

Samoa

‘There is a tremendous amount of leadership potential among Samoa’s women and they have a right to a voice in Parliament. These [Increasing Political Participation of Women in Samoa Programme] activities provide opportunities to share information and resources, answer questions, provoke discussion and encourage change.’

Ms Gatoloai Tili Afamasaga, Increasing Political Participation of Women in Samoa Programme Coordinator (UN Women, 2015).¹

Samoa is a Pacific Island Country that consists of four inhabited and five uninhabited islands. The Samoan economy is dominated by subsistence agricultural farming, with around 97 per cent of households engaged in agricultural activities.² Women account for approximately seven per cent of this agricultural activity. The Government, in collaboration with private sector and development partners, is supporting programs to expand the livelihood options and other income generating opportunities for women.³

Samoa ranks 104 out of 188 on the Human Development Index.⁴ While there is some evidence of changing gender norms, traditional culture still plays a central role in the Samoan way of life and men are predominantly regarded as the head of the household.⁵ However, women are showing greater participation in public life, with 43 per cent of the formally employed population being women.⁶

Leadership and Decision Making

Gender equality in women’s political participation remains a challenge, however the introduction of special measures illustrates some progress in this area. In June 2013, the Samoan Parliament unanimously passed the Constitution Amendment Act that introduced a 10 per cent quota⁷ of women representatives into the national Legislative Assembly – therefore women hold five of the 50 seats in the National Parliament. All candidates that stand for political leadership must still have a chiefly title of *Matai*. In 2011, only 10.5 per cent of *Matai*’s were women.⁸

Women are well represented in public sector managerial positions. As at May 2017, 12 of 38 Government Ministries and Corporations are headed by women Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). Of 128 Level Two Assistant CEOs, 79 are women and 49 are men.⁹

Samoa’s judiciary constitutes of 27 judges, seven of whom are women. Three women oversee court proceedings in Samoa’s Lands and Titles Court, two are Supreme Court judges and two are District Court judges.¹⁰

Economic Empowerment

Although there is still a gender disparity in the private sector, 40 per cent of businesses are headed by women.¹¹ In 2013, Samoa passed the Labour and Employment Relations Act that provides stricter

guidelines addressing sexual harassment and non-discrimination against applicants who are pregnant, requiring mandatory paid maternity leave and equal pay without discrimination based on gender.

Ending Violence Against Women

Violence against women is a serious issue in Samoa, with 46.4 per cent of all women who have been in a relationship having experienced one or more forms of violence.¹² Data from the Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration indicates that a total number of 625 women applied for protection orders between 2015 and 2016, while numbers from the Ministry of Police shows the number of domestic violence cases continues to increase with 767 cases recorded in 2015. A Family Violence Court and a Drugs and Alcohol Court has been established to oversee cases regarding all forms of violence in Samoan families related to drugs and alcohol.¹³

Enhancing Agency

Samoa is a signatory to a range of international and regional commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. These commitments are premised on the belief and understanding that gender equality goes hand-in-hand with sustainable national development.

On 2 December 2016, the Government of Samoa ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which emphasises the need for a gender perspective in efforts to support women living with a disability.¹⁴

Key Statistics

Leadership and Decision Making

- **10 per cent** of Samoa's National Parliament is made up of women (5 out of 50 members).¹⁵
- **47.3 per cent** of management and decision making positions are held by women.¹⁶

Economic Empowerment

- **24 per cent** of women participate in the labour force (includes formal and informal economy).
- **16 per cent** gender gap in the labour force participation rate (male to female).

Ending Violence Against Women

- **46.4 per cent** of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced one or more forms of violence.¹⁷

Enhancing Agency

- Samoa has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- **26.9 per cent** is the contraceptive prevalence rate of women aged between 15-49.

- **120** is the Gender Parity Index for secondary school enrolment (gross) in 2015 - for every 100 boys enrolled, there were 120 girls enrolled.

Note: Statistics in this section are from the [Asian Development Bank \(2016\) Gender Statistics: The Pacific and Timor Leste](#) report unless otherwise stated.

Partnership with *Pacific Women*

Through *Pacific Women*, the Australian Government will spend approximately AU\$9.3 million over ten years (2012-2022) on initiatives supporting gender equality and women's empowerment in Samoa. Approximately AU\$1.8 million has been spent delivering activities in-country (FY2012-2013 to FY2015-2016). More information on the partnership and nature of support is included in the [Pacific Women Samoa Country Plan Summary 2015-2020](#) valued at AU\$4.4 million. Details on activities currently underway in-country with various partners is available via our [interactive map](#). The list of program partners can be found [here](#). Samoa is also supported by *Pacific Women's* regional program, details of which can be viewed on the interactive map under regional activities.

Stories of Change

1. [Samoa women shaping development](#)
2. [Expanding sexual and reproductive health and rights services](#)

Further Information

- [SPC Stocktake of the Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of Pacific Island Governments \(2015\) Samoa](#)
- [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat – 2013 Samoa Gender Profile](#)
- [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#)
- [United Nations Statistics Division, Minimum Set of Gender Indicators](#)

¹ [Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development \(2015\) First Progress Report 2012-2015](#)

² Government of Samoa (2015) Report on Samoa Agriculture Survey

³ [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat – 2013 Samoa Gender Profile](#)

⁴ [United Nations, Human Development Indicators 2015](#)

⁵ UNIFEM Ending Violence Against Women (2010)

⁶ Samoa Bureau of Statistics, Employment Statistics, March 2017 Quarter.

⁷ [Asian Development Bank \(2016\) Gender Statistics: The Pacific and Timor Leste](#)

⁸ [UN Women Asia Pacific](#)

⁹ Public Service Commission (2017). Figures of women as CEOs and ACEOs.

¹⁰ [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#)

¹¹ ibid

¹² [Samoa Health and Safety Survey \(2006\)](#)

¹³ [Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat \(2016\) Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assessment Report 2012-2016](#)

¹⁴ United Nations Treaty Collection as at 25th July 2017

¹⁵ [Pacific Women in Politics](#) as at May 2017

¹⁶ Managerial positions include politicians, senior government officials, and corporate and general managers in the public and private sector.

¹⁷ [Samoa Health and Safety Survey \(2006\)](#)