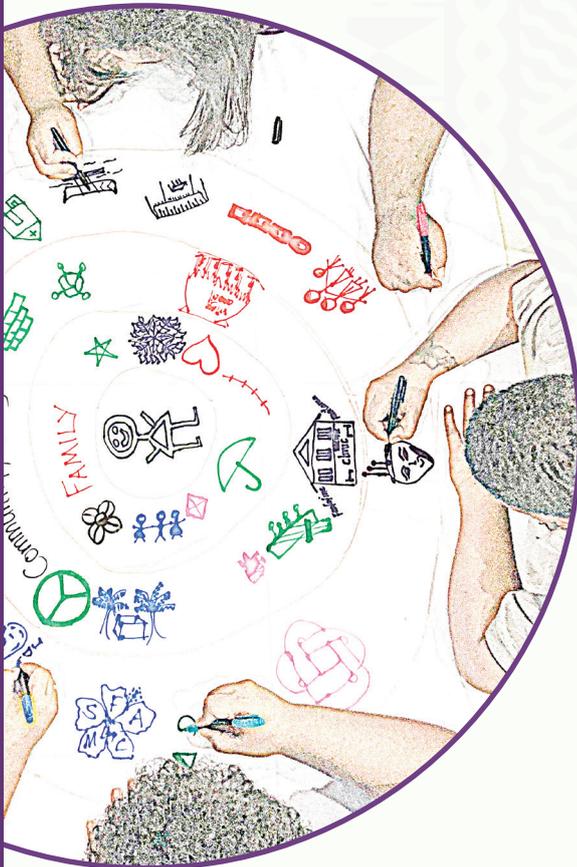




Peer-led Study on the Rights and Social Experiences of Trans and Gender Diverse People in:

Samoa

COUNTRY REPORT





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Map attributions Vemaps. Every effort has been made to ensure the information and facts mentioned in this publication is accurate and correct at the time of publishing.

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Contents

5

• Foreword

6

• Acknowledgements

7

• Acronyms

8

• Glossary of Terms

10

• Introduction

16

• Methodology

17

• Data Management
and Analysis
• Limitations

18

• Findings
• Basic Demographics

19

• Gender Identity

21

• Family and Friends

25

• Experiences in Education

27

• Experiences with Labour

28

• Experiences with
Health Services

29

• Legal and Criminal
Experiences
• Experiences with Religion

30

• Society and Culture

32

• Conclusion

35

• Recommendations

37

• References



Foreword / The fa’afafine community in Samoa takes pride in their cultural identity. Generally known as and now considered a condoned community in Samoa as heirs and beneficiaries to customary land and matai titles in fa’asamoa or Samoan culture. In spite of that position in society, they continue to encounter discrimination and stigma due to their gender identity and sexual expression. They are often subjected to cyberbullying and gender-based violence,’ including domestic violence.

One of the reasons for this thoroughly researched publication is to note and analyse all forms of violence and discrimination against fa’afafine and fa’atama and their lived experiences. My Girls Club was a core part of this research for the Samoa fa’afafine and fa’atama community.

The survey was made possible with the technical guidance of and financial assistance from Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN) to which paved the way to a large milestone for My Girls Club with its first research project roll out in Samoa.

The experience gained and the capacity built as a result of this partnership towards this survey involving our hard-to-reach communities both in urban and rural areas is truly a reward for all members of My Girls Club that participated in the project. For this we are grateful for this engagement with APTN.

We acknowledge the cooperation of and collaborative spirit our interviewees for making this work possible as their stories form the core of this publication. We acknowledge also the collaboration of our stakeholder partners for their valuable contribution during our advocacy workshops and review on the findings of the survey report.

We remember also in this project the valuable contribution by one of our members, our darling sister Jodie Magalo who passed away in late 2020. She was a valuable part of the interviewer team and a strong supporter of our advocacies. May she rest in peace.

We strongly hope and believe that this researched publication will be a reference point for more research towards a better understanding on the real issues that sees require dialogue and discussion to

ensure equality and respect for the rights and dignity of fa’afafine and fa’atama communities so they can live without discrimination.



Natu Tikeri,
Focal Person, My Girls Club

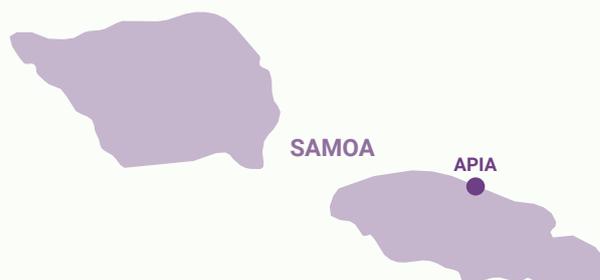
Acknowledgements / This study was coordinated by the Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APT¹) and led in the country by My Girls Club. This study has been adapted from Transgender Europe (TGEU)'s *Transrespect versus Transphobia (TvT): The social experiences of trans and gender-diverse people in 8 countries: Colombia, India, the Philippines, Serbia, Thailand, Tonga, Turkey and Venezuela.*

¹ The Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APT¹) advocates for the protection of the legal, social, and human rights of transgender (trans) people as well as the enhancement of their social wellbeing and quality of life in the Asia Pacific region.

Data was gathered by trained transgender and gender diverse people (from My Girls Club, The Rogers, and the Samoa Fa'afafine Association) under the coordination of My Girls Club. Initial descriptive data analysis was done by Duangta Pawa. The introduction of the report was produced by Patrick Thomsen, interpretation and analysis of the data was supported by Kylie Fisk, and editing of the report was supported by Sangita Singh.

Our deepest gratitude, however, goes to all the trans and gender diverse respondents who shared their open, honest, and valuable experiences, and the peer and technical reviewers who provided feedback on this report. It is with your reflections, experiences, and dedications that APTN can continue to contribute to the advocacy efforts for greater human rights in their fight for equality.

This report has internally been reviewed by the APTN secretariat. Feedback on the report has been received from Isikeli Vulavou of Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network (PSGDN), Alex Su'a of Samoa Fa'afafine Association (SFA), Loukinikini Vili (Office of the Ombudsman), My Girls Club and the research team members.



Acronyms

AIDS / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

APTN / Asia Pacific Transgender Network

CBO / Community Based Organizations

FtM / Female to Male

GBV / Gender-based Violence

HIV / Human Immunodeficiency Virus

LGBTQIA+ / Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other sexually or gender diverse people

MGC / My Girls Club

MSM / Men who have Sex with Men

MtF / Male to Female

NGO / Non-government Organizations

PEP / Post Exposure Prophylaxis

PrEP / Pre-exposure Prophylaxis

SFA / Samoan Fa'afafine Association

SPSS / Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

SRS / Sexual Reassignment Surgery

SRH / Sexual and Reproductive Health

STI / Sexually Transmitted Infection

TGEU / Transgender Europe

TvT / Transrespect versus Transphobia

UNAIDS / Joint United Nations Programme on HIV

Glossary of Terms*

Transgender & Trans

The umbrella term trans covers a diversity of gender identities and forms of gender expressions. The following non-exhaustive list explains some common terms used to describe trans identities and how they are used in this report. The definitions and their applications vary significantly across the region, within specific countries or cultures, and amongst individual trans people. Every person has the right to use the term or terms that best describes their gender identity.

In this region, “transgender” (or “trans”) is used frequently as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth. APTN has included the following definition of the terms based on discussions held at a regional consultation in Manila in 2012:

Persons who identify themselves in a different gender than that assigned to them at birth. They may express their identity differently to that expected of the gender role assigned to them at birth. Trans/transgender persons often identify themselves in ways that are locally, socially, culturally, religiously, or spiritually defined.

This report uses the word “trans” as an umbrella term to convey this diversity of gender identity or expression. When it is appropriate, the report uses the following additional terms:

Trans Woman

A trans person who identifies as female (that is, someone whose sex was assigned male at birth but who identifies as female). The acronym MtF (male to female) is also used to describe a trans woman.

Trans Man

A trans person who identifies as male (that is, someone whose sex was assigned female at birth but who identifies as male). The acronym FtM (female to male) is also used to describe a trans man.

Cisgender

Someone who is not transgender, that is, someone whose gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.

Gender-affirming Health Services

The biomedical, surgical, or health interventions a trans person may undertake to physically transition. This includes, for example, access to counselling, hormone therapy, hair removal, and a range of surgeries. The term “gender-affirming surgeries” is preferred in this document, rather than the older term, “sex reassignment surgery (SRS)”.

Gender Expression

A person’s ways of communicating culturally-defined traits of masculinity or femininity (or both or neither) externally through physical appearance (including clothing, accessories, hairstyles, and cosmetics), mannerisms, ways of speaking, and behavioural patterns in interactions with others.

Gender Dysphoria

Discomfort or distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person's gender identity and that person's sex assigned at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics).

Gender Identity

A person's internal sense of being a man, a woman, or some alternative gender or combination of genders. A person's gender identity may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth.

Gender-nonconforming or Gender Variant

Someone whose gender identity or gender expression is different from societal expectations or stereotypes. Not all trans people are gender-nonconforming. Some trans people are comfortable conforming to societal expectations of what it means to be a woman or a man. Conversely, some people who are not trans may identify as gender-nonconforming, based on their gender expression rather than their gender identity.

Intersex

Someone whose innate physical sex characteristics (such as chromosomes, gonads, and genitals) are considered to be either male or female at the same time, only partially male or partially female, or neither male nor female.

Transition

A process many but not all trans people undergo to live authentically in their gender identity. This may involve changes to a person's gender expression, such as their outward appearance, clothing, mannerisms, or the name they use in everyday interactions. Transitioning may also involve biomedical and surgical steps that help align a person's anatomy with their gender identity.

Transphobia

Prejudice directed at trans people because of their actual or perceived gender identity or expression. It can also have an impact on non-trans people who do not fit societal expectations for males or females. Transphobia can be *structural* (reflected in policies and laws that discriminate against trans people), *societal* (when trans people are rejected or mistreated by members of the society), or *internalized* (when trans people accept such prejudicial attitudes about themselves or other trans people).

Sexual Orientation

A person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and sexual attraction to and intimate and sexual relations with individuals of a different gender (heterosexual), the same gender (homosexual), or more than one gender (bisexual or pansexual) (International Commission of Jurists, 2007).

* Adapted with minor changes from Health Policy Project, Asia Pacific Transgender Network, and the United Nations Development Programme, *Blueprint for the Provision of Comprehensive Care for Trans People and Trans Communities*, Washington DC: Futures Group, Health Policy Project, 2015.

Introduction / The Independent State of Samoa is a group of islands roughly positioned in the centre of Polynesia. With two main islands, Upolu and Savai'i, and a collection of smaller inhabited islands, Samoa's population sits at approximately 200,000.²



Samoa's transgender (trans) and gender diverse community is one of the most ethnographically observed populations in the Pacific.³ Yet, despite this, there is limited information available on the status of trans and gender diverse people in Samoa. Moreover, translating the term "transgender" or "trans" into a Samoan context is challenging. The term "fa'afafine translates to "in the manner of a woman," and although many conflate this term with the MtF trans identity, the cultural context and genealogy in which fa'afafine practice and forge their identities complicate this Western gender translation.⁴

According to the Samoa Fa'afafine Association (SFA), Samoa has four cultural genders—female, male, fa'afafine, and fa'atama. However, only the female and male gender identities are promoted and included in all legislation. Fa'afafine and fa'atama are indigenous LGBTI citizens of Samoa. Fa'afafine are male at birth and explicitly embody feminine gender traits. Some identify as gay males and

some as trans. Fa'atama are female at birth and explicitly embody masculine gender traits. Most identify as lesbian and very few as trans.⁵

"SAMOA HAS FOUR CULTURAL GENDERS— FEMALE, MALE, FA'AFAFINE, AND FA'ATAMA. HOWEVER, ONLY THE FEMALE AND MALE GENDER IDENTITIES ARE PROMOTED AND INCLUDED IN ALL LEGISLATION."

SFA also argues that boxing fa'afafine into the term "transgender" as understood in part of the common acronym LGBTIQ+ ignores their cultural connection and fa'asinomaga (cultural duty and positioning), which is the essence of every Samoan.⁶ This nuance is important in reading trans and fa'afafine issues in Samoa. Fa'afafine do not see their gender diverse position as the central marker of their identity; rather, they view it as part of being Samoan.

Yet, beyond this uncertainty

² "Samoa Population," *Country Meters*, <https://countrymeters.info/en/Samoa>.

³ Heather Worth, et al, *Pacific Multi-Country Mapping and Behavioural Study: HIV and STI Risk Vulnerability among Key Populations – Samoa* (Sydney: UNDP & Global Fund, 2016), 12, https://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/sphcm/Centres_and_Units/Samoa-HIV-STI-Risk-Report.pdf.

⁴ Patrick Thomsen, "Hobgoblin' logic on Pacific gay rights has distinctly Western roots," *The Spinoff*, October 26, 2016, <https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/26-10-2016/hobgoblin-logic-on-pacific-gay-rights-has-distinctly-western-roots/>.

⁵ Samoa Fa'afafine Association, *UPR of Samoa Summary Statement of Important Issues prepared by the Samoa Fa'afafine Association*, ILGA, accessed on April 15, 2022, https://ilga.org/downloads/Samoa_PRE_SESSIONS_SUMMARY.pdf.

⁶ Samoa Fa'afafine Association, *Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review regarding the protection of the rights of LGBTI persons in Samoa: 25th session of the Universal Periodic Review*, September 2015, <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=2505&file=EnglishTranslation>.

7 UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Samoa*, June 27, 2016, A/HRC/33/6, 5, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/146/32/PDF/G1114632.pdf?OpenElement>.

8 Yvette Tan, "Miss Fa'afafine: Behind Samoa's 'third gender' beauty pageant," *BBC News*, September 1, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37227803>.

9 Patrick Abboud, "Fa'afafine: The Boys Raised to be Girls," *SBS News*, August 26, 2018, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/fa-afafine-the-boys-raised-to-be-girls>.

10 Heather Worth et al., *Pacific Multi-Country Mapping and Behavioural Study: HIV and STI Risk Vulnerability among Key Populations—Samoa*, 14.

11 Sue Farran and Alexander Su'a, "Discriminating on the Grounds of Status: Criminal Law and Fa'afafine and Fakaleiti in the South Pacific," *Journal of South Pacific Law* 9, no. 1 (2005), <http://www.paclii.org/journals/fJSPL/vol09no1/5.shtml>.

12 "Samoa: New Crimes Act Comes into Force," *Global Legal Monitor*, Library of Congress, accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/samoa-new-crimes-act-comes-into-force/>.

13 "Samoa," Human Dignity Trust, accessed April 14, 2022, <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/country-profile/samoa/>.



around definition, fa'afafine still face discrimination and obstacles to their social and legal recognition in Samoa, and that is in need of wider legislative and social review.⁷ There are no official national statistics collected on fa'afafine in Samoa. However, some estimates place fa'afafine at five percent of Samoa's total population.⁸ Meanwhile, others have reported that fa'afafine actually number between 3000⁹ and 9000.¹⁰ However, due to the more fluid nature of gender and sexuality in Samoa, these figures can be misleading. SFA argues that the estimates for the number of MSM in Samoa vary significantly. It estimates that 70 to 80% of the male population has sex with another man or a fa'afafine in their lifetime. Sex between men may be underreported in surveys, which may also play a part in the wildly different estimates of the total number of Samoa's

fa'afafine and trans population.

Like in most post-colonial societies in the Pacific, the exclusion of Samoa's fa'afafine, fa'atama, trans, and gender diverse people from legal frameworks that govern gendered forms of citizenship, thereby denying them full legal recognition, is a legacy of colonial occupation. Following independence in 1962, the institution of Samoa's penal code made it illegal for "men to impersonate women."¹¹ This was officially removed when Samoa adopted its New Crimes Act in 2013,¹² in a move that is said to have affirmed the rights of the fa'afafine community. The Act also redefined sexual connections to include oral and anal sex, which, by inference, allowed consensual sexual contact between people of the same sex. However, sodomy is still outlawed in Samoa.¹³ Both sexual orientation and

HIV status were included as protected grounds for employment through the enactment of the Labour and Employment Relations Act 2013. Discrimination based on gender identity/expression or intersex status, however, is not prohibited.¹⁴ This suggests that some tension continues to exist over how best to engage the rights of sexual and gender minorities.

"THE PRIME MINISTER OF SAMOA, HAS CALLED IT A "SODOM AND GOMORRAH PRACTICE," DECLARING THAT MARRIAGE EQUALITY LEGISLATION WOULD NEVER PASS AS LONG AS HIS PARTY GOVERNED SAMOA."

Samoa is a deeply religious country; it changed its constitution to officially become a Christian nation in 2017.¹⁵ The rise of marriage equality legislation in countries across the Western world, most notably New Zealand, Australia, and the United States, has resulted in heated debates around the appropriateness of such legislative changes in Samoa. The patron of SFA, the Prime Minister of Samoa, has called it a "Sodom and Gomorrah practice," declaring that marriage equality legislation would never pass as long as his party governed Samoa.¹⁶ The SFA has stated that fa'afafine are free to marry their partners in countries overseas, like

Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, and that their union can be recognized in Samoa. This move was called a necessary compromise by the association to ensure that Samoa's progression toward marriage equality followed a cautious and steady path.¹⁷

Despite Samoa being a deeply Christian country, fa'afafine do play an important (albeit complicated) role in the church. Modern fa'afafine have won favour with large parts of the Samoan community for their hard work, especially in leading charitable causes and taking on caregiver roles, such as looking after the elderly.¹⁸ Most are relied on as leaders of church denominations' choir groups, youth groups, and even as decorators and planners of activities.¹⁹ Yet, the relationship between fa'afafine and the church is a delicate one and can at times become tense. Reverend Vavatau Taufao, the Secretary-General to the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, said that fa'afafine were welcomed into the church and pointed out that many contributed to their congregations. The church, however, considers fa'afafine to be male and does not endorse same-sex relationships.²⁰ This illustrates the complexity around how fa'afafine in Samoa are integrated into society, where their acceptance is highly conditional²¹ and where embeddedness framing can obfuscate the ways in which

¹⁴ Labour and Employment Relations Act (2013, No. 7), Section 20 Subsection 2, <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/93575/109439/F88586476/WSM93575%20Eng.pdf>.

¹⁵ Grant Wyeth, "Samoa Officially Becomes a Christian State," *The Diplomat*, June 16, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/samoa-officially-becomes-a-christian-state/>.

¹⁶ "Tuilaepa says no to same sex marriage in Samoa," *RNZ*, December 12, 2017, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/346017/tuilaepa-says-no-to-same-sex-marriage-in-samoa>.

¹⁷ Samoa Fa'afafine Association, *Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review Regarding the Protection of the Rights of LGBTI Persons in Samoa 25th session of the Universal Periodic Review*.

¹⁸ Jonathan Barrett, "Samoa's 'third gender' delicately balances sex and religion," *Reuters*, July 31, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pacific-samoa-gender/samoas-third-gender-delicately-balances-sex-and-religion-idUSKCN1UQ036>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Serge Tcherkézoff, "Transgender in Samoa: The Cultural Production of Gender Inequality," in *Gender on the Edge: Transgender, Gay and Other Pacific Islanders*, eds., Niko Besnier and Kalissa Alexeyeff (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014), 115-134, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824840198-006>.

22 Teake, "Conditional Acceptance: Asserting Fa'afafine Claims to Legitimacy in Samoan Society," *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*, 2010, https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/923.

23 *Transrespect v Transphobia Worldwide* (n.d.) *Legal Situation; Healthcare Situation: Samoa*. Transgender Europe Online Tool. <https://transrespect.org/en/map/legal-gender-recognition-change-of-name/>.

24 Ministry of Health, *Samoa Global Aids Monitoring Report 2018*, 16, https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/WSM_2018_countryreport.pdf.

25 Heather Worth, et al., *Pacific Multi-Country Mapping and Behavioural Study: HIV and STI Risk Vulnerability among Key Populations – Samoa*, 8.

26 Ministry of Health, *Samoa Global Aids Monitoring Report 2018*, 25.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

29 United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, "Samoa 2018 Human Rights Report," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018*, 12, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SAMOA-2018.pdf>.

30 Laura Walters, "Samoan reporting on trans woman's death 'disgusting,' 'degrading,'" *Stuff*, June 20, 2016, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/world/south-pacific/81256086/samoan-reporting-on-trans-womans-death-disgusting-degrading>.

Samoa's fa'afafine, fa'afatama, and the trans communities are marginalized in other societal settings.²²

"THE SFA HIGHLIGHTED HOW YOUNG BOYS SHOWING FEMININE TRAITS AT A YOUNG AGE ARE OFTEN SUBJECTED TO SEVERE VIOLENCE AT THE HANDS OF THEIR OWN FAMILIES AND THAT IS NOT REPORTED DUE TO INTIMIDATION, FEAR OF BEING DISOWNED AND OTHER REPRISALS."

As Samoan citizens, fa'afafine and fa'atama can access the same levels of healthcare, employment, and education opportunities as other Samoans. However, there is a dearth of trans- and fa'afafine-specific healthcare services, such as hormone therapy, due to a lack of capacity, funding, and legal recognition.²³ Other research has shown that Samoa's fa'afafine are quite well-informed about STIs, especially HIV. Although knowledge of HIV was generally high, condom use was low (43.9% never used a condom), and only 16.3% had had an HIV test in the last month. The main reason for not using condoms was that the fa'afafine felt they were safe from HIV.²⁴ While Samoa's HIV infections rate is relatively low (cumulative 24 reported cases),²⁵ the rate of testing is also low, which means that there is

a danger that the infection figures could be misleading. At present, SFA offers the only trans/fa'afafine-specific HIV screening programme supported by the Ministry of Health. The organisation is active across urban and rural Samoa in promoting HIV and STI prevention, including through health promotion and voluntary HIV and Syphilis testing activities during the Annual Fa'afafine Forum, as part of the Miss Fa'afafine Pageant Week.^{26,27,28}

Information around GBV against trans and fa'afafine Samoans is limited to mostly anecdotal reports. Although it is widely accepted that Samoan society publicly recognizes the trans and fa'afafine community, there are still reports of social discrimination.²⁹ One particularly abhorrent case was the suicide of Janine Tuivaiki, a fa'afafine woman, in 2016. The Samoa Observer, Samoa's premier daily newspaper, published a picture of Janine's dead body on the front page, deliberately misgendering her.³⁰ According to the National



Public Inquiry into Family Violence Report conducted and published by Samoa's Office of the Ombudsman, 87% of the respondents reported experiencing domestic violence in the form of harsh verbal abuse, while 86% reported having experienced physical violence in a family setting.³¹ Among the women, 86% reported being subjected to intimate partner violence, including kicking, punching, slapping, and bodily harm.³² Therefore, domestic violence in Samoa has a strong gendered dimension. In relation to fa'afafine, the SFA highlighted how young boys showing feminine traits at a young age are often subjected to severe violence at the hands of their own families and that is not reported due to intimidation, fear of being disowned and other reprisals, a belief that no crime has been committed against them, and a lack of effective redressal systems.³³

"AS TRANS WOMEN ARE OFTEN FOUND TO BE AT HIGH RISK OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN OTHER SOCIETIES, THIS IS AN AREA IN SAMOA THAT NEEDS IMMEDIATE ATTENTION AND A GREATER DEGREE OF DOCUMENTATION AND ANALYSIS."

The report identified fa'afafine as an at-risk marginalized group likely to be exposed to violence

at higher rates than the non-fa'afafine. It recommended that further studies be conducted into fa'afafine experiences of violence. As trans women are often found to be at high risk of sexual assault and sexual violence in other societies,^{34,35} this is an area in Samoa that needs immediate attention and a greater degree of documentation and analysis. As the nodal fa'afafine association of Samoa, SFA is active in advocating for the enjoyment and fulfilment of the rights of their community. SFA runs a number of programmes, including sister networks throughout Samoa, which allow fa'afafine in rural villages to seek support from fa'afafine advocates and sisters across the island group. It works closely with the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) to advocate for the right to health for fa'afafine and fa'atama communities, utilizing human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to report on human rights violations. It provides technical support to the NHRI to build institutional capacity to promote and protect the human rights of fa'afafine, fa'atama, lesbian, gay, trans, and gender diverse people. This includes developing a roadmap for implementing Law Enforcement Guidelines and Standards for police and prison services, among others, that are inclusive both in policy and practice of the SFA community (that is, the fa'afafine,



³¹ Samoa Office of the Ombudsman/National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), *National Public Inquiry into Family Violence in Samoa* (Apia: Samoa Office of the Ombudsman, 2018), 4, https://ombudsman.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/National-Inquiry-Report-into-Family-Violence_State-of-Human-Rights-Report-2018-SUMMARY_English.pdf.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, 17.

³⁴ Rebecca L. Stotzer, "Gender Identity and hate crimes: Violence against transgender people in Los Angeles County," *Sexuality Research & Social Policy: A Journal of the NSRC* 5, no. 1 (2008): 43–52, <https://doi.org/10.1525/srsp.2008.5.1.43>.

³⁵ Mark Lee, *A Time to Act: Fatal Violence Against Transgender People in America, 2017* (Washington DC: Human Rights Campaign Foundation and Trans People of Color Coalition, 2017), http://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/A_Time_To_Act_2017_REV3.pdf.

fa'afatama, SOGIESC/LGBTI community).³⁶ Furthermore, the organisation has been active in advocating for greater financial and resource investment in the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women and Social Development sectoral plans to increase access to trans-competent health services for the fa'afafine and fa'afatama community.³⁷

"IN PARTICULAR, THIS REPORT PROVIDES DATA THAT DEMONSTRATES THE COMPLEXITY OF GENDER IDENTIFICATION IN SAMOA, HIGHLIGHTING THE EXPERIENCES OF FA'AFAFINE, FA'AFATAMA, TRANS, AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE IN THEIR FAMILIES, THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, THE WORKFORCE, AND WHILE TRYING TO ACCESS HEALTH, LEGAL, AND JUSTICE SERVICES."

This report by APTN and My Girls Club on the rights and social experiences of trans and gender diverse people in Samoa provides valuable previously unavailable data on the educational, employment, and social experience of the fa'afafine, fa'afatama, trans, and gender diverse communities in Samoa and highlights gaps in current research and literature. In particular, this report provides data that demonstrates the complexity of gender identification in Samoa,

highlighting the experiences of fa'afafine, fa'afatama, trans, and gender diverse people in their families, the education system, the workforce, and while trying to access health, legal, and justice services. The study also focuses on the impact religion has on the lives of Samoa's trans, fa'afafine, fa'atama, and gender diverse population. The data provided in the study can be used by My Girls Club, SFA, and their sister organisations to better advocate for greater rights and protections for fa'afafine, fa'atama, trans, and gender diverse people in Samoa and to increase support for appropriate services and research into the needs of their communities.

³⁶ "NHRI Samoa: A Case Study on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Rights," Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, <https://cfnhri.org/updates/nhri-samoa-a-case-study-on-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-rights/>.

³⁷ http://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/samoa/session_25_-_may_2016/sfa_inc._upr25_wsm_e_main.pdf.



Methodology / This research was conceptualized as a peer-led study and has been adapted from the TvT social experiences study conducted by TGEU. The country research team for Samoa and APTN retained the original form of the questionnaire for sections 1 to 9 but changed some sentence structures and removed or combined specific questions. Additionally, section 10 was jointly developed to include questions on humanitarian aid services, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services, traditional healers, and traditions.

Training sessions on research methodologies and data collection were conducted in Samoa in September 2018. The country team identified a focal person and 10 research team members (who are trans or gender diverse people). The existing TvT survey tool was reviewed and adapted to the specific country context with the inclusion of culturally appropriate terminology.

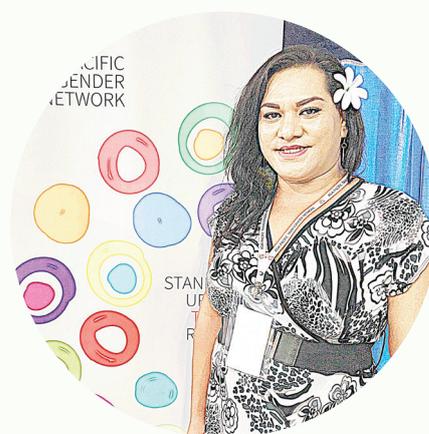
The questionnaire is divided into ten sections (see Annex 1):

1. General Information
2. Family, Friends, and Partners
3. Formal Education
4. Labor Market, Job, Earning one's Living
5. Health Care
6. Legal and Criminal Justice Systems
7. Religion
8. Society
9. Culture
10. Local Section (Humanitarian Aid Services, SRHR Services, Traditional Healers, Traditions)

The questionnaire was finalized

by the end of November 2019. There was a consensus to keep the questionnaire in English and verbally translate questions into the local language, if required, to enable a fuller understanding of terms and concepts. In total, there were 175 questions, including sub-questions that required explanatory responses. Enumerators were required to guide interviewees through the questionnaire and write down the responses. The questionnaire was paper based. The questionnaire is a guided interview where the researchers ask the questions and write down the response of the respondent.

The data gathering process commenced in December and continued till January 2020. The objective was to collect at least fifty interviews to ensure a mix and diversity among respondents regarding gender identities and ensure that at least 10% of the respondents were trans men/masculine. Each interview started by providing the respondents with



an information sheet about the research. Respondents were surveyed if they met 5 pre-determined inclusion eligibility criteria. If eligible, informed consent was sought, and assurance of confidentiality was provided, before progressing. Lastly, an 18-character interview code for each respondent was captured to ensure the anonymity of the respondent. After each interview, respondents were asked if they were willing to be contacted for a follow-up discussion. If yes, another informed consent (Annexe 2) was signed to get the respondent's mobile number and/or e-mail address. Each

respondent was provided with a transportation allowance to support their participation in the study. Each interviewer was provided with compensation per accomplished form. A total of 52 people were interviewed in Samoa. A majority of the respondents came from various villages and districts, including Apia, Faleata, Vaimauga, Aleipata, Aana, Lepa, and Lotofaga, among others.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS /

The survey questionnaire was structured in ten sections, grouped thematically by modules. This structure has largely been followed in the presentation of the analysis, though some items have been merged or placed in different sections to ease reading flow. Data has been imported from Excel and analysed using IBM SPSS v.24. The data has been coded and labelled according to the survey tool. Validity checks have been performed, but the removal of entire cases has been avoided to preserve data quantity; instead, inconsistent results or responses unrelated to the question have been noted in the footnotes. Likewise, qualitative answers unrelated to the question have not been removed but noted in the footnotes instead. The selection of findings presented in the report includes responses that align with the key themes or are particularly interesting or unexpected and instances where quantitative and qualitative data are complementary or particularly insightful. With a sample of 52 individuals and a diverse range of gender identities, disaggregation by gender was limited, though we point towards patterns where they exist by gender.

"A TOTAL OF 52 PEOPLE WERE INTERVIEWED IN SAMOA. A MAJORITY OF THE RESPONDENTS CAME FROM VARIOUS VILLAGES AND DISTRICTS, INCLUDING APIA, FALEATA, VAIMAUGA, ALEIPATA, AANA, LEPA, AND LOTOFAGA, AMONG OTHERS."

LIMITATIONS /

Some of the limitations that may have affected the data stemmed largely from the limited oversight and quality assurance of data collection due to time and budget constraints. While training was provided to all interviewers and enumerators, some inconsistencies were revealed during data analysis, potentially due to misinterpretation of questions or terms due to difficulties in translating some terms and concepts relating to gender identity. Given that there were a large number of questions and this was the first time many of the community interviewers and enumerators had engaged in such an activity, there were also issues of missing data in sections. Finally, given the hard-to-reach population, many interviewees were associated with the coordinating organisations and other LGBT organisations in the country, leading to a potential sample bias. Statistical validity checks were performed to ensure the rigour of the data presented in this report.





³⁸ Carla LaGata/Carsten Balzer and Jan Simone Hutta, eds., *Transrespect versus Transphobia: The social experiences of trans and gender-diverse people in Colombia, India, the Philippines, Serbia, Thailand, Tonga, Turkey and Venezuela*, TvT Publication Series 9 (Berlin, Germany: Transgender Europe, 2015), <https://transrespect.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/TvT-PS-Vol9-2015.pdf>.

³⁹ There were eight cases with missing data for the first section of the Samoa questionnaire, along with some missing data in qualitative responses. However, these cases did have data for most other sections of the questionnaire, so have been included in this report.

Findings / This section presents the results of the APTN peer-led study on the social experiences of trans and gender diverse people in Samoa as one section of an overall comparative research methodology and narrative. This section highlights key results, based on the experiences reported in the longer questionnaire, and triangulating quantitative and qualitative data by drawing on the analysis aim of the *TvT Survey on the Social Experiences of Trans and Gender Diverse People*³⁸ to “identify which aspects in the wide range of domains examined are especially positive or problematic and in need of political attention.”

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS /

All participants were from Samoa and lived in a variety of districts (see table below), the majority (39) living on Upolu Island and 5 on Savai'i (8 did not respond to this question).³⁹

years of schooling (ranging between 0 and 20 years), with the majority (63.5% or 33 people) having completed high school.

The average age of the sample was 30.38, ranging between 18 and 59 years old. Most lived with parents/siblings/relatives (78.8% or 41 people), while the rest either lived alone or with partners/children or friends/roommates, and 1 lived with others of their own identity. On average, participants had 10.85

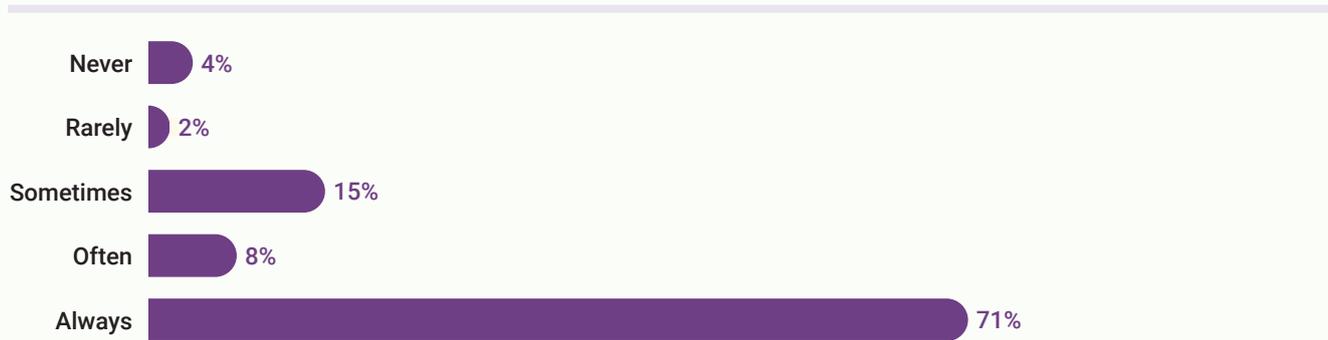
TABLE 1. FREQUENCY TABLE OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION, "HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY IDENTIFY IN TERMS OF YOUR GENDER?"

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
Indigenous	1	1.9
My gender identity is not listed above	3	5.8
Fa'afafine	33	63.5
More than one gender	5	1.9
Fa'afatama	9	9.6
Total	52	100.0

GENDER IDENTITY /

Most of the respondents (63.5% or 33) identified as fa'afafine, with a small number (17.3% or 9), identifying as fa'atama and 5 (9.6%) identifying as more than one gender, mostly including fa'afafine. In total, 41 people in the sample were assigned male at birth, and 3 had an intersex variation. A full list of gender identities in the Samoa sample has been presented above.

FIGURE 1. "I LIVE IN MY PREFERRED GENDER IDENTITY AND/OR EXPRESSION."



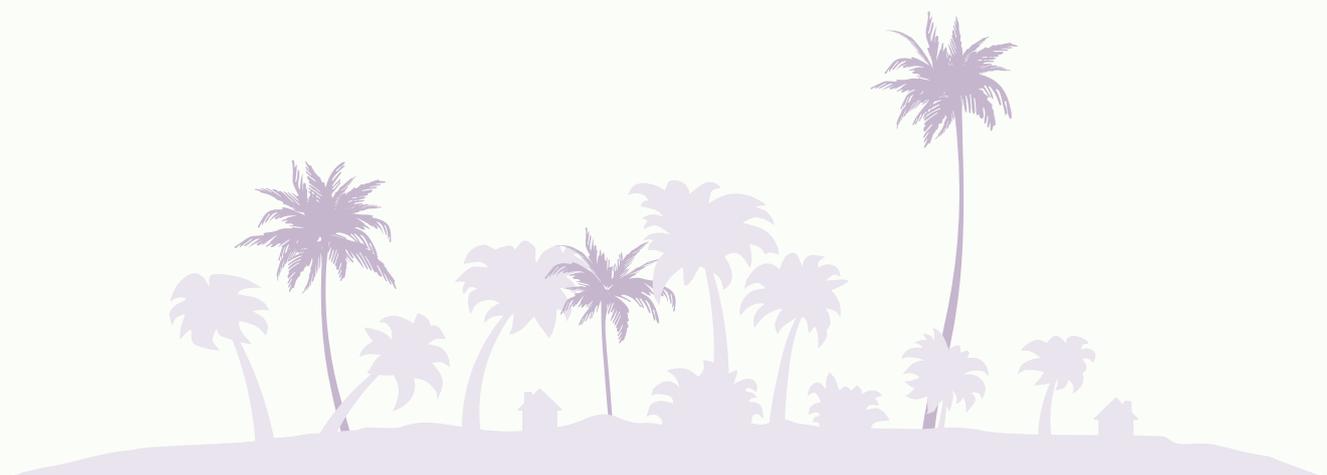
Most trans people in the Samoa sample (71.2% or 37) always live in their preferred gender identity, 7.7% often, 15.4% sometimes, 1 rarely, and 2 never. A heartening number of individuals in the sample are living in their preferred identity across domains. Therefore, the results presented in this report should be interpreted in this context.

Of the 11 respondents who said they did not always live in their gender identity, 4 described it as their choice, 7 said it was because of obstacles they face, and 4 cited other reasons. When asked to expand on these reasons, the respondents primarily cited family, two mentioned church, and one said, "no authorization in village."

Only 8 participants did not work in an organisation for trans and gender diverse people, with a wide range of organisations being mentioned by participants and many respondents being associated with more than one organisation (a full list and frequencies are below).

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE ORGANISATIONS IN SAMOA.

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
Valid		
Did not respond	8	15.4
Aleipata Fa'afafine Club	2	3.8
Aleipata Fa'afafine Club, SFA	1	1.9
Anoamaa Queens	1	1.9
Commonwealth Youth	1	1.9
Divas of Samoa, SFA	1	1.9
N/A	18	34.6
NOLA, Samoa Family Health, MWCSO	1	1.9
Rogers	2	3.8
Rogers, SFA	4	7.7
Samoa Fa'afafine Association	2	3.8
Samoa Fa'afafine Association and My Girls	3	5.8
Samoa Fa'afafine Association and Youth Club	1	1.9
Samoa Fa'afafine Association (SFA)	1	1.9
Sei o Aana, SFA	1	1.9
SFA	2	3.8
SFA, My Girls	1	1.9
SFA, Rogers	1	1.9
Society of Fa'afafine in American Samoa (SOFIA) and Samoa Fa'afafine Association.	1	1.9
Total	52	100.0



FAMILY AND FRIENDS /

Several respondents (40.4% or 21) indicated they were raised in the gender they now identify as. However, there may be an issue with the interpretation of this question, because, in response to a subsequent question, only 13.5% of the sample said they could be open about their gender identity with their family (23.1% or 12 respondents said they could be open sometimes, 10 said they could not be open about their gender identity with their family, while 31 did not answer the question). Further, only 21.2% said they had expressed their gender identity to their family for as long as they could remember.

The respondents reported high levels of bullying and attacks and abuse by family members because of their gender identity, with 28.8% (15) reporting frequent bullying and abuse, 21.2% (11) occasional bullying and abuse, and 25% saying they had never had such experiences (25% opted to skip the question). At the same time, 57.7% (30) say they had experienced at least some form of

support from family (26.9% said they had experienced this often). Examples of family abuse and support are presented in the table below.

Male family members are commonly the perpetrators of abuse—although sisters are mentioned alongside men—and female relatives, including other fa’afafines, are common sources of family support. Types of abuse include extreme physical abuse.

TABLE 3. QUALITATIVE EXAMPLES GIVEN BY PARTICIPANTS OF FAMILY SUPPORT AND ABUSE.

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING/ABUSE/ ATTACKS BY FAMILY MEMBERS		EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT/ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY FAMILY MEMBERS
<p>“Hanging me on a tree by my uncle, he tied a rope around my neck and was tempted to pull the rope down.”</p>		<p>“Aunties in law a few of my relatives support me like my girl cousins.”</p>
<p>“Hard beating with timbers and metals.”</p>		<p>“A few such as my aunties do support me.”</p>
<p>“Disowning me and send off.”</p>		<p>“Comfort from my mother and younger sisters, especially when I support my family in village occasions.”</p>
<p>“My uncle whom hates me of my identity always disallows me to hang around with girls. If I get caught he would physically abuse me.”</p>		<p>“I get financial support from overseas relative; they appreciate the caregiving I do with elders in family at home.”</p>
<p>“Some people always tease me, throw words like I’m not a good person, no importance for my family.”</p>		<p>“Mom has always supported me and what and who I am.”</p>
<p>“The village stops me from growing my hair and dressing as a girl, even my family have supported it.”</p>		<p>“Mum and dad openly appreciate my role as a fa’afafine in front of family gatherings.”</p>

"Harsh yelling, swear words, threatening words and actions, sending me off from home."

"I bear marks and scars from being beaten by my older brothers and especially my father."

"I get most of the hard labour than any other of the family, I be called names and belittled than my siblings."

"I started sharing my life with my siblings before my mom. She is the only person against who I am."

"Mostly by my father and older brothers, they usually attacked me with pieces of woods, thrown rocks at."

"My cousin once forced me to give him a blow job. My dad would like to tease me, make jokes on my gender, verbal abuse."

"My family hated me when they found out I have a partner, they tried to stop me, I was bullied a lot by my closed family."

"My father and brother verbally abused me."

"My father often scared the hell out of me by threatening me, saying he'll shoot me [if] I continue expressing as a girl. I get beaten, called bad names, but it didn't stop me."

"My father would always beat me because of my identity, my sister discourages me too."

"My mother doesn't approve of my identity expression, she wanted me to act like a girl."

"My older relative whom have the same identity as me, he's so cruel to me and he keeps saying I should obey him respectfully as he is the older one."

"My aunties and cousins kept me comfort and gave me advice to be strong."

"My aunty who loves and support me well. She even dress me femininely."

"My family put in their full support when I ran for the Drag Queen Pageant."

"My father's sisters (aunties) acknowledge or referring to me as a girl—doing indoor tasks."

"My grandpa would defend me."

"My immediate relatives are very supportive of me because I've gained a good education and a job as well, it even welcomed whatever life I choose to live."

"My mother is my number one supporter."

"My mother is very understanding, she treat me as a lady in the family, as all my sibling are males."

"My other siblings support me, still gave me girl clothes and allows me to dress up."

"My parents allow me to wear ladies clothes and do whatever I want."

"My parents gave permission to grow my hair."

"One person who stands by me is my aunt; she's always understanding and loving."

"Only my 2 aunties support me and appreciate me and my identity."

"Older brother finds me being a fa'afafine a disgrace."

"Publicly ashamed in front of church because of my uncle."

"Taken advantaged by older family members (introduced to sexual activities)."

"They don't want me to live life I want (femininely), grow my hair, wear girl clothes."

"Verbal abuse, chasing out of the house, disowning me."

"Verbally degraded and sexually abused."

"Verbally harassed by my sisters, brothers, and parents too."

"Only when they need my help then they would call out to me and my partner."

"Others of my family support and provided me with what I need, advising me to be strong, giving me comfort."

"Providing me with makeup, clothes, and others."

"Some of my family know and are afraid to tell others within the family."

"They are at our wedding."

"Words of comfort, especially from my aunties."

"My other uncle whom is a fa'afafine"

Most respondents said they were open about their gender identity with friends who did not belong to their gender identity, with 51.9% (27) saying they always were and 25% (13) saying they were open only to some. 23.1% (12 respondents) said they were never open about their gender identity with friends who did not belong to their gender identity.

Responses indicated high levels of support from friends, in general, with 69.2% of the sample reporting at least some support and 38.5% (20) saying their friends were always supportive. In contrast, 30.8% reported at least some disrespect from friends not

of their gender identity, with 7.7% (4) saying they never got respect from friends who were not of their gender identity.

These examples of disrespect and support are presented on the following page.

"MALE FAMILY MEMBERS ARE COMMONLY THE PERPETRATORS OF ABUSE—ALTHOUGH SISTERS ARE MENTIONED ALONGSIDE MEN—AND FEMALE RELATIVES, INCLUDING OTHER FA'AFAFINES, ARE COMMON SOURCES OF FAMILY SUPPORT."



TABLE 4. QUALITATIVE EXAMPLES GIVEN BY PARTICIPANTS OF FRIENDS' SUPPORT AND DISRESPECT.

EXAMPLES OF DISRESPECT FROM FRIENDS		EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS
"A man hit me at the club for no reason, then the obvious is I am a fa'afafine."		"Friends are very appreciating and supportive of me because they want me to be who I am, and they support me in every way."
"Friends whom have not been told or understand the idea have homophobic ideas towards me."		"Any person I come across is welcoming and appreciating."
"I tried to associate/fit with boys, they turn me away."		"Can only express to some friends but not all."
"Ignorance, bullying, mocking"		"During social gathering, drinking, party."
"It is always a bad scene when I'm being approached by 2 bullies of our class. Touching me inappropriately and sort."		"Even my uncles, aunties, and father's family friends accepted me, love me, support me for who I am."
"Mocking me in public places, tease and making jokes out of me."		"Hardly get support, they associate but not for long time."
"Name-calling, of course."		"I am a talkative person, and I tell jokes to entertain them."
"Not welcoming."		"I have friends that are not of my identity that shows love, hang out, and that is how I know they are appreciating me."
"People who don't know me disrespect me. It's obvious. When they see me and my expression then they start teasing and calling me names."		"In school I was confident to fit in around boys. Its mix feelings towards me."
"Some people don't like the idea of me and my expression rather disrespected among a crowd."		"My friends do want to hang out with me. If I miss out, they would come and force me to join in our friend like gatherings."
"Straight guys hate hanging around with us due to discriminative attitudes."		"My girlfriends and professional people I work with."

"The elders and boys hated me so much instead of sharing food, they rather share it with the dogs. I'd be called bad names too and sent away from their site."

"They call me names and sometimes I don't like it."

"When I hang out with friends and get drunk, they would tease me, make jokes about me, and even tried to hook me up with some guy."

"When the joke become serious, then we became violent somehow."

"My friends never discriminate me."

"My outing mates, school friends, and some of the communities appreciate me for who I am."

"Other people accepted me and show support—school mates, village friends, and local community base colleagues."

"Yes, especially girls, they're more fun to hang out with, and I can easily relate to them apart from the boys."

EXPERIENCES IN EDUCATION /

Experiences in education were mixed, with 25% reporting at least some difficulty with changes in the educational environment due to their gender identity. Older children at school were mentioned repeatedly in qualitative responses as a source of bullying and abuse. Further, 13.5% of the sample (7 respondents) reported at least one example of their achievements not being acknowledged due to their gender identity (61.5% said their achievements were never acknowledged), however extraordinary: "I had great grades in school, top of the class, but the school did not acknowledge," "one time I knew I topped my class but then it didn't come through with my school report." Several respondents also reported being misgendered by teachers: "the principal always address me with my birth gender (male)

when calling out my prizes/ awards during graduation."

Examples of respect or acknowledgement from education systems seem to not be in direct response to gender identity but to general achievement at school: "I was brightest in class," "I outshine the school with achievements," "I come up with good ideas," "when honouring the level of class and personal status." When talking about teachers specifically, 30.8% reported at least some form of respect or acknowledgement, in particular for extracurricular activities, like helping to clean the classroom or being prefect, and in relation to gendered activities: "my feminine actions and reactions change the way females look at me (in a good way)," "On duties related to both legal genders in Samoa, somehow I performed well, and I am given great appreciation."

Still, many reported disrespectful treatment from teachers due to their gender identity (21.2% or 11 individuals reported at least one instance), including instances of violence:

"During health science, the teacher asked me to strip (but I didn't) because he wants everyone to see that I am a man, not a girl."

"Hating the idea that I wear make-up at school."

"If I disobey, the teacher would say a lot of harsh words to me, my life, my style, my identity (verbally abused)."

"My PE teacher and Math teacher hates me of being fa'afafine, they slap me without reason."

"One time, my teacher strip me naked and get to

attend school only with my underwear.”

“Teacher told me to take my make-up off and demanding me that I’m not a girl”

“There was almost expulsion because of my identity, luckily, education is equal opportunity for all so I still got the hatred from the principal sometimes.”

“They force me to do what boys do”

“When in college years, I love hanging around with girls but the teacher would separate me saying I don’t belong with the girls.”

“Got slapped because of laughing loud and the way I walk and comb my hair.”

“I get attacked by teachers because of talking too much, although everyone was gossiping, I only take the blame.”

“My English teacher hit me because he didn’t want me to answer his question because of my identity.”

“One of the teachers told me to stop acting like a girl and stop hanging out where the girls are because I’m not a girl.”

“Slapped, whipped by whip.”

Overall, other pupils were the

main source of exclusion, bullying, violence, and sexual harassment, including extreme forms of abuse. 36.5% (19) reported at least some form of bullying: “bad mouthing and name-calling,” “ridiculed, called names, and at many times sexually assaulted by my seniors at school,” “boys at school used to call me names and tease me in front of the whole school,” “In college, I started to show my affections as a transman; I hardly have friends; I get bullied, call[ed] names,” “older boys would call me names,” “they don’t let me play on their team because I was too feminine.” Of those who answered, 17.3% (9) had been attacked physically and 30.8% (16) had experienced at least some form of sexual harassment or abuse.

"EXPERIENCES IN EDUCATION WERE MIXED, WITH 25% REPORTING AT LEAST SOME DIFFICULTY WITH CHANGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DUE TO THEIR GENDER IDENTITY."

The qualitative examples reveal serious violations and repeated sexual harassment and abuse, largely by male students:

“Boys would sarcastically play and try to touch my private parts.”

“Sketch on my face with

permanent markers.”

“The two bullies whom I faced all my primary school life was exhausting, such that they would hit me in the groins or hit my bum.”

“With no reason I get attacked, made me kneel and kiss her feet, take my money, hard punches on my chest and would take turns beating me up.”

(1) “Raped by 3 senior boys.”

(2) “Older senior asked to give blowjob.”

(3) “Prefects would ask to strip naked in bathroom.”

(4) “Rugby boys demand orgy.”

“Some boys would play a game and dare others to touch my anus and/or call me dick sucker.”

“They would touch my privates and call me bad names.”

“Verbally harassed; if I do something over limit I always hear them say ‘because you want to be a girl you fag.’”

As with family members, female peers were a source of support. The respondents reported being particularly acknowledged by peers for talent in entertainment (drama, singing, etc.).

EXPERIENCES WITH LABOUR /

Most respondents (40.4%) were either involved in paid work or supported by family (34.6%). A full list of professions is in the table below.

TABLE 5. LIST OF PROFESSIONS GIVEN BY PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE IN PAID WORK.

Accounts Officer: 	Caregiver: 	Cashier: 
Customer Service: 	Debt Collector: 	Employment Officer: 
Factory Worker: 	Finance Specialist: 	Housekeeping: 
Housework: 	Meteorologist: 	Office Assistant: 
Office Assistant: 	Online Marketing: 	Reservation Manager: 
Salesman: 	Sales Person: 	Sales Representative: 
Solicitor: 	Tailoring: 	Teacher: 
Teacher (Primary School): 	Teacher's Aid: 	Did Not Respond: 
Not Applicable/Not Currently Working: 		

Of those who answered, 11.5% had experienced discrimination in the labour market, ranging from the refusal of employment (11.5% or 6 respondents) to being fired (at least once, for 2 respondents) because of their gender identity. Four reported they had not tried to reveal their gender identity at work. One respondent cited being unable to express their gender identity as the cause of refusal or dismissal: "Because I have long hair and the job requires people with short hair." Others reported a perception of employer discomfort with their gender identity: "I can sense at times of interviews that the panel is not vulnerable of my identity," "I know I'm good and

been to many interviews and I know I did extremely well; they won't pick me, my identity expression is the only reason, based on my assumption," "This one job I applied for shut me out with unacceptance of fa'afafine in their workplace," "through shown behaviours towards me, sensed their ignorance of me at work." Only 1 person reported having legally challenged the refusal.

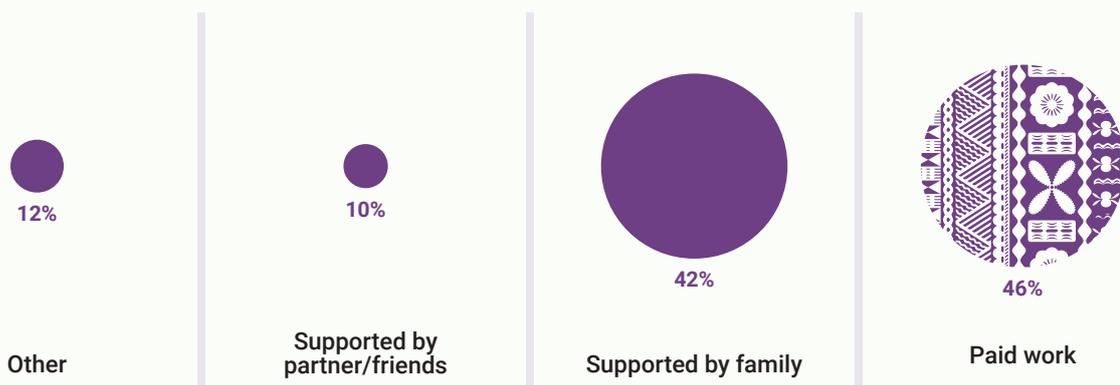
Instances of support in the labour market related to being able to dress in the preferred gender uniform, having supportive colleagues, being able to use preferred toilet facilities, and being able to "showcase...entertaining talents." In

total, 21.2% (11 respondents) had experienced at least some form of support, and 21.2% (11 respondents) said support does not exist.

Working in a sector commonly associated with gender identity is a protective factor, though only 3.8% (2) said they were working in such a sector (human rights advocate, tourism).

More respondents reported having been given employment because of the skills they have due to their gender identity (23.1% or 12 respondents said this has happened at least once), with examples including being hired for providing “flower arrangement,” “sewing,” and “church décor” and as performing artists. No participants reported having gender-specific facilities at work.

TABLE 6. “HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY EARN YOUR LIVING?”



EXPERIENCES WITH HEALTH SERVICES /

Hearteningly, only 1 respondent reported having their health services impacted because of their gender identity, reporting refusal of health care at least once. However, only 7 respondents (13.5%) had visited a healthcare professional for transition/trans-related services. The majority, who had not sought transition/related health care (86.5%), had not done so either because they didn't need or want those services or because those services were not available in Samoa. Qualitatively, participants reported several attitudes to transition-related health services: “doesn't correlate with my belief in God,” “I don't want

people to see me differently,” “I have never felt like seeing any specialist as listed as I am healthy and loved and supported by family for what I am and who I am,” “I'm afraid of using such services for I might die during transitioning period.” There were also many responses about the lack of facilities. None of the respondents reported experience with HRT, gender reassignment/affirming therapy, or body modification.

In terms of mental health, only 2 respondents had experience with psychotherapy or mental health support, though 10 respondents said they had had suicidal thoughts and 2 had attempted suicide. Sources of support in these



circumstances were largely family: “parents,” “grandparents,” “aunty,” “mother,” “my two fa'afafine best friends.”

Most of the respondents had accessed SHRH services (53.8% or 29 respondents), largely HIV services, including ARV, with a large number of respondents accessing PrEP (59.6%) and PEP (59.6%). Fewer had accessed SHRH services for condoms (38.5%), and few had accessed the pill (which is expected, given the sample).

FIGURE 2. "HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR OVERALL EXPERIENCE IN ACCESSING SRHR SERVICES WITH REGARDS TO YOUR GENDER IDENTITIY AND/OR EXPRESSION?"



LEGAL AND CRIMINAL EXPERIENCES /

There were relatively low levels of police harassment reported in Samoa, with 2 respondents reporting harassment, one of whom stated that they were “forced to lie on the ground facing the dust without reason.”

One of the respondents had been fined, and none had been convicted in court, but 5 respondents did relate their experiences of being in prison: “put in a cell not matching my self-identified gender,” “put in solitary confinement.”

The respondents who had been in prison also reported discrimination and verbal harassment by police: “the officer interviewing me, he would eagerly wanting to punch me in the face and chest, his face was red of hatred.” Discrimination from inmates included sexual harassment: “once or twice when they want sex pleasure.” However, one respondent reported being treated “like a girl/sister to them.” In terms of general experiences with police, one participant said, “since they see and think of me as a fa’afafine, their assumption is having sexual intercourse is all I want.”

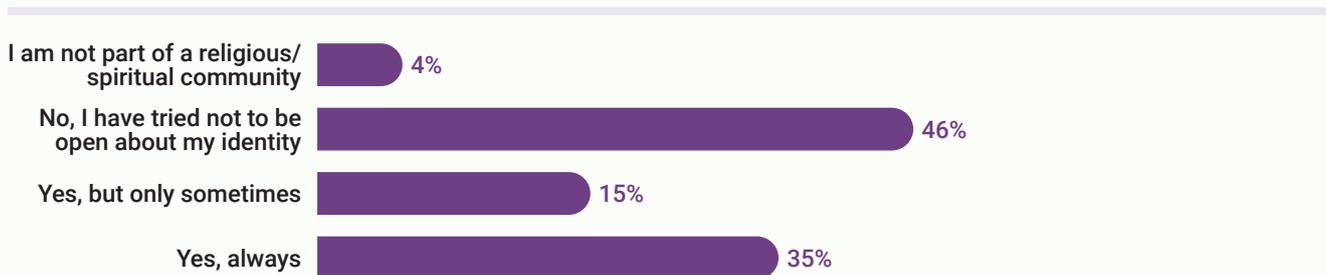
"RESPONDENTS REPORTING HARASSMENT, ONE OF WHOM STATED THAT THEY WERE "FORCED TO LIE ON THE GROUND FACING THE DUST WITHOUT REASON."

EXPERIENCES WITH RELIGION /

Experiences with the religious communities were varied, with 32.7% (17 respondents) reporting they were open about their gender identity in their religious community always and 19.2% (10 respondents) saying they were open only sometimes. 42.3% said they haven’t tried to be open, and 3 respondents said they did not belong to a religious community.

Those who had felt accepted by their religious community said they were able to wear women’s clothes to church: “I dress femininely to church,” “I wear formal girl attire to church and is accepting at church,” “my religion and church accepts me and are open to fa’afafine coming to church,” “my religion is Catholic and I am open about my gender identity within my church by wearing my formal dress like a girl in church,” “very accepting even I can attend church in women attire.” A smaller number of respondents

FIGURE 3. "CAN YOU BE OPEN ABOUT YOUR GENDER IDENTITY AND/OR EXPRESSION WITHIN YOUR CHURCH, TEMPLE, OR OTHER RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY?"



(17.3%, or 9), said their gender was actively valued in church (the difference between gender identity being accepted and actively valued is significant). However, 5 respondents reported being told they could not participate in religious ceremonies because of their gender identity, and 2 said it was conditional upon them hiding their gender identity.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE /

Experiences of societal and cultural acceptance and discrimination can be summarized as being varied—when experiences are positive, the respondents were actively celebrated for their gender identity; at worst, they faced ostracism and violence. 69.2% of the sample (36 respondents) said that people like themselves were especially appreciated for their gender identity or expression; 25% (13 respondents) said they always were.

For Samoan participants, the dynamic gender roles associated with being fa’afafine were the main aspects celebrated: “because I possess strength of both men and women,” “because of our flexibility in executing male and female chores,” “because us fa’afafine can do both men and women’s work, which is why we are appreciated in society.”

The respondents also point to the special charisma and talents of fa’afafine being

particularly appreciated: “society sees how talented and smart [we] are,” “we are valued and liked,” “because of what people of my identity do for the community, our talents are exposed via decorating, associating with society is very appreciating, we are bodily outspoken.” Some spoke to a shift in norms over time due to increased openness: “Samoan society has become more open to fa’afafine due to many coming out to their families and friends.” One respondent, however, said their identity was never appreciated because people are “simple-minded” and that “Samoans think we are cursed.”

“SOME SPOKE TO A SHIFT IN NORMS OVER TIME DUE TO INCREASED OPENNESS: “SAMOAN SOCIETY HAS BECOME MORE OPEN TO FA’AFAFINE DUE TO MANY COMING OUT TO THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS.”

At the same time, participants report being singled out for discrimination due to their gender identity, with 61.5% (32 respondents) saying this occurs at least sometimes, the cause being sexuality rather than gender (“because being fa’afafine automatically means homosexual, which is often

frowned upon,” “many people have homophobic ideas but friends who know me well accept me”), traditional culture, especially in villages (“because of family pride, and living under village rules and strong culture, therefore people of

our identity is not appreciated,” “especially in rural areas where culture is very strong”), or appearance (“I think gender identity is not the issue, it is how a fa’afafine would express themselves which is



TABLE 7. "DO YOU THINK PEOPLE LIKE YOU ARE ESPECIALLY APPRECIATED IN SOCIETY BECAUSE OF YOUR GENDER IDENTITY AND/OR EXPRESSION?"



33%

No, never



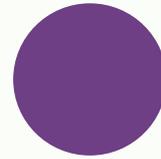
33%

Yes, sometimes



10%

Yes, often



25%

Yes, always

why some society deny the idea"). Some suggest that the behaviour of some fa'afafines is seen as representative of the whole community: "when fa'afafine express bad image/attitude," "when protocols are bypassed, people of my identity get severe critic[ism] from elders." One respondent pointed specifically to cyberbullying as a mode of discrimination. 40.4% (21 respondents) had been excluded, bullied, or abused due to their gender identity, and 28.8% (15) reported experiences of violence.

"PARTICIPANTS REPORT BEING SINGLED OUT FOR DISCRIMINATION DUE TO THEIR GENDER IDENTITY, WITH 61.5% (32 RESPONDENTS) SAYING THIS OCCURS AT LEAST SOMETIMES, THE CAUSE BEING SEXUALITY RATHER THAN GENDER."

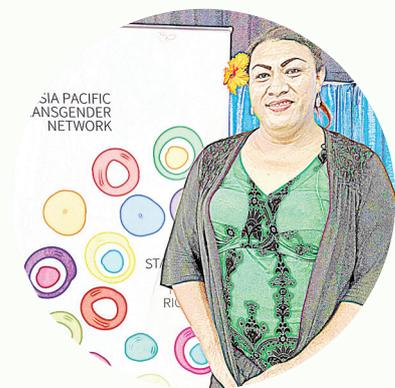
On a positive note, some respondents drew lines between the past, the traditional

role of fa'afafines in Samoa, and the unique contribution made in terms of participating in multiple gender roles and across traditional titles, as a reason why the present may be more accepting:

"Fa'afafines were accepted in the past, because of their unique talent, their superiority to reign supreme between men and women have let them advance with acceptance in the whole of the South Pacific, apart from some people who think otherwise."

"Back in the day...there not many fa'afines around and if there's any they'd still be in hiding, and with the new change we have nowadays with the Prime Minister as the godfather for all fa'afafines we tend to express ourselves to our extent."

"Yes, we were traditionally accepted in the past and that's why it's much easier to fit in our gender identity nowadays."



"They were bestowed the Matai (chief) title, they work together with matais and taulele'a (untitled men) and also working together with women."

"Yes, the fa'afafine term, meaning in the manner of a woman, such that we were the caregivers, nurtures...in the absence of women in a family. In this way we have been traditionally accepted in the past despite some minorities who think otherwise."

Conclusion / These findings reveal how experiences of discrimination and support are intertwined throughout multiple domains of life for trans and gender diverse persons in Samoa. Different systems and structures push and pull towards and away from acceptance, often simultaneously. One key finding is the importance of additional support for trans and gender diverse children and youth.

Authority figures such as teachers and police are often sources of discrimination and abuse rather than protection. This, of course, is a risk factor as the power dynamics between student and teacher or citizen and police place trans and gender diverse individuals in particularly vulnerable situations.

"AUTHORITY FIGURES SUCH AS TEACHERS AND POLICE ARE OFTEN SOURCES OF DISCRIMINATION AND ABUSE RATHER THAN PROTECTION."

In Samoa, reported experiences with teachers at school were far more negative than those

with police, with qualitative responses specifically identifying targeted harassment and violence from teachers in school. The relatively positive experiences with police being reported in this research should be cautiously interpreted as encouraging. The reason for the difference in attitudes between these two authority figures in Samoa may also be worthy of further investigation. Have the police been trained in inclusion, or do they simply encounter more trans and gender diverse individuals in the course of their jobs, normalizing these identities for them? Why is the cultural position of trans and gender diverse individuals seemingly more respected by police than teachers? These

findings further highlight the particular vulnerability of trans and gender diverse children and youth in Samoa.

Two consistent sources of support are identified in the data: friends and community-based organisations. The majority of the respondents cited examples of appreciation from friends not of the same gender identity (we can assume ceiling effects of support from friends of the same gender identity). Qualitative responses include examples of meaningful and active inclusion and acceptance from friends. Discrimination from friends not of the same gender identity was still reported but at relatively low levels. Discrimination





emerges more strongly in questions in relation to the education sector, with respondents reporting difficulties in school ranging from ostracism to violence by both teachers and fellow students.

"THE LACK OF GENDER-AFFIRMING SERVICES IN SAMOA AND LOW AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS TO PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS ARE MATTERS OF CONCERN, ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE HIGH RATES OF CHILDHOOD ABUSE."

Due to a snowball sampling strategy, it's unsurprising that

a majority of the respondents belong to some type of trans/gender diverse community-based organisation. The support such organisations provide acts as a buffer against discrimination in all other domains of life for trans and gender diverse individuals in Samoa. Hearteningly, the respondents reported only low levels of discrimination in the health sector. However, the lack of gender-affirming services in Samoa and low availability and access to psychosocial support mechanisms are matters of concern, especially given the

high rates of childhood abuse. These findings reveal gaps in healthcare experiences in Samoa for trans and gender diverse people that organisations such as SFA are seeking to address by advocating for larger financial investments and more inclusion policies in the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development's sectoral plans.

The introduction to this report outlines the complex role of the church in the social experiences of trans and gender diverse people in Samoa, and the data supports this conclusion. Being able to dress in gender-affirming clothes at church is cited

positively by many respondents, though the results also highlight the difference between tolerance and active acceptance in the church, with few participants identifying active support from the church. The society and culture findings reveal ways in which trans and gender diverse individuals build broader support systems in a conservative society in ways that are consistent with the findings of previous research: hard work, flexibility, and unique creative talents. Harnessing these strengths may provide an avenue for more active acceptance in the church, including an enhanced leadership role, which would also benefit trans and gender diverse children and youth because it would give them positive role models.

A high number of trans and gender diverse Samoans among the respondents said they always lived in their preferred gender identity, likely a reflection of the broad acceptance of fa'afafine in mainstream Samoan society. This is a positive statistic as it contributes to the visibility of trans and gender diversity in the community.

"THE MAIN DRAWBACK OF THE RESEARCH IS THE SMALL NUMBER OF FA'AFATAMA AMONG THE RESPONDENTS. THE FA'AFATAMA REMAIN AN UNDER-RESEARCHED POPULATION AND PRESUMABLY EXPERIENCE TRANS IDENTITY VERY DIFFERENTLY FROM THE FA'AFAFINE."



On the other hand, only a small number of respondents said they can be open with their family about their gender identity, which suggests these respondents may have interpreted these questions differently, depending on the context. The consistency of personally held gender identity must be considered separately from the expression of gender identity, and some responses in this survey suggest the two are being conflated. Disentangling identification and expression more carefully could benefit future research.

Overall, these findings contribute to understanding the unique circumstances of trans and gender diverse communities in Samoa. The main drawback of the research is the small number of fa'afatama among the respondents. The fa'afatama remain an under-researched population and presumably experience trans identity very differently from the fa'afafine. Nonetheless, the findings open up a wide lens for understanding life for trans and gender diverse individuals and the connectedness of experiences of support and discrimination across multiple domains throughout different age groups.



Recommendations / These recommendations have been developed as the next steps following an advocacy meeting with key stakeholders in April 2019 (Annex 3) with members of the trans and gender diverse community in Samoa, facilitated by APTN and My Girls Club.

1.0

Dissemination of findings.

1.1

Conduct a joint community consultation with trans organisations and those who participated in the study to share research report findings to develop a programme and advocacy roadmap on the way forward.

1.2

Conduct a series of targeted dialogue and dissemination meetings with key government ministries, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Labour, as well as provincial and village level authorities, including village and church councils and leaders, to raise awareness on the needs and experiences of the fa'afafine and fa'atama.

2.0

Promote an enabling legal and legislative environment.

2.1

Engage in continued advocacy to eliminate harmful laws, such as laws that criminalise sodomy and enable discrimination on the basis of gender identity and intersex characteristics in the workplace.

3.0

Increase the knowledge and understanding of healthcare gaps and needs competency to improve health outcomes.

3.1

Given the lack of research into and understanding of the health needs of fa'atama, conduct a community consultation to increase knowledge of experiences, needs, and priorities, especially including access to SRHR services with the Samoa Family Health Association.

3.2

Conduct a consultation on the need to develop guidelines and implement trans health services for all fa'afafine and fa'atama with the Ministry of Health, the Samoa Family Health Association, and the national medical associations.

4.0

Reduce discrimination through sensitisation training for key sectors.

4.1

Develop and roll out sensitisation training sessions with education institutions (primary, secondary, and tertiary) for both students and teachers to raise awareness and acceptance of trans and gender diverse students.

4.2

In partnership with the NHRI and relevant stakeholders, roll out the implementation of the Law Enforcement Guidelines and Standards to ensure police and prison officers are sensitised to the fa'afafine and fa'atama community and promote non-discriminatory practices.

5.0

Engage in ongoing advocacy to increase investment for key social protection services, including health, employment, and housing.

5.1

Discuss with government and non-government stakeholders the need to support shelters for fa'atama facing hardships with gender identity, including being bullied or abused by family and society.

5.2

Increase financial and resource investments for greater control over resources to provide targeted health services to the fa'afafine and fa'atama communities.

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ANNEX 1: Research Questionnaire (with informed consent)

Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/18pXnxO_PNGjoYp8VZmfl2EdUsNb2XvJJ/view?usp=sharing

ANNEX 2: Information Sheet

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11FtN5kw9uyTF5vD7-5vrXwaabYalKGzs/view?usp=sharing>

ANNEX 3: Minutes from Advocacy Planning Meeting

Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/10Mu7XqL_J2e80t-9isyQIAEzQPI_CMjrj/view?usp=sharing

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