



UNITED  
NATIONS  
SAMOA

Results  
2020



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***Cover: Women race  
in outrigger  
canoes in Apia.  
Photo: Aterina Samasoni  
Below:  
Traditional dancers.  
Photo: Latoya Lee***



# Highlights



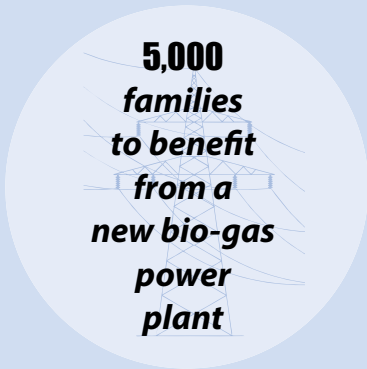
**500**  
dignity kits given  
to victims of  
domestic violence



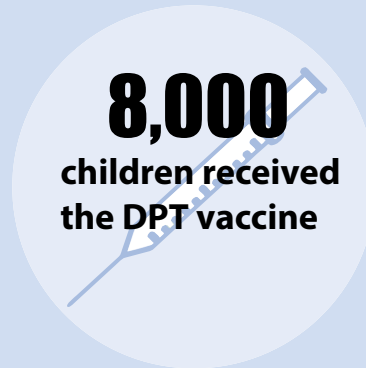
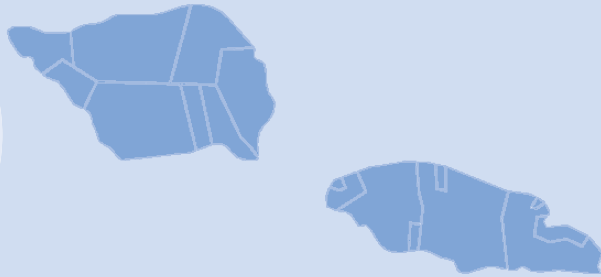
**16,760 ha**  
degraded  
farm &  
forest land  
rehabilitated



**1,200**  
*Apia residents  
saw improved  
water supply*



**5,000**  
*families  
to benefit  
from a  
new bio-gas  
power  
plant*



**8,000**  
children received  
the DPT vaccine



**3,400**  
victims of domestic  
violence received  
support through  
a helpline



More than **400**  
trained in  
**political  
leadership**



**3,000**  
children reached  
through nutrition  
programmes

# Foreword

At the time this report is finalized, Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau continue to be virus free. This is thanks to the outstanding leadership of the four governments, which enforced strict measures from the beginning of the pandemic to safeguard human capital and avoid overloading national health systems. While the virus never reached the community, the socio-economic impact of the pandemic related restrictions has been devastating in all four countries, with most of the development gains of 2019 being washed away. In Samoa, the GDP growth rate that peaked at 5.25% in the third quarter of 2019 (owing to the hosting in July 2019 of the Pacific Games) sharply declined to minus 3.7% in the fourth quarter of 2019, due to the measles outbreak that claimed 83 lives and affected 5,700 people. The pandemic further worsened the economic contraction, the impact of the two health crises resulting into a minus 6.4% GDP growth rate in December 2020, compared to July 2019.

After great progress that led to Cook Islands graduating in late 2019 to a 'High Income' country, that country saw a dramatic change in its economic conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought the GDP growth rate down to minus 7% in 2020 and to an estimated negative 15.4% in 2021, according to the Asian Development Bank.

Niue's small economy also suffered from the total border closure in 2020, losing most of its 2019 economic gains. According to the Pacific Trade Invest, over 73% of businesses reported major adverse impacts from the pandemic on operations and revenue.

Due to no quarantine facilities and limited healthcare system capacity, Tokelau closed its borders for the one boat service that currently connects it to the world. Revenue streams such as financial returns from granting fishing licenses and the Tokelau Trust Fund investments saw a steep decline in 2020.

Against this backdrop, the UN Country Team prioritized its support to the pandemic response using the Pacific Humanitarian Team platform and the Joint Incident Management mechanism - to enhance COVID testing capacity through the provision of a PCR machine in Samoa, GeneXpert kits, PPE and other medical supplies for all four countries. Assistance continued with Samoa enrolling in the COVAX Facility and the completion of the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan in December 2020, which will secure vaccines for 20% of its population.

While resources have been partially repurposed for the response to COVID-19, the UN Country Team continued to



implement joint programmes, including the Spotlight Initiative, the Knowledge Society and the Women in Leadership programme in Samoa as well as the Social Protection and the Integrated National Financing Framework programmes in all four countries - to strengthen resilience and advance the SDGs. These were complemented by agency specific projects, total financial delivery in 2020 exceeded US\$ 30 million. For 2020, the UN Resident Coordinator Office mobilized US\$ 10 million for joint programmes from the SDG Fund, the Spotlight Initiative, the UN-India

Development Partnership Fund, the COVID-19 Multi Partner Trust Fund and the UN Partnership for Persons with Disabilities Fund.

Additionally, in 2020, the UN Country Teams in Samoa and Fiji jointly established the first UN Pacific Strategy Fund, with a first contribution of US\$ 17.3 million (NZ\$ 24.7 million) from the Government of New Zealand through the two-and-a-half year UN/New Zealand Pacific Partnership for gender equality, basic services and good governance across the region.

In March 2020, with the support of the UN Resident Coordinator Office and the OHCHR Pacific office, Samoa hosted the 84th Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the first meeting of a treaty body in the history of the United Nations to be held outside Geneva and New York.

Samoa also submitted its second Voluntary National Review report in 2020, drawing on UN system-wide support enabled by the UN Resident Coordinator Office.

In 2020, in-line with the priorities of the SAMOA Pathway, at the request of the Alliance of Small Island States, the UN Resident Coordinator Office in Samoa, in partnership with other UN offices in small island developing states, launched the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, which will allow small island developing states to access concessional financing. The development of the index continues in 2021, in partnership with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network led by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs. As mandated by General Assembly Resolution 75/215, the index will be presented by the UN Secretary-General in September 2021 at the 76th General Assembly.

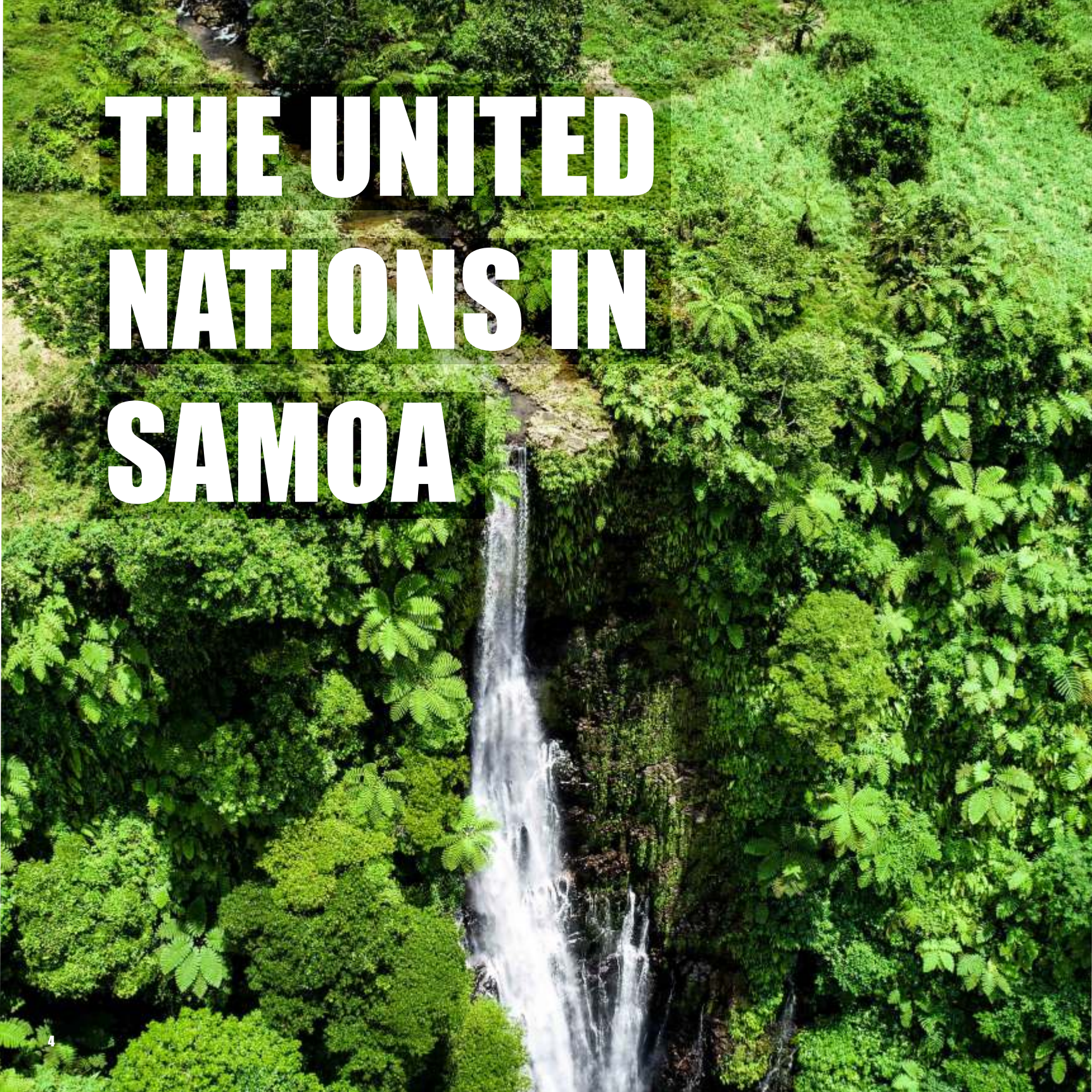
Results achieved in 2020 reflect the great commitment of our national partners in Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau and of all UN Country Team members to improving lives and strengthening capacities for the completion of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

**Simona Marinescu, UN Resident Coordinator, Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau**







An aerial photograph of a waterfall cascading down a rocky cliff in a dense, lush green forest. The water is white and frothy as it falls. The surrounding vegetation is vibrant green, with many large ferns visible. The text 'THE UNITED NATIONS IN SAMOA' is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters on the left side of the image.

# THE UNITED NATIONS IN SAMOA



**The United Nations country team in Samoa is comprised of 13 agencies with a physical presence in country. Some UN agencies do not have offices in-country but support the government or work of the UN from regional offices abroad. The UN Resident Coordinator provides strategic leadership for the country team.**

As well as serving Samoa, the multi country office also coordinates UN development activities for the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau. United Nations support to these countries includes, but is not limited to, the national priorities of the respective nations, with a strong focus on helping them to achieve the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The UN has had a presence in Samoa since before independence in 1962.

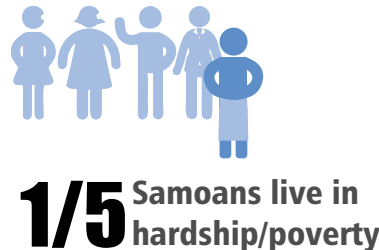
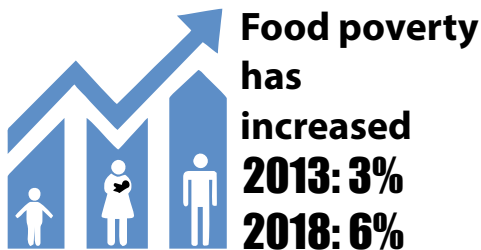
UN agencies partner with relevant government ministries to carry out activities, for example the ILO has traditionally partnered with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour; UNESCO works closely with the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture; and WHO coordinates with the Ministry of Health. However, the evolving nature of the UN's mandate has seen many UN agencies working with an expanding range of local implementing partners in recent years, such as NGOs, businesses and new ministries in government.

**UN agencies with a presence or programmes in Samoa in 2020 included:**

- **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**
- **United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)**
- **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**
- **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**
- **World Health Organization (WHO)**
- **UN Women**
- **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**
- **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**
- **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**
- **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)**
- **International Labour Organization (ILO)**
- **Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**
- **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**
- **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**Note that some global programmes are run through multiple agencies. For example, the Small Grants Programme is a UNDP-UNOPS scheme, and the Global Fund, which is also present in Samoa, is a UNDP – UNAIDS arrangement.**

## Development challenges



Opposite:  
 Sopoaga Falls,  
 Upolu  
 Photo:  
 Alvaro Hoyos.

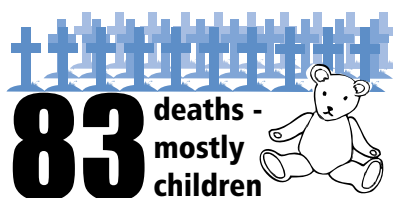
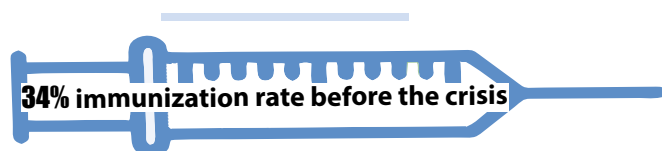
# KEY DEVELOPMENTS





# The 2019 Measles Crisis

The number of children vaccinated against measles in Samoa has been a persistent concern with vaccinate rates declining from 74 percent in 2017 to 34 percent in 2018. This decline was due to a combination of factors including a highly-publicized immunization accident that killed two children in 2018 leading to a temporary halt in national vaccinations, and the presence of a vocal “anti-vaxer” movement. Low immunization rates resulted in the virus spreading rapidly after the first known measles case arrived from New Zealand in August 2019. On 17 November, the government declared a state of emergency, and a two-day public lockdown (Dec 6-7) to allow for the Ministry of Health to roll out a mandatory national immunization campaign. By early January 2020, Close to 191,000 people had been vaccinated, 95% of the population, resulting in herd immunity and an end to community transmission. As of 22 January, 2020, 5707 measles cases and 83 measles-related deaths had been reported, out of the total population of 200,874.



Opposite:  
Taro  
harvesting,  
Upolu  
Photo:  
Alvaro Hoyos.



Volunteers from the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development reach out to villagers to encourage them to receive the MMR vaccine.  
Photo: Damian Kean

## Government response

- State of emergency declared on 17 November
- Restrictions on inter-island travel
- All schools closed
- Children barred from attending public gatherings
- Vaccination made mandatory
- UNICEF sent 110,500 vaccines to Samoa.
- Massive information campaign begun by MoH using social media, TV and radio – with WHO support
- 95% of the population vaccinated by early January

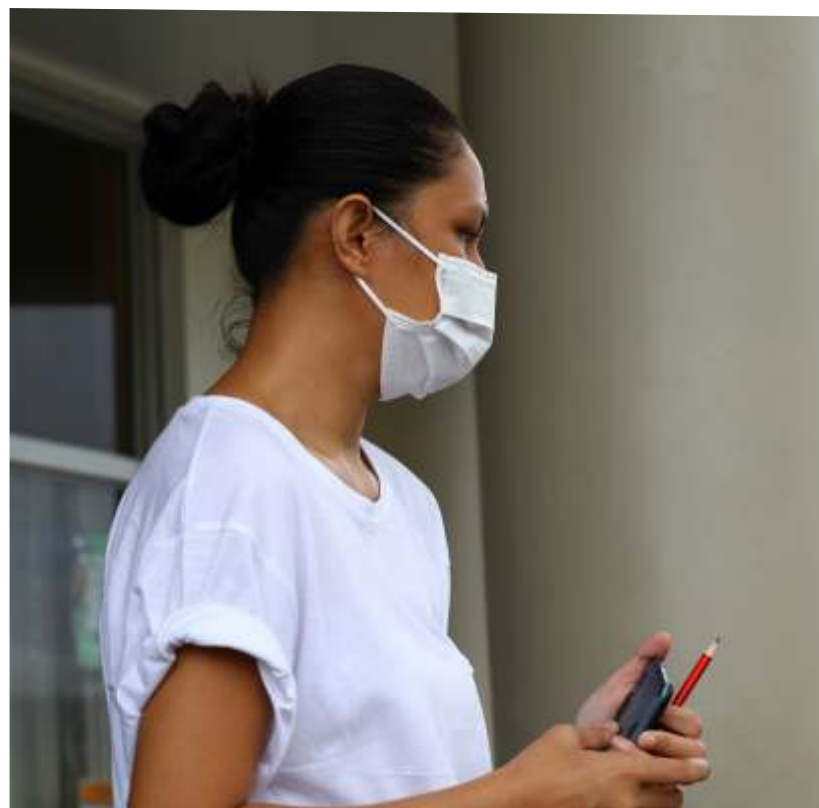
## COVID-19

Immediately after recovering from the measles epidemic, Samoa was again faced with another health challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the government to declare another state of emergency on 22 March 22, 2020. Strict entry protocols were enforced soon thereafter with Samoa's borders closed to international travelers. As of March 2021, Samoa remains COVID-19 free.

However, these restrictions have come at a huge economic cost for the country. According to the UN 2020 Samoa Socio-Economic Impact Online Rapid Assessment two thirds of households have experienced a 50 percent decline in their main income and lost at least one job. Samoa's heavy reliance on tourism meant that the impact of the border closures was immediate and severe. Since the start of the crisis 70 hotels have closed with the rest downsizing operations significantly. Before the crisis 12 percent of the country's workforce was employed in hotels and resorts, and an estimated 4,500 workers have now been laid off. A 2019-2020 survey before the pandemic showed that employment rates in Samoa were already low. Only 21.6 percent of women between 15 and 49 and 53.7 percent of men in the same age range were working. The pandemic has significantly exacerbated this situation.

The macroeconomic data indicate four consecutive quarters of economic decline that started in Q4, 2019 and became more pronounced through Q1-Q3, 2020. Indeed, quarter-on-quarter changes in GDP indicate the rates of decline of 3.3 percent, 10.7 percent and 16.3 percent, respectively (see Figure 1 below). The quarterly rate of decline of 16.3 percent in Q3, 2020 (compared to Q3, 2019) makes it the largest quarterly decline since this data began to be recorded in 1998. As of March 2021 the data for Q4, 2020 has not yet been released, but is expected to continue this negative trend. The COVID-19 related economic decline has affected all sectors of the economy, with the exception of public utilities and public administration.

The economic recession has also resulted in social issues. The 2020 UN Samoa Socio-Economic Impact Assessment and Socio-Economic Response Plan show that many Samoans are unable to supplement lost incomes, are increasingly uncertain about the sources of their livelihoods, are eating cheaper and less nutritious food, and face increased stress levels.



***An employee of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development wears a precautionary mask in Apia. Photo: Damian Kean***

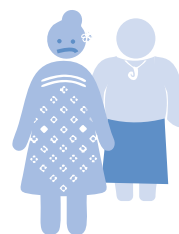
Remittances and self-subsistence agriculture have played an important role in providing some resilience to households during the current crisis. Data indicates that, contrary to decline in income from other sources, during 2020 Samoa's remittances actually reached historically high levels – with more than US\$ 237 million (SAT\$ 603.3 million) coming into the country during the year. This represents an increase of T\$ 60 million, or 11.1 percent compared to 2019, accounting for about 27 percent of GDP. With 78 percent of people in rural areas relying on subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture remittances helped mitigate the impact of the national economic contraction, provided food security, and some resilience against poverty. It also appears that due to a significant reduction in the reliance on imports (by as much as 15-20 percent compared to 2019), and the import substitution effect, the prices of goods in Samoa have generally declined, by as much as five percent.



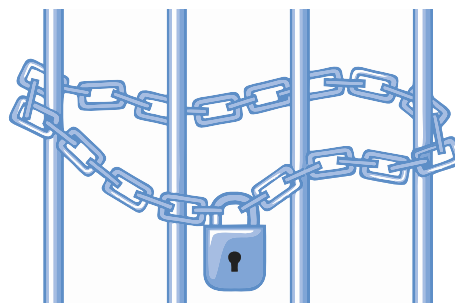
Despite these small bright spots, the pandemic has set back Samoa's progress toward the SDG targets. The Voluntary National Review of SDG targets conducted in 2020 acknowledged that there is "evidence of the direct impact of COVID 19 on our people and their livelihoods reversing some of our hard-fought progress since the MDGs, slowing our efforts towards sustainable development."

Notwithstanding the numerous challenges currently facing the country, there are many potential development opportunities. The government's development priorities for the next five years are outlined in the draft Strategy for Development of Samoa 2021-2025, with a focus on four pillars: economic, social, infrastructure and environment. The Samoa 2040 plan recently launched by the government provides an ambitious vision for economic and social transformation in Samoa over the next 20 years, with a particular focus on the four key areas: tourism, labour mobility, agriculture and fishing, and the digital economy. The plan also recognizes the importance of improving education and health, tackling gender inequalities and gender-based violence, while mitigating the impacts of climate change, as necessary conditions for accelerated development in all economic sectors.

For the country and its development partners to overcome this crisis, COVID-19 must be brought under control, regionally and globally. Samoa has made important strides in this direction, including by becoming a member country for the global COVAX initiative and rolling out a national vaccine distribution plan. In the meantime, the country continues to implement strict border controls, quarantine and testing for repatriated people. Samoa's COVID-19-free status has allowed it to resume the seasonal worker scheme with New Zealand starting in January 2021 – an important milestone on a way of potentially further opening economic activity as the year progresses.



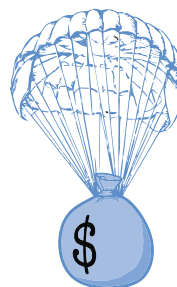
**4,500**  
**workers**  
**laid off**



**70 hotels closed**

**16.3%**

**Decline in GDP in the last quarter of 2020**



**More than**  
**US\$ 237 m**  
**sent in**  
**remittances**  
**in 2020 - a**  
**record high**



**UN SUPPORT**



The United Nations continues to work with the government across key areas - guided by the UN Pacific Strategy 218-2022 and in alignment with the Samoa Development Strategy 2016-2020. UN agencies have so far collectively invested US\$23 million to help Samoa achieve the outcomes of the Pacific strategy.

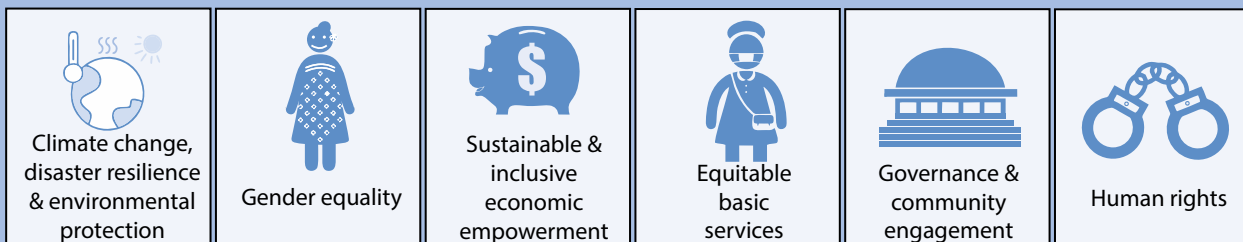
In recognition of the unique challenges of the Pacific context and their vulnerabilities as small island developing states, the UN has developed joint country action plans for each of the Pacific Island countries and territories, including Samoa. The Samoa 2020 plan was adjusted to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.



Photo: Alvaro Hoyos

## UN Pacific Strategy 2018-2022

### Six focus areas:



Opposite:  
Health care workers in Apia prepare vaccines  
Photo:  
UNICEF

# Climate change, disaster resilience and environmental protection

## Selected achievements 2020

- Protected the freshwater supply for approximately 1,200 people living in Apia through flood mitigation measures put in place under UNDP's Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund projects. Another project saw the rehabilitation of the Fuipu'a natural spring pool in Apia, which means guaranteed clean drinking water for flood affected villagers.
- Improved drainage and flood management in the Vaisigano River Catchment area by building river walls, bolstering riverbank protection, upgrading pipe culverts and installing maintenance covers in Apia. This was funded by the GCF through a project with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.
- Helped generate cleaner energy by building a new US\$ 4.3 million bio-gas fueled power plant – the first of its kind in the Pacific region. The Afolau Biomass Gasification Power Plant will have 750KW capacity and brings Samoa closer to its national goal of generating 100 percent of electricity from renewable sources by 2021. It will benefit up to 5,000 families in Upolu and generate savings to the Samoan government of more than US\$ 1.2 million per annum, which would otherwise be spent on diesel power generation. The project is financed by the UNDP Global Environment Facility, the EU, and the German government.
- Guided Samoan action on climate change with UNDP support to the development of the National Climate Change Policy for Samoa 2020. The policy sets out Samoa's plan of action and interventions needed in government, private business, civil society and

**US\$12.4m (54% of total UN support) spent on this focus area**

communities to build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

- Helped Samoa to take a global lead in advocating for climate action with support to Samoa when it

was elected co-chair of the Advisory Board for the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative spearheaded by ILO. Samoa's election into the governance structure of this global initiative further cements Samoa's political commitment to global climate action and the Climate Initiative's vision to deliver decent jobs, advance social justice, provide solutions for a sustainable future, and facilitate an inclusive and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. The initiative was launched during the 2019 UN Conference on Climate Change in Madrid.

- Protected and rehabilitated more than 16,760 ha of degraded agricultural and forest land. More than 5,000 farm households in 126 villages were taught how to better manage soil and water conservation, grow more sustainable crops, and promote local conservation through native tree planting through the Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Management of Critical Landscapes project.



**16,760 ha degraded farm & forest land rehabilitated**



**5,000 families to benefit from a new bio-gas power plant**

**1,200**

**Apia residents saw improved water supply**



**This Alipia household, was one of 20 families in the area that received training under a UN project to better manage their land. As a result of the training, each household member now grows different crops to feed and support the family, including cucumber, tomatoes, peas, pumpkin, eggplant, pineapple, cabbages, oranges, taro, and cocoa. The farm provides income to support the three children and grandchildren of Motuoaoa (head of the family - pictured).**





# Gender Equality

**In Samoa, the UN works to end violence against women and girls, promote women's leadership and political participation and help women to become more economically empowered.**

The concept of gender equality is not new to Samoa but it is not clearly understood or fully accepted. Culturally the status of women is privileged as the 'feagaiga or covenant' of a family. However, women are not accepted into all levels of decision making within the family, village or government. There are 36 villages in Samoa that do not allow women to take up chiefly titles (matai). While some villages do accept female matais, some are still prohibited from attending village council meetings. The government acknowledges the persistence of gender inequality in the country and is supporting positive change through its national priorities. For example, the government produced Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2016-2020, stipulates that the "inclusion of vulnerable groups (women, youth, people with disabilities, children, elderly and disadvantaged people) in community

planning and governance activities will be enhanced." A firm commitment in support of the promise of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind.



**52.3%**  
of Samoan women  
15-49 have  
experienced  
partner abuse

## Selected achievements 2020

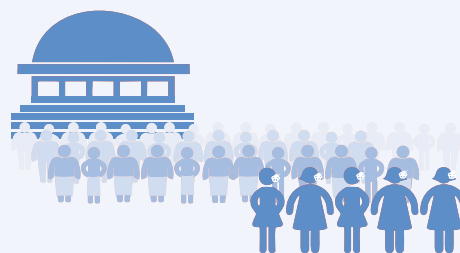
- Promoted women's inclusion in politics, business and society. More than 400 potential leaders (45 percent women, 54 percent men, one percent trans) were trained at a series of workshops across the country in leadership as potential candidates for the 2021 General Elections through the UNDP and UN Women run Women in Leadership Samoa programmes. This programme, along with the Increasing Political Participation of Women in Samoa project continues to advance the inclusion and participation of women in all levels of decision making.

**US\$ 3.5m (15% of total UN Samoa support) spent on empowering women & girls**

- Encouraged women to take up leadership roles within the health sector through six transformational leadership development training sessions for nurses and midwives. This included separate leadership training for aspiring women directors. Two of the the women who completed the leadership training

programme are candidates for the 2021 elections.

- Launched the Spotlight Initiative, a global programme funded by the EU in partnership with the UN. Spotlight tackles violence against women and girls. So far it has created guidelines for schools to use when teaching children about sexuality, provided more than 500 women and girls with dignity kits that included specific COVID-19 prevention items, and gender-based violence education material, and established a free to call helpline that provides counselling and psychosocial support to victims of gender-based violence. The helpline, run by the Samoa Victim Support Group and Faataua le Ola, has helped more than 3,400 people since operations began. The majority of victims who sought help were women and children. Operators were able to help victims with counselling, evacuation support, police assistance, protection orders, family welfare assistance and mediation.



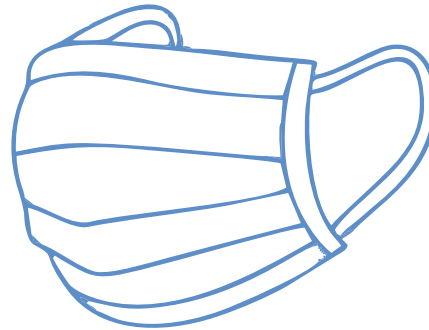
**More than 400 potential leaders trained in leadership**  
**Two women who completed this training are candidates in the 2021 election**





*"It has always been the normal practice in our village that women who marry into our village are strictly prohibited from doing certain things. For example, they are not*

*allowed to wear earrings, wear skirts or even put their hair up in a high bun. If they wish to wear a sei (flower behind the ear) they are to use the 'tauvela' (dried leaves used in the umu). They also do not have a say in our Committee meetings. If they do they are told off – sometimes for no good reason, they are not allowed to speak and are expected to just sit there and accept the telling off, whether they are right or wrong. During the training, I and my fellow women discussed this situation and decided that it was time for a change ... We came back to our village and in our Committee meeting we raised the issue and moved a motion that these long standing practices be stopped. That our in-laws be treated with respect, love and compassion. That they be treated equally. Although we initially received opposition because this has been a normal practice for years, we were able to apply the knowledge and skills we received from the training to continue the discussion until our leaders were able to understand why we needed to change. A decision was made that day to stop treating our in laws as we have been doing so for a very long time. Today everyone is happy. We respect each other and all women are treated equally. This is a big change for us but we see the good it has brought our Committee, our village and our families"* Female Trainee



More than **500**  
women & girls  
received dignity kits,  
including COVID-19  
prevention items



**3,400**  
victims of domestic  
violence received  
advice and support  
through a helpline

# Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Empowerment

**US\$ 1.8m (8% of total UN Samoa support)**

## *Selected achievements 2020*

- Launched a joint initiative across the Cook Islands, Samoa, Niue and Tokelau to establish government social protection schemes through the region. The “Strengthening Resilience of Pacific Island States through Universal Social Protection Programme” will work with the governments of the participating countries to develop universal, evidence-based, nationally owned social protection systems and introduce social protection floors to help accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Within six months of the launch, the UN Country Team conducted social protection assessments across the four countries, which will be used to inform improvements in social protection. Additionally, a social protection fiscal analysis for people with disabilities was completed in all four countries. Social protection investment is supported through the SDG Financing Fund.

# Human Rights

## *Selected achievements 2020*

- Bolstered awareness and advocacy for the rights of children by hosting the 84th Extraordinary Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Apia. This was the first time in the history of the UN that a UN Treaty Body held a regional session to review multiple countries outside of Geneva or New York. The UN in Samoa in partnership with Pacific Community and OHCHR organized the event, which included contributions to the debate from more than 100 school children. The event reviewed children's rights in the Cook Islands, FSM and Tuvalu and provided the opportunity for other Pacific island nations to attend.

## *The Voluntary National Review*

- Supported the Samoan government in the development of the 2020 Voluntary National Review, which is a mechanism for governments to assess progress on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and present this progress on a global stage. The UN Resident Coordinator Office in Samoa, in partnership with the UN Country Team, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, RREDI and the Development Co-operation Directorate, led a research and data collection process, that informed a comprehensive analysis and high quality report. This was presented to the High Level Political Forum in New York in June.



*Young panelists prepare to discuss children's rights in Samoa at the 84th Extraordinary Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Photo: Alvaro Hoyos*



# Equitable Basic Services – Health and Education

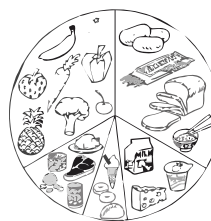
The COVID-19 state of emergency has impacted overall implementation of the UN's development interventions. Adjustments were made to country programme plans with the bulk of the resources diverted to strengthening health systems, preparedness and the response to COVID-19, while ensuring minimal disruption to children's education.

**\$4.4m (19% of total UN Samoa support) on health & education of which US\$3.1 m diverted to COVID-19**

**8,000** children under the age of 12 received the DPT vaccine

## Selected achievements 2020

- Invested in training for health professionals, provided personal protective equipment to the Ministry of Health, strengthened local COVID-19 testing capacity, and helped ensure the continuation of essential health services.
- Launched a mass media and community advocacy campaign on COVID-19, creating digital platforms for children to access school materials.
- Trained teachers in COVID-19 avoidance and provided water and sanitation support to schools.
- The UN in Samoa has contributed significantly to keeping the country COVID-19 free. Samoa has only recorded four imported cases (three of which were historical infections), which were successfully managed in quarantine.
- Inoculated more than 8,000 children under the age of 12 with the DPT vaccine.
- Reached more than 3,000 children through nutritional programmes
- Supported more than 25,000 primary school children with distance/home based learning



**3,000** children reached through nutrition programmes



**25,000** children supported through distance learning

**Boosting national testing capacity for COVID-19 - UNDP hands over equipment to the Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa.**

**"This is a significant acquisition for the Government of Samoa because we did not have the capacity to test for COVID-19 before. This equipment will continue to help the Government keep Samoa COVID-free," said the Minister of SROS, Lopaoo Natanielu Mu'a.**



# COOK ISLANDS, NIUE & TOKELAU





# Key developments

## Cook Islands

### POPULATION: 17,500

The Cook Islands enjoyed strong rates of economic growth prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. GDP growth was recorded at 8.9 percent in 2018 and 5.3 percent in 2019. As a Realm state of New Zealand, Cook Island's reliance on NZ financial assistance has meant it has been able to keep net debt levels low - at 17.3 percent. Categorized as a high-income country it boasts some of the best socio-economic indicators in the Pacific Region with high literacy rates, high rates of school enrollment, the lowest rate of infant mortality in the region and zero maternal deaths since 2001, with 100 percent of births attended by a skilled health professional. The proportion of Cook Island MPs that are women is also high for the region – at 16.6 percent.

The country also has the most advanced social protection system in the Pacific, complementing existing traditional and informal social safety nets. Additionally, it has made remarkable progress in bolstering environmental sustainability, with multiple programmes, including a US\$ 1 million UNDP investment in conserving biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem functions through a "ridge to reef" approach.

The Cook Islands however, is heavily reliant on tourism earnings with 80 percent of GDP generated by this sector. Teenage fertility is also high and the country has a high incidence of non-communicable diseases. It is ranked second in the world for obesity, with 56 percent of adults affected.

COVID-19 threatens to reverse the country's economic growth. With an economy heavily reliant on tourism earnings, the impact of the pandemic on the economy and household income was immediate. The ADB estimated that economic growth contracted by seven percent in 2020 and will decrease by another 15 percent in 2021. This economic downturn will take years from which to recover and could create pressure to increase borrowing and accumulate debt. At the same time, a rapid assessment of 116 households conducted by the government revealed that around 20 percent of families were struggling to meet their basic food needs.

Climate change also threatens to derail economic growth, with more frequent and more intense cyclones, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, land loss and increased flooding all likely.

*A local boy takes a dip in Niue. Photo: UNDP*

## Niue

### POPULATION: 1,600

a self-governing state in free association with New Zealand, and is heavily reliant on New Zealand financial assistance. Before the COVID pandemic, it was enjoying economic growth, with GDP growing by 6.5 percent in 2019. Niue has achieved universal access to clean water, universal access to education and has the lowest rates of infant and maternal mortality in the region. It is also heavily reliant on tourism, which brings in revenue of NZ\$11.7 million per year.

Like its Pacific neighbours Niue faces high levels of non-communicable diseases, the threat of climate change and is highly vulnerable to external shocks due to its reliance on the tourism industry.

## Tokelau

### POPULATION: 1,500

Tokelau is a non-self-governing territory of New Zealand. More of its population lives in New Zealand than on the island and extensive support is provided by the New Zealand government. Tokelau receives about US\$ 18.9 million (NZ\$ 27.2 million) from NZ on average per year. Its remoteness make it less heavily reliant on tourism than its pacific neighbours. Overall health and education services are well funded through the NZ support.

Tokelau's main challenges arise due to its remoteness, small population and scarce resources given the size of total land area. It is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and faces continued loss of biodiversity. Rising levels of non-communicable diseases are a threat, as well as the loss of its younger population through emigration to New Zealand for better job and education opportunities.



**20% of Cook Island families say they are struggling to meet basic food needs**



**Besides the economic shock of COVID-19, all three countries are extremely vulnerable to climate change**

# Selected Achievements 2020

**US\$ 4 m  
invested  
across  
the three  
countries  
in 2020**

## Cook Islands

- Helped more than 105 families with the distribution of baskets of local produce to help those affected by the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. Around 15 local suppliers also benefitted through the UNDP/ Joint UN Social Protection Programme initiative.
- Improved nutrition for more than 370 children aged under five through a UNICEF programme
- Inoculated more than 214 children under 12 against DPT through a UNICEF initiative.
- Helped the government to better plan and manage environmental protection by supporting the development of a Protected Areas Classification System and Protected Areas Management Policy, through a UNDP scheme. Based on traditional management systems, these will be used to inform the review of the Environment Act and strengthen protected area legislation. UNDP also strengthened the management of the 1.9 million km<sup>2</sup> Cook Islands Marine Park - Marae Moana – with a range of research studies to better understand environmental sustainability in the country.

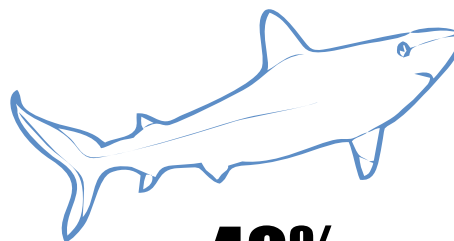
*Cook Island families received boxes of produce as part of the COVID-19 response Photo: UNDP*



**US\$ 1.5 m  
invested in Niue,  
more than  
70% of this  
targeting  
climate change**

## Niue

- Supported the government with the drafting of a new law which saw the establishment of the Niue Moana Mahu Marine Protected Area. The Cabinet's approval of the law in April formalizes legal protection to more than 127,000 km<sup>2</sup>, or 40 percent of Niue's Exclusive Economic Zone, including the coastal waters of Niue and nearby Beveridge Reef, an uninhabited, semi-submerged atoll that is home to the world's highest density of grey reef sharks. This is a significant result, as the area is the 28th largest protected area in the world in absolute terms, and means that Niue ranks second in the world (after Palau) in terms of the proportion of its Exclusive Economic Zone that is protected.
- Provided better digital mapping to the government with a UNDP supported terrestrial survey of the entire country. The high-resolution imagery and data will be used to plan and manage the protection of culturally significant species and habitats within the Moana Mahu Maritime Protected Area.
- Inoculated 17 children under 12 against DPT through a UNICEF initiative.
- Improved nutrition for more than 270 children through a UNICEF programme



**40%**  
**of Niue's Exclusive  
Economic Zone  
is now protected**



**US\$ 500,000  
invested in  
Tokelau, more  
than 70% going  
on COVID-19,  
health &  
education**

## **Tokelau**

- Helped the country remain COVID-19 free with support to the building of quarantine and hospital isolation centres on each atoll. More than 50 adolescents and adults, including 20 health workers were also trained in quarantine and isolation protocols, COVID-19 case management, sexual and reproductive health services and family planning - to help manage the facilities. As

a result of this investment, the government was able to safely quarantine 104 repatriated nationals from Samoa, New Zealand, Fiji and Australia.

- Prioritized the safety of health workers by supplying more than 1,700 items of personal protective equipment
- Raised public awareness of hygiene and COVID avoidance through public workshops and by funding programmes that were broadcast on radio and social media platforms.
- Provided more than 1,000 women and girls with dignity kits that included specific COVID-19 prevention items
- Assisted the government in better understanding the effect of the crisis, with a socio economic impact assessment study.
- Inoculated 54 children under 12 against DPT through a UNICEF initiative.
- Improved nutrition for 270 children through a UNICEF programme.

**104**  
returning  
Tokelauans  
safely  
quarantined  
in COVID-19  
facilities

*Handicrafts on  
sale in a  
tourist market  
in the Cook Islands  
Photo: Latoya Lee*







# PARTNERSHIPS & FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA



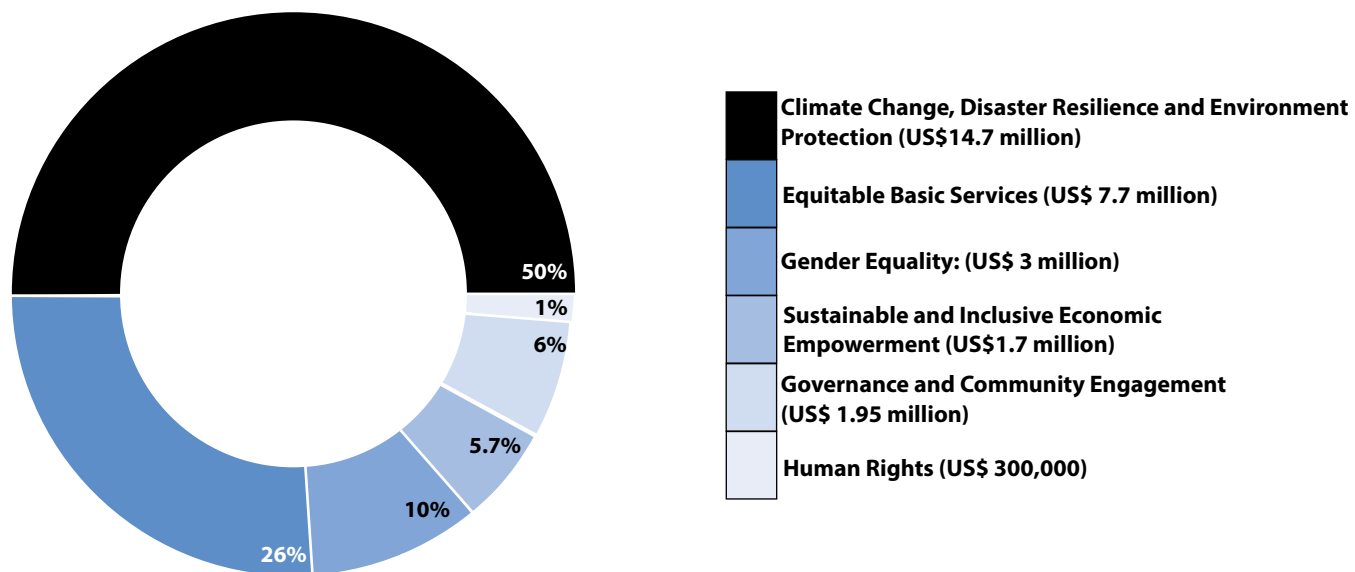
## Funds mobilized by the UN Resident Coordinator Office during the reporting period included

<p><b>US\$ 17.3 million</b>            NZ/UN Pacific Partnership -            UN Pacific Strategy Fund</p>	<p><b>US\$ 3.4 million</b>            EU-UN Spotlight Initiative            (Samoa country            programme)</p>	<p><b>US\$ 3 million</b>            Social Protection initiative            (Multi country) - Joint            SDG Fund</p>
<p><b>US\$ 1.1 million</b>            Samoa Knowledge Society            Initiative (Samoa country            programme) - UN-India            Partnership for            Development Fund</p>	<p><b>US\$ 1 million</b>            Integrated Financing            Frameworks (Multi            country) - Joint SDG            Fund</p>	<p><b>US\$ 400,000</b>            UN Partnership on the            Rights of Persons with            Disabilities Fund</p>
	<p><b>US\$ 300,000</b>            Support for Tokelau -            COVID-19 Multi Partner            Trust Fund</p>	

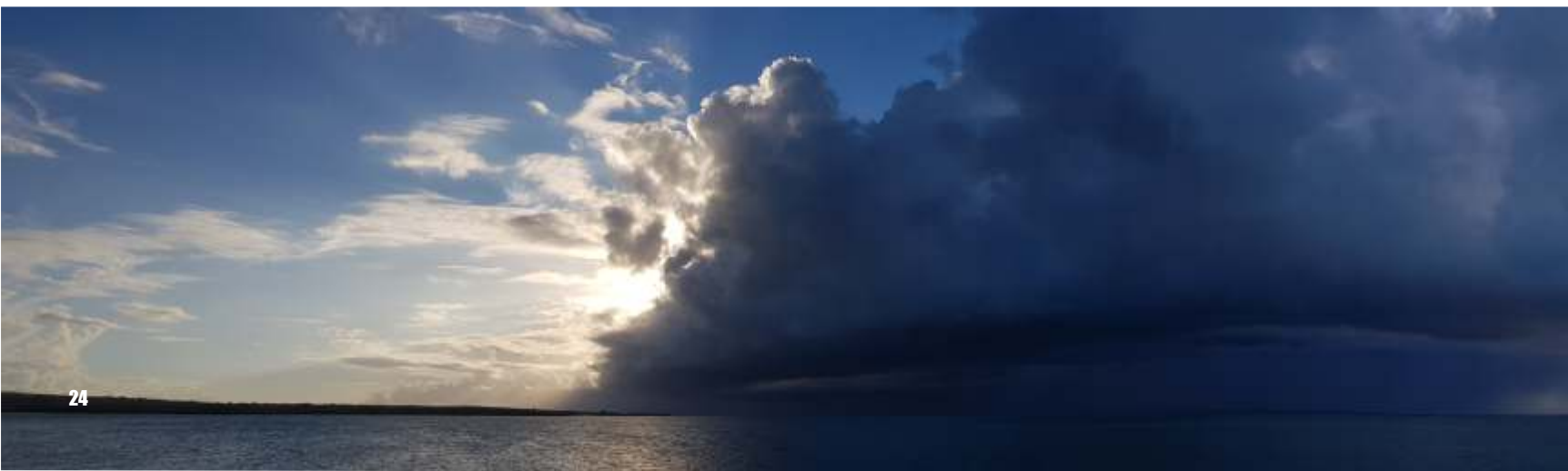
# Key focus areas for the UN multi country office, 2021

The United Nations will continue to work across the six outcome areas as per the UN Pacific Strategy, in the context of COVID-19, and with a total investment of more than US\$29.35 million.

The resource allocation for 2021 will be:



Apia sunset. Photo: Damian Kean





# The UN Country Team



## Partners providing support or resources



