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# Social Policies in Samoa

Desmond U. Amosa



**Commonwealth Secretariat**



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## Foreword

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During the 1960s and 1970s, increased interest was shown by international organisations such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat in small states, and especially in small island developing states (SIDS), and the development challenges they faced during the decolonisation period. With over a third of Commonwealth member countries classified as small economies, the Secretariat is committed to the study of small states. The issue of their vulnerability, for example, was first given formal expression within the Commonwealth at the 1977 Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in Barbados. Having noted the special characteristics of small states – in particular their reliance on trade, high dependence on capital inflows and, in some cases, lack of natural resources – ministers urged the international community to adopt a more flexible approach to their requirements and special measures to assist them. In response, the Secretariat designed a programme to assist in overcoming ‘the disadvantages of small size, isolation and scarce resources, which severely limit the capacity of such countries to achieve their development objectives or to pursue their national interests in a wider international context’.

In 1983, with the political repercussions of the US invasion of Grenada still resonant, Commonwealth leaders meeting in New Delhi expressed their belief that the problems of small states ‘deserved consideration on a wider basis, including that of national security’. A Commonwealth consultative group was therefore commissioned to carry out such an examination. Its report, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*, published in 1985, was the first to highlight the inherent vulnerability of small states to external interference. By reasserting their vulnerability and the threats they faced, and by outlining economic and foreign policy measures to mitigate these, the report raised the political profile of small states in international forums.

Following this publication, the Ministerial Group on Small States was set up to continue the discussion of issues of importance to small states. At its second meeting in 1995, ministers recognised that the international context faced by small states had changed dramatically since the end of the cold war. This led to the creation of a Commonwealth advisory group of eminent persons whose report, *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability*, was published in 1997.

In 1998 the Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Joint Task Force on Small States was formed. In 2000 it published its seminal report, *Small States: Meeting Challenges in the Global Economy*. The report concluded that addressing the challenges faced by small states required correct domestic policies, regional co-operation, assistance from multilateral and bilateral development institutions and improvements in the external environment. It highlighted four areas of special relevance to successful development: tackling volatility, vulnerability and natural disasters; transitioning to the changing

global trade regime; strengthening capacity; and benefiting from the opportunities and coping with the challenges of globalisation. It recommended that an annual forum should be held during the IMF–World Bank meeting, at which international donors could report on their activities in small states. Small states have garnered additional support and attention from international donors as a result, but more remains to be done. A 2005/06 review of the task force report established that small states are still vulnerable and that they continue to face a number of development challenges associated with their size.

In adopting Agenda 21, one of the key outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Earth Summit) in 1992, the wider international community also recognised the special challenges that SIDS face in planning for sustainable development. As a result, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States took place in Barbados in 1994. The plan that emerged, the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), is the principal international framework for addressing the special challenges and constraints faced by SIDS in their pursuit of sustainable development. The BPOA addresses 14 major themes, ranging from climate change through coastal and marine resources to tourism and human resources development.

The ten-year comprehensive review of the BPOA led to the adoption in January 2005 of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which includes 19 thematic areas, including climate change and sea level rise, natural and environmental disasters, and energy resources. The Strategy notes that for its successful implementation, SIDS require effective human, institutional and technical capacity development; effective monitoring and co-ordination, including through SIDS regional organisations; and support from the international community, particularly through financial and technical backing.

Finally, Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 8 on developing a global partnership for development specifically mentions the special needs of landlocked countries and SIDS. Yet despite this attention to small states, there are still major gaps in our understanding of their unique development process and experience. Insufficient study has been devoted to the social and economic issues they face. In particular, there is virtually no comparative research on social policy issues or on how social policies affect economic development. This paper, together with others in this series, attempts to fill this gap by taking a distinctive approach to social policy, which it sees as encompassing concerns about redistribution, production, reproduction and protection. The papers show how some small states have succeeded in improving their social indicators through appropriate social policies, how others are moving in the right direction and how some are falling behind or failing. Despite their inherent vulnerability, some small states have been successful precisely because they have implemented complementary social and economic policies and strategies. By looking at these countries in comparative perspective, we can draw interesting lessons on policy.

The papers in this series are outputs of the research project, Social Policies in Small States, led by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat from 2007 to 2009. Fourteen country studies were commissioned and their findings were discussed at regional workshops in the Caribbean and Pacific. Four thematic papers framed and complemented the country level research. We hope that the findings of this research will be useful to scholars and policy-makers concerned with the social and economic development issues facing small states.

The research project was designed and co-ordinated by Naren Prasad with assistance from Nicola Hypher and Megan Gerecke at UNRISD and in collaboration with Constance Vigilance at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

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# Summary

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In the years before it achieved independence from New Zealand in 1962, social conditions in Samoa could best be described as primitive. Education, health, housing, social security, sanitation and water supply, while a cause of concern to the colonial administration, left a lot to be desired in terms of their quality.

The first decade following independence was a testing time for the Samoan Government. Social services, particularly education, health and water supply, were at the top of the government's agenda. External assistance in various forms was sought to complement whatever domestic resources were available to spearhead the campaign for the improvement of social services.

In recent years, Samoa has won the admiration and recognition of the international community for its economic and social achievements despite having to combat a series of crises in the 1990s, including the taro blight, Polynesian Airline's financial problems and two cyclones. In fact, Samoa is widely known in the region as a 'role model' for the Pacific. This is in addition to other accolades such as the 'shining star' and 'grand jewel' of the region. These are colourful labels and while some may demur, it is a fact that Samoa has made great progress in improving the quality of its social services since independence.

So what makes Samoa a success story? This paper discusses in depth the fundamentals that have enabled the country to uplift the quality of its society since independence: the welfare state; social cohesion; participative democracy; and the rule of law. Of the four, the welfare state and social cohesion have proved to be the most significant building blocks for the country's steady social progress, as well as its growing post-crisis resilience.

Despite making big strides in social development following independence and in recent years, Samoa currently faces strong challenges that could undermine past achievements, potentially creating a bleak outlook for further progress. Several critical social issues need urgent attention, such as poverty and crime, and there have been delays in addressing these social problems. They could pose a major threat to the country's future social cohesion and development if they are not properly addressed.



## About the author

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Desmond U Amosa Ph.D is currently the Dean for the Faculty of Business and Entrepreneurship at the National University of Samoa.



## Introduction

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This paper is about social policy and development in Samoa. It describes the social condition of the country in the run-up to independence and over the following five decades. The purpose of the study is to examine trends in social development in the country and pinpoint the key factors and concepts that underscore them. Its aim is to help policy-makers within the country and internationally to learn from Samoa's successes and failures so as to further improve decision-making on the social issues facing small island states.

Due to the limited funding available for the project, the bulk of the information was obtained from development and national strategic plans, government reports and the many publications by individuals and donor agencies and countries on Samoa. In addition, the author's knowledge as a Samoan native and experience as a former public official provided substantial insights that have helped fill some of the gaps in information on social policy-making and development in the country.

As with any other study of this magnitude, several problems were encountered. The greatest challenge was the availability of information, especially for the period between the 1960s and early 1980s. The relevance of information, its validity and conflicting statistics were also of great concern. However, every effort has been made to validate the information contained in the paper and to fill in some of the missing links. Samoa was chosen to be part of the Social Policies in Small States series, as a representative of the group of small states which are lower-middle income with medium human development.

For ease of reference, the paper is divided into six main chapters. The first summarises the country's political and socio-cultural background. Chapters 2 and 3 provide comments and statistics on economic and social developments pre- and post-independence. The next two chapters discuss the factors and concepts that underpin trends in Samoa's social development. Chapter 4 examines the role of the welfare state and other institutions in the practice of social policy and Chapter 5 focuses on its scope and design. The final chapter describes how Samoa as a society responded to the crises of the 1990s in order to build resilience within the country. The role of the welfare state and community and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is highlighted in this discussion. Finally, a postscript briefly reviews progress in the period 2006–2010.



## Chapter 1

### Political and Socio-cultural Background

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Samoa (known as Western Samoa until 1990) lies between latitudes 13 and 15° south and longitudes 171 and 173° west. The country is made up of two main islands, Savai'i and Upolu, and two small islands, Apolima and Manono, together with several other uninhabited islands. In pre-European days, Samoa was a geographical and cultural expression, rather than an effective political entity; the country was under the leadership of several paramount chiefs. The late nineteenth century saw the intervention of Germany, Britain and the USA, who attempted to introduce a Western-style administration for both trade and strategic reasons. This did not last long due to 'internal intrigue and jealousy among the representatives of the interested Powers' (Department of Island Territories, 1954: 12). A treaty known as 'The Final Act of the Berlin Conference on Samoa Affairs' was signed in 1889 declaring Samoa neutral and independent under the leadership of Malietoa Laupepa as king. Following Malietoa Laupepa's death in 1898, Samoa again became unstable and this gave the 'great powers' another chance to intervene.

On 16 February 1900, the three powers agreed to partition the islands. The USA annexed Eastern Samoa, while Germany acquired Western Samoa. Britain was compensated with other parts of the Pacific, such as Papua New Guinea. Germany administered Western Samoa until 29 August 1914, when the territory was occupied by New Zealand forces. Following the end of the First World War, the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers conferred a mandate for the administration of Samoa on His Britannic Majesty, to be exercised by the New Zealand Government. Under the Samoa Act 1921, the New Zealand Government established a civil administration for the island and administered its affairs until independence in 1962.

Political stability was one of the main targets of the New Zealand Government in ensuring development in its former colony. The introduction of a Western-type governance system in the form of the Westminster model was a challenge, mainly because it was a new concept to the people of Samoa, who lived under a traditional form of government with a number of paramount chiefs. The New Zealand Government made every effort to educate the Samoans and to encourage them to unite and accept their borrowed governance model. This saw a number of paramount chiefs holding high government office and portfolios. In addition, in the late 1920s, following the launch of the Mau Movement in 1927 to demand independence, New Zealand realised the urgent need to grant Samoa independence in order for the country to move forward.

On 1 April 1950, a separate Samoan public service was established under the Western Samoa Amendment Act 1949 with 18 founding departments. A public service commission (PSC) office was established consisting of a commissioner and two

assistant commissioners. The commissioner was appointed by the Governor-General of New Zealand and given executive authority. The founding departments were agriculture, broadcasting, customs, education, government house, health, justice, labour, lands and surveys, legislative, marine, police, postal services, public service commission, public works, radio, secretariat and treasury (Department of Island Territories, 1957). By 1957, Samoa had already formed a legislative assembly under the Samoa Amendment Act 1947 (Department of Island Territories, 1954). The assembly consisted of 41 Samoan elected members, five European elected members and three official members appointed at the discretion of the High Commissioner (Department of Island Territories, 1957). Among its many functions, the assembly was responsible for approving the annual budget and making ordinances during its biannual sittings.

The Executive Council (the equivalent of the Cabinet) was established under the Samoa Amendment Acts of 1956 and 1957. Its members were the High Commissioner as President, the Fautua (advisory council), the secretary to the government, the attorney-general, the financial secretary, five ministers appointed by the High Commissioner from among the Samoan elected members of the assembly and two members from the European elected members, who were also appointed by the High Commissioner (Department of Island Territories, 1957). All the members of the council were allocated portfolios, with the exception of the High Commissioner and the Fautua. The allocation of portfolios was the responsibility of the High Commissioner. On its establishment in 1953, the Council 'became effectively the principal instrument of policy' (Department of Island Territories, 1957: 24).

In 1962, Samoa became the first Pacific island country to gain independence. Samoa's political landscape conformed to the Westminster model that featured in the 1960 constitution. Malietoa Tanumafili II and Tupua Tamasese Meaole became joint Heads of State, and Mata'afa Fiame Faumuina was appointed Prime Minister.

Parliament was not involved in party politics until the late 1970s when a group of politicians led by Va'ai Kolone formed the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) to oppose Tupuola Efi's government. The move was fuelled by competition and the conflicting views of parliamentarians. Va'ai Kolone won the contest and the HRPP took office in 1982. A court case against Va'ai Kolone following the 1982 election cost him his seat, which led to the re-election of Tupuola Efi as Prime Minister. This was short-lived, following some political bargaining, and Tofilau Eti Alesana was elected leader of the HRPP and Prime Minister. Since then the HRPP has not lost an election. Unlike its neighbours, apart from the political drama of 1982, Samoa has enjoyed political stability under the guidance of the HRPP. This is one of the strengths that has catalysed the country's development since independence.

In 1991, during the HRPP's fourth term in office, the parliamentary term was extended from three to five years. At the same time, universal suffrage was introduced, allowing all citizens aged 21 years and above to vote. This was a significant change from the previous practice where only those with *matai* (chief) titles were entitled to vote. However, the issue of free and fair elections remains contentious in Samoa. Foreign commentators and observers make no mention of this,

although it is a cause for concern among Samoan citizens. Each election is normally followed by court cases dealing with allegations of bribery.

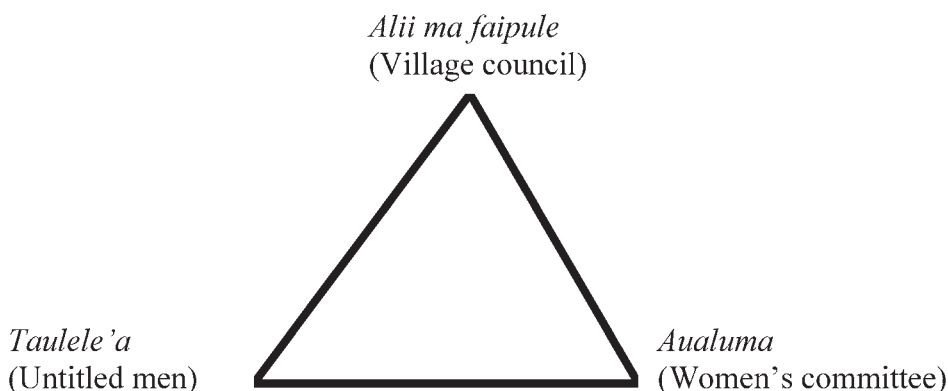
Political stability in the country since independence has enabled the state to chart a clear path in the design and implementation of social policy. The goal of the HRPP has been for the country to possess a healthy and a well-educated population, which in turn provides economic benefits. So far, it has kept its promises, at least with respect to education and health.

However, the welfare state could also be a threat to social policy if certain democratic practices were to be compromised. The current government has been in power for 26 years and has had a parliamentary majority of over two-thirds since the early 1990s. In 2006, it became the only recognised parliamentary party as the opposition lacked the required number. In effect, this presents a challenge, as the government faces no criticism of its determination of the design and practice of social policy.

Samoans are proud of their rich culture. This paper cannot present an in-depth description of this. Its focus is on Samoa's traditional social structure, and the village in particular. The paper highlights the respective authority and roles of various institutions in Samoan society.

Located at the apex of the pyramid are the *alii* and *faipule* or individuals (men and women) who hold *matai* (chiefly) titles. This is the supreme authority in any Samoan village. Its main role is to make rules for the welfare and security of villagers. The same authority also enforces the rules and passes judgement on village members who may have violated the rules. The chiefs also act as mediators in family disputes within the village. The *auaaluma*, or women's committee, is mainly comprised of women from the village. Its main role is to provide advice to the village council, maintain peace and produce wealth for the village and individual families. The *taulele'a*, or young men without chiefly title, serve the village council and to some extent the women's committee if there is need. Their primary role is to implement the decisions of the village council.

**Figure 1.1 Social structure of Samoa**



With respect to the villagers' social well-being and development, the village council makes the final decisions, while the women's committee and untitled men ensure these decisions are put into effect. The women's committee in particular carries the greatest responsibilities for health and education matters. For instance, it is mainly women who are tasked with hygiene and sanitation measures in the village. In addition, they are under an obligation to provide support for various government health campaigns for children and elders. Untitled men, on the other hand, provide food on a daily basis for the entire family, including the elders and those with disabilities.

## Chapter 2

# Pre-independence Economic and Social Development

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## 2.1 Economic development

In the run-up to independence in 1962 Samoa's economy was almost totally dependent on agriculture, and particularly on subsistence agriculture. While the sector was the focus of economic strategies in terms of crop diversification, pest control and geological soil surveys, the government also prioritised other development strategies. These included the building and improvement of roads, bridges, water supplies and electric power. Most of these developments received significant funding from government budgetary allocations and external assistance.

The country's main exports were bananas, cocoa and copra. Table 2.1 shows these by quantity and financial value for the period 1954–1957.

The lack of empirical data makes it impossible to obtain a clear overview of other key economic indicators such as unemployment, inflation, economic growth and GDP per capita. However, there were limitations in key areas of economic development in 1957. There was no commercial fishing, despite the existence of a large fishing zone, and forestry resources were unexploited, despite a suggestion put forward in 1950 by an overseas expert (Department of Island Territories, 1957). There was little industrial development, with only a few concerns producing timber, soap, coffee,

**Table 2.1 Samoa's main exports, 1954–1957**

Year	Crop	Quantity (cases/tons)	Value (pounds sterling)
1954	Bananas	276,135 cases	300,256
	Cocoa	2,399 tons	937,681
	Copra	13,664 tons	954,284
1955	Bananas	446,325 cases	463,035
	Cocoa	3,041 tons	878,566
	Copra	17,178 tons	1,078,739
1956	Bananas	294,887 cases	303,871
	Cocoa	3,338 tons	668,171
	Copra	13,581 tons	817,494
1957	Bananas	329,185 cases	370,316
	Cocoa	3,069 tons	648,562
	Copra	14,325 tons	806,471

**Source:** Department of Island Territories, 1957

aerated drinks and curios. Agriculture appeared to be the only productive sector, with individual farmers and the Western Samoa Trust Estates Corporation (WSTEC) producing bananas, cocoa, copra and taro for domestic consumption and export.

In addition, the supply of power was confined to a 20 square mile area in and around the capital, Apia, serving around 20,000 people (Department of Island Territories, 1957). Telephone services were also limited to the Apia area, although a post office served most of the country. Three wharves were also in operation. The *Salelologa* and *Mulifanua* wharves were mainly for cargo and passenger ships travelling between Savai'i and Upolu, while the *Matautu* wharf, which was closest to Apia, was mainly used by international cargo and passenger ships. There was one airport, *Faleolo*, and this was used only in emergencies.

## 2.2 Social development

Social conditions in the country five years prior to independence were almost primitive in scope. Health and education were regarded as essential prerequisites of development, and while the population enjoyed human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination in respect of race, sex, language or religion, other social services were far from impressive.

### 2.2.1 Health

In the area of health, several strategies were undertaken. In particular, there was a move to increase the number of scholarships available for local students to study medicine in New Zealand and other countries. The shortage of qualified medical doctors was seen as a major hurdle in the health sector. Attempts were also made to bring in medical experts from overseas and the World Health Organization (WHO) conducted training for local students. In addition, partnerships with regional and world organisations were stressed, namely with the South Pacific Health Service (SPHS) and WHO. Efforts were also directed to other areas such as the elimination and control of common diseases like tuberculosis, yaws and leprosy. Maternal and child health, as well as public health, were targeted.

Prior to independence, Samoa's health system was mainly funded by the administration and was under the guidance and direction of the New Zealand Government. The national hospital located at Moto'otua, Apia, with 250 beds, was the central service provider, and fourteen district hospitals were responsible for the delivery of basic services. Wider and free access to treatment for all Samoans was the main priority. Other services, such as dental care, laboratory facilities, X-rays and pharmaceuticals, were also available, but these were limited in scope. In terms of staffing, five qualified medical officers from overseas oversaw the operations of the main hospital, assisted by 43 local personnel, trained at the Central Medical School in Fiji. Ninety-four qualified nurses were also employed.

For maternal and child health, there are no reliable statistics to confirm the extent to which mothers and newborn babies were attended by either a qualified midwife or a doctor at birth. That said, it was reported that a sister who was a qualified midwife was available to attend mothers who had perinatal problems (Department of Island

**Table 2.2 Total deliveries, premature births, still births and maternal deaths**

	1957	1958	1959	1960
Total deliveries	1,047	1,080	1,455	1,799
Premature births	74	22	22	18
Still births	28	27	44	44
Maternal deaths	8	5	3	2

**Source:** Department of Island Territories, 1960

Territories, 1960). Table 2.2 shows data for births at Moto'otua Hospital and the district hospitals.

### 2.2.2 Education

Education was an equally important priority. The main aim was to provide a 'general education for all, this being a prerequisite to creating an educated public fully capable of understanding and of taking an active part in a democratic State' (Department of Island Territories, 1960: 93). The focus was on the primary and secondary levels, although there were some developments at tertiary level. Several strategies were devised to support this aim. One was the plan to develop a sound primary and secondary school system that could be managed and delivered by local personnel. In addition, a teacher training college was set up to train local students.

The primary curriculum incorporated subjects such as Samoan language, English language, health, social studies, natural science, music, dancing, arts and crafts and physical education. The extent to which such subjects were taught depended on the availability of staff. School attendance was rated excellent in urban areas, but was disappointing in village schools. Table 2.3 presents data on primary school enrolment in 1957 and 1960, prior to independence in 1962.

**Table 2.3 Primary school enrolment, 1957–1960**

	1957		1960	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>5–10 years old</b>				
Mission schools	1,314	1,480	1,840	1,924
Government schools	5,710	5,702	5,581	5,241
<b>11–15 years old</b>				
Mission schools	1,535	1,228	1,853	1,806
Government schools	3,125	3,350	3,050	3,139
<b>Over 15 years old</b>				
Mission schools	672	535	602	720
Government schools	343	227	100	46

**Source:** Department of Island Territories, 1960

**Table 2.4 Scholarship awards offered in 1957–1960**

	1957	1958	1959	1960
New Zealand	96	73	83	89
Australia	1	–	–	1
England	–	1	1	–
USA	6	–	–	–

**Source:** Department of Island Territories, 1960

Three colleges were established prior to independence in an attempt to bolster learning at secondary level. These were Avele College, Vaipouli College and Samoa College. Avele and Vaipouli Colleges were established specifically as agricultural schools, while Samoa College was staffed and equipped in to the same way as secondary schools in New Zealand. Even the curriculum and textbooks were similar to those used in New Zealand. The core subjects were English, social studies, arithmetic, music and general science.

While tertiary institutions did not exist in Samoa before independence, scholarship awards were offered to capable students who qualified under the scheme to pursue further studies at the Suva Medical School in Fiji or at universities and other higher education institutions in New Zealand. The scheme was introduced in 1947 and was a central strategy aiming at advancing education for capable students in overseas tertiary institutions. Table 2.4 summarises the number of students who received scholarship awards to study in New Zealand and other countries.

### 2.2.3 Social welfare

While education and health attracted attention, not much energy was directed to other social issues. Social welfare, and in particular social security, was not considered for many reasons, but mainly because Samoan custom provided for the needs of the elders and the young, as discussed above. The authorities paid little attention to migration, although there was concern about skilled local people migrating to New Zealand. Human rights and gender equality were also minor issues, mainly because the New Zealand Government adhered to the UN mandate which explicitly required the authorities to comply with UN principles.

## 2.3 Water, sanitation and housing

In 1957, piped water supplies were mainly confined to the Apia area. Approximately 20,000 people were served with piped water, out of a total population of 110,000 in 1960 (Department of Island Territories, 1960). Some progress was made in 1960, with several villages having access to piped water, but the supply was unreliable. Housing was not a serious problem for the government. There is no record of any government provision of housing services for the population in general, but this was acceptable as urbanisation was not a serious concern.

**Table 2.5 Employment by sector, 1960**

	1960
Agriculture	2,088
Manufacturing and construction	1,237
Commerce	1,378
Transport and communication	645
Government and administration	924
Professions	1,886

**Source:** Department of Island Territories, 1960

## 2.4 Employment

With respect to labour and employment, some form of legislation and international conventions were in place prior to independence to resolve disputes and protect the rights of employees. These included the Worker's Compensation Ordinance 1960 and the acceptance of ILO conventions such as those relating to weekly rest, forced labour, recruiting of indigenous workers and the minimum working age. Table 2.5 presents employment by sector in 1960, and shows that agriculture was the dominant employment sector. The table underestimates the number of agricultural workers, as it shows only those who worked in commercial farming, because they received a regular salary and paid income tax. The majority of farm workers were employed on a casual basis and are not included in these figures.

Women have a special and respected place in Samoan society. Hence they have the same status as men, although they play a different role. The same privilege is extended to the workplace. Women are entitled to hold any public office and exercise all functions on equal terms with men. Apparently there was no preferential treatment for women, or prejudice against them in respect of the right to work. The same applied in education, where female and male students were considered according to the same criteria for scholarship awards and other educational benefits.

Migration in the five-year period before independence was a noticeable factor. It was reported that skilled and semi-skilled workers tended to migrate to New Zealand (Department of Island Territories, 1960). However, no data are available for the actual number of workers who migrated to New Zealand and other countries in the five-year period before independence in terms of skill levels (Table 2.6). That said, it is evident that migration rose steadily in the years before independence.

**Table 2.6 Migration from Samoa, 1957–1960**

1957	1958	1959	1960
5,315	6,258	8,476	8,088

**Source:** Department of Island Territories, 1960

## Chapter 3

### Post-independence Progress

Samoa was the first country in the region to gain independence, largely as a result of New Zealand's commitment to independence and political stability. However, immediately after independence, the Samoan Government realised it faced a gigantic task. Its main concern was the rapid growth in population, with an average growth rate for the five-year period 1961–1966 of 3.8 per cent (Department of Economic Development, 1970). This was higher than in the ten-year period 1945–1956, when the growth rate was 1–2 per cent. This big increase in population placed enormous pressure on the country's economy and created huge social welfare needs.

In addition, geographic isolation, inefficient agricultural methods, land control, lack of entrepreneurial skills, lack of diversification and limited internal markets were highlighted as potential barriers to post-independence growth (Department of Economic Development, 1970). Fortunately, according to the government of the time, all these could be properly addressed through sound planning and effective policies.

#### 3.1 Economic progress

Overall, Samoa's growth over the last quarter century has been modest and fluctuating, with a few periods of negative growth. Average growth over the period has been 1.7 per cent. According to the World Bank, Samoa is a lower-middle income country with a per capita income of US\$1,607 (constant 2000 US\$) in 2007. The economy depends on agriculture, tourism, small-scale manufacturing and fisheries. It is characterised by a narrow export base, vulnerable to external economic shocks and natural disasters, as well as being constrained by large distances and related transport costs.

Policies for economic advance continued to centre on agriculture in the post-independence period (see Table 3.1). In 1963, agricultural products accounted for 98

**Table 3.1 Samoa's main exports, 1962–1972**

	1962	1964	1966	1968	1970	1972
Cocoa	1.2	0.7	1.5	1.3	1.4	0.9
Copra	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.9	1.7	1.4
Banana	0.9	0.8	0.03	0.3	0.8	0.2
Other	0.03	0.05	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>3.3</b>

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1970

Note: Monetary values for 1962 and 1964 exports are in pounds sterling. All other years are in SAT\$.

per cent of total exports. This declined to 92.5 per cent in 1973. During the 1970s, while the production of bananas, cocoa and copra were the priorities, it was decided to diversify agricultural products for export and import substitution purposes. This included the need to bolster livestock production, fishing, vegetable, fresh fruits and coffee. Manufacturing, forestry, tourism and foreign investment also formed part of the strategy for driving the country's economy forward immediately after independence. However, efforts to expand investment and growth were constrained by lack of foreign exchange and limited external aid. Exports tended to stagnate due to dependence on cash crop agriculture, which was characterised by under-investment (Browne and Scott, 1989). During the 1970s, the Government of Samoa pursued more expansionary expenditure policies in an attempt to promote growth. This resulted in balance of payments difficulties and inflation, which was made worse by the effects of the oil crisis. The deficits were largely financed by commercial borrowing from New Zealand. As a result, economic adjustment measures were implemented in the second half of the 1970s, including tighter fiscal policy and depreciation. These measures fell short of expectations due to fluctuating incomes and low rates of return, which limited increases in production. In addition, exchange rate depreciation was not supported by domestic policies and therefore did not improve Samoa's competitiveness (Browne and Scott, 1989).

In the 1980s, the economy was still largely dependent on agriculture. There was the potential for commercial fishing, but this was largely untapped (Browne and Scott, 1989). The major cash crops were coconuts and cocoa, accounting for two-thirds of agricultural output. The production of bananas, once a major export, virtually ceased. A large amount of production was in the subsistence sector, accounting for 80 per cent of the cultivated area in the 1980s (Government of Samoa, 1984). The industrial sector, consisting of hydroelectric power facilities, a crushing mill and processed food factories, contributed 10 per cent of GDP. Tourism increased significantly over this period, as shown in Table 3.4. Government policies focused on assistance to industries that used local materials and had export or import substitution potential. Exports, largely coconut products, comprised 10–15 per cent of GDP (Government of Samoa, 1984).

Growth was slow during the period 1980–1987, with an annual average growth rate of 1–2 per cent (Government of Samoa, 1984). The oil price rise and world recession had a significant impact on Samoa due to fundamental weaknesses in its balance of payments, already apparent in the 1970s. These were caused by a deterioration in the terms of trade, compounded by adverse weather conditions. From 1983, recovery was achieved with modest economic growth as a result of the comprehensive adjustment policies introduced by the new government, including fiscal and monetary constraint and use of the exchange rate to improve competitiveness. These measures also promoted growth through improvements in resource mobilisation and allocation (Browne and Scott, 1989).

Following the global recession of the early 1980s, the Samoan Government, in its fifth development plan, focused on stimulating productivity in agriculture, forestry, fishery, light industries based on and relating to agriculture, and tourism as potential means for economic improvement and growth. Several strategies were implemented, including:

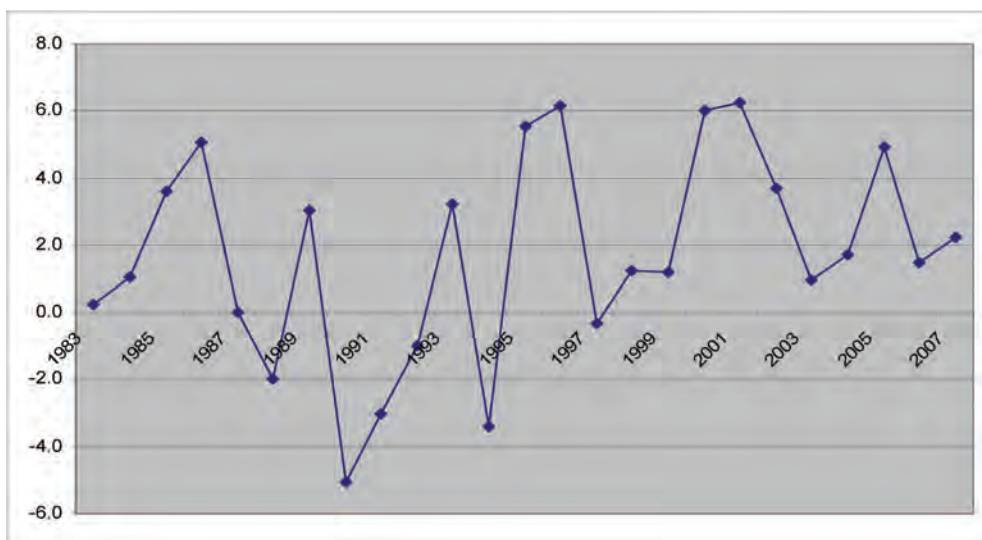
- The creation of joint ventures with foreign investors for commercial farming;
- Improving exports of agricultural products;
- Increasing the supply of agricultural products to displace imports;
- Upgrading Faleolo Airport and investing more in hotels; and
- Strengthening the private sector by creating a favourable socio-economic climate to encourage investment.

In 1990 and 1991 Samoa was hit by cyclones, followed by the taro blight of 1992. This forced the government to revise its objectives and policies in order to develop greater economic resilience. The priorities were to rebuild the agricultural sector, especially the cocoa and coconut plantations. A bonus scheme funded by the European Union (EU) was used as an incentive for farmers around the country to replant cocoa and coconut plantations destroyed by the cyclones. Assistance was also sought from abroad to develop a different breed of taro that could resist taro blight. Building new infrastructure was also a priority following the cyclones, and this was supported by generous overseas aid. At the same time, the rehabilitation required large increases in government expenditure, leading to large budget deficits. There were also efforts to diversify the economy, with a focus on manufacturing and tourism. As the programme of rehabilitation after the cyclone was completed, agriculture and tourism recovered and Samoa experienced dramatic growth in the fishing sector, as it embarked on a comprehensive reform programme (Asian Development Bank, 2000). The policy of gradual depreciation of the currency initiated in the 1980s was not maintained in the 1990s, and this led to a slight fall in competitiveness (Asian Development Bank, 2000).

In the second half of the 1990s, the government renewed its commitment to promoting the private sector as the engine for economic growth. Generous packages were made available to induce local and foreign investors to do business in the country. This saw the establishment of Yazaki Samoa, a Japanese-owned manufacturer of vehicle wiring – the largest in the southern hemisphere. Other economic reforms included the deregulation of the banking industry and the removal of some tariffs and duties, the introduction of a value added goods and services tax (VAGST) and a reduction in income tax.

In spite of these crises, in the 1990s the Samoan Government successfully implemented economic reform and from 1994 largely secured positive economic growth (Figure 3.1). This was the result both of economic restructuring, which increased economic efficiency, significant levels of external grants and private remittances, and a stable foreign reserve base. Therefore the crises did not place the Samoan economy under severe strain. As Fairbairn-Dunlop argues: ‘Samoa’s comparatively stable financial situation (including solid foreign reserve base, budget balance and balance of payments equilibrium) means that Samoa did not experience the extreme crisis position of some Pacific nations, but has been in a position to adopt long-term economic measures aimed at building up confidence in the economy and establishing the systems for efficient and effective economic development’ (Tisdell, 2002: 917).

**Figure 3.1 Annual growth of GDP per capita, 1983–2007**



**Source:** World Bank, 2009

At the turn of the century, Samoa continued to build on the positive gains from the latter half of the 1990s. In particular, the achievement of a stable macroeconomic framework was the central strategy. The main planks of this strategy were a balanced budget, low inflation, adequate credit for private sector development, creation of employment opportunities and a sustainable external balance (Government of Samoa, 2000). In addition to a sound macroeconomic framework, public sector efficiency and effectiveness, better health and education standards, improved infrastructure, private sector growth, tourism, agriculture and fisheries development, and revitalising the village economy were priorities in the attempt to promote economic and social development.

An overview of the Samoan economy from the 1990s to 2005 in terms of sectoral development, trade, remittances, tourism earning and GDP per capita shows mixed outcomes. Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2 show developments by sector since the 1990s. A

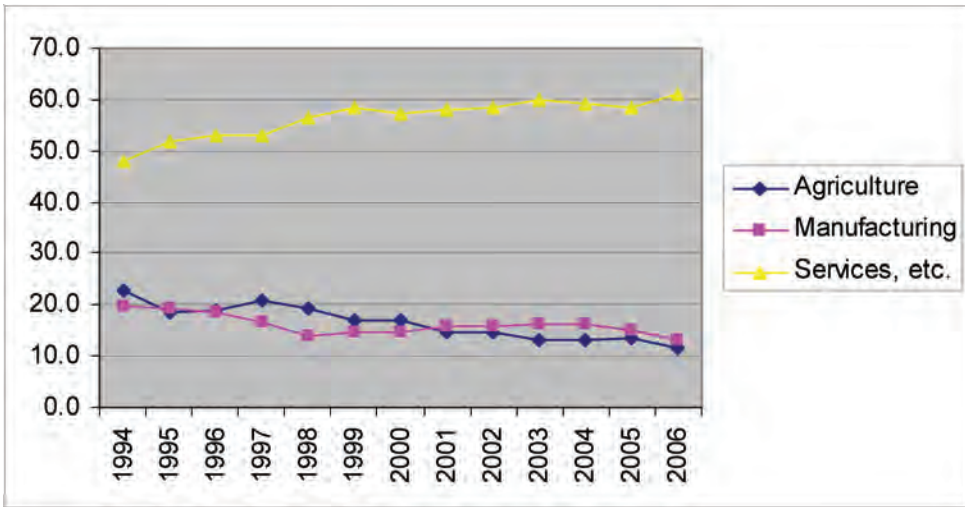
**Table 3.2 Development by sector, 1990–2009**

	1990 <sup>a</sup>	1995	2000	2005	2009
Agriculture, value added (% of GDP)	19.2	18.5	16.8	13.2	11.9
Industry, value added (% of GDP)	30.5	29.6	26.0	30.6	26.7
Manufacturing, value added (% of GDP)	–	19.3	14.8	15.7	9.4
Services, value added (% of GDP)	50.7	51.9	57.2	56.2	61.4
GDP growth (annual %)	–4.4	6.6	7.0	4.1	–5.5

**Source:** World Bank, 2011; Government of Samoa, 1990, 1995

<sup>a</sup>1990 data are from the Ministry of Finance, Government of Samoa; all other data are from World Bank, World Development Indicators

**Figure 3.2 Sectoral composition: value added as a percentage of GDP**

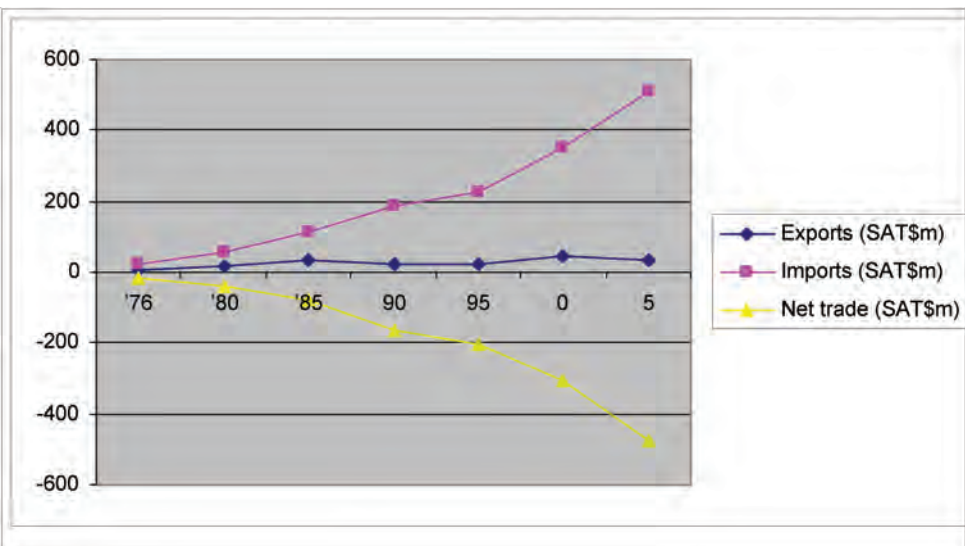


Source: World Bank, 2009

notable decrease has been experienced in agricultural production since the 1990s, while industry has remained relatively static and manufacturing has declined. The services industry appears to be the only sector that experienced growth as a percentage of GDP since independence.

With respect to trade (Figure 3.3), Samoa’s exports improved significantly between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. Imports, on the other hand, increased substantially in

**Figure 3.3 Samoa’s trade performance, 1976–2005**



Source: Central Bank of Samoa, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005; Government of Samoa, 1970, 1975; Asian Development Bank, 2010

**Table 3.3 Samoa’s trade balance, 1976–2005**

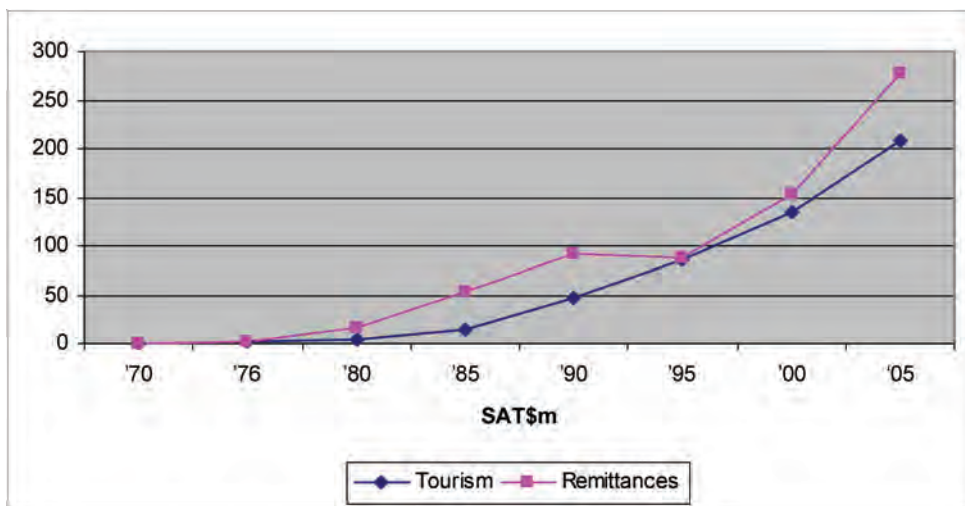
	1976	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Exports (SAT\$ million)	5.8	15.8	36.2	20.5	21.7	44.8	32.5
Imports (SAT\$ million)	21.4	57.4	115.1	186.1	228.1	297.5	507.7
Net trade (SAT\$ million)	-15.8	-41.6	-78.9	-165.6	-206.4	-252.7	-475.2
Exports (% of GDP)	-	-	-	7.9	4.4	19.4	2.8
Imports (% of GDP)	-	-	-	-62.7	-46.0	-140.1	-43.1
Overall balance (% of GDP)	-	-	-	9.7	1.6	-3.3	0.3

**Source:** Central Bank of Samoa, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005; Government of Samoa, 1970, 1975; Asian Development Bank, 2010

the same period and escalated more rapidly from the mid-1980s, growing significantly more than exports. Samoa had a negative trade balance throughout the period under discussion. In 1976, the country recorded a trade deficit of SAT\$15.8 million. Three decades later, the deficit soared to SAT\$475 million, equivalent to 29 per cent of GDP.

Remittances and tourism have increased significantly since independence (Figure 3.4 and Table 3.4). Currently, Samoa relies heavily on both these sectors for economic stability.

**Figure 3.4 Tourism and remittances revenues (SAT\$ million)**



**Source:** Central Bank of Samoa, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2006; Government of Samoa, 1970; Asian Development Bank, 2010

**Table 3.4 Remittances and tourism earnings (SAT\$m), 1970–2005**

	1970	1976	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
<b>Tourism</b>	–	2.5	4.7	15.1	47.5	86.1	134.0	207.7
<b>Remittances</b>	0.6	2.5	17.2	53.1	91.9	86.9	152.8	277.0

Source: Central Bank of Samoa, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2006; Government of Samoa, 1970; ADB, 2010

## 3.2 Social progress

Samoa has one of the highest social development rankings of all Pacific island countries, with a Human Development Index (HDI) ranking of 77 out of 177 countries worldwide for which data are available, second only to Tonga, which has a ranking of 55, in the Pacific region (UNDP, 2007). The HDI shows how well Samoa performs in social development compared to its income level, as its GDP per capita ranking is far lower, at 91. Fiji, with a marginally higher income level than Samoa, compares poorly, with an HDI ranking of 92. Samoa has a level of human development above other Pacific island countries such as Vanuatu (120), Solomon Islands (129) and Papua New Guinea (145) (UNDP, 2007). Overall, its social indicators have experienced remarkable progress over the last two decades as a result of the government's commitment to economic and social reform.

### 3.2.1 Education

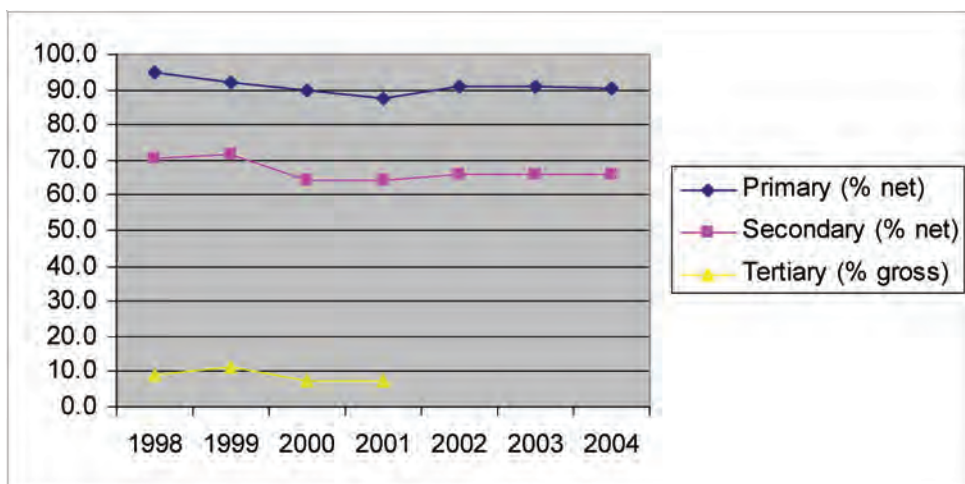
Much attention has been given to education and the impact of this is reflected in the education indicators. According to the World Development Indicators, adult literacy in Samoa was 98.6 per cent in 2004 (World Bank, 2004). This compares favourably with countries in other regions and income groups, including high-income countries, where adult average literacy in the same year was 90.3 per cent. As shown in Table 3.5, adult literacy levels have been high since the 1980s, demonstrating the government's early commitment to universal primary education. The church's contribution to literacy also deserves recognition. In particular, the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS), through its *a'oga faife'au* (pastor's school), provides good training for children to read in the Samoan language.

Table 3.5 does not provide adequate statistics for further analysis in terms of gender, age and geographical (urban/rural) representation due to the unavailability of data. Nonetheless, the statistics confirm an increasing trend in literacy rates for the population over 15 years of age. Statistics indicate that youth literacy exceeds that of

**Table 3.5 Adult literacy rates, age 15 and above (%)**

	1981	1991	2001
Male	97.0	95.5	98.0
Female	97.0	95.9	98.5
Total	97.0	95.7	98.2

Source: UNDP, 2006

**Figure 3.5 School enrolment, 1998–2004**

Source: World Bank, 2009

the older population, with 2004 rates of 99.3 and 99.4 per cent for boys and girls respectively and 2008 rates of 99.4 and 99.5 per cent (World Bank, 2011).

In terms of school enrolment, Figure 3.5 shows that since the late 1990s primary enrolment has fluctuated around 90 per cent; secondary enrolment around 70 per cent; and tertiary around 10 per cent. The figures for primary enrolment are similar to the average for East Asian and Pacific countries and for lower-middle income countries (93 and 90.4 per cent, respectively, in 2006). Samoa's performance on secondary enrolment in 2000 was above the 56 per cent average for the regional group in 2006. However, the level of tertiary enrolment was disappointing compared both to other countries in the region and to those in a similar income group (both around 20 per cent in 2006). Gender inequality in education has been minimised by government policies. The Gender-related Development Index shows that male and female educational indicators are similar for both adult literacy and combined gross enrolment ratio. For example, the female adult literacy rate is 98.3 per cent compared to 98.9 per cent for males (UNDP, 2007).

### 3.2.2 Health

Similarly, there has been significant government commitment to improvements in health, which again is reflected in the indicators. The health status of the population has improved significantly (Table 3.6) over the past decades, according to WHO (quoted in Government of Samoa, 2005b). In 2006, Samoa had an infant mortality rate of 23.2 per 1,000 live births and a life expectancy of 71.3 years. This compares favourably with the average for lower-middle income countries of 40.5 and 68.5 for infant mortality rate and life expectancy, respectively. In terms of infant mortality, this is a significant improvement from the 1970 level of 73 per 1,000 live births.

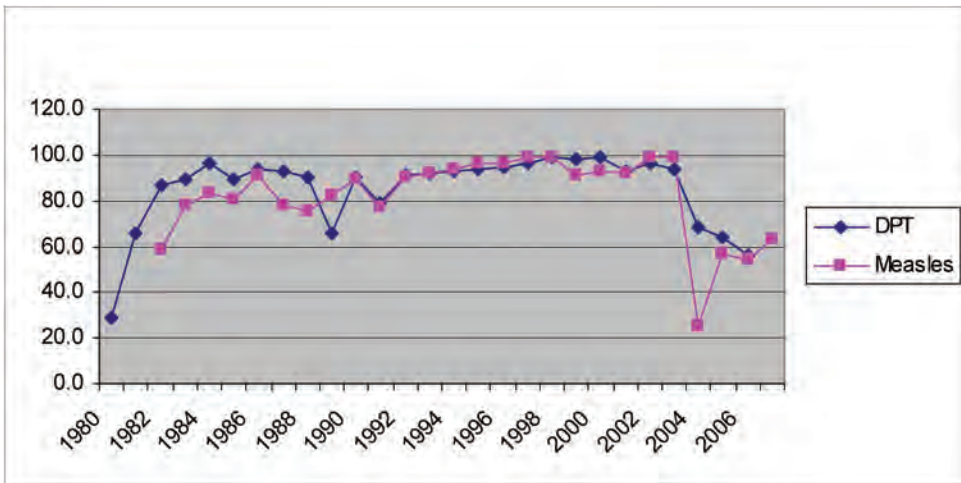
Health provision is good, as shown by the fact that 100 per cent of births are attended by skilled personnel. In spite of some decline recently, immunisation over the period

**Table 3.6 Life expectancy at birth; mortality rate; births attended by skilled staff**

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Life expectancy at birth:								
Male	59.6	–	61.0	–	63.0	–	71.0	–
Female	63.4	–	64.0	–	65.0	–	73.8	–
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	73.1	64.2	55.7	47.7	39.9	33.0	27.8	24
Number of births attended by skilled staff	–	–	63.0	–	–	–	–	100

Source: Government of Samoa, 1985, 1990b, 1995a, 2000c, 2005b; UNDP, 2006

has tended to be between 90 and 100 per cent, as shown in Figure 3.6. While health development in these areas is sound, there are areas of concern. In particular, non-communicable diseases, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, are prevalent in Samoa and consume a substantial share of the government budget. For instance, in 2004 the Ministry of Health recorded that around 259 people were suffering from diabetes. In addition, the availability of hospital beds to patients is also emerging as a

**Figure 3.6 Immunisation (percentage of children aged 12–23 months)**

Source: World Bank, 2009

**Table 3.7 Hospital beds and health service access per 1,000 people, 1970–2005**

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Hospital beds (per 1,000 people)	–	–	–	–	4.1	3.4	2	1.2
Population with access to health services (%)	–	–	70.1	–	89.1	–	88.2	–

Source: Government of Samoa, 1990b, 1995a, 2000c, 2005b

**Table 3.8 Human poverty index in Samoa**

	1971	1981	1991	2001
Poverty index (%)	–	13.8	10.9	9.4

Source: UNDP, 2006

major concern. In 1990, there were 4.1 beds available to every 1,000 people. By 2005, this figure had declined to 1.2 beds.

### 3.2.3 Poverty and inequality

There are limited data on poverty and inequality due to methodological problems in the collection of statistics: however, economic and social indicators show a good and improving quality of life with limited abject poverty (Asian Development Bank, 2000).

In general, the Pacific region's perception of poverty tends to differ from international definitions. Despite comprehensive studies by international agencies, and in particular the UNDP, which considers that a fraction of Samoa's population lives in poverty (Table 3.8), the government continues to reject the idea that there is any sign of destitution in the country. As a result, the government has not introduced a comprehensive policy to address poverty. The government's attitude may be the result of how poverty is perceived and defined in Samoa. In fact, poverty in the Samoan context is mainly defined as extreme starvation, where there is an entire absence of basic necessities such as food, water and shelter. Since there is hardly anyone in the country who lives in such conditions, the government and Samoans themselves do not believe that there is any poverty. This is an issue of public awareness and education on other aspects of poverty, such as lack of easy access to health provision and decent meals.

## 3.3 Water and sanitation

Following independence, the provision of clean water was a government priority, and it remains so today. While headway has been made in the post-independence period, the provision of a quality water supply to the entire population remains problematic despite the availability of abundant sources of fresh water from underground and from tropical rainstorms. In 2005, the percentage of the population with access to clean water was fairly high, at 92 per cent; a slightly lower percentage had access to adequate sanitation (Table 3.9).

**Table 3.9 Population access to water supply and sanitation, 1970–2005**

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Percentage of population with access to a clean water supply	–	–	81.0	–	90.0	–	91.0	92.0
Percentage of population with access to adequate sanitation	–	–	79.0	–	90.0	–	89.0	–

Source: UNDP, 2006

## Chapter 4

### Design and Scope of Social Policy

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Since independence, Samoa has constantly highlighted social development as the gateway to prosperity. Hence social policy, both in past years and currently, has been designed so as to advance the living standards of the population. In pursuing this aim, the government, the international community and society as a whole have interacted in numerous ways to devise and implement policies that have proved critical to improving social standards. Such policies have targeted components of a framework that includes production, social protection, redistribution and reproduction. In essence, the state has determined which particular element deserves central attention. It is misleading not to recognise the welfare state as a significant force that has enabled Samoa to achieve improved social welfare, as presented in the preceding discussion. The state has invested heavily in social policy since independence; it is evident that if it had not done so, social indicators for Samoa would have been worse, as is the case for many of the neighbouring countries in the region (UNDP, 2007).

The design of social policy in Samoa depends on the key institutions that are central to the social policy process in the country. Among the many institutions involved in the process, Cabinet, senior public servants, donors and international agencies are at the centre of social policy-making. Cabinet has the final say on the content and direction of social policy, while senior public servants with a wealth of expertise and information have a significant input through their advice on policy. Donor countries that have bilateral agreements with Samoa have a strong influence on the role and design of policy, mainly because of the availability of assistance in the form of finance and expertise. International institutions, especially the various branches of the United Nations and financial institutions like the Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank also have some influence on the government regarding the direction and scope of social policy as a condition for financial assistance.

The family, on the other hand, plays a significant role in supporting policies that strengthen human capital production. With respect to financing, the household plays a very limited role. Besides being the taxpayers, households are expected to pay a minimal fee for administrative purposes. This practice conforms to the government's intention to make the country's health and education systems universal and accessible. Besides the family, the market also contributes to the development of human capital. A private hospital was recently opened, a private secondary school was established in the early 1990s and several private primary and pre-schools are now serving a significant proportion of the population in the urban areas. While these private providers of education and health have assisted human capital production in

terms of providing quality services, the higher charges involved restrict access for the disadvantaged.

## 4.1 Education, health and other social service provision

### 4.1.1 Education

Investment in human capital has been a priority both pre- and post-independence. In its second development plan (1971–1975), the government put together a scheme which examined the expertise and skills needed in the immediate and distant future. This was critical at the time, due to the absence of post-secondary education, the sudden increase in migration of skilled local people overseas and the need for the country to produce its own supply of skilled labour without depending on overseas markets

In particular, there was emphasis on creating a closer link between formal education and the country's special needs in terms of its culture and the manpower required for priority sectors like health and education (Government of Samoa, 1975). The same strategy dominated the 1980s. As a result, considerable effort was directed to the design of the curriculum, teacher education and vocational training. Several measures were put in practice from the 1970s to the 1990s to address the urgent need to bolster manpower and human capital. The initial work targeted the grassroots by establishing a sound platform for primary and secondary schools. More developments at the tertiary level got underway following independence.

An Institute of Technology and Teachers Training College (TTC) were established in the early 1970s, and the National University of Samoa (NUS) was set up in 1982. At the turn of the century, both the Institute of Technology and TTC merged with the NUS in the attempt to streamline manpower development. Further, the government in the early 1990s initiated a scholarship scheme financed from its own budget to fund awards to eligible students who missed out on the limited awards granted under Australian and New Zealand schemes for study at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and other universities in Australia and New Zealand.

In the 1990s, the focus shifted to restructuring the whole ministry in order to deliver education services underpinned by the principles of equity, quality, relevance and efficiency (Government of Samoa, 1995b). A fundamental priority has been to ensure that primary education produces an increasing number of functionally literate and numerate students. In doing this, education policy has had to meet the challenges of teacher quality and high teacher turnover, the level of resources available for education, and issues of access and equity. During the same period, several developments were completed. These included the opening of a new campus of the National University of Samoa, the upgrading of science subjects in schools, the introduction of agricultural science into the secondary school curriculum and the establishment of working parties and advisory committees to strengthen links between government and NGOs in education. At the turn of the century, education strategies continued to focus on developing and improving:

**Table 4.1 Total government spending on education, 1955–2005**

1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
0.2	0.3	0.4	0.9	–	4.6	8.7	–	22.2	37.3	55.3

Note: Data for the period 1955–1965 are in pounds sterling; all other data are in SAT\$ million.

Source: Government of Samoa, 1970; Fairbairn, 1973; Department of Island Territories, 1960

- Early childhood education
- Special needs education
- Primary, secondary and post-secondary education
- The curriculum and teaching materials
- Education facilities
- Co-ordination between private and public schools
- Strengthening management in the Ministry of Education

Some of these strategies have secured funding from donor agencies like the World Bank, while some are financed from the government's own budget. As the data on government spending show (Tables 4.1 and 4.2), there has been a progressive increase in education spending overall, although as a percentage of GDP spending has fluctuated over the period. As a percentage of GDP in the last decade, the level of education expenditure (5.6% in 2005) has been comparable to that of high-income countries (5.4% on average in 2005).

**Table 4.2 Government spending on education, 1970–2005**

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Total spending (SAT\$ million)	0.9	–	4.6	8.7	18.6	22.2	37.3	55.3
Percentage of total expenditure	16.7	–	14.2	13.5	–	9.0	13.2	14.1
Percentage of GDP	5.5	–	–	1.8	–	3.4	4.6	5.6

Source: Government of Samoa, 1975, 1980, 1985a, 1990a, 1995c, 2000a, 2005c

**Table 4.3 Government spending on pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education as a percentage of total spending (SAT\$ million)**

	2000	2005
Pre-primary	0.1	0.4
Primary	12.7	17.0
Secondary	6.9	9.0
Tertiary	–	–
Special needs education	0.1	0.4

Source: Government of Samoa, 2000a, 2005c

Education policy design continues to be an outcome of external and internal intelligence. While the authorities at the Ministry of Education are at the forefront of policy design, international agencies and donors are also involved on a significant scale, mainly because of the availability of assistance in the form of finance and expertise. For instance, the policies formulated by the ministry for the ten-year period 1995–2005 were the outcome of a review undertaken by the World Bank in 1992 (Government of Samoa, 1995b). In essence, education provision in Samoa is universal at primary and secondary level, rather than targeted or means tested. Education is compulsory for all primary age students, according to the Education Amendment Act 1991/92. While this regulatory provision conforms to international standards, implementation is a major concern and not much effort is made in terms of enforcement and monitoring. For example, child vending is becoming a serious problem in urban areas; children who should be at school are out selling merchandise during school hours every day of the week.

Education in Samoa is not free. While the government is responsible for providing teachers and teaching materials, students, mainly at village primary schools, pay fees in order to maintain school facilities. At secondary level, all students are required to pay for textbooks and a minimum fee for maintenance. At post-secondary level, the policy is a mixture of universal and targeted. While the scholarship scheme, which is mainly funded by the Australian, New Zealand and Samoan governments, is universal in the sense that anyone is eligible to apply, it is targeted in practice, as only high achievers are rewarded. However, there is now provision for vocational training and an open category for the scholarship scheme in order to give those at the lower end of the academic spectrum the opportunity for further education. In addition, the National University of Samoa provides equal opportunities for all citizens to pursue further education studies.

It is a common belief in the Samoan tradition that parents are the first teachers of their own children. This is a conviction that is in line with international conventions and it is implicitly provided for in the Ministry of Education's early childhood education policy. Under Samoan custom, family members are expected to provide moral values and discipline for their children. These include honesty, a work ethic, trust, love, respect and sharing among the many. In essence, education is a priority for nearly every Samoan family.

In recent years the trend has changed significantly. The practice of child vending appears to have developed into a disturbing trend. The local media, the public and the UNDP have raised concerns about this issue with the government. As a result, the government's compulsory education policy is now being implemented as one of the measures to address the problem.

#### 4.1.2 Health

Remarkable progress has also been made in health provision since independence. During the 1970s and the 1980s, the government was concerned with maintaining and expanding the rural health system in order to control major diseases. This policy was mainly implemented by establishing district hospitals around the country, as well as by expanding the range of medical services available in district hospitals. Improving

health facilities and ensuring the availability of the requisite manpower were also key priorities (Government of Samoa, 1970, 1975). This strategy resulted in the opening of a new complex for the national hospital at Moto'otua in the mid-1970s equipped with modern technology and facilities, with support from the New Zealand Government.

In the 1990s, greater emphasis was devoted to two main areas: health promotion and preventive measures, and health sector management and planning (Government of Samoa, 1998). The former targeted the prevention of lifestyle health problems such as diabetes and high blood pressure, as well as the reduction of maternal and infant mortality rates. The latter recognised the need to enhance management in the central ministry as the key to better health services. In addition to immunisation programmes and national programmes which were popular before and just after independence, the health authorities over the last ten years have developed programmes for the care of the elderly, breast feeding, adolescent health, maternal and child health, and environmental health issues. Human resources, although still lacking in some key areas, especially in specialised surgery, have improved as the number of medical graduates has increased greatly since the early 1990s, with the majority graduating from the Fiji School of Medicine. Over the last ten years, an average of about ten medical graduates from Fiji and other countries such as Australia and New Zealand have returned to serve at the national hospitals. A scholarship bond between the government and each graduate secures the services of these graduates for a minimum period of seven years. At the end of the bond period, graduates are free to move to the private sector or abroad.

It was also intended to devise a policy on health funding with respect to the position of government. Initiatives such as health insurance and user charges were investigated, but as yet these have not been implemented. Health provision in the early 2000s continued to operate in line with previous strategies, but with greater emphasis on strengthening partnerships with the private sector (Government of Samoa, 2002, 2005b). This strategy allows private practitioners to join training programmes funded by the Ministry of Health, as well to access and use facilities and equipment at the national hospital (Government of Samoa, 2002).

Government spending on health shows the same trend as in education. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 provide a summary of government expenditure on health services in terms of actual spending and as a percentage of GDP. There was a sharp increase in spending – of over 100 per cent – in the ten-year period 1995–2005.

**Table 4.4 Government spending on health, 1970–2005**

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Total expenditure (SAT\$ million)	0.8	–	4.1	6.2	–	16.5	29.2	47.3
Percentage of total expenditure	16.1	–	12.6	9.6	–	6.7	10.4	12.1
Total expenditure as percentage of GDP	4.8	–	–	1.2	–	2.5	3.6	4.8

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985a, 1990a, 1995c, 2000a, 2005c

**Table 4.5 Total government spending on health, 1955–2005 (SAT\$ million)**

1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
0.2 <sup>a</sup>	0.3 <sup>a</sup>	0.3 <sup>a</sup>	0.8	–	4.1	6.2	–	16.5	29.2	47.3

<sup>a</sup>Spending for the period 1955–1965 is in £ million.

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1970, 1980, 1985a, 1990a, 1995c, 2000a, 2005c; Fairbairn, 1973

The Ministry of Health is the predominant policy-making institution, although an important role is also played by international organisations. WHO, together with many other health organisations and foundations, continues to work closely with the authorities at the Ministry of Health in devising, designing and implementing health policies. The health service is universal and every Samoan citizen is entitled to heavily subsidised medical treatment at district hospitals and in the two main hospitals in Apia and Savai'i. Immunisation and maternal and child health programmes are provided free of charge. A health scheme, mainly funded by the New Zealand Government, is also in place for specific illnesses that cannot be treated in the country. While the scheme is important, the limited funding available from the New Zealand Government means that some patients miss out. The government does not have a policy to automatically provide assistance for patients who do not benefit from the scheme. For a patient to qualify, an application has to be made to Cabinet through the Ministry of Health. In the past, not all cases have been approved, mainly because of financial constraints. There have also been major concerns about equity and fairness in the provision of overseas treatment.

Health is all-important in the everyday life of a Samoan family. Staying healthy or living a healthy life is a common theme. Mothers, children and elders are the main groups who are at the centre of attention of any family when it comes to health issues. However, the availability of cheap food imports, as well as the high cost of basic quality food items, has contributed to the health challenges faced by Samoa. Cheap imports are preferred, even though they are linked to high blood pressure and diabetes, which are currently the prevalent health problems among Samoans.

## 4.2 Water supply and housing

In the 1970s and 1980s several water projects funded by UNDP and UNICEF were implemented in an attempt to improve the supply of water to rural areas. The same strategy was pursued in the 1990s with several water projects aimed at improving supply to urban and rural areas. In addition, a user charge system was introduced by installing meters in an attempt to control water usage and wastage. The Water Division was also established as a corporation (the Samoa Water Authority) independent of the Public Works Department in the same period as part of the strategy to extend the supply of quality water around the country. Since 2000, more water projects have been implemented and a major scheme, funded by the EU, is currently underway.

Table 4.6 shows government spending on water supply post-independence.

**Table 4.6 Government grants for water supply, 1970–2005**

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Expenditure on water supply (SAT\$ million)	–	–	–	–	–	7.0	6.1	–
Percentage of total expenditure	–	–	–	–	–	2.8	2.2	–
Percentage of GDP	–	–	–	–	–	1.1	0.7	–

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1995c, 2000a

**Table 4.7 Government housing grants, 1990–2005 (SAT\$ million)**

	1990	1995	2000	2005
Housing	3.0	0.5	0.4	0.5
Percentage of total expenditure	–	0.2	0.1	0.1
Percentage of GDP	0.7	0.07	0.04	0.05

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1990a, 1995c, 2000a, 2005c

Following independence, the government did not provide a wider housing service for those in need of such provision. Most government houses were for government officials and formed part of their entitlement; some were rented out to public officials who could not find other accommodation in Apia. The maintenance and management of these government houses was mainly conducted by the Ministry of Public Works. Following the hurricane in early 1990, the government established a housing authority to provide financial assistance in the form of a loan scheme with fees and charges that were below the market rate to assist the wider community in rebuilding damaged properties. This service is still continuing and has been of great help to many disadvantaged citizens over the years. In terms of eligibility, middle- to low-income families are the priority. The absence of data (Table 4.7) makes it difficult to identify how many have qualified and have been assisted since the establishment of the authority.

### 4.3 Social protection

Unlike human capital intervention, social protection in the form of pensions, social assistance, compensation for injuries at work and unemployment benefit attracts less attention from the government. Several reasons explain why the government has adopted this stance over a long period. One concerns Samoan customs (see above). Another arises from the convention that all members of society have a right to use the land and other resources unconditionally for their own good. Hence there is no valid ground for the government to provide assistance, as each individual has the right to cultivate the land to support their children and families.

However, in the post-independence period the government established several institutions and implemented policies to provide social protection. While these initiatives were influenced by external thinking, they also reflected the government's belief that Samoan culture would eventually change over the years and that

vulnerable people would therefore be at risk. The setting up of the Samoa National Provident Fund (SNPF) in 1972 to provide financial security for its members is one example. The SNPF provided support for workers in formal employment in any sector and for their dependents in retirement or in the event of early death or incapacity. The help provided by the SNPF is commendable, but the fact that only a small proportion of the population is employed in the formal sector is an issue that needs attention. In June 2006, the SNPF had 22,526 active members (SNPF, 2007), equivalent to 12.4 per cent of the total population. This suggests that it is only those who are in formal employment, and who are mainly in the higher income group, who are benefiting from this service.

In 1990, the government changed its policy and introduced a monthly pension payment for every person at the age of 65. The new policy had many causes: changes in Samoan culture (see below) meant that it no longer provided an effective safety net for disadvantaged groups. Inevitably, Samoan society in the 1980s was moving away from the customary practice of family members taking care of elders. Hence, the government was compelled to act responsibly to ensure that the interests and welfare of elders were properly looked after. The policy is directly funded from the government budget and executed by the SNPF. In March 2009, about 8,500 pensioners were in the scheme. This is equivalent to 4.7 per cent of the total population. Each pensioner receives SAT\$125 per month or a total of SAT\$1,500 per year since July 2005. This is an insignificant amount, taking into account the current cost of living; a 20kg bag of rice, for instance, retails at SAT\$100.

The third initiative was the establishment of the Accident Compensation Commission (ACC) in the late 1980s. This agency provides compensation for members who have sustained injuries at the workplace, or in sports or road accidents. Tables 4.8 and 4.9 outline government spending on social welfare, showing a significant increase over the 15-year period 1990–2005.

As mentioned above, the design of social protection policy in Samoa has been influenced by external trends, although the government has the final say. Samoa's social protection policy is targeted at specific groups, rather than being universal or means tested. Retirees who are contributors to the SNPF are in a secure financial situation compared to non-members. Pensioners (those aged 65 years and above) are also in a better situation than non-pensioners. They receive a monthly allowance and other benefits, such as free medicine from the government's pharmacy and inter-island travel between Savai'i and Upolu. On the other hand, members of the ACC are

**Table 4.8 Government spending on social welfare, 1990–2005**

	1990	1995	2000	2005
Old age benefits (SAT\$ million)	2.7	5.6	9.0	14.0
Percentage of total government expenditure	1.3	2.3	3.2	3.5
Total expenditure as a percentage of GDP	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.4

**Note:** Old age benefit was introduced in 1989; other forms of social welfare are not available.

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1990a, 1995c, 2000a, 2005c

**Table 4.9 Government spending on social protection, 1990–2005**

	1990	1995	2000	2005
Government spending on pensions (SAT\$ million)	–	5.6	9.0	14.0
As a percentage of GDP	–	0.8	1.1	1.4
Government spending on accident compensation (SAT\$ million)	–	0.5	0.7	1.0
As a percentage of GDP	–	0.07	0.08	0.1

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1995c, 2000a, 2005c

more fortunate in the event of a serious or minor injury, as they are entitled to compensation, while non-members are not entitled to this.

As pointed out above, Samoan society traditionally places enormous responsibility for social security on the family and to some extent on the village community. It is the obligation of family members, and especially those who are still active, to look after the welfare of every single member of the family and in particular the young, elders, the handicapped and anyone else who is encountering difficulties. In the main, this group is responsible for providing food and other basic needs required by the less fortunate; failing to meet these obligations is a serious offence and brings shame on them and the rest of the family. This is clearly explained in the report prepared by the New Zealand Department of Island Territories prior to independence:

‘No comprehensive scheme of social security is needed in the Territory as far as most of the indigenous are concerned. Samoan custom and traditional structure of Samoan society provided that the very old and the very young are cared for by members of their *aiga* (family). Aged persons, widows, cripples, orphans, and abandoned and neglected children are considered the responsibility of the relatives, and if these relatives were not to protect and look after them they would incur considerable social odium.’ (Department of Island Territories, 1959: 78)

The community, mainly the other families in the village, can also provide a helping hand, but this may not be accepted by the family in need of help as this reflects badly on its members.

This cultural aspect, among other factors such as financial constraints, is the main reason why successive governments have held back from introducing the large-scale social protection policies, especially with regard to unemployment and other social security services, that are prevalent in more industrialised countries. While the status quo is commendable in discouraging a welfare-dependence culture, it was inevitable that Samoan society in recent years has moved away from its traditions. Hence, it is very likely that the government will introduce more extensive social protection policies in the future.

The market has played a very limited role in social protection in the past and even in recent years. Perhaps the small size of the country is the main hurdle. However, a few private insurance companies have recently negotiated medical packages with local manufacturers. Yazaki Samoa, a Japanese-owned company that specialises in

producing wires for vehicles and employs more than 2,000 workers, has recently conducted negotiations with some of the insurance companies in the country.

## 4.4 Redistribution

Redistribution policy is a political process. Decisions on levels of taxation and expenditure are predominantly political, although economic factors form part of the decision-making process. Since the early 1990s, Samoa has undergone an extensive tax reform to make its tax system both regressive and progressive. The introduction of a valued added goods and services tax (VAGST) in 1992 and a reduction in income tax, together with the removal and reduction of various custom duties and tariffs, were some of the key changes.

In terms of spending, the government in the 1970s was in favour of an expansionary fiscal policy. This was to be expected, considering the attempt of the newly independent government to speed up development and meet the expansion in its social obligations that resulted from substantial population growth. As a result of international influence and local imperatives, the 1980s were a time of mixed expansionary and tight fiscal policy. The same trend was experienced in the 1990s and in the early 2000s. Table 4.10 highlights trends in government spending since the 1970s.

**Table 4.10 Government revenue and expenditure, 1970–2005 (SAT\$ million)**

	1970	1974	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Total revenue	5.0	9.1	35.4	–	–	254.3	262.4	358.1
Total expenditure	5.4	9.9	32.2	–	–	246.6	280.8	402.4
Surplus/deficit	–0.4	–0.8	3.2	–	–	7.7	–18.4	–44.3

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1970, 1980, 1995c, 2000a, 2005c

**Table 4.11 Government expenditure on the ministries of education, health, police and community service, 1965–2005 (SAT\$ million)**

	1965	1970	1974	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Education	0.8	0.9	1.8	4.6	8.7	–	22.2	37.3	55.3
Health	0.6	0.8	1.6	4.1	6.2	–	16.5	29.2	47.3
Police	0.2	0.4	0.6	1.1	1.7	–	7.3	15.6	20.2
Community services	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	1.6	2.1	4.0	9.8	16.6	–	46.0	82.1	122.8
Total expenditure	–	5.4	10.1	32.2	64.5	–	246.6	280.8	402.4
Percentage of total budget	–	38.8	39.6	30.4	25.7	–	18.6	29.2	30.5

**Source:** Department of Island Territories, 1957; Fairbairn, 1973; Government of Samoa, 1970, 1980, 1985a, 1995c, 2000a, 2005c

Social services received the bulk of government spending before and after independence. Table 4.11 presents spending by the key government institutions directly responsible for advancing social production, security and reproduction in Samoa.

The design and scope of redistribution policy in Samoa is a mix of external and internal thinking. While international financial institutions are influential in terms of providing economic guideline and fiscal measures for the government to follow, the latter remains the ultimate decision-maker. In terms of coverage, redistribution policy is a blend of universal and targeted. The VAGST seems to be universal in scope as it captures both income earners and non-taxable income earners such as farmers and church ministers. Income tax, on the other hand, targets only those who earn income of over SAT\$14,000 per annum. It is also progressive in nature as those who earn more pay more. Further, there are other forms of taxation that target the business community. These include company tax, customs duties and licences.

Expenditure, on the other hand, reflects a combination of both principles. Education and health, as explained above, are two examples. Law and order is also universal, as it should be, as no one should be above the law. In the case of gender and age, current policies target the empowerment of women and special assistance for young people.

Since the family is the central unit in Samoan society, it has a great impact on decision-makers in terms of redistributing income. The economic and social condition of each family guides government on how to implement its redistribution policies. The introduction of old age pensions in the early 1990s and other associated benefits is a reflection of such a claim.

In comparison, the market plays a minimal role in income redistribution. As discussed above, most social services are provided free to every citizen. In some cases, a minimum fee or charge is paid, but the bulk of the cost is heavily subsidised by government.

NGOs, and in particular the church, are perceived as an influence on government decisions on redistribution. Samoa is a religious country and hence the church's view is highly respected by the government of the day. In fact, the church was a force behind the government's decision to introduce the pension scheme and reduce income tax. Other NGOs, such as those advocating the rights of women and children, have also had an impact on government policy through various programmes conducted by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD).

## 4.5 Reproduction

Fortunately, gender equality in Samoan tradition is not really an issue. While men and women play different roles, with the former as the main decision-makers and the latter as advisers and peacemakers, they have equal status in the sense that they both have a right to land, chiefly titles and other resources. The same can also be said of the workplace. As noted in a report by the New Zealand Department of Island Territories:

‘Women may hold any public office and exercise all public functions on equal terms with men, and there is no differentiation made between the sexes as regards [to] the right to work.’ (Department of Island Territories, 1960: 75)

While there has been no immediate threat to the traditional status of women in recent years, the government acted proactively by establishing a Ministry of Women’s Affairs in 1990 to demonstrate its recognition of the contribution of women to the country’s development (Toelupe, 2000). The government was aware of the need for modern Samoan women to be reminded of their traditional role, status and rights in society. This was necessary, as modern Samoan women were being subjected to changes in lifestyle from abroad. The Ministry’s main responsibility, according to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs Amendment Act 1998, was to work closely with women’s committees in villages and to empower women to fulfil their role in society and in the workplace.

Table 4.12 shows government spending on the Ministry of Women’s Affairs since its establishment in 1990.

Like the other three elements of the social policy framework, policy on reproduction is very much a product of international convention, and of local assessment and consent. The UN, and in particular its various conventions on human rights and the rights of women and children, is without doubt the most influential institution in the design of policy on reproduction in Samoa. The country’s constitution guards the principles advocated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other global agreements such as the 1992 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 1994 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Beijing Platform for Action and the Pacific Platform for Action, adopted in 1994. That said, Samoan culture itself also provides a sound platform for government to advance gender equality and human rights issues. This aspect is briefly mentioned above and was put forward clearly by a former senior official of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs:

‘Our Government believes that human rights and freedoms are best nurtured in the context of our culture and traditions ... The traditional *fa’a-samoa*, the Samoan way of life, recognises the paramount value of every Samoan person, as he or she is an heir to a family chiefly title, land and the Samoan language.’ (Toelupe, 2000: 2)

A national policy for women was approved by Cabinet in 2001 with a vision for ‘... all women of Samoa to be productive contributors to, as well as full beneficiaries of, national development for the attainment of quality of life’ (Government of Samoa,

**Table 4.12 Government spending on the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 1990–2005 (SAT\$ million)**

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006
Total spending	–	0.2	0.8	6.2	–
Percentage of total budget	–	0.1	0.3	1.6	–

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1995c, 2000a, 2005c

**Table 4.13 Composition of workforce, 1971–2005 (%)**

	1971	1981	1991	2001	2005
Male	83.1	84.8	68.3	69.4	–
Female	16.9	15.25	31.7	30.6	–

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001a

2001b). In addition, the government's vision in its Statement of Economic Strategy (SES) 2000–2001 emphasises the need to engage in a strong partnership with stakeholders as the key to social and economic development. Women are recognised as key stakeholders and it is accepted that their role in government and society at large cannot be over-emphasised.

Moreover, women have equal access to other social services provided by the government. Education and health are prime examples. In terms of employment opportunities, both genders are protected by the government's equal employment opportunities policy, which focuses on merit rather than gender. While this seems to be the case, Samoa's workforce remains dominated by men, with a small increase in female participation in the workforce (Table 4.13). This imbalance is more obvious at senior management level. While this could be perceived as a sign of gender inequality in employment, it remains an issue to be thoroughly investigated. Women in Samoa leave the workplace for many reasons, including the need to raise their children, set up their own businesses and provide care for their sick parents or children. The role of women as housewives, mothers and care-givers is yet to be formally recognised in Samoan society.

On the other hand, there is serious concern about the increasing rate of sex crimes committed against women. While Table 4.14 presents a decline in reported cases, the

**Table 4.14 Sex crimes committed against women, 2004–2006**

	2004	2005	2006	Total
Attempted rape	0	2	2	4
Carnal knowledge	5	0	12	17
Sexual intercourse with a girl over the age of 12 years and under the age of 16 years	50	39	3	92
Sexual intercourse with a girl under the age of 12 years	4	3	0	7
Sexual intercourse with an idiot or imbecile girl	2	1	0	3
Sexual intercourse with girl under the age of 21 years	0	0	1	1
Incest	7	13	6	26
Indecent act	35	22	16	73
Rape	36	8	4	48
Sexual intercourse with related girl	2	0	0	2
Sexual intercourse with stepdaughter under the age of 21	2	2	6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>283</b>

**Source:** Ministry of Justice, Division of Research and Policy database

number of unreported cases is believed to be substantial due to cultural practices under which families reach agreement without reporting the matter to the relevant authorities.

## 4.6 Role of the family

As is evident from the discussion above, the family is central to social policy-making and implementation in Samoa. It is the traditional obligation of the family to educate and to protect the status and the right of its women. Women and girls have a special status in a family. They are called the *feagaiga* (the covenant), simply meaning that they are served, protected and respected by the males of the family. Their role is to advise the chiefs of the family and to uphold peace and harmony. As ascertained by the country's former caretaker:

'Women are organized groups and have an acknowledged and respected place in Samoan society ... Women in Samoa are far from being an underprivileged section of the community. They are equal in law with men.' (Department of Island Territories, 1960: 74)

In essence, while the role of the Samoan family has changed over the years, it is still the fundamental force that nurtures the status and rights of women in society.

## 4.7 Design, priorities and impact of government strategies

It is beyond contention that the design of strategies drawn up in the pre-independence period was heavily influenced by international actors because of meagre local resources and expertise. However, it is evident that decision-makers were cautious because of the unique domestic context that undermined the feasibility of imposing values from outside. Hence, local conditions were integrated into the design of strategies. If this had not been the case, the country would have struggled socially following independence. In addition, strategies were not substantially redesigned following independence. Current strategies appear to be based on those that were in place prior to and just after independence, with selective additions to capture changing trends within the country and abroad in recent times. This is made clear in the discussion above.

Samoa is fortunate in that it has not experienced a series of crises as have most developing small island states. As detailed in Chapter 4, since independence the country has only experienced three major crises: the two cyclones in 1990 and 1991, the taro blight in 1992 and the financial debacle caused by the collapse of the state-owned airline, Polynesian Airlines, in the same year. The government's response to the three crises was mainly through its fiscal policy; it adopted an expansionary fiscal policy in an attempt to build resilience.

In terms of priorities and emphasis, it is evident that social services such as education, health and water supply were at the forefront of successive governments' agendas both before and after independence. Since independence, education and health have remained as the top recipients of government budgetary allocations. In addition, both sectors have been the focus of assistance from overseas. Water supply, on the other

hand, while not attracting many resources in comparison, nevertheless received a fair share of the government's budget and external assistance following independence.

The above discussion presents several successes achieved by Samoa since independence on the economic and social fronts. It is difficult to judge whether such achievements provide adequate grounds to declare that the original and subsequent strategies and policies launched by successive governments to achieve social and economic development have been successful. Perhaps it is best to say that there have been vast improvements. That this is so is beyond doubt, as shown by the data presented in the preceding chapters.

## Chapter 5

# The Welfare State, Social Cohesion, Participative Democracy, Power of Jurisdiction and Social Policy Design

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Social policy in Samoa in terms of its design and subsequent success is heavily contingent on a network of relationships between the state, society and external partners, as elaborated in the preceding chapters. Such relationships have been the subject of many studies that have attempted to determine the effective conditions for successful social policy. Over the years, four main theories evolved from the many analyses of the factors that underpin an effective social policy: the welfare state, consensual democracy, power of jurisdiction and social cohesion. This chapter presents observations and analyses of the four concepts with respect to the practice and design of social policy in Samoa.

### 5.1 The welfare state

Since the evolution of the concept of the state in Samoa, social services have been the prerogative of the government, both before and since independence. Education, health, law and order, and water supply have consumed significant resources and continue to be government priorities. Although social security is mainly left to the family, the state in the 1980s and 1990s expanded its social welfare provision by introducing pensions for the elderly, together with several health and inter-island travel benefits, as discussed above. Compensation for work-related injuries was also introduced in the 1980s.

#### 5.1.1 The welfare state and the design and practice of social policy

It is beyond contention that the final shape and design of social policy and the time and mode of implementation is strictly a decision for the government of the day. While external influence and pressure also feature prominently in the process, the government generally acts carefully to ensure the feasibility of social policy in the light of the country's specific conditions. For the last two decades, most governments in industrialised and underdeveloped countries have engaged in economic reforms that limit the role of the state, as well as introducing private sector business-type practices in the main operations of government in the search for economic efficiencies. This has led to the introduction of concepts such as 'user pays' and cost recovery for most basic social services such as health and higher education. While Samoa has implemented similar reforms in response to external pressures, the government has refrained from putting into practice the concepts of 'user pays' and clientele fees, as these would

clearly undermine the accessibility of important services for a significant number of the country's citizens.

Since independence, the government has established several agencies to put its social policies into practice. Besides the Ministries of Health, Education and Police, the SNPF, Housing Corporation and ACC are some of the agencies set up in the post-independence period. The SNPF is responsible for government transfers to pensioners and retirees, while the ACC oversees compensation for work-related injuries and car accidents. In the late 1990s, the Ministries of Education and Health conducted capacity building programmes in an attempt to improve service delivery in these sectors. The structures of both ministries have been altered, as has the relevant legislation. The Ministry of Police has recently initiated a capacity building project which aims to improve its service to the community.

## 5.2 Social cohesion

Despite its complexity, it is evident that social cohesion is widely discussed and has three main dimensions: inequality, social capital, and institutions and governance. The first two dimensions are discussed in the work of Berger-Schmitt (2002) and the last has been highlighted by the World Bank (Easterly et al., 2006; Beauvais and Jenson, 2007). Berger-Schmitt (2002: 404–405) claims that the first aspect is about 'promoting equal opportunities and reducing disparities and divisions within a society', while the second is concerned with 'strengthening social relations, interactions and ties and embraces all aspects which are generally considered as the social capital of a society'. The third dimension claims that sound development outcomes are a product of effective institutions that are in turn heavily contingent on the degree of social cohesion in a society (Easterly et al., 2006: 105).

Samoa is fortunate in that it is a homogeneous society and therefore ethnicity, religion and race are not major concerns. While there is a minimal presence of Chinese and Europeans, most are married to local people and therefore they and their children enjoy the same government privileges as indigenous Samoans. Christianity is the state religion. These aspects present less concern for social policy-making with respect to social cohesion. In fact, the main concerns are equality, networking and building trusting relationships among different age groups and genders, and between urban and rural residents.

Samoa's social policy is helped by the country's social cohesion and an apparent emphasis on equity, as in the case of education, health, housing and water supply. Enhancing networking, trust and integrity among individuals in society and between the state and citizens is also a policy objective, although it is not a priority. Good governance is also on the government agenda as part of the drive for social cohesion.

Social cohesion has contributed enormously to the process of building resilience and effective social policy practice. As long as strong and trusting relationships are maintained in families and villages, community support for the implementation of government social policy is guaranteed. Equally important, the country will be in a good position to recover quickly from a crisis. The government initiative to network with decision-making institutions in the villages through the Ministry of Women,

Community and Social Development is commended. This produces an interdependent relationship which strengthens trust between the state and the community. In essence, the church and the key institutions in the village are seen as critical to building and sustaining social cohesion in society. Their roles therefore need to be enhanced.

However, the impact of other institutions such as the Lands and Titles Court on social cohesion needs urgent and careful examination. Its role in delivering rulings on land and title disputes among villages and families has been a challenge to social bonding and trust in families and the community at large – especially when its rulings are inconsistent. Unpopular court rulings have caused violence, tensions and rifts among families and villages. As a result, efforts for reconciliation have taken enormous time and energy.

### 5.2.1 Social cohesion and the design and practice of social policy

As briefly mentioned above, social cohesion in terms of equal access and treatment is largely observed with respect to the production side of social policy. That said, it is apparent that those living in the rural areas are disadvantaged in terms of the financial costs involved in accessing education and health services compared to those living on the outskirts of Apia. To make things worse, the public transport system, which is privately operated, is not as effective as it should be, and has limited hours. In practice, most rural families with children attending government-run colleges and the National University of Samoa look to relatives residing close to the country's capital to provide accommodation and other basic necessities. This is a cultural practice and largely attributable to social cohesion. It is worth noting that where there is inequality in terms of access, social cohesion in a small island state like Samoa is the means to assist those who lose out.

In promoting social capital, the government in the early 1990s decided to strengthen its ties with villages and communities. This led to the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1990, later renamed the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development in 2004, following a restructuring of government ministries. The ministry's main function is to encourage and support the use of cultural practices and traditional structures in the villages, which involve traditional forms of networking and other elements of social capital. In addition, the ministry also informs communities about the range of social services provided by the government for their benefit.

In performing its duties, two key institutions of Samoan society are targeted: the village council and women's committees. The former is brought into the mainframe by the village mayor. Every village has a mayor, who is considered the representative of the government. The Internal Affairs Division of the MWCSO oversees all matters pertaining to village mayors and it is the responsibility of the division to inform all mayors about key developments and decisions of government to improve the general quality of life. On the other hand, the mayors' monthly meeting is also considered as the means for the government to receive feedback from villagers on government policies and specific areas that need further government assistance. This forum is also used as a channel for village councils in particular to inform the government whether they support or reject government policies.

Importantly, the mayors are now the gateway for all government projects aiming at improving the standard of living in the villages. Since most projects impact on village resources such as land and fresh water it is critical that the village council's approval is secured prior to implementation: otherwise the project is bound to fail. In the past, this has in fact happened. Hence, it is the role of the mayor to network with the village council and government agencies so that all parties have a common understanding regarding the purpose of the project and its impact on the well-being of the village and its resources.

With respect to other components of social capital such as trust, integrity and sharing, which are central to social development and a decent society, the government has done little to develop these. While the MWCSD is in close contact with village women's committees in its attempt to educate women on their role as peacemakers in the community and their rights as women, it has yet to reach the core of social capital. If any element can take credit for maintaining and enforcing principles of social capital in Samoan society, it is its traditions and religion. The principles underpinning Samoan culture are similar to those of Christianity, and it is this connection that builds and nurtures the fundamentals of trust, respect, caring, honesty and integrity. Having said this, it is with a matter of great concern that there has been a significant increase in serious crime, especially sex-related crime, against women in recent years (Table 4.14). This is a clear reflection of a serious erosion of social tenets in the country.

Good governance is therefore in great danger in the future, should the government, the church and the community fail to act responsibly to address this issue. Currently, there is a strong commitment from the government to engage in good governance practices; the outcome still hangs in the balance, tilted to the positive side. However, such an effort is likely to be in vain in the future if social capital is not thoroughly addressed by responsible stakeholders at the grassroots. Table 5.1 shows that Samoa is rated just above average with respect to corruption. This means that there is still a lot of work to be done.

The influence of trade unions on the design and practice of social policy since the early 1980s has been minimal, if not insignificant. The parent body for public service unions, the Public Service Association (PSA), currently has few members. The last public service union strike, in late 2005, was by the Samoa Medical Association. This was the first ever strike led by a trade union since the PSA strike in 1981. The association was fighting for an increase in doctors' salaries and an improvement in their working conditions and administrative support from the ministry. With the weakening power of trade unions, it is evident that NGOs and international agencies

**Table 5.1 Corruption in Samoa (percentile rank)**

	1998	2000	2002	2003	2006
Control of corruption	50.5	50.7	50.9	60.0	60.2

Source: World Bank, 2007

appear to be the main forces that have an impact on the design and practice of social policy in Samoa.

## 5.3 Participative democracy

‘Participative democracy’ is a term derived from ‘consensus democracy’ coined in the work of Arend Lijphart. The concept involves the incorporation of the views of interest groups in the process of policy formulation and implementation (Lijphart and Crepaz, 1991: 235).

In the case of Samoa, participative democracy is encouraged in addition to representative democracy. The country’s constitution allows for the legal formation of interest groups to represent various segments of society. While the input of interest groups has been part of policy-making since independence, it was only in the 1990s that the government made a more proactive attempt to enforce greater participation from key stakeholders in society, including interest groups.

It is hard to argue that participative democracy has had a significant influence on the design and practice of social policy in Samoa. Participative democracy remains an insignificant concept in the policy-making process. This is unfortunate, but it is the way democracy works in a small country like Samoa. With hindsight, participative democracy has a long way to go before it makes any impression on the policy-making process. Moreover, participative democracy also falls short of playing a convincing role in building resilience in society compared to the welfare state and social cohesion. This is to be expected, considering its lack of impact on the design and practice of social policy.

### 5.3.1 Participatory democracy and the design and practice of social policy

Samoa has several registered interest groups, including trade unions, the Chamber of Commerce, the church and human rights groups. Unions are perhaps the largest interest group, with numerous unions and associations representing employees in both the public and private sectors although their influence in recent years is considered feeble. The Chamber of Commerce, representing prominent business people, is mainly concerned with economic issues. The church is also an influential institution representing the whole of society. Samoa is a Christian state and a very religious country. There are also several human rights and environmental groups that advocate for their own specific group rights and viewpoints.

Various mechanisms are in place to facilitate the inclusion of interest groups in the social policy-making process. Parliamentary procedures and standing orders require interest groups and any other organisation or individual in the community to present their views and opinions on a particular bill before its final reading in Parliament. A special parliamentary committee is normally appointed to receive and to review a bill in light of the submissions from different sections of society. The committee reports back to Parliament, where it is decided whether or not the changes will be made. The other avenue is for interest groups to present their submissions or to engage in dialogue directly with the minister responsible for a particular policy or with the Prime Minister who is the Head of Cabinet. In addition, the government ministry that is

responsible for formulating a particular policy is encouraged to consult with interest groups and key stakeholders. The media is also an effective means through which interest groups can pressure the government to take their views into account.

While there are avenues through which interest groups and the community at large can contribute to the policy-making process, it is rare for interest groups, let alone the community at large, to make good use of the status quo. There are several reasons for this. First, one of the principles central to Samoa's culture is 'high power distance' (Hofstede, 1981). This means that the Samoan people respect and trust those in power; hence any decision or a policy introduced by the authorities is regarded as being in the best interests of the community. This explains why individuals and organisations are reluctant to present their different opinions through the channels discussed above; they do not want to give the impression that they lack respect and trust in the government of the day.

## 5.4 Power of jurisdiction

The power of jurisdiction or jurisdiction resourcefulness refers to the level of jurisdiction or the governing writ (Warrington, 1998: 105) that a sovereign state has on its resources through law, policy institutions and culture (Baldacchino and Milne, 2000). The jurisdiction resourcefulness of the state can be expressed in various ways, such as control over citizenship, immigration and rights of residency; relations with other jurisdictions; ability to sign international agreements and relations with other jurisdictions; ability to sign international agreements and have representation abroad; control over culture and language; control over education and institutions of higher learning; sense of national identity and shared history (see Srebrnik, 2000, 2003 for more details).

### 5.4.1 Power of jurisdiction and the design and practice of social policy

There is no doubt that Samoa is an independent sovereign state. The state has control over resources such as taxation, citizenship, currency and trade. However, more than 80 per cent of the land is controlled by the Samoans, rather than by the state. That said, the state through its control of various resources has great influence on the design and practice of social policy. Among others powers, the ability of the state to sign international agreements and relations with other jurisdictions is perhaps one of the most influential controls the state has on the design and practice of the country's social policy.

With respect to health, the government has signed numerous agreements with donor agencies and countries on various health issues. The agreement with the Government of New Zealand to transfer patients with special conditions that cannot be dealt with in Samoa to New Zealand for treatment is a good example. In addition, Samoa has signed a number of agreements with the UN on human rights issues. It has also introduced compulsory education as a result of UN agreements. These cases confirm the influence of the power of jurisdiction on the practice and design of social policy in Samoa.

## Chapter 6

### Response to Crises

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#### 6.1 The crises

Since independence, Samoa has faced few economic and environmental crises. The economic crisis of the 1970s, the two cyclones in 1990 and 1991 and the financial debt incurred by the government-owned airline, Polynesian Airlines, are the major national crises discussed in this paper with respect to responses from various institutions in the country.

##### 6.1.1 The economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s

The economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s was triggered by poor government decision-making and was the first serious set-back experienced by the newly independent country. Foreign reserves were depleted, exports plummeted and the government was heavily in debt. Fuel and food shortages and the strike by the Public Service Association in 1981 against low wages were acute signs of the crisis.

The poor economic performance of the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as low wages and salaries for public servants, led to the three-week strike by the PSA in 1981 for an increase in salaries. It remains the biggest and the longest union strike in Samoa. Union demands were rejected by the government and this was the main factor behind the change of government in 1982, when the Human Rights Protection Party assumed power. Its promise was to protect the rights of the people of Samoa.

##### 6.1.2 The cyclones and Polynesian Airlines

The second crisis arose from the destruction caused by the devastating cyclones of 1990 and 1991. Both cyclones cost the government millions of dollars in rebuilding damaged infrastructure and property. The third crisis took place in 1992, when the government-owned airline, Polynesian Airlines, generated debts of more than SAT\$200 million. This was equivalent to almost 50 per cent of the government's total budget for the fiscal year 1992/93 (Amosa, 2005).

#### 6.2 Response to crises

The successful attempt of the government to secure a bonus scheme of more than SAT\$5 million from the European Union to revive cocoa and coconut plantations destroyed by the two cyclones was an important part of its response to the crisis caused by the 1990 and 1991 cyclones. It also lifted custom duties for imported building materials and instituted a below-market lending rate from the housing authority.

**Table 6.1 Remittances received following the cyclones in 1990 and 1991 (SAT\$ million)**

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Remittances	73.8	86.6	91.9	74.3	107.1	80.4	83.4	86.9

**Source:** Central Bank of Samoa, Division of Research and Statistics, database

Social cohesion was certainly the most powerful force that built resilience in society in response to the devastation caused by the two successive cyclones. Both cyclones destroyed homes, churches, schools, hospitals and plantations, affecting nearly everybody in Samoa. Families without homes and food were looked after by other members of the village or their relatives during the crisis. The country's rapid recovery from both cyclones was greatly assisted by the generosity of relatives residing abroad, in particular in Australia, New Zealand and the USA. Table 6.1 shows a big increase in remittances from these countries in 1992. Relatives living abroad poured cash into the hands of those living in the country to help them rebuild their homes. Food was also shipped to the country in huge quantities to support families.

Rebuilding schools in villages was also part of the benevolence of relatives living abroad. While the government and donor countries were providing financial assistance, some financial costs were left to the village. As a result sons and daughters of each village living abroad were conducting activities to raise funds to meet other costs not provided under the school rebuilding programme. In addition, labour was provided by the villagers. Health issues like hygiene and sanitation were also in good control as the result of assistance from women's committees in villages. An epidemic could have been easily affected the country following the crises as experienced in other developing countries. However, this was not the case in Samoa, as each village following the cyclones was more vigilant on such issues.

In the case of the two cyclones and the financial debt of Polynesian Airlines, there was no major reaction from society. While some concerned citizens criticised poor management of those in charge of the airline and the decision by the government to 'soldier on' with the airline despite the Ministry of Finance's recommendation to

**Table 6.2 Government spending on social services during crisis periods (SAT\$ million)**

	1991	1992	1993	1994
Education	18.6	18.9	21.8	21.9
Health	14.5	14.5	15.4	14.7
Police	6.0	6.6	6.5	6.5
Women and community services	–	–	–	–
Pensions	2.7	4.1	4.3	4.5
ACC	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Total	42.1	44.5	48.4	48.0
Percentage of total budget	20.4	17.6	22.4	19.0

**Source:** Government of Samoa, 1990–2006

liquidate the airline in the media, no constructive actions were taken by interest groups.

Irrespective of the crises dampening the country's economic progress, government, as indicated in Table 6.2 has been consistent with the amount of budgetary allocations for key social services during trying times.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

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More than four decades after gaining independence Samoa is fortunate to be in a socially satisfactory position. While the country still has a long way to go, it at least managed to secure a high international ranking, compared to some of its neighbouring island countries, in the post-independence period and following several national crises in the first half of the 1990s. It is evident from the previous discussion that the welfare state and social cohesion were the instrumental forces that contributed significantly to building resilience following the crises.

The welfare state has been maintained intact since independence and the government has continued to increase budgetary allocations to social service development irrespective of the crises faced by the country. An important part of building resilience in the community is linked to the effort of the state to secure external assistance from donor countries and agencies through international diplomacy. In addition, in the years following independence, the government established several institutions in addition to the education and health services to deal with other social issues such as housing, social welfare and injuries. While these initiatives were influenced by external practice and pressure, the fact that they were accepted and implemented suggests that the government was genuine about acting to promote the welfare of its citizens.

Several lessons can be learned from Samoa's experience in respect of the role of the welfare state in building resilience in a small developing island state following a crisis. First, the integrity and credibility of the state is paramount in securing external assistance and in gaining the confidence and trust of the community. Donors are quick to give support in kind if the government's integrity and credibility are intact. The community also is willing to co-operate and to give support to government programmes when it has trust in the government. Second, building resilience for social development requires good working relationships between the state, the community and external actors. The state cannot afford to stand on its own through the rebuilding stage. Third, the machinery of government or the government agencies responsible for implementing government decisions and programmes must be effective and efficient. Any shortfall on their part reflects badly on the government of the day, and this may undermine relationships with donors and the community.

Social cohesion has been an important force in driving resilience in the Samoan community in the post-crisis situation. One important lesson that can be learned from Samoa's response to crisis is the need to maintain indigenous culture as the key to social cohesion. The unity of various community groups and their struggle to rebuild and bounce back quickly following the crises was possible because the *fa'asamoa*, or Samoan culture, was intact. Hence there is a need for the government to establish

institutions that support customary practices and rediscover lost culture and tradition. The role of the church in terms of encouraging people is also commended and needs reinforcement as well.

## Chapter 8

### Postscript

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In the period 2006–2010, Samoa continued to make sound progress in social development, although a mixed performance in economic development was also evident. Real economic growth was 0.6 per cent in 2006 and 6.8 per cent in 2006. There was a downward trend in 2008 and 2009, when the economy shrank by –3.4 and –1.7 respectively. The economy recovered in 2010, with a real growth rate of 1.5 per cent. The significant drop in output of the agricultural and fishing sectors contributed to negative growth.

In terms of trade, Samoa's exports continued to show a gradual increase. In the financial year 2006/2007, total exports were valued at ST\$31.2 million and rose to ST\$31.9 million in the following financial year. The total value of exports fell to ST\$28.1 million in the 2008/2009 financial year and slowly picked up again in 2010. Merchandise exports, and in particular *nonu* fruits and coconut oil, led the strong performance which saw an 18.8 per cent increase in merchandise exports in 2010, generating a total value of ST\$12.2 million (Asian Development Bank, 2011). However, imports continued to increase rapidly, which meant that the trade deficit increased to 8.2 per cent of GDP in 2010 (Asian Development Bank, 2011).

Remittances, on the other hand, have showed a consistent upward trend in the last four years. In 2006, the total value of remittances was ST\$309.3 million. This increased substantially in 2009 following the tsunami that hit the country in September of that year. Total remittances were valued at ST\$356.9 million at the end of the year (Central Bank of Samoa, 2010). Tourism has also showed positive signs in recent years in terms of the number of visitors. In the year 2006, 116,707 people visited Samoa. This increased to 122,311 in 2007 and dropped slightly in 2008 to 121,141 (Central Bank of Samoa, 2010). A substantial drop in tourism was experienced in 2009 following the tsunami, but there was a substantial recovery in 2010 with a total of 131,300 visitors.

With respect to social development, Samoa has without doubt made sound progress over the last five years. Available information suggests that Samoa has reduced the proportion of its population facing extreme poverty and hunger from 15 per cent in 1997 to 5.5 per cent in 2006 (Government of Samoa, 2008). Education has seen a major advance. Starting in 2010, primary education in Samoa is free. Australia and New Zealand are funding the first three years of this scheme and the government will pick up the tab at the end of the three-year period. The development of health facilities continues to focus on primary health care, health promotion and preventive programmes. The World Bank and Japan have contributed significantly to the upgrading of health facilities and equipment in the country's two main hospitals in Apia and Tuasivi. One of the major health issues facing the country is the alarming

increase in non-communicable health problems like diabetes and high blood pressure. This has put enormous pressure on government expenditure because of the substantial cost of treatment (Ministry of Finance, 2008).

Strong economic performance remains the central focus of the government in order for the country to fulfil its social obligations. In its 2008–2012 Strategic Development Statement (SDS) the government, as in its previous SDS, retains macroeconomic stability as its main priority. Part of this strategy involves the revamping of productivity in the various sectors, including agriculture, tourism, fisheries, sports, telecommunication, transportation and the financial sector. The second priority is social development, which includes continuous improvement in education, health, water supply and community development. There is no doubt that the Samoan government is setting correct priorities. Its main challenge is to ensure that the machinery of government and other developmental actors are working together to achieve development targets.

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