

# Addressing drug and alcohol use as key contributors to violence against women

Samoa [Ending Violence Against Women](#)

December 8, 2017

Project Name: Support to Drug and Alcohol Court Services

Project partner: Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration

Total funding: \$40,000

Funding timeframe: 2016-2018



Mr Muliagatele David Carter, Probation Officer and Programs Facilitator (left) and Mr Luamanuvae Toma Petelo, Case Management Officer. Photo: Samoa Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.

Recognising that alcohol and drug use contributes to violence, Samoan Women Shaping Samoan Development (SWSDP) is funding a case management officer at the pilot Alcohol and Drugs Court. By partnering on this new court initiative with the Ministry of Justice, Courts and Administration, the Australian aid program's [Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development](#) initiative is helping to reduce incidences of substance abuse and violence against women.

[‘Since taking up this role, everyone who’s been in this program has not reoffended’, says Mr Luamanuvae Toma Petelo, Case Management Officer. ‘The support and the contribution from the SWSDP has made this program](#)

possible. The significance of this contribution has given our program's participants a second chance in life.'

Mr Petelo supports substance abusers and perpetrators of gender-based violence to change attitudes and behaviours in relation to their drug and alcohol consumption and use of violence. The aim is for women and children to feel safer and to be treated more fairly and equitably within their families, communities and in public places.

'I did not realise my drug addiction was really bad until this program,' explains one participant. 'Before, I relied heavily on drugs... This program has made me realise that my substance abuse was hurting my family, especially my partner.'

Mr Petelo runs multi-week programs addressing issues including alcohol and drug use, anger management and violence prevention, all delivered in local language.

'This program has really made me realise what I was doing wrong and how my actions were affecting those around me,' says another participant. 'This program has taught me that I am capable of becoming a better person and that I can always make a positive change. I am a father and I need to set a good example for my son. I know that my behaviour will affect those around me, so if I choose well, maybe those who are going through the same problem may follow.'

Mr Petelo confirms that there has been a significant change of attitude towards alcohol, drugs, abuse and violence for the participants.

'Most participants came to this program more worried about the law, but did not really think about the consequences on their health and spirituality such as the low self-esteem and the self-blaming. This program has helped them understand the impact of their actions not only on themselves [but also] on others.'

*\*This Story of Change was originally published in the [Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2016 – 2017](#). All values are consistent with that reporting period. For the most up-to-date value of activities, visit our [interactive map](#).*