

MGOS RESPONSE AND QUESTIONS FROM THE CSOs IN SAMOA TO THE VNR OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SAMOA

We welcome the Samoa Government's (SG) second round of VNR 2020.

Since the progress established with VNR 2016, poverty, unemployment and unmet needs for essential services still challenge Samoa. This calls for improved partnership with civil society on the strategy, allocation of budgets, implementation and monitoring impacts of SDGs in Samoa (including anti-corruption efforts); and investment in capacity building, to achieve improved quality of life for All.

Samoa is currently COVID19 free, however the threat has exposed our vulnerabilities. We cannot rely on Tourism. The SG must invest in primary industries and locally owned businesses to ensure sustainable livelihoods during crisis periods.

To achieve the SDGs and leave no one behind...

- Deeper 'grassroots' engagement must effect socio-economic rural developments.
- There is an urgent need to develop our local market for agricultural products, and support local commodities; redirect foreign aid or government funds towards smaller farm operations to build local resilience. We need consumers to choose local products.
- Access to customary land is a cultural and constitutional right of indigenous Samoans. It should not be compromised by commercial or economic interests of the government or foreign business. The SG's emphasis on single title land registration destroys the Fa'a Samoa concept of collective ownership.
- Rural areas need access to roads, water, waste management, electricity, security, health and social services. These are crucial to employment creation and the wellbeing of Samoans.
- Recognition that organic farming practices is the answer to sustainable agriculture to promote healthier food, lifestyles, soil health, biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.
- Social services are still failing to address violence against women, youth suicide, crime, addiction and mental health.
- More than 10% of persons with disabilities have never been to school. This does not include other children and youth on the streets. Education and meaningful outcomes is a fundamental right for All.