



# PERSPECTIVE AND EXPERIENCE IN ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SAMOA.

Ministry of Women  
Community and Social  
Development  
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# BACKGROUND

Samoa's movement towards gender equality initiated in 1953 through the establishment of the Samoa National Council of Women (SNCW). It is the oldest non-government women's movement in Samoa with a constitutional focus on local governance by advancing women's leadership skills in political and public life.

The establishment of the Ministry of Women Affairs by Act of Parliament in 1990 demonstrates the high regard that the Government of Samoa has of its women and their contribution to the development of Samoa economically, socially, politically and spiritually. This was further strengthened when Samoa ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1992 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1994.

In 2003, the Ministry of Women Affairs was further restructured which led to an amalgamation of the women, youth and internal affairs and functions under one Ministry, and then it was called the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development (MWCSD). The restructuring was in response to a lack of an integrated approach to 'social' and 'community' development aspects in Samoa.

In 2020, the focus of the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development was restructured. The restructure moves the Ministry's focus from individual groups to thematic areas: social development, economic empowerment, governance and leadership. This involved mainstreaming of women, gender, children, people living with disabilities into all the focal work areas of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. The key to the change is to ensure improved integrated planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting so that there is more effective responses to the needs of our people.

# EXPERIENCES IN ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SAMOA

In the past five years, Samoa has made significant progress towards achieving gender equality through Policy Development such as National Policy on Gender Equality and Rights for Women and Girls 2021–2031, National Policy on Family Safety, Elimination of Family Violence 2021-2031, National Social Protection Policy Framework 2023 and National Disability Policy 2021-2031 to name a few. These policies exhibit coherence with the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development Sector Plan, and are aligned with the National Pathway for the Development of Samoa (PDS), as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In pursuit of equality for our people particularly those most vulnerable such as women and girls, Government in collaboration with our network of male & female Village Representatives, Civil Society Organizations, Non-Government Organizations, Organizations for Persons with Disabilities, National Council of Churches, Government Ministries & Agencies, alongside the support of all our development partners, has made significant progress over the past years

Achievements over the past years have included the implementation of the temporary special measure during the 2020 National Elections to increase the representation of women in Parliament to 10% and appointment of the first female Prime Minister for Samoa. The number of women in public sector leadership roles is 57% including 30% of Chief Executives Officers . However, men still outnumber women at other public leadership roles including Parliament, Land and Titles Court, Village Councils and boards of state-owned enterprises.

# PERSPECTIVE IN ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN SAMOA

Samoa has made strides in advancing gender equality, including ratifying CEDAW, establishing a Ministry of Women, and having a female Prime Minister.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist:

- Limited budget allocation for gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives, which rely heavily on donor funding.
- Implementation of national policies is hindered by the lack of dedicated funding for women's empowerment and gender equality work.

To address these challenges:

- Propose developing SDG indicator to measure the percentage of government budget allocated for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality initiatives, fostering accountability and commitment to these goals.
- Advocate for budget allocation for report writing to facilitate international reporting, involving extensive national and stakeholder consultations.
- Recommend developing qualitative indicators alongside quantitative ones to effectively convey stories and experiences beyond numerical data.



**Faafetai Lava!!**