



UN Women Executive Director visiting the Help Line Project during the Small Island Developing States (S.I.D.S) Conference in September 2014

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Samoa Victim Support Group



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

**In Partnership with the
UN Women Pacific Regional Ending Violence against Women
Facility Fund**

Co-Sponsored by

Digicel bluesky
Digicel (Samoa) & Bluesky (Samoa)

Presents

**Final Report on
"The Help Line Project"
1 April 2013 - 30 September 2015**

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The support of our Patron and Minister of Communications & Information Technology—Honorable Tuisugaletaua Sofara Aveau—has been invaluable to the success of the Help Line Project.

The Family Court is acknowledged for recognizing the work of SVSG Advocacy Groups hence the referral of offenders for counselling programs.

To the Attorney General’s Office and the Criminal Team, thank you for providing encouragement and moral support to SVSG during the Project. We are appreciative of your continued support and we look forward to working with you to continue this great success.

To all our stakeholders, families and friends, thank you for bearing with us throughout this time.

Last but not the least, we acknowledge with pride the courage of all the women and men, girls and children survivors of violence whose lives have been saved by the Help Line. Your speaking out enabled us to help you. You are the heroes of the Help Line Project.

We pray that each and every one of you will continue with us along this journey as **“TOGETHER, We Can Save Lives”**



13. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The most repeated comments from the survivors of violence saved by the Help Line were “Fa’afetai lava—Thank you” and “Ia fa’amanuia le Atua i le galuega—May God bless the work”

These general feelings sum up the magnitude of the Help Line project; a feeling of acknowledgement and of being blessed by the lives saved. It is in this connection that SVSG acknowledges the following supporting partners, families and friends:

Firstly, thank you to the UN Women Pacific Regional EAW Facility Fund for entrusting SVSG to implement the Help Line Project for the people of Samoa;

Thank you to the Government of Samoa for being supportive of our efforts to end violence against women and children.

To our local sponsors Digicel (Samoa) and Bluesky(Samoa), thank you for your commitment to end violence in Samoa through bearing the costs of the Help Line calls. We would not be able to implement this Project without both of you on board. Your willingness to sustain the Help Line further after the life of the Project is humbling and a testimony of your giving back to the community commitment.

SVSG also wishes to acknowledge the tireless work and dedication of the SVSG Church Response Teams and the SVSG Village Representatives who have facilitated the efficient operation of the Community Alert System. Your immediate response to evacuate women and children survivors in emergency situations impacted greatly to the saving life nature of the Help Line.

1. THE HELP LINE PROJECT

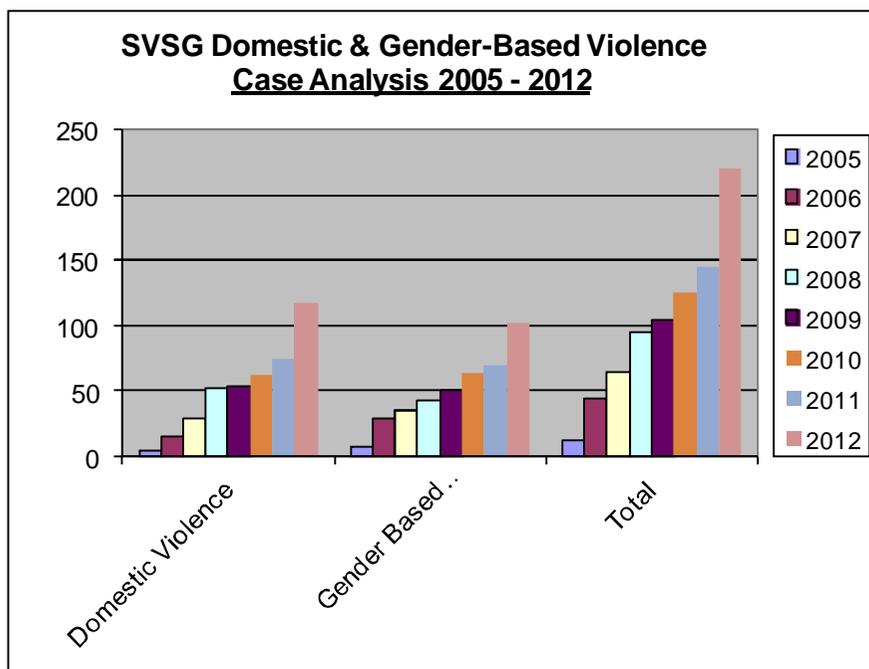
Samoa Victim Support Group, in partnership with the UN Women Pacific Regional Ending Violence against Women Facility Fund, providing full funding of the 2-year Project; and co-sponsored by the two telecommunication companies Digicel (Samoa) Limited and Bluesky (Samoa) Limited, launched and implemented a nation-wide “Help Line Project” from 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2015.

From mid-2005 to 2012, SVSG’s casework database revealed a concerning pattern of increasing reports of domestic and gender-based violence within the most important safe haven—HOME.

**Samoa Victim Support Group
Domestic & Gender-Based Violence
2005 - 2012**

Period	Domestic Violence	Gender Based Violence	Total
2005	5	7	12
2006	15	29	44
2007	29	35	64
2008	52	43	95
2009	54	50	104
2010	62	63	125
2011	75	70	145
2012	118	102	220
TOTAL	410	399	809

These statistics supported the concerns highlighted in the publication of the Samoa Family Health and Safety Study (2007), where the first-ever picture of the prevalence of violence against women in Samoa, found that 46.4% of women between the age of 15 and 49 years who have ever entered a relationship, reported experiencing physical , emotional and sexual violence by an intimate partner.



It was the prevalence of such violence that motivated SVSG to initiate its Stronger Communities Project with UN Women Trust to End Violence Against Women from 2011—2013.

While the Stronger Communities approached realized that “the strength of a Samoan community to fight for an end to violence against women is in solidarity”, the onus of the responsibility was now on the women and girls survivors of violence to ‘speak out’. But how can they ‘speak out’ when they do not have the means to do so.

The Help Line Project is SVSG’s response, using the free 24-hour service as a tool available to women and girls survivors of violence to communicate the need for assistance to SVSG in order for SVSG to provide timely assistance.

It is all about saving lives.

The phone rang again and it was the same number. The caller was now seeking help for her children, she was in a suicidal state. I talked to her, just so that she would continue to talk while help was on the way. Through her frustration from not being able to speak out sooner, she has had enough. She just wanted an end to all the suffering, but all she is asking for is refer her children to her parents in the Savaii. Through counseling, she was calm in time when the two SVSG Village Reps got to her and took her in to their village pastor’s house for more counseling support.

The caller is now a volunteer for the SVSG Juniors. As a young mother, she had lost out on all opportunities available to her as a youth. She is making it up by volunteering her time to help other troubled youths.

[Female Counselor, 52 years of age, rural Upolu]

I have worked for the NHS for over 20 years now so I am used to emergency cases coming in. However, seeing an infant of 3 years old being carried in as a result of being hanged in a sack is heart breaking. There were bruises around the arms and legs resulting from being tied up. What brought tears to my ears is the smile on this child’s face despite the ordeal that she had been through.

After attending to the child, I later found out that she was a victim of abuse by her own mother. How Samoa Victim Support Group was involved is through a call being put through their Help Line. As a mother and a nurse, I still could not come to terms with what drove a mother to do such inhuman doing to her child. One thing is for sure, is that the Help Line had saved this child’s life.

[Female Nurse, 45 years of age, rural Savaii]

I live with my son, his wife and their three children. My son is the only one that works in my family. I do not have a cell phone. I have problems with my legs, I rely on my daughter in law to move me around. However, on this particular occasion late January 2014, my disability did not stop me from crawling next door to my neighbor to use their phone to call for help.

I have to admit that I have not being a good mother, remaining silent all the time I see my son beat his wife up. However, with my daughter in law being silence by fear and my silence by fear of what the people in the village might say, we are not helping the innocent children being caught in the middle. Panting and breathless, I asked our neighbor for her cell phone. I dialed the 800-7874 number I have been hearing on our radio and gave our location for help. All I wanted was to have my son locked away for abusing his wife and children for so long. However, I was surprised when I saw not the Police, but 2 men from my village. They said that they are Representative of Victim Support and were here to help. I was relieved, I ended up sleeping at my neighbor's house until my other son from a nearby village fetched me later in the evening.

[Female Informer, 76 years of age, rural Upolu]

As a trained Help Line counselor, I was taught on different ways to provide counseling support, depending on the nature of the case and the circumstances surrounding it.

However, hearing a scream for help followed by a loud bang, I was frantic. I grabbed the phone tight as if by doing so, I would get to the caller. But no, the line went dead. All I was left with was the phone number of the caller, her name and her village. This however was enough information for me to go with. I immediately alerted the SVSG Village Rep at this particular village informing them of the name of the caller and then I sat back and prayed.

2. PROJECT GOAL AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

2.1 Project Goal

The Project focused on both the women survivors' ability to communicate the need for assistance to SVSG through an emergency Help Line and SVSG's ability to reach out to these women survivors through an established Community Alert System.

The efficiency in having a responsive emergency Help Line and Community Alert System should see an increase in access by these women survivors to all related quality support available such as shelters, family care, counselling and referrals to other support services.

There are two major components to this Project:

1. Establishing a Help Line giving women survivors increased access to support at all times; and
1. Establishing a Community Alert System in villages to provide women survivors in rural and remote areas with immediate access to SVSG and its support services. This is SVSG's innovative approach as it utilises a network of SVSG village representatives within each village as its community alert system.

2.2 Project Outcomes

With communication being an important tool for SVSG to create an enabling environment for women survivors, the following were the expected outcomes of the project:

- Women survivors in rural and remote areas of Samoa have a greater chance of accessing support services at all times;
- SVSG's community alert system reached a greater portion of women survivors in rural and remote areas of Samoa for ease of relevant referrals;

- Availability of counseling support as a life saving measure for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence; and
- Domestic and gender-based violence survivors received appropriate support upon referral to relevant Ministries, Agencies and other service providers in a timely manner.

2.3 Project's Primary Beneficiaries



Through this Project, SVSG aimed to support the abled and disabled Samoan community with a specific focus on women and girls survivors of violence in rural Samoa.

For women/girls survivors age 14—24, SVSG casework database 2005—2012 identified this group at risk of sexual violence from within their families. It is in this connection that the Help Line project aims to increase access available to these survivors to timely support.



For women survivors age 25—59 who are housewives and are *nofotane* (living with husband's families), they are the most vulnerable as they depend highly on the husband for a living. It is this same age group that makes up the majority of the domestic violence cases report to SVSG from 2005—2012 as per SVSG's casework database. Again, the project aimed at increasing access by these women survivors to immediate support for them and their children, especially in life threatening situations.

12. SUCCESS STORIES

The success of the Help Line have been noted by the significant change stories of some of the primary and secondary beneficiaries of the Project highlighted below:

I have been taught in the English sign language while attending a special needs school. A former teacher of my school called up SVSG's Help Line for me when she found out that I was abused by a teacher aide. My deafness hindered by ability to seek help through the Help Line myself. When my former teacher called the Help Line for me, I was living with relatives in Upolu. I am originally from a rural village in Savaii. Up to now, I am still amazed by the speedy turn of events all for my sake.

On the same day my former teacher called SVSG's Help Line, I was immediately evacuated to a shelter where girls of the same age as I live. I was scared but my former teacher assured me that it would all be over soon. Lucky for me, I found a friend at the shelter, someone who can communicate with me and in the similar situation. I am glad that my former teacher sought help for me through the Help Line.

With the support of girls in the same situation as I, I am now walking tall and concentrating on putting all the bad experiences behind me. I am special and I have been blessed thanks to the support from the Help Line.

[Girl Survivor of Violence, 16 years of age, rural Savaii]

Note: This survivor suffers from deafness and not other disabilities. The story was interpreted by a qualified interpreter from APTC

11. THE WAY FORWARD

SVSG's campaign to end violence in the homes and against the vulnerable members of the community continues. And in doing so, SVSG will need government's assistance.

During the term of the Help Line project, we have seen sustainable developments paving the way forward for vigorous work to eliminate all forms of violence affecting our loved ones.

11.1 Legislation reforms are being passed to give greater protection to survivors of violence and bring them justice.

11.2 The Ministry of Justice have set up a Family and Youth Court to deal directly with domestic violence issues.

11.3 The media have set up a specific group to increase visibility and public discussion on ending violence against women and children.

11.4 Many members of the church are taking their role in ending violence against women and children seriously through supporting SVSG's campaign to end violence in the homes.

11.5 Partnerships have been established with organizations such as the Women in Business Development Incorporated to reduce poverty and domestic violence through the economic empowerment of women.

11.6 Many international and local supporters and partners are coming on board to support the work being done for victims of violence and abuse. From the Samoa Weightlifting Federation supporting the development of this talents in the children survivors of violence to the UNICEF financing the rehabilitation programs of children survivors of violence cared for in SVSG shelter facilities.

3. THE DONOR AGENCY

Samoa Victim Support Group submitted an application mid-2012 to the UN Women Pacific Regional EAW Facility Fund to finance the 2-year Help Line Project.

This was approved with total funding of USD50,000.00 allocated to SVSG to operate the Help Line and the Community Alert System components of the Project.

During the project term, SVSG staff, volunteers and SVSG village representatives have attended regional training and workshops as part of the capacity development for the Project. The most recent one was the Human Rights Training around the Family Safety Act 2013 funded by UN Women and facilitated by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) in February 2015.

The Project had therefore benefited not only its primary beneficiaries, but also SVSG staff, volunteers and SVSG village representatives, which is vitally important for the sustainability of the Help Line service for the people of Samoa.



4. THE CO-SPONSORS

The Help Line project once again saw the strength of a community in solidarity to end all forms of violence against women and children. This is when the two private telecommunication companies namely Digicel Samoa and Bluesky Samoa, come together to support our cause for an end to violence against women. This solidarity is crucial to SVSG and its work because without it, we would not be able to reach out to our people requiring assistance in times of need.

SVSG signed separate MoUs with Digicel and Bluesky officiating the companies covering the costs of all income calls to the Help Line, thus making all calls FREE to Help Line users.

The Community Alert System saw 100 post paid cell phones acquired from Bluesky and 100 more from Digicel allocated to leading SVSG village representatives. Any call coming through the Help Line requiring an alert to the village representatives in the community for immediate assistance and are communicated through these 200 cell phones.

Funding from the UN Women are covering the monthly costs of these cell phones.



10.3 Living up to the Expectations of the Community

With increase awareness comes increased Help Line usage for the community seeking any forms of assistance, apart from the women survivors of violence. The challenge of living up to the high expectation and the trust of the Samoan community on the Help Line service was great.

And this encouraged SVSG to be strong enough respond to the calls from the community for any forms of help needed and any time. SVSG's strong support network with the church and the village communities stepped up to this challenge, ensuring that not one caller was ever turned away.

10.4 Supporting the Survivors with Disabilities

It was a challenge securing support for survivors of violence with disabilities such as sign language skills, without compromising the confidentiality of information pertaining to the case.

While SVSG utilized the sign language skills of a village representative who studied Disabilities with APTC on Disabilities, an opportunity for staff and volunteer empowerment in this area had opened up. Scholarship opportunities offered by APTC has now enabled SVSG to enroll more of our Village Reps in Disability Courses with APTC and this is continuing to date.

10.5 Additional Workload with Limited Funding

The 24 hour Help Line has created a whole new work load for SVSG beyond what the project funding could cover. The village reps and the church leaders providing immediate shelter and counselling support, the volunteer counsellors manning the Help Line after hours and the staff taking on additional supporting roles.

It was the strength of SVSG's established networks that stood out during this project to cover shelter, medicine, food, transport and other costs associated with the saving life nature of the Help Line.

10. THE CHALLENGES

Paving the way for the operation of the Help Line was not an easy task for SVSG. The challenges that continue to confront SVSG during the Project implementation once again lead to opportunities which saw the achievement of the project goal beyond expectations.

10.1 **Digicel (Samoa) and Bluesky (Samoa)**

While the challenge was to have the two telecommunications companies agreeing on working together for an end to violence against women through the operation of the Help Line, the rewards have been tremendous.

SVSG had managed to negotiate with both companies much lower rental charges for the 200 post paid cell phones used by the community alert system. The companies have sponsored advertisement spots for the 800-7874 number and have been reporting on the Help Line progress as part of their Working with the Community press releases in media, thereby increasing awareness throughout the community of the benefits of the Help Line.

10.2 **Women Survivors Not Having Cell Phones**

The most notable challenge encountered in having women survivors in rural and remote areas accessing the Help Line is their inability to own a phone.

This is the case for women at risk and women survivors of violence living in remote areas of Upolu, Savaii and Manono tai that due to extreme poverty, they do not have a cell phone. SVSG Church Response Teams and SVSG village representatives have filled in this gap through raising awareness amongst church and village groups to be on the look out for these women survivors.

5. PROJECT STRATEGIES

There have been 4 strategies used to achieve the project goal and outcomes. These include:

5.1 **Communication Strategy**

This strategy aimed at creating an enabling environment which is very important in encouraging women and girls survivors to speak out, through communication as a tool. Particularly important is SVSG's ability to respond immediately to this call for help from women and girls survivors through an effective community alert system.

5.2 **Shelter Care and Support**

This strategy looks at providing overnight shelter assistance for women survivors and their children in extreme dangerous situations. SVSG's Church Response Teams made up of church leaders in villages and SVSG village representatives once again fronted up this strategy.

5.3 **Awareness Raising and Advocacy**

SVSG village representatives take up the leading role in raising awareness in their village communities of the Help Line service and advocating for a violence free community. This is through village council meetings, women's committee meetings and church youth groups. Roadside signboards bearing the 800-7874 formed part of this awareness raising.

5.4 **Facilitating relevant referrals**

This strategy facilitates an extended range of support services made easily accessible to women and girls survivors of violence such as:

- Referrals to the Ministry of Police Domestic Violence Unit;
- Referrals to the Ministry of Justice for Protection Order, maintenance and custody assistance;
- Referrals to the National Health Services for medical treatment; and
- Referrals to counseling, or specialized legal assistance.

6. THE NUMBERS REACHED

HELP LINE PROJECT

TOTAL NUMBERS REACHED [1 APRIL 2013 - 30 MARCH 2015]

YEAR 1: 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2014	Children 14 years & under	Youths 15 - 24 years	Aduls 25 - 59 years	Elderly 60+ years	Total Numbers Reached
Female domestic workers		137	7,965	53	8,155
Female migrant workers			27		27
Women & girls in general		24,174			24,174
Women & girls with disabilities		6			6
Women & girls survivors of violence	53	348	535		936
Sub-Total	53	24,665	8,527	53	33,298
YEAR 2: 1 Apr 2014 - 31 Mar 2015	Children 14 years & under	Youths 15 - 24 years	Aduls 25 - 59 years	Elderly 60+ years	Total Numbers Reached
Female domestic workers		198	8,913	68	9,179
Female migrant workers			46		46
Women & girls in general		25,093	15,690		40,783
Women & girls with disabilities		11			11
Women & girls survivors of violence	87	648	928		1,663
Sub-Total	87	25,950	25,577	68	51,682
TOTAL NUMBERS REACHED	140	50,615	34,104	121	84,980

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- **Case Referrals from the Family & Youth Courts**

Since October 2013, the Family Court have been referring men offenders of violence for counseling assistance by SVSG Men's Advocacy Program.

This was followed by the Youth Court referrals of young offenders to SVSG Youth Empowerment Program in September 2014, with the latest referrals being women offenders of violence to SVSG's Tina Faufautua (Women's Advocacy) Program.

This is an important achievement for the legislative advocacy and lobbying aspect of the Help Line project.

- **Protection Order & Guardianship**

One of the greatest achievements for the Help Line project relates to the guardianship now granted to SVSG for some of the children survivors of violence whom SVSG had applied for Protection Orders.

The latest being a 6 year old child now placed under the guardianship of SVSG while the mother is imprisoned for 3 years.



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9. THE PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

• **Help Line coverage reaches New Zealand and American Samoa;**

The Help Line had assisted with 35 calls from American Samoa And New Zealand from the Samoan communities residing there. The callers have used the Help Line to seek SVSG's assistance for their relatives here in Samoa either to follow up with their cases lodged with the Police or to advocate for their medical evacuation cases with the Ministry of Health.

• **UN Women Executive Director Visit**

Having the global UN Women Executive Director Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka visiting the Help Line project while she was in the country for the SIDS Conference in September 2014, attest to the recognition of the achievements of the Help Line at the global UN Women level.

It was an achievement shared by SVSG family of supporters as well as the co-sponsors for the Help Line—Digicel (Samoa) and Bluesky (Samoa)



For two years from 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2015, the Help Line service had reached a total of 84,980 calls, 25% of which were life-threatening cases of which:

- 2,599 were women and girls survivors of violence;
- 525 were women survivors of violence referred to Church Response Teams for counseling of which 67 were gender-based violence survivors;
- 185 were women and children survivors of violence referred to the National Health Services;
- Close to 100 Protection Orders applied for on behalf of the women and children survivor of violence;
- 83 were women survivors of violence being sheltered;
- 68 were children of women survivors of violence being sheltered;
- 58 were attempted suicide survivors; and
- 15 were women and girls survivors of violence with disabilities;

Most calls are handled through online counseling assistance and referral to SVSG village representatives closer to the location of the caller. Callers have ranged in age from 14 to 80. Calls have sometimes included requests for other services, such as disability and home care assistance. Response includes the distribution of wheelchairs and general welfare support such as clothing and food.

The Help Line has also been instrumental in alleviating the frustrations of parents, husband and partners who are looking for someone to talk to about their problems. This group comprises 65% of the Help Line's callers, a testimony to the fact that Samoans increasingly want to 'speak out' and seek assistance.

7. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH BASELINE DATA

Samoa Victim Support Group Domestic & Gender-Based Violence 2005 - 2014

Period	Domestic Violence	Gender Based Violence	Total
2005	5	7	12
2006	15	29	44
2007	29	35	64
2008	52	43	95
2009	54	50	104
2010	62	63	125
2011	75	70	145
2012	118	102	220
2013	303	125	428
2014	393	137	530
TOTAL	1106	661	1767

There is no doubt that the statistics of domestic & gender-based violence cases lodged with SVSG during the 2-year project period speaks volume for the effectiveness of the Help Line.

SVSG casework database during the 2 year project recorded a substantial increase of 118% in total domestic and gender-based violence cases lodged during the 2 years project period compared to 7 year period from 2005—2012.

Again, this is a testimony to the fact that Samoans increasingly want to 'speak out' and seek assistance.

8. THE PROJECT OUTCOMES—SAVING LIVES

For the Help Line to go that extra mile and save lives is a milestone achievement for this Project.

- The 58 attempted suicide survivors in which the Help Line were able to saved is a highlight. 18 of them are youth ages 18– 23 and are now under the SVSG Junior Empowerment Programs;
- The 185 women and children survivors of violence who have suffered injuries from violence have been immediately referred to the National Health Services or the NHS outposts in Upolu and Savaii for the required medical treatment;
- The close to 3,000 women and girls survivors of violence who had the courage to pick up that phone and call for help had the multiplying effect in saving the lives of close to 100 of their children we have sheltered;
- The 15 women and girls survivors of violence further marginalized by their disabilities have been able to exercise their rights to justice just by picking up that phone;
- The lives of close to 100 women and children survivors of violence being protected by Court Orders have secured their safety while their cases have been processed through the judicial system; and
- The close to 100 women and children whom SVSG had advocated for their immediate evacuation for overseas medical treatment.

SVSG credits the media with spreading the word about the 24-hour Help Line and the constant media reports on the lives being saved which had contributed to an influx of calls that came through.