SAMOA’S THIRD VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW
on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

“Fostering social harmony, safety and freedom for all”
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Talofa lava! It is my great pleasure to present Samoa’s third voluntary national review on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which represents the Government’s steadfast commitment to fostering social harmony, safety, and freedom for all the people of Samoa.

The Government of Samoa is dedicated to achieving sustainable development. We are navigating unprecedented times, with interlocking crises, and multi-faceted challenges, under the continuing pervasive impacts of climate change. Major setbacks, like the measles outbreak in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis, have intensified our commitment to empowering our communities, enabling them to better handle disruptions and threats to our well-being and prosperity. By prioritizing human development, we acknowledge the need to address the critical social issues that have curbed our socio-economic progress over the past decades.

We aim to foster growth that benefits everyone in our community and leaves no one behind. By leveraging community participation, we can build shared prosperity, enhance security, and safeguard people’s well-being, as well as the environment. To this end, we need to build and enhance resilience, diversify green development, stimulate innovation, and further encourage wide participation and social engagement.

We take ownership of our development efforts. We strive to align the Sustainable Development Goals to our national development plan - the Pathway for the Development of Samoa (FY 2021-22 – FY 2025-26). We are guided by the pledge to create a just, more sustainable, and peaceful future that reflects our shared values of fairness, respect, inclusiveness, and responsibility towards each other and our natural resources. Our District Development Plan launched in 2020 resonates our commitment to supporting community-led development initiatives that address local needs and opportunities, target the most vulnerable and, enhancing national resilience.

Together, we can achieve more than the Government can accomplish alone. As a small island developing State, we face a unique set of vulnerabilities that hamper our ability to achieve sustainable development. Although challenges may persist, we know that collective solidarity and unity can overcome the pitfalls posed by the climate crisis, accelerated biodiversity loss, erosion of human rights and health, worsening conflicts, and the misuse of information and new technologies.

Through close collaboration of all stakeholders, we can attain the ambitions set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and build a more harmonious, resilient, and prosperous Samoa, where no one is left behind.

To conclude, I would like to reaffirm Samoa’s commitment to multilateralism and the United Nations, which we view as the primary forum for addressing transboundary issues. We will continue to build on the strengths and value of our unique culture, as our foundation for adaptation and resilience to the multifaceted crises we continue to face. Likewise, we will respect our diversity, and embrace our differences, to build a strong foundation for the future we want.

Fiame Naomi Mata’afa
Prime Minister
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Samoa’s third Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was prepared by the SDG Task Force under the general directive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), with support from relevant stakeholders and the United Nations.

We highly value the contributions of the Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS) in the provision of updated data for the report to ensure the narrative is based on evidence. The drafting of the VNR report would not have been possible without the inputs from various Government ministries, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the private sector, academia, and United Nations (UN) agencies in Samoa. In addition, the report captured the valuable feedback received from stakeholders during a national validation workshop held on June 5 & 7, 2024.

We express our appreciation to the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Samoa, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (UNRCO), the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Samoa, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) for their financial contributions and technical assistance in the preparation of Samoa’s third VNR.

We acknowledge also the contribution of all our development partners who continue to support the government in the implementation of development initiatives critical to the achievement of our Sustainable Development Goals.
Samoa’s Third Voluntary National Review

HIGHLIGHTS - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Samoa’s global ambitions remain focused and steadfast despite the socio-economic challenges that continue to affect our people driving us towards a policy direction that is centred on human development, empowering communities, building resilience, and inspiring growth. As a small island developing State (SIDS), our vulnerabilities underscore the urgency of collective action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our 2024 voluntary national review (VNR) reaffirms the Government of Samoa’s continuing commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Progress resonates with our priorities, resource availability, and active community engagement, acknowledging that regional challenges may obscure our national achievements and transformative actions.

Throughout the years, Samoa has prioritized SDG attainment by leveraging our cultural strengths, instituting transformative reforms, mobilizing resources effectively, and managing our natural environment prudently. Integration of global SDG targets into our national development plan, ‘Pathway for the Development of Samoa’, underscores our commitment to fostering social harmony, safety, and freedom for all. Localized targets and mapped indicators within national sector plans ensure relevance to Samoa’s unique context, a cornerstone of our comprehensive SDG implementation framework.

Samoa’s third VNR aligns with the 2024 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) theme, focusing on ‘reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions.’ Building on progress documented in our previous reports of 2016 and 2020, this review provides a detailed assessment of our efforts towards Goals 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Since the second VNR in 2020, Samoa has faced mounting obstacles in our journey towards achieving the SDGs. These challenges include enduring impacts of COVID-19, escalating prices of food and fuel, instability in external finances, and worsening effects of natural disasters and climate change. Global inflation has led to two years of economic slowdown, hampering Samoa’s progress towards the SDGs and intensifying existing difficulties. Additionally, the pandemic has compounded issues arising from previous challenges such as measles outbreak and ongoing vulnerabilities to climate-related events.

PEOPLE

Strong community ties and mutual support networks underpin Samoa’s sustainable development efforts. Communities engage collectively and within their extended families to address hardships, and share benefits through communal village projects. This collective support system helps to alleviate poverty by providing a safety net for vulnerable individuals and families. While Samoa has modernized in many ways, the traditional values and ways of living continue to thrive.
Samoa has made efforts to reduce poverty through various social and economic policies. Despite challenges, such as an increase in the population living below the international poverty line, the country is committed to implementing targeted interventions to alleviate the impacts of poverty/hardship. This includes strengthening social protection programmes, enhancing access to education and healthcare, and promoting sustainable economic growth that benefits all sectors of society.

Overall, Samoa has been active in mitigating risks associated with natural disasters and health crises with the development of Natural Disaster Management Plans and Disaster Risk Financing Policy strengthening the financial preparedness of Samoa in addressing natural disasters.

Social protection frameworks and delivery mechanisms have also been developed and mobilised in Samoa, targeting vulnerable groups to improve the livelihoods of communities through strengthened delivery of Government services.

Samoa’s commitment to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) underscores the Government’s dedication to improving food security, promoting sustainable agriculture, and ensuring equitable access to nutritious food for all citizens. By addressing these challenges and seizing opportunities through integrated policies and partnerships, Samoa strives to build a resilient and food-secure future in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Samoa’s Food Systems Pathway 2030 recognises the ongoing challenges and is the pathway for transforming food systems for a resilient Samoa and achieving sustainable food and nutritional security and affordable healthy diets for Samoans.

The Government of Samoa remains dedicated to improving healthcare access, reducing mortality rates, and addressing health challenges effectively. Samoa is progressing on universal health coverage but regressing on sexual and reproductive health. The under-five mortality rate also improved, with significant reductions over the years. However, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases remain high and the country has decentralized its health services. However, there is still work to be done to bridge the gap in quality and access to healthcare between urban and rural regions. The compactness of Samoa’s geography ensures there is easy access to services in the urban areas.

Samoa is on target to achieve equal access to education among genders, sustainable development education, scholarships, and qualified teachers. Progress is made on effective learning outcomes, early childhood education, and education facilities. Samoa is also on track to achieving the targets on discrimination against women and girls, equal economic rights, and gender equality policies, while progressing on women in leadership. The National Policy on Gender Equality (2021-2031) aims to increase women and girls’ access to law and justice. Gender-based violence (GBV) remains an issue, with 37.5 per cent of women having experienced violence in their lifetime, and 26.8 per cent in the past 12 months. Public education programs and the high visibility of response initiatives by lead NGOs and village councils are contributing to enhanced awareness of the situation.
PLANET

Samoa continues to underscore the urgent need for climate action given the vulnerability to climate change impacts and extreme weather events that affect the overall economy. Samoa is taking proactive measures to strengthen adaptation and mitigation measures, including exploring renewable energy initiatives in line with the updated National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and decarbonisation strategies. The Government is enhancing disaster risk reduction and promoting climate resilience and emission reduction across all key development policy areas through the Low Emissions Strategy 2022-32, aligned with the call to keep global temperatures below 1.5 degrees. Similarly, Samoa has used its position as Chair of the Alliance of Small Islands states to engage in high-level advocacy for a global commitment to keeping the 1.5degree promise.

Samoa's Climate Change Policy (2020) has a cross-sectoral approach. The policy outlines strategies and interventions required across all sectors and all stakeholders to bolster resilience against climate change impacts while achieving the SDGs.

Importance is placed on conserving marine and terrestrial ecosystems. The country’s efforts include marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries management, and reforestation programmes aimed at preserving biodiversity and ecosystem services. Samoa’s commitment to sustainable resource management aligns with global targets to halt biodiversity loss and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources for future generations.

Access to clean water and sanitation is essential for Samoa’s development and environmental health. The Government continues to improve water infrastructure, promoting water conservation practices, and ensuring equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities across the whole country.

PEACE AND PROSPERITY

Samoa remains a generally peaceful country, committed to justice, strong institutions, and the protection of human rights. There are no reported cases of conflict-related deaths, no detected victims of human trafficking, nor violence against journalists. Efforts to enhance access to information, promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies are underway with a draft ‘Access to Information Policy’ and the recent ratification of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment.

The recent launch of the Samoa National Anti-Corruption Policy and the ‘Talofa with a Smile’ campaign are key steps to improve public service integrity, trust, and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, women’s representation in Parliament and senior executive roles in Government has improved. Efforts have also been made to strengthen the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, which are key in providing the foundation for the national identity programme.

The Samoa National Broadband Highway (SNBH), the Government network linking Government bodies is being strengthened to enhance information flows and foster coordination in the public sector.

Samoa recognizes the importance of reducing inequalities and is actively implementing social protection programmes to support vulnerable populations. Additionally, initiatives are underway to improve access to education and further promote existing legislation for compulsory and free education and healthcare services throughout the country, ensuring everyone has a chance to thrive.

Access to electricity is a priority and strides have been made to achieve a relatively high rate of 98.3 per cent (2021). In terms of wages, the average monthly gross wage has increased by 28 per cent from 2017 to 2022. Efforts to address inequalities include social protection programmes and initiatives to enhance access to education and healthcare in remote areas. A ‘Minimum Wage Policy’ aimed at ensuring fair wages for workers has been approved.
Challenges and areas of concern include the persistently high rates of violence against women and children, limited availability of mental health services potentially perpetuating cycles of violence, a marginal increase in intentional homicides, the need to strengthen labour rights and ensure safe working environments, limited progress in research and development, and the need to further address relevant fiscal and social protection policies.

PARTNERSHIPS

Means of implementation and partnerships are crucial to mobilize the SDGs and Samoa is committed to strengthening this area. This commitment is evident through a significant increase in domestic revenue collection as a result of the introduction of electronic fiscal devices (Tax Invoicing and Monitoring System), strong post-pandemic economic rebound with a fiscal surplus, and high remittances. Enhancing the use of enabling technology, such as Information and Communications Technology (ICT), is crucial for Samoa’s development. Progress has been observed in the strategic efforts towards enabling fast, reliable, and affordable internet more widely available.

Samoa recognizes the importance of maintaining and strengthening multi-stakeholders partnerships. Policies and systems are in place to ensure effective aid coordination and management such as ensuring that loans used to finance Government needs are concessional and sustainable. Additional efforts are being made by the Samoa Audit Office to audit the implementation of both national and global goals, including the SDGs which began with the SAO being a member of the National Taskforce.

Challenges and areas of focus include external shocks such as the country’s vulnerability to natural disasters and the impacts thereof on debt sustainability. Additionally, efforts are needed to bridge the last-mile digital connectivity, boost the national innovation ecosystem, and establish a comprehensive public sector digital strategy. Most of these developments are work in progress.
INTRODUCTION

This third VNR report illustrates Samoa’s development journey towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda amidst the persistent challenges faced by Samoa and its people. In localizing the SDGs into the national development strategies and sector plans, Samoa’s development focus has remained centred on human development, empowering communities and building resilience.

The report highlights Samoa’s strides towards achieving the SDGs by leveraging the strengths of its culture and society, implementing transformative reforms, mobilizing resources effectively, and carefully managing the natural environment. While reflecting on the previous VNR reports in 2016 and 2020, this report assesses Samoa’s progress and challenges during the most economically challenging period for Samoa as it responded to the back-to-back health crises of the measles epidemic in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic and overcame the impacts of the global poly-crisis on the economy.

Samoa’s actions and the way forward in addressing these challenges and blueprint for the implementation of sustainable development in the medium term is the ‘Pathway for the Development of Samoa (PDS)’ with a focus on three thematic areas: Empowering communities, Building resilience, and Inspiring growth, which support the Government’s long-term vision of ‘Fostering Social Harmony, Safety and Freedom for all’. All efforts and work to achieve the Goals and attain a good quality of life in Samoa are implemented under the umbrella of the “Fa’a-Samoa - the Samoan Way”.

**FA’A SAMOA - THE SAMOAN WAY**

The Samoan Way, known as Fa’a Samoa, refers to Samoa’s culture and traditions that shape the way Samoan people have lived and continue to live, built around the concept of Aiga or family, which is at the core of the Fa’a Samoa encompassing collective efforts aimed at the benefit of both family and community.

Traditional practices in Samoa highlight the cultural emphasis on sharing and reciprocity. As such, traditional structures embedded in the Fa’a Samoa ensure that no one bears the burdens of economic and social challenges alone.

While this traditional structure has evolved, the core values of service and community endure and are central to the organization of the Samoan society, as reflected in the PDS. This forms the basis for the efforts towards maintaining peace and harmony since independence in 1962 through sustainable development, social cohesion, fostering communities, environmental preservation, sustained democracy, and the rule of law.
The traditional Samoan way of life is deeply intertwined with Samoa’s pursuit of sustainable development, maintaining a strong connection to traditional customs, values, and social structures whilst adapting to changes that align closely with the SDGs.

This fosters a strong support network within communities, helping to alleviate hardship and reduce poverty (SDG 1: No Poverty) by ensuring that resources are shared and distributed fairly amongst members. It promotes self-sufficiency and sustainable resource management, addressing issues of food security, hunger and malnutrition (SDG 2: No Hunger). It emphasizes holistic well-being (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being), including physical, mental, and spiritual health through communal and spiritual fellowship and caring. It also promotes traditional healing practices and preventive healthcare to promote good health and well-being among communities.

Education (SDG 4: Quality Education) is highly valued in Samoan culture, and efforts to preserve and promote traditional knowledge and cultural practices through story-telling, dance and songs, sports and games, and old Samoan folklore contribute to an inclusive quality education. These practices emphasize lifelong learning and intergenerational knowledge sharing. Efforts to promote gender equality (SDG 5: Gender Equality) within the context of the Fa’a Samoa include initiatives to empower women in the local and national socio-economic dynamics. There are clearly defined roles by gender within the family, village and community.

Traditional building practices and land-use management techniques further promote environmentally friendly and culturally appropriate development, enabling resilient communities. The Samoan way of life places a strong emphasis on the relationship between the people and the land, where traditional ecological knowledge and practices incorporate principles of environmental stewardship (SDG 15: Life on Land) and resilience to natural disasters (SDG 13: Climate Action).

By integrating core traditional values and practices into development initiatives, Samoa can harness the strengths of its people to advance progress towards the 2030 Agenda and foster social harmony, safety, and freedom for all.
SOCIO-ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

Samoa, with a total population of 205,557 people (51 per cent male; 49 per cent female), as per the 2021 Census, consists of two main islands: Upolu, where 78 per cent of the population resides, and Savai’i (22 per cent of the population), along with two smaller inhabited islands, Apolima and Manono, and six uninhabited islets. Improved healthcare and nutrition access have increased life expectancy from 66 to 76 years between 1990 and 2021, despite high fertility rates compared to neighbouring regions. Migration driven by labour mobility opportunities plays a significant role in Samoa’s demographic trends, labour supply, and remittance inflows, while notable outward migration affects population growth rates.

A small island developing State (SIDS) in the Polynesian region of the Pacific Ocean, Samoa is a lower-middle-income country with a high level of human development (0.702 as of 2022). The country faces distinct social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities that are intensified by its remote geographical location. With an oceanic tropical climate, Samoa experiences frequent tropical cyclones and heavy rainfalls, often accompanied by severe flash flooding, high winds, and storm surges.

The socio-economic landscape of Samoa can be understood within the broader context of challenges faced by SIDS. The vulnerabilities of SIDS, including economic and structural vulnerabilities, and exposure to climate risks and natural disasters affect their ability to achieve the SDGs. The prevalence and severity of natural disasters have hindered the country’s development, causing loss of life, infrastructure damage, disruptions to trade and tourism, and heightened food insecurity. Climate change poses a significant threat, potentially amplifying the frequency and intensity of natural disasters and altering weather patterns. Given that 70 per cent of the population resides in low-lying coastal areas, rising sea levels pose substantial risks to coastal communities and the local economy.

Samoa’s economy is primarily based on agriculture, fisheries and tourism, with a high dependence on external personal remittances and development aid. Economic expansion resumed in the fiscal year (FY) 2023-24, following three years of decline due to the measles outbreak in late 2019 and external crises such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020, and the food and fuel crisis caused by imported inflation, all of which significantly impacted Samoa’s economy.

After experiencing a 5.3 per cent contraction in FY 2021-22, gross domestic product (GDP) surged by 8.0 per cent as the reopening of borders brought new life into tourism and various infrastructure projects were initiated. Despite this growth, in FY 2022-23, the GDP remained at 92.1 per cent of the FY 2018-19 level. Tourism is gradually recovering to its pre-pandemic state, and remittances continue to exhibit robust growth. In FY 2022-23, visitor arrivals reached 70.4% per cent of the levels seen in FY 2018-19, with tourism receipts reaching 78.0 per cent of their pre-pandemic value. These developments contributed to a significant reduction in the current account deficit, from 13.5 per cent of GDP in FY 2021-22 to 4.9 per cent in FY 2022-23. Additionally, remittances saw a notable increase of 13.6 per cent during the same fiscal year.

Looking ahead, tourism and construction are expected to remain key drivers of growth in the near future. GDP is forecasted to grow by 4.2 per cent in FY 2024-25, slightly moderating to 4.0 per cent in FY 2025-26. Apart from the continuous implementation of public infrastructure projects, hosting international events like the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in October 2024 is anticipated to stimulate economic activity and attract more visitors. Furthermore, there is a rise in cruise ship tourism, with 26 ships scheduled to visit Samoa by the end of 2024. However, challenges such as accommodation and labour constraints may impede growth. It is also important to build on the tourism product Samoa has on offer involving communities...
Inflation is expected to decrease after reaching recent highs. The average annual inflation for the year ending in May 2020 was 1.7 per cent.7 In FY 2023, inflation surged to 12 per cent, the highest seen in decades, up from 8.8 per cent in FY 2022. The slowdown in international commodity prices took time to affect Samoa. Inflation declined to 5.9 per cent in March 20248 and projections indicate a decline in inflation to 3.8 per cent in FY 2024-25 as both international and local price pressures ease, although the volatility of international prices remains a significant risk.

The fiscal situation remains positive and public debt is on a downward trend. The Government's budget balance amounted to 3.0 per cent of Nominal GDP in FY 2022-23 compared to 5.4 per cent in FY 2021-22. Taxes contributed significantly to the 5.7 per cent revenue growth in FY 2022-23 compared to FY 2021-22. Due to some deferred capital expenditures in FY 2021-22 being allocated in FY 2022-23 and recurrent spending increasing, total expenditure rose by 12.1 per cent. Growth in overall revenue is expected to continue, with current payments projected to peak in FY 2023-24 as preparations for CHOGM ramp up, before returning to normal levels in FY 2024-25. This trajectory is expected to result in deficits in the budget balance equivalent to -3.3 per cent of GDP in FY 2023-24 and -2.1 per cent in FY 2024-25. Public debt continues to decrease, dropping to 33.4 per cent of GDP by the end of FY 2022-23 from 43.7 per cent in FY 2021-22. Forecasts predict a further decrease to 29.8 per cent in FY 2023-24 and 25.0 per cent by the end of FY 2024-25.

Employment figures increased by 7.0 per cent in the last quarter of 20239, compared to the same quarter in 2022. This was the fifth consecutive quarter with positive growth, after twelve quarters of negative growth since December 2019. As of December 2023, employment levels were above pre-pandemic levels aiding in the country's socio-economic recovery. The employment index increased by 5.4 per cent in the calendar year 2023 following three years of negative growth, credited to an increase in employment in industries such as accommodation, education, restaurants, public administration, financial services, and commerce.

Samoa’s social protection system encompasses both informal and formal components. The informal aspect, rooted in tradition, remains robust, relying on community, extended family, and religious institutions for support.
SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

Samoa was one of the first countries to present its VNR report in 2016 and again in 2020. This report focuses on Samoa’s journey towards the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs from a Samoan perspective, contextualising its progress and accounting for the cultural and traditional elements that play a significant role in Samoa’s sustainable development journey.

Building on Samoa’s National Development Plan, the main theme for the third VNR report - Fostering social harmony, safety, and freedom for all - emphasizes the achievement of the SDGs in Samoa through a combination of impactful reforms, efficient resource mobilization and thoughtful environmental stewardship. In line with the theme of the 2024 HLPF, and building on the outcomes of the 2020 VNR, the 2024 VNR also reflects on the impacts of COVID-19 and multiple national and external crises on the SDG progress and takes stock of what has been done at all levels to overcome these challenges.

While considering the integrated and interlinked nature of the SDGs, the 2024 VNR focuses on the Goals under in-depth review at the 2024 HLPF, namely **Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture; Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels; and Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.**

Several examples of SDG implementation and ongoing efforts from the ground are featured in this report, including the application of the District Development Plan (DDP) in support of a Whole-of-Government (WoG) and Whole-of-Society (WoS) approach to development.

SDG TASKFORCE

The Government of Samoa coordinated this work under the established national mechanism of the SDG Taskforce, comprising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (MPMC, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCS), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS), and the Audit Office (AO). The membership represents the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental.

The SDG Taskforce, chaired by MFAT, is mandated to coordinate the implementation, follow-up, monitoring and reporting of the SDGs for Samoa.

METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COORDINATION

The SBS plays a crucial role in collecting the data for the SDG indicators. Data were gathered from various surveys and censuses implemented by SBS, official statistics sources from ministries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organizations, and UN agencies.
Data were also extracted from the UN DESA SDG database\textsuperscript{11} and the ESCAP SDG Gateway portal\textsuperscript{12} to supplement existing data gaps. Data analysis covered the period 2020-2024, and results were compared with those of the second VNR.

With the support of ESCAP, SBS developed the National SDG Tracker\textsuperscript{13} tool, a robust up-to-date database to enhance reporting on the national development plan and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The National SDG Tracker tool enables countries to track progress on the SDGs by entering national data and target values and visualising progress. Beyond the VNR, this system functions as a tool for Samoa to track and monitor data related to the SDGs, ensuring the availability of the most recent SDG-related data. The SDG Tracker tool was implemented by Samoa through SBS in July 2021, to report and monitor the progress of its SDG indicators. Data compiled from surveys and censuses conducted by SBS together with data from the Global SDG database were used for Samoa’s SDG Tracker tool. The Tracker Tool is monitored and updated regularly by SBS to ensure that the latest available results from surveys and censuses are reflected in the Tracker.

**NATIONAL INDICATOR MATRIX**

During preparations for Samoa’s second VNR report, the SDG Taskforce Secretariat compiled, with the support of SBS and the UN, a matrix with all the relevant data for each global indicator. In cases where global indicators were not suitable to Samoa’s context, proxy indicators and additional metrics were developed to better reflect Samoa’s context, and included in the matrix. The draft matrix was then provided to all relevant stakeholders, Government agencies, NGOs, the private sector, UN agencies, and development partners, soliciting their feedback on the required data for the indicators. Baselines for data, agreed to by the relevant stakeholders, are integrated into the matrix.

The second VNR indicator matrix also informed preparations for Samoa’s third VNR report. The most recent data provided in the second VNR indicator matrix served as the baseline year for the third VNR indicator report. Similar to the second VNR process, the draft matrix was circulated to all relevant stakeholders seeking their input on data needed for reporting on the indicators. All data received from SDG stakeholders were included in the matrix which was then used to inform this report.

**STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS**

In formulating this report, stakeholders were engaged in focused consultations on the SDG indicator matrix data.

The draft SDG indicator matrix, prepared by the SDG Taskforce through MFAT, was shared across the different lines of Government ministries and agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and development partners. This exercise provided an opportunity to review existing data, contextualize global indicators, and discuss how qualitative data can help bridge data gaps. The two-day VNR Data Validation Consultations held on June 5 and 7, 2024 aimed to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the collection of data, insights and feedback from all relevant stakeholders. Participants engaged in validating the available data, identifying gaps, and sharing relevant case studies to enhance collective progress towards the SDGs.

The second VNR acknowledged that persons with disabilities are among the most marginalized and poorest members of communities. In collaboration with the UN RCO, Nuanua O Le Alofa (NOLA), a leading advocacy organization for persons with
disabilities in Samoa led by persons with disabilities, held a consultation on the five Goals in focus, as well as SDG 3 and 10, which are particularly relevant for persons with disabilities. Participants identified and agreed on key areas of progress since 2020, as well as ongoing challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Samoa. Major overarching recommendations include ensuring that all district-level projects include consultations with persons with disabilities to identify their needs and priorities.

**DATA AVAILABILITY**

Data availability in Samoa has improved. Data gaps have been identified for 31 indicators in Tier 2 due to a lack of data collection. This is compared to data gaps identified for 50 Tier 2 indicators reported in Samoa’s second VNR in 2020, indicating a strong improvement in data collection. Efforts are underway to collect data for these indicators in the future to ensure comprehensive compilation and reporting of all SDG indicators.

While the SDG indicators represent a global response to global challenges, Samoa has deemed them nationally pertinent. Due to the difficulty in collecting relevant data to measure certain global indicators, Samoa has localized 36 indicators as proxies, with the intention to transition these to actual indicators in the future. Furthermore, four global indicators are not included as they are considered irrelevant to Samoa’s context.

Data availability for SDG compilation in Samoa has made significant progress since its second VNR in 2020. An additional 25 indicators have reported data from 2020 to 2023, as depicted in Figure 1 below.
POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The cornerstone of the Government’s development agenda is to chart a future that every Samoan can take pride in. Overall, Samoa's strong institutions, coupled with its unique cultural traditions, serve as the foundation for the robust policymaking. Decisions across various sectors build on this foundation, ensuring that governance reflects the cultural values and identity of the Samoan people. Policy considerations adopt a Whole-of-Society approach involving consultations with village chiefs (matai), community leaders, the elderly, women and girls, and youth to ensure that policies reflect the needs and perspectives of the community as a whole.

Providing opportunities as a foundation for enhancing the quality of life has been a consistent theme in Samoa's national development plans for many years. As a SIDS, Samoa is highly susceptible to global economic shocks and natural disasters. The need to pursue coherent and consistent policies cannot therefore be overstated. The appropriate policy mix to expedite economic growth, ensure social stability, and preserve the environment is paramount.

The SDGs have been incorporated into medium and long-term national development plans accounting for Samoa's specific context. They have become an integral component of the broader national planning, budgeting, and accountability mechanisms. In alignment with its national sustainable development strategy, Samoa continues to deliver on its development objectives through the sector-wide mechanism implementing the SDGs to ensure a cohesive and coordinated effort towards achieving the SDG targets.

In the past four years (2020 – 2024), over thirty national policies and frameworks were tabled and approved by Samoa’s National Policy Coordination Framework (NPCC) and Cabinet, demonstrating the country’s commitment and efforts to create an enabling environment for sustainable development.

NATIONAL POLICY COORDINATION COMMITTEE

The National Policy Coordination Committee (NPCC), established in 2017, is an important advisory body that encourages collaboration and policy dialogue among Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in view of the whole of the Government’s agenda. NPCC is chaired by the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (MPMC) and comprises of CEOs from the different Government...
Ministries. All national policies and frameworks being developed must be reviewed first by the NPCC before submission to the Cabinet for endorsement. This ensures that there is a proper system in place for the coordination of all national policies and frameworks. Furthermore, this provides a platform for the Government to advise and provide constructive feedback on all policies, thus serving as a forum to openly discuss and deliberate on issues of national interest.

**MEDIUM-TERM NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The current medium-term development strategy, the ‘Pathway for the Development of Samoa’¹⁴ (PDS), for the period, FY 2021-22 – FY 2025-26, was developed from the people’s vision of ‘Fostering social harmony, safety, and freedom for all’. The development of the PDS is led by the Ministry of Finance in consultation with other Government agencies, village and church communities, the private sector, non-government organizations, and the public.

The Pathway focuses on three thematic areas to support Samoa’s long-term vision and has five (5) Key Strategic Outcomes (KSO) comprising: i) Improved social development; ii) Diversified and sustainable economy; iii) Security and trusted governance; iv) Secured environment and climate change; v) Structured public works and infrastructure.

In ensuring that there is monitoring of the implementation of the PDS, the Government through the Ministry of Finance is currently undergoing a mid-term review of the PDS, with the report to be finalized this year.

**LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT VISION**

Samoa 2040¹⁵ serves as a roadmap to guide Samoa’s development over the next two decades. It outlines opportunities in key sectors such as tourism, agriculture and fishing, digital economy, and labour mobility, which can stimulate economic growth, foster employment, increase Government revenues, and enhance living standards. This plan establishes a foundation to address the needs of both current and future generations of Samoans, with a commitment to inclusivity to ensure that no one is marginalized or left behind.

Samoa 2040 serves as a complementary framework to the PDS. While the PDS outlines Samoa’s overall development strategy across various pillars including economic, social, and environmental considerations, Samoa 2040 emphasizes strategies for achieving higher growth rates. Samoa 2040 focuses on four sectors: tourism, agriculture and fishing, digital economy, and labour mobility.

Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Samoa 2040 will be integrated into the PDS monitoring and evaluation process, highlighting the synergy between these two documents and their mutual support in guiding Samoa’s development trajectory.
### Text Table: Pathways for Development of Samoa (PDS) and the SDGs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PDS Key Priority Area</th>
<th>Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)</th>
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<td><strong>1. Improved Social Development</strong></td>
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<td>1: Alleviating Hardship</td>
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<td>2: Improved Public Health</td>
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<td>3: Quality Education</td>
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<td>4: People Empowerment</td>
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<td>5: Skilled Workforce</td>
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<td><strong>2. Diversified and Sustainable Economy</strong></td>
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<td>6: Community Development</td>
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<td>7: Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture Productivity</td>
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<td>8: Tourism Revitalisation</td>
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<td>9: Business Innovation and Growth</td>
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<td>10: Increased Labour Mobility</td>
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<td>11: Macroeconomic Stability</td>
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<td><strong>3. Security and Trusted Governance</strong></td>
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<td>12: Empowered Legislation</td>
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<td>13: Improved Accountability</td>
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<td>14: Dynamic Global Relations and Partnerships</td>
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<td><strong>4. Secured Environment and Climate Change</strong></td>
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<td>15: Build Climate Resilience</td>
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<td>16: Effective Environmental Protection and Management Frameworks</td>
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<td>17: Enhanced Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources</td>
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<td>18: Sustainable Energy Development Enhanced</td>
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<td><strong>5. Structured Public Works and Infrastructure</strong></td>
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<td>19: Responsive Public Utility Services</td>
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<td>20: Innovative Information, Communication and Technology Use</td>
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<td>21: Consolidated Infrastructure Management</td>
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*Source: PDS (2021)*
KEY POLICIES FOR SDGS IN FOCUS

SDG 1

The National Social Protection Policy Framework builds upon existing social assistance, social insurance, and active labour market programmes. Developed under the mandate of the Ministry of Finance, the NSPPF’s goal is to foster equity, resilience, and opportunities for various vulnerable groups. It advocates for the enhancement of human capital among vulnerable and marginalized individuals by ensuring fair access to health services, supporting their educational pursuits, and facilitating access to productive employment. Furthermore, this policy framework streamlines Samoa's approach to social protection by integrating its key components into a unified, cohesive policy, programme, and planning framework.

SDG 2
National Food and Nutrition Policy17 (NFNP) (2021-2026).

The NFNP 2021-2026 outlines the Government's commitments to enhancing food and nutritional health in the country. It presents a framework of measures that the Government and its partners aim to adopt, develop, and implement to address the various food and nutritional health issues and challenges facing Samoa. The NFNP mission, "to reduce malnutrition and food and nutrition-related diseases in Samoa," underscores the Government of Samoa's commitment to addressing food and nutrition as a fundamental public policy duty. This mission aims to improve the health of Samoa's population and advance towards the Health Sector Plan vision of "A Healthy Samoa."

SDG 13
Samoa Climate Change Policy18 (NPCC) 2020.

Serving as the overarching climate change framework, it guides the Government, communities, and the private sector on national governance and effective and ambitious climate action. It identifies eight broad objectives: i) Establish an effective governance framework and support systems for responding to climate change impacts; ii) Implement climate change adaptation measures; iii) Enforce mitigation measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), including those related to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); iv) Enhance sustainable climate finance measure; v) Mainstream climate change adaptation and mitigation into national planning, implementation, and monitoring processes; vi) Improve data and information management on climate change for informed decision-making; vii) Strengthen coordination and representation at the national, regional, and international level; viii) Promote and implement effective awareness, education, and advocacy activities on climate change issues.
Building on and complementing existing plans such as the Environment Sector Plan, Energy Sector Plans, National Disaster Management Plan, and other relevant plans, it is the overarching policy document providing Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies (LT-LEDS).

The NPCC primarily targets domestic actions but also takes into account the obligations and timelines of Samoa’s international commitments under the UNFCCC set out in the Paris Agreement and SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Actions Pathway (SAMOA Pathway), promoting synergies under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**SDG 16**

National Policy on Inclusive Governance (2021-2031).

The National Inclusive Governance Policy outlines the Government and its partners pledge to incorporate the perspectives of all citizens in decision-making, leadership, and development endeavours. By embracing diversity, it aims to ensure that all Samoans are engaged, benefit from, and are served by governance initiatives, fostering a more participatory, equitable, fair, and inclusive society in Samoa.

The goal of the policy is to boost the engagement, representation, empowerment, and rights of women, individuals with disabilities, youth, and non-homogeneity nature groups as well as other marginalized groups across all tiers of governance, decision-making processes, and leadership roles.

**National Anti-Corruption Policy (2024-25, 2028-29)**

Samoa launched its first national policy for anti-corruption in June 2024. This policy aims to address corruption in all its forms by ensuring that there is strong national security and trusted governance, improved public accountability and public sector efficiency and productivity and that there are specific measures for anti-corruption. This will further contribute to strengthening integrity, good governance, security, and the rule of law.
SAMOA’S SDG JOURNEY AMID THE GLOBAL POLYCRISIS:
COMMUNITY-LED (FA’A-SAMOA) APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Samoa’s approach to sustainable development has consistently been people-centred. The main national priorities aim to enhance the quality of life for all, emphasizing economic sustainability, social inclusion, access to infrastructure and essential services, and strengthening climate resilience. Over the past decades, Samoa has continually invested in its human resources, focusing its sustainable development strategy and efforts on its people.

A people-centred approach, with a primary focus on enhancing the socio-economic well-being of everyone, means empowering people and communities. Therefore, this strategy has led to a different approach from the Government with the implementation of the DDP to ensure food and human security for all. It is an important milestone as it empowers people by giving them ownership of the different projects they are implementing in their respective constituencies.

The Government continues to support Samoa’s people not only through the community-led DDP, but also through a multistakeholder sector-wide approach addressing different pillars of society, such as women and girls, children, youth, elderly, and people with disabilities. There is also continued partnership by the Government with CSOs, the private sector, and Development Partners to ensure no one is left behind and that Samoan people are seen and heard.
Initiated in 2021 by the Government of Samoa through the MWCSD, the District Development Programme (DDP), under the first-ever District Development Policy Framework, is a Government initiative aimed at aligning national and community-led development with regional and international obligations. This programme is demand-driven and based on priority needs highlighted in the updated DDP, incorporating Community Integrated Management Plans (CIMPs) initiatives. The scheme aims to disburse one million WST a year to the 51 constituencies (electoral districts) in Samoa for various development projects.

The DDP plays a significant role in supporting community-led development efforts across the country. Through the DDP, financial and technical assistance is provided to all 51 electoral constituencies, empowering them to pursue their own development initiatives. Furthermore, DDP advocates for the representation of women and youth in district councils across all constituencies to ensure inclusive decision-making processes.

The DDP prioritizes a wide range of community-level projects, spanning various sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, education, health, social well-being, environment, and climate change. Aiming to improve livelihoods, enhance infrastructure, and promote sustainable development at the grassroots level, these projects have been instrumental in fostering local ownership and participation in development efforts and empowering communities to drive positive change in their districts.

The DDP has initiated projects and programmes that empower women and communities and help close the socio-economic gap between the rich and the poor in Samoa. For instance, the DDP provides tuition fees$^{21}$ for university students from families facing hardship, funds the purchase of new machinery for farmers, and supports community centres such as church halls and schools.
KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SECOND VNR

The second VNR, five years since the inception of the SDGs, highlighted significant improvements in several SDG targets and indicators with further improved integration of the SDGs into national processes to allow for improved monitoring, data collection, evaluation, and established links to overall budget and planning, development assistance and international obligations.

Throughout this process, the second VNR emphasized a human rights approach through strengthening processes and further nationalizing the SDGs to address challenges at the grassroots level and promote active community participation in decision-making. The 2020 report highlighted the continued investment into delivery and equal access to basic services, and efforts to ensure every Samoan enjoy a high quality of life in harmony with the environment. It also emphasised Samoa’s role in promoting peaceful, inclusive societies and good governance within the Blue Pacific context, enhancing regional resilience to geopolitical tensions.
IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SDG PROGRESS

Since the second VNR in 2020, Samoa has faced significant setbacks in its efforts to advance towards the SDGs. These challenges include the prolonged impacts of COVID-19, escalating food and fuel prices, instability in external finances, and the cascading impacts of natural disasters and climate change. As a result of the significant rise in global inflation, Samoa experienced two years of stalled economic activity impacting Samoa's ability to, amongst others, progress on SDG implementation and sustainable development. The pandemic has compounded the challenges of the pre-existing measles outbreak and ongoing external vulnerabilities.

Samoa’s economy experienced a severe contraction, with GDP shrinking by more than 9 per cent in 2020. Recovery has been slow, and economic hardships persist, affecting efforts towards a more stable socio-economic outlook. While Samoa successfully controlled COVID-19 through widespread vaccination, there are still aspects of the health system that could be further improved. The reprioritisation of resources to support the strengthening of COVID-19 response measures also affected national SDG implementation. Priority was accorded to health, education, quarantine measures, and stimulating the economy.

The pandemic had adverse effects on Samoa’s socio-economic development and was manifested across all sectors of Government and all pillars of society.
Real GDP per capita growth declined significantly in 2020, highlighting the economic challenges aggravated by the pandemic. Similarly, real GDP per employed person witnessed a decline between 2020 and 2022, reflecting the broader economic impact of COVID-19 on labour markets.

The provision of clean water and sanitation services faced mixed fortunes during the pandemic. While the safely managed drinking water service recorded an increase since 2020, basic hand-washing facilities on premises experienced a slight decline over the same period. Additionally, the pandemic contributed to a decrease in the safely managed sanitation service and a reduction in safely treated domestic wastewater flows from 2020 to 2022. Despite these challenges, ambient water quality remained good from 2020 until 2024.

Access to electricity significantly increased in 2021 (98.3 per cent) when compared to 88 per cent in 2000. This reflects the Government’s efforts to expand energy infrastructure and improve accessibility. Moreover, there was a positive trend in primary reliance on clean fuels and technology over the same period. Seventy per cent renewable energy usage by 2031. Samoa continues to explore the use of proven technologies. The pandemic posed delays and setbacks on renewable energy projects and slowed progress towards implementing sustainable energy goals.

Samoa’s commerce, industry, and infrastructure sectors faced contrasting trends during the pandemic. While passenger volume by air transport declined during the pandemic, due to border closures and national lockdowns, container port traffic experienced a notable increase to ensure adequate imported food supplies and medical goods.

Efforts to reduce inequalities in Samoa were exacerbated by the pandemic. Additionally, there was a slight decrease in the share of non-performing loans (NPL) in total gross loans from 2016 to 2021, indicating efforts towards enhanced financial stability amidst economic uncertainties.

Progress towards responsible consumption and production remained relatively stable during the pandemic, while efforts to conserve marine biodiversity saw mixed results. While the average proportion of marine key biodiversity zones covered by protected areas was 54.2 per cent in 2022, there remain challenges in ensuring comprehensive protection of marine ecosystems amidst competing socio-economic priorities.

The pandemic also posed challenges to land-based conservation efforts in the country. Although the proportion of land area covered by forest experienced a decline in 2020, there was a gradual increase in the average proportion of key terrestrial biodiversity zones covered by protected areas in 2022, indicating ongoing efforts to preserve terrestrial ecosystems amidst socio-economic disruptions.

The pandemic underscored the importance of partnerships for advancing sustainable development in Samoa. Total Government revenue as a proportion of GDP increased significantly in 2021, reflecting efforts to enhance fiscal sustainability through domestic resource mobilization. However, the domestic budget funded by domestic taxes showed a slight decline in 2021, highlighting the need for innovative financing mechanisms and strengthened partnerships to address emerging challenges.

The reopening of borders and the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in 2021 resulted in significantly improved outcomes, with signs of a positive trajectory. Samoa’s response to COVID-19 was marked by proactive measures and community cooperation, demonstrating resilience and the ability to integrate health protocols with cultural practices. While the pandemic posed significant challenges, it also reinforced the importance of community and traditional values in navigating crises.
Samoa moved swiftly to implement strict border controls and preventive measures to mitigate the spread of the virus within its borders. A State of Emergency was declared on the 20th of March 2020. One of the key strategies employed by the Government was the early closure of its borders to international travellers, along with mandatory quarantine protocols for repatriated citizens and residents. These measures mitigated the introduction of COVID-19 into the country and gave health authorities time to strengthen the healthcare system and implement testing and contact tracing mechanisms.

Additionally, the Government activated its National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) to coordinate the response to COVID-19 coupled with public education and awareness campaigns to promote hygiene practices, social distancing, and mask wearing to prevent community transmission. The Government worked closely with local communities, CSOs, the private sector, and Development Partners to mobilise resources, disseminate information and combat misinformation about the virus.

Despite its remote location and limited resources, Samoa demonstrated resilience and effective governance in response to the pandemic. By prioritizing public health measures and leveraging community engagement, the Government was able to contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and well-being of its population.

Several support mechanisms were coordinated through the Government with assistance from development partners. The Government’s stimulus package to assist those most affected by COVID-19 included:

- ‘National Provident Fund Dividend’ disbursement for all contributors to the value of 35 million WST in July 2020.
- An increase in the payout for the pension scheme for all pensioners and other support for Samoan citizens.
- Agriculture stimulus delivered through the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and key stakeholders to support farmers to increase food production and engage those left unemployed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Unemployment subsidy: the Ministry of Finance and the Samoa Chamber of Commerce coordinated the delivery of monetary compensation for all workers who had been laid off, been put on leave without pay, or had their working hours reduced due to COVID-19.
- Interest relief for all business loans with commercial banks and credit facilities at the Development Bank of Samoa for specific sectors with a focus on COVID-19 recovery.
- Assistance to vulnerable groups through key social welfare NGOs and community outreach with village committees on improving sanitation, health, and education.
- Reduction in utilities such as water and electricity and trade concessions for imported staple food products.
- Strengthened health facilities and equipment, and grants delivered to the education sector to enable continued delivery of remote education services across the country.
One of the priorities identified during COVID-19 was hygiene, sanity, and safety of women and girls as the state of emergency restrictions affected their accessibility to resources and necessities needed for their wellbeing.

As part of the Government’s community response through the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD) COVID-19 with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 1,450 customized menstrual dignity kits were distributed to women and girls, including those with disabilities in both Upolu and Savaii.

The selected communities for this response reported being very grateful and appreciative as it assisted with the financial burden at the time, giving more room for the families to accommodate their other needs such as food and electricity bills. The dignity kits were also an entry point in emphasizing proper hygiene and maintaining infection control for women and girls during crises.
SDG PROGRESS

This section focuses on Samoa’s progress in achieving the Goals. The SDGs have been grouped into four clusters: People; Planet; Peace and Prosperity; and Partnerships. The analysis of the five Goals under in-depth review (SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16, and 17) includes the full 2015 baseline and progress data (noting that indicators not analysed in the National SDG Tracker are not included in the infographics).

While Samoa has made significant progress in improving data collection, challenges remain. Such effort has seen the availability of sufficient data for 165 out of the 231 indicators for the 169 targets of the SDGs. Of the measurable indicators, 40 are on track, 40 need to be accelerated, and 23 are in a reverse trend. SDG progress is mixed, and there are challenges in progressing in some areas of the SDGs as highlighted by the figure below. It further shows the progress the country is making towards achieving the SDGs by 2030.

Samoa is on track to achieve Goal 5 (Gender equality) mainly due to strong legislation promoting gender equality across various issues, and Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production), due to significant improvements in recycling practices, and management of fossil fuel subsidies.

Good progress is also being made for both Goal 15 (Life on land) attributable to a very high Mountain Green Cover Index (MGCI)\textsuperscript{23}, management of biodiversity and wildlife protection, and Goal 13 (Climate action) as a result of Samoa’s progress in implementing strategies relating to national disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation.
The most noticeable regression has taken place in Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation) due to a reduction in both water use efficiency and financial support for water and sanitation, and Goal 14 (Life below water), because of recent peaks in chlorophyll-a deviations and a drop off in sustainable fisheries due to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The remaining Goals are progressing at a reasonable rate or little movement in progression; however, it is recognised that these Goals will require consistent accelerated action to achieve the SDG targets.

**Figure 2: Progress by Goal**

The current status index provides a standardized value of progress from baseline to the target for each indicator. Indices are aggregated at target and Goal levels to show the bigger picture of progress and regression. SBS provided the data used in this analysis. For more information on the methodology, please see Annex I.
By reinforcing social safety nets, promoting food security, maintaining health and well-being, and supporting education, communities in Samoa are able to complement the Government's efforts by providing a culturally rooted foundation for sustainable development.

Overview of the cluster

For SDG 1 | Samoa is on target for resilience to disasters and is progressing well on indicators, implementing Disaster Risk Reduction policies, strategies, plans, and programmes, all of which are in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In addressing poverty, Samoa recently launched its National Social Protection Framework, which will direct both formal and informal social protection systems in Samoa. The difficulty in reporting on this Goal lies in finding updated data to measure poverty indicators, as the most current data comes from Samoa's 2018 Household, Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES). As this survey is conducted every 5 years, the next HIES report is anticipated to be ready by the end of 2024. Therefore, the data needed to report on targets and indicators under this Goal has not changed since the last VNR.

SDG 2 | reveals that Samoa is on target for agricultural export subsidies and is making some progress on undernourishment and food security, but regressing on malnutrition, and small-scale food producers. The prevalence of undernourishment was less than 2.5 per cent in 2018. Moderate food insecurity affected 22.4 per cent of the population, while severe food insecurity affected 2.4 per cent. Agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers have shown progress, but recent data are required for a complete evaluation.
For SDG 3 | indicators related to maternal mortality, child mortality, and communicable diseases are on track. Samoa is progressing on universal health coverage but regressing on universal access to sexual and reproductive health. According to data from the Samoa Family Health Association (SFHA), contraceptive usage has decreased from 27 per cent in 2014 to 23.9 per cent in 2023, influenced by the fluctuating demographics due to labour mobility and other migration factors compounded by the pandemic. The maternal mortality ratio in Samoa decreased from 37.6 per 100,000 live births in 2019 to 16.9 per 100,000 live births in 2022. The under-five mortality rate also improved, with significant reductions over the years. However, NCDs like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases remain high, contributing to 9 per cent and 34 per cent of deaths, respectively. The incidence of tuberculosis increased to 22.03 per 100,000 population in 2022, up from 9.63 in 2019. While the country has decentralized its health services, there is still work to be done to bridge the gap in quality and access to healthcare between urban and rural regions. The shift towards a modern cash economy has introduced new health concerns, notably the increase in non-communicable diseases like obesity and diabetes.

For SDG 4 | Samoa is on target for equal access to education among genders, sustainable development education, scholarships, and qualified teachers, and progress is made on effective learning outcomes, early childhood development, and education facilities. Primary school enrolment in Samoa is high, but literacy and numeracy proficiency remain low, with only 22.7 per cent of children (aged 7-14) having demonstrated numerical skills and 51.8 per cent demonstrating foundational reading skills. There is progress in adult literacy and numeracy rate with a total of 87.4 per cent in 2021. Participation in organized learning for children below 6 increased to 55 per cent in 2022 from 24 per cent in 2019. At the VNR validation consultation, participants noted that data coming from private schools is not captured, affecting national statistics. The Samoa Teachers Union also raised concerns that actual learning within the classroom is not captured through the literacy and numeracy tests conducted by the Ministry of Education (MEC). Data gaps were also identified in informal education and training.

SDG 5 | is on track, particularly on discrimination against women and girls, reproductive health access and rights, equal economic rights, and gender equality policies, while progressing on women in leadership. The ‘National Policy on Gender Equality’ (2021-2031) aims to increase women and girls’ access to law and justice. GBV remains an issue, with 37.5 per cent of women having experienced violence in their lifetime, and 26.8 per cent in the past 12 months although this is a significant improvement from 2017 when 46 per cent of women reported having experienced some form of violence in the previous 12 months. The ‘National Policy on Family Safety: Elimination of Family Violence’ (2021-2031) aims to raise awareness of GBV, including holding campaigns like Thursdays in Black, where Government officials and community members wear black to protest violence against women. Furthermore, a GBV Admin Database is being developed to centralize GBV-related data to enhance monitoring.
The Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) is a CSO that provides shelter to the victims of domestic violence and abuse in Samoa. One of their projects is called “Nofotane”. Nofotane women in traditional Samoan society are those who marry outside their home village, usually occupy the lowest social status, and are highly vulnerable to exploitation. In response to the high levels of unemployment and violence among these women, SVSG launched several projects from 2016 onwards to economically empower them. Funded by the UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality (UN Women) and the European Commission (EU), these initiatives provided training, supported small business creation, and raised employer awareness, benefiting thousands of women. SVSG also opened a physical and online shop to sell products made by Nofotane women. Continuing these efforts, SVSG aims to transition the Nofotane Programme into a social enterprise by 2027, aligning its work with multiple SDGs to improve the socio-economic status of Nofotane women within the cultural context of Samoan society.

For SDG 6 | ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation has long been a priority in the international, regional and national development agenda. Samoa has made significant strides in providing access to clean drinking water and improved sanitation facilities, though challenges remain in enhancing water use efficiency and preserving water-related ecosystems. ODA assistance over the years has significantly improved water quality and access throughout the country, which has been a key priority for the Government. The percentage of the population accessing improved sources of drinking water increased from 97.3 per cent in 2015 to 98.6 per cent in 2020 as per DHS-MICS 2019/2020. 98.1 per cent of the population has access to improved sanitation facilities. However, only 78.8 per cent had access to handwashing facilities with soap and water, indicating a need for enhanced hygiene promotion initiatives. According to the Samoa Water Authority (SWA), sewage coverage was 21.34 per cent in 2020. Samoa continues to implement the Water and Sanitation Sector Plan 2020/2021-2024/2025.
OVERVIEW

Strong community ties and mutual support networks underpin Samoa’s sustainable development efforts. Communities engage collectively and within their extended families to address hardship and share benefits and communal village projects. This collective support system helps to alleviate poverty by providing a safety net for vulnerable individuals and families. While Samoa has modernized in many ways, the traditional values and way of living continue to thrive. Urbanization and globalization have brought new challenges, but Samoans have adapted by blending modern practices with their cultural heritage.

Figure 4 shows progress being made against each SDG indicator with sufficient data for Goal 1. Areas where progress is on track, are shown in indicators 1.5.1 and 1.5.2, as a result of the reduction of severe natural disasters in Samoa in recent years, and indicators 1.5.3 and 1.5.4, due to the increased implementation of national and local Government DRR strategies. In addition, there has been an increase in Government spending on essential services (health, education, social protection) from 36.8 per cent in 2019 to 47.4 per cent in 2023.

Moreover, challenges remain for the indicators of international poverty; workers covered; and the proportion of domestically generated resources allocated by the Government. It is expected that inter alia, current Government initiatives through the DDP will address these challenges going forward.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

Extreme poverty and hunger do not exist in the form envisaged in the SDGs, with global poverty indicators not reflecting the nuances of the reality on the ground. However, in every society, some are less well off than the average. This condition may arise from poor education, poor health, location, the impact of natural disasters, or other factors.
Therefore, although there may not be many people in Samoa living under extreme hardship, there still exists pockets of relative poverty.

Multidimensional poverty offers a holistic view of poverty, revealing not just, who is poor, but also the extent of their deprivation and the various dimensions in which they experience poverty. Initiated by SBS in 2022, the adoption of a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) investigates the non-monetary measures of poverty, which comprise of three dimensions: health, education and employment, and living standards. The health dimension includes three SDG indicators: access to health care and facilities, food security, and main source of drinking water. Education and Employment encompass four SDG indicators: school attendance, years of schooling, youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET), and school lag. Living Standards cover 5 SDG indicators: asset ownership, cooking fuel, housing, sanitation, and internet connection.

MPI in Samoa lies at 0.109, which indicates that the poor would experience 10.9 per cent of deprivations if all people in Samoa were deprived in all indicators. In addition, it is estimated that 24.9 per cent of Samoans are multidimensionally poor, based on 2018 HIES data. A closer look at MPI's indicators reveals that the largest contribution of poverty comes from food insecurity (18.4 per cent), lack of access to drinking water (16.2 per cent), and lack of access to internet connection (12.1 per cent). When aggregating the indicators by dimensions, the largest contribution to overall multidimensional poverty is due to living standard deprivations (41.6 per cent), followed by health (37.9 per cent) and education (20.5 per cent).

The 2022 MPI report indicates that 24.9 per cent of Samoan citizens are multidimensionally poor and most of them live in rural areas. The findings showed that out of the 12 variables included in Samoa’s MPI, food security, access to clean water, and internet connection have the highest respective contributions to the MPI (18.4 per cent, 16.2 per cent, and 12.1 per cent respectively). Living standards, at 41.6 per cent, was the attribute that contributed most to the MPI, followed by health at 37.9 per cent and education at 20.5 per cent. The greatest MPIs by household characteristics are the dependent demographic of children and the elderly.

Samoa recognises that the MPI alone does not encompass all aspects of SDGs, however, it does shed light on the depth of poverty, the various deprivations experienced by individuals and households, their geographical distribution, and the gender disparities among affected groups. The Government continues to utilise tools like the MPI to assess and monitor progress over time, identify specific bottlenecks, and work towards ensuring no one is left behind.

**BUILDING RESILIENCE**

Samoa has been identified as an emerging hotspot under a 2-degree global warming scenario particularly due to cyclones. The country is projected to experience the greatest increase in population exposure to newly emerging multi-hazard risks, with over 97 per cent of its population becoming exposed to emerging hotspots. Thus, building resilience is of utmost importance.

Samoa has been proactive in mitigating the risks and consequences associated with natural disasters and health crises. The creation of the ‘National Disaster Management Plan’ (2017 – 2021) and ‘Disaster Risk Financing Policy’ (2022 – 2025) serve as a crucial framework, offering direction for disaster response and risk mitigation efforts, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. These instruments provide liquidity and budgetary support in the event of a natural disaster and have been integrated at the community level.

Furthermore, since 2022, Samoa has deployed the ‘Samoa Emergency Medical Assistance Team’ (SEMAT), trained to assess and provide a rapid response during outbreaks or in times of disaster. This is in addition to the long-standing emergency support assistance provided by the Samoa Red Cross Society.
The first-ever Samoa Medical Emergency Assistance Team (SEMAT), launched in 2022, aims at strengthening climate resilience and strengthening the adaptive capacity of Samoa in times of outbreaks and disasters. SEMAT is set up to speed up the deployment of personnel to respond quickly to disasters and other national crises. SEMAT completed a one-week simulation training in November 2022, and the first cohort of trained SEMAT members consisted of 35 personnel from the Ministry of Health (MOH), Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) and the Ministry of Police, Prisons and Corrections Services (MPPCS). On the final day, a simulation exercise was conducted in which a cyclone scenario was presented, and the team was tasked to plan their deployment, logistics, supplies, and overall management of the incident. A second training course, which also included simulation exercises, was held for a week in 2023.

In March 2024, the NGO Field Ready launched the ‘Rapid Response Manufacturing in Pacific’ programme in partnership with the Samoa Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) and USAID-BHA. The programme aims to increase local disaster response capability by establishing in-country supply of aid items with local businesses and making rapid repair and response equipment for humanitarian responders and stakeholders.

The adoption of the ‘National Social Protection Policy Framework’ in 2023 was another milestone towards resilience. Encompassing both formal and informal social protection, the policy developed by the Ministry of Finance provides guiding principles for policies and programmes implemented by Government agencies to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable peoples, with assistance provided especially during external shocks or natural disasters. Furthermore, the Government has significantly increased its expenditure on essential services.

An example of the critical role informal social protection plays in the country can be seen in the provision of remittances from overseas families during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Samoa incurred a loss of over 500 million WST to its GDP during this period, remittances surged to a record high of 546 million WST in 2019 and to over 827 million WST in 2023. Thus, this system acts as a safety net and a vital source of socio-economic support and cultural preservation.

Formal aspects of Samoa’s social protection system can be seen in many of its current social programmes. Cash-based social assistance in Samoa is primarily channelled through two pension programmes: the ‘Senior Citizen Benefit Scheme’ (SCBS) and the ‘Samoa National Provident Fund’ (SNPF). The SCBS offers a universal pension to individuals aged 65 and
above, while the SNPF operates as a mandatory savings scheme for formal sector employees. Samoa has a ‘Disability Benefit Scheme’ (cash-based social assistance) in place for all persons with disabilities, which will now be channelled through the SNPF starting June 2024, as per the adjustment specified in the National Provident Fund Amendment Bill 2023. In the last two financial years, a total of 1,880 persons with disabilities have benefited from this scheme. These programmes are administered and funded by the State. Other notable social assistance initiatives include a worker’s compensation scheme for formal sector employees, free healthcare services for pensioners and children 12 years and below, free maternity services protection, free inter-island ferry transport for pensioners and an education scheme offering relief on school fees for public schools.

**WAY FORWARD**

With less than 6 years left to 2030, accelerated progress is needed in alleviating non-monetary forms of poverty. This encompasses access to vital resources such as basic water and sanitation and extending social protection coverage.

**Strengthened Existing Social Protection Framework to Leave No One Behind**

Several people and households in Samoa lack personal safety measures. Programmes like social assistance, social insurance, and active labour market initiatives can uphold household incomes and livelihoods. Hence, utilizing a blend of in-kind and cash assistance can establish a safety net for vulnerable groups in Samoa, fostering economic rebound and bolstering resilience.

Concerted efforts are needed to broaden the reach of social protection systems given demographic changes and the impacts of climate change. The focus will be on people who are more exposed to vulnerabilities, including children, persons with disabilities, older persons, women, informal workers, and migrant workers. Vulnerabilities are not fixed over time; therefore, it is crucial to have an adaptive social protection system, to ensure it covers those who need it the most. Further investments in adaptive social protection schemes and in digital technologies to offer opportunities to enhance the design and delivery of social protection are instrumental in helping to gain efficiency and minimize waste.

**Strengthnen Implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies at the National and Local Levels**

Strengthening the resilience of the Samoan population is key to alleviating hardship. It will be instrumental to transition from a sectoral to a system approach whereby social protection and climate change interventions align to strengthen vulnerable populations’ capacity to adapt, absorb, and transfer risks. Equally important is the implementation of comprehensive disaster and climate risk management, which is critical for resilient food systems and, at the same time, ensuring the meaningful participation of marginalized groups, particularly women, youth, and people with disability in disaster risk reduction and management.

**Increased Attention to Workers**

Future steps might include the expansion and improvement of the quantity and quality of vocational, life, technical, business, and entrepreneurial skills training. Training programmes should accommodate the needs of intended beneficiaries and be developed through collaboration with the private sector. Other Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP), including labour-market services, can complement skills training, especially for youth transitioning from school to work. ALMPs can also help people in informal employment to transition to formal employment. Their positive impact depends on whether informal jobs, like women’s time and labour in care work, are valued and recognized. Expanding ALMPs should be complemented by investments in the care economy including...
providing employment-related care, e.g., parental leave policies and benefits and family-friendly working arrangements.

**Increase Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities at all Levels**

The District Development Plans should include entrepreneurial initiatives for persons with disabilities and they should receive facilitated access to training to start their businesses. Increased access to income-generation schemes is needed as well as guidelines in this regard. It will be important to promote more disability-inclusive employers in both the public and private sectors and employ more persons with disabilities within the Government. To facilitate employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, the existing ‘Disability Benefit Scheme’ may be expanded by covering the costs of public transportation and assistive devices and persons with disabilities also be included in employment opportunities abroad, such as ‘Seasonal Worker Schemes’.
Figure 4: SDG 2 overview

Source: Produced by SBS using National SDG Tracker
OVERVIEW

Figure 5 above shows the progress being made against each indicator with sufficient data for Goal 2, Progress is on track for indicator 2.b.1, due to zero agricultural export subsidies, for; indicator 2.a.1 as a result of an increase in Samoa’s agriculture orientation index and 2.1.1, through a reduction in the prevalence of undernourishment.

There also remain challenges that have affected the progress of several indicators for Goal 2 with the most concerns relating to indicator 2.3.1 where there has been a significant reduction in the volume of local food products, and indicator 2.2.1 where the proportion of children under 5 who are moderately stunted has increased.

For Samoa, agriculture plays a significant role in overall development, contributing 9.2 per cent of GDP in 2023 and receiving increased Government expenditure compared to previous fiscal years (4.4 per cent for 2022-23 vs. 2019-20).

Levels of extreme hunger and undernourishment remain low, with a slight decrease in the prevalence of undernourishment from 5.6 per cent in 2020 to 4.6 per cent in 2021. However, 23.6 per cent of people are moderately or severely food insecure with 3.4 per cent of people considered severely food insecure (highlighting a slight rise in the food insecurity among the population, +0.8 per cent and 1.0 per cent respectively compared to the last VNR report). This can be attributed to the rise in the cost of living and inflation during the post COVID-19 recovery period, which is projected to improve over the next fiscal year.

Despite some progress, nutritional security remains a concern. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the World Bank (WB) Group reported low levels of stunting and wasting (7.4 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively), and a medium level of overweight (6.0) among Samoan children in 2023. These figures indicate a slight increase on levels of stunting and overweight (from 5 per cent each) and a small decrease in wasting (from 4 per cent), compared to data from Samoa’s Second VNR.

Evidence suggests that the country is currently self-sufficient in several food groups. However, the rise in global food prices, the vulnerabilities of the agriculture food sector to climate change, and the susceptibility of the economy to external shocks present Samoa with many challenges in ensuring sustainable food systems that can cater for its growing population and fluctuating demographics attributed to labour mobility and other migration factors.

Agriculture activities for food production are in decline with households engaging more in small-scale production rather than large-scale farming. Significant decline is seen in fishing and livestock and the Government is looking into initiatives to discourage illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) and unsustainable fishing practices contributing to the loss of biodiversity. Food imports make up over a quarter of the overall food supply in Samoa with 80 per cent made up of imported meat and processed foods influencing local diets and the decline in consumption of nutritionally balanced food. The ongoing effects of climate change on the environment also increase the risk of foodborne and waterborne diseases amplified by disasters.

‘Samoa’s Food Systems Pathway 2030’ recognises the ongoing challenges and is the blueprint for transforming food systems for a resilient Samoa and achieving sustainable food and nutritional security and affordable healthy diets for Samoans.

Nutritional imbalance in Samoa is a critical public health issue characterized by low consumption of fruits and vegetables and high consumption of processed foods. The nutritional imbalance of Samoan food consumption has been linked to the increase in NDCs amongst Samoans. Government efforts are underway to address these issues. The PEN Fa’a Samoa initiative focuses on raising awareness about
the importance of a balanced diet of fruit and vegetables and the associated health risks that come with consuming processed foods.

Despite continuous investment in sustainable agriculture and efforts towards transforming the Samoan food systems, there is still underinvestment in the agriculture sector. Abnormal increases in food prices, as indicated by the International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA), require monitoring to understand their impact on food security, access, and affordability of a healthy diet.

While there is some progress, nutrition security remains a significant concern, particularly among Samoan children. Addressing issues such as stunting, wasting, and being overweight is essential to improving overall nutrition outcomes. Although the ‘School Health Programmes’ have made strides in this area, recent monitoring reveals that unhealthy food items are still prevalent in schools. Sweet sugary beverages and foods high in sugar, salt, and fat continue to be available in school canteens, sold by vendors, and provided by parents, contributing to poor nutrition among children. To address these challenges and ensure resilient, healthy food systems, Samoa can benefit from transformative actions across various sectors, through the continuous and appropriate implementation of its ‘Samoa Food System Pathways 2030’.
Transforming food systems for a resilient and healthy Samoa where no one is left behind. Sustainable food and nutritional security and affordable healthy diets.

The Pathways aims to: boost local production, enhance the enabling environment for sustainable food systems, improve data-driven knowledge on food systems to better inform policies on sustainable consumption and production, promote local food and healthy food habits, make use of traditional knowledge; strengthen environmental protection policies, promote the engagement of different stakeholders and their involvement in agriculture and food value chains, foster a culture of collaboration, and value community roles and cultural practices in food systems.

The Agenda emphasises the importance of looking beyond hunger towards ensuring access to safe, nutritious and adequate food for everyone at all times, and to end all forms of malnutrition.

Localizing SDG 2 to Enhance Agrifood Systems at all Levels

The Food System Transformation Agenda (FSTA) in Samoa is centred on promoting sustainable agriculture, enhancing resilience to climate change, improving food security and nutrition, and preserving local food cultures, through collaboration, innovation, and policy coherence to advance this agenda and achieving the Goals related to food and nutritional security. Several ongoing initiatives demonstrate Samoa’s commitment to localizing SDG 2 and ending hunger through multifaceted approaches that prioritize sustainability, community engagement, and cultural preservation. These include:

Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture

Samoa has been actively promoting sustainable agriculture practices to increase food production and ensure food security. Initiatives such as organic farming, agroforestry, and permaculture have been encouraged to enhance resilience to climate change and improve food sovereignty. Talomua - the Annual Agricultural Showcasing Event is held in every district with farmers displaying an array of agricultural produce and locally made handicrafts to promote local agriculture and craftsmanship. This is an initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to encourage village subsistence farmers to grow fresh produce to promote food security. It is a community practice for village councils to have regular inspections of family plots for staples and vegetables; it is also a measure to ensure effective use of land.

Strengthening Food Systems

The Government, in collaboration with local communities and international organizations, has been working to strengthen food systems. This includes providing initiatives to support smallholder farmers, improve access to markets, and enhance value chains.
for locally produced food. The ‘Samoa Agriculture & Fisheries Productivity and Marketing’ (SAFPROM) project started in 2020 to increase productivity and access to markets by selected producers, to improve the management of targeted productive natural resources in the event of emergencies. Throughout the project, 965 beneficiaries received matching grants so far which consists of 445 (4 per cent) crop farmers, 453 (47 per cent) livestock farmers and 67 (7 per cent) fishers. The total budget for all these farmers is 8,187,939 WST. The procurement process has covered the entire country (51 districts).

Community Gardens and Food Security Projects

Community-led initiatives such as community gardens and food security projects have been successful in increasing access to fresh and nutritious food. These projects not only address immediate food needs but also promote community resilience and self-sufficiency.

Initiatives by the Women in Business Development Inc. (WIBDI) provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to earn an income and develop their skills through direct employment or self-employment, including organic and sustainable farming and the production of traditional fine mats. The Association for the Development of Human Resources in Agriculture (ADHRA) also promotes sustainable agriculture and food security in Samoa, including collaboration with volunteers to establish vegetable gardens across the country.

Nutrition Education and Awareness

Efforts to raise awareness about nutrition and healthy eating habits have been implemented across schools, communities, and health centres. These initiatives aim to combat malnutrition and improve overall health outcomes.

The PEN Fa’a Samoa programme emphasizes three pillars: early detection, early treatment, and awareness. The programme trains village women’s committees and young adults to screen their communities for NCDs and educate them about key lifestyle factors, including nutrition. Additionally, the ‘Samoa Health System Strengthening Programme’ employs community nutritionists to engage with their respective districts on nutritional matters and monitor school nutrition environments. The Ministry of Health also oversees these efforts through quarterly school monitoring evaluations.

Policy Support and Advocacy

The Government is committed to ending hunger through policy support and advocacy. This includes the development of national food security strategies, including the development and approval of the ‘Samoa National Food and Nutrition Policy and Plan of Action’ (2021-2026), ‘Agriculture and Fisheries Sector Plan 2022/2023-2026/2027’ and the ‘Samoa Agriculture & Fisheries Climate Change Policy’. Legislative frameworks and partnerships with stakeholders have also been developed to address hunger and malnutrition comprehensively.

Preservation of Traditional Knowledge

Samoa recognizes the importance of traditional knowledge and practices in ensuring food security and preserving biodiversity. Efforts to integrate traditional farming methods and Indigenous crops into modern agricultural practices contribute to sustainable food production and cultural preservation.

WAY FORWARD

Invest in Sustainable, Climate-smart, and Diversified Food Production

To tackle the reduction of local food products, a recalibration of food production strategies to enhance food security is needed. This includes increasing food production and productivity, strategic investing in crop and food diversification for balanced nutrition, and promoting agro-ecological, climate-smart, and other sustainable food production practices including for the livestock sector. Investment in sustainable mechanisation and innovative digitalization is needed. Attention should be paid to reducing the use of chemicals, greenhouse gasses (GHG) emissions, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion while sustaining soil health and food output.
Enhance Local Value Chains to Improve Nutrition and Access to Food

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent crises underscored the urgency to shift the agrifood paradigm towards more balanced domestic sources versus imported food to ensure food security for the Samoan population. Improving food availability requires connecting shockproof supply chains, enhancing food market linkages, and implementing measures to strengthen resilient supply chains through storage and logistics infrastructure.

Strengthen Samoan Capacities for Risk Assessment and Management in Response to Disruptions to Food Systems.

Investments are needed to promote disaster-proof and resilient food value chains capable of withstanding shocks and disruptions from natural or human sources. This involves integrating risk management strategies into policy formulation, investing in data and information systems, and developing capacity for data analysis and information management to enhance robust decision-making along the food value chain. Investment is needed in developing capacities for risk assessment and management based on reliable data on market, price, stock, and policy along agrifood commodities and value chains most vulnerable to shocks.

Promote Farmers’ Livelihoods and Prosperity

Continuous involvement of individuals in the production sector is crucial for sustainable agriculture and fisheries, however, engagement in this sector is declining. Farmers and producers are agents of change in sustainable food production. The decline in people working in agriculture and fisheries must be addressed and investment and incentives for individuals to remain in the sector are needed.

It is critical to reduce production costs and ensure access to quality seeds, land, water resources, finance, technology, and knowledge to make farming viable and sustainable and to improve farmers’ prosperity. Farmers and consumers need targeted intervention to improve market linkages and ensure fair prices. Investment in entrepreneurship skills is also needed, including supporting youth engagement in innovative agriculture practices. Integrating and empowering rural women and youth in sustainable livelihoods, including through the security of land tenure, is also critical.
Samoa’s efforts in progressing in this cluster are through the sustainable use of its natural resources, promoting community-based environmental stewardship, and integrating traditional ecological knowledge with modern conservation efforts. These efforts contribute to the protection and sustainable management of the natural resources, and the overall resilience of Samoan communities.

**Overview of the cluster**

**For SDG 11** is on target and progressing on most indicators, although regressing on convenient access to public transport. As of 2021, 47.5 per cent of households use buses and taxis for land transportation, and 51.6 per cent use private vehicles. Since 2016, there has been an increase in the use (+ 17.6 per cent) and ownership (+ 8.1 per cent) of private vehicles and a 11.5 per cent decrease in the use of public transportation (buses and taxis). Challenges such as rapid urbanization and climate vulnerabilities persist. Key initiatives in urban planning and management have focused on upgrading informal settlements, enhancing disaster resilience, and promoting sustainable transportation.

**SDG 12** reveals that the country is on target for reduction in waste generation, public procurement practices, and fossil fuel subsidies, while acceleration is needed on sustainable use of natural resources, managing chemicals and wastes, support for research and development (R&D) capacity, and sustainable tourism monitoring. Efforts to promote sustainable consumption and production include initiatives to reduce waste generation, promote recycling, and enhance sustainable agricultural practices. However, comprehensive data on the impact of these initiatives is needed to fully assess their effectiveness. The ‘Samoa Tourism Sector Plan’ (STSP) 2022 articulates the strategic direction for the tourism sector for the period 2022 - 2027, aspiring to turn Samoa into a sustainable, and resilient tourism destination.
For SDG 13 | Samoa's progress on SDG 13 targets is generally on track, with increasing policies, plans, strategies, programmes, and projects implemented in the country to further strengthen resilience to natural disasters. Although GHG emissions have slightly increased, Samoa still contributes very little to overall GHG emissions on the global scale. Despite this, there has been much work done to tackle this issue as can be seen in the increase in policies, strategies, and plans that incorporate measures to reduce GHG emissions, as well as the submission of Samoa’s updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the UNFCCC in 2021. The 2021 NDC covers more sectors than the previous one, with specific mitigation targets and measures for each sector.

For SDG 14 | Progress on SDG 14 varies with targets for small-scale artisanal fishing on track, those on conservation of coastal areas that require acceleration, and those on marine pollution, and marine resources showing regressions. Samoa has made progress in protecting marine ecosystems through the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) and sustainable fishing practices. However, marine ecosystems remain threatened by climate change and overfishing, requiring continued conservation efforts. ‘Samoa’s first Ocean Strategy’ (SOS) was launched in 2020, with a key focus on tackling pollution. Under SOS, Samoa has also committed to the protection of 30 per cent of its exclusive economic zones (EEZ) equivalent to 40,000 km². The current layout and plan for the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) is to gradually roll out the protection of the identified zones for protection and conservation in time to achieve 30 per cent by 2030. Awareness raising of the impacts of waste and marine pollution, and capacity-building activities are undergoing. For instance, the ‘Guardians Environmental Experiential Educational Campaign’ launched in 2021 aims to increase the environmental literacy of Samoan communities through their youth.

SDG 15 | indicates progress on protected species trafficking, invasive alien species, biodiversity in national and local planning, resources for biodiversity and ecosystems, resources for forest management, and protected species trafficking. The country has focused on reforestation, protection of natural habitats, and combating land degradation. As of 2020, forest area comprised 58.2 per cent of Samoa's total land area, a slight increase of 0.2 per cent from 2015. The ‘National Forestry Monitoring System’ (NFMS) established in 2023 will enable Samoa to track and report changes in forest cover and forest carbon stocks contributing to sustainable forest management and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, sustainable forest management, conservation of mountain ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, and utilization of genetic resources need to be accelerated. Baseline data from 2018 indicates a need for increased efforts in biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management. Progress includes the implementation of community-based conservation programmes and enhanced environmental policies.
Samoa Conservation Society (SCS) is an NGO committed to advancing the conservation of Samoa’s biodiversity and natural heritage.

SCS has been involved in several projects, including the current ‘Samoa Climate Smart Rain Forest Restoration C-offset’. The project engages 30 champions from the Sa’aga, Saleilua and Poutasi villages to participate in the growing of native trees in the national park. The champions, of which one-third of the champions are female, are engaged for eight months in different ways, for a total of 50 days. They are involved in both fieldwork (80 per cent of their time) and classroom activities where they learn different ways in which they can help the fight against climate change.

This project aims to not only restore forests using native trees but also provide employment opportunities to youth groups within target villages.

SCS also conducted the ‘Greening of School’ project in 2023. Faleata College was used as the pilot school where students assessed their carbon footprints, from electricity usage via carbon audit. They then offset their carbon footprints through the planting of trees. Furthermore, the school has plans to restore and maintain the degraded areas near the school alongside the Fuluasou River with plants that are flood proof to enhance climate adaptation.
Overview

In the face of climate-related events, such as sea-level rise, extreme weather conditions, and changing rainfall patterns, Samoa promotes and emphasizes community-based adaptation strategies, drawing on local wisdom and cooperation. These include traditional knowledge and practices for water management, coastal protection, and agricultural resilience at the grassroots level, which complement the overall efforts in resilient infrastructure and mainstreaming.

Figure 7 below shows the progress made against each indicator with sufficient data for Goal 13. Progress is on track for indicators 13.1.2, 13.1.3, and 13.2.1, all resulting from Samoa having in place strategies to address DRR and climate change adaptation. There was little regression for indicator 13.2.2 due to a marginal increase in GHG emissions\(^6\). Nevertheless, GHG emissions remain marginal at the global level.

Funding gaps exist for achieving climate targets, requiring international support.
One of the Government’s main priority areas concerning climate action is reducing and offsetting carbon emissions with the launch of the ‘3 Million Tree Planting Initiative’ (2021 – 2028). This is a continuation and extension of the 1 million-tree campaign (2009-2012) and the 2 million-tree campaign (2015-2020), both of which were successfully achieved by their end-of-year targets.

Many activities supported achieving the 2 million targets, some of which include the ‘Green Games Initiative’ that took place during the Pacific Games in Samoa in 2019. Athletes and officials travelling to Samoa for the Games were encouraged to plant trees to offset their carbon emissions, resulting in planting over 3200 native trees. Furthermore, several schools in Samoa assisted with the Green Games Initiative by planting up to 7500 native trees across Upolu and Savaii. The 3 million tree planting initiative is in progress with more than 983,000 trees planted, and 110 hectares of land covered so far. Farmers and villages are also actively involved in the initiatives that are intended to mitigate the impacts of climate change and restore degraded forest and watershed areas, in a collective fashion.

In 2022, on the occasion of World Environment Day (WED), the ACEO of the Division of Environment Conservation division together with the British High Commissioner implemented the Queen’s Green Canopy Tree Planting initiative to honour the 70 years of service from Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom.
CLIMATE FINANCE

Samoa has made notable strides in addressing the challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters, aided by support from various donors. However, substantial funding shortfalls persist, hindering the country’s ability to fully realize its climate objectives.

Grants and concessional loans are crucial due to limited fiscal space, and better coordination is needed to match financing sources with project pipelines. While Samoa has been effective in securing concessional climate funds on a global and regional scale, there remains the need for enhanced coordination and a focused strategic approach in aligning climate project plans with the appropriate funding sources that are easily accessible. Samoa has significantly improved its institutional capacities over the years to integrate climate resilience across all its 14 sectors to ensure that all development efforts align with Samoa’s climate change priorities.

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND CLIMATE ACTION

Through the DDP initiative, in the Falealili constituency, members of their community participated in replanting forests and other tree-planting initiatives. In the Vaimauga-3 constituency, one of the projects relates to the establishment of warning signs, of communication materials, and evacuation processes in response to natural disasters. In the Vaimauga-4 constituency, the council approved the upgrading of family homes situated near the Vaimauga River to make them flood proof. Each family was given entitlements to upgrade their homes.

There have been several projects conducted in other districts in support of climate resilience to protect families, villages, homes and strengthening of early warning systems and evacuation processes.

Climate resilience building and disaster management are key priorities in Samoa's national development and economic agendas. The country’s steadfast dedication to enhancing climate resilience is evident in numerous national strategic documents, and its disaster management plans are well established.

‘Samoa’s Climate Change Policy’ (2020) has a cross-sectoral approach. The policy outlines strategies and interventions required across all sectors and all stakeholders to bolster resilience against climate change impacts while achieving the SDGs. It proposes the establishment of a National Climate Change Council to facilitate effective coordination among ministries, institutions, the private sector, civil society, and local communities, and the Climate Change Report Card as the National Reporting tool to ensure all national climate change actions are captured and reported to the decision-makers including the Cabinet Development Committee.

In the context of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Government of Samoa pledged to mainstream climate education and awareness in public education and school curricula. Several efforts are being undertaken to ensure climate and DRR policies are inclusive, as well as to raise awareness. In 2023, Samoa officially launched its first braille-translated disaster risk management awareness materials/booklets. To improve awareness and knowledge of climate and disaster resilience in education, the Government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, collaborated with key partners to provide handbooks and vocational training on climate change hazards. Furthermore, in 2020, Samoa’s National University formed the first-ever environmental student association to push students to fight for climate action.
Lanulauava is a student association from the National University of Samoa (NUS) doing environmental advocacy. In 2021, Lanulauava in partnership with the Samoa Conservation Society implemented the ‘Future of the Green Pacific’ or ‘Lou Lumanai Lanulauava’ project, in which they conducted carbon audits of six secondary schools in Upolu and six secondary schools in Savaii. The objective of the project was to raise environmental awareness at the village level through the mobilization of students throughout the country. During the project, students were also trained on how to conduct environmental audits and carbon footprint assessments.

This project aims to empower students to raise awareness in their communities on climate action, highlighting the key contributors to carbon emissions annually and gauging the public's interest in practical measures to reduce or offset their carbon footprints. As part of the Lou Lumanai Lanulauava project, a carbon audit was also conducted for the NUS campus.

In 2021, Samoa submitted its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), replacing the sectoral targets in its initial NDC with an absolute economy-wide reduction target of reducing total GHG emissions by 26 per cent in 2030 compared to the 2007 level. For adaptation practices, Samoa aims to expand mangrove forests by 5 per cent, expand agroforestry by an additional 5 per cent, and increase the total forest cover by 2 per cent. For mitigation, the goal is to generate 100 per cent of its electricity from Renewable Energy by 2025. However, both mitigation and adaptation targets are conditional on external financial support.

Samoa’s second NDC outlines a coherent mitigation strategy, which is closely aligned with overarching development objectives. ‘Samoa’s Low Emission Development Strategy’ (2022-2032) and ‘Samoa’s NDC Implementation Roadmap & Investment Plan’ (2021) were also launched in the last quarter of 2022. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in articulating a comprehensive summary of cost adaptation plans at the national level. Mitigation strategies focus on renewable energy expansion and tax reforms, while adaptation efforts require better integration of climate risk assessments and consistent cost-benefit analysis.

The Government recently completed its First Biennial Update Report (BUR) in 2023. The report highlights the work done to reduce emissions through mitigation measures such as increasing awareness, strengthening institutions, and preparing and implementing policies and plans. Samoa also completed its fourth GHG inventory under the Third National Communication to the UNFCCC. This report will be released soon.
CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND THE BLUE ECONOMY

Samoa plays an active role in global discussions concerning vital matters related to sustainable development in SIDS such as climate change and ocean preservation, advocating for improved access to financial resources and technological support to enhance resilience and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Additionally, through its term as Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Samoa continues to advocate on behalf of SIDS on the call for worldwide efforts to curb GHG emissions, elevate funding for climate adaptation initiatives, and promote sustainable practices for managing the oceans.

While the country is highly vulnerable to climate change, its readiness levels remain low. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects that adaptation-related expenditure in Samoa, for transportation, flood mitigation, water and sanitation, the environment, agriculture and fisheries, and early warning systems, will be approximately 426 million USD by 2026 (2022-2026), or about 11 per cent of GDP. Expenditure to improve resilience in the transport sector is estimated to reach 231 million USD, while agricultural and fisheries adaptation would cost 22 million USD.

Preserving the health of the oceans not only contributes to climate change adaptation but also underscores its importance. The operationalisation of nature-based solutions (NBs) can harness ecosystem services and biodiversity for resilience and SOS (2020 – 2030) includes an ecosystem-based approach to adaptation. For instance, the restoration of mangroves can serve as a barrier against storm surges.

Decarbonisation stands as a crucial strategy for Samoa to mitigate its economic vulnerabilities. Despite Samoa’s GHG emissions showing a consistent increase since the 20th century, they remain a minimal fraction of global emissions. In its latest NDC, Samoa aims to reduce emissions by 26 per cent by 2030. This commitment necessitates decarbonizing the energy sector, which is the primary source of its GHG emissions. This would also help Samoa alleviate a significant economic vulnerability, given its heavy dependence on fossil fuel imports. Though contributions to global emissions are extremely low, Samoa is still committed through its ‘Low Emissions Development Strategy’ (LEDS) 2022/2032 to the call to reduce emissions and ensure global temperatures stay below 1.5 degrees.

Decarbonising maritime transport is a central aspect of Samoa's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint. As of 2019, energy and agriculture contributed to over 50 per cent of Samoa's emissions, with transport emissions, particularly from the maritime sector, being a significant portion. Although the adoption of green maritime transport in Samoa is still in its early stages, there are emerging initiatives to facilitate the transition. For instance, in 2023, the Government of Japan, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), allocated 15.5 million USD to accelerate the electrification of transport and explore low-carbon propulsion systems in Samoa.

WAY FORWARD

Samoa is progressing well on climate action, particularly due to progressive work on Disaster Risk Management and climate resilience. Moving forward, Samoa’s strategy to advance SDG 13 involves a multifaceted approach that integrates adaptation, mitigation, and international cooperation. Firstly, bolstering resilience remains a cornerstone of Samoa’s climate action agenda. Samoa will continue to enhance its capacity to withstand climate impacts through improved infrastructure, robust early warning systems, and sustainable land-use.
practices. This includes further investment in coastal protection measures and promoting climate-smart agricultural techniques to safeguard food security aligned with the priorities of Samoa’s Climate Change Policy.

Secondly, Samoa remains committed to efforts that support the reduction of GHG emissions and its 100 per cent renewable energy targets through exploring new renewable energy sources and technology. Despite multiple programs and projects targeting the reduction of emissions, more long-term efforts are needed to significantly reduce these emissions, noting that this is an area Samoa is currently regressing on under SDG13. Scaling-up investments in solar, wind, and hydroelectric power will not only mitigate emissions but also enhance energy security and foster economic development. Continued support for energy efficiency measures across sectors will further contribute to Samoa’s low-carbon transition.

Moreover, Samoa recognizes the importance of international collaboration and partnerships in addressing global climate challenges. As an active participant in regional and international climate fora, Samoa advocates for equitable climate solutions that prioritize the needs of vulnerable countries like SIDS and takes a leadership role in this area as the Chair for AOSIS. Strengthening partnerships with development agencies, multilateral organizations, and Pacific Island nations coupled with strengthened resource mobilization to support implementation is crucial to bolster collective efforts towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Looking ahead, mainstreaming climate considerations into national policies and development planning remains pivotal. Samoa will integrate climate resilience across key sectors such as agriculture, water management, and urban planning to ensure sustainable growth and safeguard livelihoods. Public awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives will also play a crucial role in fostering a culture of climate resilience and empowering local communities to actively participate in climate action.

In conclusion, Samoa's way forward on SDG 13 is defined by proactive adaptation strategies, ambitious mitigation targets, and active international engagement. By leveraging its unique strengths and collaborating with global partners, Samoa aims to build a resilient and sustainable future that safeguards its natural resources and enhances the well-being of its people in the face of a changing climate.
The Prosperity SDG cluster comprises

- Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities
- Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions


Overview of the cluster

**For SDG 7** is on target for access to energy services, and investing in energy infrastructure, while regressing on the target for international cooperation on energy. As per the 2021 Census, there has been a slight drop in access to electricity compared to the 2019 levels, due to increased population. A total of 2213 households in Samoa use electricity as their primary reliance for cooking, while 2220 use biogas stoves. Samoa's National Climate Report Card highlights that as of 2022, Samoa’s total renewable energy sources account for 45 per cent of the total installed national capacity. This is made up of hydro (50 per cent), solar (46 per cent), biomass, and wind (4 per cent). Samoa Energy Sector Plan supports Samoa’s energy transition efforts, aiming to strengthen and promote renewable energy infrastructure and reduce Samoa’s reliance on imported fossil fuels.

**SDG 8** is limited, with targets for economic productivity and innovation, labour rights and a safe working environment and access to financial services requiring acceleration, and regression for per capita economic growth and aid for trade. As per the latest Samoa Labour Force Survey (2022), gross monthly wages have increased by 353 WST from 2017 to 2022. Inequalities among genders remain, with males' average gross monthly wages increasing by 368 WST from 2017 to 2022, while females’ decreased to 319 WST. The definition of informal and formal work remains unclear given there has been no consolidated work to formalize the definition for these terms to overcome the challenge, and limitations in the capturing of data on labour markets.
Similarly, SDG 9 indicates limited progress on research and development, and access to ICT and the internet, while regressing on infrastructure development, sustainable and inclusive industrialization, and resilient infrastructure. The ‘Samoa National Broadband Highway’ (SNBH), the Government network linking Government offices is being strengthened to enhance information flows and foster coordination. For industrial development, manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP and per capita decreased to 5.5 per cent in 2022, recording a 3 per cent decrease since 2018. As per the latest Samoa Labour Force and Child Labour Survey (2022), manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment also reduced by 0.8 per cent, going from 6.8 per cent in 2017 to 6.0 per cent in 2022.

For SDG 10 baseline data from 2018 highlights significant regional disparities. Targets on fiscal and social protection policies, regulation of financial markets, safe migration and mobility, and resource flows for development are making limited progress and stimulus is needed. Inclusive global governance and special and differential treatment are deteriorating. Efforts to address these inequalities include social protection programmes and initiatives to enhance access to education and healthcare in remote areas. A ‘Minimum Wage Policy’ aiming to ensure fair wages for workers has been developed and is currently awaiting Cabinet approval.

For SDG 16 the reduction of violence and related deaths, public access to information and capacity to prevent violence are on track. While there are no cases of human trafficking in the country, Samoa has a National Security Council with a mandate over the ‘National Security Policy Implementation Strategy’ in place which aims to address human, border, and cyber security. Inclusive decision-making is progressing but needs hastening, while justice for all, and effective institutions are in reverse trend. Samoa has made progress in strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks, enhancing transparency, and promoting good governance. Efforts to reduce violence, particularly against women and children, have been a focus, with initiatives such as the ‘National Policy on Family Safety’ set in place. Continued attention to strengthening institutions and ensuring justice for all remains essential.
**Figure 6: SDG 16 overview**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>Target 2030</th>
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<tr>
<td>16.1.1 Intentional homicides</td>
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<td>16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths</td>
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<td>16.2.2 Detected victims of human trafficking</td>
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<td>16.3.2 Unsentenced detainees</td>
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<td>16.4.2 Seized small arms and light weapons recorded and traced</td>
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<td>16.6.1 Government expenditure</td>
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<td>16.7.1 Population representativity in public institutions</td>
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<td>16.9.1 Birth registration</td>
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<td>16.10.1 Violence against journalists, trade unionists and human rights advocates</td>
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<td>16.a.1 National Human Rights institutions</td>
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Source: Produced by SBS using National SDG Tracker
OVERVIEW

Overall, Samoa remains a peaceful country with very few incidences of gun violence and homicides, and no reported cases of human trafficking. However, challenges remain with persistent cases of violence against women and children and limited availability of mental health services.

Figure 6 shows the progress made towards each indicator with sufficient data for Goal 16. It further indicates areas where Samoa is on track to reach 2030 targets: no reported cases of conflicted-related deaths (16.1.2), no detected victims of human trafficking (16.2.2), and no violence against journalists, trade unionists, and human rights advocates (16.10.1). Samoa also has a National Human Rights Institution, the Office of the Ombudsman with a mandate to promote and protect human rights for all (16.a.1).

Areas that are regressing for this Goal include indicator 16.1.1, due to an increase in intentional homicides, although numbers are still small; indicator 16.3.2, because of a significant increase in unsentenced detainees; and 16.6.1, due to an increase in the mismatch of approved budget and actual Government expenditure.

Access to information (target 16.10) is closely linked to the right to freedom of expression, which is guaranteed under Article 13 of the Constitution as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Samoa ratified in 2008. The right to access information is not explicitly guaranteed under domestic legislation, there are however efforts to progress this indicator with a draft ‘Freedom of Information Policy’ currently being reviewed, which is led by the Government through the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. Further initiatives on ensuring public access to information have been implemented by the Knowledge Society Initiative, supported by the India-UN Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and UNDP.

In relation to the promotion and enforcement of non-discriminatory laws and policies (target 16b), the Government of Samoa accepted 112 out of the 145 Human Rights recommendations received (77 per cent) for its Third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2021. These include recommendations related to combating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; consideration of the possibility of adopting legislation on disability to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life; and the adoption of the Child Care and Protection Bill. In May 2024, Samoa ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment. The Convention aims to protect all workers from physical, psychological, and sexual harm at work. To complement the implementation of the Convention, the ‘Labour and Employment Relations Amendment Act’ was introduced in 2023 and includes new sections on harassment and sexual harassment, including definitions thereof.

The ‘Samoa National Anti-Corruption Policy and Strategy’ (FY 24-25 – FY 28-29) was launched in June 2024 to put in place anti-corruption measures to improve public accountability and public sector efficiency and productivity. The implementation of the policy is led by the Samoa Public Service Commission and this work links directly to efforts to progress on target 16.5 - Reduce Corruption.

In view of promoting effective, accountable, and transparent institutions (target 16.6), the Samoa Public Service also launched the ‘Talofa With a Smile’ Campaign in 2023 in order to promote better customer service delivery and thereby achieving customer satisfaction and trust within the Public Service. Since the launch of the campaign, comments received through customer feedback boxes indicate generally high satisfaction, except for the health service.

Customary and community-based justice can contribute to communal safety and peace, including through crime prevention and
management. However, the Government of Samoa acknowledges the need for continued efforts to improve the harmonization of formal and customary justice systems, as well as to ensure a victims-centered approach in line with international human rights standards in both customary and formal justice systems.

In 2021, the ‘Samoa Law and Justice Sector Plan’ (2020 – 2025)\textsuperscript{62} was launched, with a focus on three main areas to strengthen the justice system:

1. Community safety and well-being - Prioritizing crime prevention and crime management

2. Access to justice - Improving access to justice systems and harmonizing the governance and integrity of customary and formal justice systems

3. Border security and national safeguards - Enhancing border security and national safeguards through good governance principles and respect for the rule of law.

The Law and Justice Sector Plan is part of the Government’s broader efforts to achieve SDG 16 on strong institutions. The Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration plays a key role in implementing this plan and strengthening the justice system.

Although the rise in intentional homicide is marginal, it raises concerns, as Samoa is a peaceful country with strong religious ties and communal values. As of 2018, the country registered 6.5 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, primarily male (ale (0.5 female, 6.0 male)\textsuperscript{63}. This figure rose to 12 per 100,000. While numbers are very low, this needs considerable attention to ensure the soundness and security of the people of Samoa and it calls for the enhancement of public fund allocation to mental health issues.

The continued mismatch between the original approved budget and expenditure may undermine the public financial management system and thereby affect the credibility of institutions developed to ensure effectiveness, accountability, and transparency at all levels. Continued audit of Government expenditure and implementation of audit recommendations to ensure that allocated funds are used for their intended purposes unless re-allocated for pressing national issues such as emergencies have been the efforts of the Government towards ensuring sound public financial management tenets.

Women’s participation in national and local governance is progressing, with more than half of senior executive roles in Government held by women. According to the Public Service Commission Annual Report FY 2021-2022, women in executive positions account to 59.1 per cent of the total senior executive roles in the Government\textsuperscript{64}. The constitutional requirement that 10 per cent of parliamentarians should be women was met in the 2016 election and has been improved or increased in the recent 2021 election, moving from five out of fifty (10 per cent) female members of parliament in 2016 to six out of fifty-one (11.8 per cent), following the 2021 Elections\textsuperscript{65}, which has resulted in an added number of parliamentarians from the original 51 to 53 to ensure the representation of women MPs in parliament. Similarly, three out of thirteen cabinet ministers are female (23.1 per cent) in 2021, showing an increase from 15.3 per cent (two out of thirteen) in 2016.

In December 2020, the Parliament passed three bills, which amended the Constitution and brought changes to the judicial system. As a result, the judicial system currently has two parallel courts of equal standing: one to deal with criminal and civil matters, and the other with customary land and titles. The possibility of appealing the decision of the Land and Titles Court of Appeal and Review Court to the Supreme Court has been removed, and is an ongoing matter of discussion, particularly with regard to the Supreme Court’s jurisdiction for violations of people’s human rights as guaranteed in the...
Constitution. There are also ongoing challenges in the establishment of the Land and Titles High Court due to the shortage of qualified candidates.

CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS (CRVS)

An efficient birth registration system is the key to a solid CRVS System, which in turn creates the foundation for a robust national digital identity programme in Samoa.

According to the latest data (MICS 2019-20), 67 per cent of children in Samoa under the age of five years have their birth registered with civil registration authorities. The Government of Samoa has been working with Development Partners (ESCAP, UNICEF, UNDP, and SPC) on several initiatives to strengthen the CRVS system and identify disparities in the completeness of civil registration. About 19 per cent of mothers of unregistered children did not know how to register them, whilst whooping 81 per cent knew how to do so but still did not register their children. Children without birth registration may have limited access to essential health, education, and legal services.

To ensure that children under five are registered, the Government of Samoa through SBS and in collaboration with UNDP and other partners including SPC and ESCAP has made efforts to strengthen the CRVS and reinforce the commitment towards universal birth registration in Samoa.

In 2023, Samoan CRVS stakeholders embarked on conducting a CRVS Inequality Assessment led by the SBS, with support from ESCAP to examine who is being left behind from birth and death registration. The assessment showed that children under the age of one have the lowest rates of registration across all factors examined (41 per cent), increasing to around 80 per cent by age five, when children reach school enrolment age. Regional disparities are also pronounced with Savai‘i exhibiting the lowest registration rates (some districts reporting rates as low as 4 per cent). On the main island of Upolu, registration rates decrease with increasing distance from the registration office in the capital, Apia. Children from the poorest households are less likely to have their birth registered, which is especially marked among children aged less than one year, compared to children aged under five years. 25 per cent of children under age 1 residing in the poorest households have their birth registered, compared to 62 per cent of the children living in the richest households.

The current birth registration system is a three-step process that puts the responsibility to complete registration solely on parents who must submit the original birth notification form (B10 form) to process the registration. The system lacks sufficient control mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the birth registration process. For instance, there is no formal way for the Birth, Death, and Marriage (BDM) division of SBS to follow up with parents on delayed registration regardless of birth notification. B10 forms do not include the contact details of parents, and BDM is left to wait for parents to come to them. Practically, a lack of awareness of the importance of birth registration and unclear information on the birth registration process can discourage parents from registering their newborns.

To overcome these challenges, the Government of Samoa is considering removing the current 15 WST registration and issuance fee for birth certificates for children registered within three months of birth. This is accompanied by continued mobile registration campaigns at the doorstep of the communities, allowing registry staff to be stationed at hospitals to help capture the births on site, and mandating the formal registration of children for school enrolment.

SAMOA AUDIT OFFICE

Having completed the audit of the preparedness of Samoa to reach the SDGs Samoa Audit Office (SAO) has shifted its focus to the implementation by all auditees. This combines the traditional financial audits and the new
operational audits comprising of the audit of compliance, performance audit, environmental audit, information technology audit, special audit of fraud, abuse, waste, and corruption, audit of national integrity and security, and audit of progression of Sustainable Development Goals and national goals.

One of the important functions of the SAO, which is mandated under the Audit Act 2013 is the Pre-Audit Function. This scrutinizes all the payments and each transaction made by the Government of Samoa. This ensures that all transactions along with SDG-related transactions go through the Financial Management Information System for vetting before the payment is made.

SAO also audits the financial side of climate change programmes or activities in line with involved Ministries and Agencies’ planned outputs and outcomes through project audits. For instance, the ‘Economy-Wide Adaptation of Climate Change’ (EWACC), the IMPRESS (Improving the Performance and the Reliability of Renewable Energy Power System in Samoa), the Samoa Agriculture Competitiveness Enhancement Project (SACEP), and other related climate change projects that are scattered across all Government ministries and agencies.

The office is currently engaged with Global Cooperative Performance Audit on Climate Change Adaptation Actions (CCAA) spearheaded by INTOSAI Working Group on Environmental Audit (WGEA) and INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI). The audit is now in the execution phase with the Ministry of Natural Resources as the overarching agency leading climate change adaptation actions in Samoa. The objective of this audit is to assess how effectively the Government of Samoa (MNRE & MWCSD) has ensured the sustainability of specific activities related to the protection of communities' physical assets and promoting resilient livelihoods, which were implemented as part of the EWACC Project.
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN / NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTION

The Office of the Ombudsman was established as a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in 2013 and was accredited with A-status in 2016 in recognition of its work as an independent institution to promote and protect the human rights of everyone in Samoa. It has undertaken important work to engage with communities to assess and provide recommendations on issues such as family violence, the impact of COVID-19 on human rights, the rights of persons with disabilities, climate change, and the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

The Office of the Ombudsman also continues to advise the public on matters related to good governance, investigate practices of maladministration in Government agencies, and conduct investigations concerning the abuse of power by law enforcement agencies.

However, human resource and financial constraints remain an ongoing challenge to effectively implement the office work with the Ombudsman position being vacant since 2023. At the margins of the Pacific Island Leaders Forum Meeting in Cook Islands in November 2023, the Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon. Fiamē Naomi Mataʻafa, highlighted the importance of NHRIs and expressed commitment to strengthening it.

WAY FORWARD

While Samoa has made significant strides in addressing different issues related to SDG 16 indicators, a strategic approach combining legislative reform, community engagement, and institutional strengthening will be essential to continue progressing.

Samoa aims to foster a culture of peace and inclusivity through education and awareness campaigns that promote tolerance, conflict resolution skills, and respect for human rights, adding a layer of additional security and deterrent for crime within the village communities. Efforts to empower local communities to participate in decision-making processes and ensure their voices are heard in governance structures will also strengthen democratic institutions and promote accountability. Increased focus and investment must continue at the community level to address all violence, particularly violence against women and children. Limited community programs are in place to counsel those who commit domestic violence for example, and more resources are needed to increase the coverage of such programs. There is also a lack of mental health support facilities, which must be addressed.

Ongoing institutional strengthening is necessary to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of SDG 16 targets. This includes bolstering the capacity of governmental bodies, such as the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, anti-corruption authorities, Samoa’s Audit Office and the Ombudsman to perform their roles impartially and effectively. Investing in training programs, and technological advancements, and fostering partnerships with CSOs and international stakeholders can further enhance institutional capabilities.

Lastly, regional and international cooperation should be pursued to exchange best practices, access resources, and collaborate on regional security issues, particularly in areas such as transnational crime and environmental protection.

In summary, Samoa’s progress on SDG 16 hinges on comprehensive legislative reforms, community empowerment, institutional capacity-building, technological innovation, and international cooperation. By adopting a holistic approach that addresses these dimensions, Samoa can make significant strides towards achieving sustainable peace, justice, and strong institutions for all its citizens.
Through traditional governance structures like the village council - fono, partnerships are formed between community leaders and residents to address local challenges, promote development initiatives, and preserve cultural heritage. Principles of reciprocity and hospitality extend to interactions with foreign partners and organizations. Samoa actively engages in diplomatic relations and international cooperation to address global challenges, share knowledge and experiences, and access resources and expertise to support national development efforts.
The country’s implementation efforts for SDG 17, which focuses on strengthening global partnerships to support and achieve the ambitious targets set out in the SDGs, reflect both progress and ongoing challenges. Figure 7 above shows the progress being made against each indicator with sufficient data for Goal 17. There are many areas where Samoa is on track to reach the 2030 targets:

- **17.1.1:** Thanks to a significant increase in Government revenue;
- **17.5.1:** Deriving from having implemented and adopted investment and promotion regimes;
- **17.8.1:** Significant increase in internet users;

Areas where regression has taken place, include indicator 17.2.1, due to a reduction in overall ODA; 17.3.1, because of a significant drop in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows; 17.4.1, due to the increase in debt service; 17.7.1, attributable to a reduction in total funding for environmentally sound technologies; and 17.9.1 ascribed to a significant drop in ODA for technical cooperation.

### Figure 7: SDG 17 overview

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**OVERVIEW**

The country’s implementation efforts for SDG 17, which focuses on strengthening global partnerships to support and achieve the ambitious targets set out in the SDGs, reflect both progress and ongoing challenges. Figure 7 above shows the progress being made against each indicator with sufficient data for Goal 17. There are many areas where Samoa is on track to reach the 2030 targets:

- **17.1.1:** As a result of have effective monitoring frameworks in place, in support of the SDGs;
- **17.16.1:** As a result of have effective monitoring frameworks in place, in support of the SDGs;
- **17.18.2:** Statistical legislation in place;
- **17.18.3:** A national strategy for the development of statistics in place;
- **17.19.2:** Significant increases in both birth and death registration.
Finance

Samoa has made strides in mobilizing financial resources to support sustainable development. However, there remains a need for enhanced domestic resource mobilization and international support. The country’s reliance on external aid underscores the importance of developing robust mechanisms for domestic revenue collection. The most recent data indicate that Samoa continues to depend significantly on ODA to fund its development programmes.

On a fiscal year basis, grants received by the Government of Samoa fell from 203 million USD to 148 million USD in FY 2020-21 but then increased to the FY 2019-2020 figure in the following period, remaining above pre-pandemic levels. The expansion in FY2020/21 was driven by an increase in ODA from 56.07 million USD in 2020 to 72.73 million USD in 2021. However, in 2022, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) reported that ODA to Samoa fell to 58.07 million USD.

Nonetheless, domestic revenue efforts have been bearing fruit. The Government’s tax revenue increased from 20 per cent of GDP in 2010 to over 25 per cent of GDP in 2022. While prior progress has been due to increases in the value-added on goods and services tax (VAGST), excise taxes, reduction in personal income tax exemptions, and a winding down of a tax credit for investment in hotels, the continued expansion in tax revenue since 2020 has occurred in part because of higher import prices, resilience in consumption and formal sector wages related to the post-pandemic increase in inflation. Samoa’s tax revenue in FY 2021-22 was 25.4 per cent of GDP, compared to 25 per cent of GDP in FY 2020-21, and around 6.1 per cent above the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) 2021 revenue to GDP average. Samoa’s strong revenue performance during and after the pandemic is also attributed to the Government’s tax cuts restraint; the rollout of electronic fiscal devices (Tax Invoicing and Monitoring System) which boosted VAGST and corporate income tax revenue; and buoyant remittances which supported revenue from taxes based on consumption and imports.

Samoa’s rebounding tourism and increased GDP growth, and higher revenue performance combined with the Government’s under-expenditure contributed to a fiscal surplus of 5.4 per cent of GDP in FY 2022 and a lower debt ratio of 43.7 per cent in FY 2022. The surplus was converted to debt service payments as reflected in total interest and amortization outlays which increased from 30 million WST to 63 million WST in FY 2021-22. It should also be noted that Samoa participated in an 18-months Debt Service Suspension Initiative by G-20 countries in 2020 and 2021. This represented an increase in the debt service to export of goods and services ratio from 11.4 per cent to 23 per cent, respectively. The Government’s Medium Term Debt Management Strategy FY 2021-22 – FY 2025-26 prioritises concessional borrowing, for loans to include at least a 35 per cent grant element, and positive economic returns to cover interest and payment costs.

With an increase in seasonal workers abroad, remittances, as reflected in private transfers were up 24 million USD from 185.9 million USD in FY 2020-21 and 54.8 million USD to 264.7 million USD, thereby remaining strong. Underpinned also by increased support for families, remittances to Samoa rose from around 22 per cent of GDP in 2019 to 33 per cent of GDP in 2022, the second highest in the region. On the other hand, net direct investment from foreign sources experienced consecutive declines of 6.5 million USD and 5.3 million USD in FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23, respectively. In percent of GDP terms, the foreign direct investment inflows were 0.8 per cent and 0.6 per cent, respectively.

Samoa Labour Mobility Schemes box

Labour mobility is a crucial component of Samoa’s economy and community development. Initiated by the Government of Samoa in collaboration with the Australian and New Zealand Governments, its objective is to support the most vulnerable individuals and families while enhancing Samoa’s workforce skills through the opportunities provided and boosting the economy and their social well-being through remittances.
Under this scheme, there is an annual cap of 6,000 of the most vulnerable workers mobilised under the New Zealand labour mobility schemes and an additional cap of 6,000 of the most vulnerable workers to be mobilised annually under the Australian labour mobility schemes. However, this quota is usually not met each year due to various limitations presented by the programme.

The scheme is expected to:

► Enhance security and protection of Samoan workers while deployed.

► Enforce employers to provide enhanced safety measures.

► Fully disclose contracts and information on wages and deductions.

► Cover travel and recruitment costs, housing, and pastoral care.

► Ensure that all matters pertaining to the administration of schemes in-country are channelled via the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labour.

► Enhance circular migration: Return workers without offering them residency opportunities.

► Set up a licensing process to ensure oversight of the involvement of private recruiters.

► Mobilise additional Liaison Officers near farm sites.

This is also an opportunity for Samoa to strengthen partnerships with New Zealand and Australia and support the enhancement of technical and vocational education to meet the demands of overseas markets.

**Technology**

The use of technology is crucial for Samoa’s development. The proportion of individuals using the internet has been a key focus, with efforts to enhance digital infrastructure across the country. Despite improvements, challenges remain in ensuring equitable access to technology, particularly in rural areas where connectivity is limited. In 2019, 73.3 per cent of households had access to some form of internet connection. However, internet access varied considerably between sub-regions, being the highest in Apia.
and North-West Upolu at 80.4 per cent and 75.4 per cent respectively, and the lowest in the rest of Upolu (70.5 per cent) and Savaii (66.8 per cent)\textsuperscript{70}.

Enhancing the use of enabling technology, particularly information and communications technology (ICT), is the Government’s priority to foster innovation and inclusive development.

### Capacity building

Capacity building is integral to Samoa’s development strategy. The country has been striving to align its national development plans with the SDGs. The PDS highlights the Government’s commitment to building capacity at various levels to implement and monitor the SDGs effectively. Nevertheless, data scarcity continues to impede comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of progress, necessitating further investment in statistical capacity building.

### Trade

Samoa’s trade policies are geared towards enhancing its participation in the global market. Efforts to promote a rules-based, non-discriminatory trading system have been ongoing. The government has adopted measures to increase exports, particularly from the agricultural and fisheries sectors, which are vital for the economy\textsuperscript{71}. In FY 2022-23, Samoa’s trade balance narrowed to -11.6 per cent of GDP from -14.6 per cent of GDP in FY 2021-22, primarily because of the increase in remittances which partially offset higher imports. Exports of goods and services increased from 98.6 million USD in FY 2020-21 to 102.2 million USD in FY 2021-22, despite the cessation of tourism during those periods.

### National Policy Coherence

The National Policy Coordination Committee (NPCC), formed in 2018, is a crucial advisory body facilitating collaboration and policy dialogue among Government ministries to advance the government’s comprehensive agenda. Composed of members of the Public Administration Steering Committee, the NPCC plays a pivotal role in aligning national policies with regional and international strategies, including the SDGs. It reviews and provides constructive feedback on policies before Cabinet submission, fosters open discussion on national issues, and enhances coordination among government agencies. As of 2020, the NPCC has endorsed 34 policies and frameworks across all Government sectors.

### Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

The formation and strengthening of partnerships are critical to Samoa’s SDG implementation. The country has seen substantial engagement from various stakeholders, including Government agencies, civil society, and international organizations. These partnerships are crucial for resource mobilization, knowledge sharing, and implementing sustainable development initiatives. SDG localization has been a coordinated effort led by the Samoa SDGs Task Force.

With regards to partnerships for resource mobilisation, the Government has been engaged with the WB IDA, Asian Development Bank, Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Exim Bank (China), and the Government of Japan for the acquisition of non-concessional financing. Concessional financing has continued to be mainly from Australia and New Zealand.

### Debt Sustainability

Although Samoa’s debt-carrying capacity remains strong\textsuperscript{72}, debt risks are assessed to be high given the country’s vulnerability to natural disaster shocks and climate-related events. Evidence from the IMF’s debt sustainability assessment stress tests show that Samoa’s external debt stocks carry the greatest risks of breaching debt sustainability thresholds, while public debt stocks under stress fall just below the threshold. Mitigating the effect of potential shocks is the large portion of Samoa’s debt portfolio on concessional terms and accumulated cash reserves, which reached 14.6 per cent in FY 2022. Nonetheless, the Government will have to keep a watchful eye on its medium- to long-
term debt strategy to ensure it avoids breaches in debt sustainability.

Additionally, while Samoa’s high VAGST collection coupled with the inflationary environment helped usher in an expansion in tax revenues, the high VAGST has been a headwind to growth. Secondly, Samoa’s VAGST is the highest in the region at 25 per cent of GDP on average in 2021, relative to 19.3 per cent of GDP for other PICs. This implies that there is little room for further increases in VAGST and increased tax revenue from this source.

**ICT for Development**

Digital, technology, and innovation are crucial drivers for Samoa’s growth and development. The country has built strong foundations in infrastructure, digital government, regulation, business, and human capital, and it is systematically progressing in various aspects of digital transformation.

Digital connectivity has improved due to market liberalization and infrastructure investments, though last-mile connectivity remains challenging. Additionally, efforts to boost Samoa’s innovation ecosystem through incubators, entrepreneurship, and skill development need prioritization. Businesses in Samoa are gradually engaging with the digital and online economies, but face constraints such as limited credit access, connectivity issues, and digital skills gaps. Financial inclusion, particularly for women, is also an ongoing challenge.

Within the Government, digital adoption is growing as key services become digitalized. However, challenges persist in breaking down silos between teams, departments, and digital components. Clarifying the Government’s digital mandate and developing a comprehensive strategy will be crucial. While Samoa has good technical infrastructure, some of it remains underutilized.

Further digital transformation will require broader catalysts, including improved data standards and protection, such as open data structures and processes. Regulation of the digital economy is still developing, with opportunities to address competitive challenges in e-commerce and drive digital transformation. Prioritizing discussions, strategies, and actions around national cybersecurity is essential. Enhancing funding and procurement methods, and developing monitoring and analytics capabilities across the Government could yield positive effects for businesses, citizens, and the public sector.

Samoa’s digital economy has significant potential. While the foundations need strengthening, the country has excellent human capital, particularly in adult functional literacy, to leverage. Upskilling Samoans will be vital to achieving these ambitious goals, including developing advanced technical skills. A coordinated approach to digital skills, including engaging the digital diaspora, will be important. An inclusive digital economy can drive broader development and position Samoa as a digital leader.

**WAY FORWARD**

**Enhanced Domestic Resource Mobilization and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships**

Given Samoa’s continued dependence on aid, efforts must be made to further enhance domestic resource mobilization. This can include innovative financing mechanisms such as Public-Private Partnerships and blended finance, and broadening the tax base, where possible.

There also is a need to continue to engage and deepen relationships with partners including Governments, civil society, the private sector, and international organisations to leverage expertise and resources for sustainable financing.

**Strengthen Statistical Capacity**

Data scarcity remains a challenge that requires further attention and investment in statistical capacity building. This should include both strengthening the data collection process, but also focusing on data interpretation, going beyond the National Statistic Office.
Leveraging ICT to Increase Transparency

Samoa’s Tax Invoicing and Monitoring System (TIMS), which was rolled out in 2020, helped to boost VAGST collection, corporate tax revenue; and revenue from remittance-driven consumption and imports. TIMS was introduced as an initiative through the Ministry of Customs and Revenue to increase tax compliance; reduce tax evasion and the informal economy, and to capture all transactions happening within every business.

TIMS is a monitoring tool developed to increase compliance, reduce the grey economy and fight tax evasion. The Tax Administration Amendment Act 2020 was passed by Parliament giving effect to the Tax Administration (Tax Invoice Monitoring System) Regulations 2020 to regulate the installation, implementation and operation of TIMS.

Business taxpayers with an annual turnover of 200,000 WST per annum or more are required to install and use the Electronic Fiscal Device (EFD) and provide customers with instantly verifiable invoices or receipts.

Leveraging Technology for Development

Technology is an enabling driver for development and ‘last-mile’ connectivity issues must be addressed. Efforts to further boost innovation are needed through digital incubators and programs that support entrepreneurship and skill development. The digital economy has potential and ought to be supported by advancing the population’s technical skills. At the public sector level, a comprehensive digital strategy is needed to improve digital governance.
As of 2024, Samoa is navigating a critical path towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, marked by significant strides in sustainability, governance, and infrastructure. Central to Samoa's strategy is its commitment to the SDGs, which serve as a blueprint for prosperity that leaves no one behind. Efforts are concentrated on bolstering resilience to climate change impacts, a pressing concern given Samoa's vulnerability to natural disasters. Investments in renewable energy projects and sustainable agriculture underscore Samoa's dedication to environmental sustainability, ensuring economic stability and social equity.

In tandem with environmental goals, Samoa is enhancing governance structures to foster inclusivity and transparency. This includes advancing gender equality, empowering marginalized communities, and promoting accountable institutions. The strengthening of legal frameworks and civic engagement mechanisms are pivotal in ensuring that policies and programmes effectively address the needs of all Samoans, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Such initiatives not only uphold human rights but also contribute to building a robust foundation for sustainable development.

Infrastructure development forms another cornerstone of Samoa's roadmap to 2030, aimed at improving connectivity and accessibility across the islands. Investments in roads, telecommunications, and digital infrastructure are pivotal in bridging urban-rural divides and enabling equitable access to services and opportunities. Furthermore, Samoa's commitment to sustainable tourism aligns economic growth with cultural preservation, showcasing its rich heritage while promoting responsible tourism practices. By prioritizing these interconnected pillars—environmental sustainability, inclusive governance, and infrastructure development—Samoa is laying a resilient foundation for achieving its long-term development goals by 2030 and beyond.

Enhanced educational awareness, stronger institutional capacity, consistent policy frameworks, increased capital, innovation, and technology, solid regional cooperation, and partnerships among various stakeholders are needed to create an enabling environment for transformative solutions.

The work conducted by CSOs is crucial and needs continued collaboration with Government and Development Partners to ensure continuity and the alleviation of hardship. Dialogue between all sectors of society needs to be sustained to avoid duplication of projects and maximize reach to the most vulnerable. Running businesses in Samoa also needs a Whole-of-Society approach, as a reflection of the collective effort to ensure the success of new micro, small, and medium enterprises and foster economic growth and prosperity for all.
Samoa recognizes the importance of global partnerships in achieving the SDGs. The country has actively engaged in international cooperation and sought support from Development Partners to enhance its capacity to implement the SDGs. Efforts to mobilize resources, share knowledge, and build partnerships are ongoing, with a focus on aligning national priorities with global commitments. The effectiveness of these partnerships in driving progress towards the SDGs will be critical in the coming years.

Priority areas of work to be carried out through a Whole-of-Society and Whole-of-Government approach with the support of all ministries, SOEs and other public institutions, civil society, the private sector, academia, community representatives, regional and international organizations, the UN and other Development Partners include: i) enhanced technical capacities at the national level; ii) strengthen policy coherence and institutional arrangements; iii) capture and sharing of data; iv) and promote inclusivity in all levels of decision making.
Samoa's third VNR report highlights significant achievements and ongoing challenges in the country's pursuit of sustainable development. Overall, Samoa has made commendable progress in various sectors, particularly in environmental conservation, where initiatives like renewable energy projects and sustainable agriculture have bolstered resilience against climate change impacts. These efforts underscore Samoa's commitment to mitigating environmental risks while promoting economic stability and social well-being.

Moreover, Samoa's governance framework has seen notable advancements, emphasizing inclusivity, transparency, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. Strengthened legal and institutional capacities have enhanced the effectiveness of policies aimed at addressing inequality and promoting human rights across all sectors of society. Such strides not only reflect Samoa's dedication to good governance but also set a precedent for sustainable development rooted in equity and accountability.

Looking forward, Samoa remains steadfast in its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, striving to build a resilient and sustainable future where no one is left behind. By leveraging its cultural heritage, natural resources, and strategic partnerships, Samoa is poised to navigate these challenges with resilience and determination, ensuring progress towards its sustainable development aspirations. Samoa's third VNR report underscores its commitment to achieving the SDGs through integrated policies, sustainable practices, and inclusive governance at a pace it can effectively and sustainably manage and ensure no one is left behind. Despite challenges, Samoa remains resolute in its pursuit of a sustainable future where prosperity is shared equitably, leaving no one behind in the journey towards transformative development.
Validation Workshop: Samoa 3rd Voluntary National Review Report for SDG

1. Poinsettia Epati  Ministry of Education and Culture
2. Foumalu Ropati  Ministry of Education and Culture
3. Pesega Faavae  Samoa Life Assurance Corporation
4. Feagaiga Toleafoa  Samoa Life Assurance Corporation
5. Lydia Fatutoa  Samoa Victim Support Group
6. Pepe Tevaga  Samoa Victim Support Group
7. Faainu Fatutoa  Samoa Education Network
8. Leitu Latu  Samoa Education Network
9. Alaifea Laititi Belford Su'a  Sosaiete Faiaoga Samoa (Samoa Teachers Council)
10. Rosa Teese  Ombudsman Samoa
11. Tualapapa Maria Leota  Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters
12. Louis Schwalger  Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters
13. Taalolo u. Ainuu  Scientific Research Organization of Samoa
14. Faaea V Talilai  Scientific Research Organization of Samoa
15. Susana Tauaa  National University of Samoa
16. Faainuu Latu  National University of Samoa
17. Peresitene Kirifi  Ministry of Finance
18. Tero Uilelea  Ministry of Finance
19. Leumalealofa Faumui  Ministry of Finance
20. Funefeai Tupufia  Ministry of Finance
21. Miriama Elisaia  Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration
22. Leeliamalu Lapalapa  Women in Business Development Samoa
23. Oceanbaby Penitito  Samoa Audit Office
24. Annie Leitupo  Samoa Audit Office
25. Fiapito Alo  Samoa Audit Office
26. Cam Wendt  Ministry of Public Enterprise
27. Lenara Tupai Fui  Samoa Information Technology Association
28. Sarai F Tevita  Samoa Information Technology Association
29. Jocelynette Leilua  Brown Girl Woke
30. Dons Tulifau  Brown Girl Woke
31. Edward Enoka  Brown Girl Woke
32. Mele Maualaivao  UN Women Samoa
33. Ganasavea Tafeaga  Journalist Association of Western Samoa
34. Alanna Mapu  International Labour Organization
35. Fanolu’a Kenrick  Samoa Business Hub
36. Tovai Taulealo  Samoa Business Hub
37. Alapati Anoia  Samoa Family Health Association
38. Leapaga Moni  Samoa Family Health Association
39. Sailele A Mataafa  Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
40. Fefilo‘i Kerstin  Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
41. Malia Pisi  Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
42. Vatapuia Maiava  Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
44. Anton Tofa  Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
45. Evangel Esera  Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
46. Faanuu Lameko  Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
47. Pisepa Jr Hakai  Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
48. Cheryl Lei Sam  Public Service Commission
49. Rilanya Aoina  Public Service Commission
50. Gatoloai Tili Afamasaga  Public Service Commission
51. Tuliau Sara Faletoese Su’a  United Nations Population Fund
52. Faigalotu Taamilosaga  Samoa Bureau of Statistics
53. Papalii Benjamin Sila  Samoa Bureau of Statistics
54. Anamaria Saili  SkyeEye Samoa
55. Charles Salevai  Land Transport Authority
56. Mark Toimimiko  Land Transport Authority
57. Marperatina Aimaasu  Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labour
58. Tauatia Tuimauga  Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labour
59. Jason Ah Sue  Goshen Trust
60. Naomi Eshraghi  Goshen Trust
61. Taputu Reupena  Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet
62. Romario Pose  Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet
63. Fagalima Tuatagaloa  Accident Compensation Corporation
64. Alex Sua  Samoa Faafafine Association
65. Gustav Sua  Samoa Faafafine Association
66. Leota Toma  Loto Taumafai
67. Ruby Maiava  Samoa Qualification Authority
68. Sinei Falefita  Samoa Qualification Authority
69. Mary Talafaaoiti  Samoa Qualification Authority
70. Unaito Asi  Ministry of Health
71. Sisavaii Tagata  Ministry of Health
72. Lealataua Sophia  Ministry of Customs and Revenue
73. Kika Paiena  Central Bank of Samoa
74. Alofaifo Seleni  Central Bank of Samoa
75. Giovanni Kruger  Ministry of Police, Prison and Correction Services
76. Lotu Faavae Simamao  Ministry of Police, Prison and Correction Services
77. Nofoa Farani  Ministry of Police, Prison and Correction Services
78. Noelapomaiikalani Alatise  Ministry of Communication and Information Technology
79. Gene Keleuati  Ministry of Communication and Information Technology
80. Leaulu T Asiata  Aoga Fiamalamalama
81. Fiaavae S Tina  Aoga Fiamalamalama
82. Mary Collins  Aoga Fiamalamalama
83. Tuivasa Rodney  Samoa Red Cross Society
84. Calium Malifa  Samoa Red Cross Society
85. Feloi Manioa  Samoa Red Cross Society
86. Maseiga Sefo  Samoa Red Cross Society
87. Roland Setu  Samoa Tourism Authority
88. Isabella Patrick  Samoa Tourism Authority
89. Easter T. Leota  Samoa Tourism Authority
90. Hillier Pouesi  Samoa Blind Persons Association
91. Mataafa Faatino Utumapu  Nuanua o le Alofa (NOLA)
92. Asenati Semu  
   Nuanua o le Alofa (NOLA)
93. Khin Moe Aye  
   UNICEF
94. Hinnah Banse  
   Vodafone Samoa
95. Kordano Segegah  
   UNDP
96. Rosa Peniamina  
   UNDP
97. Filia Iosefa  
   UNDP - SCP
98. Thempe Kalua  
   UN RCO
99. Aterina Samasoni  
   UN RCO
100. Morita M Sapolu  
    UN RCO
101. Travis Mitchell  
    UN RCO
102. Sara Libera Zanetti  
    UN ESCAP
103. Junia Iuvale  
    Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
104. Marina Keil  
    Samoa Recycling & Waste Management Association
105. Maima Toma  
    Samoa Recycling & Waste Management Association
106. Danita Strickland  
    Conservation International
107. Samantha Kwana  
    Conservation International
108. Luna-Rossa Lomitusi Ape  
    Global Shapers
109. Olisana Mariner Hughes  
    Global Shapers
110. Tauiliili Vui  
    Samoa Farmers Association
111. Jinhua Zhang  
    UNEP
112. Kazumi Nakamura  
    IOM
113. John Sitagata  
    Ministry of Works Transport and Infrastructure
114. Mutaaga Isara  
    Samoa Chamber of Commerce and Industry
115. Emma Sinclair  
    Independent Water Schemes Association
116. Peseta Noumea Simi  
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
117. Justin Lima  
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
118. Fiona Lene  
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
119. Tau Jurgen Kappus  
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
120. Asiata Gerard Anapu  
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
121. Tiare Marumatakimanu  
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
122. Maestro Toma  
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
123. Elisara Elisara  
    Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
ENDNOTES


4 The fiscal year in Samoa begins on July 1st and ends on June 30th.


10 The 2024 HLPF’s theme is “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”.

11 UN DESA (2023) SDG Global Database. Available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg/

12 UN ESCAP (2024) Asia-Pacific SDG Gateway. Available at https://data.unescap.org/

13 See National SDG Tracker at https://data.unescap.org/stories/national-sdg-tracker


21 Lagi Keresoma at Talamua Online (2024) *Timely Financial Support for Students from the $1m District Development Project*. Available at https://talamua.com/2024/03/19/timely-financial-support-for-students-from-the-1m-district-development-project/


23 MGCI intends to track changes in green vegetation in mountain areas - i.e. forest, shrubs, trees, pastureland, cropland, etc. to monitor progress towards the mountain target.


26 In 2015, case data from SVSG found that 85% of 4.500 women survivors of violence who sought support from SVSG were unemployed.

27 SVSG was successful in its application to the European Commission in November 2023, to fund the Nofotane Samoa Social Enterprise (NSSE) Project (2024-2026).

28 Data from the 2023 HIES is still being analysed and its results have not been inputted into the National SDG Tracker yet. Current data refers to 2018 HIES https://www.sbs.gov.ws/2023-hies/


30 Extreme/absolute poverty is more appropriate for low-income countries. For Samoa, moderate/relative poverty is more appropriate (at 3.65 USD international poverty line).
31 Based on the Alkire-Foster method Samoa Bureau of Statistics (2022) *Samoa Multidimensional Poverty Index 2022*. Available at https://sbs.gov.ws/documents/social/mpi/Samoa_MPI_Report_2022.pdf Note that the MPI is based on 2018 data and will be updated once data from 2023 HIES is released.


34 There is a current review of this plan with the expected updated version to be available soon.


38 On Government expenditures for essential services, 20.4% goes to the health sector; 17.2% to education; 9.8% to social protection with a total of 47.4% as of 2023 https://www.sbs.gov.ws/documents/Governmen_Finance_Statistics/GFS-Report-Dec-Quarter-2023.pdf

39 The ‘Disability Benefit Scheme’, introduced in late 2021 and rolled out in mid-2022, provides a monthly cash allowance of 100 WST to anyone born with disabilities in Samoa until they turn 65 years old. Afterward, they are entitled to a pension fund of 125 WST monthly.


42 Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. *Samoa Agriculture & Fisheries Productivity and Marketing (SAFPROM)*. Available at https://www.maf.gov.ws/safprom/

43 Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, SAFPROM Progress Report, June 2024

44 Women in Business. Available at https://www.womeninbusiness.ws/

Samoa Ocean Strategy. Available at https://www.samoaocean.org/


Samoa Conservation Society. Available at https://samoaconservationsociety.wordpress.com/

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) has completed a GHG inventory, and a report will be published soon.


The ND-GAIN Country Index summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change in combination with its readiness. Samoa's climate change vulnerability is 0.507, ranking 143rd globally (out of 185 countries), and a climate change readiness of 0.439, ranking 84th globally (of 192 countries). https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/


The ‘Climate Action Pathways for Island Transport (CAP-IT): Accelerating the Decarbonisation of Samoa’s Land and Maritime Transport Sectors’ Project, in collaboration with the Ministry of Works Transport and Infrastructure (MWTI).

Samoa Knowledge Society Initiative. Available at https://samoaksi.ws/

https://www.psc.gov.ws/talofa-with-a-smile/


The main stakeholders in the Samoa CRVS system include the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Births, Deaths, and Marriages (BDM) Division within the Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS). MoH provides information on notification of births and deaths to BDM and the primary role of the BDM Division is to serve the public by registering vital events and providing birth, death, marriage, and divorce certificates.

The report of the audit of preparedness has already been submitted to Parliament and the Constitutional Office Committee (COC) of Parliament has already examined and scrutinized it calling all members of the SDG Taskforce to provide further evidence on the report. The COC has encouraged SAO to move into the audits of implementation and is looking forward to a report on the audit of implementation of SDGs to be tabled in Parliament in 2024.


ADB (2023) Samoa, Key Indicators. Available at https://data.adb.org/dataset/samoa-key-indicators

Based on the Composite Indicator Rating of 3.22 in March 2021 for Samoa (IMF 2023).
