



Spotlight Initiative

To eliminate violence against women and girls

Samoa



HIGHLIGHTS

Q1-2020

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



Village Family Safety Committee

The Spotlight Initiative joins partners in supporting the National Human Rights Institute NHRI in establishing Family Safety Committees in **six pilot villages**. The villages of Asau and Taga featured here are two of the pilot sites who demonstrated a strong commitment to this community led programme in eliminating all forms of violence at the village and district level.

The initiative is a response to Recommendation 20 of the National Inquiry Report 2018, to support the establishment of **Village Family Safety Committees**. Their role is to work alongside the Village Fono in dealing directly with matters pertaining to family safety, prevention and protection from violence.

The Spotlight Initiative focuses on the **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls** EVAWG component of this initiative highlighting an approach that centres the realities of those most affected with violence and at the intersections of multiple inequalities, especially women and girls in rural areas, SOGIESC communities and women and girls with disabilities.

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.



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COVID-19



In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Samoa declared a National **STATE OF EMERGENCY** on the 20th March 2020 and immediately put in effect strict **LOCKDOWN** conditions for all.

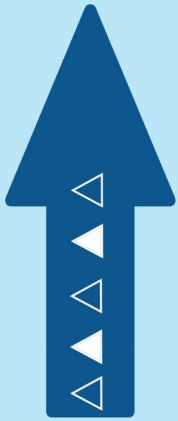
There is a high risk that all forms of gender-based violence (GBV) will increase during the pandemic, creating more demand and greater need for **SERVICES**. It is reported globally that intimate partner and domestic violence cases have risen dramatically. Victims of GBV are potentially in Lockdown with abusers and perpetrators, economic strife due to loss of business and employment further contributes to stressful environments that lead to fear, uncertainty and violence. Samoa is no exception!

As lockdowns and quarantines continue, Women and other vulnerable groups require targeted **access to information** on COVID-19 as well as access to GBV service providers and psycho-social support.

20%

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Increase from 9 to 46 Cases



Two NGO service providers, Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) and Fa'ataua le Ola (FLO) responded to **438 calls** via their FREE Helplines in March alone. Over 85% of callers are women experiencing multiple threats linked to domestic violence.

The requests range from needing counseling, suicide cases seeking support, evacuation, shelter, case management, health, legal and police protection, welfare assistance and community referral support.

The Helpline data indicate that domestic violence in the home has increased from 9 to 46 calls for help since the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

HELPLINE

Facilitating 24/7 Real Time Response for **ACCESS** to GBV Service Providers & Pshyco-social Support



HELPLINE

800-7874



LIFELINE

800-5433



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“Inequality and poverty is staring us at the face...the tension has been building up, forcing our people to resort to extreme measures just to survive”

SVSG PRESIDENT
Siliniu Lina Chang



The elderly grandmother above rang the Free Helpline requesting assistance for her 12 grandchildren all under the age of 15. Due to COVID-19 her two sons who are the providers of their only source of income are stuck in New Zealand on seasonal work and unable to provide support.

A team from SVSG Samoa was deployed to provide alternative solutions for the family. They drove off the main road for 35 minutes on a dirt road to reach the family who are clearly isolated from available means of public transport. They were provided food parcels and counselling support giving them hope in spite of their difficult situation.

The Spotlight Initiative under UNDP with SVSG Samoa provides support in all areas where safety and security is a concern and leaving no one behind in these challenging times.

HELPLINE
800-7874
RESPONSE
Stories





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HELPLINE
800-7874
RESPONSE
Stories

ARE YOU #WITH HER

A 26 year- old single mother who is a survivor of violence and abuse speaks about how the helpline saved her and her 10 month old baby.

She is a primary school teacher and one of the two main breadwinners for her family of 12.

Due to COVID-19 she was temporarily unemployed when the schools closed. The lack of income resulted in an escalating conflict with her mother. She was constantly ridiculed for not providing for the family, and often received physical beatings and verbal abuse from her mother.

To escape her mother's abuse she left home with her baby without any money or options of where to go and what to do.

While sitting at the bus stop, a woman approached her after observing something did not look right with this young mother and child. After sharing her story with the women, the concerned stranger gave her the SVSG Free Helpline number to call for help.

In one ring, the Helpline received her call and responded. The SVSG team picked the mother and baby from the bus stop and taken to the SVSG Campus of Hope shelter where they were both cared for.

The mother and child are receiving counselling services with SVSG reaching out to her abusive mother and family for group mediation and counselling support.

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HELPLINE
800-7874



RESPONSE Stories

“Don't be afraid to take that step to seek help, you will take courage when you look into the eyes of your children”



"Today will be different, I know it."

These are the wishful words of a 51-year-old mother of three she murmurs daily for 13 years of being married to an abusive and violent husband. In one incident she suffered a gruesome head injury because he took a rock to her head. The husband has a history of alcohol abuse resulting in violence which was a regular occurrence in their household.

On the 14th April 2020 she was being verbally abused by the husband using profane and demeaning language, calling her "lazy and worthless". His verbal assaults became more destructive as he was getting louder and approaching her uncomfortably close probing her to react. Because this is the "norm" she knew one wrong action from her will immediately escalate his tantrum to something physical. Desperate for her safety she fled to the neighbours without her children. The neighbours however were aware of the SVSG Helpline through The Spotlight Initiative's social media promotion and called for Help! The SVSG Team responded and brought her to the safety of the SVSG Campus of Hope where she received support.

Today she is full of hope and optimism. It was the hardest decision like any mother to leave her children behind and although she is missing them she understands the SVSG process to facilitate a new and better life for her and her family. Thinking of her children inspire and motivate her to keep going!

Through counselling and family mediation support small but steady progress are made daily not only for her but for the husband. Her act of bravery to seek help and leaving home was a shock to her husband who never thought she would have the will and strength to do that. He became immune to his dominance and abuses of power her simple act of courage seeking help was a wake-up call for him and his sickly behaviour.



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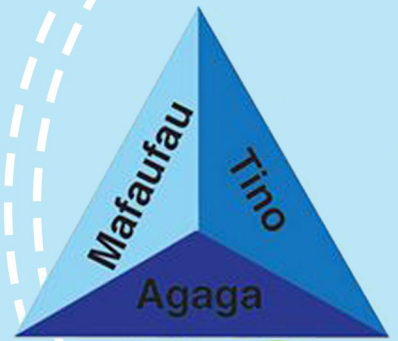
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FLO

Faataua le Ola

LIFELINE 800-5433

Stories

MR and Mrs. Z have 5 children. When the State of Emergency was declared Mr. Z, a carpenter by trade was laid off from work as a result.

The financial stress of making ends meet began to wear on both husband and wife. Mrs. Z is a dedicated home maker started to blame Mr. Z for the lack of income, Mr. Z in return, besieged with feelings of inadequacy of being the family provider, accused his wife of being unsupportive and disobedient.

He then started to physically push Mrs. Z around as well as humiliating her with harsh words. Mrs. Z realized the situation was going to escalate quickly between herself and her husband and called the FLO lifeline for help. In her words she said,

"Ua ou leiloa le mea e fai — I don't know what else to do."

FLO team of experienced counselors worked with Mrs. Z, they listened and engaged her in conversations to shift her mindset to a different plane where she could navigate options on how her situation can be addressed to bring clarity to both herself and Mr. Z

When FLO followed up, Mrs. Z was in a much better place and she had managed to successfully work out an intervention with her husband, whereby they had resorted to their family plantation to earn income easing the burden and blame in their family home.

**ONE LIFE
LOST IS ONE
TOO MANY**



**BREAK THE
SILENCE**



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When your world is turned upside unexpectedly, it changes you from what you once were. Such is the case with Mr. J, once a happily married man with children. In 2016, an accident saw Mr. J become wheelchair bound for life. Unfortunately, this led to the loss of first; his job, then his marriage and his children. The accident caused Mr. J to develop feelings of sadness, depression and helplessness. It was during the lockdown that Mr. J, at his lowest point, being full of guilt and anxiety on being another extra mouth to feed, for being a burden on his well meaning and loving relatives who are his care givers, reached out to Faataua le Ola. The free helpline supported under the EU UN Spotlight Initiative (UNDP) became a close friend of Mr. J, where he was and continues to be counselled and supported, and while he is in a much better place and better frame of mind, the help line continues to give him strength and a place where he can find both understanding and a supportive network.



LIFELINE

800-5433

Stories

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE



1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence — mostly by an intimate partner.



In 2012, **1 in 2 women** killed worldwide were killed by their partners or family.

Produced by UN Women



"Our Spotlight Initiative is a movement without precedent in the global fight to end violence against women and girls"

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica.

"Peace, justice and sustainable development. None are possible without gender equality and women's empowerment."

UN SG António Guterres, 20 September 2017..





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COVID-19



Humanitarian emergencies, natural disasters and global pandemics put women and girls at **increased risk of violence**. This was true during the 2015–16 Zika virus epidemic and during recent outbreaks of Ebola virus disease, where reports of violence against women and girls – an often-underreported statistic – spiked.

The current COVID-19 crisis is no exception. Increased stress levels, economic and food insecurity, unemployment, and movement restrictions are all creating **conditions** which are contributing to significant reported increases in the levels of domestic violence as response to the global pandemic increases in scale.

A comprehensive and global response to the COVID-19 pandemic must include **interventions to prevent violence against women and girls**.

Gender-based violence is a barrier to effective crisis management – which can only be successful when basic human needs are met, and collective fears are addressed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Spotlight Initiative acknowledges Civil Society Actors Samoa Victim Support Group SVSG and Fa'ataua le Ola FLO in minimizing the risk of violence against women and girls during Samoa's COVID-19 Response by allowing access to GBV Service providers and psycho-social Support for those in need.

In particular the leadership of these two women at the frontline of reaching the most marginalized and at risk members of our community in these difficult times.

This vital work is one of the priorities of the Spotlight Initiative **Targeting real needs** by addressing legislative and policy gaps, strengthening institutions, promoting gender-equitable attitudes, and providing quality services for survivors. Interventions are also strengthening systems for collecting data on violence against women and girls and empowering women's movements.



Siliniu Lina Chang



Papali'i Caroline Ah Chong



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**FOR MORE
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