

**VILLAGE BASED ADVOCATES  
AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE**

# **TALANOA** **TOOLKIT**

*Facilitating Conversations and  
Dialogues to Address Family  
Violence in Samoan Communities*





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## About the Toolkit

This Toolkit is a prevention tool which provides a guide for any village based advocate against family violence (VBA) in Samoa for facilitating conversations and dialogues to address family violence in community and family settings. It contains information on:

- key definitions relating to family violence,
- the do's and don't's when engaging in conversations about family violence
- key messages that challenge practices that perpetuate family violence – taboo, privacy, shame and victim-blaming
- service providers working in the family violence prevention space in Samoa

The Toolkit is designed to be culturally contextualized to address specific needs and level of understanding of VBAs and help consolidate key messages into a single user-friendly resource that is readily available. The toolkit shall ensure that appropriate messages and relevant information are easily accessible to VBAs, and community partners working in this space.



## Purpose and who can use the TOOLKIT

The **overall purpose of the Toolkit** is to ensure that conversations about addressing family violence are guided by consistent, culturally specific, and survivor-centered messaging that will deliver positive outcomes for victims/survivors (including perpetrators) of family violence.



**Key messages** contained in this Toolkit aim to discourage deeply rooted mindsets and practices as well as debunk myths that continue to perpetrate family violence in homes and communities and thus preventing further harm to individuals and families. The messages are targeted to various audiences and groups including – victims/survivors, perpetrators, parents, community (including church and village leaders, general public).

The Toolkit can be **used by a broad range of actors advocating against family violence** including village family safety committees, church ministers, youth, family matai, and any other member of the community.

# Key definitions

## FAMILY VIOLENCE

**Family violence** refers to violence that covers all forms of violence against women, girls and children and that take place within the family setting. Such violence includes emotional/physiological, physical, sexual and financial. In addition, it includes any other controlling or abusive behavior where such conduct harms or may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or well-being of a person.

## INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)

**IPV** refers to any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship [2].

## CAUSE OF VIOLENCE

A **cause** is the underlying reason family violence happens. For example, witnessing family violence as a child, power and control, gender inequality etc., can be causes of family violence.

## GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

**GBV** refers to violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects disproportionately. It takes many forms and acts of violence that result in physical, sexual or psychological (emotional) harm or suffering to women and girls that can include but not limited to stalking, threats, and socio-economic deprivation. GBV disproportionately affects women and girls in areas such as domestic violence, family violence, sexual harassment/assault, sexual abuse and others [1].

## TRIGGERS OF VIOLENCE

A **trigger** starts something that was already primed to happen. For example feelings of jealousy, alcohol, anger, stress, financial problems etc., can be triggers of family violence.

[1] See UNHCR, "Gender-based violence". Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html>. Accessed 25 October 2021.

[2] World Health Organization, "Understanding and addressing violence against women: Intimate Partner Violence". Retrieved from [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.36\\_eng.pdf](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf). Accessed 23 October 2021.

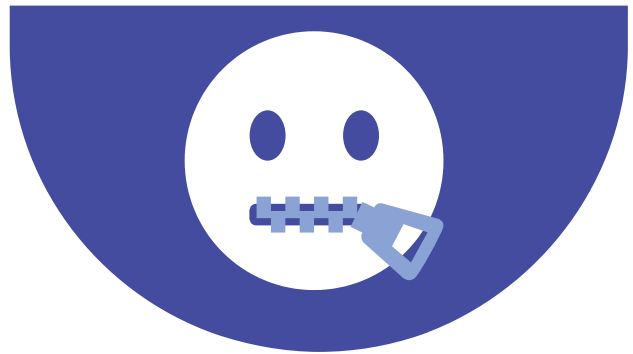


## Practices that promote family violence



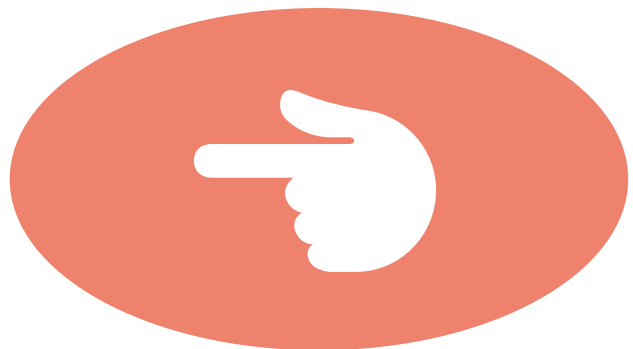
**PRIVACY:** The notion that privacy should be maintained regardless of the severity of what is happening in the home allows family abuse to continue without intervention or support from those outside of the family.

**TABOO:** When we collectively refuse to openly discuss topics such as sex, we allow sexually violent behavior to thrive in the vacuum of silence.



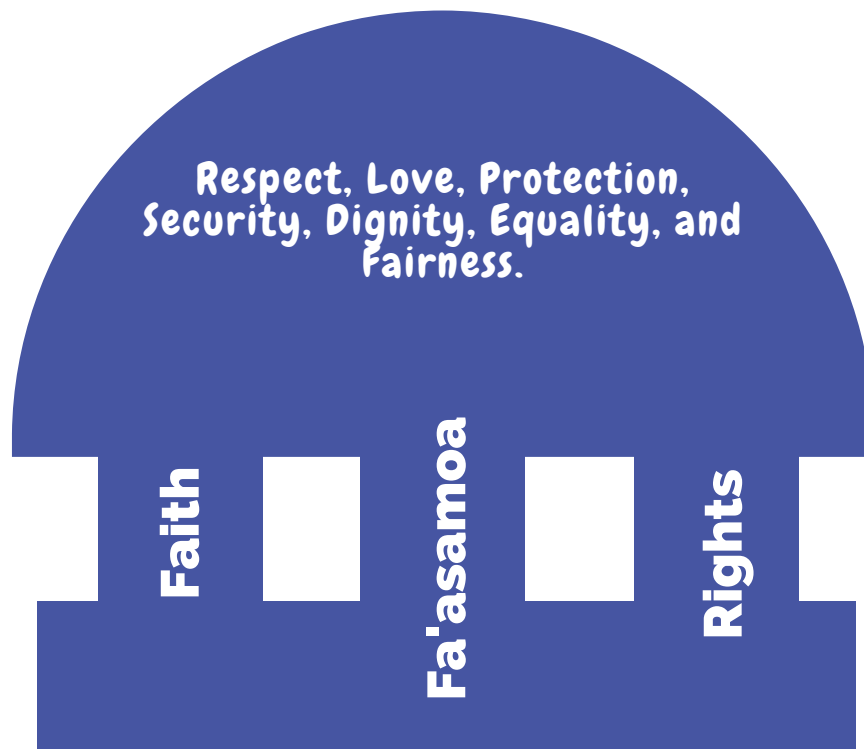
**SHAME:** When we prioritize family honor rather than a survivor's well-being and safety, we are silencing survivors and keeping them in potentially life-threatening situations

**VICTIM BLAMING:** When we exclusively focus on the survivor, we release the abuser from any accountability for his/her actions.



## Fa'asamoa, faith and human rights framework

The principles contained within the Fa'asamoa, Faith and human rights framework contain standards, values, norms and approaches which when well applied, can prevent and protect against all forms of family violence [3]. Some of these shared values and principles include: **Respect, Love, Protection, Security, Dignity, Equality, and Fairness.**



**Solutions to family violence prevention are strengthened by an approach encompassing of Fa'asamoa, Faith and human rights values and principles**



[3] See Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2018: National Public Inquiry into Family Violence (June 2018) p. 35.



## General messages for facilitating conversations and dialogues on family violence PREVENTION [4]



### Village Fono

- Take a leading and proactive role in the prevention of family violence through making family violence as an area of concern for the Village Fono.
- Encourage reporting and monitor protection orders and parole in relation to family violence.
- Make a positive influence.

### Fathers/parents

- Identify and use positive parenting methods when disciplining children.
- Talk (talanoa), listen and spend time with mother and children.
- Listen and respect your children's views.
- Provide guidance, care, love and support.
- Have mutual respect for one another.
- Make a positive influence.



### Family

- Everyone has the right to feel safe and live without fear in their own home.
- Provide a supportive and caring environment for everyone to enjoy.
- Recognize and strengthen the 'vā tapuia.
- Make a positive influence.

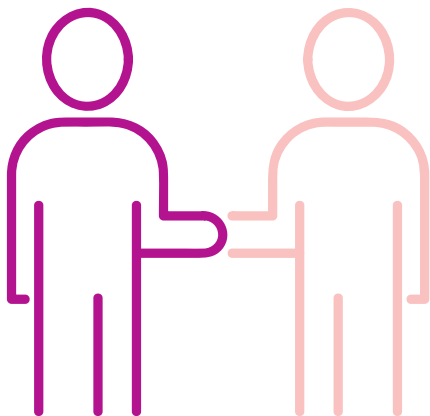
[4] Ibid. 32.



## General messages for facilitating conversations and dialogues on family violence PREVENTION [5]

### Neighbors

- Talk to your neighbors and don't be afraid to report incidents of violence to the relevant authorities where there is imminent harm to life.



### Community generally

- Respect the dignity of others regardless of their age, status, disability or gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Physical, Verbal and Sexual Violence is never acceptable and against the law in Samoa.
- Violence is not part of Fa'asamoa.
- Violence is not a solution.
- Violence is not a private matter.
- Love and Violence does not go together.
- Respect your elders.

### Church/faifeau

- Be proactive in the prevention of family violence through promoting non-violence and preaching a nonviolence theology.
- Offer help/support through spiritual guidance and act as an early warning system.
- Set limits on church obligations linked to financial capacity of families to minimize stress that can trigger family violence.
- Make a positive influence.

[5] Ibid, p. 32.



## Myths, facts and key messages

### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)



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Intimate partner violence is a private family matter [6].	MYTH
Violence of all forms including IPV is a national and global social issue. It affects everyone - country, entire family, village and church.	FACT
<b>All forms of violence are NOT a private matter. It is a national social issue. Government, Village and Churches have a role to play in addressing it.</b>	<b>KEY MESSAGE</b>
Victims/survivor, Perpetrator, Community	TARGET AUDIENCE

MYTH	Speaking out to report family violence will bring shame to the reputation of the family and village [7].
FACT	Fear or refusal to speak out has shown to only cause further harm to the victim/survivor and families and the continuation of violence without intervention and support.
<b>KEY MESSAGE</b>	<b>It is more honorable to speak out and survive than to hide away and fear.</b> <b>Refusal by family and village leaders to report to relevant authorities' serious crimes of violence is an obstruction of justice. It also puts the victim/survivor at greater risk of serious harm.</b>
TARGET AUDIENCE	Victims/survivor, Community

[6] Arizona Coalition to End Sexual & Domestic Violence. "Domestic Violence Myths and Misconceptions." Retrieved from <https://www.acesdv.org/domestic-violence-graphics/domestic-violence-myths-and-misconceptions/>.

[7] See Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2020 VFSC Pilot Project. Retrieved from <https://ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SHRR-2020-English-with-letter-by-PM-.pdf>.



## Myths, facts and key messages



### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

#### MYTH

*Violence against women is sometimes justified [8].*

*Some women provoke the violence by talking back to their husbands and doing things that they know makes their husbands angry.*

*The women should always tolerate violence to keep her family together.*

*Reading the Bible and praying will solve IPV/ family violence.*

#### FACT

The myths are common statements made in defense of the abuser/perpetrator. Often time's women blame themselves for their husbands' sexual indiscretions with other women and girls. For example, they did not take care of themselves or look their best and or meet their husbands' sexual needs. This essentially puts the blame on the woman, which is a form of manipulation, control and sexism.

Although reading the Bible and praying can provide spiritual healing it does not address the root cause of IPV/ family violence which requires changed mindsets.

#### KEY MESSAGE

**Men and women are equally entitled to the right to be free from violence and feel safe in their own homes.**

**Blaming the victim/survivor takes the responsibility away from the perpetrator and reinforces the mindset of the perpetrator that it is ok for him to beat his wife/partner.**

**There is no excuse for violence in any relationship.**

#### TARGET AUDIENCE

Victims/survivor, perpetrator, Community

[8] Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. "Thematic brief myths about gender equality in the Pacific". Retrieved from [https://pacificwomen.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/07/Thematic-Brief\\_Myths\\_v12-FINAL-Jul2021.pdf](https://pacificwomen.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/07/Thematic-Brief_Myths_v12-FINAL-Jul2021.pdf).



## Myths, facts and key messages

### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)



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<p><i>Sexual intercourse is a man's right in marriage [9].</i></p> <p><i>Women denying sex with their partner is a form of violence against men and a violation of men's basic needs.</i></p>	<p>MYTH</p>
<p>Regardless of marital status sexual activity must always be consensual. Denying sex with a partner is not considered a form of violence under the law.</p>	<p>FACT</p>
<p><b>Sexual violence including marital rape is a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 2013, punishable by up to life imprisonment [10].</b></p>	<p><b>KEY MESSAGE</b></p>
<p>Victims/survivor, Perpetrator, Community</p>	<p>TARGET AUDIENCE</p>
<p>MYTH</p>	<p><i>The Bible says that wives are inferior to husbands and should be physically disciplined if they fail to obey [11].</i></p>
<p>FACT</p>	<p>The Bible is quite clear that men and women were created equally in the image of God and there is absolutely no reference to physical discipline between husband and wife or intimate partners. On the contrary there are extensive teachings around non-violence, kindness, tolerance, peacefulness and even sacrifice in the bible in regards to relationship.</p>
<p><b>KEY MESSAGE</b></p>	<p><b>Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her – Ephesians 5:25-33</b></p>
<p>TARGET AUDIENCE</p>	<p>Perpetrator, Community</p>

[9] Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. "Thematic brief myths about gender equality in the Pacific". Retrieved from [https://pacificwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Thematic-Brief\\_Myths\\_v12-FINAL-Jul2021.pdf](https://pacificwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Thematic-Brief_Myths_v12-FINAL-Jul2021.pdf).

[10] Crimes Act 2013, section 49. See also Part 7 of the Crimes Act 2013.

[11] Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. "Thematic brief myths about gender equality in the Pacific". Retrieved from [https://pacificwomen.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/07/Thematic-Brief\\_Myths\\_v12-FINAL-Jul2021.pdf](https://pacificwomen.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/07/Thematic-Brief_Myths_v12-FINAL-Jul2021.pdf).



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## Myths, facts and key messages



### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

MYTH	Only serious cases of IPV/ family violence that may lead to loss of life can be reported to the Village Fono [12].
FACT	Cases of violence regardless of their severity still negatively impacts victims/survivors and require various solutions including reporting to police and a specialist service and not just to the Village Fono.
KEY MESSAGE	<b>Sweeping cases of violence under the carpet and reporting only to the Village Fono and not to police obstructs justice allowing violence to continue to thrive and violates the right of the victim/survivor to be free from violence.</b> <b>Any case of family violence regardless of severity must be treated as a serious matter.</b>
TARGET AUDIENCE	Community

<i>I love you, that's why I hit you.</i> <i>Jealousy is the cause of violence in relationships.</i>	MYTH
Love is not expressed with violence or cruelty. Jealousy arises from a combination of the need for power and control and traditional gender roles of men and women. Jealousy is a very powerful emotion and it is a trigger not a cause of violence.	FACT
<b>There is no violence in a healthy relationship.</b> <b>Genuine love and commitment do not harm or hurt people; love protects and honors. This is clearly demonstrated in Samoan families when principles and values of Fa'asamoa and faith are practiced, valued, and held at high regard.</b>	KEY MESSAGE
Victim/survivor, Perpetrator	TARGET AUDIENCE

[12] See Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2020 VFSC Pilot Project. Retrieved from <https://ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SHRR-2020-English-with-letter-by-PM-.pdf>.



## Myths, facts and key messages

### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)



Only physical violence counts as family violence [13].	MYTH
Family violence can be defined as any controlling or violent behavior that causes emotional, psychological, sexual, financial, or physical damage to a family member, partner or ex-partner, or causes them to feel fear. And, as many survivors of family violence can attest, supposedly “less serious” types of violence like emotional and psychological abuse can leave very deep scars and are very hard to overcome [14].	FACT
<b>All violent behavior – be it emotional, psychological, or any other form – is harmful and inexcusable.</b>	<b>KEY MESSAGE</b>
Perpetrator, Community	TARGET AUDIENCE

MYTH	<i>Lots of women make false claims about family violence or exaggerate how bad the abuse is [15].</i>
FACT	False claims about family violence are extremely rare. 80% of women who experience violence from a current partner don't contact the police about it. When talking to family, friends and others, women are more likely to downplay their experience of violence than exaggerate it [16].
<b>KEY MESSAGE</b>	<b>Believe the victim/survivor and do not judge them. Validate their experience of abuse by saying something like: “Thank you for sharing with me, it must have been difficult”.  There is no shame in speaking out.</b>
TARGET AUDIENCE	Victim, Community

[13] Ministry of Social Development NZ. Attitudes, values, beliefs about violence within families. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/campaign-action-violence-research/attitudes-values-and-beliefs-about-violence-within-families.pdf>.

[14] Safe Steps: Family Violence Response Centre, “Family Violence Myths & Facts”. Retrieved from <https://www.safesteps.org.au/understanding-family-violence/family-violence-myths-facts/>.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.



## Myths, facts and key messages



### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

MYTH	<i>Anger, Alcohol and drugs are the main causes of IPV [17].</i>
FACT	<p>Anger is a tool the perpetrator uses to get what they want. Perpetrators are actually very much in control because they can stop when someone knocks on the door or the phone rings; they often direct punches and kicks to parts of the body where the bruises are less likely to show; and they are not abusing everyone who makes them “angry”, but waits until there are no witnesses to abuse the one he says he loves [18].</p> <p>Alcohol and drugs are not present in the vast majority of IPV/ family violence incidents reported to the police in Samoa. Furthermore, many people consume alcohol and drugs without going on to commit violence. The reality is that alcohol and drug abuse can sometimes trigger violence by altering inhibitions and decreasing patience and tolerance levels, but it is not the root cause of that violence [19].</p>
KEY MESSAGE	<p><b>Violent behavior is a choice.</b></p> <p><b>Anger, Alcohol and drugs only triggers violence but are not causes of violence.</b></p>
TARGET AUDIENCE	Victims/survivor, Community

*IPV/ family violence only happens to low socio-economic families and to individuals with low educational backgrounds.*

MYTH

IPV can happen and affects all different groups from all different backgrounds.

FACT

**IPV affects everyone. It does not discriminate!**

**KEY MESSAGE**

Community

TARGET AUDIENCE

[17] Ministry of Social Development NZ. Attitudes, values, beliefs about violence within families. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/campaign-action-violence-research/attitudes-values-and-beliefs-about-violence-within-families.pdf>.

[18] See Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2018: National Public Inquiry into Family Violence (June 2018).

[19] Ibid.



## Myths, facts and key messages

### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)



*If a woman was in real danger, she would just leave. If she hasn't left, it can't be that bad [20].*

MYTH

A woman is at highest risk of extreme violence, including murder, when she does leave an abuser. Many women stay because they are justifiably fearful for themselves or their children if they do leave. If a woman chooses to stay in an abusive relationship, it doesn't mean the situation isn't bad, it means she's worried leaving might make it even worse. Other reasons why a woman might stay in a violence environment include: Fear, low self-esteem, shame, guilt; Lack of financial independence; Desire to maintain the family unit; sometime there may be family pressure to keep the family together; Belief that the partner can and will change; Isolation – lack of family and social support networks [21].

FACT

**When women stay in abusive relationships it does not mean that the situation is not bad, it means she is worried that when she leaves it may cause more harm.**

KEY  
MESSAGE

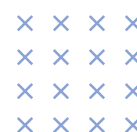
**Leaving can be an easy solution, but for some women there may be reasons that hold them back – therefore it is important to be open and understanding.**

Community

TARGET  
AUDIENCE

[20] Safe Steps: Family Violence Response Centre, "Family Violence Myths & Facts". Retrieved from <https://www.safesteps.org.au/understanding-family-violence/family-violence-myths-facts/>.

[21] Ibid.





## Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

### **TIPS for advocates when discussing the issue of IPV [23]**

**Remember!** Intimate partner abuse happens in a Cycle of Violence – where repeated and dangerous acts of violence become a pattern or a cycle that occurs over and over again in a relationship.

**Remember!** Cycles continue because women find it difficult to leave their abusive partners and tend to keep going back to them.

**Remember!** When a woman who has returned to her abusive partner calls for help we must treat her as if she is contacting us for the first time.

**Remember!** Listen and Link: If someone experiences IPV and asks for help, be a source of support: “listen”, show support, don’t judge and try to engage in the situation. You can “link” them to information about support services available.

**Remember!** Look out for **signs** to recognize if the **person is a victim/survivor**: IPV may be visible, or it may be more subtle. Remember it can sometimes be difficult to notice signs if someone is experiencing IPV. However, there are certain things that can help identify if someone is experiencing IPV:

- Unexplained injuries
- Personality changes, like low self-esteem in someone who was always confident
- Self-harm and suicidal thoughts and behaviors
- Afraid for their husband to know what they said or do
- Paranoia, Emotional and cries a lot

**Remember!** Look out for **signs** to recognize if the **person is a perpetrator**: The person uses physical aggression, have unpredictable behaviors, display of jealousy, suspicious or angry even if there is no reason to be, monitor and control their partner’s activity, uses verbal threats.

[23] See Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa. Village Family Safety Committees Workplans and Activities (March 2020) pp. 15-10.

## Myths, facts and key messages

### Violence against Children



*Perpetrators of sexual violence against children are often strangers and people not known/close to them [24].*

MYTH

Most sexual violence is committed by people known to the victim/survivor. The NIFV heard multiple stories where the perpetrator of sexual violence against a child is a close family member. Other common perpetrators included teachers, pastors, neighbors, work colleagues or friends. Neither was there any upper or lower age limit of those carrying out the crimes, in keeping with research and studies undertaken in countries worldwide.

FACT

**Always make sure that those taking care of your children are people you really trust.**

**KEY MESSAGE**

Parents, Community

TARGET AUDIENCE

MYTH

*Violent behaviors by children are learnt from school and outside of the home [25].*

FACT

Violent behaviors can be learned and influenced by different settings however it is most often learned from the home.

**KEY MESSAGE**

**Violence is a learned behavior usually from the home.  
Children imitate what they see and hear from their parents and close relatives.**

TARGET AUDIENCE

Parents, Community

[24] World Health Organization, "Violence against Children: key facts", (June 2020). Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children>. Accessed 19 October 2021.

[25] Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2018: National Public Inquiry into Family Violence (June 2018).

## Myths, facts and key messages



### Violence against Children

MYTH	<i>Only girls experience sexual violence/ abuse [26].</i>	
FACT	It is a dangerous myth that only girls are abused. Dangerous because it means that boys receive less attention and are therefore more vulnerable and because our support services are then not set up to deal with such cases. There have been instances documented in the NIFV where young boys/ Fa'afafine have also been victims of sexual abuse but is under-reported.	
KEY MESSAGE	<p><b>Young boys are also vulnerable to sexual abuse similar to young girls.</b></p> <p><b>All children (young girls, young boys including young Fa'afafine and Fa'atama and children with disabilities) have the right to be free from any type of violence.</b></p>	
TARGET AUDIENCE	Parents, Community	
<i>Being smacked as a child didn't do any harm [27].</i>		MYTH
Children exposed to family violence are more likely to hold attitudes that justify their own use of violence. When someone says of a violent upbringing 'well it didn't do me any harm', or 'it made me the person I am today', neither are true or have any factual basis. Not every child is resilient in the face of violence. Some may not cope well with violence as others and can be deeply affected.		FACT
<b>Not every child handles or copes with violence the same way. Each child has different coping skills which requires careful attention.</b>		KEY MESSAGE
Parents, Community		TARGET AUDIENCE

[26] Jill Davies, Family Violence Prevention Fund: A guide for domestic violence advocates (2009). Retrieved from [https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Children\\_and\\_Families/Advocates%20Guide\(1\).pdf](https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Children_and_Families/Advocates%20Guide(1).pdf).

[27] Ibid. See also Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2018: National Public Inquiry into Family Violence (June 2018).



## Myths, facts and key messages

### Violence against Children



<p><i>Being exposed to violence as a child means they are destined to go on and become a perpetrator or victim of violence when they grow up [28].</i></p>	<p>MYTH</p>
<p>A child who is exposed to violence and who has a violent upbringing is not guaranteed or will inevitably become perpetrators as adults or that they will necessarily suffer negative consequences in their lives; many children and young people demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of family violence.</p> <p>A violent upbringing increases the chance a child will go on to become a perpetrator or victim, it does not make it certain. That means that a person can have a violent upbringing and go on to lead a life totally free of violence, and indeed many do.</p>	<p>FACT</p>
<p><b>Do not stigmatize and assume that being exposed to violence as a child will make that child a victim or perpetrator later in life.</b></p>	<p><b>KEY MESSAGE</b></p>
<p>Parents, Community</p>	<p>TARGET AUDIENCE</p>
<p>MYTH</p>	<p><i>Violence against children is usually borne out of a parent's frustrations over what the child has done [29].</i></p>
<p>FACT</p>	<p>Often physical and verbal violence of children is not because what the child has done but other external factors that stressed out the parent e.g. financial troubles, family obligations.</p>
<p><b>KEY MESSAGE</b></p>	<p><b>There are other ways to overcome anger and children should not be used as punching bags to release anger and stress.</b></p> <p><b>Open discussion without anger can help create stronger communication.</b></p>
<p>TARGET AUDIENCE</p>	<p>Parents, Community</p>



[28] Ibid.

[29] Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2018: National Public Inquiry into Family Violence (June 2018).



## Myths, facts and key messages



### Violence against Children

MYTH	<p><i>Physical discipline is the only way. Words are no use [30].</i></p> <p><i>Smacking of children does not constitute violence but rather discipline.</i></p>	
FACT	<p>There are other nonviolent methods to discipline children including correcting their behaviors that exist for example, talanoa, fa'asoa.</p> <p>Discipline is intended for the well-being and development of the child and the impacts of violence are certainly not in the best interests of the child and cannot be justified.</p>	
KEY MESSAGE	<p><b>Discipline is guidance not violence.</b></p> <p><b>Any action (verbal or physical) towards a child that causes negative impacts commonly accepted to be caused by violence, is violence and not discipline.</b></p>	
TARGET AUDIENCE	Parents, Community	
<p><i>Children with disabilities (especially intellectual disability) are less likely to become victims of abuse than children without disabilities [31].</i></p>		MYTH
<p>Children with disabilities are three times more likely than children without them to be victims of sexual abuse, and the likelihood is even higher for children with intellectual or mental health disabilities. These children face many challenges in reporting the abuse and receiving vital services designed to meet their needs [32].</p>		FACT
<p><b>Children with disabilities need to be listened to and believed and not stigmatized because of their disability.</b></p>		KEY MESSAGE
Parents, Community		TARGET AUDIENCE

[30] Ibid.

[31] Resilience, "Sexual Violence Myths & Facts". Retrieved from <https://www.ourresilience.org/what-you-need-to-know/myths-and-facts/>. Accessed 23 October 2021.

[32] Ibid.

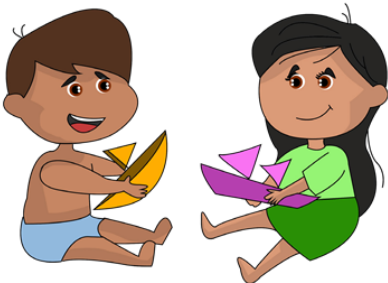


Myths, facts and key messages

Violence against Children



Young girls who are said to dress inappropriately and seductively invite sexual violence [33].	MYTH
The clothes a person wears does not indicate sexual intent. Consent to have sex must be communicated directly. Your clothing is never an invitation for rape. The offender is ultimately responsible for the assault. This myth distorts the truth by shifting blame away from the offender and onto the victim.	FACT
<p>Engaging in sexual activity must always be consensual.</p> <p>Sexual violence and coercion including incest and rape of young girls and boys is a crime under the Crimes Act 2013, where the perpetrator can be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 20 years [34].</p> <p>Blaming the cause of sexual violence on how young girls dress shifts blame and accountability away from the offender and onto the victim.</p>	KEY MESSAGE
Parents, Community	TARGET AUDIENCE



[33] Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2018: National Public Inquiry into Family Violence (June 2018).  
[34] See Part 7 of the Crimes Act 2013.



## Myths, facts and key messages



### Violence against Children

MYTH	<p><i>The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) gives children rights which lead to increased drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, disrespectful behaviors, violence, and suicide [35].</i></p> <p><i>The CRC interferes with parental responsibility to discipline and raise one's children [36].</i></p>
FACT	<p>There are no rights within the CRC which permit children to engage in alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, disrespectful behaviors, violence, and suicide, nor remove the right of the parent to raise their child as they wish. Rather, it is violence towards children which contributes to these types of perceptions of children being disrespectful etc. [37].</p> <p>Article 18 of the CRC provides that parents have the prime responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child including appropriately disciplining them. No other limitations are put upon a parent's right and responsibility to raise and discipline their child.</p>
KEY MESSAGE	<p><b>The CRC contains a series of rights for children to ensure their development and freedom from actions that are not in their best interests, such as ensuring they are raised in an environment that is free from violence or other inhuman or degrading punishments.</b></p> <p><b>CRC is in place to protect the dignity and integrity of the child and protecting the rights of the parents. No other limitations are put upon a parent's right and responsibility to raise and discipline their child.</b></p>
TARGET AUDIENCE	Parents, Community

[35] Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2015 and village consultations. Retrieved from [https://ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2015\\_State-of-Human-Rights-Report-General\\_English.pdf](https://ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2015_State-of-Human-Rights-Report-General_English.pdf).

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

## Violence against Children



**TIPS** for advocates when discussing the issue of violence against children [38]

**Remember!** Children can sometimes not be aware of everything including giving consent, therefore it is important that you explain what it means so they understand and are made aware.

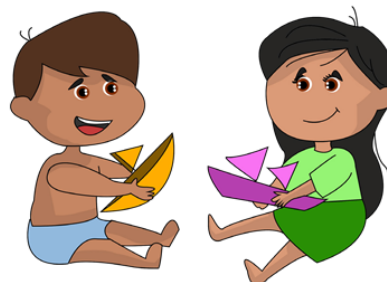
**Remember!** If you come across a child who has been abused and is in severe danger, contact the relevant authorities for assistance. The **Referral forms in Part 7: Resources for Advocates** can be a useful resource for making a referral.

**Remember! The best interest of the child is always paramount.** Any interventions to assist children suffering violence or abuse must take into consideration their best interests.

**Remember!** Always make sure that conversations with children are conducted in a way and language that they can easily understand.

**Remember!** Discussing violence against children with parents can be a challenge and can create misunderstanding. It is important to keep an open mind and create a safe space for parents to share openly and freely without being judged about their parenting skills.

x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x  
x x x x



[38] Jill Davies, Family Violence Prevention Fund: A guide for domestic violence advocates (2009). Retrieved from [https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Children\\_and\\_Families/Advocates%20Guide\(1\).pdf](https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Children_and_Families/Advocates%20Guide(1).pdf).



## Myths, facts and key messages



### Violence against other groups

MYTH	<i>Persons with disabilities do not get abused [39].</i>
FACT	PWDs also face violence not only from family members but from outsiders. PWDs especially women with disabilities, are subjected to abuse and exploitation and for the most part are not always reported. Unfortunately, a common misconception among people in Samoa is that PWDs are not prone to violence due to their disability. This is not true!
KEY MESSAGE	<b>Persons with disabilities need to be believed and not stigmatized because of their disability.</b>
TARGET AUDIENCE	Parents, Community

<i>Fa'afafine and Fa'afatama communities rarely experience abuse in their lifetime [40].</i>	MYTH
The NIFV indicated that Fa'afafine and Faatama are often subjected to severe violence at the hands of their own families and that this is not reported due to intimidation of the victims/survivors, fear of reprisals and being disowned, lack of effective redress and a belief that no crime has been committed.	FACT
<b>Family violence does not discriminate; it affects everyone regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.</b> <b>Treat everyone with respect and human dignity. Do not judge!</b> <b>"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." - Luke 6:31</b>	KEY MESSAGE
Parents, Community	TARGET AUDIENCE

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[39] Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa, State of Human Rights Report 2018: National Public Inquiry into Family Violence (June 2018) pp. 66-82.

[40] Ibid.

# Myths, facts and key messages

## Violence against other groups



Nofotane and faiāvā are slaves and must do all the work for their in-laws [41].	MYTH
Nofotane and Faiāvā are human beings and must be treated with the same dignity and respect as other members of the family. They have an important role to play in contributing to the development of families.	FACT
<b>Treat everyone equally and fairly. Greater emphasis on in-laws (men and women) as maupaolo rather than nofotane/faiāvā.</b>	<b>KEY MESSAGE</b>
Parents, Community	TARGET AUDIENCE



### TIPS for advocates when discussing the issue of violence against other groups

- Remember!** Assist the person to seek support before you encourage them to speak out.
- Remember!** Violence does not affect a certain group of people only. It is important to not assume and to always have an open mind.
- Remember!** Everyone deals with trauma from family violence in different ways. It is important to be aware of this to ensure that your response is survivor-centered and does not cause further harm.

[41] Ibid.





## Resources for Advocates

### DO'S & DON'T'S

#### DOs

- Believe the victim/survivor
- Be open and understanding
- Listen with care and show empathy
- Always maintain confidentiality
- Respect the privacy of the victim/survivor
- Seek consent when referring to a service or applying for a protection order on the victim/survivor's behalf
- Always refer the victim/survivor to a professional support service for specialist help



#### DON'T's

- Be judgmental
- Blame the victim/survivor for the acts of the perpetrator
- Excuse the behavior of the perpetrator
- Counsel the victim/survivor to go back to a relationship especially if it will put them in grave danger
- Tell the victim/survivor to compromise and be patient with the perpetrator
- Give expert advice or advice that would further traumatize or put the victim/survivor at further harm



## Resources for Advocates



## SPECIALIST SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR HELP



Ministry of Police (Domestic Violence Unit)

**Contact:** 22222

**Type of support:** first responders, domestic violence complaints, lodging protection orders.



Health Services

**Contact:** 911

**Type of support:** emergency services, medical assessment, and treatment, make referrals, social work support.



Samoa Victim Support

**Contact:** 800-7874 | 25392

**Type of support:** shelters, counseling, empowerment programmes, make referrals, assist in lodging protection orders.



Nuanua o le Alofa

**Contact:** 25243 | 21147

**Type of support:** disability support services, assist in lodging protection orders.



Teen Challenge

**Contact:** 25235 | 7701520

**Type of support:** counseling, rehabilitation for youth, make referrals.



Samoa Red Cross Society

**Contact:** 24334

**Type of support:** humanitarian assistance, first aid, awareness raising on disaster risk management and climate change, emergency services.





## Resources for Advocates

### SPECIALIST SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR HELP



Talofa Kids Charitable Trust

**Contact:** 7241350 |

hello@talofakids.com

**Type of support:** awareness raising programmes on child protection, counseling for parents and children.



Samoa Fa'afafine Assoc.

**Contact:** 7775171 | 7797799

**Type of support:** support for fa'afafine & fa'atama & other SOGIESC groups, counseling support, make referrals, assist in lodging protection orders.



Ministry of Women

**Contact:** 27752 | 27753

**Type of support:** child protection, domestic violence counseling and support, GBV awareness, make referrals, assist in lodging protection orders.



Young Women Christian Association

**Contact:** 7716560 | 7799393

**Type of support:** counseling, awareness programme on empowerment for young women, assist in lodging protection orders.



Salvation Army

**Contact:** 8400666

**Type of support:** alcohol, drugs and anger management counseling, rehabilitation for perpetrators.



Ministry of Justice

**Contact:** 22672 | 53514

**Type of support:** protection order support, alcohol, drugs and anger management counseling referrals, child maintenance, divorce processes and matters.

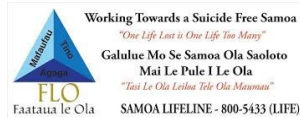




## Resources for Advocates



### SPECIALIST SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR HELP



Faataua le Ola

**Contact:** 800-5433

**Type of support:** suicide prevention, counseling, make referrals, assist in lodging protection orders.



Samoa Family Health Association

**Contact:** 26929 | 26549

**Type of support:** counseling and services for sexual reproductive health rights, make referrals, assist in lodging protection orders.



Adventist Development Relief  
Agency Samoa

**Contact:** 27439

**Type of support:** humanitarian relief and support, make referrals.



Goshen Trust Mental Health Services

**Contact:** 27487

**Type of support:** rehabilitation support and shelter for mental health patients.



Samoa National Youth Council

**Contact:** 27804 | 8422584

**Type of support:** youth empowerment.



**Brown Girl Woke**

Brown Girl Woke

**Contact:** 842 1773 |

info@browngirlwoke.com

**Type of support:** social support, empowerment, career coaching, self-development mentorship for girls, and awareness raising against GBV.





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village based advocates against  
family violence

## TALANOA TOOLKIT

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