



## PRESS RELEASE

**Apia, 19 August 2022 – A guide to assist villages that wish to set up their own Village Family Safety Committee to combat violence in villages was released today.**

Recommendation 20 of the National Inquiry on Family Violence 2018 by the Office of the Ombudsman and Recommendation 4 of the Family Safety Study by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD) of Samoa signals the significant role of the Village Fono to establish a credible mechanism for preventing family violence that ensures regular and ongoing programs and advocacy of family violence prevention awareness at the village level benefiting all groups and individuals.

These recommendations set in motion the Village Family Safety Committee Pilot Project piloted in 6 villages across Samoa. This project was supported and part of the Spotlight Initiative by UNDP and was conducted from 2019-2021.

Some of the key outcomes of the Project included the setup of Village Family Safety Committees in the 6 villages (Lalovi Mulifanua, Vaiee, Lotopue, Saleia, Taga and Asau), provision of assistance to the 6 villages in implementing awareness raising activities on family violence and its impacts, the development of by-laws to include family violence protections which were launched December 2021, and the identification of family violence prevention advocates and champions within villages.

Given the desire by some villages who were not part of the project to set up their own Village Family Safety Committees the Office developed a guide of how to set up a Village Family Safety Committees in village communities developed from reflections and lessons learnt from the implementation of the Village Family Safety Committee Pilot Project. The guide is a resource with the overall purpose to provide information and considerations for establishing Village Family Safety Committees for any interested villages that wishes to set one up to prevent and combat family violence in the village setting. It includes information regarding the intended role of the Committee, its composition, and guiding principles to guide their work linking them with existing Government initiatives.

It is important to emphasize in setting up VFSC's that villages to take note that VFSC's should not be set up for the purpose of providing expert counselling or serve as caseworkers but more as an informational network to provide awareness and informal referral pathway that provide first assistance within their respective villages. VFSC also serve a supporting role to the Village Fono in their efforts to combat family violence in villages.

The Office acknowledges the support of the UNDP Spotlight and all key partners who contributed throughout this project and also the participation of organizations and village representatives today.

The resource was released during the launch of the Talanoa Toolkit for village-based advocates against family violence today.

A copy of the guide in Samoan and English can be downloaded from our website using this link: [[English](#)] [[Samoan](#)]

**END**