used. Women with five or more children are more likely to jointly decide how their earnings are used (48 percent).

## **Sectors**

### **Health**

Whilst many key health indicators have improved in recent years there is concern that the quality of services being delivered, especially in some rural areas, is inadequate. The morbidity profile of the population is tending towards non-communicable, lifestyle diseases where strong primary health care, health education and nutrition programs have an important preventative role to play. The low immunization levels

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<sup>5</sup> (IFC) Samoa Gender & Investment, Climate Reform Assessment, 2010, page 11

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* page 12

(56% males and 69.7% for females) are a major concern with regards to preventive health measures for children.<sup>7</sup>

The 2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report states that Samoa has mixed performance in meeting MDG 5 (maternal health). Although there has been low maternal death and improvement in skilled birth attendance, concerns over access to these services remain in rural areas. Access to contraceptives remains a challenge, as with small populations it is difficult to ensure confidentiality and strict cultural norms. The lack of access has been linked to an increase in teenage pregnancies. According to the report Samoa's sexual and reproductive health issues remain complex, which requires further study and limited funding on reproductive health services remains a key challenge. Samoa is considered a low-HIV- prevalence country.

### **Education**

Samoa has achieved gender parity for girls in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary education. According to the Government of Samoa MDG Progress Report, 2010, girls are outperforming their male counterparts in all levels of education. The declining percentage of males completing secondary and tertiary education when compared to females could pose a risk to social stability in the future. Key notable areas at risk are increasing male unemployment rate, crime and violence rates including violence against women and children.

Samoa girls have equal access to education at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary. The ratio of females per 100 males enrolled in primary level is 0.97:1 and 1.13:1 for secondary education. There are also more females in tertiary education accounting for 61% compared to 39% for males. A noticeable gender gap exists between the education levels/results for boys as opposed to girls at secondary level and this is beginning to feed into tertiary education. A growing number of females are pursuing science and technical courses with an increase from 6 percent in 2000 to 25 percent in 2008<sup>8</sup>. Recent reports highlight concerns over the performance of boys, with males less likely to complete secondary and tertiary education compared to girls.

### **Water and Sanitation**

According to the Government of Samoa 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> report to the CEDAW Committee in 2011, government's Water Sector Support Program (WASSP) is in place to address the issues and challenges of wastewater disposal and sanitation and other water related issues, under the Water Framework for Action. The Ministry of Women Community and Social Development (MWCSO) as one of the implementing agencies for the WASSP is responsible for the Independent Water Scheme (IWS) component of the programme. The IWS component focuses on the use, protection and management of village owned watersheds or water pools to supply the entire village as well as that of the neighbouring villages that cannot access the main water supply because of their geographical locations. These independent water schemes are managed by a village committee whose membership consists of 50% females. An IWS Association consisting of one representative from each of the individual village committees has been established under the support of the MWCSO as part of the WASSP. This Association is chaired by a woman, and is currently housed with the Division for Internal Affairs of the MWCSO.

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<sup>7</sup> Government of Samoa MDG Second Progress Report, 2010

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

## **Environment and Climate Change**

A Post Disaster Needs Assessment conducted in Samoa after Cyclone Evan hit the country in 2012, identified women's sources of subsistence income in rural areas as negatively impacted. Women in subsistence households are primarily responsible for cultivating vegetables such as cucumbers, tomatoes and eggplant. Mat weaving, which is another source of income for women primarily, may have been negatively impacted by the storm. A major challenge for Samoa is ensuring that climate change does not reverse its hard won development gains, worsening the plight of the most vulnerable, including some communities, women, children, youth and the disabled.<sup>9</sup>

## **Institutional and Legal Framework**

Over the past few years, the Ministry for Women and Community and Social Development has worked towards the development of a policy and national plan that incorporates the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Commonwealth Plan of Action and the Revised Pacific Platform for Action. The Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS) 2012-2016 is government's national policy framework for development over the 5 years. The work on the advancement of women cuts across all sectors and is noted as part of the Community Sector and or Community Development goal, with the reference to the National Policy for Women as the mechanism that aims to expand opportunities for women and ensure progress is made in implementing the CEDAW.

Samoa ratified CEDAW in 1992 and has since submitted its combined initial, second and third report to the CEDAW Committee in 2003 and the combined 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> report in 2011. Current laws being reviewed by the law reform commission includes the Criminal Code.

While women are increasingly empowered at national level and promised equality under the Constitution, the high rates of domestic and sexual violence illustrate the substantial work needed to ensure women's most basic right—to live free from violence and harm. Advocacy on CEDAW and CRC by the MWCSO to advance the status of women continues to date with national level and village based program implementation. These programs centre on issues such as GBV, HIV & AIDS and the broader Reproductive Sexual Health issues, entrepreneurship and small business development, negotiation and leadership skills training for women and girls.<sup>10</sup>

The MDG Second Progress Report, 2010 highlights the following:

- Female Wages paid in the Non agriculture sector has increased from 52.8 million tala in 2005 to 77.8 million tala in 2009 compared to an increase from 87.7 million to 112.3 million tala for males. Whilst there has been a greater percentage increase for female wages (47.3%) when compared to males (28.1%) for this same period, the proportion of female wages to total wages in non agriculture sectors only improved slightly from 37.6 percent to 40.9 percent. In 2009, wages for males declined by 1.5 percent over 2008 whilst

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<sup>9</sup>Samoa Strategic Programme for Climate Resilience, prepared for the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience, 2011

<sup>10</sup>Government of Samoa combined fourth & fifth report to the CEDAW Committee

female wages increased by 4.3 percent. This is the result of more females moving into managerial and executive positions thus earning higher salaries.

- The voting age in Samoa is 21 years for both females and males. However, in order for one to run for a seat in parliament, one has to be a holder of a chiefly title. Samoa has 49 members of parliament elected through a democratic process and representing 47 geographical constituencies plus 2 representing minority ethnic groups. Only title holders (Matai) are eligible to compete for the 49 seats. In 2006, the largest contingent of women ran for parliament. This trend was seen as a direct result of intensive advocacy, lobbying and awareness raising efforts of NGO's. A total of eighteen (18) women from different constituencies competed in the 2006 election however only four made it into the 49-member parliament, with three (3) currently serving as Cabinet Ministers.

### **Actors**

The following organisations are working in various aspects of gender equality and women's empowerment in Samoa

- Department for Women under the Ministry of Women and Community Social Development (MWCSD)
- Samoa Umbrella for NGO's (SUNGO)
- Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG)
- Women in Business Development International (WIBDI)
- Law Reform Commission
- Nuanua O Le Alofa (NOLA serving People Living with Disabilities)
- SPC RRRT Country Focal Officer

### **Recommendations**

The following have been identified as priorities for development assistance in this area outlined in the MDG Progress Report, 2010:

- The institutional strengthening of the Samoa Bureau of Statistics to strengthen the collection of segregated data enabling in-depth analysis of gender issues.
- The strengthening of the capacity of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development as well as the provision of financial resources that would enable gender issues to be adequately addressed. This will include equipping MWCSD to take the lead role in facilitating cross-sectoral dialogue and fostering partnerships with the relevant ministries and non-government organizations.
- Support for advocacy campaigns at the village, church and community levels to increase awareness of key challenges facing women in Samoa and the review of the Village Fono Act to mirror these priorities.
- Support for Crucial women's access to credit, technical advice and capacity building in the area of women's economic empowerment.
- Support the implementation of the National Policy for Women of Samoa 2007-2017.
- Support for a comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women, to include the churches, relevant authorities and stakeholders.

- Support for the consistent monitoring of the MDG targets and CEDAW and CRC and for a consolidated effort to gather sex disaggregated data across all sectors including all surveys carried out at national level.

According to the Government of Samoa MDG Progress Report, 2010, significant progress has been achieved since the 2004 MDG Report. The Ministry of Women Community and Social development should focus its attention on the key issues such as the generation of sex-disaggregated data that would serve as useful baseline information, as well as implementation of its policy framework. Furthermore there is an urgency to pursue the finalization of its sector plan and institutional strengthening program so that it is in a position to provide guidance for the way forward in terms of its resource requirements and capacities.

