

Empowering Women in Rural Samoa to Combat Violence

Country Statistics

Samoa

Population (millions) – 0.2

Surface Area (sq. km.) – 2,831

GDP per capita (PPP US\$) – 4,000

Life expectancy at birth (years) –

Women – 75.68

Men – 69.79

Human Development Index Rank 1-187 (1 is highest)– 99

Seats held by women in Parliament (%) – 8.2

Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 births) – not available

Infant mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) – 21

Births attended by skilled health personnel (%) – 80.8

Contraceptive prevalence rate (%) – 28.7

Female enrollment in primary education (%) – 99.8

Internet users (per 100 people) – 7

Population below \$1 (PPP) per day – not available

Country statistics were taken from The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011.



a project in cooperation with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund), managed by UN Women. The not-for-profit, Samoa Victim Support Group, will deliver the project on behalf of UN Trust Fund.

2012-2014 Funding: US\$109,876 from the Zonta International Strategies to End Violence against Women (ZISVAW) Fund. The UN Women administration fee is 7 percent.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SAMOA

Samoa is an island country in the Pacific Ocean and has a population of 192,001 with 61% of the population living in poverty. The incidence of violence experienced by women and girls between the ages of 18 and 65 in Samoa is high, and this violence is usually perpetrated by an intimate partner. The World Health Organization found that women in Samoa experienced both physical abuse (41%) and sexual abuse (20%), and more than 50% did not tell anyone about the abuse. Of those women that did not seek help, 86% stated that they thought abuse was “normal” or “not serious.”

Physical and sexual violence in the home is common in Samoa, where prevailing norms justify abuse as an inevitable part of family life. In rural Samoa, the village and family structure are extremely important for the survival of women, which contributes to a situation where women suffering violence feel obligated to stay with the perpetrator. Survivors of violence in Samoa lack support networks, access to resources and services, and opportunities to earn income. An additional barrier to women reporting violence within the home are the traditional methods communities use to deal with the situations. At the village level, village councils and leaders negotiate a traditional apology, whereby the woman’s family receives an apology from the abuser and his family, or a village council fine, whereby his family pays money to the woman and her family. In criminal situations, police facilitate these

same activities instead of the village councils; and, as a result, the victim does not receive counseling and no arrest of the abuser occurs.

GOAL

The goal of the project is to empower communities in rural Samoa to prevent and combat violence against women (VAW). Working with Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG), the project will:

Advocacy

- Implement a grassroots advocacy campaign to enhance the capacity of SVSG village representatives to advocate within their communities to end violence against women and to provide support services for victims of violence;
- Enhance communication between SVSG, police and the community to increase the use of the formal justice system to combat violence;
- Increase awareness of legal reforms that enhance the ability of individuals and communities to end violence against women;

Support

- Build informed and active networks among women in rural Samoa to create support systems for women threatened by violence and to empower these women to take action against violence and to access justice and support services;

Livelihood Training

- Provide livelihood training for women to challenge women’s lack of economic independence in rural villages.

The goal of this project also aligns with Zonta’s 2012-2014 Biennial goals, specifically the goal to increase Zonta’s credibility and visibility through continued advocacy to prevent violence against women by drawing on Zonta’s membership, networks and ZISVAW projects to increase the visibility of the issue of violence against women globally and locally.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Advocacy

- 300 village representatives will attend trainings on ways to support victims, confidentiality issues, police and legal procedures, and providing referrals.
- Village representatives will sign project agreements and engage in advocacy efforts with government officials and other leaders to end violence against women.
- SVSG will partner with police to share lessons learned from the field, formalize referral policies for support services, and improve police procedures that reduce re-victimization.

Support

- 3,750 women will attend 25 “Stronger Community” workshops, which will be conducted by 50 village representatives. These workshops will cover strategies to combat violence, teach men how strong women prevent violence within families, and ways to raise children without violence in the home.
- Women will establish and grow village networks to assist women in preventing violence in their homes.

Livelihood Training

- 750 women across 25 districts will participate in livelihood trainings over the course of one year.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of this project, there will be stronger communities with women who have:

- Access to information on how police and the legal system can protect them and their communities against violence;
- Skills and resources to form networks to combat violence against women;
- Confidence to address violence in their personal lives and communities;
- Strength and support to report violence to the police or SVSG.
- Increase in self-esteem and self-worth; and
- Economic independence and can contribute to the village economy.

Likewise, government officials, village mayors, church leaders and police will have the skills to:

- Decrease violence in their communities;
- Use SVSG village representatives’

support networks to assist women and their families;

- Stop using “traditional apologies” and “village council fines” and assist women to access the formal justice system instead;
- Stop the belief that abusing a woman is acceptable in certain circumstances and that domestic violence is a private matter; and
- Understand violence against women legal reforms.

