

“An Improved Quality of Life For All”

Samoa’s second VNR will assess progress on all SDGs with a focus on **People Goals** to tell our story. We have since the first report improved integration of SDGs into national processes for better data collection, M&E and linking to budget and planning processes, development assistance and other international obligations. Stakeholder engagement improved using existing platforms.

- Overall, Samoa has shown resilience to multiple and frequent natural hazards and disasters and external shocks from the Global Economic Crisis, the 2009 Tsunami, 2012 Cyclone Evan and 2018 Cyclone Gita. Despite steady economic growth with peak growth of 7.1% in 2015/2016 following the recovery from these disasters and external shocks; there was the increase of the basic needs poverty from 18.8% in 2013 to 22.7% in 2018 and declining economic growth mainly due to industry slowdown with the Yazaki Samoa manufacturing plant closure in August 2017. There was also a rise in unemployment rates from 8.7% in 2012 to 14.5% in 2017.
- Whilst resilience in terms of governance, coordinated response and recovery has strengthened, the recent tragic results of the Measles Epidemic in 2019 highlighted significant gaps in our health system; albeit the lessons learned have placed Samoa in a better state of preparedness towards national response to the COVID19 pandemic. Samoa as of May 1st 2020 remains COVID19 free. Steps taken to prevent the spread of measles and now COVID19 are impacting the economy with a decline in GDP per capita and expanding budget deficits due to decreasing visitor numbers and earnings from tourism for the first time since June 2018 quarter.
- Investing in human capital has always been at the top of the national agenda. So far, there are mixed results on the global maternal and child health targets but improved primary health care service access. High morbidity and mortality rates are reported from NCDs. Despite this, there is good progress in addressing the risk factors of NCDs with alcohol and tobacco use declining and levels of physical exercise and healthy eating increasing over the past 10 years. The recent Measles outbreak revealed gaps that are

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being addressed with a thorough review of the vaccinations and health information management systems.

- Universal access to education especially in primary and secondary levels are positive, with the assistance of the School Fee Grants Scheme. Challenges remain with declining literacy and numeracy rates, poor results in Science and Maths and very poor quality results for boys. Responding to the school closures from the State of Emergencies for the Measles Epidemic and Covid19 Pandemic, the Education system has innovated and are delivering school lessons online and the use of e-learning materials.
- Gender equality and empowerment is key in Samoa’s national development approach. While there is overall positive progress in the participation of women in decision making at all levels, there is high prevalence of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- There is near universal access of the population to essential services such as safe drinking water, sanitation and electricity services. Efforts for digital transformation are resulting in increased access to mobile technology and internet and enabling such services as financial inclusion. The challenge is to maintain and improve the quality of water and sanitation, ensure affordable ICT and more clean energy consumption.
- Samoa continues to invest in climate resilient infrastructure and ensures the integration of climate change across all sectors. Forest cover remains stable, however, there have been no major improvements in the status of threatened species for Samoa.
- There are established institutions and mechanisms to enhance a ‘human rights-based approach to development and to link implementation and review of human rights obligations with SDGs.
- The reports on means of implementation have been positive. Despite progress in many areas there remains key gaps. With the current COVID19 situation, sustainability of any gains are now in question.

Key take-aways include the importance of strong and decisive leadership, systems and capacities; constructive partnerships at all levels; use of country systems; effective

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management of significant amounts of national data and reports supported by data analysis capabilities

Challenges highlighted are the limited capacity including for implementation, data analysis and management at all levels; uncoordinated partner SDG support efforts; increased vulnerability to external shocks, disasters and emerging threats including health crises.