





CHAPTER

7

Apia,
Samoa

Chapter Seven: Apia, Samoa

7.1 Introduction

This Urban Centre Case Study discusses youth crime and violence in Apia, Samoa. The research team conducted focus groups discussions and interviews in Apia with young people, government actors, village leaders and civil society organizations which provided the main basis for the findings. Additionally, a desk review of available reports and statistics was conducted. Drawing together these findings, this case study recommends a number of key actions to strengthen and support resilient capacity among young men and women.

The median age in Samoa is 20.5 years, making it a relatively young population. The *2001-2010 National Youth Policy* defines young people as aged between 12-29 years old. However, with the current review of the National Youth Policy, it is anticipated that the new policy may re-define the age bracket. In addition, a young person can be criminally held responsible between the ages of 8-14 years according to the Crimes Ordinance 1961.

"I'm proud to be Samoan. One day I want to play for the Manu Samoa and show the world our Island, our friendly way"

Young man

Young people in Samoa are facing a number of challenges, including the impacts of globalization and changes occurring as a result of rural-urban migration. Despite these transitions, there is still an ongoing adherence to *fa'a-Samoa*, or the 'Samoa Way'.²⁶⁹ In Samoa, the social structure rests on kinship values, which place the family and the village at the centre. The underlying traditional belief is that the well-being of the family and the village will ensure the welfare of the individual.²⁷⁰ The *fa'a-Samoa* allows the participation of young people through *auvaluma* (daughters of the village), the *aumaga* (untitled men) and the *autalavou* (faith-based youth groups).²⁷¹ However, as more Samoan families begin to reside outside of their own village structures with its strong traditional administration and social governance, the implications, roles and responsibilities of young people in their community are changing.

Statistics maintained by the police as well as qualitative interviews undertaken during this study suggest that the prevalent forms of youth crime include burglary, theft, narcotics and assaults. Risk factors create an environment which increases the likelihood of young people becoming involved in criminal activity. The most commonly agreed upon risk factors during consultations include unemployment, break down of families, lack of good role models, and urban migration. Additional factors, such as globalization, urbanization, drugs and alcohol, might exacerbate young people's likelihood of engaging in crime and/or violence. Nonetheless, young men and women have demonstrated they can be resilient against these negative factors through the existence of good role models to give advice, strong family/cultural ties and opportunities for employment and training.

7.2 National Context

In 2006, the population of Samoa was 180,741 (Figure 7.1), with 37,708 living in the Apia Urban Area.²⁷² This means that approximately 21 percent of the overall population is urban-based.

²⁶⁹ SPC and UNFPA 2006.

²⁷⁰ Meleisea 1987.

²⁷¹ Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010; Government of Samoa 2001.

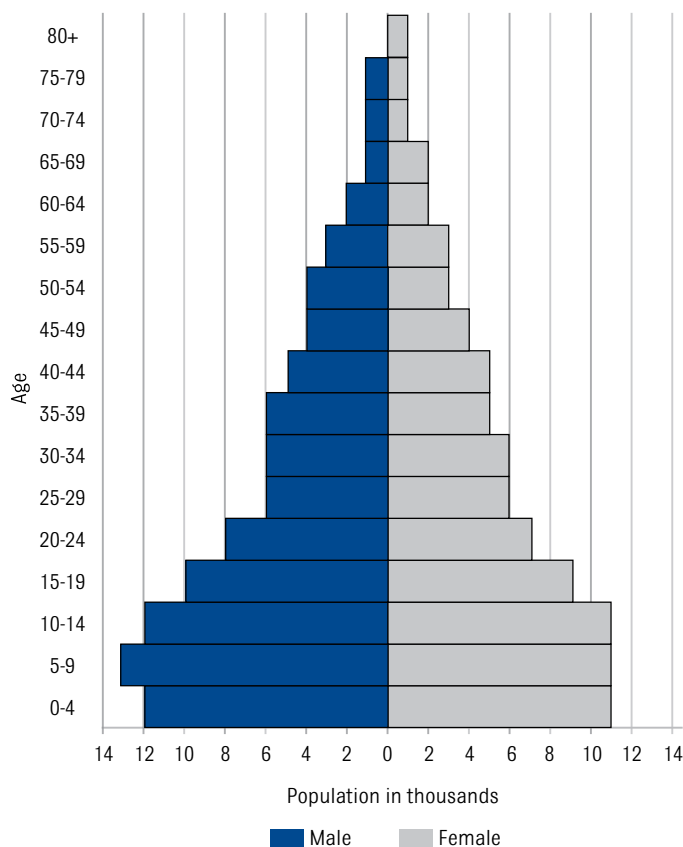
²⁷² Samoa Bureau of Statistics 2008.

The 2009 Human Development Index ranks Samoa 94 out of 182 countries.²⁷³ Samoa is on track to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals such as the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. While the Government of Samoa does not maintain a statistic on the incidence of poverty in Samoa, it has undertaken participatory poverty assessments that identify a widespread “poverty of opportunity.” This encompasses: “a lack of access to basic services, a lack of adequate resources to meet basic household needs and customary obligations to the family, village community and church, [and] a lack of opportunities to participate fully in the socioeconomic life of the community.”²⁷⁴

As of 2008, 15,323 students attended the 13 secondary schools in the Apia Urban Area, of which 8,023 are females and 7,300 are males. 60 percent of these students are in Government schools and there are more young women (938) enrolled in year 13 than young men (719). The highest dropout rate is at year 12 and 13.²⁷⁵ It is estimated that approximately as many as 21 percent of secondary school age youth (between the ages of 12-17 years old) are not in school, and that an average of 10,000 young people leave school every year in Samoa.²⁷⁶ The National Youth Policy specifically identifies the risk that these young people are facing as they join the ranks of the already unemployed out of school youth and who, due to their disillusionment, may be attracted to drugs, alcohol and crime.

Teenage pregnancy continues to be an issue in Samoa with nine percent of teenage girls having had children. The *Second Generation Surveillance Surveys* undertaken by SPC on HIV and other sexually transmitted infections found that young people under 25 years of age had extremely high prevalence and very low knowledge of sexually transmitted infections. This, combined with the level of teenage pregnancy, indicates high levels of unprotected sex amongst young people.²⁷⁷ The issue of youth suicide is also a key social and health concern in Samoa. In 2004, there were 42 suicide deaths recorded. By 2006-2007, the number dropped to 16 suicide deaths, but there were still 37 attempts. The highest rate of suicides attempts and deaths are amongst young males aged 29 and under.²⁷⁸ It has been suggested that in Samoa there is a link between suicide and high parental expectations in relation to education and employment attainment.²⁷⁹

Figure 7.1: Samoa Population Pyramid



Source: UN Population Division 2009

“Peer pressure and thinking they are the master starts so many fights here... Saturday I go to church and Sunday I help my mother with things around the house”

Young woman

273 For more information and a detailed explanation of the Human Development Index see: http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_WSM.html

274 AusAID 2010.

275 MESC 2007.

276 SBEC 2006:14.

277 Ministry of Health 2010.

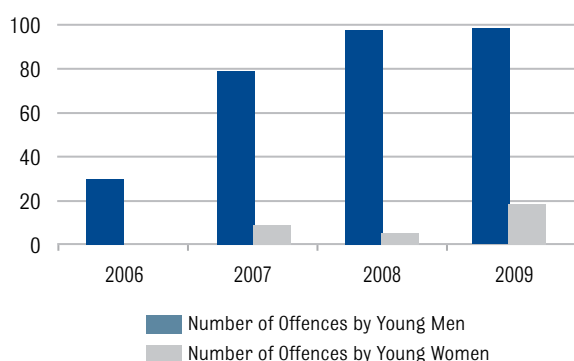
278 FSPI 2009 & Government of Samoa 2001.

279 National University of Samoa 2006.

Culturally, Samoa has held on strongly to many of its traditional values and community structures. Since 1991, Samoa has had universal suffrage, but customary processes (*fa'a Samoa*) also play a very large role in contemporary politics. Only citizens with *matai*²⁸⁰ titles are eligible to stand for election. Moreover, a substantial portion of the national administration of law and order is entrusted to *matai* through the devolution of responsibilities to village councils or fono composed of titled individuals. The *matai* system offers a challenge for women's political and economic empowerment as only approximately five percent of Samoan *matai* titles are held by women.²⁸¹ Nonetheless, Samoa ratified CEDAW in 1995 and has created a specific Ministry to promote women's rights. It is estimated that approximately 40 percent of women form part of the formal economic sector and 33 percent of the total workforce. However, women continue to occupy a lower social status than men. This is highlighted by the high levels of domestic violence, which indicates that 46 percent of women who have ever been in a relationship experience partner abuse (Section 7.3).²⁸²

7.3 Young People as Victims and Perpetrators

Figure 7.2 Number of Offences per Year by Young People Aged 15-29



Source: MWCSO 2010

"They have no money and can't get a job to receive money so they get into selling drugs and stealing"

Young man

Many young people living in Apia contribute positively to the society. That said their potential is not being realized. There needs to be further strengthening of partnerships between government, civil society and young people to better enable young people to access effective support and services to empower them especially in the justice sector. Some young people are engaging in criminal activities, including assault, drug abuse and domestic violence. At the same time, young people are at risk of being victims of crime, in particular, violence inside and outside the home.

Common Crimes

Predominant criminal offenders in Samoa are males aged between 24-30 years of age. The total number of youth offenders aged between 15 to 29 years has increased substantially – for example in 2006 there were 30 offences committed by young men. However by 2009 the number had increased to 99 offences by young men (Figure 7.2). According to police statistics, in 2009 the top five crimes committed by young male offenders were: possession of narcotics (44 percent), escape from custody/prison (22 percent), burglary (13 percent), theft (11 percent), and actual bodily harm (ten percent) (Figure 7.3).²⁸³

Out of a total of 312 crimes committed from 2006-2010 by young aged 15 to 29, the Ministry of Police lists 32 female offenders during that period with only one aged 17 years. Women's crimes were almost exclusively money-related, often involving breach of trust and were almost all non-violent except for one assault and one manslaughter charge. In 2009, there were 19 crimes involving young women (under the age of 29 years), 15 of which were theft as a servant, forgery, false pretence, or falsifying accounts (Figure 7.4).²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Chiefly title.

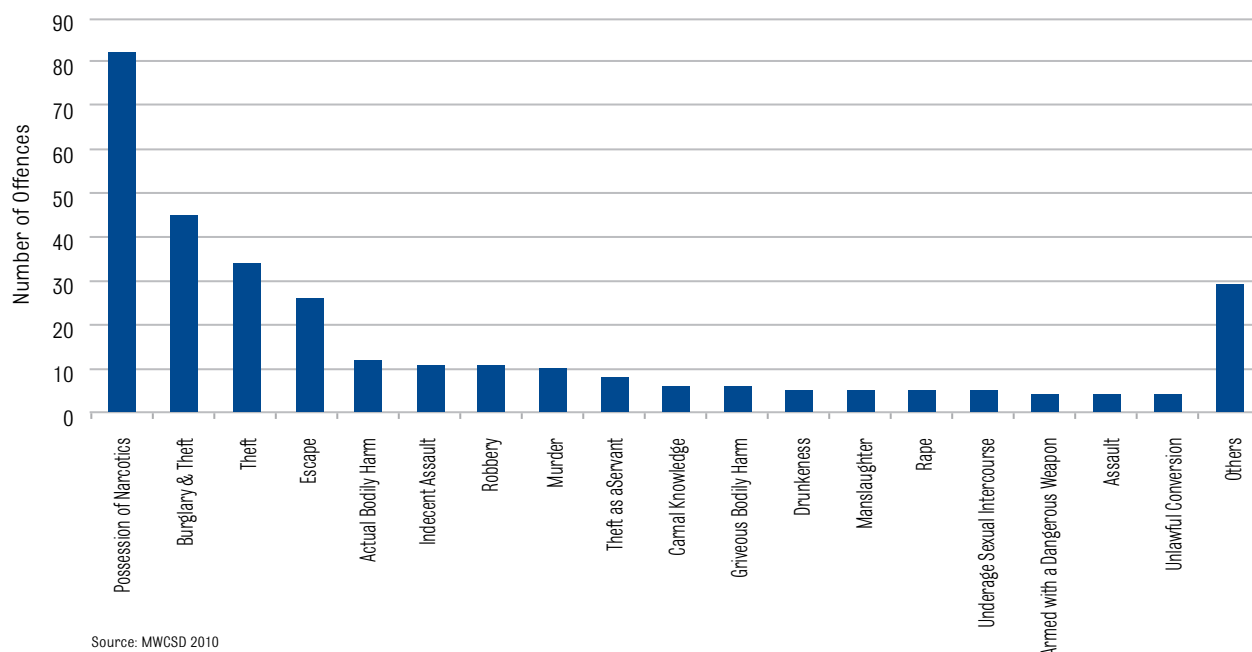
²⁸¹ PIFS 2006.

²⁸² SPC and UNFPA 2006.

²⁸³ MWCSO 2010.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

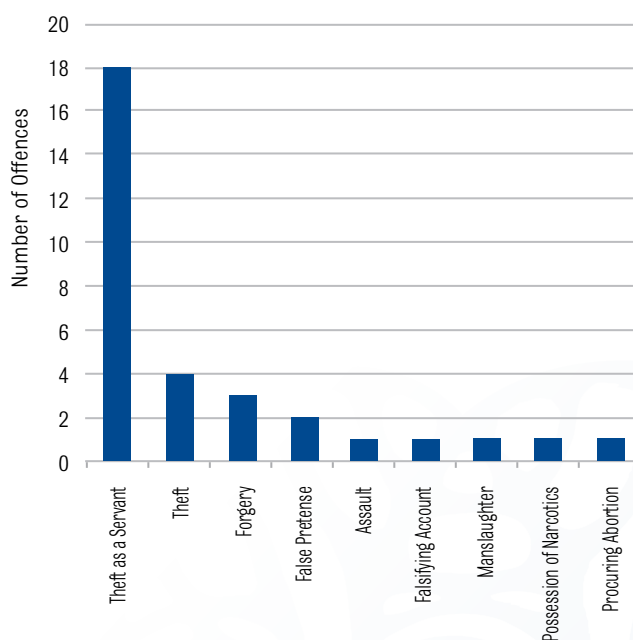
Figure 7.3 Male Offenders Aged 15-29 from 2006-2010 (March) by Type of Offence



Perceptions of crime prevalence gathered from government, civil society and young people during consultations largely matched the available statistics. The Attorney General's office identified possession and selling of drugs as the most serious crime commonly perpetrated by juvenile offenders which may correlate with information on substance use amongst young Samoans. Crimes involving violence (e.g. actual bodily harm, indecent assault, robbery, murder) ranked among the top eight crimes recorded by the police, but they were less common among young offenders. Over the four-year period mentioned above, only four offenders were convicted for violent crimes namely, armed with a dangerous weapon.²⁸⁵

Statistics on recidivism were not available, but it was widely agreed among government and NGO officials that recidivism is a problem. One government official estimated that three out of every ten young males reoffend, often multiple times. None of the women in prison at the time of consultations were re-offenders, however, this may not indicate the rates of recidivism amongst females. Lastly, recidivism rates may be due to limited rehabilitation programmes within prisons, including the male juvenile detention facility. According to government officials, a number of inmates are provided counselling by police guards, pastors or are taken to Church.

Figure 7.4 Female Offenders Aged 15-29 from 2006-2010 (March) by Type of Offence



285 Ibid.

"All fights I know about is caused by loto leaga (jealousy) over girlfriends and others trying to have relationships"

Young man

Assaults

During consultations, young people and government officials reported that group violence resulting in assaults was a key concern. Such violence appeared to be most common after nightclubs closed, with a clear correlation between alcohol use and fighting. Fights amongst drunken nightclub patrons or bystanders, particularly those that congregate within the perimeters of the city centre, were often violent, with police intervention required to stop the escalation of the fighting. In recent months, strict curfews have been set up to combat the serious instances of violence that occurs after-hours, with bars required to stop serving alcohol at midnight.

Gangs were also reported to be in existence in Apia according to some participants during consultations. It was stated that this was thought to be a result of external influences, such as gangs in New Zealand and the United States. It was suggested that further research needed to be undertaken understand the nature of gangs in Samoa and possible policy responses that could be taken by Government to deal with this looming problem.

Drug Related Crimes

Under criminal law knowingly possessing an illegal substance constitutes a criminal act in Samoa. In 2009 there were 30 young men and one young woman charged with possession of narcotics in the age range of 17-29 years.²⁸⁶ The Attorney General's office identified possession and dealing of drugs as the most serious crime commonly perpetrated by juvenile offenders.

Domestic and Sexual Violence Crime

Statistics and qualitative interviews with government and civil society indicate that sexual and domestic violence is a common crime that is increasing in prevalence. Police statistics from January 2007 to January 2010 indicate 32 young women aged between 11 to 20 and 385 women ages 21 to 30 were victims of domestic violence. The police described women between the ages 21 to 30 years old as "highly vulnerable" to domestic violence crimes.²⁸⁷ According to civil society experts most of these crimes are being perpetrated by young men against their partners. Participants agreed that sexual and domestic violence are under-reported and under-prosecuted and that the impact of this on children and young people is serious and often manifested in different problem behaviours. Young people may often be suffering in silence or as stated in the *Samoa Family Health and Safety Study*, they may suffer from nightmares, be more aggressive or be more susceptible to dropping out of school.

Both the *Samoa Demographic and Health Survey* and the *Samoa Family Health and Safety Study* demonstrated the extent of suffering and trauma that occurs in homes, particularly perpetrated towards women, children and young people. Young people witnessing family violence suffer extreme stress and their lives are impaired in many ways.²⁸⁸ It was also reported that young people sometimes suffer violence at the hands of other adult authority figures, including teachers. Young people highlighted that this is an area that needs to

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ FSPI 2009.



be addressed due to the seriousness of incidents, but also because drop-out rates are impacted by violence at school at the hands of teachers and other senior students.

Domestic violence is not proscribed in specific legislation, but it can be charged as 'common assault'.²⁸⁹ However, with the establishment of the Samoa Law Reform Commission, steps are being taken to reform and review Samoa's laws in relation to sexual and domestic violence. The Law Reform Commission has made specific recommendations to Parliament to amend the Crimes Ordinance 1961 to introduce provisions to punish sexual offences against persons less than 12 years of age and to require such offences against young men and women between 12-16 years to incur harsher penalties.²⁹⁰ Under the same recommendation to Parliament, the Law Reform Commission has also proposed that marital rape become an offence.

*"I do get hit
by my mother and
my father... It makes
me sad and scared but also
when they fight it makes me
scared"*

Young man

Inter-School Fights

Inter-school fighting, which includes crimes such as assaults and grievous bodily harm, were reported to occur in the urban area, either at the market or at the sea-wall. Inter-school fighting often arises over rivalry between schools over sports such as rugby, where students fight en masse in retaliation to insults or individual assaults on members of their own school. Students may use glass bottles, rocks, metal pipes/bars and other makeshift weapons to attack other school students. The most severe of these attacks occurred in 2008 whilst a group of students were waiting at a bus stand. A Molotov cocktail or petrol bomb²⁹¹ was thrown and it exploded on three students. One female student sustained serious injury causing second degree burns to her hand, head, face and torso. The student who threw the petrol bomb has now been convicted of causing grievous bodily harm.²⁹²

7.4 Institutional Responses in Support of Youth

Government initiatives such as the Law Reform Commission and the 'Towards A Legacy of Achievement, Versatility and Opportunity through Unity' (TALAVOU) programme are already in place to address the range of needs and challenges facing young people, particularly in relation to crime and violence. However, there are still limitations and gaps in effectively tackling youth issues and in supporting young people to be to achieve their full potential and continue to serve and participate in their communities.

Political Institutions' Engagement with Youth

Samoa has 49 members in its National Parliament. At the 2011 election, the number of female MPs was halved from four to two and the number of Ministers was reduced from three to one, the new Minister for Justice. There were only nine women candidates amongst the 158 candidates that stood at the 2011 election. Although CEDAW prioritizes women's political participation, both the legislative and executive branches of government are dominated by men. The legislative branch is also dominated by older male members of the Samoan community, with the result that young people's voices are rarely heard in national decision-making forums. Despite this, to date there has been no consideration of whether it would be useful to reserve any seats for young people in the national legislature.

²⁸⁹ SPC and UNFPA 2006:5.

²⁹⁰ Email from Government Official 28 February 2011.

²⁹¹ An improvised incendiary device made of a glass bottle containing flammable liquid, usually petrol, and fitted with a burning cloth wick that is designed to set target ablaze on impact.

²⁹² Petrol Bomb Student Jailed 2010.

Young people need to be more actively engaged in the development of their communities and be part of decision-making processes. The creation of more opportunities for dialogue between young people and decision makers are essential so that positive contributions can be made and young people feel that they are a resource in the community rather than a burden. To this end, it is positive that Samoa has held Youth Parliaments, which provide young people with a forum to connect with the political system and an opportunity to contribute to national policy debates. Such activities should be continued in the future so young leaders are developed and acknowledged by their political structures, although meaningful exchanges with parliamentarians need to be included.

Government Youth Policies

The *Strategy for the Development of Samoa (2008-2012)* specifically recognizes that development cannot occur if young people's issues are not addressed.²⁹³ Accordingly, it has developed specific indicators to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of its policies. These indicators include a reduction in youth suicide, violence and sexual abuse, and juvenile crimes.

Whilst the *2001-2010 National Youth Policy* (Table 7.1) and its *Strategic Plan* were developed a number of years ago, implementation has lagged and youth development remains a relatively new area for implementation and coordination. The Division for Youth tasked with implementation of the Policy is situated within the Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development. The Division is divided into two departments, one focused on economic development and the other on social issues. As of December 2010 the Division was transitioning into a policy-making and monitoring role, rather than an implementation role. If done effectively, this will be a positive step as the Division will be able to direct more energy and resources to mainstreaming youth issues across departments. Lastly, it will also be required to take the lead in developing and implementing the next iteration of the *National Youth Policy*, to follow on from the 2001-10 Policy which has just concluded.

Table 7.1 Key Issues and Actions in National Youth Policy

Key Issue	Action
Youth Health	Ensure that health care information and facilities are readily accessible to all youth and prevent the occurrence and spread of diseases before they occur amongst young people.
Education and Training	Maximize the learning potential and talents of youth and provide viable alternatives for all students to gain employable and livelihood skills.
Employment and Occupation	Support and promote sustainable income generating activities of youth.
Youth Justice	Prevent youth involvement in criminal behaviour and establish a separate judicial and rehabilitation process for processing juveniles and young offenders.
Youth and Natural Resource Use	Encourage and increase the involvement of youth in protecting, conserving and using in a sustainable manner Samoa's natural biodiversity.
Youth Recreation	Acknowledge and develop the creative talents and natural abilities throughout Samoa.

²⁹³ Priority Area 2: Social Policies - Goal 5: Community Development: Improved Economic and Social Wellbeing and Improved Village Governance.

Youth Institutions and Key Organizations

Within the social department of the Division for Youth is the 'TALAVOU' programme. The aim of the programme, which is a partnership between the Division and UNDP, is the coordination of a multi-sector approach to improving the quality of life for Samoan youth. The programme includes four components:

- Self-worth improvement initiatives;
- Skills formation and human development initiatives;
- Income generation and livelihoods initiatives; and,
- Programme management and coordination.²⁹⁴

The TALAVOU programme runs a number of activities, such as awareness-raising initiatives, which include the consequences of breaking the law and life-skills classes. It also holds annual awards for individual young people and supports youth group projects. The TALAVOU programme uses church youth groups to access young people, estimating that approximately 80-90 percent of young people participate in youth ministries. However, it acknowledges that there are young people who do not participate in these groups and that they are likely to be the most marginalized. TALAVOU identifies its central challenges as lack of partnerships with other government departments and civil society to assist in programme delivery and failure to reach vulnerable youth.

The nationwide consultation process to determine the re-establishment of the Samoan National Youth Council has concluded and an internal report to Government has been submitted. The steps for its reestablishment has been taken up by the Division for Youth to encourage the participation of young people and to assist in the implementation of youth services. It is currently sourcing funding from donors and it aims to be operating within the next two years with the assistance of the Pacific Youth Council.

There are a few key non-government organizations that also work specifically in the justice sector to provide services to young people designed to respond to youth in crisis and/or who are involved in violence or crime, including:

- Family Haven / *Mapusaga O Aiga* – This organization was founded in 1993 “to raise awareness about sexual abuse and domestic violence and to educate people about these issues.”²⁹⁵ Women surveyed identified *Mapusaga O Aiga* as one of the few places they would go if they experience domestic violence. *Mapusaga O Aiga* also trains the police about domestic violence;
- Samoa Victim Support Group supports, cares for and empowers victim/survivors of crime, particularly pertaining to sexually based offences, through the provision of safe houses and shelter. It also provides assistance with legal and police procedures as well as providing welfare and educational assistance;
- Lifeline is best known for its crisis hotline. People in need, including young people, can call for advice when they are experiencing difficulties, particularly relating to suicidal thoughts. Lifeline also does face-to-face counselling. Additionally, the organization runs a programme in schools and has piloted youth empowerment seminars in villages.

Justice Institutions and Policies

The Division of Probation and Parole in the Ministry of Justice, the Samoan Police Service and the Office of the Attorney General are the most prominent government agencies

294 MWCSO 2006.

295 SPC and UNFPA 2006:6.



handling cases involving juvenile offenders. The Office of the Attorney General prosecutes cases involving sentences longer than seven years and the police process cases involving minor crimes. The Division of Probation and Parole supervises young men and women who have been convicted of crimes but who will not serve prison time. They provide limited rehabilitation services, but are moving away from an implementation role and are seeking to identify NGO who can fill this gap.

As stated above the Law Reform Commission facilitates the review, reform and development of laws in Samoa. It is currently developing a new Criminal Procedure Act and a new Prisons Act. Within this positive step, it is understood that the Prisons Act will include more provisions relating to the rehabilitation of offenders. The Commission is also responsible for reviewing legislation to identify inconsistencies between Samoan law and international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child that was ratified in 1994. .

In terms of the current legal framework governing juvenile offenders, the Young Offenders Act 2007 establishes a criminal justice system for young persons. The Act defines a young person as between the ages of 11 and 16 inclusive. Any criminal charge against a young person, other than murder, must be brought into the Youth Court, a division of the District Court. However, the judge has the discretion to transfer any serious case to the Supreme Court. The Act requires that a sentence of imprisonment for a young man or woman will be imposed only as a last resort: other sentencing options include community work and limited rehabilitative programmes. The Act also provides an option for the Police to issue a young person a formal warning rather than bring the charges to court.

The Community Justice Act 2008 provides judges with options for community-based sentencing, to promote rehabilitation of offenders and the integration of Samoan custom and tradition into sentencing. Such sentencing may include formal apologies, community work and restorative actions. Awareness of both the Community Justice Act and the Young Offenders Act seemed to be lacking amongst a number of participants during consultations, suggesting that more needs to be done to build knowledge of the laws and how they can be effectively implemented.

7.5 Supporting Young People: Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience

Due to the many changes that are occurring in the lives of young people, risk and resilience factors coexist to create a context in which young men and women are more or less likely to engage in crime and violence. These changes include the transition from traditional exchange-based economies to a more cash-based economy and other issues such as family breakdown. If not managed carefully, through the provision of special youth services and the implementation of specific programmes for young people, these changes pose great risks to the youthful population of Samoa. However, it is encouraging that Samoa has a strong foundation on which to build programmes, noting the strong role of village structures and existing youth leadership.

Growing the Employment Opportunities for Youth

The small, open, local economy that makes up Samoa's resource base is comprised mainly of agriculture, tourism, small-scale manufacturing and fisheries. The economy also depends on development aid and very highly on remittances. In 2009, the double impact of the September tsunami and the global economic crisis affected Samoa's economy and the government adopted a further set of policy reforms and public sector adjustments in response. Formal employment and income-generating opportunities are key challenges for the Government, with an estimated 20 percent of households having inadequate income to meet basic needs.²⁹⁶

The definition of employed according to the 2006 Census covers all persons working in paid jobs, working to earn an income and/or all persons working in activities such as handicrafts, planting and farming for family consumption and/or sales. Within this broad definition Samoa experiences one percent formal unemployment.²⁹⁷ For those that are unemployed, 89 percent are between the ages of 15 to 34 years of which 59 percent are males and 41 percent are females. Youth unemployment rates are directly linked to the high number of school leavers who cannot be accommodated in the formal employment sector. Government officials participating in the study explained that youth unemployment leads to problems of poverty and increases incidents of theft as a way to gain money and material items. According to the 2006 Apia Youth Survey, the correlation between increasing crime and youth unemployment is the "major issue."²⁹⁸

Another risk factor mentioned continuously by participants during consultations was the new 'need for cash'. Part of this new reality was explained as the result of global and 'new' influences. Juvenile offenders interviewed identified a desire for luxury, fashionable and high-tech items such as new mobile phones, MP3 players and lap-top computers. This is due, in part, to new information and technology coming in from outside of Samoa. Young people interviewed explained that the need for cash is also driven by ideas about family obligations and expectations. Money might be required for special occasions, such as weddings and funerals, or to support relations, whether family, friend or intimate.

Although underemployment and lack of income generating activities remain problematic, there has been an increase in self-employment and/or engagement in family business by young people which has been attributed to an increase in seed funds, business knowledge

²⁹⁶ ADB 2010.

²⁹⁷ SBEC 2006.

²⁹⁸ Ibid:9

and NGO participation.²⁹⁹ Recently, the Government also revised the school curriculum to include models on entrepreneurship and financial education amongst students. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour also provides apprenticeship training schemes so that young people have more capacity to engage in the labor force and/or create their own income generating activities. The Small Business Enterprise Centre of Samoa facilitates access to finance for businesses and provides trainings and mentoring. The Samoa National Private Association (formerly the Chamber of Commerce) promotes sustainable growth, the creation of employment opportunities and supports business growth. Women in Business Development Inc. provide support to rural and vulnerable people to earn an income in their current village setting and with the resources available to them, and have suggested that the best place for young people to remain is in their villages. It tries to assist young people by focusing on agriculture development skills and also counsels parents to reimburse their young people for work that contributes to family subsistence.

Improving the Quality and Relevance of Education

The Education Sector is supported by a number of development partners. Samoa is specifically benefiting from AusAID and New Zealand Aid Programme funds to provide the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, a programme that subsidizes school fees.³⁰⁰ Contributing to this Samoa's Education Act 2009 requires compulsory education for all young people aged between five and 14 years. Despite this positive legal requirement, there are still young people of compulsory school-age who engage in street trading during school hours, in order to earn money for their families. It is for this reason that the Government needs to support these children and young people to stay in school and assist parents in ensuring their children's education is fulfilled. Priority also needs to be given to post-school education and training, as well as life skills training to enhance the lives of young Samoans who have left school and become more vulnerable. This is one of the main recommendations in the

"It's about listening to the young people... they are not the problem"

Teacher

Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2008-2012.

In any case, even where students stay in the education system, many of them are still leaving school with inappropriate skills to secure sustainable livelihoods.³⁰¹ It was suggested that this is compounded by parents' expectations which focus on academic achievement, rather than vocational or technical skills. In 2007, there were approximately 654 males and 232 females in TVET institutions, taking courses in agriculture, arts and crafts, design technology and food and textiles technology.³⁰² There are also a number of literacy programmes that are conducted with institutions that provide second-chance education programmes. Educational pathways such as TVET need to be strengthened and promoted as viable options for educational and career advancement and as a feasible option for young people to support themselves and their families.

It was evident throughout all consultations that the quality and relevance of education is one of the strongest resilience factors for young people. Notably, this priority was even reflected during consultations with women at Tafaigata prison who suggested a need for education, particularly about the consequences of committing crimes, how to resist involvement

299 ILO 2008.

300 NZAID 2009.

301 Samoa Bureau of Statistics 2008.

302 MWCSO 2006.

in criminal activities, how to budget money and how to establish clear expectation and responsibility structures for family and friends to respect. This was consistent with the recommendations of the Women Prisoners Rehabilitation Pilot Project (2008-2009) that was managed by the Young Women Christian Association of Samoa. Young people at the Oloamanu Juvenile Centre also mentioned a need for skills training whilst in detention so that they could do something productive when they return to their communities. They also suggested the implementation of specific youth rehabilitation programmes upon their release, which participants reported are almost non-existent.

Tackling Substance Abuse

In Samoa the most prevalent substance use is alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and hallucinogens mainly *logo* (Angel's trumpet or datura) and *pulou aitu* (magic or spirit mushroom).³⁰³ It is also suggested that crystal methamphetamine, inhalants and methylated alcohol are also becoming more prevalent, however alcohol, tobacco and marijuana represent substances of greatest concern.³⁰⁴ Participants in consultations all made strong statements correlating crime and alcohol/drug use and abuse and expressed a growing concern for young people, in terms of the negative health impacts as well as the social consequences of substance use and abuse. However, whilst the health impacts of substance abuse are measureable, the social cost and the deeper understanding as to why young people are engaging in such self-destructive activities has yet to be properly examined, and has largely been over-looked by policy-makers.³⁰⁵ Some village leaders have aimed to reduce drunkenness and alcohol related crimes by imposing curfews and patrolling public areas at night.

"I don't know why I do this... drugs and drinking at home then I get into fights on the road"

Young man

Opportunities for Meaningful Activity

Meaningful activities that encourage youth volunteerism in humanitarian, charitable and civic organizations are effective tools to engage young people in public participation and decision making processes. *The National Youth Policy* recognizes that youth participation is an integral part of youth development in Samoa and specific recommendations in this area include recognizing and strengthening the voice of young people in governing organizations such as parliament, village councils and religious organizations. Youth specific organizations such as the Rotaract (part of the Rotary Club of Apia) and the Samoa Victim Support Group Juniors operate to provide opportunities for young people to engage in extra-curricular activities.

Young people expressed a stronger desire to be engaged in more activities that are 'youth friendly', where their leadership and decision-making skills could be valued and respected. In the area of sports and recreation, young people recognized that the facilitation of organized sports and related events could not only increase their social skills but could also open up opportunities for them to engage in sport as a viable future career. The desire for becoming meaningfully engaged also included a need for more information about where young people could volunteer, in particular in areas where they could develop/enhance skills that would help them in attaining future employment.

The role of religious organizations and their contribution to youth development is also quite

³⁰³ Odden 2011; Government of Samoa 2001.

³⁰⁴ Odden 2011.

³⁰⁵ Government of Samoa 2001.

visible. The Council of Churches has a membership of nine churches and one fellowship ecumenical for women. Many churches encourage youth unity and build unification in sports and other group activities. Many religious youth groups provided young people with youth specific activities that engage them and put their youthful skills – such as singing, playing musical instruments and dancing – to use. These programmes contribute to developing religious values and beliefs, but also include participation in development projects such as farming.³⁰⁶


Family Challenges

Traditionally, the *aiga* (family) is the foundation of *fa'a-Samoa* and it provides all supporting members social and economic well-being. Young people's roles and expectations are defined by the *aiga* and the notion of *va-fealoaloai* (respectful relationship) within the *aiga*.³⁰⁷ In this context, it is very significant that the second most prevalent risk factor identified by participants consulted was the breakdown of families and the impact of this on young people. One of the most mentioned causes of family breakdown is the changes in cultural values, where individual rights and needs have become more prominent. Divorce, financial problems, abuse, lifestyle differences and migration are some of the driving factors in the breakdown of family relationships. This also goes for the extended family network that once assisted with the raising of young people. Young men and women may experience feelings of grief, loss, anger, and of being forgotten due to this breakdown. They may begin to act out due to the reduced parental skills, lack of guidance and supervision and less time being spent with them by parents due to added economic pressures such as working late or having more than one job.



³⁰⁶ Government of Samoa 2001.

³⁰⁷ Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010 and Government of Samoa 2001.



During consultations, young men and women also identified the lack of good role models, both in adults and peers, as a problem. NGO actors that participated in interviews agreed, stating that some young people do not have good advice to make positive decisions and avoid negative behaviours. Government officials worried about the effects of peer pressure in the absence of positive influences. According to youth, local leaders, and NGO actors, effective communication, generally, is reported to be absent between young people and adults. Young participants also expressed the challenges they face in not knowing how to access opportunities and succeed in their transitions into adulthood. They identify the wide accessibility of negative influences, including adults who engage in criminal activities, drugs and alcohol users. Some young people currently detained in prison said these influences were present in their families.

At the same time, participants also identified a number of resilience factors that promote success and dissuade youth from engaging in negative behaviours. The most common – and the one identified universally by young people consulted – was good advice and mentoring. Youth believed peer mentoring was most important. They want positive examples and advice from someone in their lives. They particularly valued people who demonstrate confidence in them and have an investment interest in their lives. Young men in the Oloamanu Juvenile Centre mentioned that young people need someone to help them feel happy. Secondary-school young people consulted confirmed that youth need help looking on the “bright side” in order to prevent them from committing crimes. Additionally, adult mentoring was identified as important by government, NGO and local leaders, but the root of this suggestion appeared to be grounded in developing stronger family and cultural ties. Adults and young people consulted believed good communication with parents was important to prevent young people from leaving home and acting out through crime and violence.

Societal Challenges


In the *fa'a-Samoa* system of chiefly rule the roles of all Samoans is set. The *faamatai* (chiefly system of governance) means there are roles for everyone. The *aiga* (family) is crucial and young people are expected to provide support and respect to those of higher status and seniority, especially during *faalavelave* (social obligations). According to local leaders, village leadership positions are given based on service to family and community. This is either through monetary or traditional contributions towards either village development or family obligations and it is reflected by the Samoan saying: “*O le ala I le pule o le tautua*” symbolically meaning “the way to authority is through service.”

Young people’s roles and responsibilities are conducted through the *aumaga* (untitled men), the *aualuma* (daughters of the village) and the *autalavou* (faith-based youth groups).³⁰⁸ The *aumagas* are often the workforce of the village and may provide a community policing function in some instances. Their purpose is to act upon specific instructions imparted by the village council. The *aualuma* traditionally learn handicrafts, weaving and perform hospitality functions. They may also form part of the women’s committees that may undertake health programmes and other small development projects.³⁰⁹ Finally, the *autalavou* are the religious based groups that provide youth specific activities that often benefit the entire village.³¹⁰

308 Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010; Government of Samoa 2001.

309 Government of Samoa 2001.

310 Government of Samoa 2001.



The observance of traditional culture was recognized as important for many young people consulted. According to young people, if one person does something seen to breach the village bylaws the entire family may be punished. The responsibility on the individual, thus, becomes onerous and is looked upon by some young people with condemnation or at least, frustration. The *faa-Samoa* is crucial to the development of young people and their perceived place in their communities. However, the shifts caused by global and/or outside influences and societal transformation has caused changes to the cultural fabric of Samoa.

According to government, NGO leaders and young people interviewed there is a need to further strengthen and empower youth participation at all levels, recognizing the impacts of both the traditional and modern aspects of the state. Failure to do this may contribute to young people developing poor relationships with families and village leaders. Young people who are not engaged in decision making processes are more likely to act out their frustration in their villages and break rules. These young men and women might face the village council or be reported to police, which was identified by a village leader as a modern response inconsistent with traditional approaches. *The Mapping Vulnerable Youth* report explains: “In the past, social infringements were settled within the aiga and village community systems only...the increasing number of crimes reported to police suggests a weakening ability of the family and village systems to cope with rising crime.”³¹¹

Another contributing risk factor identified across the board by participants was rural-urban migration. It was reported by participants that young people arrive in Apia looking for cash-earning opportunities, but often they end up disappointed. Separated from their direct family members and their land adds to their frustration. Necessities cost money and local support structures may be absent or weak. Government officials and local leaders confirmed that many families that have migrated from rural areas live in freehold land in the peri-urban area, where there is a heightened level of crime. In urban areas, where there is more activity and influence from the outside, young people reported that they find more temptations and face negative peer pressure.

Numerous NGO stakeholders also identified the exacerbating effect of natural disasters. The 2009 tsunami caused trauma for all Samoans, but in particular for families in the coastal region most affected by the tsunami. The resulting fatalities and destruction of land forced families to move inland and live a different way of life. There have also been cyclones and a taro leaf blight that have affected peoples’ livelihoods. These natural disasters have disturbed family and community structures, enhanced the need for employment and promoted urban migration which puts further pressure on societal coping mechanisms, with particular implications for vulnerable youth populations.

Samoan justice officials and a number of other stakeholders commented on the issue of criminal deportees in Samoa. From 1998 to 2008 there were approximately 124 criminal deportees arriving in Samoa from the U.S., New Zealand and Australia. However, significant missing and withheld data from the deporting countries make it difficult to determine exactly how many criminal deportees currently reside in Samoa.³¹² During the course of interviews with Samoan justice officials it was stated that the arrival of criminal deportees has produced a number of issues for the justice sector citing mainly the first ever armed bank robbery in Samoa where two of the assumed robbers were allegedly deportees.

³¹¹ SBEC 2006:25.

³¹² Pereira 2011.



Criminal deportees in Samoa are mainly young men aged between 25 to 35 years and have spent between 16 to 31 years abroad either in the United States, Australia or New Zealand. The criminal offences range from aggravated robbery to weapon charges.³¹³ Many of the deportees face a number of challenges accessing employment and housing options. They have limited connection to social safety nets that are vital in the Pacific and often do not engage with broader social services. The rates of recidivism and the impact on the communities are unknown at this stage.

The issue of criminal deportees in Samoa has been tackled by a number of stakeholders through a taskforce that was chaired by the Attorney General's Office. This resulted in the development of the Samoa Returnees Charitable Trust which will undertake, promote and advance reintegration and resettlement programs for criminal deportees. However, funding and technical advice is required before adequate reintegration and resettlement begins to occur for those arriving back in Samoa.

7.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Youth crime and violence has been identified as an increasing problem. In this context it is encouraging that Government and CSO actors are committed to a new focus of crime prevention. A multi-sector approach will be required to address the risk factors underpinning youth crime. It is notable that participants in this study agreed on the major risk factors: unemployment, substance abuse, breakdown of families, poor education and urbanization. Exacerbating risk factors included globalization, and new modern/urban influences.

³¹³ *ibid.*

Resilience factors were primarily the reverse of the risk factors: good role models to give advice, strong family and cultural ties, opportunities for training and employment. A theme linking all of the factors, both positive and negative, is youth participation. Whether or not youth have opportunities to communicate to adults and participate in activities – whether to earn money, to give voice to their views and concerns, or to merely gain support and encouragement – contributes to their probability of achieving successful outcomes.

Recommendations

- Re-establish the National Youth Council to monitor the implementation of the National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan.
- Develop a new National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan with monitoring and tracking of achievements built in.
- Create a central community meeting space in Apia to provide a venue for youth to tackle issues of concerns to them.
- Review disincentives for young people to take up agriculture.
- Provide support to the Law and Justice Sector for the development of a National Crime Prevention Strategy that encourages the participation of all sections of the community, recognizing formal and traditional pathways to enabling young people to be supported from early intervention to reintegration stages.
- Build capacity and raise the awareness of relevant government ministries and CSOs to implement the recent Youth Offenders Act and the Community Justice Act.
- Develop a rehabilitation policy for juvenile offenders.
- Provide support to the reintegration and resettlement of criminal deportees.



References

- ADB (Asian Development Bank). 2010. *Development Effectiveness Brief Samoa: Building a More Resilient Economy*. Manila.
- AusAid (Australian Agency for International Development). 2010. "Samoa Development Challenges." <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/country/pacific/samoa-challenges.cfm>. Accessed 21 January 2011.
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. 2010. "He's won, but he's lost it: Applying a Samoa Gender Lens to Education Outcomes." *Alternative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 6 (2).
- Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI). 2009. *Youth and Mental Health in Samoa: A Situational Analysis*. Suva.
- Government of Samoa. 2001. *Samoa National Youth Policy 2001 – 2010*. Apia.
- ILO (International Labour Organization). 2008. *Country Desk Reviews on Youth Employment in Five Pacific Islands Countries: Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa*. Suva.
- Meleisea, M. 1987. *Lagaga A Short History of Western Samoa*. Suva: University of the South Pacific.
- MESC (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture). 2007. *Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment Report Samoa*. Apia.
- Ministry of Health. 2010. *Samoa Demographic and Health Survey 2009*. Apia.
- MWCSD (Ministry of Women Community and Social Development). 2010. *Crime Statistics for Information Search*. Apia. Information sheet.
- . 2006. *Division for Youth Strategic Plan 2007 - 2009*. Apia.
- National University of Samoa. 2006. *Samoa National Human Development Report: Sustainable Livelihoods in a Changing Samoa*. Apia.
- NZAid (New Zealand Aid Programme). 2009. "Improving Education Outcomes." <http://www.aid.govt.nz/programmes/c-samoa.html>. Accessed 24 November 2010.
- Odden, H. 2011. "Alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and hallucinogen use in Samoan adolescents." *Drugs and Alcohol Review*.
- Pereira, N. 2011. *Return[ed] to Paradise: The Deportation Experience in Samoa and Tonga*. Most 2 Policy Paper No. 21. Paris: UNESCO.
- "Petrol Bomb Student Jailed." 2010. Samoa Observer. http://www.samoaoobserver.ws/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=21061:petrol-bomb&catid=50:headline&Itemid=62. Accessed 05 January 2011.
- PIFS (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat) 2006. "The Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation in Pacific Parliaments." in *A Woman's Place is in the House – the House of Parliament*. Suva
- Samoa Bureau of Statistics. 2008. *Samoa Population and Housing Census Report*. Apia.
- SBEC (Small Business Enterprise Centre) 2006. *Mapping of Vulnerable Youths*. Apia
- SPC (Secretariat of the Pacific Community) and UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). 2006. *The Samoa Family Health and Safety Study*. New Caledonia.