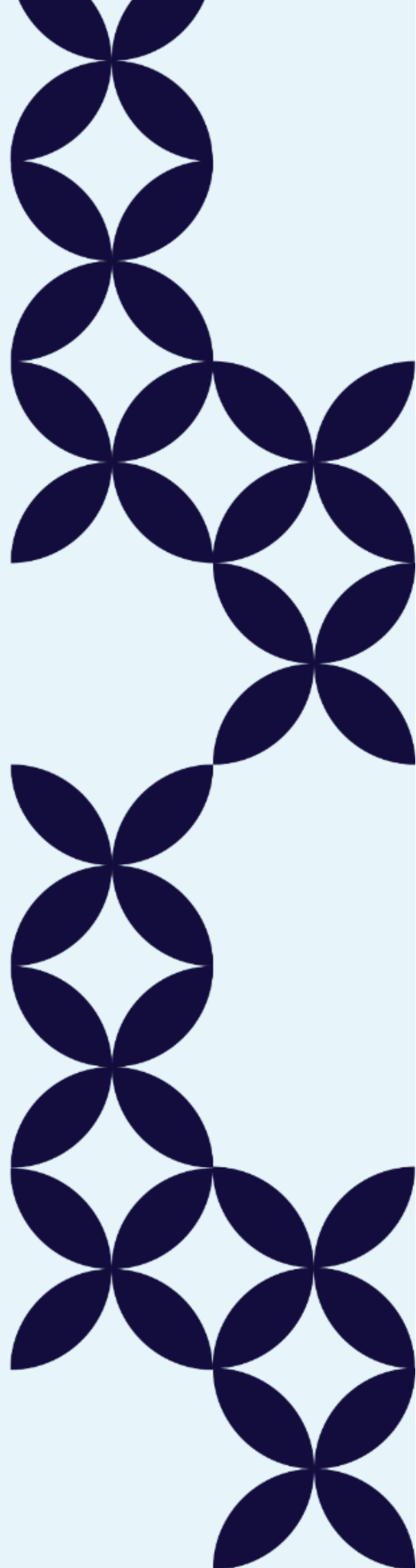
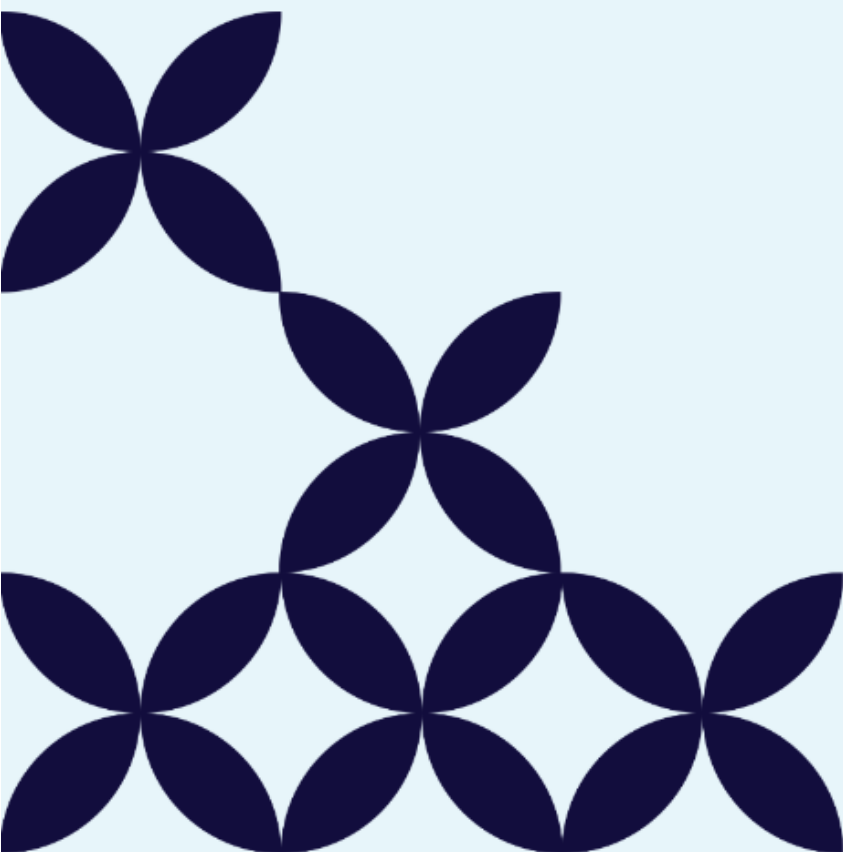


# Samoa

## Country Plan

May 2025



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## Purpose of this document

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) has developed this Plan to guide the planning and management of New Zealand's overall engagement with Samoa and as a foundation for dialogue with partners and stakeholders.

The Plan is used to bring clarity to what work should be prioritised, and to help monitor progress towards shared outcomes and strategic goals.

This is a living document that will be reviewed with partners and updated periodically to ensure it responds to changes in country, including the impacts of any external shocks.

## An integrated approach to Pacific engagement

New Zealand pursues an integrated approach to engagement with Samoa. We focus on coherence across our diplomatic, trade and economic, climate change, environment, security and development objectives to deliver sustainable progress in developing countries, and advance New Zealand's interests and values. As such, our development contribution (both policy and financial) is an integral pillar of our foreign policy – it reflects our network of international relationships and commitments, and is an expression of our values.



## Country overview

### Country context

Samoa is a Polynesian country consisting of two main islands, Upolu and Savai'i and seven smaller islets. The two official languages of Samoa are Samoan and English.

In the most recent 2021 census<sup>1</sup> the total population of Samoa was 205,557, with seventy-eight percent of the total population living on the largest island of Upolu. The median age of the total population was 22 years old, highlighting a youthful population in Samoa. In New Zealand's 2023 census 213,069 people identified as Samoan comprising the largest group of New Zealand's total Pasifika population, with most living in Auckland. In 2024, the Samoa Quota Scheme grants up to 1,100 Samoans, including their partners and dependent children residence in New Zealand each year.

Life expectancy at birth for females in Samoa (in years) is 75 and for males is 70<sup>2</sup>, with the leading cause of death being heart disease (129 deaths per 100,000).

In Samoa, society values remain relatively traditional, meaning progress on gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) is visible but still faces considerable challenges. In working with Samoa, New Zealand's approach will include for example, supporting women into forms of employment beyond the home and providing educational or employment opportunities for the large number of youth in Samoa. Notably, women currently hold 10% of seats in Parliament, aided by Samoa's constitutional amendment that reserves a minimum of five seats for women.

The following are key dates in Samoa's sovereignty:

- in 1962 Samoa became an independent state; and
- in 1970 Samoa became a member of the Commonwealth; and
- in 1976 Samoa became a member state of the United Nations.

Samoa is a unitary representative democracy with a five-year term. In 2021, following a general election a new government was formed, led by the Faatuatua i Le Atua Samoa ua Tasi (FAST) Party after nearly 40 years of one-party rule under the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP). Samoa's next general election will be held in 2026.

Samoa is challenged with limits on formal employment opportunities, and this along with Samoa's geographical remoteness and vulnerability to national disasters and climate change, constrain economic and social development. Subsistence agriculture and fishing remain integral to livelihoods.

The impact of the 2019 measles epidemic, and the 2020-2023 COVID-19 global pandemic and resulting border closures, all contributed to a three-year economic recession in Samoa, during which real gross domestic product (GDP) in Samoa declined by 15 percent. Samoa has seen some economic recovery since the reopening of borders, boosted by the recovery of the tourism sector and robust remittances primarily from the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme. An active trade relationship between New Zealand and Samoa also contributes to the Samoa economy. In 2023 the Samoa economy demonstrated signs of recovery, reporting 8.0 percent growth, and 11 percent growth of the Samoa economy is projected for 2024<sup>3</sup>. In 2024 the tourism sector in Samoa reported a steady and visible recovery with arrival numbers and total earnings

<sup>1</sup> [Census-2021-Final-Report\\_221122\\_051222.pdf \(sbs.gov.ws\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results | Population Division \(un.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Asian Development Outlook \(ADO\) Series | Asian Development Bank \(adb.org\)](#)



both experiencing growth of 4.3% and 9.7% respectively in the January-May 2024 period compared to the same period in 2023.

As a member state of the United Nations, Samoa actively lends its international voice to global challenges such as climate change and global and regional security – shared areas of concern to both New Zealand and Samoa. In 2024 Samoa hosted the international Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Samoa is the first Small Island Developing State from the Blue Pacific to host CHOGM, further demonstrating its leadership role in the Pacific region. Samoa also takes a leadership role as the current Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), representing the voices of small and low-lying states in international climate change and sustainable development negotiations and processes.

Samoa engages with a number of development partners, and as a country has received the fifth greatest portion of total aid in the Pacific as of 2021<sup>4</sup>. Australia is Samoa's largest bilateral donor, with New Zealand ranking fourth behind China and Japan, and second largest behind Australia in terms of grant contributions. New Zealand works with likeminded development partners on 16% of its current activities in Samoa.

## **New Zealand's partnership with Samoa**

New Zealand and Samoa have a close and multi-faceted relationship built on a foundation of shared history, family links, and economic and labour cooperation. The 1962 Treaty of Friendship<sup>5</sup> – unique among New Zealand's Pacific partnerships – continues to underpin our relationship, committing us to consult on matters of mutual interest, treat our respective citizens fairly and equally, and cooperate to promote the welfare of the people of Samoa. The New Zealand and Samoa relationship is further strengthened by our Statement of Partnership that identifies five priority areas for cooperation until 2028: security, empowering communities, building climate resilience, and inspiring growth.

Samoa is a key partner for New Zealand in our region. We share a commitment to supporting and preserving Pacific regionalism, and to ensuring we take a strong Pacific voice forward to address critical regional and global challenges including on regional security issues, threats from climate change, and pressures on the environment and ocean resources.

New Zealand and Samoa hold annual High Level Consultations (HLCs) between senior officials enabling two-way discussions on a number of issues of mutual importance.. This forum is key to confirming both countries' strategic alignment, affirming the value of our partnership and enabling mutual agreement on new and priority areas of development assistance for Samoa.

In 2024, the importance and unity of the New Zealand and Samoa partnership was underscored with New Zealand stepping forward as a key partner to work closely with Samoa to host a successful Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), 21-26 October. New Zealand contributed to both the preparatory and hosting phases, with 11 New Zealand government agencies (NZ Inc) represented in Samoa. The deployments corresponded to a total of 227 people on the ground during CHOGM.

New Zealand has provided reform-linked budget support to Samoa since 2017 through the Joint Policy Action Matrix (JPAM) – a Samoa led donor coordination mechanism that links disbursement of budget support to progress in agreed policy reforms.

Through the RSE scheme, New Zealand has welcomed 3,922 Samoan workers in the 2023-2024 season, and over 30,000 Samoan workers since the programme was implemented in 2007.

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<sup>4</sup> [Lowy Institute Pacific Aid Map](#).

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Countries-and-Regions/Pacific/Samoa/NZ-Samoa-Treaty-of-Friendship.pdf>



New Zealand has both a High Commission and an Immigration New Zealand Office located in Apia, Samoa. Samoa has a High Commission in Wellington and a Consulate-General in Auckland. In addition to New Zealand's permanent diplomatic presence in Samoa, a New Zealand Police Officer is attached to the Apia-based Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre. The New Zealand Defence Attache in Tonga is accredited to Samoa. A number of NZ Inc agencies enjoy direct working relationships with their Samoan counterparts across the breadth of government.

New Zealand adopts a partnership approach to supporting humanitarian response and disaster management in the Pacific. We focus on responding quickly to requests by Pacific governments to meet their priorities, and delivering practical and financial assistance for those most in need when a disaster strikes. This includes a 'whole of Government' commitment to work with other New Zealand Government agencies to deploy specialist emergency capabilities in a disaster response. We also work closely with other development partners, the United Nations, international and local non-government organisations and the private sector. Our bilateral development programmes invest in our Pacific partner's longer-term recovery from disasters. We also recognise the value of investing in measures that reduce and manage the risks of disasters, and increase resilience; and in helping countries be better prepared for disasters through regional, bilateral and NGO partner initiatives.

### Partner plans relevant to the relationship

The Government of Samoa's current development plan Pathway for the Development of Samoa FY2021/22 – FY2025/26<sup>6</sup> is led by the Ministry of Finance, Samoa. The strategy has a thematic **focus** of 'empowering communities, building resilience and inspiring growth'. The Pathway sets out five Key Priority Areas:

1. **Improved Social Development:** the Government will seek to provide all Samoans with equal access to affordable social services and livelihood opportunities.
2. **Diversified and Sustainable Economy:** The Government will diversify economic development and improve access to equal economic opportunities for all, and for the benefit of individuals, households, communities and the nation.
3. **Security and Trusted Governance:** the Government will ensure protection of rights to decision making as stipulated under various legislation and in conjunction with the Constitution of the Government of Samoa.
4. **Secured Environment and Climate Change:** the Government will maintain a safe environment for Samoa and promote sustainable economic use of natural resources.
5. **Structured Public Works and Infrastructure:** The Government will ensure that public works and infrastructure are guided by a long-term phased development plan that underpins socio-economic progress in Samoa.

Enhanced human development is cross-cutting, where the benefits of the strategy are accessible to all people of Samoa, reflecting a strategic inclusion focus.

New Zealand draws on Samoa's development plan as a reference document for designing our development assistance to Samoa. We work in partnership with Samoa to ensure our development assistance aligns with the Government of Samoa's current development and other national plans.

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<sup>6</sup> [National Development Plans for Samoa – Ministry of Finance \(mof.gov.ws\)](https://mof.gov.ws)



Other relevant plans which guide New Zealand's development assistance to Samoa include the Samoa Finance Sector Plan 2023 – 2027<sup>7</sup>, the Samoa Health Workforce Development Plan 2020/21 – 2025/26<sup>8</sup>, the Health Sector Plan FY2019/20 FY209/30<sup>9</sup>, the National Environment Sector Plan (NESP) 2023 – 2027 and Samoa Climate Change Policy 2020 -2030<sup>10</sup>. A new Education Sector Plan<sup>11</sup> is in draft.

These documents guide how New Zealand works in partnership and alignment with Samoa to best provide development assistance.

## Strategic framework for the Samoa Country Plan

The IDC Priorities Framework 2024-27<sup>12</sup> is a guiding document for the Samoa Country Plan. It shows how the IDC Programme contributes to the Ministry's overall goals, as set out in the Ministry's Strategic Framework<sup>13</sup>, and articulates the priority outcomes that we aim to advance through the IDC Programme.

The Samoa programme logic diagram that is included on the next page, sets out our ambitions for our work with Samoa, in alignment with the IDC Priorities Framework. It represents integrated delivery across development, foreign policy, trade, and security and covers a total country view of our IDC investment, covering our core IDC programme, multi-country investments, regional investments, NGO partnerships and scholarships.

The logic diagram sets out how our strategic goals drive more specific medium and short term outcomes. New Zealand will work towards these outcomes in partnership with Samoa. The medium term outcomes in the logic diagram describe our interests in more detail. The short term outcomes cover our areas of immediate focus, rather than all the initiatives required to deliver these medium term outcomes.

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<sup>7</sup> [Finance Sector Plan 2023-2027 \(mof.gov.ws\)](https://www.mof.gov.ws/Assets/About-us-Corporate/MFAT-strategies-and-frameworks/Strategic-Intentions-2024-2028.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [Samoa-Health-Workforce-Development-Plan.pdf](#)

<sup>9</sup> [4Health-Sector-Implementation-Plan-Policy-2019.pdf](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Samoa-Climate-Change-Policy-2020-2030.pdf \(sprep.org\)](#)

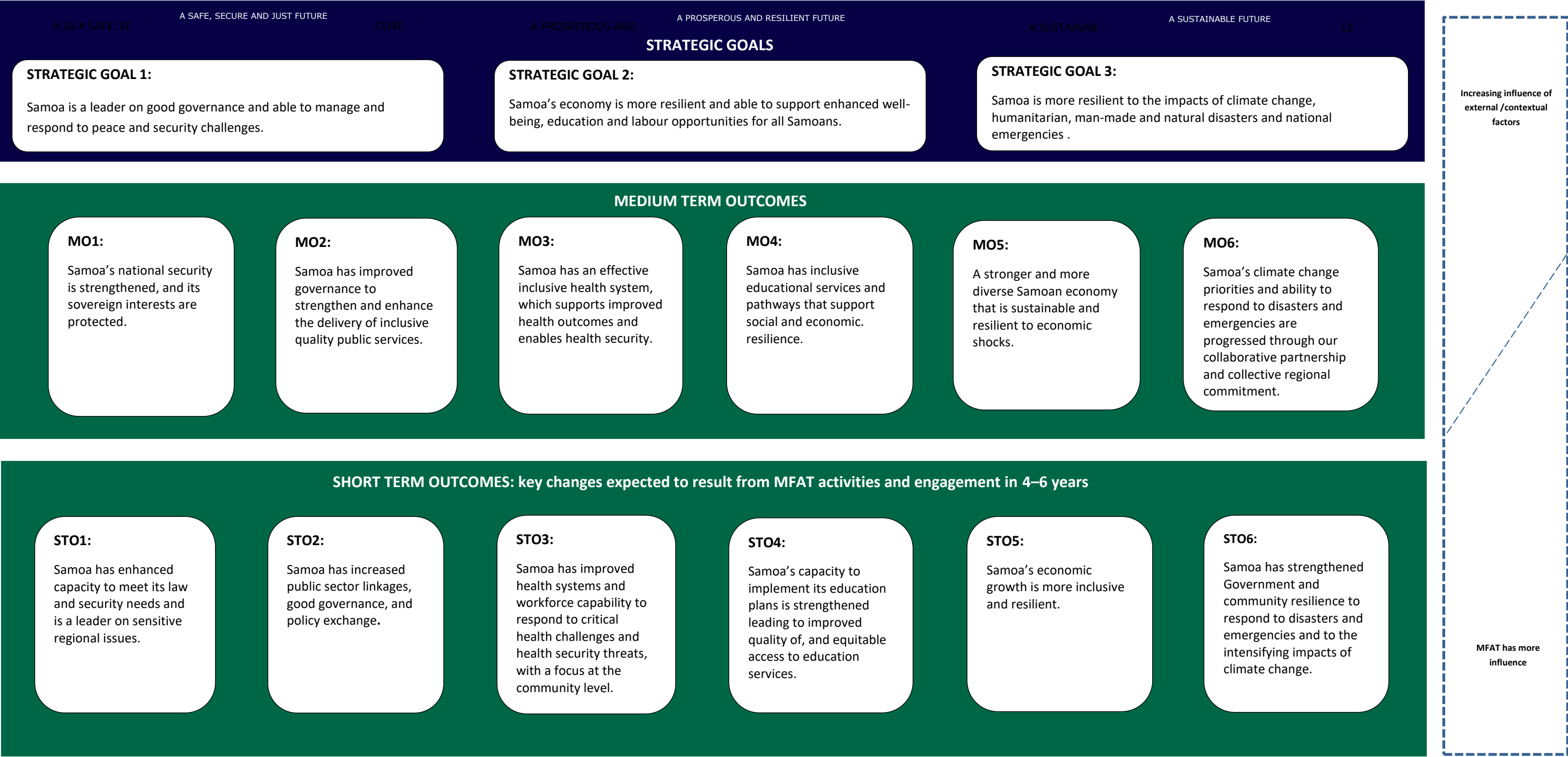
<sup>11</sup> [Education-Sector-Plan-2019-2024.pdf \(mof.gov.ws\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid/Aid-General/IDC-Priorities-Framework-2024.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/About-us-Corporate/MFAT-strategies-and-frameworks/Strategic-Intentions-2024-2028.pdf>



Logic diagram for the Samoa Country Plan



## How we put this Plan into action

New Zealand's IDC funding for this Plan is managed over a three-year period. There is flexibility to move funds into and between Plans in order to respond to rapidly changing contexts. Current information about New Zealand's overall International Development Cooperation budget for the current funding triennium is on the MFAT website<sup>14</sup>.

## How we will work to deliver on this Plan

New Zealand's International Cooperation for Effective Sustainable Development (ICESD) Policy<sup>15</sup> identifies four development principles that guide New Zealand's work with partner countries and sets out a commitment to deliver development that is effective, inclusive, resilient and sustained.

Achieving the short-term outcomes of this Plan, and working towards the medium-term outcomes and strategic goals, will employ the strengths of the established partnership between New Zealand and Samoa. There will be a need to draw on existing relationships with the various organisations which will support effective delivery of outcomes, as well as brokering new relationships between Samoa and New Zealand and other key bilateral partners and donors.

Material to delivering on successful outcomes for Samoa is ensuring our approach is partner-led, acknowledging the sovereignty of Samoa to determine what is best for the people of Samoa and equally recognising and balancing this with the capacity constraints which exist in the Samoa public sector. The reform-linked budget support which New Zealand has provided to Samoa since 2017 is an example of a higher order funding modality provided through a grant funding contribution, that places less demand on the systems and processes of the Government of Samoa. New Zealand's development assistance to Samoa will, where possible continue to seek opportunities for these higher order funding modalities, such as grant funding contributions. This, in recognition of the high level of trust that exists in our partnership and Samoa's preference to receive support through this modality.

Reflecting discussions between New Zealand and Samoa, New Zealand's development assistance to Samoa will gradually be streamlined and move away from the current approach of being spread across a number of thematic areas i.e. 'everything to everyone'. Priority thematic areas identified by Samoa, including health and education, scholarships and private sector support will continue to be supported, as well as key activities such as reform-linked budget support. Strategic partnerships, for example, in the area of regional security and climate change, will also be a feature of New Zealand's way of working with Samoa.

Samoa also benefits from its inclusion in a variety of regional and multi-country activities, led by a number of regional organisations, which support the short and medium-term outcomes of this Plan. Priority will be placed on activities reflected in the Logic Diagram of the Samoa Country Plan, including supporting national law and security needs and regional security, good governance of institutions, health, education, private sector development which promotes sustainability and Samoa's resilience to climate change and disaster response. There is scope for the regional and multi-country activities to demonstrate greater complementarity with activities in the Samoa bilateral programme. In this way, progress to achieving the short term outcomes is enhanced and there is less draw on people and other resources in Samoa.

<sup>14</sup> [www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid/where-our-funding-goes/our-planned-aid-expenditure/](http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid/where-our-funding-goes/our-planned-aid-expenditure/)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid-Prog-docs/Policy/Policy-Statement-New-Zealands-International-Cooperation-for-Effective-Sustainable-Development-ICESD.pdf>





To build in the flexibility required in any good partnership, the increased High Commission Emergency Fund (HEF) will enable local initiatives aligned with the outcomes of this Plan that are led by community organisations and NGOs.

### **Who we will work with to deliver on this Plan**

How we work to deliver on development assistance will retain similar delivery models to previously, including channelling assistance through Samoa government systems and through New Zealand partnerships (government agencies, state sector partners, NGO's, multilateral and regional agencies). Fundamental to success is employing a high trust model drawing on the trust and strength of the partnership between New Zealand and Samoa. New Zealand High Commission staff are pivotal in supporting this model to achieve resilient and sustained development assistance outcomes, through their engagement with Government officials and other key partners and stakeholders on the ground.

To operationalise this Plan and therefore contribute to achievement of agreed strategic goals New Zealand uses a range of actions and works with multiple partners. New Zealand will continue to strengthen these partnerships and look for opportunities to collaborate with new partners.

Our principal implementing partner is Samoa, and New Zealand engages with all levels of Samoa's system to ensure New Zealand's support aligns with its needs.

The Samoa Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (SMFAT) is the Ministry who leads on the bilateral relationship with New Zealand and a principal stakeholder in the New Zealand Samoa relationship. SMFAT oversees all development assistance to Samoa. The Ministry of Finance in the Government of Samoa is an operational focal point of the New Zealand Samoa bilateral relationship, and frequently leads on the disbursement of New Zealand's development assistance to Samoa.

There are a number of New Zealand Government (NZ Inc) agencies who have long-standing and accomplished relationships with their counterpart agencies and officials in Samoa. Many of these NZ Inc agencies have diaspora within their organisational structure. The agencies include New Zealand Customs, Immigration New Zealand, Civil Aviation Authority, New Zealand Police, New Zealand Medical Assistance Team (through the New Zealand Ministry of Health), New Zealand Defence Force, Maritime New Zealand, National Emergency Management Agency, Parliamentary Counsel Office, and Ministry for Primary Industries.

New Zealand takes a more strategic approach to work closely with other like-minded development partners, such as Australia who also provide development assistance to Samoa. Where possible New Zealand looks to harmonise and leverage our support in areas of shared priority. In doing so, this cooperation has the potential to provide a synthesised benefit to Samoa. New Zealand works closely with other development partners such as Japan, the United Kingdom, the European Union, World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB). This ensures that development support for Samoa is aligned and according to the needs of Samoa.

New Zealand also draws on the expertise of regional agencies such as The Pacific Community (SPC) or the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to work with Samoa in niche areas, relevant to our shared strategic priorities. In the area of economics, New Zealand works with regional agencies which provide technical assistance to support reform priorities of the Government of Samoa, for example, the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) and the Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative (PSDI).



Samoa was admitted as a member of the United Nations in 1976. New Zealand works with UN organisations who provide support to Samoa. Many are based in the region and some have offices in Samoa, such as UN Women, UNESCO and UNICEF.

New Zealand provides development assistance to Samoa through strategic partnerships with private sector partners. Private sector partners work with greater flexibility and are able to offer Samoa access to training and low-cost finance and investment opportunities. MFAT's Private Sector Hub is an initiative set up to work with New Zealand and Pacific businesses to facilitate innovative commercial initiatives with Sustainable Development Goal outcomes. Samoa has a number of small businesses, many owned by women, particularly in the tourism and agriculture area that have and continue to benefit from working with New Zealand private sector partners.

MFAT partners with New Zealand non-government organisations (NGOs) through the *Partnering for Impact* programme. Through this approach, we partner with NZ NGOs and local civil society to use their experience, knowledge and reach, to fulfil communities development aspirations.

## How we will assess progress against this Plan

The logic diagram sets out the strategic goals, medium and short term outcomes we hope will result from New Zealand's activities and engagement with Samoa.

We report back on progress towards our goals in Samoa via the annual Minister of Foreign Affairs Report on the IDC appropriation<sup>16</sup>. We also report back on this Plan to the Government of Samoa via our annual High Level Consultations and engagement with senior officials. This not only gives us an opportunity to discuss what has been achieved in partnership, but also to test whether our Plan remains fit-for-purpose or if we need to change anything. Progress against the Plan will be assessed with the following indicators:

Strategic Goals	Indicator
<b>Goal 1:</b> Samoa is well governed and able to manage and respond to peace and security challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), Lowy Institute: Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, percentile rank 0-100.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2:</b> Samoa's economy is more resilient and able to support enhanced well-being, education and labour opportunities for all Samoans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real GDP per capita.</li> <li>SDG 3.8.1 - Coverage of essential health services.</li> <li>SDG 3.4.1 - mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory disease.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 3:</b> Samoa is more resilient to the impacts of climate change, and humanitarian and natural disasters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blue Pacific Dashboard: Climate Change and Disasters 1.0: Reduced economic loss attributed to disasters relative to GDP%</li> <li>Resilience Index Scores</li> </ul>

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid>



Short Term Outcome (STO)	Indicator
STO1: Samoa has enhanced capacity to meet its law and security needs and is a leader on sensitive regional issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in peace and security (M/F) (ARI).</li> <li>Evidence of improved organisational development through planning, policies, process and strategies to enable service delivery (STO in TNZPP).</li> </ul>
STO2: Samoa has increased public sector linkages, good governance and policy exchange.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WGI, Lowy Institute – Government Effectiveness, percentile rank 0-100.</li> <li>Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in governance (M/F).</li> <li>Samoa continues to progress and meet their policy reforms measured through the Joint Policy Action Matrix (JPAM).</li> </ul>
STO3: Samoa has improved health systems and workforce capability to respond to critical health challenges and health security threats, with a focus at the community level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government expenditure on health as % of total government expenditure.</li> <li>SDG 3.8.1: Universal coverage of essential health services.</li> <li>Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in health or health-related services (health workforce) (M/F) (ARI).</li> </ul>
STO4: Samoa's capacity to implement its education plans is strengthened leading to improved quality of, and equitable access to education services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure.</li> <li>Number of people receiving training or capability building support in education by gender.</li> </ul>
STO5: Samoa's economic growth is more inclusive and resilient.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Labour Force Participation Rate – disaggregated by gender and age.</li> </ul>
STO6: Samoa has strengthened Government and community resilience to respond to disasters and to the intensifying impacts of climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of people directly benefitting from improved climate-resilient infrastructure and services by gender.</li> <li>Evidence of NZ's investment contributing to progressing Samoa's climate policies, strategies and action plans e.g. NDC and NAP (ICFS headline indicator).</li> </ul>

The Plan will be evaluated approximately once every four years. The next strategic evaluation of the Samoa Country Plan is expected to take place in 2029. The Ministry's forward strategic evaluation schedule is available on the website<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid/evaluation-and-research>



## For further information

Contact details for the New Zealand High Commission to Samoa are available on the MFAT website <sup>18</sup>.

To find out more about New Zealand's engagement with Pacific Island countries also go to the MFAT website, at [www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/australia-and-pacific/](http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/australia-and-pacific/).

This document is one in a series of Plans published by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and managed by the Ministry's Pacific and Development Group. For the latest version please go to [www.mfat.govt.nz](http://www.mfat.govt.nz)

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/>

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1981/0047/latest/DLM51358.html>

