

INFORMAL AND TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION IN SAMOA

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Executive Summary

Samoa has a rich history and culture that revolves around communal caregiving, a valued tradition that has sustained and protected its communities in the absence of a comprehensive and formal social protection policy framework. There are three traditional social protection mechanisms entrenched in Samoa's society according to evidence obtained from community focus group workshops: the *nu'u* (village), *aiga* (family) and *tuao'i* (neighbour). These mechanisms provide protection for the vulnerable groups identified for the study (i.e., women and youth, persons with disabilities, jobseekers, school dropouts, individuals and households recovering from disasters) during and after shocks.

Benefits and services provided to vulnerable groups under traditional protection mechanisms tend to be universal, non-discriminatory and independent of the amount of resources available to the provider, especially during a natural disaster. Under traditional mechanisms, social assistance is provided through cash and in-kind support, such as basic food items, clothing, drinking water, shelter and remittances. Remittances are perhaps the main benefit supporting traditional social protection mechanisms, and according to evidence gathered, are available immediately after disasters. Informal social protection mechanisms comprise of the church, community-based organisations (CBOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs). They too provide targeted and

universal protection for their members and broader communities. These informal mechanisms offer benefits similar to those provided under traditional mechanisms and additionally offer technical and specialised service required by their members.

While benefits from traditional and informal mechanisms are universal, their short-term availability limits their effectiveness and coverage. Such limitations have been amplified due to stagnant and low household income, rise of nuclear families, and the increasing frequency and severity of exogenous shocks. These trends converge with two main drivers of vulnerability for the targeted groups: unemployment and inadequate education. To bridge these protection gaps, the study developed a range of recommendations, with a focus on maximizing the potential of formal social protection mechanisms to complement the role of traditional and informal social protection mechanisms. These recommendations are based on the view that the traditional system has a place and role in the Samoan society despite its shortfalls, and that together, these protection instruments can, as part of the national social protection policy framework, strengthen and sustain the effective functioning of social protection of Samoa.

> **Strengthening traditional social protection for school dropouts**

- i. Responsible government authorities to facilitate awareness raising workshops for village councils to promote the establishment of a village fund to support low-income families with school dropouts.
- ii. Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) to provide awareness raising programmes for communities on the initiative to establish a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) pathway for students completing Year 11 and are not qualified or interested to continue to Years 12 and 13, per the core initiatives laid out in the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

> **Strengthening traditional social protection for persons with disabilities**

- i. Responsible government authorities to provide technical training and counselling for caretakers and other family members looking after persons with disabilities.
- ii. Responsible government authorities to promote community-based care groups for persons with disabilities through partnerships with women's committees (aualuma and faletua ma taus), CBOs and FBOs.

> **Strengthening informal social protection for households recovering from a disaster**

Government authorities, development partners and stakeholders may:

- i. consider tax and duty concessions on building materials to allow households recovering from a disaster to readjust quickly, as has been applied following the two cyclones Ofa and Val in 1990 and 1991.
- ii. work with Post School Education and Training (PSET) providers to provide TVET to villagers focusing on formal certification in disaster-resilient construction.
- iii. consider providing financial grant to assist targeted villagers participating TVET programmes on disaster-resilient construction under the support fund of the Education Sector Strategic Plan.
- iv. conduct training for households in the community on how to protect their properties when a natural disaster is expected.

> **Capacity development for aiga (family) and tuao'i (neighbour)**

Government authorities, development partners and stakeholders may:

- i. provide disaster prevention and response trainings and educate households on coping strategies, such as stockpiling food supplies and other materials.
- ii. work with village councils and members of the communities to identify the most vulnerable families and devise effective ways to assist them during a natural disaster.
- iii. facilitate training for communities on proper handling and evacuating of people with disabilities, pregnant women, elderlies and children during and after disasters.
- iv. educate communities on the likelihood of Gender-based Violence (GBV) occurring during disasters and other shocks, and how to remedy situations that may lead to such incidents.

> **Strengthening village governance and leadership**

Responsible government authorities and development partners are urged to:

- i. facilitate advocacy and awareness raising programmes on good leadership in the village.
- ii. facilitate advocacy and awareness raising programmes on the difficulties facing vulnerable groups and their families in the village and how the village as a community can assist.
- iii. facilitate and promote public-private partnership with village councils on welfare initiatives on education, employment and health.

Abbreviations

ACC	Accident Compensation Corporation
ACS	Accident Compensation Scheme
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CCCS	The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
CJCLDS	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
DMO	Disaster Management Office
FBO	Faith-based Organisation
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
ILO	International Labour Organization
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
MCIL	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour
MESC	Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture
MWCSD	Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development
NEOC	National Emergency Operation Centre
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NOLA	Nuanua o Le Alofa
NUS	National University of Samoa
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PSET	Post School Education and Training
RSE	Recognised Seasonal Employer
SBS	Samoa Bureau of Statistics
SCBS	Senior Citizens Benefit Scheme
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SNPF	Samoa National Provident Fund
SQA	Samoa Qualifications Authority
SSFSGS	Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme
SVSG	Samoa Victim Support Group
SWP	Seasonal Worker Programme
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

I. Introduction

This study probes the informal and traditional social protection landscape in Samoa and identifies protection gaps and emerging issues. In this study, informal social protection mechanisms refer to the church, community-based organisations (CBOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs), while traditional social protection mechanisms are strictly conceptualized as being culturally created and social capital-oriented. Providers of the three traditional social protection pillars identified in the study, *tuao'i* (neighbour), *aiga* (family) and *nu'u* (village), constitute a network of people practising communal support.

Between 1990 and the COVID-19 pandemic, Samoa experienced a number of exogenous shocks, including eight tropical cyclones, one tsunami, a taro blight, and a measles outbreak. The total damage of two severe cyclones in the early 1990s was estimated at SAT\$650m to SAT\$1.1b, equivalent to an estimate of four times the value of the total Gross Domestic Product (World Bank 2015). Adverse shocks also came with human costs, with the 2009 tsunami claiming 143 lives (Government of Samoa 2011) and the 2019 measles outbreak claiming 83 lives, where in both instances, the majority of victims were children.

The frequency and magnitude of shocks have placed traditional social protection mechanisms under considerable strain. In addition, rising costs of living and inequality,

urbanization, social norms shifts, the impact of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic are exerting unprecedented pressure on the effective functioning of traditional social protection mechanisms and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. For instance, in 2018, Samoans in vulnerable employment reached 32 per cent, above the Pacific average of 24.7 per cent (ILO 2019) while village women continue to face religious and socio-cultural barriers to leadership in communities and local and national governments (Pa'usisi 2019).

In light of these challenges, it is of vital importance to correctly identify where protection gaps lie for the most marginalized groups in the country. The realities and life cycle vulnerabilities of these groups are neither yet fully captured with disaggregated data nor addressed with targeted policy. To that end, this study assesses how formal social protection policies could complement and strengthen informal and traditional mechanisms. By mainstreaming the perspectives of the target groups, the study will add value to the policy design through an analysis on the issues facing women and youth, persons with disabilities, jobseekers, school dropouts, individuals and households recovering from disasters.

II. Study Data and Methodology

DATA REQUIREMENTS

The study analyses both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were obtained from community focus group workshops and interviews and capture the perception of communities on their experience of seeking protection from traditional social protection mechanisms before, during and after shocks. Quantitative data, on the other hand, provide background and insights on the circumstances of vulnerable groups identified in the study. Table 1 gives a brief outline of the data needed for the study, their collection tools and sources.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Community focus group seminars

This is one of the main tools of qualitative data collection considering the limited time and resources available for the study. Five seminars were conducted in the islands of Savai'i and Upolu, which were attended by more than 100 community members representing each of the vulnerable groups targeted for the study (see Annex 1 for summary of participants). Two community focus group seminars were held in Savai'i and three in Upolu. The first group for Savai'i included three villages – Asau, Falealupo and Vaisala – that were severely devastated by

TABLE 1: TYPES OF DATA, DATA SOURCE AND DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Types of data	Focus	Source	Tool
Qualitative data	Focuses on the views and experiences of community affected by past shocks	Communities most affected by shocks; Government officials; CBO representatives	Community focus groups; Seminars; Interviews
Quantitative data	Focuses on background data that reveal the condition of targeted vulnerable groups.	Reports by Samoa Bureau of Statistics; UN reports; Academic journals	Literature and desk review

cyclones Ofa and Val. The second session invited villagers from the eastern side of Savai'i, which included Salelologa, Tafua and Salelavalu. For Upolu, the first seminar targeted villages near urban areas while the second session focused on villages in rural areas, including those affected by the 2009 tsunami. The third seminar in Upolu brought together local experts of the Samoan culture and tradition as well as those working with targeted vulnerable groups.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis with representatives of the government, non-government organisations (NGOs) and stakeholders working closely with vulnerable groups (see Annex 1 for the summary of interviewees).

Literature review

A literature review focused on previous studies on social protection in Samoa and other Pacific Island Countries (PICs). The review covered Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS) surveys, research materials of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Samoa Office and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), articles from academic journals and reports produced by government agencies.

Technical committee

The Technical Committee and Participating United Nations Organizations of the Social

Protection Joint Programme provided valuable insights and guided the study towards its key objectives. The consultations were crucial in refining the drafts of the report and producing the final version.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main constraint concerns establishing an adequate level of diversity and representation in the findings to be appropriate for and representative of the Samoan community. With a sample of just over 100 community members, the collected accounts might not reflect what other communities encountered during and after natural shocks. The second issue concerns intersectional vulnerability, whereby accounting for and isolating each vulnerability remained a challenge. To account for this caveat, participants of community focus group seminars were guided to share their experiences based on unique and multiple vulnerabilities.

III. Concepts and Definitions

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Among various interpretations on social protection, the definition provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO) is most relevant to the context of the study, due to its emphasis on lifecycle vulnerabilities: social protection is a “set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability across the lifecycle. Social protection includes nine main areas: child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, health protection, old age benefits and survivors’ benefits” (ILO 2017: 2). Lifecycle vulnerabilities refer to the multiple vulnerabilities an individual may face throughout their lifetime. Policies responding to these vulnerabilities are said to protect individuals from ‘cradle to grave’ per the findings of the 1942 Beveridge Report (Atkinson 1999). In practical terms, social protection provided by the state is considered formal, linked to the view that the state is a formal institution with written rules, instructions, processes and structures (Pugh et al. 1968; Kaufmann and Van Witteloostuijn 2012). This means any form of social protection outside of the perimeter of the state is regarded as non-state, informal or traditional.

INFORMAL AND TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE SAMOAN CONTEXT

The terms informal and traditional social protection tend to be applied interchangeably to a range of protections provided by non-state actors, such as the church, non-governmental organisations and other cultural mechanisms. During consultations, a majority of those interviewed discredited the term “informal” to illustrate traditional or culturally-derived protection. Therefore, this study makes a distinction between the two terms and refers to traditional social protection as being directly linked to the Samoan cultural values, norms and practices, or *fa’asamoa*. The analysis in the ensuing sections highlights the *tua’oi* (neighbour), *aiga* (family) and *nu’u* (village) as central traditional social protection mechanisms. The functions of these mechanisms concentrate on securing safety, peace and food security for all members of the community. Alongside these mechanisms, institutions like the church, CBOs and FBOs provide informal social protection, operating in the space between the formal (state) and traditional (culturally-sensitive)

social protection. CBOs protect and represent the interest of a specific vulnerable group in the community, such as women and children. FBOs denote religious ties and fall under the umbrella of a church, with a mandate to cover humanitarian relief programmes of the church.

SHOCK VERSUS CRISIS

Shock and crisis are distinguished to properly capture their socioeconomic impact. Exogenous shocks refer to “unexpected or unpredictable events that occur outside an industry or country, but can have a dramatic effect on the performance or markets within an industry or country” (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia 2020). A crisis is generally referred to as a significant downward shift of a community or society from its normal condition or point of operation.

VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability in this report is mainly perceived in the context of hardships of any kind. It refers to conditions determined by physical, social, economic, cultural and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards, economic and social hardships. Intersecting vulnerabilities can compound individuals’ risks and deprivations across wellbeing dimensions.

IV. The Case for Strengthening Social Protection in Samoa

The recent call for countries around the world to revive and reinforce their social protection frameworks is warranted on several grounds. Economic growth alone cannot completely address poverty and inequity, and social protection plays a critical role in leveraging the status of the most vulnerable (UNDP 2016). The need for a safety net is more salient in the Pacific, where most PICs are increasingly exposed to natural hazards caused by climate change. Since 1990, Samoa has had eight tropical cyclones as summarised in Table 2.

Exogenous shocks have ranged from natural disasters to macroeconomic crises. The most devastating cyclones were Ofa and Val that consecutively hit the country in 1990 and 1991 and caused an estimated damage between SAT\$650m and SAT\$1.1b (World Bank 2015). While recovering from back-to-back cyclones, a taro blight wiped out all plantations across the country in 1992. At the time, taro was the leading export for Samoa and was a source of stable diet and income for most low-income families. With COVID-

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF SHOCKS THAT AFFECTED SAMOA BETWEEN 1990-2020

Year	Crisis	Cost	Other impact
1990	Cyclone Ofa	SAT\$650m-	
1991	Cyclone Val	SAT1.1b	
1992	Taro blight	-	
2003	Cyclone Heta	-	
2005	Cyclone Olaf	-	
2009	Tsunami	-	143 deaths – mainly children
2011	Cyclone Wilma	-	
2012	Cyclone Evan	USD\$204m	
2016	Cyclone Amos	-	
2018	Cyclone Gita	-	
2019	Measles outbreak	-	81 lives lost, majority were children under 5 years
2020	COVID-19	-	No death at time of study 4,500 jobs expected to go

Source: World Bank, 2015; WHO, 2019; Price and Sen, 2021

19, Samoa stands to lose 4,500 jobs from total employment of 24,000 at the end of 2021, which equates to an 18 per cent reduction in employment figures (Price and Sen, 2021). Such financial ramifications are substantial for a country where 70 per cent of total households are likely to incur debt on a weekly basis (SBS 2020). The impact of a shock directly and negatively affects households safety nets and is even more significant for vulnerable groups whose capacity to respond is very narrow.

V . Informal and Traditional Social Protection Mechanisms in Samoa

Social protection via informal and traditional means serves as the first line of protection for vulnerable groups. In order to appreciate the functioning of traditional social protection mechanisms in Samoa, a brief discussion of the Samoan culture (*fa'asamoa*) is provided, focusing on key cultural values that are considered vital to the effective and sustainable functioning of the mechanisms.

SAMOAN CULTURE (FA'ASAMOA)

Samoan culture underpinned by *fa'asamoa* anchors traditional social protection mechanisms. In recognition of the constantly evolving and heterogenous nature of cultural values and in the absence of a prominent typology or conceptual framework on Samoa's values, Hofstede's framework on cross-cultural values can be used to lever a comprehensive discussion on the underlying principles of the Samoan culture and how they manifest in different forms of traditional social protection (Hofstede 1984). Two relevant dimensions of Hofstede's framework are used here: individualism and collectivism; and power distance.

In its primary form, individuals in collectivist societies tend to see themselves as being interdependent with in-groups and value community goals over personal goals, while considering interpersonal relationships as stable (Triandis and Suh 2002; Nisbett 2003; Triandis 2004). Collectivism is at the centre of the Samoan culture. Samoan communities are highly interdependent and social relationships weaved in genealogy, marriage and friendship are well respected and sustained. During crisis, community members are expected to provide assistance to vulnerable groups, regardless of their current economic situation.

The second dimension of Hofstede's cross-cultural framework, power distance, describes the attitude of members of a society towards an unequal distribution of power. In the case of Samoa, citizens accept and designate some members to hold higher status and assume leadership roles. These members are referred to as chiefs (*matai*). The role of chiefs in enforcing and sustaining the practice of collectivism is paramount. When a shock occurs, chiefs are responsible for making decisions to assist and protect members in need by utilizing communal and private resources like land, money and labour. Based on the primary data of this

study, while collectivism motivates members of the Samoan society to engage in the practice of reciprocity, power distance provides the leverage for chiefs to mobilise community resources to protect vulnerable groups in their communities in times of crisis.

TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS

Traditional social protection refers to social protection mechanisms that are directly induced by tradition and cultural practices. Based on qualitative analysis, traditional social protection mechanisms in Samoa are organized in a tripartite structure, as shown in Figure 1.

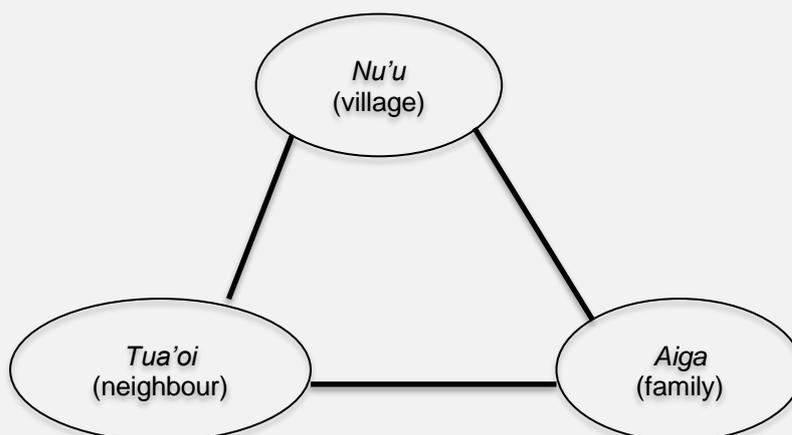
THE NEIGHBOUR (TUA'O'I)

The neighbour, or tua'o'i, is understood as the family living next door and is widely regarded as one of the essential traditional social protection mechanisms during crises. The neighbour provides critical protection during a rapid onset crisis, such as a cyclone or a flash flood. Historical evidence suggests that when one family's residential area is damaged by abovementioned events, their immediate place of refuge is their neighbour's dwelling.

SAMOAN FAMILY (AIGA)

The Samoan family, or aiga, is the centrepiece to the practice of reciprocity, interdependency, and the many manifestations of collectivism in the Samoan society. By definition, the aiga "means relative by blood, marriage and adoption" (Mead 1930: 40). For the family to function effectively, family chiefs enforce order, as well

FIGURE 1: STRUCTURE OF TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS IN SAMOA



Source: Author's design based on information collected for the study

as protect and allocate resources. Every member of the family is entitled to family resources for their welfare and protection.

THE VILLAGE (NU'U)

The village, or *nu'u*, is another traditional social protection mechanism for vulnerable groups and is made up of a collection of families. Samoa has 362 villages spreading over 11 traditional districts. Each village generally comprises of three entities: village council of chiefs (*pulega a matai*), women's committee (*aualuma*) and untitled men (*taulele'a or aumaga*), as expressed in Figure 2.

COUNCIL OF CHIEFS

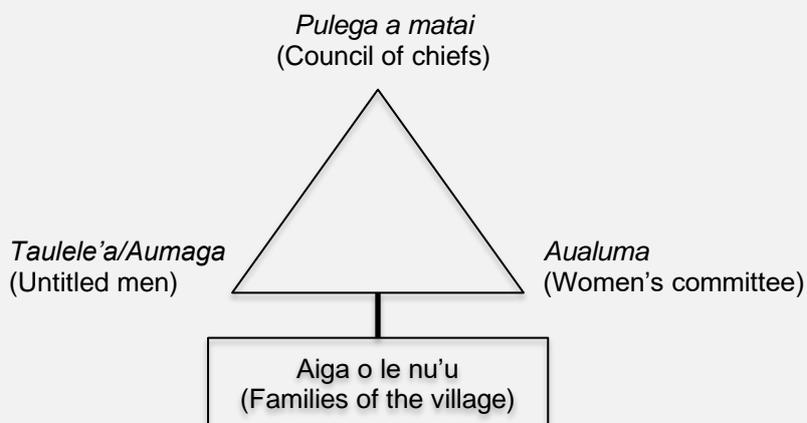
While the exact structure varies by villages and has changed in recent years, the council of chiefs, *pulega a matai*, remains as the ultimate decision-making body that establishes and enforces rules on welfare, security, peace and harmony. It also decides on the fate of villagers who break village

rules. While the village council holds every member accountable for their actions, there is no traditional practice to hold the village council itself accountable for any poor decisions (Amosa 2010).

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE (AUALUMA)

The women's committee or *aualuma* consists of daughters of village members. It does not include wives of chiefs (who are generally from another village) or other women in the village. The *aualuma* performs several roles and are the peacemakers of the village, which earned them the title *pae ma le auli*, or shell and the iron (Amosa 2010; Latai 2015). *Aualuma* are obligated to generate wealth in the form of *ietoga* (fine mat) and other types of mats and artefacts. They are also in charge of attending to public health issues and overall hygienic conditions, such as maintaining each family's front and back yards.

FIGURE 2: SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF A TRADITIONAL SAMOA VILLAGE



Source: Amosa, 2010

UNTITLED MEN (AUMAGA)

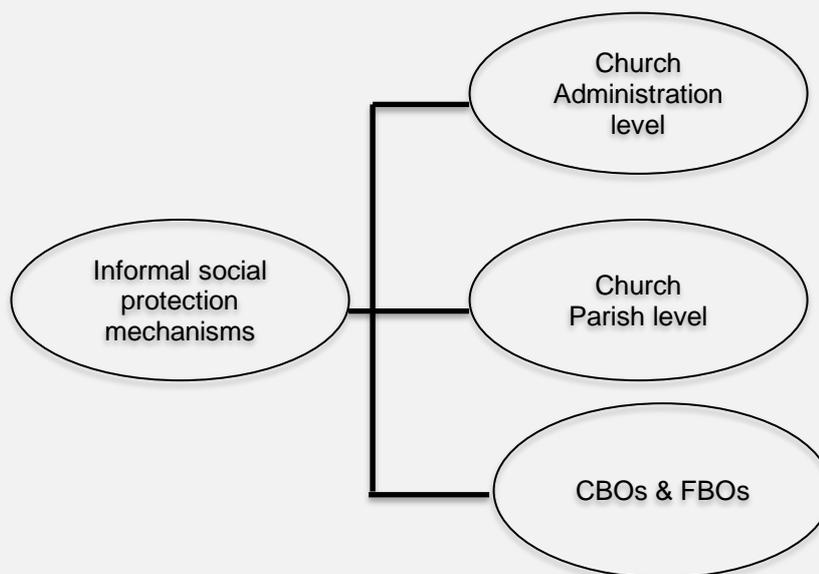
The *aumaga* are the labourers and warriors of the village (Leibowitz 1989; Rambach and Foley 2014). The *aumaga*'s foremost responsibility is to farm the land or to fish and provide food for their respective families. Since they are referred to as the *malosi o le nu'u* (strength of the village), the *aumaga* provides assistance in the form of labour to village projects, under the instruction of the village council.

The essential role of the village as a traditional social protection mechanism has been evidenced on numerous occasions, including the 2009 tsunami. According to the members of the villages affected, chiefs called an urgent meeting and the *aumaga* were tasked with searching affected areas and bringing the wounded and the dead to allocated spots. Before arrival of government assistance, affected villages have already dispatched their people to assist victims of the disaster.

INFORMAL SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS

Informal social protection in Samoa is mainly provided through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which, for the purpose of this study are categorised as the church, community-based organisations (CBOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs). The church is further divided into two levels: the parish and the administration, as shown in Figure 3. At the parish level, it is led by a representative generally referred to as the church minister, or *faiife'au* serving in the village. Majority of villages in Samoa have more than one parish from different Christian denominations. The administration level encapsulates the key administration of each church that is responsible for decision-making.

FIGURE 3: INFORMAL SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS



Source: Author's design based on information collected for the study

THE CHURCH: PARISH LEVEL

The main denominations in villages are the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS), Catholic Church, Methodist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (CJCLDS) and the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church. Samoans are deeply religious and make substantial contributions to the church in terms of money, food and church projects. In times of crisis, vulnerable families and groups in the village seek refuge at the church minister's house, which is relatively big and modern compared to most of the villagers' houses. When the country was hit by cyclones Ofa and Val in the early 1990s, some villages used the church minister's house and church buildings for shelter.

THE CHURCH: ADMINISTRATION LEVEL

Out of the five main church denominations in the country, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-days Saints is perhaps the most organised entity in terms of shock and disaster response. The church has an Emergency Preparedness Policy, which is activated once the country is struck by a shock of any nature. Other churches in comparison operate on an ad hoc basis, rendering their assistance less certain. The Church of Latter-days Saints activated its emergency response policy for COVID-19 once the government issued the State of Emergency order in March 2019. The church, per its policy, consulted the government through the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) on its needs and designated two of its chapels in two isolated locations in Upolu for quarantine purposes. The church's

response to any shock is not targeted and tailored to specific needs of individuals and serves the community in a uniform manner.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS AND FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

Community-based organisations (CBOs) are local non-profits that provide advocacy and support in various forms for members in the community and address their special needs. Two CBOs are covered in this study, Nuanua o Le Alofa (NOLA) and Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG). The former targets persons with disabilities in the community by providing technical assistance, education, advocacy, special equipment and other types of care needed by their members. Seeking to integrate pertinent issues of persons with disabilities into government policies and development partners' assistance, NOLA has focused on eliminating violence against persons with disabilities in recent years. The latter organization, SVSG, focuses on women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Their service includes the provision of temporary accommodation, counselling and education for their members. From an initial focus on domestic violence, the service has expanded to include working with the Ministry of Police to prosecute perpetrators of domestic violence; provide counselling for victims and perpetrators; provide shelter and food for victims of domestic violence; and provide education for children affected by domestic violence.

Faith-based organisations (FBOs), on the other hand, are non-profits with ties to a major religion whose mission is to provide

humanitarian assistance to deprived families and communities, rather than proselytizing. One such organization is the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), which is a local FBO under the jurisdiction of the Seven Day Adventist Church. ADRA has engaged in relief efforts following natural disasters, including building shelters for the families of the victims of the 2009 tsunami as well as providing basic humanitarian assistance to deprived families and communities. It has built shelters for the families of the victims of the 2009 tsunami as well as provided basic needs to communities that were affected by cyclones and floods.

INFORMAL AND TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LIFECYCLE VULNERABILITIES

TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

Traditional social protection in Samoa takes effect throughout the lifetime of its community members. Rooted in cultural norms and practices, neighbours and relatives are expected to support a family in need when possible. This can be in the form of cash or in-kind support for basic needs like food, shelter and education for children, sick individuals, person with disabilities, older people, and women. Families also support milestones like wedding, funeral, fundraising and bestowing of chiefly titles and tend to step in to assist with financial difficulties of households with school-age children as well as support jobseekers with their own networks.

The assistance provided does not discriminate persons seeking support if social relations with the neighbour or family members are intact and reciprocal. Despite the reciprocity, the voluntary nature of this type of assistance deems it inconsistent and unavailable at a systematic level. However, it is reported and cherished by communities as a good entry point of support, covering individuals at the early and later stages of their lifecycles.

INFORMAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

The church, CBOs and FBOs contribute to addressing lifecycle vulnerabilities of targeted groups in Samoan communities. Denominations like the Catholic church, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-days Saints and Seventh Day Adventists hold annual events to collect and distribute basic items like food and clothing to older people and low-income families. CBOs, on the other hand, provide protection for their targeted groups, and FBOs cover diverse humanitarian initiatives. Table 3 provides a summary of coverage and key features of informal and tradition social protection.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF KEY FEATURES OF INFORMAL AND TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

Traditional social protection				
Target	Children	Sick people and persons with disabilities	Older people	Women
Type of protection	Social assistance (voluntary)	Social assistance (voluntary)	Social assistance (voluntary)	Social assistance (voluntary)
Time frame	Short-term	Short-term	Short-term	Short-term
Consistency	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Inconsistent
Informal social protection				
Organisations	Church	NOLA	SVSG	ADRA
Target	Universal	Persons with disabilities	Women and children	Universal
Type of protection	Social assistance	Social assistance	Social assistance	Social assistance
Time frame	Short-term	Short-term	Short- to medium-term*	Short-term
Consistency	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Inconsistent	Inconsistent

Note: Short-term means a few days to several weeks, and medium-term means more than 3 months and less than 24 months.

VI. Vulnerable Groups: Access and Benefits from Informal and Traditional Social Protection Mechanisms in Samoa

CONTEXTUALISING VULNERABLE GROUPS

WOMEN

Women in the Samoan society hold a special status called *feagaiga*, or covenant. This status is associated with multiple roles like the peacemaker and producer of wealth in her family (Latai 2015; Matai'a-Milo 2016). When a Samoan woman gets married and lives with her spouse's family, her status changes from *feagaiga* to *nofotane*, which is considered a downgrade. The *nofotane* is expected to take the leading role in serving her husband's family with domestic duties. According to a 2017 study conducted by the Ministry of Women Community, and Social Development (MWCSD), *nofotane* women become more vulnerable when unemployed and poorly educated. This is the environment in which most women are subjected to domestic abuse and violence. During a shock, the *nofotane* depends on her husband for protection. The neighbour and her husband's family are the first line of protection and the village comes next.

YOUTH

Youth is defined as those within the age range of 18 to 35 years, according to the MWCSD. In the 2016 census, the total number of youth was 50,182 (26 per cent of total population), of which 51 per cent were male and 49 per cent were female (SBS and UNFPA 2020: 7). Unemployment and lack of education are two leading factors that make Samoan youth vulnerable. Unemployed youth tend to rely on their parents, older siblings and close family members for their everyday needs. Based on the census, the total number of employed youth was 24,810, or 49 per cent of the total youth population. As shown in Table 4, while male youth accounted for 70 per cent among youth with employment, young women dominated the clerical and professional employment categories.

In terms of education, the 2016 census found only 49 per cent of youth to have completed secondary school or completed Year 13. Female students had a higher completion rate of 54.6 per cent compared to 44 per cent for male students. With a high level of dropout from secondary school, the struggle for youth to find permanent employment persists.

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION FOR YOUTH AGED 18-35

Occupation	Male	Female
Skilled agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishery	8572	1245
Service & Sales	2410	1979
Clerical	774	1355
Professionals	860	1246
Craft related trade workers and food	1356	440
Elementary occupation	928	398
Machinery	1138	167
Technicians, Associate professionals	730	381
Legislators and managers	352	291
Armed force	8	8
Total	17308	7502

Source: SBS and UNFPA, 2020: 41

As a result, most young people turn to informal work, such as subsistence agriculture. These activities account for 68 per cent of total labour and are unsustainable due to climate change and small domestic market (SBS 2020). In the end, many young people experience hardship due to poor education and limited employment and income-earning opportunities.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Persons with disabilities are perhaps the most vulnerable group in Samoa for several reasons, including social exclusion, low household income, and lack of access to essential services. Persons with disabilities are stigmatized as lacking physical and mental abilities to take care of themselves and make a contribution to the society. As a result, they are kept at home for protection and are unable to fully participate in economic, social, political and cultural life.

Accessing basic services remains a key challenge for persons with disabilities. In terms of education, the percentage of persons with disabilities completing secondary school is at 37 per cent compared to 51 per cent of the total population of those without disabilities, as seen in Table 5. A critical disparity is also evidenced in Table 5, in the category of “never been to school,” in which persons with disabilities are five times more likely than those without disabilities to have not been to school. One of the long-standing issues that undermine access to education is inadequate school facility and availability of teachers or trainers to educate students with disabilities.

Healthcare is another persisting issue for persons with disabilities. Assistance provided by the Ministry of Health and NGOs are limited and costly, especially the medication required for long-term treatment. This renders persons with disabilities in low-income families more vulnerable to a health crisis or

TABLE 5: PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS WITHOUT DISABILITIES AND WITH DISABILITIES BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

	Total	%		Total	%
Persons without disabilities	164263	100.0	People with disabilities	3370	100.0
	164426*	100.1*		3364**	99.8**
Never been to school	2793	1.7	Never been to school	324	9.6
Pre-school	1807	1.1	Pre-school	54	1.6
Primary school	51414	31.3	Primary school	1398	41.5
Secondary school	84595	51.5	Secondary school	1237	36.7
Higher education	23325	14.2	Higher education	243	7.2
Special needs education	164	0.1	Special needs education	54	1.6
Missionaries	164	0.1	Missionaries	34	1.0
Missing	164	0.1	Missing	20	0.6

Source: SBS, MWCSO, Pacific Community and UNICEF, 2018: 21

*The percentage data points provided in the original source (Table 5-1, p 21) for each level of education add up to 100.1%. This is equivalent to a count of 164426 rather than 164263, as has been documented in the source.

**The percentages provided in the original source for each level of education add up to 99.8%. This is equivalent to a count of 3364 rather than 3370, as documented in page 6 of the source.

a natural disaster. To exacerbate matters, only one in twenty persons with disabilities is engaged in formal, paid employment compared to one in four persons without disabilities. While protection from the neighbour and village can be easily accessed, it is deemed limited due to the special care that may be needed to cater to specific mental and physical conditions. This renders the family the closest protection mechanism for this vulnerable group.

JOB SEEKERS AND SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Job seekers' vulnerability mainly stems from the lack of regular income to meet basic needs. When a shock strikes, job seekers become a lot more vulnerable as the providers of their protection are also affected.

Table 6 shows that in 2017, Samoa had a labour force of 48,100 in which 85.5 per cent were employed in formal and informal sectors, leaving 14.5 per cent of the workforce, or 6,960 persons, unemployed. The informal sector employed about 15,340 or 31.5 per cent of the total workforce, while 54 per cent were employed in the formal sector (SBS, ILO and MCIL 2017: 31). More than half of formal sector workers are female, at 53.1 per cent. The unemployment divide is also pronounced in terms of the urban-rural gap. In urban areas, 18 per cent are unemployed while the same rate soars in rural areas at 82 per cent.

When facing a shock, jobseekers seek protection from their family and use familial network to find employment both in the formal and informal sectors. For the least educated jobseekers, families may offer informal employment for a temporary period.

School dropouts, on the other hand, are vulnerable due to their inadequate level of education and poor employment prospects. Samoa has a high secondary school dropout rate, despite the government’s free tuition fee scheme. From the 2016 census, 49 per cent of young people completed Year 13, which means, 51 per cent dropped out of secondary school (SBS and UNFPA 2020: 29). Dropouts who are old enough are likely to use family land and other resources to sustain themselves and while younger dropouts will likely rely on family for support.

HOUSEHOLDS RECOVERING FROM DISASTERS

One of the compounding factors to the households’ vulnerability and resilience is its income level. The 2018 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) sheds light on the level of income for 29,229 households in the country. Table 7 breaks down the weekly average income and expenditure by income decile. The first decile (1st Decile) represents the lowest income while the tenth decile (10th Decile) indicates the highest income. The weekly average incomes of households in the top seven deciles are lower than their weekly average expenditures, which denotes that 70 per cent (20,450) of total households in the country incur a debt on a weekly basis, engendering them even more vulnerable to shocks and crises.

TABLE 6: FORMAL AND INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT

	Total workforce	Total employment	Formal sector	Informal sector	Total unemployment
	48,100	41,140	26,140	15,340	6,960
% of total workforce	100.00		54.0	31.5	14.5

Source: SBS, ILO and MCIL, 2017: 31

TABLE 7: AVERAGE WEEKLY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE BY DECILE

National income decile	Total number of households	% of total households	Average income (ST\$)	Average expenditure
1 st Decile	2,921	10.0	114.9	285.2
2 nd Decile	2,919	10.0	214.0	388.9
3 rd Decile	2,927	10.1	294.5	453.4
4 th Decile	2,920	10.0	371.7	480.3
5 th Decile	2,927	10.0	462.0	550.9
6 th Decile	2,920	10.0	566.7	680.4
7 th Decile	2,916	9.9	698.3	755.6
8 th Decile	2,931	10.0	905.1	848.6
9 th Decile	2,917	10.0	1,252.6	1,017.7
10 th Decile	2,931	10.0	2,684.6	1,892.7
Total	29,229	100.1	757.0	735.7

Source: SBS, 2020: 59

Note: The percentage of household for each quintile was calculated for the purpose of this study.

ACCESS AND BENEFITS: TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS

ACCESS

The three traditional social protection mechanisms offer universal access to all vulnerable groups targeted for the study. One of the factors underlying universal access to traditional mechanisms is social capital and community relations. Strong and sustainable relationships with the neighbour and other family members facilitate access to communal assistance and help members of the community to manoeuvre lifecycle vulnerabilities and shocks.

BENEFITS

Neighbours or family members provide various benefits like shelter, food, drinking water, clothing and other basic items in normal times and around shocks. Benefits may be provided for a short-term period of a few days or for several weeks, depending on the economic status and severity of the shocks. Remittances and cash gifts are another type of benefit endowed through traditional mechanisms. Remittances cover day-to-day expenses and tend to be counter-cyclical, making a significant contribution to Samoan communities recovering from a shock through financial assistance for rebuilding family homes, community school and church buildings damaged from a natural hazard.

Table 8 displays remittance inflows during and after natural shocks since 2002. There is a notable positive increase in the amount in the year that the shock took place. For instance, the COVID-19 crisis saw a substantial increase in remittances from SAT\$528.31m in 2019 to SAT\$606.92m in 2020. While there are no existing studies documenting the average annual amount remitted by a family member to date, a 2014 pilot study conducted by the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) on Samoan male workers on the seasonal employment scheme discovered that each employee remitted 42 per cent of his total net income to families in Samoa (MBIE undated).

According to the participants from villages affected by the 2009 tsunami, families and members of neighbouring villages brought in food, clothes and water a few hours after the tsunami, while assistance from government and other actors arrived a day or two later. Accounts obtained from community workshops deemed such benefits appropriate. Interviewees who received assistance were obligated to reciprocate to the host when the host asks for assistance, which reflects an old Samoan adage, *E a oe nei ae a a'u taeao*, meaning “today is your turn, but tomorrow is mine.” Those who had aided neighbours and family during natural shocks could not provide a proper monetary estimate of the assistance given. Most

TABLE 8: REMITTANCES FOR SAMOA DURING AND AFTER A SHOCK

Year	Total remittances (SAT\$m)	% of Nominal GDP	Major natural shocks experienced
2002	195.04	-	
2003	212.18	-	Cyclone Heta
2005	303.36	22.4	
2006	311.52	22.0	
2007	314.99	19.1	
2008	360.45	21.1	
2009	369.90	22.0	Tsunami
2010	348.85	20.3	
2011	374.90	21.3	
2012	405.96	23.4	Cyclone Evan
2017	425.67	20.2	
2018	528.31	24.5	Cyclone Gita
2019	546.92	24.4	Measles outbreak
2020	606.98	29.5	COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Data obtained from Central Bank of Samoa Economic Division: 04th May 2021.

recalled that their priority was to assist those affected, irrespective of the limited amount of resources at hand. Participants were also forthcoming that such practice is different in normal times, during which they may decline to assist a neighbour or a family member, citing limited resources. This implies that outside of a salient shock, traditional social protection may be limited in scope.

ACCESS AND BENEFITS: INFORMAL SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS

ACCESS TO PROTECTION FROM THE CHURCH

The church at the parish level provides immediate protection through shelters, food and drinking water for residents of the village. Access is not restricted to a specific group during a natural disaster. Whoever needs help is welcome to the church or the minister's house. At the administration level, the church also complements shock recovery efforts by the government. Assistance is usually directed to support the government in its relief efforts and does not target a particular group.

BENEFITS FROM CBOs AND FBOs

CBOs and FBOs come into full force in the immediate aftermath of a cyclone. For instance, ADRA was involved in building shelters for the families of the victims of the 2009 tsunami as well as providing basic needs to communities that were affected by cyclones and floods. During COVID-19, NOLA, a CBO targeting persons with disabilities, ensured that a sign language instructor accompanied the Prime Minister and government officials during press briefings, so that their members are also informed on the updates. Another CBO, SVSG, has opened their doors to women and children affected by natural disasters.

VII. Evaluating Informal and Traditional Social Protection: Protection Advantages, Gaps, Changes and Emerging Issues

ADVANTAGES OF INFORMAL AND TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

IMMEDIATE AVAILABILITY

One of the defining features of traditional social protection in Samoa is its immediate availability during shocks. Throughout cyclical and recurrent natural disasters in the last 30 years, the villages' instant deployment of shelter, food, drinking water and other basic items has been well documented. In most cases, support was provided before intervention from the government or stakeholders.

STRENGTHENING OF CULTURAL VALUES AND PRACTICE

The effective functioning of traditional mechanisms simultaneously contributes to and is contingent on the Samoan culture. When a shock occurs, cultural values of collectivism are activated, motivating members of the community to protect their most vulnerable.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Traditional social protection is not discriminatory, as is evident from the findings of the study. Anyone seeking refuge is welcome and taken care of by the family, neighbour and the village irrespective of the amount of resources in their possession.

EFFECTIVE USE OF TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

Members of the community turn to family lands and the ocean for survival when tropical cyclones and concomitant floods damage crops and plantations. Village members tap into the traditional knowledge and make adjustments to resources by planting root crops like yams that are more resilient to natural disasters.

ADVANTAGES OF COMMUNITY-BASED AND FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

CBOs and FBOs provide technical support and specialised service that targets specific vulnerable groups, which traditional social protection mechanisms may not be equipped to provide.

The advocacy role of CBOs and FBOs for the rights of their members is commended. While the government tend to focus on the basic and universal needs after shocks, CBOs and FBOs have voiced the concerns of their members for assistance, thus filling the protection gap.

GAPS OF INFORMAL AND TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

SHORT-TERM AND LIMITED PROTECTION

Short-term assistance is a considerable gap for both informal and traditional social protection mechanisms. Some vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and women, may not be provided with all essential materials like medication throughout their lifecycles and around shocks.

DEPENDENCE ON QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL

Poor governance and lack of accountability in decision-making in the village contributes to inadequate protection, as experienced by some affected by the tsunami in 2009. Senior members of a few villages councils prioritized their own families' welfare over other families, according to the focus group discussions. There is some evidence of bias in the distribution of relief assistance and supplies in favor of families of high chiefs.

CHANGES TO TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS AND EMERGING ISSUES

Over the years, the Samoan culture has dynamically evolved, and the structure and functionality of traditional social protection mechanisms have changed in tandem. Of particular concern is the shift of societal values from collectivism to individualism, which has weakened the protection role of the collectivism in terms of crisis. Against this backdrop, vulnerable groups have become more at risk to adverse events and shocks. The study notes key factors that contribute to the shift of societal value, including:

- disputes on family lands and titles
- high levels of indebtedness
- urbanisation
- intergenerational shifts in family structure and culture

DISPUTES ON FAMILY LANDS AND TITLES

Family members are entitled to the family land, earmarked to be used to serve the family and may eventually become chief titleholders when they have been of service. In recent years, an increasing number of family members living abroad or outside their villages of origin have claimed rights to use family lands and/or to be bestowed with a

chiefly title. When their claims are declined by chiefs and head chiefs, most claimants take their grievances to the Lands and Titles court for redress. This creates frictions among family members and compromises unity. As a result, the family can no longer act as a reliable source of protection.

HIGH LEVELS OF INDEBTEDNESS

More than half of all households in the country generate debt on a weekly basis, which may limit their ability to help beyond their immediate relatives. Under persisting unemployment and low educational attainment levels loom a risk of poverty traps, whereby households could remain in financially precarious conditions without means to attain reliable sources of income and/or make accruals in savings.

URBANISATION

According to the 2016 census, 20 per cent of the population resides in urban Apia, the smallest region in Samoa (SBS 2017). When members of communities move to the urban area, they tend to grow detached from the rest of the village and may become less likely to offer consistent protection.

INTERGENERATIONAL SHIFTS IN FAMILY STRUCTURE AND CULTURE

About 28 per cent of total households have 1 to 4 occupants (SBS 2017), which denotes a change in family structure from an extended to an immediate family, according to the HIES data. Nuclear families may be reluctant to offer protection to their extended families in need, as ties are not as strong as they used to be for previous generations.

VIII. Informal, Traditional and Formal Social Protection in Samoa

The overall picture of informal and traditional social protection mechanisms in Samoa shows that each has a place and a role to play for vulnerable members of the community (Section 7). The positions and roles of informal and traditional social protection mechanisms need strengthening and proper consideration by decision-makers in the government when devising a comprehensive national social protection policy framework for Samoa.

OVERVIEW OF FORMAL SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS

Samoa has four main formal social protection schemes:

- Compulsory retirement savings scheme
- Senior Citizens Benefit Scheme (SCBS)
- Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme (SSFGS)
- Accident Compensation Scheme (ACS)

COMPULSORY RETIREMENT SAVINGS SCHEME

The Samoa National Provident Fund (SNPF) provides social insurance to its members through its compulsory retirement savings scheme. Every employee is mandated to pay nine per cent of annual gross income while the employer is required to contribute the other nine per cent to SNPF. The main purpose of the insurance scheme is to provide financial safety net for employees when reaching the retirement age. Members of the scheme are also entitled to benefits under the senior citizens benefit scheme when they reach the age of 65.

SENIOR CITIZENS BENEFIT SCHEME (SCBS)

The SCBS falls under the jurisdiction of SNPF and was established in 1990 to assist senior citizens aged 65 and above with basic needs, such as food, transportation and medication. The package includes a monthly pension of \$135 until death or migration overseas; free travel between Savai'i and Upolu on state-owned ferries; free consultation and free set of dentures at government hospitals; free medical supplies from government pharmacies.

Table 9 outlines the total number of senior citizens on the scheme and the amount of payment made in the last five years. On average, a senior citizen receives \$1,850 per annum, which includes a monthly pension and other health and social benefits. For eligible low-income households, these benefits are welcomed and regarded as source of relief, easing financial burden on medication and other needs.

SAMOA SCHOOL FEES GRANT SCHEME (SSFSGS)

SSFSGS was established in 2010 following the 2009 tsunami and was initially named the School Fee Relief Scheme. The scheme only applies to students in government schools and covers school fees for children attending all levels of primary school and the first two years (years 9 and 10) of secondary school. Parents are still obligated to pay for stationeries, school registration fees and other education expenses. For parents of primary and secondary school-aged children, especially those in low-income and large households with more than 10 members, the scheme is considered to be a substantial financial support.

ACCIDENT COMPENSATION SCHEME (ACS)

The ACS is administered by the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) and has been instituted under the *Accident Compensation Act 1989* and the *Accident Compensation Amendment Act 1989*. The scheme is intended to promote safety and accident prevention on roads and workplaces. It also provides financial assistance and services towards rehabilitation of members. The scheme is funded by a one per cent levy paid by employers on their employees' earning; one per cent levy paid by the employees on their earnings; and five cent per gallon of fuel locally used on vehicles and vessels. Table 10 outlines the total amount of compensation and the total number of corresponding beneficiaries of the last six years, from the fiscal year 2015/2016.

TABLE 9: SUMMARY OF PAYMENT MADE AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES

Year	Total amount paid (SAT\$m)	Total number of beneficiaries
2015	17.1	9,253
2016	17.5	9,151
2017	17.9	9,545
2018	18.7	9,801
2019	19.5	10,367

Source: Data obtained from Samoa National Provident Fund Senior Citizens Benefit Fund Division: 12th February 2021

TABLE 10: TOTAL COMPENSATION AMOUNT PAID AND TOTAL NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES

Financial year	Total amount paid (SAT\$m)	Total number of beneficiaries (claims)
2015/16	0.9	263
2016/17	1.5	237
2017/18	1.2	315
2018/19	1.3	282
2019/20	1.8	232

Source: Data obtained from Accident Compensation Corporation Investigations and Claims Division: 22nd February 2021.

INTERACTION BETWEEN INFORMAL, TRADITIONAL AND FORMAL SOCIAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS: GAPS AND ISSUES

In order to examine the interaction of the three social protection systems in Samoa, attention must be directed to how effectively they address drivers of vulnerabilities. In doing so, a clear picture emerges, allowing for gaps, overlaps and complementarities to guide in-depth analysis and policy recommendations. Gaining a contextual insight into how each system addresses situational drivers of vulnerability is a meaningful starting point in designing a comprehensive social protection framework.

As summarized in Tables 11-16 in Annex 2, a comparative analysis of three protection modalities has been conducted using a set of assessment criteria that consists of protection coverage, time frame and consistency in order to outline their overlaps and protection gaps with respect to targeted vulnerable groups.

WOMEN

Traditional social protection, while offering assistance with basic items and general security, does not fully protect women from two situational drivers of vulnerability: unemployment and inadequate education (see Table 11 in Annex 2). CBOs complement traditional social protection through their provision of food, shelter and legal support for women who experienced domestic violence. The assistance is considered to last short- to medium-term, depending on the duration envisioned to rectify the situation. Formal

social protection policies, on the other hand, provide partial and non-exclusive protection for women aged 65 and above through the SCBS. They also cater to young women in state-owned primary and secondary schools up to year 11 through the SSFGS.

YOUTH

Young people are deemed vulnerable to shocks due to high unemployment and inadequate education. Traditional social protection covers all youth in terms of basic livelihood needs. Informal social protection, on the other hand, offers protection for female youth who are affected by domestic violence. Formal social protection policy targeting youth unemployment and school dropouts is currently lacking.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Persons with disabilities are exposed to more risks than other vulnerable groups in the study due to multiple situational factors that amplify their vulnerability. Traditional social protection focuses on everyday needs while informal social protection concentrates on technical service and specialised equipment. On the formal side, the SCBS covers older persons with disabilities aged 65 years. As the SSFGS cater to those with minor disabilities, access to specialized education and health services remain an issue, especially for those with severe disabilities.

JOBSEEKERS AND SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Jobseekers are covered under the traditional social protection with basic items for survival. Informal social protection does not provide

explicit assistance to jobseekers. School dropouts (Table 15) are partially covered under the SSFGS scheme should they decide and are able to return to school.

RECOVERING FROM A DISASTER – BEYOND BASIC NEEDS

With recurrent and intensifying natural disasters, recovery from shocks often involve rebuilding damaged properties. Low-income households accounting for 70 per cent of all households are likely to struggle the most while recovering due to the lack of income and restricted access to financial capital. Moreover, property damage is more likely to be extensive due to weak structures and location. Traditional social protection is useful in this situation by immediately providing basic items and services. Both informal and formal social protection may not be shock-responsive and do not sufficiently or explicitly help recovery.

COMPLEMENTARITY

The three systems complement each other at some junctions. For instance, older women with disabilities may be covered under the pension scheme. During normal and turbulent times, families and neighbour may commit to providing constant care for women with disabilities, irrespective of their age and forms of protection provided. CBOs and FBOs fill some protection gaps by providing special equipment like wheelchairs.

IX. Lessons and Policy Recommendations

Social protection is a basic human right, critical in reducing lifecycle and shock-induced vulnerabilities. Whether it be provided through formal, traditional and informal means, a comprehensive social protection system can help vulnerable groups combat poverty, secure minimum income and access basic services in health and education, all of which are crucial in their long-term wellbeing. To that end, this section outlines key findings and recommendations that may inform the design of a comprehensive social protection framework in Samoa.

LESSONS

A notable potential for complementarity exists across the three social protection modalities spanning the traditional, informal and formal. **Traditional social protection** provides immediate and universal access to basic benefits, and among the three mechanisms identified, the family is perceived to be the most stable. Despite its longstanding advantages, traditional social protection is limited in providing consistent and long-term support, as most assistance is given to secure everyday basic needs, such as food, clothing, temporary shelter and small

amounts of cash. The effectiveness of traditional social protection mechanisms is underpinned by cultural values and norms, which are constantly shifting, rendering it potentially unreliable. Another modality, **informal social protection**, is primarily delivered through CBOs and FBOs, which play a strong advocacy role to the government and bring technical expertise and specialized services. While also short-lived and inconsistent, informal social protection can be leveraged to complement formal and traditional social protection especially using more specialised and professional support for vulnerable individuals. **Formal social protection**, as it stands, targets few groups, and may need to be expanded to cover more populations. Taken together, a comprehensive social protection framework can be built upon the existing protection landscape.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the critical role of social protection, the study identified policy options aimed at maximizing the complementarity of formal social protection and informal and traditional mechanisms, noting and corroborating sector-specific entry points and recommendations stipulated in the UNDP

Report on the *Review and Development of Social Protection Systems in Samoa*, as endorsed by the Joint Programme Technical and Steering Committees.

STRENGTHENING TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Education is universally accessible through primary school and the first two years of secondary school, after which families are required to bear the financial burden through years 12 and 13 as well as post-secondary education, such as university and TVET. The bottlenecks in accessing and funding secondary education are evidenced by considerable school dropout rates among targeted vulnerable groups, including women, youth and jobseekers (Chapter 6). As informal and traditional social protection systems are relatively constrained in this arena, more work needs to be done to understand how the community and village structures can address the underlying issues leading to dropping out of school. A couple of recommendations are suggested to address the problem of school dropouts:

- i. Responsible government authorities to facilitate awareness raising workshops for village councils to promote the establishment of a village fund to support low-income families with school dropouts.

- ii. Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) to provide awareness raising programmes for communities on the initiative to establish a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) pathway for students completing Year 11 and are not qualified or interested to continue to Years 12 and 13, per the core initiatives laid out in the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

STRENGTHENING TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

This vulnerable group is marginally covered by the three systems of social protection despite their high level of vulnerability. Their needs are perceived to be costly and, in some cases, require constant care throughout the day. Their access to special education and health care is restricted due to unavailability of special facilities and integrated services. This creates a burden for the family member which is expected to step in and thus forgoing the opportunity to earn an income.

In order for formal social protection policies to complement informal social protection mechanism, several recommendations are tendered for consideration.

- i. Responsible government authorities to provide technical training and counselling for caretakers and other family members who are looking after persons with disabilities in their homes.

- ii. Responsible government authorities to promote the concept of community-based care groups for persons with disabilities through women's committees (aualuma and faletua ma tausi), CBOs and FBOs.

STRENGTHENING INFORMAL SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR HOUSEHOLDS RECOVERING FROM A DISASTER

Protection for households recovering from a disaster is very thin. Traditional social protection mainly covers basic items and services, like labour. The formal system does not cover this need either, leaving the household on its own to recover. With increased intensity of tropical cyclones and frequency due to climate change, more needs to be done to strengthen the structure of dwellings, enforce no build zones, and support households with financing to build back better.

To address this gap, it is recommended that responsible government authorities, development partners and stakeholder to:

- i. consider tax and duty concessions on building materials to allow households recovering from a disaster to readjust quickly, as has been applied following the two cyclones Ofa and Val in 1990 and 1991.

- ii. work with PSET providers to provide TVET to villagers focusing on formal certification in disaster-resilient construction.
- iii. consider providing financial grant to assist targeted villagers participating TVET programmes on disaster-resilient construction under the support fund of the Education Sector Strategic Plan.
- iv. conduct training for households in the community on how to protect their properties when a natural disaster is expected.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR AIGA (FAMILY) AND TUAO'I (NEIGHBOUR)

One of the strengths of informal and traditional social protection mechanisms is the immediate availability of protection for basic needs during and after a natural shock. However, members of communities lack the technical knowledge like life-saving skills needed when a member of the community is physically affected by a natural hazard.

At present the Disaster Management Office (DMO), which is under the portfolio of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is providing life-saving training for the community through the Community and Disaster Management Risk Programme. So far, the project has covered 90 villages leaving more than 200 villages to train. Unfortunately, the funding for this project

ends in December 2021. Based on discussions with officials from DMO, the need for assistance from development partners to sustain the project in order to cover the rest of villages in the country is critical.

DMO officials strongly support this study's drive to strengthen traditional social protection mechanisms and in particular the family due to their critical role in protecting vulnerable groups especially during and after a natural disaster. Following discussions with DMO, several areas have been identified for family capacity building. It is suggested that the responsible government authorities to work in partnership with development partners to:

- i. provide disaster prevention and response trainings and educate households on coping strategies, such as stockpiling food supplies and other materials.
- ii. work with village councils and members of the communities to identify the most vulnerable families and devise effective ways to assist them during a natural disaster.

- iii. facilitate training for communities on proper handling and evacuating of people with disabilities, pregnant women, elderlies and children during and after disasters.
- iv. educate communities on the likeliness of Gender-based Violence (GBV) occurring during disasters and how to remedy situations that may lead to such incidents.

STRENGTHENING VILLAGE GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The village council is the ultimate decision-making body and serves as the gateway for any government and development partners' initiatives. In recognition of the pivotal role of village council as the ultimate decision-making body, and based on consultations with representatives of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, formal social protection system can complement and strengthen village council by working with development partners to:

- i. facilitate advocacy and awareness raising programmes on good leadership in the village.

- ii. facilitate advocacy and awareness raising programmes on the difficulties facing vulnerable groups and their families in the village and how the village as a community is able to assist.
- iii. facilitate and promote public-private partnership with village councils on welfare initiatives on education, employment and health.

UNEMPLOYMENT PROTECTION

One of the noticeable gaps of the current social protection framework is the lack of protection for unemployed persons. Both informal and traditional social protection do not provide adequate coverage for the unemployed. Overseas employment opportunities through schemes such as the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) and the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) have proven to be attractive but remain limited. To maximize their potential benefits, especially for social protection, these schemes need to be revisited. This study recommends the following based on discussions with representatives from Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour (MCIL):

- i. Regulate private RSE operators or agents in order to work closely with relevant government authorities like MCIL and village councils to identify and recruit people from vulnerable families in the villages. This improves the scheme in terms of meeting RSE requirements set by the host countries as well as promoting inclusiveness for village people considered for the scheme.
- ii. Government authorities like the Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA) to encourage providers like the National University of Samoa (NUS) and private providers to introduce Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) that address the skills and demands of the RSE scheme. This initiative has already started with one of the PSET providers providing training on basic finance skills for workers recruited for the scheme. More training however is needed for other basic skills like communication skills and in particular horticultural skills which are critical to the nature of work opportunities available under the RSE scheme.

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Annex

ANNEX 1: SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS CONSULTED AND INTERVIEWED

Summary:

- 1) Two community focus group seminars were conducted in Savai'i and three were conducted in Upolu. Each group consists of representatives from the vulnerable groups targeted for the study.
- 2) The third focus group seminar in Upolu invited local experts on Samoan culture and traditions and other relevant stakeholders to discuss informal and traditional social protection mechanisms in Samoa.
- 3) Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis with representatives of various entities working closely with vulnerable groups.

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS: UPOLU			
	Upolu urban area	Upolu rural area	Upolu total
Male	35	N/A	N/A
Female	23	N/A	N/A
Total	58	19	77

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS: SAVAI'I			
	Savai'i urban area	Savai'i rural area	Savai'i total
Male	8	10	18
Female	12	9	21
Total	20	19	39

SAMOAN CULTURE EXPERTS PANELIST					
	NUS	Samoa Culture Centre	MESC	MWCSD	Total
Male	1	2	1	1	5
Female	14	0	0	0	14
Total	15	2	1	1	19

PARTICIPANTS FOR INTERVIEWS									
	MWCSD	UNDP	ADRA	NOLA	SVSG	CJCLDS	Council of Churches	NEOC	Total
Male	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	6
Female	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
Total	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10

ANNEX 2: COMPARISON OF THREE PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND EFFECT ON VULNERABLE GROUPS

TABLE 11: COMPARISON OF PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS: WOMEN

	Vulnerable group	Access	Benefits	Timeframe	Vulnerability situational factors	
Informal social protection					Unemployment	Inadequate education
Church	Women	Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
NGOs		Targeted	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
Traditional social protection						
Neighbour		Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
Family		Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
Village		Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
Formal social protection						
Senior Citizens Pensions Scheme		Target only women 65 years and above	Basic needs and medication	Long-term	No	No
School fee grant scheme		Target only women attending primary and secondary schools	Education	Long-term	Yes	Yes
Accident Compensation Scheme		Targeted only women in formal employment	Compensation for any injury and income loss	Long-term	No	No
Recognised Seasonal Employers' scheme		Targeted young women	Income and remittances	Seasonal	Yes but seasonal	Possible

TABLE 12: COMPARISON OF PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS: YOUTH

	Vulnerable group: Youth	Access	Benefits	Timeframe	Vulnerability situational factors	
Informal social protection					Unemployment	Inadequate education
Church		Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
NGOs		Targeted	Basic needs	Short-term	Limited cover	No
Traditional social protection						
Neighbour		Conditional	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
Family		Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
Village		Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
Formal social protection						
Senior Citizens Pensions Scheme		Not applicable				
School fee grant scheme		Target only youth of 18 years of age	Free education (tuition only)	Long-term	Yes	Yes
Accident Compensation Scheme		Targeted only youth in formal employment	Compensation for any injury and income loss	Long-term	No	No
Recognised Seasonal Employers' scheme		Yes but limited opportunities	Income and remittances	Seasonal	Yes but seasonal	Possible

TABLE 13: COMPARISON OF PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS: PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Vulnerable group: Persons with disabilities							
	Access	Benefits	Timeframe	Vulnerability situational factors			
				Social exclusion	Low income	Access to education	Access to health
Informal social protection							
Church	Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No	No	No
NGOs	Targeted	Basic needs	Long-term	Yes	No	Limited	Limited
Traditional social protection							
Neighbour	Limited	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No	No	No
Family	Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No	No	No
Village	Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No	No	No
Formal social protection							
Senior Citizens Pensions Scheme	Target only persons with disabilities 65 years and above	Basic needs and medication	Long-term	No	Yes	No	Yes
School fee grant scheme	Target only those with minor disabilities attending primary and secondary schools	Education	Long-term	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Accident Compensation Scheme	Targeted only persons with disabilities in formal employment	Compensation for any injury and income loss	Long-term	No	No	No	No
Recognised Seasonal Employers' scheme	Not applicable as it targeted persons without disabilities						

TABLE 14: COMPARISON OF PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS: JOBSEEKERS

Vulnerable group: Jobseekers					
	Access	Benefits	Timeframe	Vulnerability situational factors	
Informal social protection				Unemployment	
Church	Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	
NGOs	Not applicable				
Traditional social protection					
Neighbour	Limited	Basic needs	Short-term	No	
Family	Free access to members	Basic needs	Short-term	No	
Village	Free access to members	Basic needs	Short-term	No	
Formal social protection					
Senior Citizens Pensions Scheme	Not applicable				
School fee grant scheme	Not applicable				
Accident Compensation Scheme	Not applicable				
Recognised Seasonal Employers' scheme	Yes but limited opportunities	Income and remittances	Seasonal	Yes but seasonal	Possible

TABLE 15: COMPARISON OF PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS: SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Vulnerable group: School dropout					
	Access	Benefits	Timeframe	Vulnerability situational factors	
Informal social protection				Unemployment	Inadequate education
Church	Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
NGOs	Not applicable				
Traditional social protection					
Neighbour	Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
Family	Free access to members	Basic needs	Short-term	No	Possibility
Village	Free access to members	Basic needs	Short-term	No	No
Formal social protection					
Senior Citizens Pensions Scheme	Not applicable				
School fee grant scheme	Targeting students in primary and secondary schools	Free education	Long-term	Yes	Yes
Accident Compensation Scheme	Not applicable				
Recognised Seasonal Employers' scheme	Yes but limited opportunities	Income and remittances	Seasonal	Yes but seasonal	Possible

TABLE 16: COMPARISON OF PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS: HOUSEHOLDS RECOVERING FROM A CRISIS

Vulnerable group: Households recovering from a crisis					
	Access	Benefits	Timeframe	Vulnerability situational factors	
Informal social protection				Low income	
Church	Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	
NGOs	Targeted	Basic needs	Short-term	No	
Traditional social protection					
Neighbour	Free access	Basic needs	Short-term	No	
Family	Free access to members	Basic needs	Short-term	No	
Village	Free access to members	Basic needs	Short-term	No	
Formal social protection					
Senior Citizens Pensions Scheme	Targeted only those in the household who are 65 years and above	Basic needs and medication	Long-term	No	
School fee grant scheme	Targeting only those in the household attending primary and secondary schools	Free education	Long-term	No	
Accident Compensation Scheme	Not applicable				
Recognised Seasonal Employers' scheme	Yes but limited opportunities	Income and remittances	Seasonal	Yes but not regular	

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