

Samoan

Background

Samoa is an independent country and is part of the Polynesian group. It has a land area of 2,820 square kilometres. It has two main islands of Upolu and Savai'i, plus seven small islands. Gagana Samoa is the sole indigenous language, and Samoan and English are the official languages. In 2016 Samoa had a population of 195,979¹.

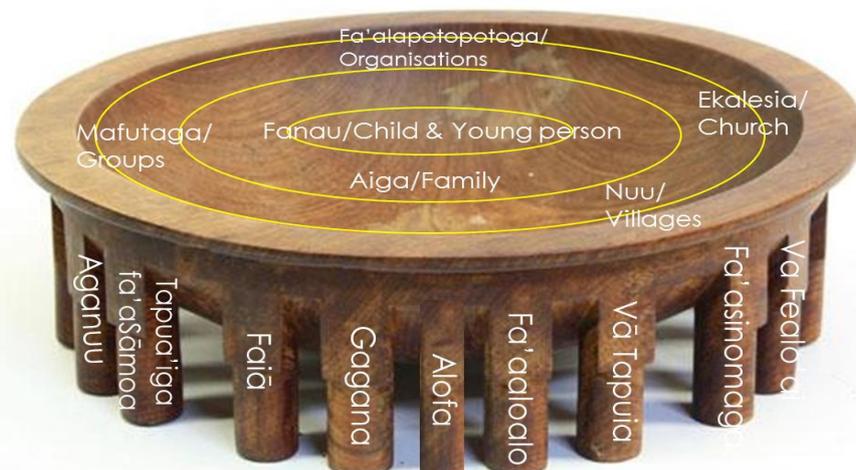
Samoa originally included what is now American Samoa after those islands were incorporated by the United States in the early 1900s. In 2010 American Samoa had an estimated population of 66,432. The official languages there are Samoan and English².

Samoans in Aotearoa

Samoans	2001	2006	2013
	115,017	131,103	144,138

This is the largest Pacific group in Aotearoa. The majority (92.9 %) live in the North Island, a small percentage (7.1%) live in the South Island, and 3 people live in the Chatham Islands. Most (93.7%) live in urban areas. Significant numbers are in Auckland (66.5% or 95,916), Wellington (15.5% or 22,383), and the Canterbury region (4.8% or 6,984). For those living in the Auckland region, concentrations are in Mangere-Otahuhu (18.3%), Otara-Papatoetoe (17.6%), and Manurewa (14.9%)³. Around 50,661 of the 144,138 were born overseas⁴.

Tautua - Samoan Cultural Framework for Practice



¹ Samoa Bureau of Statistics. *Population & Demography*. Retrieved 18/10/2018 from <http://www.sbs.gov.ws/index.php/population-demography-and-vital-statistics>

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs (9/12/2013). *American Samoa*. Retrieved from <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/American-Samoa.phorgang>

³ Statistics NZ. (2014). *2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Samoan. Population and geography*. Retrieved 10/3/2015 from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24708&tabname=Populationandgeography

⁴ Statistics New Zealand. (n.d). *2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Samoan. Key facts*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24708&tabname=Keyfacts

“O le ala i le pule o le tautua” - the path to leadership is through service

The *tanoa* is the ceremonial bowl used to prepare the traditional ceremonial drink ‘ava’ used in formal gatherings of chiefs of extended families (*matai*). The gathering of *matai* occurs when there is matters of importance to be discussed that affects the interests of the extended family or the whole community. The *tanoa* is used here to symbolise collective unity, ownership of and responsibility for solutions for children’s interests. At the centre of the *tanoa* are the *fanau*/children. Surrounding them is the extended *āiga*/family, and beyond that are the surrounding communities of significance (including faith based communities). Children are the future of families; their wellbeing, safety, prosperity, and dignity are concerns for the collectives in which they belong.

The Tautua model is based on a fundamental belief in the role and responsibility of the *āiga*/family for its children. The proverb ‘*E fofō e le alamea le alamea*’ refers to a tropical fish –*alamea* that carries the antidote to its poison in its body. The proverb reflects the Samoan belief in the strength and capacity of families to find their own solutions to challenges, especially in relation to their children and when those challenges come from within.

Purpose

To provide a best practice framework for social work engagement, assessment, decision making and action for the betterment of Samoan children and their families.

The tautua approach serves the best interests of vulnerable children and young people. Those who perform tautua are families, practitioners, community partners and supporting agencies.

Philosophy: Fa’a Samoa

Fa’a Samoa is the way of life and umbilical cord that attaches Samoans to their culture. This is the overarching philosophical framework for working with Samoan children, young people and their *āiga*. Mulitalo-Lauta broadly refers to fa’a Samoa as the total make-up of the Samoan culture, that which encompasses the invisible and visible which form the basis of principles, values and beliefs of Samoans.⁵

Central to fa’a Samoa is the notion of *tautua*, or service to God and to others. It stems from the philosophy of *alofa*/love, responsibility, hospitality, caring, and dignity. This is not service in a hierarchical relationship, but actions that are carried out with consideration and integrity⁶. Tautua is congruent with the notions of selflessness, putting others before oneself.

From the Samoan cultural worldview, social work has a purpose to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. It enriches the world through service to communities, the agencies, and humanity. In addition, as Samoans have strong Christian values, there is a belief that the more one takes the needs of others to heart the more one becomes close with God.

⁵ Mulitalo-Lauta, P. (2000). *Fa’a Samoa and Social Work within the New Zealand Context*. Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

⁶ Apulu, M. (2010). *Tautua Fa’atamalii – Servant hood with absolute integrity*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Massey University. Auckland. New Zealand.

Tautua has different aspects, the most pertinent are:

- *Tautua Matavela* – (*mata* – eyes, face; *vela* – cooked) service with full commitment and honesty.
- *Tautua Matalilo* – (*mata* – eyes, face; *lilo* – unseen, hidden) service done behind the scenes.
- *Tautua Toto* – (*toto* – blood) service with sacrifice.
- *Tautua Aitaumalele* – service from a distance e.g. a family member who lives overseas but supports the ones at home.
- *Tautua nofotuanae* - The word *nofotuavae* means – to sit behind or at the feet of someone. This *tautua* exemplifies the person who stands behind his/her *matai*/leader/agency ready to serve.

Aga Tausili – Values⁷

Symbolised by the legs of the *tanoa*:

- **Alofa**: Love, compassion, empathy.
- **Fa'aaloalo**: Behaviour and language that convey respect, and honours *vā tapuia*.
- **Fa'asinomaga**: Reference points or indicators of identity and belonging⁸. This refers to one's role, place, and responsibilities to others in the *āiga*, village, and extended family. Connected to *fa'asinomaga* are *fa'alupega* and *fa'alagiga* which are genealogical and honorific references and salutations of the child's, young person's and their family's specific home district, village and family.

For children born or raised predominantly in Aotearoa, identity markers may include school, religious affiliation, suburb, or town of their upbringing.

- **Faiā**: Genealogical and historical connections and purpose in relation to others kin and community. This includes ancestral lineages and kinship ties. Knowledge of *faiā* is important as well as knowledge of associated roles and responsibilities of individuals within their families.
- **Gagana**: Knowledge and use of the Samoan language. *Gagana* is considered a gift from God⁹. It articulates how members should co-exist with others especially within the *āiga* and certain places of significance. *Gagana* is the vehicle that connects Samoans with their world views and for responding to the world they live in¹⁰. The different levels of language *Gagana o le fa'aaloalo* (formal language) and *gagana mo aso uma* (common-use language) are applied according to the audience and

⁷ MSD. (2012). *Nga Vaka o Kāinga Tapu*. Wellington. New Zealand. Pg: 37-43.

⁸ Papali'i, Moeimanono Fouva'a. (2011). *O le matafaioi a le fonu a le nuu ma le fonu a le lotu i le fa'amautuina o le gagana Samoa i Niu Sila' (The role of fonu a le nuu and fonu a le lotu in the maintenance of Samoan language in New Zealand)*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. The University of Auckland. Auckland. New Zealand.

⁹ Tanielu, L. S. (2004). *O le aoaoina o le gagana, faitautusi, ma le tusitusi i le aoga a le faifeau EFKS. Literacy Education-language, reading and writing in the Pastors' schools-Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS)*. Unpublished doctoral Thesis. The University of Auckland. Auckland. New Zealand.

¹⁰ Mulitalo-Lauta, P. (2000). *Fa'a Samoa and Social Work within the New Zealand Context*. Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, NZ

situation. *Gagana Samoa* is rich with idioms, riddles and implicit meanings that can only be fully appreciated by native speakers.

- **Tapua'iga fa'a Samoa:** Cultural and spiritual contemplation of success for an undertaking¹¹.
- **Vā Tapuia:** The divinely appointed, mutually respectful and sacred inter-relationships between people; between people and lands and the environment; with inanimate objects, and with the Divine. Violations of *vā tapuia* are believed to result in dire spiritual and physical consequences.

A very important *vā tapuia* is the *feagaiga*, which is the relationship between a brother and sister. Interpreted in the widest sense, *feagaiga* includes relationships between kin of the opposite sex. In a non-traditional context a version of this relationship is noted between Samoan young people and colleagues of the opposite sex.

- **Vā fealoa'i:** Respectful, dignified and harmonious relationships in face-to-face engagement between people, including the observance of relational and cultural protocols.
- **Tofā mamao:** A long term vision or insight of wellbeing, security and prosperity for children and families.

Engagement Assessment Decision Making

During any part of engagement (*fa'atalanoaga*) through assessment (*iloiloga*), decision making (*filifiliga ma fa'ai'uga*), plan implementation and review; a social worker may draw on a few or all of the *aga tausili* (key values), and experience the different aspects of *tautua* at once.



¹¹ Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families, Ministry of Social Development

The use of *gagana Samoan* and common terms (see table at the end of the section) would greatly help engagement with children, young people, parents and elders.

It is important to ascertain what language would best suit the child or young person concerned, and to ensure that she/he is meaningfully engaged and included in conversations where different languages are used. Many Samoan children and young people speak Samoan compared to other Pacific populations because it is frequently spoken in homes and in church communities. The possibility of a child or young person speaking Samoan however decreases for children from ethnically mixed families and among New Zealand-born generations. Those who are not fluent in Samoan may still understand common terms and cultural concepts used during engagement. Hearing the native language may help alleviate a child's or young person's anxiety and build rapport.

Be sure to engage all people who may have an influential role in the future of the child or young person. Every household has a lead person or people; it is often not a *matai*. A *matai* does not hold sole authority in Samoan families; he or she must consult widely before representing the family's interests. Some *matai* are appointed ahead of their leadership capability and become mentored over time, for future responsibility. In Samoa and Aotearoa, many families are headed by women who may or may not carry *matai* titles and responsibilities, but are nevertheless leaders and decision makers. Women's role in leadership is something Samoans have in common with matrilineal communities in other parts of the Pacific.

The Samoan proverb '*Pae ma auli*' refers to a process of smoothing out rough stones. In a parallel way, practitioners working with Samoan children and families will be required to draw on the different aspects of the *tanoa* and work collaboratively to address the challenges posed by abuse, neglect and criminal offending. It is important for practitioners to have in-depth understanding of the cultural characteristics of these families in order to be effective. Success in doing so establishes a foundation of cultural competency¹², and will build confidence that will contribute to best outcome for children and their families.

¹² Crichton-Hill, Y. (2007). *Family Violence and Cultural Context*. Social Work Now, 12-17. Ministry of Social Development. Wellington. New Zealand.

Useful Words and Phrases - Samoa

Common Greetings and Phrases	
Tālofa or Mālo le soifua	Greetings, hello
Maliu mai or Afio maia	Welcome come in
O ā mai oe?	How are you?
Manuia fa'afetai. O ā mai oe?	I'm fine thanks. How are you?
Fa'amolemole	Please
Fa'afetai	Thank you
Tulou	Excuse me (<i>to pave the way before saying something that may offend, or when crossing in front of someone</i>)
Tōfa Soifua	Goodbye (<i>formal</i>)
Tōfa/ Fā	Goodbye (<i>informal</i>)
Fa'amalie atu or Fa'amālulu atu	Sorry, my apologies
la manuia	Blessings upon you, all the best
Family Terms	
tama teine (<i>mother to a daughter</i>) afafine (<i>father to a daughter</i>)	daughter
teine	girl
tama tama (<i>mother to a son</i>) atali'i (<i>father to a son</i>)	son
tama	boy, child (<i>of any sex</i>)
pepe	baby
fanau a fanau	grandchild/ grandchildren
alo (<i>formal</i>); tama (<i>informal</i>)	child
fanau (<i>plural, informal</i>) nofoāalo (<i>formal</i>)	children
tinā	mother
tamā	father
āiga Tinā matua Tamā matua	family grandmother grandfather