



SETTING UP A VILLAGE FAMILY SAFETY COMMITTEE

GUIDE







The Guide is developed from reflections and lessons learnt from the Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa's implementation of its Village Family Safety Committee Pilot Project 2020-2021.

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GUIDE

family violence prevention tool

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About the Guide



This Guide is a Resource which provides guidelines and information for setting up and establishing Village Family Safety Committees (VFSC) in Samoan communities. The guidelines include among others the role of the Committee, its composition, and guiding principles to guide their work.

It is developed from reflections and lessons learnt from the Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa's implementation of its Village Family Safety Committee Pilot Project 2020-2021 initiated from Recommendation 20 of the National Public <u>Inquiry</u> into Family Violence in Samoa Report 2018[1].

Purpose and who can use the Guide

The overall purpose of the Guide is to provide information especially for interested village councils and village communities in setting up or establishing VFSCs in their villages.

VFSCs focus specifically on family violence prevention through raising awareness of family violence, make referrals[2], report family violence matters to Village Fono[3] and police, as well as be the focal point for family violence service providers. They are similar to other village committees that look after water resources and schools for instance in that they are a village based committee.

The Guide can be used by any village community in Samoa that is interested in setting up or establishing its own VFSC to help in preventing and combating family violence in the family and village setting. The guide is not designed to be strictly used as is. However, a village may adopt and amend the guide to what best suits their village settings, needs and structures.

^[1] See Samoa Office of the Ombudsman NHRI, VFSC Pilot Project Report 2020, https://ombudsman.gov.ws/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/SHRR-2020-English-with-letter-by-PM-.pdf.

^[2] See Samoa Office of the Ombudsman NHRI, Talanoa Toolkit: Facilitating Conversations and Dialogues to Address Family Violence in Samoan Communities, (December 2021) pp. 46-58 at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ncit-uJhpHiP14rJwHVB-1LiYkVJx7RL. See also Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Samoa Inter - Agency Essential Services Guide for Responding to Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection, https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2021/02/English%20-%20WEB%20-%20Samoa%20IESG%20for%20Responding%20to%20Gender-

Based%20Violence%20and%20Child%20Protection.pdf.
[3] The term Village Fono and Village Council are used interchangeably.

Why develop Village Family Safety Committees?

While appropriate services and responses provided by Government and non-governmental organisations are important components in the effort to counter family violence, these mechanisms cannot solve the problem of family violence on their own. The Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa has observed through its VFSC Pilot Project that it takes more than that to generate and sustain change. It requires a collective approach by the whole nation including village communities and village leaders.

Families and village members play a crucial role in preventing family violence within a village setting for many reasons:

- Families and Village members especially those who sit on Village Fono
 or lead a congregation are often more influential in changing behavior
 and mindsets that promote family violence;
- Village members often know which families need help and which specific services they may require;
- Village members often know what may be the common primary drivers of violence within their villages and which targeted programs their village may require;
- When village councils and village members are in agreement and committed to a cause, they are often more influential in changing behavior and mindsets that promote family violence;
- Nothing moves at the village setting without the support of village members but especially the village councils.

VFSC can therefore be crucial mechanisms to assist the Village Fono in addressing the primary drivers (causes & triggers) of violence through village led activities and awareness that challenges deeply rooted behaviors that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and girls and other vulnerable groups.

It is important to note that VFSCs are NOT set up to provide counseling or serve as caseworkers but more as an informational network to provide education, awareness and an informal referral pathway that can provide the first assistance within their respective villages to individuals and families requiring family violence services. Also, VFSCs will serve as eyes and ears of the village and report to the Village Fono and/or police any suspected issues of family violence if it were to arise.

Village Based Approach vs District Based Approach

Given that VFSCs are and will directly assist Village Councils in combating family violence, establishing them at the village level rather than the district level would be more practical and effective for the following reasons:

- Each village have their protocols and structures (faiganuu) that may differ from one village to another within one district and this can be a barrier to any direct impacts that can be made by the committees;
- Village-based committees have a more direct link and regular contact with the Village Council who plays an overarching role for endorsement of any programs or activities etc.;
- People in the village may be more comfortable discussing family violence issues within their own village and amongst their own people;
- Village-based committees can ensure regular and consistent programs are held within the village;
- Village base committees are much closer to the center of the problem where districts can be too distant from the problem.

Village Councils and District Committees play a direct link to VFSCs as each VFSC can report to their Village Council who then reports to the District Committees on the progress of work and any family violence-related matters that may arise in the village (see diagram below regarding relationship and link between VFSC level to Village Council level to District Development Committees level).

District Development Plans (DPPs) and DPP Committees: the DPPs are plans developed by the Government through the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD) in consultations with district representatives which include parliament representatives, Village Fono/Council, women's committees etc. of the various districts which identifies the needs for development within each district including education and awareness programmes on issues including prevention from domestic/family violence, protection of rights of people with disabilities, sexual reproductive health, suicide prevention etc.

DPP Committees which are made up of representatives from the various villages within the district and led by the member of parliament for that district monitors and implements such plans.

Village Fono/ Council: the Village Fono/Council comprises of matai (men (majority) and women) who are responsible for making decisions for the welfare and development of the village. They are also responsible for developing and implementing bylaws that govern village affairs including imposing punishments for those who commit offences such as family violence in the village.



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Link of the VFSC to other Government Work



District Development Committee (MWCSD)

Assist the VFSC to achieve the overarching objectives of the District Development Plans (DDP) specifically for family violence matters. Receive and review update reports from Village Fono on the work of their VFSC.

Fono a Alii & Faipule (Village Council)

Work together with the VFSC. Receive report on the status of the work of the VFSC (includes status of violence and cases, programs implemented and need to be implemented, impacts of programs etc.) and report this to District Committee. Support the VFSC and the implementation of its activities/programmes.









Village Family Safety Committee (VFSC)

Identify and implement (with assistance) programmes & activities for the prevention of family violence. Report violence cases to Village Council and Police. Refer enquiries to relevant services.

Critical success factors of setting up a VFSC

The following are some factors for a village to consider before they decide to establish a VFSC to ensure the VFSC works

Adaptive leadership & good governance: there must be good and effective leaders with commitment and dedication in resolving the issue of family violence and support the establishment of the VFSC.



Village Ownership: Motivation and Commitment: Villages need to have the dedication and commitment to resolve and address the problem. Being able to take ownership of the project allows for greater results and guarantees effectiveness, because ultimately, the overarching objective of establishing VSFCs requires a change of mindset, a change of heart and a change of behavior.

Value of the Project for the Village: It is important to stress the value of establishing VFSCs from the outset for the village, regardless of whether those who are involved get paid or not.





Continuity: It is important that there is a plan for continued middle to long term support to the work expected to be undertaken by VFSCs and villagers especially for an issue such as family violence that will always be present in communities.

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E): M&E is important to assess if progress is made in achieving expected results, to spot gaps in implementation and to highlight whether there are any unintended effects from a programme or project and its activities. (See part of "Support for the sustainability of VFSC" regarding information on Technical/capacity building support available for M&E. See also Annex 2: Monitoring & Evaluation of Workplan Template).

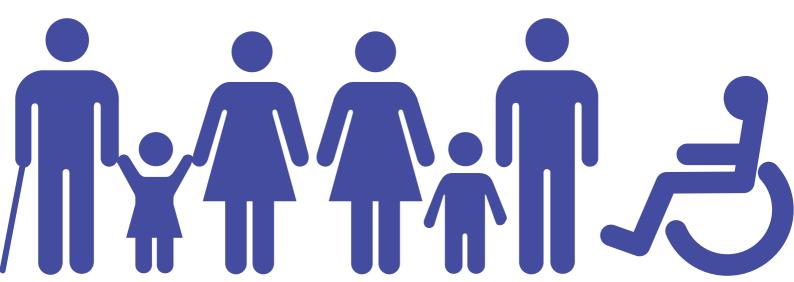


LESSON LEARNT: Eliminating violence against women and children in villages is not possible without the commitment and support from village leaders and everyone.

Composition of VFSC

To ensure representation of various demographics and experiences, Village Councils must ensure VFSCs should include the following members:

- Sui Tamaitai & Sui o Nuu (Co-Chairs) (2)
- Church Minister and/or Faletua (2)
- A senior member of the Village Fono (1)
- A representative from Aumaga (1)
- A representative from the Tamaitai's Committee (2)
- Youth/ Young person Representative (1)
- Person with disability Representative (1)
- SVSG Village Representative (1)
- Representative from other vulnerable groups that exist within in the village such as Faafafine etc.



Vulnerable group: a group of people who, due to their characteristics and circumstances, are likely to suffer more adverse impacts of discrimination and exploitation than other groups in the community. Vulnerable groups include children, elderly people, pregnant women, and people with disabilities, persons of diverse gender identity and sexual orientation, people suffering from dangerous diseases, low income families and people living in poverty, rural and populations in remote locations [4].

[4] See Understanding Human Rights: Chapter 5 - Human Rights and Vulnerable Groups, pp. 77-102, https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11973_Chapter_5.pdf. See also Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies, Glossary - Vulnerable Groups, https://inee.org/eieglossary/vulnerable-groups.

Criteria of Selecting the Committee

To ensure integrity, accountability and representation, Village Councils must ensure that members of the VFSC are selected based on the following criteria:

- 1.All members would need to meet minimum requirements for practicing non-violence;
- 2. Must be self-driven and have the passion to eliminate violence against women and girls and other vulnerable groups including children, disability, faafafine, faatama and elderly.
- 3. Must consider all demographics and other marginalized groups affected by violence;
- 4. Must not be in any other existing village committees (this is to avoid burnout and lack of commitment due to many responsibilities).

Intended roles of VFSC

For the purpose of family violence prevention, the VFSC of each village will be responsible for:

RAISING AWARENESS
OF FAMILY VIOLENCE
AND FAMILY
VIOLENCE
PREVENTION

Empower VFSC through capacity building to become leading advocates against family violence in their villages to lead and develop their awareness initiatives relating to the true causes, triggers and impacts of family violence and any pressing issues they see should be addressed in their villages to prevent family violence.

Resource: Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa Village Based Advocate against family violence <u>Talanoa Toolkit</u> for facilitating conversations and dialogues to address family violence in Samoan communities.

REFERRAL MECHANISM IN VILLAGES

VFSC to act as an informal referral mechanism for women, girls, and families who require immediate and non-immediate assistance to family violence services.

*informal referral is giving out of information and contact details of service providers for individuals or families to decide for themselves.

REPORT FAMILY VIOLENCE MATTERS

VFSC where appropriate to report to the Village Council, DDP Committee and Police cases of family violence and any suspected serious matter of family violence in their villages.

A FOCAL POINT FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICE PROVIDERS

VFSC play a direct role in identifying and linking relevant services (providing awareness programs or service providers) on family violence prevention to their village.

Resource: Office of the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa Village Based Advocate against family violence <u>Talanoa Toolkit</u> for facilitating conversations and dialogues to address family violence in Samoan communities.

VFSC Capacity Building

It is important to build the capacity and raise awareness of those who are selected to be part of the VFSC in their respective villages to ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities as well as where to seek support and assistance. Capacity building for VFSC members can cover:

- 1. Inform the Committee members of the objectives and purpose of the VFSC as well as their key roles and responsibilities;
- 2. Raise awareness and sensitize committee members on important family violence areas/topics. These may include:
- Identifying the causes of family violence and distinguish this from triggers and contributing factors;
- Understanding the different forms of violence and types of abuse that exist:
- Understanding the cycle of violence in abusive relationships;
- Identifying and understanding some of the common myths and facts about domestic violence that exist as deeply rooted mindsets in Samoan society;
- Understanding and be able to apply the different types of Prevention, Intervention and Responses to common scenarios being: Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Assault on Children, Violent Discipline of Children.
- 3. Introduce the Good Governance Principles of Participation, Transparency, Responsiveness, Equity and Inclusiveness, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Accountability, and being Consensus-Orientated. Committee members will address areas pertaining to the election/selection of office bearers, meetings and quorums, financial policies, budgets and bank accounts, as well as roles and responsibilities of members.
- 4. Develop their own unique Appropriate Response Guidelines for the common incidents of Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Assault on Children, Violent Discipline of Children.

Refer to part of "Support for the sustainability of VFSC" regarding information on Technical/capacity building support.

Developing Village Family Safety Work Plans/Activity Plans

Following comprehensive Capacity Building Workshop, the Committee must develop a Village Family Safety Work plan or Activity Plan. A highly interactive facilitative approach must be taken in the development of VFSC Plans, to ensure a high level of ownership and commitment from committee members.

The Plan will outline their village's own unique vision, mission, values, goals, family violence issues, family violence prevention activities and implementation and monitoring plan of the activities. The Plan can include specific activities to be carried out by the committee, over 12 months.

Refer to Annex 1 regarding Work plan Template that VFSC can use to develop their own work plans.

The MWCSD working with the Ombudsman NHRI Samoa can assist in the development of these Work plans.

Fundamental Guiding Principles

To ensure relevant and appropriate services and programmes are offered and delivered by the VFSC, below are guiding principles that must be followed in performing their roles and responsibilities in their respective villages.



DO NO HARM PRINCIPLE: The aim of this principle is to limit or prevent any further harm or risks to someone especially survivors or victims of family violence. Committees need to ensure that a do no harm principle is observed and implemented in conducting its work. It is always important to ensure that some prevention activities, although may be done with good intention, can have the potential to increase risks to women and children. Very strong consultation processes with specialist organizations and among community members will be required to build rapport and to identify and mitigate any risks for any activities that Committees will like to implement.



ZERO TOLERANCE TO VIOLENCE: Samoa does not tolerate violence in any form in the community, especially against women and children, persons living with a disability, faafafine and faatama and the elderly, in any context or any circumstance. It is important that all committee members practice zero tolerance for violence not only in conducting their work but also within their homes and communities.

Fundamental Guiding Principles



ENSURE AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT: It is acknowledged that among any group of people involved in prevention activities it is likely that there will be women or girls who have experienced (or are currently experiencing) violence, and men who are perpetrators. It is important for committee members to ensure that accessible and appropriate systems of support are available to respond to women's experiences of violence (at home or within the setting in which a prevention initiative occurs) and support for men who are perpetrators as well as to provide ongoing support where required. Refer to part of "Support for the sustainability of VFSC" regarding information on Technical/capacity building support, as well as financial support avenues available.



ENSURE INCLUSIVENESS: All activities run by the Committee should be made available to all women, girls, youths, persons with disabilities, faafafine, faatama, the elderly and other marginalized groups equally without discrimination and respect of their rights and human dignity.



ENSURE SAFETY AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: All prevention activities should ensure prioritizing safety, agency, and empowerment of women and the principle that all women and girls have the right to a life free from violence and free from the fear of violence.



ENSURE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE DRIVERS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE: Committee members must have a clear understanding of the causes and triggers of family violence and the impacts it can have on families and individuals. Capacity building support can be sought to assist committee members understand the drivers of family violence (See part of "Support for the sustainability of VFSC" regarding

information on Technical/capacity building support available).

Support for the sustainability of VFSC

It is critical for VFSC to have relevant and adequate support as they implement their activities to prevent family violence. Support to VFSCs should be holistic in terms of:

- Strategic partnerships for funding and resourcing activities;
- Mentoring support to members who themselves are at risk of behaving violently;
- Support for 'champions from within' who can drive activities and initiate change;
- Support towards educational programs for all other members of the village.

The types of support that are available for VFSCs include TECHNICAL/CAPACITY BUILDING and FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

Technical/capacity building support

MINISTRY OF WOMEN
COMMUNITY AND
SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT
(MWCSD), SAMOA
VICTIM SUPPORT
GROUP (SVSG)

Assist VFSCs on awareness raising on family violence prevention. Furthermore, assist with developing Workplans for the VFSC on annual activities on family violence prevention as well as monitor and evaluate effectiveness of VFSC Workplans and activities. Activities on family violence prevention already contained in MWCSD Workplans can be given to the VFSC to implement.

MWCSD

Contact: 27752 | 27753

SVSG

Contact: 800-7874 | 25392

OMBUDSMAN NHRI SAMOA Assist VFSCs on human rights awareness programmes as well as assist in monitoring and evaluation of VFSC Workplans and activities.

OMBNHRI

Contact: 25394 | 23317

FAATAUA LE OLA (FLO), SALVATION ARMY, SOUL TALK Assist VFSCs in programmes on counselling on issues such as alcohol and anger management, suicide prevention.

FLO SALVATION ARMY Contact: 800-5433 Contact: 8400666

Soul Talk Samoa Trust

Contact: soultalksamoa@gmail.com

SAMOA FAMILY HEALTH ASSOCIATION (SFHA)/ METI	Assist VFSCs in programmes on sexual reproductive health right healthy living and relationships. SFHA METI Contact: 26929 26549 Contact: 30550				
OFFICE OF THE REGULATOR (OOTR)/ MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (MCIT)	Assist VFSCs in awareness progra OOTR Contact: 30282	MCIT Contact: 26117 8426117			
CENTRAL BANK OF SAMOA (CBS)	Assist VFSCs in awareness programmes on budgeting and financial management especially when VFSC have funds to conduct activities. CBS Contact: 34100				
TALOFA KIDS	Assist VFSCs in awareness raising on rights of children and positive parenting. TALOFA KIDS Contact: 7241350 hello@talofakids.com				
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE COURT AND ADMINISTRATION (MJCA)/ MINISTRY OF POLICE AND PRISONS SERVICES (MPPS)	Assist VFSCs in awareness progra MJCA Contact: 22672 53514	ammes on access to justice. MPPS Contact: 22222			
NUANUA O LE ALOFA (NOLA)	Assist VFSCs on awareness programmes on rights of persons with disabilities especially in relation to violence prevention. NOLA Contact: 25243 21147				

Funding sources/ avenues

DISTRICT OFFICES	Assist VFSCs to provide funds to carry out awareness programmes and activities initiated by the VSFC. MWCSD inquire for District Office contact number
MWCSD	Assist VFSCs to provide funds to carry out awareness programmes and activities initiated by the VSFC. MWCSD Contact: 27752 27753
CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT PROGRAMME (CSSP)	Assist VFSCs to provide funds to carry out awareness programmes and activities initiated by the VSFC. CSSP Contact: 24617
UN AGENCIES – UNWOMEN, UNFPA ETC.	Assist VFSCs to provide funds to carry out awareness programmes and activities initiated by the VSFC. UNWomen UNFPA UNICEF UNDP One UN House Tuanaimato
EMBASSIES – AUSTRALIA, JAPAN, NEW ZEALAND, UK	Assist VFSCs to provide funds to carry out awareness programmes and activities initiated by the VSFC. Australia – Beach Road, Apia New Zealand – Tamaligi United Kingdom – Tamaligi Japan – SNPF Plaza Level 2
VFSC OWN FUNDRAISING	Taking own initiative to obtain funds to assist with awareness programmes and activities of the VSFC.

Annex 1: VFSC Workplan Template

Goal 1	AWARENESS – GREATER AND CONTINUED AWARENESS OF THE CAUSES AND TRIGGERS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE					
Issue	Cause	Solution	Responsible	Timeframe	Resources needed	
Young couples require support as often times they are the ones who get into fights	There is lack of understanding between one another because they rush into marriage	Prayer day/ Forum for young couples to focus on healthy relationships	Youth, young couples Partners: MOH, METI	2021	\$\$ for venue and catering	
Abuse of persons with disabilities (PWDs)	Lack of understanding of the needs and wants of PWDs	Workshop to raise awareness of the rights, needs and wants of PWDs and what people can do to help them	Whole village Partners: NOLA, SENESE, Blind Association	2021	\$\$ for venue and catering Educational materials	
Goal 2	EDUCATION AND LEARNING – INCREASE KNOWLEDGE OF VFSC MEMBERS ABOUT EFFECTIVE WAYS TO DEAL WITH FAMILY VIOLENCE MATTERS IN VILLAGES E.G. MAKING INFORMAL REFERRALS					
Issue	Cause	Solution	Responsible	Timeframe	Resources needed	
VFSC lack knowledge of causes and triggers of family violence and services available	Many families do not talk or discuss these types of issues	Capacity building workshop for VFSC and also villagers	VFSC Partners: NHRI, FLO, MJCA, SFHA, MPPS, Talofa Kids, Salvation Army	May 2021	\$\$ for venue and catering	
Unable to make ends meet due to lack of money	Money is not used wisely for priority and needs of the family but rather to unnecessary things like alcohol and bingo	Capacity building on effective budgeting	Families Partners: Central Bank of Samoa	August 2021	\$\$ for venue and catering Awareness materials	

Goal 3	GOOD GOVERNANCE – STRENGTHEN GOOD GOVERNANCE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE WITHIN VILLAGES AND AMONG VFSC MEMBERS TO ENSURE COMMITMENT TO ADDRESSING FAMILY VIOLENCE					
Issue	Cause	Solution	Responsible	Timeframe	Resources needed	
Bylaws need to be reviewed to capture offenses on family violence	There is lack of political will, effective leadership, and commitment from leaders within the villages	Develop bylaws and include offences on family violence. Build capacity of VFSC members on good governance principles	Village Fono VFSC Partners: NHRI, MWCSD, OAG, consultant	May – July 2021	\$\$ for venue and catering Consultant	
	DEVELOPMENT – INCREASE AND SUSTAIN DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR VILLAGERS					
Goal 4				VELOPMEN ⁻	Г	
Goal 4				VELOPMEN ^T Timeframe	Resources needed	

Annex 2: Monitoring & Evaluation of Workplan Template

GOAL WORK CONDUCTED		MEASURE	WORK PROGRESS			OUTCOMES
			Complete	Ongoing	Postpone	
Raise awareness among young couples about healthy relationships	Conduct awareness for young couples	2 workshops within 12 months	Completed 1			Increased awareness among young couples of ways to maintain healthy relationships e.g. effective communication etc.
Prevent abuse and increase awareness of needs and wants to PWDs	Conduct awareness for families especially those who have family that have a disability	One per year			√	Need to consult NGOs to assist
Improve knowledge and understanding of VFSC on causes and triggers of family violence	Conduct capacity building workshop for VFSC members on causes and triggers of family violence	One per year		✓		Increased knowledge of causes of triggers of family violence amongst VFSC members
Increase knowledge of effective ways to budget	Conduct awareness for families on effective ways to manage money	One per year			√	Need to consult partners to assist
Review village bylaws	Hire consultant to assist in the review of bylaws	Review of bylaws completed by end of 2021	✓			Reviewed bylaws launched December 2021
Increase employment opportunities for unemployed	Develop and run programmes on elei printing	Ongoing		✓		Have yet to develop and run programmes. Village Fono to seek assistance from Government

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