EXTERNAL REVIEW
UN WOMEN STRONGER COMMUNITIES
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2014
Contents
1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 3
2. THE PROJECT ..................................................................................................................... 3
3. METHODOLOGY OF EXTERNAL REVIEW ............................................................................ 4
4. IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES .................................................................................. 4
5. RECOMMENDATIONS ........................................................................................................ 11
6. CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................... 14
7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..................................................................................................... 14
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) was established in 2005 with the vision of ensuring that victims of sexual crimes were well supported, safe and in control of restoring their lives. This vision is the basis of the SVSG constitution and the work of SVSG is guided by the principles of fairness, integrity and Christianity to achieve this vision.

1.2 The UN Women Stronger Communities Project (Project) was initiated by SVSG in 2011 to empower village leaders in rural Samoa to take action against violence in their communities. The focus of the project was twofold – the prevention of violence against women, and responding to existing violence within village communities. With respect to prevention of violence, SVSG sought to achieve this through implement awareness programs and training of Village Representatives. In relation to responding to existing violence within communities, SVSG sought to establish support networks to empower women to combat violence within their own families, and wider communities.

1.3 The objective of this report is to provide an external review to establish, first what was done to achieve the goals set out by SVSG for the Project, and secondly, what in fact was achieved.

2. THE PROJECT

2.1 The Project’s objectives are:

Objective 1: To enhance capacity of SVSG Village Representatives to advocate within their communities to end violence against women.

Objective 2: To build communication between SVSG and Police and the community to increase use of the formal justice system to combat violence.

Objective 3: To build informed and active networks among women in rural Samoa to create support systems for women threatened by violence.

Objective 4: To increase awareness of law reform that enhances the ability of individuals and communities to end violence against women.

2.2 The methodology of SVSG in carrying out the Project can be illustrated in the diagram below.

![Diagram 1](image-url)
3. METHODOLOGY OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

3.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information on the review of the overall Project. The review of the overall Project shall focus on the following tasks:

3.2 The methodology used by the reviewers in conduction the review of S V S G work in relation to the Project is set out in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 PHASE ONE: Data Collection</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collect list of village representatives</td>
<td>S V S G</td>
<td>Tuesday 11 March 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collect list of training aimed at providing village representatives with the requisite skills to assist women combat violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interviews with village representatives and Pulenu’u to discuss their training and practical outcomes of the Project in regards to building networks in the community</td>
<td>Review Team</td>
<td>Wednesday 12 March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interview with Police and other relevant agencies in regards to building relationships in communication with S V S G</td>
<td>Review Team</td>
<td>Wednesday 12 March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Obtain any relevant data from law reform regarding increase awareness to end violence against women</td>
<td>Review Team</td>
<td>Wednesday 12 March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 PHASE TWO: Analysis of Data Collected</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review and critically analyze the information collected from Phase One</td>
<td>Review Team</td>
<td>Thursday 13 March 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 PHASE THREE: Reporting of External Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compile a Report outlining:</td>
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<td>• the objectives and TOR of the Project;</td>
<td>Friday 14 March 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>• the objectives and TOR of the External Review;</td>
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<td>• the outcomes achieved by the Project;</td>
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<td>• the results of the External Review;</td>
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<td>• Outline any recommendations to follow.</td>
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4. IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES

4.1 The Project was implemented in four strategic stages as illustrated by Diagram 1 above. This part of the report will outline each of those strategies, and assess the projected outcome/outputs against the actual outcome/outputs achieved.
4.2 The four strategies of the Project were; grassroots advocacy, village network support systems, livelihood programs, and public awareness campaigns.

4.3 Grassroots Advocacy Strategy

4.3.1 Project Objective addressed by Strategy
4.3.1.1 The Grassroots Advocacy Strategy encompassed the training of SVSG management and Village Representatives in the how to advocate for an end to violence. This strategy focused on addressing Objectives 1, 2 and 4 of the Project as outlined in 2.1 above.

4.3.2 Goal of Strategy
4.3.2.1 The goal of this strategy in achieving Objectives 1 and 2 of the Project was twofold. First it was to train SVSG Management and Village Representatives on how to advocate for an end to violence. And secondly, to then roll out a “grassroots” advocacy campaign through the trained Village Representatives to facilitate meetings with persons identified in the community as “decision makers” – such as pulenu’u (high chiefs), faife’au (pastors, religious leaders) – to present and discuss the variety of strategies and tactics to combat violence within their communities.

4.3.2.2 Furthermore, the goal of the strategy in achieving Objective 4 of the Project was to train SVSG Management in advocacy and volunteer management to have the capabilities to lobby Government in implementing legislative changes and finance projects aimed at ending violence against women.

4.3.3 Projected outcome/output
4.3.3.1 The Project projected that 300 Village Representatives would be trained in the skills and strategies of advocacy by December 2011.

4.3.4 Actual outcome/output
4.3.4.1 Since the inception of the Project in 2011, SVSG has a record of over 500 Village Representatives. These Village Representatives are located across the islands of Upolu and Savai’i. All Representatives undergo initial advocacy and basic skills training in respect of how to undertake their roles as the first aid to victims when an incident of violence is reported.

4.3.4.2 SVSG in partnership with Caritas New Zealand implemented a one year project, from January to December of 2011. This project aimed at training Village Representatives and empowering them to work within their communities to provide, education, support and crisis care in regards to violence or sexual crimes. This training project was a success in many parts; mainly it highlighted the important roles of Village Representatives in maintaining peace and harmony within times of crisis, as well as the commitment and volunteering spirit of the Village Representatives to serve their communities. The training provided by Caritas also contributes
the professional development of the individual Representatives by providing training on how to approach and handle victim of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

4.3.4.3 However, not every Village in Samoa is represented. The shortfall in achieving a Village Representative from each Village is due to the difficulties in breaking down cultural barriers with some Village Councils. There is a misconception that SVSG will take away the traditional power of the Council to adjudicate matters in the traditional sense. However, this is being addressed by public awareness programs such as regional meetings, television advertisements, and billboards, to show how SVSG assists Villages with how to understand and implement better methods and tactics of adjudicating matters, with a focus to ameliorate traditional methods.

4.3.4.4 During the consultation process of this review, Village Representatives spoke of their own Village initiated projects within their communities through the Church and Youth Groups to advocate against violence as well as promoting awareness in respect of safety of women and children and their rights. These projects are wholly funded by the volunteers and Village Representatives who host these programs. It is both time and resource intensive; however, the Village Representatives who have used their training to initiate these further awareness programs have reported that there is a need for such awareness programs. They have reported that either there has been a decrease in the number of reported crimes as a result of the awareness and a change of attitudes towards women, or it is because of the awareness programs more reporting of violence against women has occurred as people are not afraid to speak out because they are aware and understand that there is help for affected women and have accepted a no tolerance for violence within their communities.

4.4 Village Networks Support Systems Strategy
4.4.1 Project Objective addressed by Strategy

4.4.1.1 The Village Networks Support System Strategy focused on facilitating networks between village women to create support systems that would assist women to combat violence in their homes, and extended families, as well as provide support to those networks with legal and counseling services. This strategy focused on addressing Objectives 2 and 3 of the Project, outlined in 2.1 above. In terms of SVSG’s working relationship with Police, there are regular fortnightly meetings between the Police Heads of Department such as the Criminal Investigation Unit, Domestic Violence Unit and the SVSG where both parties give reports on the current status of matters handled by the SVSG and Police. These meetings ensure a system of ‘follow up’ on cases launched by the SVSG to the Police for investigations and it has significantly helped both sides to identify areas that need working improvement.

4.4.1.2 The exposure of some of the sensitive information to the media while Police investigation is ongoing has also resulted in producing different expectations from the public interest and the Court. As such there is a need for some kind of controlled mechanism to assist the need of the SVSG in advocating awareness campaign programs and not on the expense of Police ongoing investigations.
4.4.1.3 The handling of cases especially the approach taken by both group before the matter reach its final decision in Court can be a delicate areas for both group. It has been identified that there are complex cases where the SVSG reached out in the spirit love to a victim of a crime and remove him/her from an abusive environment can be a dilemma if not done properly. For instance, after the removal of a victim from a hostile environment the Police were informed to investigate the case and by the time the Police arrived to conduct investigations of the family of the victim, the Police faced a dilemma of ‘withdraw’ or a ‘hard wall’ approach from these people. As a result the Police have difficulties in obtaining all the best evidences to assist such a poor victim. It is not uncommon for families to attempt to hide the incident. However SVSG can attend with a police officer in future so police may be involved right from the beginning.

4.4.2 Goal of Strategy
4.4.2.1 The goal of this strategy was to bring large numbers of adult women together in the larger village districts throughout Samoa, and facilitate the building of support networks to combat and prevent violence. The aim of these meetings was to promote a greater awareness amongst women of the prevalence of violence, and the effects of violence. It was also intended that SVSG would be able to make the women aware of the help and support that SVSG offers, in terms of refuge, case assistance, police support and legal advice and counseling.

4.4.2.2 SVSG also aimed at consulting with Police from General Policing, Domestic Violence and Criminal Investigation Divisions, to identify key challenges that Police encounter with victims of violence. This consultation sought to find solutions or strategies for SVSG to work with victims in overcoming any identified challenges, and assist with victim cooperation in investigations and prosecutions.

4.4.3 Projected outcome/output
4.4.3.1 The projected outcome of the Village Networks Support System Strategy was for Villages in rural Samoa to be proactive in taking steps to combat and prevent violence against women.

4.4.3.2 Furthermore, that SVSG and Samoa Police work together to address violence against women. This is sought to be tracked by a collection of data to monitor the use of the formal justice system, and outcomes of cases.

4.4.4 Actual outcome/output
As outlined in paragraph 4.3.4.4 above, Village Representatives have been proactive in initiating awareness projects to combat and prevent violence within their communities.

4.4.4.1 From the fortnightly meetings of Police and SVSG, areas have been identified that can help the Police and the SVSG in advancing their working relations. There is still the unavoidable element of ‘communications breakdown’ from poor dissemination of information which both sides is constantly working on improvements.
4.4.4.2 The working relations between the Police and the SVSG have produced much success. The following areas have been identified as some of the key areas in which the SVSG has greatly assisted the Police in the investigations of cases (but not limited to sexual offences):

- Counseling victims of sexual offending;
- Preparing Victims for investigations;
- Providing shelters for vulnerable victims;
- Ensuring victims are available for criminal investigations and Court trials;
- Preparing victims for trials by building their self-esteem and their spiritual wellbeing;
- Provide a back-up support in terms of finding evidence;
- The effective use of SVSG village representatives in locating missing witnesses and victims;
- Locating witnesses and transporting them to Court;
- Providing support to Police resources.

The service and support rendered by the SVSG has tremendously beneficial as it helps victims of crimes have their cases successfully reach the Court system and produce positive outcomes. Communication between Police and SVSG has also been improved by the relocation of one of the SVSG offices close to main Police headquarters in Apia. This assists when Police need to get information from the victim during investigations and also when Police receive complainants of domestic violence and they can immediately take the victim to the nearby SVSG shelter for counseling. Police also note that having SVSG village representatives who provide information instantaneously and who are readily available to assist in removing a victim of domestic violence from a hostile environment is extremely helpful to their work. Often Police officers do not possess the necessary training to approach these types of situations and the role of village representatives as links to the village is invaluable to them.

4.5 Samoa Women Survivors of Violence Livelihood Programs Strategy
4.5.1 Project Objective addressed by Strategy
4.5.1.1 The Livelihood Programs Strategy aimed at providing women at risk of violence with the opportunity to attend livelihood training to build self-esteem and self-worth. This strategy focused on addressing Objective 3 of the Project, outlined in 2.1 above. This strategy was carried out in four (4) sessions across the country with the first three (3) sessions taking place at the coastal, inland and western rural parts of Upolu and the fourth session taking place in Savaii.

4.5.2 Goal of Strategy
4.5.2.1 The goal of this strategy was important to the Objectives of the Project in two main ways; first to provide a positive environment for creating support networks, and secondly to provide women at risk with an opportunity to learn skills that will give them economic independence, as well as an increased sense of worth and self esteem.
4.5.2.2 The livelihood strategy sought to involve training women in the skills of basic hairdressing, flower arranging, and commercial cooking. Each skill has been identified because of the low start up costs, availability of customers and materials, and that there is a market within the village district, as well as the limited resources and funds available to SVSG to conduct this program.

4.5.3 Projected outcome/output
4.5.3.1 The outcome sought as a result of this strategy was that women at risk would gain livelihood skills to have a greater sense of worth and self esteem, whilst enabled to participate and contribute to the village economy. The strategy took place as a workshop spread over 3-4 days and focused on teaching women four (4) livelihood skills to empower survivors of violence and allow them to gain economic independence. The four (4) skills were commercial cooking, flower arrangement, vegetable gardening and elei printing (painting traditional motifs on material for resale).

4.5.4 Actual outcome/output
4.5.4.1 The livelihood program was carried out accordingly. However, when the project was launched in the village of Leauva’a in Upolu, SVSG received suggestions from the women survivors that they would prefer the project of “fish-farming” which would benefit the village as a whole not just the individual survivors. SVSG took this recommendation under advisement and for Leauva’a they launched a fish-farming project with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Positive responses to the change were recorded and during review, a total of 1,050 participants to all livelihood trainings were noted from the surveys being completed.

4.5.4.2 In turn this project also received a lot of media coverage which helped the women to promote their market and spread the news of the project itself to other villages. According to SVSG there is ongoing technical support for these projects from the Ministry who often sends officers to monitor the progress of the farms and also to supply the village with the tools to make new farms as the fish ponds are constantly expanding. Also this project has a wider range of beneficiaries besides the women themselves who take part in the project. This is known as the ripple effect where the women who gain skills essential to empowerment and economic independence share this benefit with their children and other members of their family. Therefore for every participant there is at least one other secondary beneficiary who is enabled and is one less link in the cycle of domestic violence.

4.5.4.3 SVSG also recorded that from these sessions there have been requests for additional workshops and in Upolu, Savaii and even American Samoa. The Review Team sees this as confirmation of the success of the workshops as well as the theory that these workshops have a ripple effect reaching others either because they share in the participant’s benefits (for example children and close relatives) from the workshop or by witnessing the benefits a workshop participant receives (persons from the same community).
4.5.4.4 A possible program to carry out in the future in relation to this strategy can be to set up a fair for women to promote their skills thereby expanding their current market. Ideally this would take place in the commercial hubs of the country to allow for maximum exposure and advertisement.

4.6 Public Awareness Campaign Strategy
4.6.1 Project Objective addressed by Strategy
4.6.1.1 The Public Awareness Campaign Strategy focused on running public awareness initiatives throughout rural Samoa to raise awareness of the formal justice system, amendments to laws in Samoa that impact on violence against women and to increase knowledge of support services available to the communities. Furthermore, this strategy focused on raising awareness to key stakeholders, and Government, in relation to law reform to enhance the ability of the communities to access justice and end violence against women. This strategy focused on addressing Objective 4 of the Project as outlined in 2.1 above.

4.6.2 Goal of Strategy
4.6.2.1 The Strategy sought to contribute to the Project Objectives by:
- Make free legal advice and community legal information brochures accessible to women in rural Samoa;
- Case workers and family/criminal specialists to provide advice in confidential setting to women who are subject of violence, or family or friends seeking help for a woman in violence;
- Address the absence of counseling services for women who have encountered violence;
- Public awareness of formal justice system to enable victims of violence to make an informed decision about reporting violence.

4.6.3 Projected outcome/output
4.6.3.1 SSVG were to be active in the lobbying of Government and other key bodies to achieve law reform to benefit women who suffer from, or are threatened, by violence. SSVG’s role to achieve the Objectives of the Project, were:
- to advocate for Government support of strategies and projects being run in rural Samoa to end violence against women;
- to make recommendations to the Law Reform Commission regarding amendments to the Crimes Ordinance 1961;
- To advocate a Victims’ Act.

4.6.4 Actual outcome/output
4.6.4.1 There have been many advice brochures distributed to Villages in rural Samoa with the aim of promoting awareness of the formal legal system, as well as information to access counseling and assistance through SSVG. This was through the Canada funded Community Legal Information
Project auctioned in 2012. SVSG produced and distributed pamphlets to stands across the country, with the assistance of Village Representatives to replenish these on a regular basis.

4.6.4.2 SVSG were integral in advocating for criminalization of rape in a marital relationship, and create harsher penalties for sexual and violent offences. This in large part was due to the submissions of SVSG to the Law Reform in relation to the Issues Paper IP 01/09 regarding the Crimes Ordinance 1961 amendments. The Crimes Act 2013 has largely reflected the concerns of SVSG in their submissions to the Law Reform.

4.6.4.3 Furthermore, in 2013 Village Representatives were trained in telephone counseling for a SVSG helpline – a 24-hour crisis line which can be accessed free of charge to the caller, due to the commitment and partnership of the two major telecommunications companies in Samoa – Bluesky and Digicel.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 In summation, SVSG has implemented a wide range of strategies and projects to achieve the goals set out in 2 (above). These projects aim to be relevant, accessible and encourage communication between SVSG, the village, government stakeholders and the victim as the segments of a community who would be able to help prevent and/or minimize domestic violence. Objectives 1 & 2 focus on the development of SVSG as an organization through internal training and inter-organization reliance. This Review (Part 4.4) shows there is strong inter-reliance between SVSG, Police and other government agencies. Both parties are enthusiastic about maintaining and developing this relationship which would go beyond achieving the goals identified in objectives 1 and 2.

5.2 In summation, the structure of SVSG strategies allows the organization to lay a strong foundation for achieving the objectives identified in Part 2 of this report. The main issues identified in the review are their capacity to expand to reach more people and the capacity up from their current projects. The one issue that is constant throughout the Review is human resource; however SVSG maintains confidence that their volunteerism approach is the only way to ensure their members capture the mission statement of the organization. To this end, the Review has identified the following issues within each strategy.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 This Review identifies the sources of problems within each strategy in the hope that the UN Stronger Communities Project can identify what, if anything, they can do to assist SVSG with each of these problem areas. Considering the scope of SVSG itself the Review Team is unable to recommend specific actions that could address some of these issues.
6.2 In each strategy problem areas have been categorized as Structural Issues or Implementation Issues. Structural Issues come from within the organization and focus on concerns in the planning and execution of a strategy. Implementation Issues come from outside the organization and focus on concerns which become apparent when or after a strategy is carried out. As the reader will note, Structural and Implementation Issues can be interlinked and one will often lead to the other.

6.2.1 Grassroots Advocacy Strategy

6.2.1.1 Structural Issues

As stated in Part 4.3.4.3 of this Review, not all villages gave a representative. This means that there are villages without “eyes and ears” as the VR’s are known within SSVG. This is a serious problem as one of main purposes of a village representative is to have someone within the community to identify and report domestic violence situations where the victim is either cut-off or unwilling to report as is sometimes the case in Samoa.

6.2.1.2 Implementation Issues

This strategy initially was to train and educate SSVG Management and Village Representatives on how to go about their duties. This training was minimal and gave village representative’s basic knowledge of how to approach a victim of domestic violence and how to run miniseminars for their village’s leaders advocating against violence and creating awareness of the roles and rights of persons within a community. However VR’s have noted in the Review Meetings with them that there is a need to update the basic training they receive to cater for their growing role in the communities. This could take the form of a “refresher course” with the added benefit of more advanced advocacy and communication workshops to allow village representative’s to better communicate with their village leaders. This would allow for open dialogue between the parties and more importantly for the village leaders to feel more comfortable with their VR’s which comes from a better understanding of the role of the village representative in the village.

As noted in the Grassroots Strategy, village representative’s use their own time, money and resources to carry out their advocacy programs within their communities. The pressure on them is undeniable and SSVG has noted that because of this pressure some village representative’s have been forced to resign. Despite this, the organization is adamant that they do not want payment for their service. Tumua Tufete (Village Representative Leader) says:

"The Spirit of Volunteerism is one of the most important qualities in a SSVG member...village representatives are also immensely proud of their roles and see it as an honor to be a part of the organization"

However this review would suggest a specific budget for village level advocacy programs. As stated in this section above, village representatives take any opportunity to run domestic violence awareness and advocacy campaigns with their local Churches and Youth Groups.
However there is still a need for specific sessions for particular demography to make the messages and issues more relevant to that demographic.

The other issue which arises from this strategy is linked to the Structural Issue identified. The lack of village representative’s means that there are cases where a village representative for one village will try to open his duties to care for more than one village. In cases where both villages are receptive to this approach or where the villages are small and close to each other the only pressure is on the village representative to run enough programs to educate the occupants of the two villages. However where there is some opposition or if the villages are too large for one village representative there is a break in a network that is crucial to prevent domestic violence and protect victim’s in reported incidents.

6.2.2 Village Networks Support System
6.2.2.1 Structural Issues
This strategy is closely related to the Grassroots Advocacy Strategy but they focus on different aspects of the village representative role. In relation to this strategy the role of the village representative that needs to be looked at is how they communicate information to and from the village leaders, villages and to the main SVSG office in Apia. This network is crucial as given the level of training and transport issues; the village representative needs to get accurate advice from the Head Office on how to approach each case. Given their level of training head office advice is highly valued and gives the village representative the confidence to approach a situation if a case management officer from Apia is unable to immediately attend. Therefore the breaks in the network represented by villages without village representatives threaten the integrity of the system as a whole.

6.2.2.2 Implementation Issues
Issue which has been resolved through the development of SVSG within the community is the involvement of official bodies with SVSG. Because of the unique role that SVSG plays as advocating for the rights of victim’s they have become integral to external bodies like the Domestic Violence Unit (Ministry of Police) and investigations into sexual and personal offences cases. The one issue that Police have raised is that while they have the authority to approach victims and their families they do not have the required training to deal with the parties in these delicate situations. To this end they hope SVSG would consider running workshops to share their knowledge and experience in this area.

6.2.3 Livelihood Programs Strategy
6.2.3.1 Structural Issues
The scope of the workshop overall was relevant especially for women in the villages. However it is still very limited in terms of the range of skills they teach women. It gives women the opportunity to gain some independence but maintaining their businesses could be a problem if there is an increase in demand for their product.
6.2.3.2 Implementation Issues

The one problem noted by SVSG in this regard was the difficulty in transporting women survivors to the venue of the workshop. As much as possible SVSG would host these projects in as many areas as they could however considering the constraints on time and pressure on resources they could only hold it in three areas in Upolu and one in Savaii. The transport if women survivors to and from the workshop was borne at the cost of the survivors themselves. Considering the general standard of living in rural Samoa the cost of bus fare was a luxury few could afford. For survivors in areas which were not accessible by bus SVSG vehicles were used to transport women to and from their homes for the duration of the training in their area. The cost of implementing this project was immense to both SVSG and the survivors who attend it.

6.2.4 **Public Awareness Campaign Strategy**

6.2.4.1 Structural Issues

The structural issues for this strategy are related to the structural issues identified in 5.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.2.3. The gap in the network created by missing village representatives is crucial to how this network operates.

6.2.4.2 Implementation Issues

Most implementation issues have been solved by the assistance of Bluesky and Digicel in setting up a 24-hour free call hotline to report crimes and also for counselling as required. However their remains the problem that is a village lacks a village representative SVSG has little ties to the village and may have trouble approaching a family to remove the victim. Considering the social structures of Samoan communities outsiders, even if they be Samoan would find it difficult to approach a village to bring a victim to safety. The point of a village representative is to strengthen ties between the community and SVSG, without this link SVSG has no footing within the village and may face obstruction from the village, village leaders and the family themselves.

7. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The External Review Team would like to acknowledge the contributions of SVSG and the Village Representatives, Pule Nu’u and Police who contributed to the data collection for the collaboration of this Report.