
**COVID-19
SOCIO-
ECONOMIC
RESPONSE PLAN**

UNITED NATIONS IN SAMOA

CONTENT

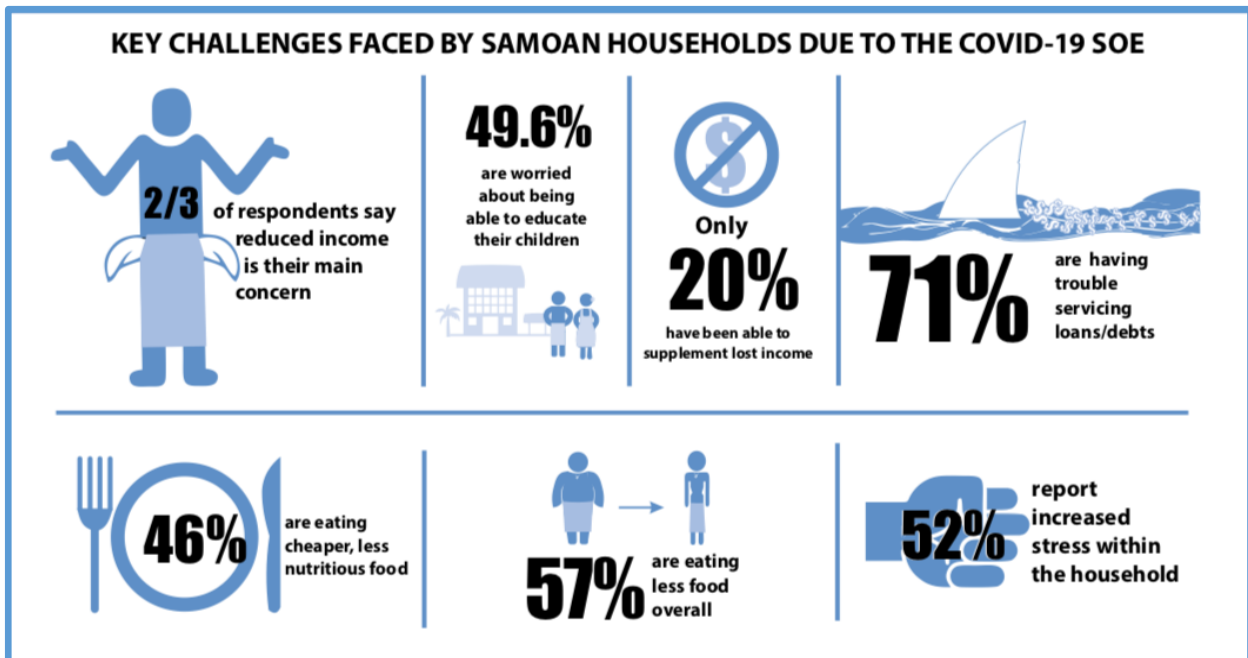
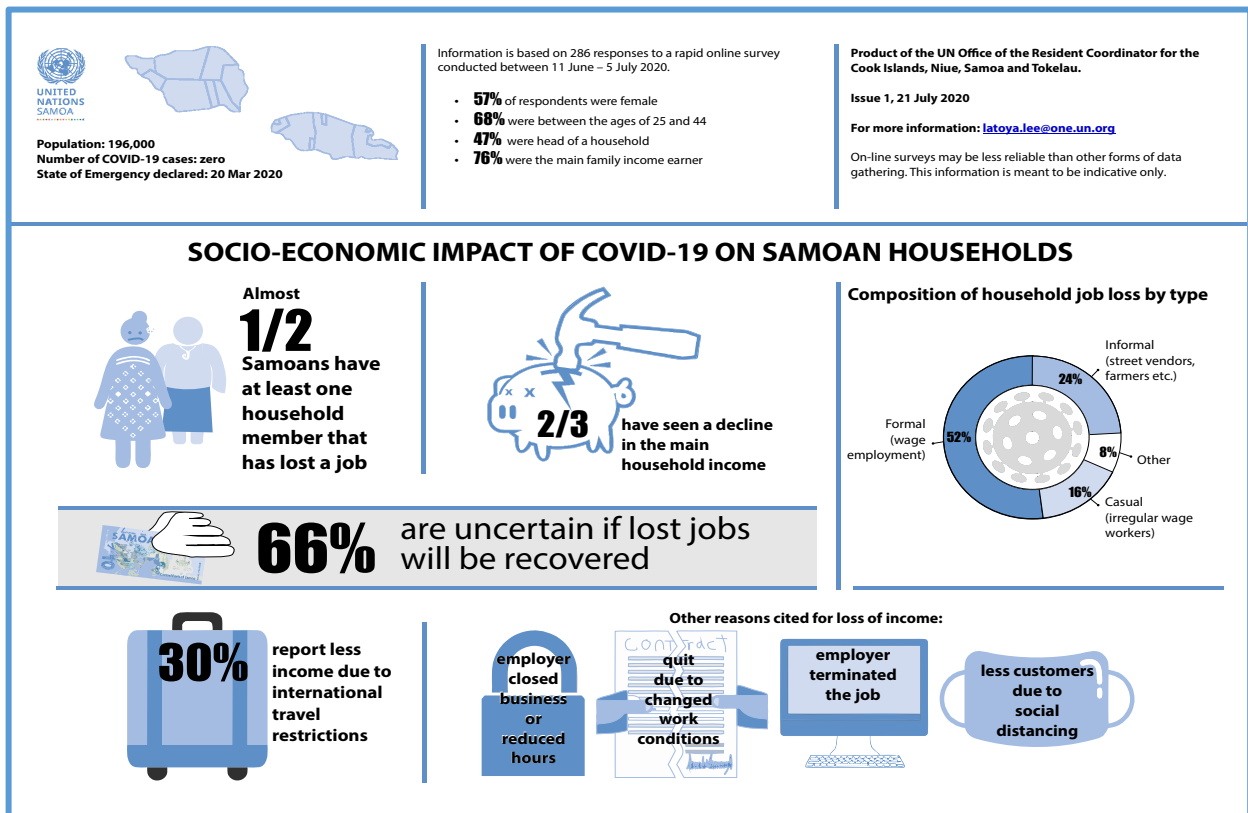
- I. **Executive Summary**.....4

- II. **COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan**10
 - Pillar 1: Health First - Protecting Health Services and Systems during the Crisis**.....10
 - Findings & Planned actions
 - Pillar 2: Protecting People – Social Protection and Basic Services**.....12
 - Findings & Planned actions
 - Pillar 3: Economic Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and the Most Vulnerable Productive Actors**.....26
 - Findings & Planned actions
 - Pillar 4: Macroeconomic impact**.....27
 - Findings & Planned actions
 - Pillar 5: Social Cohesion and Community Resilience**.....29
 - Findings & Planned action

- III. **ANNEX**.....33
 - UN Resident Coordinator Office Survey**.....33
 - UNFPA Study on COVID-19 Impact**.....34

Impact of the pandemic on livelihoods and business in Samoa

Source: [Online survey conducted by the UN Resident Coordinator Office 11 June – 5 July 2020](#)



I. Executive Summary

At the time the Socio-Economic Response Plan is developed to address the impact of COVID-19 in Samoa, the pandemic has already infected over 22 million people and claimed close to 800,000 lives worldwide. The pandemic and its associated impacts show no sign of weakening.

While Samoa remains virus free, most of the Samoan livelihoods have been affected with 2/3 of the households admitting their main income has declined and close to 50% experiencing at least one job loss due to the pandemic-related restrictions.

The pre-pandemic employment participation rates in Samoa as reflected in the [2019-2020 DHS-MICS](#) results were already critically low with only 21.6 percent of women employed and 53.7 percent of men holding a job. With no tourists coming to Samoa anymore and most of the regional and global value chains that Samoa's businesses could access being now disrupted, the joblessness and income insecurity have most likely created new poverty, up from the 22 percent rate prior to the crisis.

Similarly, the low proportion of children with foundational reading and number skills that the DHS-MICS 2019-2020 came up with (only 45.0 percent of children age 7-14 completed three foundational reading tasks and 22.7 percent were capable of completing four foundational number tasks) indicate that the education system was already underperforming before the pandemic and may continue to deteriorate if the pandemic leads again to school closure. Distance education as an alternative to in-school learning remains challenging with only 26.5 percent of the households owning a computer and 21.1 percent of women and 19.2 percent of men using a computer within the last three months prior to the survey.

Domestic violence that, according to the 2017 National Inquiry conducted by the National Human Rights Institute, was the highest in the Pacific Region remains of concern with 52.3 percent of the women age 15-49 reporting to have experienced physical violence in their lifetime out of whom 37.5 percent by their current husband or partner.

To identify the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in Samoa, the UN Country Team conducted a thorough assessment using the five pillar approach of the [UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19](#). The **Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA)** for Samoa was released on 24 July 2020.

This **Socio-Economic Response Plan (Plan)** draws on the SEIA and aims at ensuring that all investments made by the UN Country Team in Samoa will address the impact of the pandemic-related restrictions.

The United Nations in Samoa, in line with the **Pacific Strategy (UNPS 2018-2022)**, works to address and build resilience to climate-related fragility, while promoting inclusive growth, gender equality and women's empowerment, universal access to basic services, and accountable governance. All of these development aims are jeopardized by the coronavirus pandemic. While Samoa remains free of the virus, the social and economic impact of the measures to prevent the spread of the virus to the country has been significant. The following **Plan** sets out the strategic interventions that the UNCT commits to pursuing in 2020-2021 in response to the findings of the SEIA.

The **Plan** takes note of pre-existing development vulnerabilities that the pandemic has further exacerbated. Similar to all Small Islands and Developing States (SIDS), Samoa is highly dependent on tourism, a sector of the economy particularly impacted by the pandemic-related restrictions and is also heavily reliant on imports including food. Samoa is therefore emblematic of regional development issues that will be the primary focus of the UN's efforts to aid countries **build back better** from the economic and social disruptions we are currently facing.

The **Plan** complements the SEIA and identifies and costs interventions across the five sector pillars – **health, social protection, food security, macro-economic factors, and social cohesion**. As findings of the SEIA are not definitive due to still limited cross border exchanges and absent tourism, the **Plan** remains a living framework as the pandemic continues. The UNCT will periodically update the SEIA and the **Plan** as more information becomes available to enable informed decisions on development priorities to be made by the government, the UN and other development actors and donors.

Methodology

In April 2020, the UN Secretary-General released [A UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19](#) to guide UNCTs on the ground in the pursuit of a comprehensive socio-economic impact assessment and an effective response to bring countries back on track for the completion of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The Framework identifies five building blocks of the response that the UNCTs will design and implement alongside other development partners assisting governments and non-state actors. Jointly, UN organizations under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinators, commit to addressing the multi-sectoral needs identified in the SEIA through:

1. Ensuring that essential health services are still available and protecting health systems;
2. Helping people cope with adversity, through social protection and basic services;
3. Protecting jobs, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sector workers through economic response and recovery programmes;
4. Guiding the necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macroeconomic policies work for the most vulnerable and strengthening multilateral and regional responses;
5. Promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems.

These five streams are connected by a strong human rights focus, environmental sustainability and a gender equality imperative to build back better. More specifically, all initiatives in the socio-economic response to the pandemic will integrate the [Social and Environmental Standards](#) to prevent any adverse impact on the natural capital of Samoa, on people's rights and freedoms and on ongoing efforts to achieve gender equality and continue women's empowerment.

The **short-term response to the pandemic in Samoa** consists of (i) procurement of essential equipment for the health sector including an rt-PCR machine to strengthen the country's capacity to conduct testing of a wide range of viruses, (ii) technical assistance for the health sector, (iii) raising community awareness, (iv) alternative solutions for continued education, and (v) protection against domestic violence with an emphasis on protection of women and girls from gender based violence.

To devise an effective socio-economic response, the **Plan** in Samoa draws on the thorough analysis of the (1) healthcare services available, (2) existing social protection programmes and other basic services, (3) state of affairs of the formal and informal business sector and its losses due to the pandemic, (4) the extent to which macroeconomic policies adopted through the pandemic benefit the society, including the most vulnerable groups, and (5) the

potential changes in the social cohesion of communities across the country and their capacity to absorb the shock.

Multiple sources of data and information that have been used in the SEIA including regular statistics provided by the Samoa Bureau of Statistics, data collected through various surveys as well as other assessments undertaken by donors and multilateral development banks are used to inform the **Plan**.

The preliminary data of the **2019-2020 DHS-MICS** that the Samoa Bureau of Statistics conducted with the assistance of UNICEF and UNFPA was released after the UNCT produced the SEIA. The data is now being used in the **Plan** as baselines for some of the critical indicators around which the recovery is being shaped such as:

- Employment participation of women and men
- Immunization, maternal health and child mortality
- School attendance, literacy and numeracy skills
- Access to information through radio, TV, mobile phones and computers / Digital divide
- Access to family planning and reproductive health services
- Domestic violence / Intimate partner violence and violence against children

COVID-19 socio-economic impact in Samoa

Over the last three decades, Samoa has made steady progress in human development with the country's Human Development Index increasing from 0.621 in 1990, when the index was introduced, to 0.707 in 2018. The country is now in the **high human development category**, ranking 111 out of 189 countries and territories. However, despite graduation to a Middle-Income Country in 2014 (2019 GNI per capita = USD 5,885 (2011 PPP\$)), Samoa's growth continues to rely heavily on development cooperation (15.9% of GDP) and other forms of external financial flows, particularly remittances (16.4% of GDP). The country's economic base remains narrow with a high dependence on seasonal tourism, limited FDI and insufficient employment and income opportunities, with strong and prevailing inequalities between women and men regarding access to and participation in paid work and income, as well as increasing climate-related fragility.

Samoa's GDP growth rate has fluctuated significantly in recent years, from a 1% GDP growth rate in 2016/2017, Samoa's economy contracted by 2.2% in 2017/2018 due to the closure

of the Yazaki company and the impact of cyclone Gita. In 2018/2019, the GDP growth rate stood at 3.5% in part owing to the Pacific Games and a series of global and regional events that the country hosted during the year.

The measles outbreak of 2019 and the COVID-19 related restrictions that the Government of Samoa enforced as of February 2020 are expected to lead to a negative GDP growth rate for 2019/2020 of 3.3%, a projection that may worsen further as the global and regional lockdown continues beyond into the second half of 2020¹. Women, who disproportionately hold precarious jobs and are the ones primarily responsible for the unpaid care of dependents and the majority of frontline health workers, face additional challenges.

Recognizing the weaknesses in the national health system, Samoa reacted promptly to the risk of virus by imposing strict border screening as well as by limiting movement, introducing social distancing rules, closing schools, restaurants and other public establishments. A State of Emergency was declared on 20 March (which continues as of August 2020) that included closure of borders to all but returning citizens.

The drop in border taxes, which represent 55% of government revenues, together with declining trade were partially offset by the direct budget support provided by key development partners including Australia, New Zealand and the World Bank. Additionally, in April 2020, the Government of Samoa secured USD \$22.02m from the International Monetary Fund's Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) (representing 100% of the quota) for balance of payment purposes.

To further limit the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, a first stimulus package of USD 23.6 million was adopted on 11 April to support, inter-alia, the business sector and tourism-related businesses in particular which have laid off over 500 workers. On 15 April, the Samoan Government eased some state of emergency restrictions including reopening inter-islander maritime travel and public transportation with restrictions on operating hours and passengers. Restaurants and markets were allowed to reopen with limited hours. However, social distancing rules and other emergency restrictions remained in force.

In the 2020/2021 budget in June, the government announced a phase II stimulus package amounting to USD \$29.88m targeted at the individuals and households most affected by the economic shock of the pandemic response. The budget also appropriates funds to strengthen the health and education sectors and aims to ensure there will be sufficient fiscal

¹ Minister of Finance's Parliamentary Address at the submission of the 2020/2021 Budget Bill.

space to sustain the priorities as outlined within the main estimates 2020/21 that accompany the bill.

The Fiscal Strategy 2020/2021 lays out additional measures to limit the budget deficit and support growth, including by attracting higher incoming grants, expanding public investment through a pipeline of projects, sustaining businesses through easing monetary policy under the Central Bank's purview, increasing tax collection through the introduction of the Taxation Information Management System (TIMS) as well as investing in social welfare programmes. While fiscal sustainability is critical for the Government to implement socio-economic response measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, it is highly unlikely that tax collection will improve at a time when businesses are experiencing a major financial stress. It is, therefore, essential that the direct budget support that Samoa receives from its partners is invested in countercyclical measures to restore growth and create employment.

Main Findings of the SEIA and Planned Actions

While the restrictions introduced by the Government of Samoa in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic saved lives and kept the country virus free, they have had a dramatic impact on the country's small economy and limited livelihood opportunities. With Samoa's traditional economic partners in a continued lockdown, the country's recovery pathway and pace remain uncertain. Repatriation of migrant workers from Australia and New Zealand poses an additional burden on Samoa's labour market, the declining remittances severely affecting the local demand and crowding out small businesses.

Without reopening the country's economy including resumption of tourism and trade activities, the socio-economic impact of the pandemic will continue to deepen. However, in the absence of the necessary capacity for testing, tracing, isolation and treatment, the Government of Samoa is reluctant to lift the State of Emergency and the ban on travel despite the increasing fiscal stress that the border closure is causing.

Proper planning of cross border circulation to ensure testing needs meet the country's capacity to provide such services is a prerequisite for human security and stability in Samoa without which the socio-economic cost of the pandemic would become much more dramatic.

It is therefore imperative that the **building back better** efforts begin with a strategy and a timetable for the safe reopening of Samoa that is consistent with regional and global developments pertaining to the pandemic.

In an attempt to align external support with the specific needs that critical industries including medical services, air and maritime transport, tourism and hospitality have in connection with the restoration of the cross border traffic, the United Nations and the Asian Development Bank launched a series of roundtable discussions with all stakeholders in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories. In Samoa, the roundtable took place on 6 August and included the Government, the public and private sector corporations, the Chamber of Commerce, civil society and all of the development partners.

The United Nations and the Asian Development Bank commit to providing the knowledge needed to secure the safe reopening of the borders whose cost could be partially covered from the COVID-19 related financing instruments that the UN and the multilateral development banks have established. To reduce the fiscal burden that intensive testing will incur, the United Nations will assist the Government of Samoa to negotiate Government – to – Government agreements regarding COVID-19 related measures for the people on the move in the Pacific region.

II. COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan for Samoa

Pillar 1: Health First – Protecting Health Services and Systems during the Crisis

Samoa's health system has been under severe pressure over the last two years. The deaths of two infants due to incorrectly administered MMR vaccines in 2018 exacerbated already low vaccination rates in the country, leading to a large-scale measles outbreak during the latter months of 2019. The outbreak hospitalised at least 5,000 individuals, particularly children, claimed 83 lives, and exposed not only low vaccination rates in Samoa, but also the limited capacity of the public health system to cope with a large-scale public health crisis. With the global outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, the government of Samoa, acknowledging shortage of national health care capacity and absence of necessary testing equipment to identify those infected with the virus, closed the borders in early 2020 as an immediate measure to protect lives.

To enable the Government of Samoa to undertake testing in country, the United Nations provided resources for the procurement of an rt-PCR machine and related kits and reagents and further committed to assisting with the supply required for the equipment to operate at full capacity. Additionally, 2,000 GeneXpert kits have been procured to allow Samoa to

undertake testing in connection with gradual border reopening and another 3,000 are scheduled to arrive in late September 2020.

As of 15 August 2020, Samoa continues to report no Covid-19 cases. The absence of the virus has enabled the Ministry of Health (MoH) to use the first 6 months of 2020 to build some new capacity in the health system and to raise awareness in Samoa about prevention measures. However, health system capacity remains limited making the country vulnerable in the event that cases of COVID-19 enter the country. The Health Emergency Operations Committee (HEOC), chaired by the Director General of MoH, has sought to increase stock of health commodities and supplies, increase staff at community health facilities, build capacity of health surveillance needed for contact tracing, while promoting public health messaging and encouraging social distancing practices.

In addition to building virus testing facilities, further interventions need to be made to ensure the health system contributes to human security and wellbeing in Samoa:

Pillar 1: Planned actions

Intervention	Timeline & Cost
1. <i>Strengthen governance and coordination mechanisms between finance and health sectors to ensure financing for essential health services for all:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a gap assessment in terms of health system infrastructure and capacity to secure access to healthcare services to all • Assist Government to reflect a new vision on the health system in its 2020/2021 – 2024/2025 Sustainable Development Strategy and align annual budgets with the vision to address all gaps [<i>Gender marker through gender budgeting integrated</i>] 	July 2020 – Dec 2021 US\$ 200,000
2. <i>Strengthen effective and gender responsive communication to support the appropriate use of essential services for communicable and non-communicable diseases including sexually transmitted infections and support to GBV victims</i> Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [<i>gender marker added</i>]	July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 200,000
3. <i>Optimize service delivery settings and platforms (Community health workers) to guarantee access to all</i> Indicators: Number of trained community health workers disaggregated by sex Number of people accessing services disaggregated by sex [<i>gender marker added</i>]	July 2020 -Dec 2021 US\$ 250,000
4. <i>Optimize health workforce capacity</i> Indicator: Number of qualified / registered health workers per 10,000 people [<i>disaggregated by sex</i>] [<i>gender marker added</i>]	July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 500,000
5. <i>Improve planning and procurement capacity to maintain the availability of essential medications, equipment and supplies</i>	July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 250,000

6. Digitize medical records to ensure adequate care is delivered including immunization to all Indicator: Number of digitized records disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]	July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 550,000
7. Prepare the safe reopening of the borders including through cross-border cooperation	July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 350,000
Total budget July 2020- Dec 2021	US\$ 2,300,000

Pillar 2: Protecting People – Social Protection and Basic Services

Social Protection: The *formal* social protection system in Samoa remains underdeveloped by global and even regional standards. No social protection floor has been introduced to date. Cash-based social assistance is limited to the old age social pension, or the senior citizen benefit scheme administered by the Samoa National Provident Fund. The senior citizen benefit covers citizens and permanent residents aged 65 or older residing in Samoa.

The absence of an established social protection infrastructure has impeded targeted intervention by the Government to support families and individuals in the wake of the impact on the economy of the SoE. It has also retarded further advancement of women’s economic autonomy and their sustained inclusion in the labour market. Labour market support is of particular need, specifically through vocational training and other skills development programs that take into consideration the specific needs of the different groups of population in Samoa, particularly the most vulnerable. Without a clear social protection system, the government’s stimulus packages cannot be guaranteed to target those most in need.

With the USD \$3.0m allocation from the SDG Fund, a social protection system is under development in partnership with national state and non-state institutions including the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour, the Samoa National Provident Fund, the Samoa Bureau of Statistics, the Samoa National Tripartite Forum, the Chamber of Commerce, National University of Samoa and others. This joint programme that five UN agencies (UNDP, ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF and ESCAP) implement aims to establish a social protection floor that protects people against covariate shocks, targeting the ones who are most affected and securing universal access to benefits and services. The social protection floor will be gender-responsive and address the specific needs of women and girls, further advancing the efforts Samoa has already done to address the prevailing gender inequalities.

Pillar 2: Social Protection – Planned actions

Intervention	Timeline & Cost
<p>1. <i>Design the Social Protection Floor for Samoa to ensure universal access to benefits and services and reduce poverty</i></p> <p>Indicator: Share of uncovered population disaggregated by sex Expected annual expansion of coverage [in percentage] disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Jan 2020 – Dec 2021 Funded by US\$ 3.0mill SDG Fund allocation</p>
<p>2. <i>Develop the labour market intervention network of services to assist the unemployed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Job mediation platform</i> • <i>Public-private partnerships for Vocational Training and on-the-job training programmes</i> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 300,000</p>
<p>3. <i>Develop the IT system to administer the Social Protection Floor</i></p>	<p>Jan -Dec 2021 US\$ 400,000</p>
<p>4. <i>Enhance services for persons living with disabilities including through the CSOs</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 400,000</p>
<p>5. <i>Introduce a nation-wide school feeding programme [gender marker]</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of expected beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 1,000,000</p>
<p>Total budget July 2020- Dec 2021</p>	<p>US\$ 2,100,000 (unfunded)</p>

Food security: The severe decline in tourism in Samoa accompanied by the closure of restaurants and the restrictions imposed on public gatherings including weddings, church related events and other community engagements significantly lowered the demand for food. Local farmers have faced challenges linking with markets due to limited market hours. Sunday closures and fishing boat restrictions have negatively affected the availability of fresh fish. Samoa lacks policies and alternative mechanisms to offset these disruptions in local production.

To strengthen food security, a series of policy interventions are critical including financial and in-kind support to farmers including seeds and planting material, livestock feed, veterinary medicine, animal health support services and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to maintain adequate food supply in local markets.

Other Government assistance in place to support the agricultural sector may also consider limited free rent to food processing businesses and to businesses operating on all wharves (Samoa Ports Authority) as well as interest relief for all loans with the Development Bank for a certain number of months.

Women farmers face greater constraints than men in accessing productive resources, services, technologies, markets, financial assets and local institutions, which makes them more vulnerable to the socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures to contain it. Policy responses should consider women’s roles in agri-food systems and ensure that their multiple needs – as guardians of household food security, food producers, farm managers, processors, traders, wage workers and entrepreneurs – are adequately addressed. In Samoa, micro-business across the farm-to-table system and cooperative experiences of rural women are demonstrating their capacity to raise women farmers’ profile in communities as key economic contributors.² Therefore, any responses in this matter should particularly allow women farmers to access assistance and loan programs to prevent a rise in gender inequalities.³

Continued investment in farming diversification to avoid shortage during declining imports caused by natural hazards and other types of crises should be considered in the country’s food security policy. **Extension of the Samoa Agriculture and Fisheries Productivity and Marketing Project (SAFPROM) co-financed by the World Bank and IFAD for investment activities in the fruit and vegetable, livestock, and fisheries sub-sectors to bolster the stimulus package is already underway.** Such investments strengthen domestic food production in the long-run by increasing on-farm productivity and improving fisheries resource management and enhance market linkages of farmers and fishers value chains.

Other measures may include putting in place a long-term waiver of market fees for market vendors, to support the continued operation of agricultural and food markets and provide training specifically on value adding (such as preservation methods) for market vendors, to reduce wastage and increase income opportunities.

Pillar 2: Food security – Planned actions

Intervention	Timeline & Cost
1. <i>Extension of Samoa Agriculture and Fisheries Productivity and Marketing Project (SAFPROM) co-financed by the World Bank and IFAD for investment activities in the fruit and vegetable, livestock, and fisheries sub-sectors to bolster the stimulus package</i>	US\$ 25.0 mill (funded)
2. <i>Introduce financial and in-kind support to farmers including seeds and planting material, livestock feed, veterinary medicine, animal health support services and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to maintain adequate food supply in local markets [gender marker]:</i>	July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 400,000

² Draft SUMMARY REPORT PACIFIC REGIONAL BEIJING + 25 8TH OCTOBER, 2019.

³ Gendered impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses in agriculture, food security and nutrition. FAO May 2020.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist the Government with specific goals linked to food security in the 2020/21- 2023/24 Sustainable Development Strategy and legislation Annual budgets to include specific allocations Investment in farming diversification <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	
<p>2. Launch agri-business incubators for women farmers to access markets</p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021</p> <p>US\$ 300,000</p>
<p>3. Provide training specifically on value adding (such as preservation methods) for market vendors, to reduce wastage and increase income opportunities</p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Jan -Dec 2021</p> <p>US\$ 300,000</p>
<p>4. Engage community knowledge-holders in traditional farming and fishing practices and canoe production to strengthen food security</p> <p>Indicator: Number of households / individuals reporting having access to island-produced nutritious food / disaggregated by sex</p>	<p>Nov 2020-Dec 2021</p> <p>US\$ 250,000</p>
<p>Total budget July 2020- Dec 2021</p>	<p>US\$ 1,250,000</p>

Education and Wash: The government of Samoa has consistently prioritized the education sector over the past decade and continued to allocate the sector the highest or second highest portion of the national budget, inclusive of external development resources. From 2010 to 2019, Samoa has allocated between 13 and 15% of its national budget to education which is within the Education 2030 Framework for Action target of 15 to 20% national allocation to education. In 2009 Samoa made education compulsory up to the 8th grade including early childhood education. In 2010 the government introduced free education at primary level guaranteeing access to primary schooling for disadvantaged children. The scheme has now been extended to secondary schools. However, Samoa struggles with comparatively low education outcomes at all levels, with poor proficiencies in literacy, numeracy and also for mathematics and the science subjects, especially among boys. The net enrolment ratio (NER) for early childhood education, which is voluntary in Samoa, stood at a low 22 per cent as of 2019. On a positive note, Samoa achieved a 100 per cent primary education NER in 2019 – a significant step towards the attainment of universal primary education. However, the NER for secondary school stood at a lower 72 per cent as of 2019, with a higher proportion of girls enrolled than boys.

The Samoan education system is governed by three key entities; i) the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, which manages early childhood education and primary and secondary education; ii) the National University of Samoa, which provides tertiary education including teacher training and technical and vocational education; and iii) the Samoa Qualification

Authority responsible for regulation, accreditation and quality assurance in post-secondary education and training. The education infrastructure comprises a network of early childhood centres (125), 170 primary schools, 42 secondary schools, and 26 registered post school education and training providers (PSET) (includes 1 national tertiary institution, and 2 international tertiary institutions).

Schools were closed under the SoE in March, with intermittent opening between May and late June. This disruption affected an estimated 65,000 students (4,203 – ECE; 43,546 – primary; 16,365 – secondary) and 2,885 teachers (423 – ECE; 1,427 – primary; 1,035 – secondary). Women teachers were particularly further impacted not only because of the disruption of schools but because the increased burden of domestic and unpaid care work within their own households. In an attempt to mitigate the impact of the closure, the government announced a 0.5 million tala stimulus for the education sector. Further, in the national budget for 2020/2021 103.4 million Tala was allocated to MESC, of which 18 million Tala was for the One Government Grant to assist schools in continuing to provide remote education services to the children of Samoa in 2020/2021.

A key area of concern is the negative impact the SoE will likely have on completion rates. Pre-COVID-19, data from 2015 to 2019 indicates a high drop-out rate for years 11 and 13, ranging from 20 to 24% (Yr 11) and 24 to 30% (yr 13), despite net enrolment for secondary education increasing 5% between 2016 (68%) and 2018 (73%). The secondary school completion rate declined between 2016 and 2018 for both years 12 (from 62.65% to 54.1%) and 13 (from 71.4% to 35.95%) for both males and females. The completion rate for Year 13 declined from 44.4% in 2016 to 35.95% in 2018. Completion rates for females was higher than males in both years 12 and year 13. These statistics are extremely concerning and are expected to worsen during and after the pandemic.

Development partners and UN agencies are supporting the efforts of government towards better education outcomes through technical support in several areas to ensure progress towards SDG 4. This include support with coordination and formulation of COVID-19 response plan; development and dissemination of guidance on safe school operations; life-saving messages and psychosocial support including messages to teachers on remote support to well-being, play, referrals, self-care; learning continuity and development of distance learning content/modality; knowledge management; community mobilization on

safe schooling & risk mitigation; advocacy/messaging on education sector role to fight COVID19 and WASH communication and supplies.

While education remains a priority sector in Samoa's Sustainable Development Strategy, the pandemic revealed a series of immediate needs to ensure access to learning is universal and alternative arrangements are available during school closure due to lockdowns, be they caused by natural hazards or outbreaks.

The recent **DHS-MICS** that was conducted prior to the pandemic shows deteriorating rates of enrolment and basic performance among school age children. Responding to the pandemic will require a much wider scope of interventions and levels of investment to ensure Samoa can advance its SDG 4 agenda and improve quality of its human capital.

According to the survey, **only 55 percent of the children in the relevant age group (one year before the official primary school entry age) are attending an early childhood education programme.** Furthermore, **only 70.7 percent of the school-entry age children enter the first grade of primary school.** **Only 45.5 percent of the children age 7-14 successfully completed three foundational reading tasks and 22.7 percent were able to complete four foundational number tasks.**

As connectivity continues to improve, Samoa does have the potential to provide distance learning and lifelong learning solutions that draw on technology and that have a country wide coverage for all people to benefit provided that adequate investment is being made.

Ensuring all children and families have access to safe and affordable drinking water, as well as adequate sanitation and hygiene, is crucial to achieving a whole range development goals related to health and nutrition as well as education. For example, a lack of basic sanitation, hygiene and safe drinking water has been shown to contribute to the spread of water-related diseases (including diarrhoea), which are in turn a significant cause of under-five child mortality in the Pacific region; and increasing women's and children's domestic burden. Existing evidence also suggests that poor WASH access is linked to growth stunting. Furthermore, there is growing evidence that clean water and sanitation facilities (at home, in health care facilities and in schools) can improve health outcomes, school attendance and even learning outcomes for boys and girls, also reducing women's burden of domestic work and therefore allowing them more time to engage in economic activities.

The Samoa water and sanitation sector, which comprises a coalition of government, private and not for profit entities has been undergoing reforms over the past 15 years with significant funding and technical support from the government and development partners, most notably the European Union. This level of sustained partnership and long-term investment and collaboration guided by the Water for Life: Water and Sanitation Sector Plan Framework for Action 2016-2020 and governed through the Water and Sanitation Sector Coordination Unit and Steering Committee is reflected in generally positive results in the sector. In schools, 100% have access to basic drinking water. The proportion of schools having access to basic handwashing facilities is 97% for government primary school and 100% for government secondary schools. Despite this, there are pockets of the population that are covered by rainwater tanks and or untreated independent water supplies. Further, poor quality septic tanks are impacting the quality of ground water. So, there remains challenges with quality of water and sanitation facilities.

Improved water coverage in Samoa stands at a universal 99 per cent, which is significantly above the PICTs average. Similarly, access to improved sanitation (improved latrine/sanitation facility) is 94.7% (2009) and 97% ⁴(2015) which is 27.6% higher than the world average and 60.6% higher than the Oceania average in 2015. Open defecation is no longer practised in Samoa. Climate change and rising sea levels threaten bores with saltwater intrusion, although this primarily affects the northern and eastern parts of Savaii Island.

However, a recent water quality research undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the National University of Samoa in partnership with New York University (USA) and New York University of Abu Dhabi (UAE) identified major problems in the quality of the freshwater streams, mangrove swamps and the seawater in Samoa, some caused by human activity such as poor waste management and inadequate fishing and diving practices. The 2019-2020 DHS-MICS concluded that the source water of 36.9 percent of the households and the drinking water of 47 percent of the households are E. coli contaminated, thus confirming the findings of the research.

Further analysis of the findings is underway to identify potential health clusters linked to the suboptimal quality of water, high concentration of e-Coli and microplastics.

⁴ Samoa Demographic Health Surveys 2009 and 2013, Samoa Bureau of Statistics.

A national strategy for waste management is in progress to address one of the biggest challenges the country has and, most likely, a critical factor in the declining biodiversity on land and under water that Samoa has been experiencing in recent years. Public-private partnerships are being envisioned to accelerate value chain development in the waste management sector, job creation and environmental sustainability.

Pillar 2: Education and Wash– Planned actions

Intervention	Timeline & Cost
<p>1. <i>Infrastructural development for schools to provide a safe and resilient gender responsive environment for the children to be educated in, and to ensure no child is left behind:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment conducted to inform education infrastructure investments • Cost and budget adequate investment in ICT for education to enable e-learning; <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 400,000</p>
<p>2. <i>Family and Community solutions are in place to improve mainstream school attendance, retention, and completion promoting responsible parenting, particularly among fathers</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of family and community members engaged disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 400,000</p>
<p>3. <i>Adequate resources to improve WASH in Schools Infrastructure, Supplies and Hygiene Best Practice upon re-opening of schools addressing specific needs of girls and children with disabilities</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 1,000,000</p>
<p>4. <i>Train teachers and school staff to identify children impacted by violence and GBV (as victims or witnesses)</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of teachers enrolled disaggregated by sex Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020 -Dec 2021 US\$ 200,000</p>
<p>Total budget July 2020- Dec 2021</p>	<p>US\$ 2,000,000</p>

Gender-Based Violence and Violence against Children: Violence against women is a pervasive problem with 52.3⁵ percent of the women in Samoa experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. The risk to increased GBV prevalence due to the pandemic is high, and administrative records across response agencies show increased demand for

⁵ 2019-2020 DHS-MICS https://www.sbs.gov.ws/images/sbs-documents/DHS-MICS/2020/Factsheet_Samoa_DHS-MICS%202019-20%20v16.pdf

protection and counselling services. The United Nations is currently supporting the government with a joint community response to address GBV risks during the COVID-19 crisis. Despite strengthening of the multi-sectoral response to GBV, availability and quality of health, psychosocial support and counselling GBV services is low in Samoa.

Context and situational analysis of GBV in Samoa

Violence against women is a pervasive problem with nearly half of women in Samoa experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Other reports indicate that up to three out of four women (76%) have experienced it at least once in their lifetime, and as high as 86% of women have ever suffered intimate partner physical and sexual violence.⁶ The main perpetrators of violence are intimate partners. Overall, 46% of Samoan women who have ever been in a relationship have experienced one or more kinds of partner abuse.⁷ The most common form of spousal abuse is physical abuse (38%), followed by sexual abuse (20%) and emotional abuse (19%). The kinds of abuse experienced by women include: being slapped or having objects thrown (35%); being punched (18%); being forced to have sex (17%); insults (14%); being coerced into having sex (11%); and being kicked, dragged or beaten (11%). Women between the age of 17-31 are the most represented demographic of reported domestic violence incident.

Recent estimates suggest the incidence of women 20-49 years experiencing violence (some level of physical, emotional and sexual abuse) in their lifetime may have increased from 46% in 2006 to 60% in 2017. About 22% or one in five ever partnered women report violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.⁸ In addition, according to the 2018 report of the National Public Inquiry into Family Violence, 86% of women who were respondents in Samoa have been subjected to kicking, punching and other forms of physical assault. Worryingly, 9.5% of female respondents reported being raped by a family member. Overall, existing data suggests an upward trend in the number of reported domestic violence cases. Available data show that less than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort. Among those who do, most look to family and friends. Less than 10 per cent of those women seeking help seek help from the police.⁹

⁶ Draft SUMMARY REPORT PACIFIC REGIONAL BEIJING + 25 8TH OCTOBER, 2019.

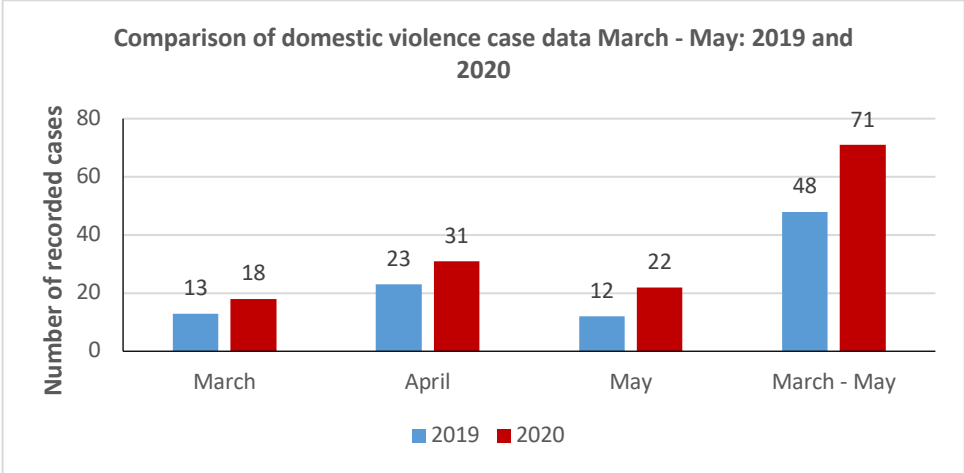
⁷ Samoa Family Health & Safety Study, 2006

⁸ 2017 Samoa Family Safety Study. There are notable differences in methodology and data quality, therefore comparison with past prevalence should be interpreted with caution.

⁹Source: <https://www.unwomen.org/-Media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>

With the imposition of the SoE on March 22, 2020, case management data from Samoa Victim Support Group shows that between March and May reported domestic violence cases increased by 48 per cent in comparison to the same months in 2019. Cases reported include sexual, emotional, physical and verbal abuse.

Reported domestic violence cases – March – May 2019/2020



Data Source: SVSG Casework Database 2019 – 2020.

Key organisations working on/responding to gender-based violence and women’s issues in Samoa include: The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD), Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) of Samoa Police, Ministry of Health, Non-government organizations including Samoa Victims Support Group (SVSG), Samoa Red cross (SRC), Samoa Family Health Association (SFHA), Samoa Fa’afafine Association (SFA), and Faataua le Ola (FLO); and UN agencies including UN Women and UNFPA.

There is a need to ensure support for the continuation and full implementation of GBV and domestic violence measures and actions including ensuring essential services are supported, full implementation of DV legislation and health and judicial services to survivors of violence.

Pillar 2: Gender Based Violence – Planned actions

Intervention	Timeline & Cost
<p>1. End domestic violence/intimate partner violence including violence against children in Samoa.</p> <p>Indicator: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical and/or, sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age;</p>	<p>Jan 2020-Dec 2022</p> <p>Spotlight Initiative</p> <p>EUR 3.5mill (funded)</p>

<p>2. <i>Develop the GBV inter-agency GBV service guidelines and adopt clear referral pathways linking survivors to health service access and access to other GBV services</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 100,000</p>
<p>3. <i>Adapt existing SOPs for GBV health services and train all health workers across all health facilities in Samoa on the identification and case management of GBV survivors</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 200,000</p>
<p>4. <i>Expand geographical footprint of mobile SRH services in Samoa and increase awareness on availability of these services to ensure vulnerable people in rural and hard to reach areas can be reached with services</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020 -Dec 2021 US\$ 400,000</p>
<p>Total budget July 2020- Dec 2021</p>	<p>US\$ 700,000 (unfunded)</p>

Child labour: The main impact of Covid-19 on child protection concerns is the increased level of psychosocial distress among children and parents/caregivers, resulting from fear of the disease, increased social isolation, economic hardship and the ensuing anxiety about the future. The most serious violations of the rights of children in the Pacific Islands, come from their dependence on adults and related vulnerabilities to abuse. A 2019 report describes violence against children, and in particular against girl children, as being ‘at endemic levels across Pacific island nations. **According to the 2019-2020 DHS-MICS, 13.9 percent of the children age 5-17 are involved in child labour and 90.8 percent of the children 1-14 years of age experienced physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by care givers in the past month prior to the survey.** In Samoa, corporal punishment in schools is outlawed but anecdotal reports indicate it still occurs. Heightened levels of stress are in turn resulting in increased tension and family violence, in particular intimate partner violence. Children witnessing parental violence causes them distress amounting to emotional abuse, and children in violent households are more likely to be subjected to physical and psychological abuse, and neglect.

Social norms that reinforce gender stereotypes, favouring boys and discriminating against girls, are evidenced at all levels. ¹⁰ Persistence of discriminatory social norms and harmful practices like early marriage, taking girls out of school, bride-price and traditional forgiveness ceremonies contravene the rights of the girl child and might be reinforced in the context of

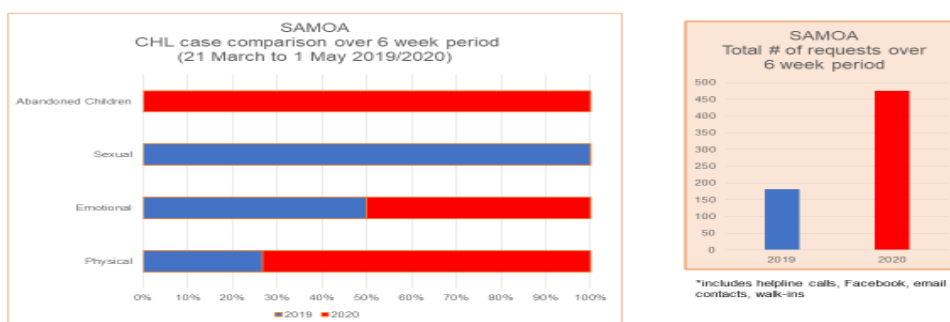
10 Draft SUMMARY REPORT PACIFIC REGIONAL BEIJING + 25 8TH OCTOBER, 2019.

the crisis. Attitudes about adolescent pregnancy discriminate against young women and limit their educational and employment opportunities but fail to hold accountable the men involved.¹¹ Violence against girls runs parallel to the high prevalence of violence against adult women. The common practice of sending children to live with extended families to attend school, can increase their risks.¹²

Government child protection routine administrative data collection is generally weak, so at the time of writing, the only data available are from Child Helplines operated by local NGO’s in Fiji and Samoa. The only data available to support this analysis is anecdotal evidence, and the number of cases reported to social services. However, there have been some notable instances of harm to children during the SoE. In early June, 3 children tragically died as a result of engaging in risky domestic chores; one having fallen into a ravine trying to get to the family plantation and two others drowned while out fishing.

The 2018 Samoa National Inquiry into Family Violence revealed an “epidemic” of sexual abuse and incest involving children.¹³ In Samoa, the Child Helpline received more than twice the number of calls as compared with the same period in 2019; more children were abandoned and more cases of physical abuse reported¹⁴; the fact that no sexual abuse cases were reported may be due to the fact that children were not left alone during this period and therefore there were fewer opportunities for abuse, or that it was more difficult to assess reporting mechanisms because schools were closed

Child Help Line Usage Comparison – 2020 vs. 2019



Source: UNICEF

11 Draft SUMMARY REPORT PACIFIC REGIONAL BEIJING + 25 8TH OCTOBER, 2019.

12 Draft SUMMARY REPORT PACIFIC REGIONAL BEIJING + 25 8TH OCTOBER, 2019.

13 https://ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/National-Inquiry-Report-into-Family-Violence-State-of-Human-Rights-Report-2018-SUMMARY_English.pdf

14 The increase in number of calls received through child helpline cannot be attributed directly to impact of COVID-19.

These challenges which are exacerbated by the Covid-19 context call for further strengthening multi-sector, multi-actor child protection systems for prevention, early intervention and response to child protection concerns, even more so as they are heightened by the psychological, social and economic impacts of the pandemic, in particular the social welfare sector:

Pillar 2: Child labour – Planned actions

Intervention	Timeline & Cost
<p>1. <i>Provide adequate training to frontline social service workers working directly with vulnerable families (early intervention) and children victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation (response)</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of trainees disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2022 US\$ 100,000</p>
<p>2. <i>Strengthen coordination and collaboration with other key government and community based actors in child protection (judiciary, police, health, education, labour) through (i) strengthening of national and sub-national child protection coordination and referral mechanisms; (ii) finalization or drafting of costed multi-sector child protection plan; (iii) integration of child protection in national development, social welfare, education, health, justice and labour sectoral plans/policies/strategies.</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 200,000</p>
<p>3. <i>Improve administrative routine data collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination on child protection cases in all sectors – social welfare, judiciary, police, health, education, labour.</i></p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 100,000</p>
<p>4. <i>Engage community-based actors, including religious, traditional, women, youth and other leaders, organisations, networks, in prevention, early intervention and response</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of participants disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020 -Dec 2021 US\$ 200,000</p>
<p>5. <i>Increase awareness of mechanisms that are in place to protect and support survivors such as Family Protection Orders, Domestic Violence Unit of Police, and Hotlines</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 100,000</p>
<p>6. <i>Engage the media in child protection, especially with regard to behaviour change.</i></p> <p>7. <i>Indicator: Number of media outlets trained on ethical reporting of child protection issues.</i></p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 50,000</p>
<p>Total budget July 2020- Dec 2021</p>	<p>US\$ 750,000</p>

Pillar 3: Economic Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and the Most Vulnerable Productive Actors

Preventive measures adopted by the Government to avoid the spread of COVID-19 led to a significant decline in business in Samoa with tourism and hospitality taking the largest hit. Conditions in the labour market have worsened in both the formal and informal sector, with women’s unemployment higher than men’s (9.84% vs. 7.58% in 2019)¹⁵ and youth unemployment exceeding 22% in May 2020. With 38% of youth not in education, employment or training (NEET rate in 2018), low women’s economic participation -61% women’s participation vs. 76.6% men’s participation-, strong gender inequalities -women constitute only 29% of the formal workforce in Samoa-¹⁶ availability of skills to incentivize FDI and support business expansion remains a problem that the Government must address in order to strengthen socio-economic resilience to shocks.

Pillar 3 – Planned actions

Intervention	Timeline & Cost
<p>1. <i>Establish an impact investment fund to support social entrepreneurship building on ongoing financial lines for SMEs established by local banks and support Women-led businesses addressing specific issues such as reduced property ownership and access to bank accounts</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2022 US\$ 600,000</p>
<p>2. <i>Enable continued investment in digital transformation to facilitate expansion of digital markets and digital entrepreneurship including in informal sectors and economically empowering women and youth</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop a YouthConnekt Platform to enable youth social entrepreneurship</i> • <i>Establish a supplier development platform equipping SMEs to access value chains</i> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 200,000</p>
<p>3. <i>Introduce wage subsidy programmes for companies hiring unemployed following international best practice.</i></p> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 300,000</p>
<p>4. <i>Improve invest climate by addressing issues identified in the 2020 Ease of Doing Business (IFC) report</i></p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 250,000</p>

¹⁵ https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Samoa/Male_unemployment/

¹⁶ Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Pacific Regional Overview Prepared by the Pacific Community for the 13th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 6th Meeting of Ministers for Women August 2017

Indicator: Number of targeted business beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]	
Total budget July 2020- Dec 2021	US\$ 1,350,000

Pillar 4: Macroeconomic impact

A significant hit to the cumulative economic growth potential is expected over the next 5 years. Even under the current, rather positive, economic scenario, Samoa's GDP level by the end of FY24 will only recover to FY19 (pre-measles crisis) level. This would be an equivalent of the loss of 13.5 percentage points in potential economic growth over the period of FY19-FY24 (compared to pre-crisis scenario). It is important to note also that even the pre-covid19 medium-term scenario assumed very modest rates of economic growth, at about 2.2% annually.

Sizable losses in tax revenues will impact negatively the overall fiscal balance, resulting in a deficit of around 7.25% of GDP in FY20 and 9.75% of GDP in FY21 (IMF). Lack of domestic sources of financing means that this deficit would need to be covered through external (including donor) funding.

Samoa faces a high risk of debt distress, given the country's dependence on tourism and extremely high vulnerability to natural disasters. Either domestic or external borrowing will result in the build-up of debt (except when the funding is in the form of grants). The current projections indicate that public debt in Samoa is projected to reach 55.5% of GDP in FY20—above the authorities' debt target of 50% of GDP—and 73.25% in FY25 (IMF, April 2020). That presents significant deterioration relative to the public debt of 53.7% in FY25 forecasted pre-covid19.

Moving forward, the economic growth restoration in Samoa needs to be balanced with the public health risks and costs of preventing/managing any potential future pandemics. The COVID-19 crisis around the world should perhaps be taken as a reminder that the rate of economic growth itself cannot be viewed as the only metric of country's success. Economic growth should not be achieved at the cost of forsaking the prevention of the environment and ensuring health of the population, if the country wants to build a resilient, more equal and sustainable development.

There should be an increasing emphasis on managing public debt in a responsible manner. It is paramount to avoid the accumulation of debt to unsustainable level. The thing about the debt is that it is easy to create it, but difficult to pay off, especially with an expected economic growth of 2% in the medium term. Also, ultimately somebody will have to pay for it – and when it is not the current generation, then it the next one.

Households, business entities and the government need to create savings/reserves for a rainy day. While in more advanced economies the governments were able to provide far-reaching bailouts at the individual, household and enterprise level, adverse effects may occur in the form of inflation tax, accumulation of debt to unsustainable levels, and ultimate increase in bankruptcies if disruptions in global supply chains and a significantly suppressed demand continue to distort markets and affect businesses.

The Government’s stimulus policies should be designed to preserve jobs and create alternative income opportunities for the unemployed for more sustainable livelihoods and lower incidence of poverty and exclusion. Countercyclical interventions that boost economic activities to substitute for declining imports and meet internal demand should be at the centre of stimulus packages at this time.

Pillar 4 – Planned actions

Intervention	Timeline & Cost
1. <i>Assist the Government of Samoa in developing a debt servicing strategy that includes debt swaps (debt-to-development, debt-to-environment, debt-to-equity) and enable negotiations with relevant creditors</i>	July2020-Dec 2022 US\$ 150,000
2. <i>Develop an SDG marker for budget purposes including for direct budget support to ensure an LNOB approach to public spending and provide training to line ministries and relevant Parliament Committees in SDG budgeting</i> <i>Indicator: Budget appropriations [as a percentage of total budget] with high SDG 5 marker [example]</i>	July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 200,000
3. <i>Rules-based stimulus policies (IMF) in place to ensure countercyclical effects of socio-economic measures taken to reverse the impact of the pandemic</i>	Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 100,000
4. <i>Advance dialogues on the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund</i> <i>Indicator: Number of dialogue participants disaggregated by sex</i>	Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 150,000
Total budget July 2020- Dec 2021	US\$ 600,000

Pillar 5: Social Cohesion and Community Resilience

5.1 Strengthening social cohesion in Samoa

Loss of jobs, declining remittances, limited availability of food in the market, declining demand for local produce and the lockdown have put relationships in the family and in the community in Samoa under growing stress over the last 6 months. Traditionally cohesive, Samoa's society is now grappling with new poverty and deepening vulnerability, inequality and exclusion being on the rise. Gender Based Violence, and particularly intimate-partner violence and domestic violence have significantly increased since the beginning of the year, jeopardizing any recovery measures that might be put in place.

Trust in public institutions remained high as the two large stimulus packages were timely adopted although not covering the wide range of issues that the restrictions related to the pandemic have generated. The Government prioritized support to State Owned Enterprises to stabilize their labour force and subsidize prices of basic services including electricity and water supply. Owing to very strong partnerships with donors in the Pacific, the Government of Samoa was able to fund the stimulus packages drawing on the direct budget support received and additional sector specific financing.

Several interventions for development partners in Samoa may include:

i) **Reducing Inequality by using a Gender Responsive Equity Lens**

Poverty and Income Inequality are at risk of increasing. The nation-wide loss of jobs in the affected sectors and industries resulted in many vulnerable families struggling to make ends meet. The tourism industry, which contributed about 21.5% to formal employment in 2018, is very likely to shrink in 2020. National accounts for March 2020 showed a 16 percent decline in the transport sector as a percentage of GDP over March 2019.

Short to medium term - In addition to the government offer of an unemployment subsidy to compensate for workers who have been laid off and have reduced their working hours, support for informal workers impacted by the COVID-19 crises and deployment of workers from the transport and tourism sectors to other viable sectors may be considered in short term.

Medium to Long Term - Government to consider reskilling and upskilling of workforce. Propose collaboration with ILO on new employment policy to guide government action and

ensure minimal unemployment in crises. Such actions present a unique opportunity to promote gender equality in education and in the labour market.

ii) Strengthened Governance & Leadership

The governance of local institutions and development partners should ensure that COVID-19 response programs are as inclusive, effective, transparent and accountable as possible, ensuring the inclusion of women in participatory and decision-making processes. An emphasis on strengthening inclusive governance systems and dynamics will not only address the immediate impacts of the crisis but also foster the conditions for longer-term development and resilience and ensure no one is left behind.

The COVID-19 has illustrated that we are in the era of digitization where distance may no longer be an issue. In this era, there is a need for strong leadership and governance to ensure the privileges of technological digital age are not exclusive to those who are better off leaving the vulnerable further behind. The vulnerable groups should be able to access knowledge, affordable up-to date infrastructure and equipment so they will not be left behind in the race for prosperity. Particular attention should be paid to the participation of women and girls in promoting digital inclusion for breaking the digital divide.

Healthcare services, the education system, and community leaders must be engaged in campaigns to combat GBV, provide victims with adequate assistance and support, and protect women's rights.

5.2. Improving Community Resilience

Samoa has proven its resilience to previous global economic shocks such as the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) as well as several large natural disasters – Cyclone Evans in 2012 and Gita in 2018 to name two recent examples. Recovery and growth from these events were aided by significant public spending, development partner support for reconstruction and recovery development, and the hosting of major events such as the SIDS Conference in 2014, the Commonwealth Youth Games in 2015 and the Pacific Games in 2019.¹⁷ In addition, growth in two of the key national income sectors of tourism and remittances supported the recovery process.

¹⁷ National Budget Statement 2015/16, 2018/2019.

The 2020/21 budget address laid out the Government’s Strategy to steer Samoa towards a strong recovery pathway. With the theme of “*Weaving a Prosperous and Secure future for Samoa together*” the Government will collaborate with key development partners to ensure continued implementation of its pipeline projects under grants assistance for the next five years to secure employment opportunities for our youth as well as to raise direct injections into the economy.¹⁸

Pillar 5 – Planned actions

Intervention	Timeline & Cost
<p>1. <i>Design and establish community centres for access to information and basic services [several pilots based on availability of funds in line with REACH joint UNDP-UN Women programme]</i> Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2022 US\$ 250,000</p>
<p>2. <i>Develop community-based inclusive value chains that offer income opportunities to the most disadvantaged groups in environmentally friendly sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>PPE production using local produce</i> • <i>[e-]Waste management solutions</i> • <i>SGP-supported community projects</i> <p>Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2022 US\$ 100,000</p>
<p>3. <i>Invest in inclusive sports programmes at village level and launch a nation-wide campaign for physical exercise and healthy living in partnership with civil society and community based organizations.</i> Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>July 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 300,000</p>
<p>4. <i>Establish youth innovation labs to co-design community services</i> Indicator: Number of targeted beneficiaries disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 100,000</p>
<p>5. <i>Launch social dialogues committees including women committees, faith-based organizations to address pressing issues facing villages and households</i> Indicator: Number of social dialogue participants disaggregated by sex [gender marker added]</p>	<p>Sep 2020-Dec 2021 US\$ 250,000</p>
<p>Total budget July 2020- Dec 2021</p>	<p>US\$ 1,000,000</p>

TOTAL Budget [next page]

¹⁸ Final-draft-Budget-Address-from-Minister-ENG-.pdf

TOTAL SERP Budget

PILLAR	Budget
Pillar 1: Health First - Protecting Health Services and Systems during the Crisis	US\$ 2,300,000
Pillar 2: Protecting People – Social Protection and Basic Services	US\$ 6,800,000
Pillar 3: Economic Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and the Most Vulnerable Productive Actors	US\$ 1,350,000
Pillar 4: Macroeconomic impact	US\$ 600,000
Pillar 5: Social Cohesion and Community Resilience	US\$ 1,000,000
UNRCO SBS SEIA Survey Sep 2020 [ANNEX page 34]	US\$ 200,000
TOTAL [unfunded]	US\$ 12,250,000
Funded [Social Protection, Spotlight]	US\$ 7,100,000
GRAND TOTAL	US\$ 19,350,000

III. ANNEX

UNFPA Study on COVID-19 Impact

UNFPA in collaboration with diverse youth networks, the Pacific Disability Forum and other United Nations agencies, with the support of MFAT New Zealand, launched a survey in June, 2020 for Pacific young people in the age group of 15-24 years across 14 PICTs, including Samoa to share their impressions and observations on how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting different aspects of their lives.

Contribution of Young Samoans to the National Response

Responses from 366 young people in Samoa suggest majority of young Samoans (15-24 years) were taking precautions to stay infection free, including seeking information from reliable sources such as government and WHO (59 per cent); staying at home/indoors (65 per cent); practicing hand washing practices (64%), practicing physical distancing (44 per cent) and practicing good respiratory hygiene (43 per cent). Majority of young Samoans were also making efforts to take care of their mental health and emotional well-being as highlighted under Pillar 1. Young people's opinion of cohesion amongst Samoan communities in tackling the COVID-19 crisis varied; 54 per cent were of the opinion there was more co-operation among community members to tackle the crisis, 20 per cent believed there was no change in the behavior of community members and 43% reported everyone is worried about their own safety in the community.

Young people in Samoa are willing to take responsibility for themselves and their communities to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. Approximately six out of ten young Samoans reported that they provide accurate information to friends and family (64 per cent), and one out of five young Samoans contribute to their communities by challenging common myths related to spread of COVID-19 and by doing their best to prevent stigma related to COVID-19 (19 and 21 per cent respectively). These results reflect a good sense of youth autonomy and agency amongst Samoan youth, highlighting the power of this group as an asset to strengthen community resilience and solidarity.

Vulnerability of Young Samoans due to COVID-19 pandemic

Young people are not a homogenous group; therefore, this pandemic is affecting them differently. 16 per cent of Samoan youth reported their lives changed for the worse as a result of the pandemic, 30 per cent reported no change while 42 per cent reported their lives had changed for the better. In addition, approximately one in five reportedly felt more vulnerable because of their age (18 per cent); vulnerabilities due to gender were similar - 7 per cent of young Samoan females reported vulnerability due to their gender, compared to 8 per cent of young Samoan males. Reported vulnerabilities due to disruption of institutions varied; 15 per cent felt more vulnerable because they do not have a job, and 2 per cent because they could not go to school. Overall, majority reported consequences of COVID-19 were not different for them compared to any other person (62 per cent).

Strengthening Youth Engagement and Inclusion within the National response

Three out of ten young Samoans (29 per cent) reported the government had provided basic needs such as food, safety, health care and economic support for them to cope with the pandemic. Similarly, three in ten Samoan Youth (15-24 years) reported they had received support from local organization including NGOs and faith-based organizations (30 per cent). Majority relied on family and friends for support to cope with the pandemic (92 per cent and 63 per cent respectively) reinforcing the family and community-centered approach of the Samoan context. To deal better with COVID-19, young people reportedly need better support to access accurate information through public sources (70 per cent), better availability of testing facilities (76 per cent), availability of food, water, medicines, electricity and essential supplies (65 per cent) and financial support (34 per cent).

Young Samoans are eager to contribute to the COVID-19 national response and engage in community preparedness measures for future health emergencies. Majority responded if provided with resources, they could support themselves and others by providing correct information on ways to limit COVID-19 spread (68 per cent), educating family and friends to try to follow a routine while taking necessary precautions (52 per cent), utilizing creative ways such as arts to disseminate accurate information (33 per cent) and by contributing to preparedness measures to effectively deal with similar situations in future (28 per cent).

Youth (15 – 24 years), make up an estimated 18% of Samoa's population and are key to effective dialogue and coordination between national authorities and their communities. Protecting and expanding the opportunities for youth development and leadership, including their health and well-being, education, training, and access to decent work during the pandemic is critical to realize the potential of Samoa's demographic transition. In addition, ensuring a well-resourced and empowered youth network can catalyze youth engagement and sustain community ownership of programmes.

UN Resident Coordinator Office and Samoa Bureau of Statistics joint data collection exercise measuring the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in Samoa

To ensure a thorough measurement of impact of the pandemic on the population of Samoa is being undertaken, the Samoa Bureau of Statistics decided to integrate the UN Joint Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) Survey with the Household Listing and Cartographic/GIS exercise for the Population and Housing Census 2021. Consequently, the Joint UN SEIA will reach all households in the country.

In August 2020, the training for enumerators has started. UNDP procured and delivered laptops to the enumerators to support the SEIA data collection component. UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA have committed to providing technical support with coordination provided by the UN Resident Coordinator Office.

Data collection will roll out in September 2020. Results will be available by late September-early October 2020. Results will be jointly released by the UN Resident Coordinator Office and the Samoa Bureau of Statistics. The total budget required for the data collection and the SEIA analytics amounts to US\$ 200,000.