

SAMOA EDUCATION NETWORK (SEN)

CSO SPOTLIGHT KEY MESSAGES ON SDG 4

Accelerating actions for transformative and resilient education amidst COVID-19



SAMOA

Population:
196,130 (WB, 2018)

SDG 4 Dashboard:
Challenges remain

SDG 4 Trend:
→ Stagnating

SDG 10 Dashboard:
Major challenges

HDI value/rank:
0.707, 111 (UNDP, 2019)

GNI per Capita:
USD 4,180 (WB, 2019)

Secondary Net Enrolment:
85.52% (UNESCO, 2016)

**Literacy Rate
(15 years & older):**
Total: 99.1%
Female: 99.25%
Male: 98.96%
(UNESCO, 2018)

Education Expenditure:
4.08% of GDP
10.48% of total
government expenditure
(UNESCO, 2016)

The Samoa Education Network (SEN) agrees with the Government of Samoa's Voluntary National Review (VNR) that, while there has been some progress, the country still faces significant challenges in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in SDG 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning for all. Most of these are listed in the Government's VNR 2020.

Despite progress made in increasing access to education as seen in school enrolments, there has been a decline in literacy and numeracy rates, and poor results in most subjects, including science, maths and languages, with boys usually having poorer results than girls. While there is 100% enrolment in primary school, the drop-out rate is at 20%. In secondary school, the enrolment rate is at 78% but the completion rates between 2016 and 2018 for both Years 12 (from 62.65% to 54.1%) and 13 (from 44.4% to 35.95%), for both males and females, have declined.

Samoa has faced school closures in 2019 due to a measles epidemic and then in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The education system promptly adapted, delivered school lessons online and used e-learning materials, however many children, some in the urban schools, many in rural schools and in remote areas, and poorer children did miss out. Schools and teachers addressed this issue by preparing print materials, which were distributed periodically to the children.

Inclusive education policy and strategies as outlined in its Education Sector Plan 2019-2024 were implemented in the country. One of which is the Inclusive Education (IE) Policy for Students Living with Disability. Through this policy, Samoa saw an increase in the number of children with special needs or a disability attending school between 2015-2019.

Samoa is rife with gender-based violence and domestic violence, which is a grave violation of fundamental human rights, especially women's and children's rights. It also negatively impacts on all aspects of life, including education and learning. Preventing and addressing gender-based violence will require more robust action plans and programmes and collective efforts from the government, civil society, and relevant actors. The VNR also made comments on Samoa's limited capacity for the collection, analysis and timely reporting of quality data and the capacity challenges regarding management at all levels and uncoordinated partner support efforts to achieve the SDGs.

SEN highlights the challenge encountered with the meaningful implementation of SDG 4 Target 7, an all-important Target, which requires rethinking and redefining the purpose of education and seeing it from a lifelong learning perspective so that it can become a key enabler for a sustainable future. The achievement of which would equip 'learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours and values they need to engage creatively and responsibly with our ever more rapidly changing world'.

Civil society organisations stand willing to increase their participation in government and stakeholder spaces and forums to work towards the achievement of the SDGs in Samoa.



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