WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: THE 2016 ELECTION IN SAMOA

Ruta Fiti-Sinclair, Penelope Schoeffel and Malama Meleisea

Centre for Samoan Studies
National University of Samoa

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Executive Summary

In 2013 the government of Samoa passed an amendment to the Electoral Act which guaranteed women 10% of seat in parliament. If fewer than five women are elected, up to five additional seats will be established to be filled by those women who did not win the seat, but who scored the highest number of votes. Twenty four women out of a total of 164 candidates stood for the 2016 elections of which four won seats, no more than in previous elections. However the legislative change allowed the female candidate that polled the highest amongst all female candidates and satisfied the quota to take a seat in parliament, thus increasing the number of Parliamentarians from 49 to 50.

Prior to the 2016 elections Samoa’s development partners working with the media and civil society promoted women’s candidacy. Increasing Political Participation of Women in Samoa (IPPWS) was a joint programme of both the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women (UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) in partnership with the governments of Samoa and Australia, and with the support of a number of local partner organisations.

This report briefly reviews some key findings on cultural obstacles to women’s political participation in villages (Meleisea et.al. 2015). This found that although most villages in Samoa do not formally or overtly discriminate against women matai there are barriers of Samoan ‘custom and usage’ to women’s participation in village government.

Following the elections in 2016 all the women who stood were interviewed and their reflections of their experience form the main part of this report.

Some of the common themes that emerged from the interviews are as follows:

- Programs that were designed to increase the number of women elected to parliament did not have much of an impact, according to most of the women who stood for the 2016 elections, although those who took part in these programs found them interesting and inspiring.
- The ‘women’ issue in the election many have been over-exposed to an electorate that, in general, was accustomed to male leadership, and which may have ‘switched off’ because most people did not see why it was important for women to be in parliament and so voted according to local preferences.
- “Playing by the rules”, as specified in the electoral Act was emphasised in the training. But many women concluded that by obeying the law against bribery they reduced their chances of winning the seat. Nearly all the candidates said the law was widely disregarded.
- Many candidates emphasised the importance of studying the electoral roll for the constituency. A knowledgeable candidate will be able to identify voters on the basis of their eligibility and where they are living (in the electorate or in town) as well as those whose names should be removed from the roll because they have passed away.
- Most of the candidates said that experience taught them that women voters do not support women candidates because they are women. Women in Samoa are accustomed to men being the leaders and decision-makers. There is a need to raise the awareness of women voters about issues of particular concern to women, and why having women in parliament to raise these issues is important.
• Most of the women who took part in training said participation in a church committee, village council, and other local organisations were more important than becoming known using modern methods of campaigning with posters, pamphlets, radio and TV and focussing on development issues.

• Candidates said that by standing for election they had learned the importance of "being there"—if not actually living in the village, then participating regularly and long term in local events, in the village council, in a church in the electorate. Having a supportive extended family in one or more of the villages in the electorate is important. These opinions confirm 2014–2015 research findings on women and local government in Samoa (Meleisea et.al. 2015).

• Culture matters: A person aspiring to become an MP should ideally hold a matai title of high rank and seniority. Women matai should sit in the village council (fono) but few do so.

• Electoral success depends on a long term plan. Training, campaigning and NGO activities in the months just before the election are seldom effective. A candidate needs to prepare for at least five years of the electoral cycle before the elections to build support in the electorate, though generosity, participation in village and district and church affairs, and to become well known as a potential village and district leader.
1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction
This report presents reflections on the experiences of the 24 woman candidates who stood in 14 electorates in the 2016 Parliamentary elections in Samoa. The information was collected by means of semi-structured individual interviews, in July–November 2016, with the candidates, both those who won seats and those who did not.

It builds on prior research conducted in the period 2013–2015; a nationwide survey of women’s participation in political and economic village-based organizations, covering all ‘traditional’ villages and sub-villages in Samoa. The results of this research were published in November 2015 and included an analysis of policy significance of the findings on barriers to women’s political participation in Samoa. Its overall finding was that there are both formal and informal barriers to women’s equal participation in local government: women have very little voice in the governance of villages, which are the foundation stones of the national political system.

Samoan women have achieved approximate equality to men in most modern spheres of government and private enterprise, yet women have never, since Samoa’s independence in 1962, succeeded in winning more than five seats in the 49 seat parliament. In most previous parliaments, women have held only one or two seats, usually for a single term. In 2015 Samoa was among the countries ranked lowest in the world for women’s representation in parliament, at 128 out of 140 countries.

Following criticisms of Samoa’s progress towards meeting commitments to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) the government of Samoa considered what affirmative action or intervention, given the unique characteristics of the Samoan electoral processes, could be taken to enable more women to win seats.

1.2 Previous elections campaigns for women
Prior to the 2006 elections, campaigning by the Inailau Women’s Leadership Network, led by the Samoa National Council of Women, encouraged unprecedented numbers of women to contest the elections. However, these efforts failed to translate to a significant increase, with only five out of the 22 women candidates being elected which was no more than in 1996 when five were also elected. In the 2010 election the number of women candidates dropped to the level of the 2001 election with two women elected. As the chart below shows, there was a big increase in women candidates prior to the 2006 elections compared to previous elections, the result of a national advocacy campaign. However, the campaign did not did not result in more women being elected than in 1996 or in
previous elections. In 2011 the number of candidates dropped along with the number of women elected. There has been no change to the pattern of outcomes since independence; the proportions of women elected to parliament have remained below the 10 per cent mark; below a count of 5 successful candidates within a 49-member parliament.

**Figure 1: Number of women Candidates and seat won by women 1961-2011:**

![Graph showing the number of women candidates and seats won by women from 1961 to 2011.](image)

Source: So’o, 2012.

**1.3 Affirmative Legal measures for the 2016 elections.**

Parity laws have been used in some other democracies (e.g. Timor Leste, Rwanda, France) to give women equal opportunity. Such measures usually depend on a political party system in which single candidates are preselected by parties for each electorate to contest an election. Parity laws usually require parties to endorse equal numbers of male and female candidates. This measure is not an option for Samoa because the political parties do not pre-select a single candidate for each electorate prior to elections. It is common for candidates who have declared themselves supporters of the same party to compete against one another for votes in an electorate. However, a candidate, once elected with a commitment to a particular party, may not legally switch allegiance to another party without endorsement from his or her electorate, which means a by-election is required.

In 2013 the government of Samoa passed an amendment to the Electoral Act which guaranteed women 10% of seat in parliament. If fewer than five women are elected, up to five additional seats will be established to be filled by those women who did not win the seat, but who scored the highest number of votes. In 2016 the 10% quota for women parliamentarians was administered following the official count. Only one seat was needed to satisfy the quota to make up five women.
parliamentarians. In the 2016 election this provision satisfied the quota by allowing the female candidate who polled the highest amongst all female candidates to become a member of parliament (MP), thus increasing the number of Parliamentarians to 50.

In the 2016 election there were 24 candidates of whom four won seats, no more than in previous elections. However the legislative change allowed the female candidate who polled the highest amongst all female candidates and satisfied the quota (from Gagaifomauga No 3) to become the fifth woman MP, thus increasing the number of Parliamentarians from 49 to 50 (Electoral Commission, 2016).

1.4 Support for women candidates in the 2016 election

Prior to the 2016 elections development partners working with the media and civil society promoted women's candidacy. Increasing Political Participation of Women in Samoa (IPPWS) was a joint programme of both the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women (UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) in partnership with the governments of Samoa and Australia, and with the support of a number of local partner organisations. The IPPWS programme focused on awareness-raising and education, capacity building for women participating in the electoral process, and providing information and training to political parties ahead of the election. It also provides postelection mentoring support for all members of parliament on subjects such as gender-responsive budgeting and gender-sensitive legislation. IPPWS activities included using a multi-media approach to informing citizens of the constitutional amendment, how to register and vote, recent policy and legislative changes to the Elections Act, and promoting women to run for office. This specific communications strategy, capitalized on communities with high penetration by TV and radio networks, access to local newspapers and social media platforms. The programme provided some assistance with brochure production for candidates but did not otherwise provide financial assistance to campaign.

Among the activities of IPPWS was Elections Talk (Fa’asāoa i Le Pāloa) a weekly call back show focused on promoting women’s political participation. Hosted by Samoa Ala Mai, an NGO that aims to develop leaders and promote women in office, it aired from September, 2015 to March, 2016. Over that period, Elections Talk was played on two radio stations. Programs covered topics such as the Constitutional Amendment and voter registration awareness; promoting women in leadership and encouraging women to run for office, and providing female candidates with a platform to promote their campaigns. More than half of the 24 candidates who ran for office were interviewed on air. There was emphasis on media coverage in the IPPWS including workshops on gender
sensitive election reporting in August 2015 for National University of Samoa (NUS) journalism students and NGO representatives

The Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations—SUNGO participated in a workshop to lead community outreach engagement on the importance of voter registration and participation, appreciation of women in leadership roles and understanding the constitutional amendment and the most recent legislative changes. The trainers reached out to rural and urban communities all over the nation (a total of 30 villages on Upolu and Savai‘i) in preparation for the national elections. The trainings were hosted by Gender and Elections specialist Audrey Manu, UN Women and applied the BRIDGE methodology. Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) is a modular professional development program designed to promote and reinforce professional confidence, ethics, comprehension of principles of best electoral practice, and access to networks of peers. It included guest speakers from the Office of the Electoral Commissioner, the Samoa Human Rights Institute, and UNDP Samoa contributed to the training.

Another activity was Roundtables on Women in Politics to discuss why women should participate in political life of Samoa. As part of the community outreach strategy, IPPWS partnered with the Centre for Samoan Studies (CSS), National University of Samoa to produce four roundtable discussions on Women in Politics. The panel debates were aired, focusing on the topics of: Female candidates and experiences in the current election, media analysis of the political landscape, youth and the elections, and a post-elections analysis. The aim of the roundtables was to inform voters on female candidates and the electoral process as well as debate the political issues that emerged from the election campaigns. The roundtables intended to inspire registered voters to participate and feel more invested in the process.

Despite all these activities, the results for women were disappointing, with no more women winning seat than in previous elections over the past 54 years.

1.5 Findings on gender and political participation
Research in 2014-15 (Meleisea et. al.) investigated the reason why few women participate in local government, as well as in the national parliament. The study predicted that electorates comprising one or more of the 17 villages that do not recognise women matai (chiefs, heads of families), are unlikely to elect a woman candidate. Although most villages in Samoa do not formally or overtly discriminate against women matai there are barriers of Samoan ‘custom and usage’ to women’s participation in village government.
Since the 1960s, increasing numbers of Samoan women have become *matai*, often in recognition of their educational and career achievements; however the study found that of all village-based *matai*, only about 5% are women. The research found that the system of traditional village government in Samoa presents significant barriers that limit women’s access to and participation in decision-making forums in local government councils, church leadership, school management and community-based organisations.

The most common obstacle to women’s voice in local government is that among the very few female *matai* living in villages, even fewer sit in the village councils. This form of exclusion is very difficult to quantify because it may not be formally articulated, but is more of an unspoken norm. Their absence reinforces public perceptions—even religious beliefs—that married women should take her status from her husband, that decision-making in the public sphere is a male prerogative, not only in the village councils, but also in the church, in village school committees, and by extension, in national parliament. Without significant participation in leadership decision-making at the village level, it is difficult for women to become—or to be seen as—national leaders.

It found that, irrespective of sex, in the past successful female members of parliament have shared certain characteristics. Membership of the council of the village to which the title belongs at the time of the election appears to have been important for election success. Membership of one of the mainstream churches (Congregational, Catholic or Methodist) in the electorate was also an important factor; most of the elected women are members or deacons of a church in the electorate.

Education is an important factor affecting whether women stand for election. Most of the women *matai* (both those who won seats and those that did not) had attained post-secondary levels of education and had a background in government or business. The majority held *ali‘i* rather than *tulafale* titles. All were of a ‘mature’ age (over 40). The research found, further, that historically, women who were unmarried widowed or married to part-Samoans or non-Samoans have had an advantage in winning seats. We infer that this is because, in a village setting, a married woman takes her status from her husband, and very few women resident in villages have *matai* titles.
Family connections were important. The three serving women MPs re-elected in 2011 (and 2016) won seat formerly held by close family members. Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata‘afa holds the seat (and had held it for over 20 years) that was held by her late mother before her, and before that by her late father, Mata‘afa Fiame Faumuina Mulinu‘u II, who was Samoa’s first prime minister. Hon. Gatolaifa’ana Amataga Alesana-Gidlow has held her seat for nearly 10 years; it was previously held by her late father who was Prime Minister of Samoa from 1982 to 1997. Hon. Faimalotoa Kika Stowers Ah Kau won a seat in a by-election in 2015 that was previously held by her late uncle.

It is likely that the sex of these three MPs was of minor relevance to their electoral success, since they were evidently chosen on the basis of electoral recognition of their important connections, personal and family standing, and record of service. Indeed most of the women interviewed emphasised how important family connections are in obtaining electoral support, and the three women MPs all made the point that although it is necessary to have sufficient funds for a solid campaign, what matters in the longer term is a record of service to the village and the electoral district in terms of contributions to its development and religious activities.

2. POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF SAMOA

2.1 Background
Samoa gained political independence in 1962 as a modern state with a Westminster-style democratic constitution in which the prime minister is elected by the parliament and appoints the cabinet. Until the late 1970s, leadership was mainly based on traditional rank and village consensus, but the emergence of political factions that cut across traditional political boundaries eventually led to the formation of political parties. The first political parties were established in 1982. The Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) won office in 1988 and has been in power since then. Political authority and decision-making is tightly centralised upon the cabinet, which approves all senior appointments in the government bureaucracy (So’o, 2012).
2.2 Geography
Of the population of Samoa, 69% of households live on customary land in villages, 25% live on freehold land, mainly in the urban area, and the remainder live on government or church-owned land (SBS, 2011:87). The Apia urban area is located on Upolu; the most densely populated region of the country is North West Upolu, followed by the rural areas Upolu Island and Savai’i Island. A very small township on Savaii, within the boundaries of the village of Salelologa, is not yet designated ‘urban’ but provides many of the island’s core services and facilities (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

Map 1: Samoa and its major traditional districts

Source: Ezilon.com

2.3 Local government
Traditional local government in Samoa is based on village councils (fono) made up of matai who represent the families of the village. The council commands two other village organisations; village women’s committees (komiti) and associations of untitled men (‘āumaga). This system is often referred to as ‘fa’amatai’ and is referred to as the foundation (fa’avae) of Samoan custom and tradition.

Samoa has over 275 local government areas of which 192 are traditional villages, 48 are sub-villages of traditional villages, and 35 are non-traditional villages. Non-traditional villages include new settlements, large residential compounds and suburban areas. Each recognised local government area has an elected or appointed village representative (Sui o le nu’u) who acts as a liaison between
the local community and the central government. Village women’s committees also elect representatives (Sui tama’ita’i).

2.4 Matai leadership
Matai (chiefs, heads of lineages) hold titles (ancestral names) that are the common property of a lineage comprising all those who are ancestrally connected (suli) to the title. Titles are conferred by a consensus decision among the male and female elders of the lineage. The Samoan kinship system is flexible and allows an individual to trace ancestry through both maternal and paternal connections. The primary affiliation by an individual—which section of his or her family he or she has the strongest attachment to—is usually determined by residence. Thus, if a person lives with his or her father’s family, he or she mainly contributes to that family and serves its matai (while if a person lives with his or her mother’s family, he or she will contribute to that family). Each matai title is associated with one village except in the case of a few paramount titles which may be associated with several villages).

Matai are leaders in two equally important spheres of authority, both of which depend on consultation and consensus. The first level is authority within the family, which is given to the matai in the expectation that he or she will consult with family elders in making decisions; the second is the authority of the village council in which, despite inequalities in the rank of its constituent matai, every matai has a voice in reaching a consensus decision.

Any person holding a registered matai title may stand for parliament. However, until 1991 only registered matai could vote in or be candidates for elections. Following a referendum in that year, the franchise was extended to all persons over 21 years of age but there was no change to the provision that only matai are eligible to stand as candidates for election to parliament. Matai are persons upon whom a title has been ritually bestowed by the senior male and female members of the extended family or lineage (āiga) to whom the title belongs, usually with the endorsement of the village with which the title is historically associated. A matai serves as head of that family. If resident in a village, a matai usually represents that family in the local village council, and often in church committees and other village-based organisations as well.

2.5 The Village
Village councils (fono) are comprised of a group of matai each representing the men, women of the families that elected them to hold their matai title that belongs to the village (nu’u). The ritual bestowal of matai titles usually requires acknowledgement of the village to which the title belongs before the title can be legally registered. The normal legally-sanctioned procedure is for the title bestowal ceremony to be held in the village to which the title belongs.
A traditional village (*nu’u*) is a traditional polity governing a group of extended families within a territory, which typically extends from the top of the central ridge of mountains to the coast. Village councils are based on a traditional system of authority which has existed for at least the past 200 years and likely for longer. Each council comprises *matai* who represent the families of the village. They have assigned seating places, ranked according to traditional criteria.

*Matai* make decisions for the village in council, based on consensus and following discussions in which all *matai* have the right to express opinions. Traditional villages are governed by one village council of *matai*, with one village representative (*Sui o Nu’u*) elected by the village council, with a traditional honorific salutation (*fa’alupēga*) that specifies the rank and history of the *matai* titles of the village, and usually with traditional associations of untitled men and ‘daughters’ of the village, and a women’s committee.

Most villages have at least one named sub-village (*pitonu’u*). Some villages, particularly in densely populated north-west Upolu, are gradually being divided into separate villages as the population grows. In some large traditional villages, sub-villages operate as separate villages, even though they are not formally recognised as such. In some instances the sub-villages are highly organised and apply traditional governance structures, with a sub-village council and a sub-village representative who make decisions at the sub-village level.

Village governments have considerable power and authority in deciding priorities for the provision of health and education services, water supply, agricultural development, business operations, land use, customary observances and maintenance of law and order. Thus, they exercise considerable influence over land, fisheries and other important resources. The village is the foundation stone of the electoral system in Samoa. The people of the 192 ‘traditional’ villages comprise the majority of the voting population in all but two of Samoa’s parliamentary constituencies.

### 2.6 Constituencies

When Samoa became independent in 1962 the electoral system was designed as far as possible to accommodate the country’s traditional political districts (Map 1) so that territorial constituencies would be aligned with them.

The 49 territorial constituencies use the first-past-the-post voting system. In previous elections two seats were reserved for ‘individual’ voters. The individual voters roll was established at independence to provide for part-Samoan citizens or naturalised citizens who did not have a family *matai* or a village connection. Nowadays part-Samoans are as likely to have *matai* titles as people

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1 Formerly termed *pulenu’u*. 

*
who regard themselves as ‘full-blooded’ Samoans, so the distinction is no longer relevant. An amendment to the Electoral Act in May 2015 replaced the former Individual Voters Roll with two urban Seats called Urban West and Urban East.

Each parliamentary constituency comprises several villages. When a citizen registers as a voter he or she must specify the village he or she is from, and the parliamentary constituency in which that village is located. Untitled citizens (i.e. non-matai) over the age of 21 may choose which territorial constituency they will register in, depending on their family and village connections. If they live on freehold land in town owned by their family, they may register in one of the two urban constituencies.

Citizens holding a registered matai title are expected to register to vote in the electoral district associated with the village to which their title belongs. This is the case even if they are not recognised by the village because they have not provided service (mōnotāga), or, in some cases, because they are female.

In the case of a matai registering to stand for parliamentary election, the registration form must include signed validation from the representative of the village council (Sui o le nu’u) stating that the intending candidate has rendered service to and is recognised by the village.

In the early years of Samoa’s independence, the villages in each parliamentary constituency would agree on a candidate, so many seats were not contested. Candidates from the village with the largest population would usually gain the majority of votes in an election. In those early years, to give candidates from smaller villages a chance, the village councils of a parliamentary constituency would take turns to provide a candidate.

This system of consensus is no longer viable in most electorate, but many, if not most, village councils still nominate the preferred candidate of their choice, and most members of parliament are from the bigger villages in the parliamentary constituency. The choice of the village council is not binding on voters, who may vote as they wish, but when a village council backs a candidate this will usually influence electoral outcomes.

2.7 Political Parties

Two political parties, the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) and the Tautua Samoa Party (TSP) had candidates in the 2016 general elections. A total of 164 candidates were nominated to stand for election, of these, 81 contested as HRPP Candidates, including the four unopposed Candidates, 61
declared their candidacy as independents and only 22 contested for the Tautua Samoa Party (Samoa Electoral Commission 2016).

### 2.8 Voter registration

The Electoral Commission’s figures in Table 1 (column three) below shows that the number of those eligible to vote was about 93,045 (those aged 21 years and over, estimated from the 2011 census). Assuming a 4% (or 7,079) increase in Samoa’s population from 2011 to 2016, the estimated total number of people who were eligible to vote in 2016 is 96,552.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population (Census)</th>
<th>Eligible Voters (21+)</th>
<th>Registered Voters</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>187,820</td>
<td>93,045</td>
<td>100,810</td>
<td>7,765</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016*</td>
<td>194,899</td>
<td>96,552</td>
<td>115,891</td>
<td>19,339</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>7,079</td>
<td>3,507</td>
<td>15,081</td>
<td>11,574</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Estimate using the 2011 census as a baseline


In 2016, as shown in Figure 1 below, the number of registered voters was higher (by 16.7%) than the census figure of eligible voters (i.e. 100,810). The electoral commission suggest that a possible explanation for this variance is the number of deceased registered voters who remained on the election rolls. A deceased voter cannot be removed from the main roll unless a written confirmation is obtained. A further explanation is that some registered voters on the electoral roll were not counted as residents in Samoa in the 2011 census because they were overseas.

Figure 2 shows that there were more male than female voters registered, except in the three oldest age groups (which are consistent with demographic norms for a longer life expectancy among women). This means a slightly smaller number of women registered to vote, as there are only marginally more males than females in the total population (SBS 2011).

In the 2016 election, of registered voters in 21 Constituencies, 71–79% cast their votes; the number of registered voters’ casting votes (69%) was only lower than this in one constituency. Two Constituencies did not participate as their seats were unopposed. In relation to Samoa’s population (SBS 2011) in the age group of 21–30 years, the proportion of male to female is higher as is the number of registered voters in this age group. However, the number of females (at this 21–30 years age group) who actually cast their votes was higher than males.
2.9 Corrupt Practices and Samoan Custom

Campaigning for election can be very expensive and legal efforts have been made in the provisions of the Electoral Act as to what are “corrupt” practices and distinguish these from Samoan customs (see Appendix 1). For example if an aspiring politician goes house-to-house to seek electoral support Samoan etiquette requires them to bring a gift of food or money, however when this is done close to
an election it could be interpreted as bribery. Further, until recently, many candidates provided a large customary presentation (ō'o) of food and money to the council of their village (or to all the village councils in the parliamentary constituency) prior to the election. This has now been made illegal; the presentations may now legally only be made after the election. Vote-buying is also illegal but the practice is sometimes confused by customary expectations that a person aspiring to leadership will reward his or her supporters. Gifts from candidates are still anticipated by voters in most if not all parliamentary constituencies. Following elections there are usually a number of petitions alleging ‘bribing and treating’ against successful candidates by their unsuccessful rivals. If such allegations are proved in court, a by-election is called and a person found to have breached the electoral law is not allowed to be a candidate.

2.10 The 2016 Samoa General Elections Domestic Observation Report

This report was conducted by a team from the Australian National University in cooperation with the National University of Samoa and Samoa, the Samoa Office of the Electoral Commissioner (SOEC), and including participation from local civil society organisations Leadership Samoa and the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Government Organisations (SUNGO). Observations took place in 13 constituencies, including 11 on Upolu and two on Savai‘i. Constituencies were purposefully chosen to be broadly representative and included: the newly established urban seats; seats with one or more female candidate, as well as seats with no female candidate; seats with the highest number of candidates, and seats where the incumbent MP ran unopposed; and the seats with the highest and lowest numbers of registered voters. Teams undertook observation in these constituencies across a four-week period during the campaign, pre-poll, polling and counting periods. The key findings (ANU, 2016) arising from their observations in relation to female candidacy are as follows:

**There was generally high awareness of the new parliamentary gender quota—often referred to as the “10 per cent law”—and much debate over the issue of women in politics. In the pre-polling survey conducted by observers, 68 per cent of respondents said there should be more women MPs, and 22 per cent said there should not, with 18 per cent undecided. When asked if they would vote for a good woman MP, almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) said yes, with 15 per cent saying no and 12 per cent not sure. Yet, when asked if there were any good women candidates running in the election, just over half (54%) of respondents agreed, a full one-quarter (25%) disagreed, and around one in five (21%) said they were not sure.**

**While the majority of survey respondents agreed there should be more women MPs, conversations while conducting the survey revealed that there is still opposition from both men and women to greater women’s representation in politics. The citizen survey interviews demonstrate that amongst women there is a lack of consensus on the issue of women in politics. This is exemplified in the statements below recorded by observers:**
From the ads and T.V you can see some women are o.k but others are ma’imau taimi [not ready for it]. (Female, 21-29)

The Bible does not say we need more women in parliament, there should be no women in parliament, we should have no women MPs; E malepe palemene ia latou [they will divide parliament]. (Female 30-59)

Only woman with high ranking titles and from political families should run ... Politics is dirty, women shouldn’t be subjected to the kind of tala tau sua [inappropriate jokes] that Tuilaepa likes to give. (Female 60+)

3. CAMPAIGN EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN CANDIDATES

3.1 Characteristics of Women Candidates in the 2016 election

In 2016 elections 24 woman candidates stood in 14 electorates; of those women only four were elected, and one was appointed according to the new provisions of the Electoral Act. Three of those elected were sitting members, Hon. Fiame Naomi Mataafa, Hon. Gatoloaifa’ana Amataga Alesana Gidlow and Hon. Faimalotoa Kika Stowers Ah Kau. Both Fiame and Galotoaifa’ana have won successive elections. Faimalotoa won a by-election in 2014 after the incumbent passed away. Fiame is a long-serving cabinet minister and Gatoloaifa’ana was an associate minister in the previous parliament, and held a full ministerial post in the parliament before that. Al’imalemanu Alofa Tuuau is a new member, and Fa’aulusau Rosa Duffy-Stowers was appointed on the basis of the 10% affirmative action provision in the revised Electoral Act.

All but one candidate were over 50 years of age. Only eight candidates were married women, the majority were widows, divorced or single. Of those who were married, two were married to non-Samoans. The remainder were married to matai. This fits with the finding of the previously cited research (Meleisea et. al. 2015.) that suggests that since independence only a small minority of women parliamentarians were married to Samoan husbands at the time they held office. Candidates were predominantly and in approximately equal numbers, affiliated to Congregational, Roman Catholic and Assemblies of God churches. Nearly all had tertiary educational qualifications and backgrounds in business or professional employment. Only six had their primary residence in a village within the electorate, the remainder mainly lived in Apia but said they visited and regularly stayed with family in their village. Only one (unsuccessful) candidate stood in an electorate where one or more villages did not recognise matai titles held by women.
Table 2: 2016 Election outcomes for women candidates by electorate and party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electorate</th>
<th>Name (ELECTED)</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number of votes received by candidate</th>
<th>Total votes cast in electorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A’ana Alofi 1 East</td>
<td>Lolomatauama Eseta Mataituli</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lolomalu Nele Leilua</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lemalu Silivia Taupau</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>451</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unasa Iulia Petelo</td>
<td>Tautua</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lefaga and Faleseela</td>
<td>FIAME NAOMI MATAAFA</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>Returned unopposed</td>
<td>No election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaimasenu’u Zita Martel</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotofaga</td>
<td>Alaiasa Elena - Tautua</td>
<td>Tautua</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alaiasa Malia Petelo - HRPP</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>324</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleipata Itupa I Lalo</td>
<td>GATOLOAIFAANA AMATAGA ALESANA GIDLOW</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>1589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaasilifiti Moelagi Jackson -</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gagaemauga 2</td>
<td>Seuoti Sheryl Muagututia -</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semau Faamau Levi</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gagaifomauga 1</td>
<td>FAIMALOTOA KIKA STOWERS -</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>1115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gagaifomauga 3</td>
<td>FAAULUSAU ROSA DUFFY-STOWERS</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>1096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alataua West</td>
<td>Aiopotea Taatiti Visekota</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>1287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuifaiga Laloama Yoshida</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>432</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palauli East</td>
<td>Fiso Evelini Faamoe</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>123</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiso Taranaki Mailei-Tamasese</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban East</td>
<td>Namalaulu Nuaalofa Tuuaau-Potoi</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pulemagaфа Mara Coffin-Hunter</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>1460</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faasaleleaga 3</td>
<td>Unasa Faapupula Metuli</td>
<td>HRPP</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gagaifomauga 2</td>
<td>Manuta Lavamalie Uesile</td>
<td>Tautua</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>1298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Samoa Electoral Commission.

3.3 Sitting members that were re-elected:
The four women who won seats had carefully thought out strategies and well established bases of support. The three sitting members had homes in the village of their matai title in their electorate,

\[^2\] Appointed to fulfil the Constitutional Amendment Act 2013 for minimum 10% women MP
as well as in town. They all went to church in their village and two of them were deacons in their church. All three were closely related to the former holders of their electoral seat, and had been encouraged to succeed these close relatives by their families and village leaders

Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata’afa has been a member of parliament for over 20 years, and is the daughter of Samoa’s first Prime Minister. She had held many cabinet portfolios; in 2016 she was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, and Samoa Trust Estates Corporation. Hon. Fiame’s title is recognised as highest in the district and among the highest in Samoa She is the head of the traditional district council (fono a le itūmālō) which meets when she request a meeting. This is the traditional prerogative of her title, not from her status as their member of parliament. Any matai of the electorate was eligible to stand for election, provided they met the residence requirements. When the district met to discuss the elections, each village had met first, to decide whether they have reached a collective opinion, and to see if they had a consensus. Before the election, although support was expressed for Fiame’s re-election, two other names were put forward but only one of these were nominated. Fiame checked the credentials of this prospective opponent for the seat, and finding an issue, challenged his eligibility in, court resulting in the candidate’s disqualification. Subsequently she was elected unopposed

Fiame made the point that electoral context is important, and that the context is Samoan culture. Women who want to be MPs must ensure they have a matai title of standing, and should be able to stand and speak. She recalled two former woman MPS who really changed the dynamics of the house. When one of them stood with the to’oto’o (orator’s staff), she was much more impressive than many male tulafale (orators). She could say things to the men that she, Fiame, could never say because they were older and married. Unfortunately, they lost their seats through challenges. Women must know they have to fight challenges, because there is a perception that women are easy to overthrow. Women have to know their opponents. She noted that if a woman is challenged, it’s important to research a political opponent to ensure they are eligible and have no convictions.

Each village has its own way doing things and its own protocols. In her own village, whenever a matter is discussed, after all views were heard, they then they say “ia tu’u atu mo se afioga”, meaning they give it to Fiame to make the final decision. These protocols vary between villages and
“Women’s vote is also decided by Samoan culture. First you look at your own ‘āiga, then your pitonu’u. If you want the women’s votes, you should be involved in things that interest the women. But women are like men, who look at their own connections first, so a woman wanting a political career should do that first. Build relationships as women, as community members and as matai.”

between districts, so it is important for potential politicians to really know their own āla-i-fanua and work it to their advantage.

Another point made by Fiame is that women, although matai, tend to prioritise their other roles such as ‘mother’, ‘wife’ and a ‘woman’ rather than put their matai role first. She commented that “… many women matai allow people to continue to address them by their given name, but men don’t do this and usually insist on the use of their titles. In the council meetings and other formal situations, and especially in politics, you are there as a matai, so use your title.”

The successful women MPs have mostly been accomplished women who have had their own careers, unlike herself, she said. When she first came into politics, she was very young. These new women members are changing the dynamics, not only in the house but also in cabinet. It’s good to get in to parliament more than once. Because it is like any other job, you gain experience and people get to know you’re serious about being a politician. Although some women matai sit in their village councils, many of them just sit and never talk. So women should look at the rights attached to the titles they hold, to see if they can speak in village fono. They should also look at their own fuāila (extended family) and work within their own pui‘āiga (closer āiga) to give them the chance to speak in meetings.

When asked about breaches in the electoral law, which many of the women standing have complained about, Fiame agreed there are changes needed in the current electoral law and she hopes that people who have ideas will come up with them when a review is done. She pointed out that people complain, yet they do not use the legal processes to get what they want. “A mana’o lava i se mea alu e tuli” (pursue your convictions) she said. People have to make submissions and when the discussion of electoral law comes up they should attend to put in their arguments.

Fiame advises aspiring women politicians to understand there are long term and the short term approaches. Those women who didn’t get in were looking at the short term. For long term success, look for funds for community projects organised over many years, so even if opponents gave money on the night before the election, people will remember what they’ve done in the long run. “It’s interesting that of those women who won seats, none went to Samoa Alamai’s programmes. Some candidates believed that they should stand because they were advocating that women should stand,
thinking that they should set an example themselves, so they registered just as short time before nominations closed. That is far too short term.”

**Hon. Gatoloaifaana Amataga Alesana Gidlow** was a cabinet minister and an associate minister in previous governments. She is married but her husband is not an ethnic Samoan. Like Fiame, she is also the daughter of a previous Prime Minister, who chose her from among her brothers and sisters to hold her title (although she asked him to give it to one of her younger brothers). She agrees that her father’s reputation and service to the constituency helped her initially, when she first stood for parliament, because most of his supporters became her supporters. However since then she relied a lot on her own personal relations with people. Her main home is in the electorate and her husband and family are there.

In term of electoral success, she added that it was important to get as many people as possible to register. This was an important task for her electoral committee, to ensure that eligible people were registered. She said that it didn’t matter if all those that her committee helped to register voted for her or not, the main thing was to get them to participate. She and her committee got information from the Electoral Commission and checked to see who hadn’t registered, then followed up. This was easy to do in in the villages, but it was harder to find people from her constituency that were living in Apia. They started contacting people about eight months before elections and also brought people in to vote.

Her committee didn’t campaign; they just transported people to the booths so each person still had their right to vote as they wished. She did not have brochures or posters, she relied on personal contact, both by herself or by the electoral committee she chaired. She was endorsed by the village where she resides but not the others, however she got votes from all the villages. This was because her electoral committee talked to her extended family members, as well as their own families. Being the sitting member, she was able to point to the things she had done for her village and for the whole constituency, and to the respect her family had earned over many years.

She said that although money plays a part, the way she sees it that the people selected her, so to reciprocate the people’s votes, she should give back some of what she gains as a sitting member, to those who got her there. That way, she doesn’t see it as treating; she sees it as part of her service.
However, she does this continuously between elections, as her *tautūa fa’aauau*, (continuing support); this is part of what people in the village do all the time, those with help and those without.

On the issue of women in village government, she pointed out that from her own experience there have been many decisions that were overturned when she put in her point of view. This, she said, suggests that women’s views should be heard more in village councils; that can’t happen if women *matai* don’t come to the *fono*. There have also been cases where women *matai* attended the village council, but then went back to the women’s committees rather than stay in the village council. Women are not committing themselves to their *matai* role.

She pointed out that there is a strong tendency for people to think that decision-making is the man’s role, and that the ideas of men are better than those of women. She added that sometimes, even in their own families, women are not exercising their role as mothers to make decision for the betterment of their families, but leaving it all to their husbands. Gatoloai thought that to ensure that the best decisions are made for the upbringing of children; inputs must be made by both father and mother. The same is true for decisions in the village council.

**Hon. Faimalotoa Kika Stowers.** She won a by-election to the previous parliament in 2014 after her uncle, the sitting member, had passed away. At a family conference after his funeral, she was nominated to stand as his replacement by her extended family. At that time, she didn’t campaign for herself but the electorate supported her. After her re-election in 2016 she was appointed Minister of Women, Community and Social Development.

For 2016 national elections, she had the electoral support of her village counsel and her family members, including her adult children, who helped to get people to register and helped when members of her constituency came to her seeking assistance. She had been chosen to continue the work of her uncle who died with the support of the *itumali* (district). The most important success factor her election is the support of her family. She cited a Samoan proverb: “*Tusa lava po’o le ā le leāga o le tagata e mālō lava le toto*”. (“No matter how bad is the person, blood wins.”)

| **NGO efforts for women candidates started too late; they over-exposed women candidates and while they brought good ‘food for thought’, some of the advice was not applicable to the Samoan situation, even though the recommended approaches might be effective in other democratic countries.** |

She did not need to campaign much although her ‘āiga did form an electoral committee, who did the usual things, such as taking people to register and encouraged people to vote for her. She did not use the media to campaign; she just went to the villages and contributed to whatever is happening there. She has always helped whoever came to her
asking, and she always goes to funerals in the two villages of her constituency as she has relatives in both. She has always performed her extended family obligations, and stressed the Samoan saying “O le ala i le pule o le tautua” (the road to authority is by service). Among her immediate family she has always been the one closest to her mother’s village. Since her childhood she has been going there and grew up knowing her family connections and all the people in the village, even though she went to school in Apia and has lived in town most of her life. She was well known there, as well as throughout Samoa because of her career in radio broadcasting. She gives equally to all of the four churches in her village because many members of her extended family go to the other three churches. However, being a Catholic in a village with a strong Catholic presence helped. Despite her media background, she did not use television or radio to campaign or other publicity materials. As a sitting member who supports the goal of getting more women into parliament, she attended a few of the UNDP/UNWomen seminars and training.

She said that she heard some negative comments from women in villages about the Samoa Alamai group suggesting that women as well as men have conservative values, some believing they should vote according to her husband’s choice. She says that many women voted for her, but not because she is a woman. In this regard, she noted that the two new women elected for the first time did not attend workshops to promote women’s candidacy, but stayed in their villages and talked to the people there. Accordingly, she thinks, it is doubtful that all the money spent by NGOs helped to get any women elected. Her advice for prospective women candidates is: “Start now! ... go to villages, be there, contribute to village fa’alavelave; they have to see your actions. Talk to all groups in the villages, āualūma, tāulele’a, faletua ma tausi, matai. Women can convince their husbands (there are women’s ways). Do the same with your constituents who live in Apia. Get people to register. There are young people turning 21 every day. Know the people in your villages, those who’ve just come of age, and those who just haven’t got round to registering. Tell people in your village what your ideas are and how you can help your itūmālō! (district).”

3.3 Newly elected women MPs

Ali‘imalemanu Alofa Tuu‘au: won the seat by 432 of 1287 total votes; her opponents included two women. She started her campaign a year before the elections. She lives in Apia but goes regularly to the village on Savaii. She attributes her victory to God’s calling, but added that she won ninety per cent of the votes from her village. They voted for her because they saw that she could make a difference. All her life she has contributed to her church and to its women’s organisation.
Her strategy was to pull her family connections together behind her as a leader they could look up to. After her family, then her village. Like the previous candidates referred to, she paid close attention to the electoral roll. She used skills she had learnt as an accountant to methodically analyse the roll to plan a strategy to get as many voters registered as possible. They began by crossing off the ones who were dead or who had gone overseas, but were still on the rolls to get a better idea of the potential number of supporters. There were 1,600 on roll they got from electoral commission but they got it down to 980. Her family had served her village in the electorate for a long time, which helped her campaign.

She knew she could get about a hundred votes from her own village, so she worked on obtaining votes from other villages in the constituency, having analysed how many of those potential voters would be likely to vote for her. Once she got the full support of her own extended family, she got each individual to ask for the support from their own relatives, where ever they live, whether in Savaii or Upolu. As there were many from the constituency living in the Apia area, her oldest daughter paid attention them and set targets for contacts to make each week. Her electoral committee picked up people in Savaii to take them to register, while her daughter and a driver did the same in Apia. The people they took to register were only given lunch. She had set targets to get at least 200 more votes than any of the others. She only missed on her target by 37 votes.

In terms of the costs; She spent around WST$120,000, for pāse (feeding people who went to register) as well as petrol and food, and for her electoral committee and herself coming and going to Savaii and contacting potential voters in town. She had been saving to build a house in Savaii, but used her savings for her campaign.

One of her aims was educate people about what they could expect from their local member of parliament. Their role is to help the whole constituency, not to pay bills for individuals, who should not ask the faipule for that kind of help. When people come to her with personal requests she gives them a small gift but tells them it is not her responsibility to help individuals:

Reflecting on her success, she said she was well known to everyone in the village because, although based in Apia, she always goes there and she and her family have served the family for a long time.
She let the village know her wish to run early and made sure that most of the village council was behind her. She has contributed to the church all her life and goes to its national annual conference to connect with other churchwomen there. She mentioned that many young people in her village were excited to see a woman stand for election.

Fa’aulusau Rosa Stowers won her seat through the new affirmative action provisions in electoral law, that 10% of seats will be held by women. Fa’aulusau won 389 of 1096 votes, which was the highest number of votes won by a female candidate who did not win an outright majority. She stood for elections because was persuaded by the matai of her village; they thought the sitting member had favoured some villages in the electorate over others. There was disagreement within the electorate over land in which the sitting member had supported one of the sides in a court case. She holds matai titles from two of the opposing villages, but has family connections to all the villages of the constituency. She was born in one of the villages of her constituency and later moved to another where she grew up, until she moved to Apia for high school. All through her life she and her family went to Savaii for fa’alavelave and for breaks from Apia.

She didn’t go to the villages that were supporting the sitting member, but she and her electoral komiti contacted all her ‘āiga there to ask for their support. In the two villages from which she held titles, she talked to everybody she met, young and old. She spent time finding out what peoples’ concerns were, what they wanted for their village and what their needs were. She took the time to talk the youths, about using their lives properly. She has five boys of her own, and when they come over to Savaii they bring their friends among the youths of the village to the house, so she uses the opportunity to talk to her children as well as village youths, on all sorts of issues to improve their lives. Her children love Savaii and think of those villages as theirs. Over all those years her parents and their parents, and now she and her family serve her ‘āiga and district.

3.3 Women candidates who did not win seats
The editors/researchers of this report are not identifying these candidates by name or that of their electorate, to allow them to freely express their opinions. We have assigned them numbers randomly.
Candidate One. She lives in one of the villages in the electorate and began her campaign by seeking the support of the village and her extended family members there, with a core group of about fifty supporters; then she notified the other villages in the constituency of her decision to stand and her hope for their support. However another holder of the same titles as hers had already sought support in the electorate. She thought her service to the community as a teacher and her knowledge of local issue would help her candidacy, but it didn’t—the successful candidate lived in town, not in the electorate. Also, she could not ask the most politically influential village in the electorate to support her, because they endorsed one of her rivals. Over all, her campaign cost her about WST $20,000 but her mother probably spent more than that. Although she was afraid of the law against bribery and treating, she did give money to those who really needed it, telling them they can report her if they want to. Much of the money she spent was given after the elections to those who had supported her, including some who she suspected had not done so.

Money won, she thinks. The winner was an experienced politician who had won in the past in a different electorate who spent a lot. Other factors were divisions in her family, support came from her mother’s side but not from her father’s side which is a big family, in terms of status and numbers. Had she got their support, she would have won but they supported her rival. She was concerned about the eligibility of voters; she thinks about a quarter of those on the roll are not connected to villages in the electorate, so the Electoral Commission needs to look into to this issue. It is too easy for people to swop around constituencies. She thought the fact that she is single may also have counted against her.

In her analysis the successful candidate won by spending money, by convincing voters he would be chosen for a cabinet position (he wasn’t) and because he had very advantageous kinship connections in politics. He also got outsiders to register in the constituency to build his support base, and had strong backing from members of one of the churches in the electorate. The lesson she learned from her experience as a candidate was that money is still number one, followed by support from family, village council and church. Women did not necessarily support women and need to be given more political education. “Women look down on themselves and other women” she said, also that “men think a woman’s place is in the home”. Yet women need to be politically engaged; they are the ones who understand all the needs of families, knowing what each member needs, and how to manage
money and other family resources. She said: “E ese lava le tōfā a le tamā ese le tōfā a le tinā.” (The mother looks ahead, while men wait until something happens before they act).

**Candidate Two:** She seemed ambivalent about her candidacy and viewed it more as an opportunity to talk about issues. She supported the opposition party, who approached her to stand and gave her some help. They registered her to run for them, and gave her advice on how to get votes. She commented that people think they have to vote for a candidate in the ruling party or they won’t get things from the government.

She lives in the village and focused on her local community. She did not spend any money; all she did was talk to people. She laughed and said “it’s no wonder they didn’t vote for me! All they got from me was an earful and no money”. But she said she feels sad to see problems in her village. Her interest in standing for the election was to raise awareness about the education of children. “So many children do not go to school, and mothers are not pushing to get them to school—parents not doing their duty.”

She wanted to promote her views about women’s roles; “women [are supposed to] avoid and smooth over conflict (pae ma ‘āūli) but are scared to say what they think, and they are not doing the duties that they used to do ...”. She was also concerned about youth, the young men of the village who go to town to wander around instead of working on the land, who go to ceremonies to get money for beer and who don’t educate their children. She was concerned about village decision-making and the unfairness of some male matai; for example if a wrongdoer is the son of a poor or low-ranking matai “that sits under the post” the fine will be really heavy, but if it’s the son of a high ranking matai tāua, he only gets a light fine. She said she spoke up strongly against that unjust behaviour. If there were more women in the village council, it will ensure fairer decisions on such matters.

Apart from one workshop, she did not attend any of the other UNDP/UNWomen programme for women candidates because she didn’t get an invitation. In her analysis, she didn’t get in because she didn’t spend any money and didn’t go to other villages. She just talked about what she thought the local issues were. She didn’t think her church membership, sitting in the fono or being a woman would help her get elected, compared to spending a lot of money. She still doesn’t believe in giving people money. She sees that as a ‘dirty game’. She wanted to support another candidate by talking...
about the issues, and didn’t seem to understand that she was taking the votes that could have gone to the person she said she went to support. The winning candidate won because he really wanted to get in, she said. She didn’t know how much he spent, but she knows he gave her village T10, 000 after the elections.

She thinks that women are needed in politics but the obstacle to women’s participation in village decision-making is that women do not speak up. They need to learn not to be afraid to speak up. They should get used to speaking up, they need practice. Many have good ideas but are afraid to speak up in meetings. There is a great need for more education, not just to get women to speak up, but also to educate women on national issues and just get them to think better and continue to perform their duties to improve their ʻāiga and nuʻu. A woman also needs to understand her own standing in her own village and where her village stands in the country; they need to know their faʻasinomāga (heritage).

**Candidate Three:** She lives in Apia but makes regular visits to her village and constituency and attends church when she is there. She does not sit on the village council because the demands of her profession make it difficult to attend but other matai of her family keep her informed. Her electoral strategy was to visit families in the electorate, going house to house, attending Church services in the electorate, giving radio interviews, and broadcasting a message to her electorate on TV and radio in last two weeks of campaign. She also arranged youth evenings and appointed a youth committee; in addition she had an electoral komiti in her village and a family group in another village of the electorate working in support of her campaign. She was also involved in Samoa Alamai training sessions and worked closely with UN Women. She estimates that the total cost for her campaign including her own travel costs was approximately WST$75,000.

A number of factors undermined her chances of winning the seat. One was village politics; there were divisions within her extended family over Land and Titles Court decisions in the past. Another factor was the long-term political dominance of the largest village in the electorate which endorsed four of her rivals. The winning candidate gave gifts of $2000.00 to each village in the electorate, as well as gifts of food and cash to individuals on the night before the election and at polling booths in town and in the electorate. There were also unpleasant incidents in which a close member of her rival’s family threatened her and tried to prevent shops from displaying her poster. She mentioned that it is difficult for people to go against village decisions; some of her supporters who voted for her in town would not have done so if they were in the village. Some of them avoided one of the town polling booths to vote at another because they felt intimidated by members of her rival’s electoral committee. She thinks that some women who might have supported her were pressured in various
ways to give their vote to another candidate. One woman courageously voted for her in a situation where her vote could not have been concealed.

**Candidate Four**: This candidate was issues-driven and interested in village development. In the past she prepared funding proposals for some of the needs of the village, such as water supply, street lights and a sea wall. She promoted these projects and she got people to sign their support for her proposals. Now they have street lights, but the water improvement didn’t come until after the elections. A plan is underway for the sea-wall, but it hasn’t started yet. She is disappointed that people who didn’t vote for her although they are benefiting from the projects she initiated to help her village. She sits in her village council, but because her brother and father are also both sitting, she feels shy when men start having ‘men talk’. However, if she speaks, her views are accepted in the council, for example when the advocated a lower fine to punish a youth, she was listened to.

She decided a year before elections that she would stand, and that’s when she formed her electoral committee. She spent some money for getting people’s proof of identity to register as voters and paid for petrol and for food for the committee members who stayed at the place of registration, making sure people filled in their forms properly. Her electoral committee was not from whole district, but included the village women’s representatives from three villages. They sought the women’s vote, talking to women during *falealāga* (weaving groups) and other women’s activities. She bought modest amounts of food for her committee telling them she couldn’t bring them anything more because of the law. Her committee didn’t cover all villages; they just went to villages where she has ‘āiga.

She commented that Samoa Alamai went to villages where there was no women standing; they should have gone more to villages/districts where women were standing. She didn’t get any money from the programs supporting women candidates, although she asked for money to give to women’s committee for sewing machines, or for cooking classes for women. When she attended workshops she brought the women’s village government representative with her, who was on her electoral committee. She thought that what they did at workshops was interesting, but it would have been better if they used the aid money to help women in the villages.

*Campaigning is difficult in the context of Samoan culture, she said. It is impolite to go to people homes without taking a gift of food or money, so she felt constrained to campaign this way because but it is illegal for a candidate to do this. Nevertheless, she said, other candidates gave money to churches and to*
She lost because wasn’t prepared, she did not have enough finance. She didn’t do a presentation (ō’o) to the whole district and believes, with hindsight, that she should have looked beyond the three sub-villages of her village. To build support, future projects shouldn’t be just for own village, she should try and help all other villages in the electorate. Many voters from her own village supported her, but because she didn’t go to other villages, she didn’t get many from them, even those where she had relatives. She didn’t promise much, but talked about her work for water supply, street lights and a sea-wall. She also gave food to extended family members from other villages on Mother’s Day. After the elections she cooked food for the Sunday lunch for village families to thank those who voted for her.

In her opinion support from extended family and church are important “but money is number one”. The successful candidate got outsiders registered to vote and took them to the polls to vote for him. In her opinion people should only vote where they live, but some candidates took some people to Apia to vote, away from villages, so that people in the villages wouldn’t know how these people voted.

In her analysis women don’t want to elevate another woman above themselves, so few vote for women. Another obstacles that prevents women getting into politics is the idea that “e pule lava le tamā”—that the matai (father) should direct how the women and men of family vote. Many women don’t feel confident to be matai and would rather give matai titles of their families to their husbands (faiāvā) than to hold titles themselves. More awareness-raising is needed among women. She noticed that the village sui-tama’ita’i are invited to various workshop, but they don’t share what they have learned with rest of the village women. “More and more women have jobs in government and business and also in villages, many women are doing productive agricultural work nowadays and other men’s job, so they should also be more involved in politics making decisions for the betterment of the villages.” She plans to learn from her experience a stand again, and this time she’ll look for ways to help village development through the women’s committees. She’ll talk to them about how women can contribute different views to making laws for the country.

**Candidate Five:** This candidate does not live in the village of her title, but in town. She decided to stand because of her religious conviction and her concern about women and girls being abused in
families. She wanted to be in parliament as a way of reaching out to the leaders of the country, because if the leaders are not corrupt they will set a good example to their village and to the country. She said she has been praying for the country to turn to God. Once she decided to stand, she went to her village council to tell them of her decision and seek their support. With their consent she registered; she was the last to register and it was quite late. Although the council spoke of her as the village candidate, she said “I know many of those men are two-faced, they extend one hand to me while they hold the other hand behind their backs to stab me with.”

She did not have much time to campaign and she decided to target young voters, hoping they would become good leaders themselves. She did not make any promises. With her family and friends in the electorate, their message was that it was time for a woman to represent their constituency, and it was time for her village to take its turn to supply a member of parliament. She did not meet with the councils of the other two villages of the constituency. However she had family connections in other villages that she hoped could win support for her. She did not have an electoral committee either as she thought that would be very expensive and might have required her to bribe supporters. Her own supporter were members of her extended family and friends in the village, mainly the ladies of the village (tama’ita’i o le aualūma) her age, those that she grew up with. She said it was a stress-free campaign for her and her supporters because they chose not to criticise (fa’aleaga) other candidates, even if they spoke against her. She did not retaliate because she did not want to tarnish the dignity of her title and her family (suāfa o le ‘āiga). She also did not give out any money because she wanted to follow the law. She told people to wait until after the election, according to the law.

She thought that the donor-supported program to encourage the election of women to parliament was very useful and that she learned a lot from their seminars and talks. She also thought some women candidates who attended this program were overexposed and were were selling ourselves to be humiliated; we were selling ourselves to be destroyed. Outsiders have no idea about this, but we in Samoa know our own people’s mentality”.

In her analysis, she didn’t win because registered too late, and, in keeping with the law, she did not spend money on gifts as others did. Voters in at least one village were directed to vote according to the choice of the village council. Her opponent won because he and his committee gave monetary gifts. Money is still the most factors for winning elections. Family, committees and church
membership all help, but money is most important. Some village councillors were two-faced; they promised support but voted for those who gave them money and food. Further, women do not provide significant support for women candidates; they tend to vote for the person their husbands tell them to vote for. They still believe that decision making is man’s work and they are jealous of other women. More work is needed to convince women about the need for political equality between women and men and to elect women to parliament.

**Candidate Six**: This candidate said she felt called by God to stand in her electorate. She does not live in the village and when she went she found that three male candidates had already sought support there and that her village had chosen one of them. After hearing this she went home and prayed some more, and still feeling called, she wrote a letter to the village council requesting to please let her stand according to her right as a woman. She said her letter really stirred things up the *fono*: “it was like jumping into hot water”. She was abused and ridiculed by some who said that she had been away should not come back and spoil the village’s decision. She responded that she wanted to share this with other women. She felt uneasy sitting in the front because women are brought up to respect the elderly, but she sat at the front because of the title she holds; one of the two highest ranking *matai* titles of the village. Although the title did have many holders, the others supported her right. She emphasised that she was following what she believed to be God’s will, so decided whatever happened, she would stand. There was even talk of banning her from the village, and one of the *matai* told her that she could go and “have her rights, but to keep going, and not come back to the village”.

These attacks strengthened her determination and after further prayer, she lodged an application for mediation in court between herself and her village. This was attended by a rival candidate and other village leaders. The outcome of the mediation was she was allowed to remain in the village *fono*. So although there were still a lot of bad feelings she was able to campaign. Later another holder of the same title, also a woman, announced she wanted to stand, and in the end the man who the village agreed on decided to step down, thus the two women with the same title, from the same village were among the candidates for the electorate.

The only media talk she did was to her district regarding the water metering issue. She started with a small electoral committee of family and friends, but she was betrayed by someone from her family who campaigned for the winning candidate in the electorate. Overall her campaign cost more that WST$10,000. She raised some of this money with the help of family in New Zealand. She paid for herself and five supporters to go to NZ but this wasn’t very successful, as only WST$4,000 was raised.
She recognises that her late start undermined her chances. Her committee was not effective because they had no strategy to follow, and she didn’t seek endorsement from village councils in the district. She thinks she wasn’t sufficiently prepared and didn’t do enough groundwork by going to the villages and talking to the people. To win election money is the main thing, she said, but you should first mobilise your family, village and church

Her analysis of her election experience was that the successful candidate gave more food and money. The night before elections his committee came in to her village giving out rice and chicken to everyone, including her scrutineers. She said that although many women agreed with her on the water issue because it is the women who need and use water more than men. But when it comes to votes, women vote according to their husband’s instructions. Education is needed for women in the village to think for themselves and to decide for themselves what is best for themselves and their families. If she stands again next time, she has decided to get village projects going, including a cooperative store, and pig pens, and vegetable gardens for every family.

She based her campaign on an opinion survey of whether the village should have a metered water supply and be required to pay for their water (a move she opposed). She managed to get over 400 signatures opposing metering.

Candidate Seven: This candidate made use of media for her campaign, producing brochures, doing spots on TV and radio so that people knew her. She believed that this approach would win get more votes, and was very disappointed that it didn’t. She began campaigning late with an electoral committee of mainly young matai of her village. “When I didn’t get in, some of my committee members came crying, so disappointed.” Her message was to help women, and she went to NZ, to fund-raise, which raised NZ$ 2,500. Her brochures and TV spots cost about SAT$3000, and she gave money to her committee for food and transport.

Reflecting on her experience she said if she tried again (and she wants to) she would go to NZ and raise a lot of money to give out to people before the elections. “In the Samoa Alamai workshops we were taught strategies that didn’t work for us, and were warned to obey rules about giving gifts. Yet two women won seats without attending these workshops and they gave out money.”

She mentioned that her brother, who is a member of the village council, criticises her if she doesn’t attend the village council meetings. Women who want to be involved in decision-making should build up their listening skills and talking skills and also know their own standing and that of their family in the village. “Women often have a different perspective to that of men, which is why there
should be more women in parliament. In future more effort needs to be put into voter education, especially with youth and women.”

**Candidate Eight:** This candidate said she didn’t aspire to go into politics, but was urged to do so by others including the retiring Member of Parliament who was from her village. She runs a business there, and holds titles from two villages in the constituency. Eventually, at a meeting of the village council, she was asked to stand so as to keep the parliamentary seat in the village. She reasoned if she agreed to stand, it was up to them to help her win.

She mentioned that she knows her village well, and believes there was some local jealousy about her growing business. For this reason, she thought that not all the people of her village would support her. Her family has had a shop in the village for about 40 years, which she has extended, and has recently started a beach resort near the village.

Her electoral committee comprised ten women and six men, whom she did not choose; they offered themselves. She did not pay them, but prepared breakfast for them before they went out, and lunch when they got back. Their strategy was to approach all the families in her village for support, which they did. They did that in two villages of the constituency, but not the others because of the expense. “Samoan etiquette means that if you seek the support of a village you must give out money, but there is a law against that.” The same expectation of customary gifts applies when someone goes house to house to seek support; she couldn’t do this without giving money.

Her campaign began only four months before the election. After the elections she gave SAT$10,000 to her komiti, and she also spent about SAT$3,000 for food for the people who came to vote, after the voting. She laughed and said that she gave 1000 plates of food although she got only 400 votes, so more than half of the people who ate her food did not vote for her. Altogether she spent around SAT15,000, some of it raised from family members including some in New Zealand.

Reflecting on the outcome, she thinks she lost because she wasn’t prepared enough. Because she did not really want to stand, she took her time to register. Her village has the biggest population in the constituency, so if they’d all voted for her, she could have got in. Another reason why she lost was because she stuck to the law. She didn’t think her church had any influence on her votes, nor women. Although the women in her komiti and her own ‘āiga and friends voted for her, women generally vote for whoever their husbands tell them to vote for. She thinks the successful candidate
(from another village in the constituency) won because he was very motivated, had stood in the electorate before and had only lost narrowly. He also spent a lot of money. Money is the most important success factor in elections in Samoa. Your family, village council, church, committee, all help, but giving out plenty of money is the most important strategy. If she stood again she would have to start campaigning now, well in advance. She thought that what might help is have the law thoroughly explained to voters and candidates so that they all understand it equally. She hopes a review of electoral law will come up with a better law.

In her opinion village government needs more women to be involved. Women tend to have more skills and interests than men; will turn their hand to anything and do it well. They think about how to develop their families, as well as doing all the chores for them. Her village has four women matai but only two attend the village fono regularly. In one case husband and wife hold the same title from different branches of the family, so perhaps that is why the husband attends, not the wife. It can be awkward for husband and wife to both sit at the village council, she said, because if there is a dispute, it can affect the couple. She thinks the majority of women who are successful both in village and national governments are women who are either widows, divorced or single. These women, unlike married women, don’t have husbands who might tell them to stay home and look after the family. She strongly supports the need for more women in national politics; the fact that there are so few is for the same reason there aren’t many in village politics.

**Candidate Nine** This candidate sought the approval of her immediate and extended family and its leaders before registering as a candidate. She sought their support as a woman’s candidate, saying that as a woman MP she would be able to open up women’s world according to their individual talents (many of which the men don’t have) by going to workshops for women candidates. When speaking to her village council, she criticised the sitting member, and made the point that men have represented the electorate for so many years, yet there haven’t had any changes in the village. All the sitting MP has given is promises and beer and does not share the proceeds from projects that benefit him and his family. It was time a woman had a chance, she told them; she would make a change.

She didn’t have an electoral committee at first; her strategy was to visit families. However she didn’t take money to give them because of the law. Later she got campaign help from several people; another matai and a taxi operator. Her campaign cost her almost WST$20,000. This included the cost of TV and radio spot, brochures. Her sisters and brothers encouraged her to spend, and contributed to her expenses. While campaigning she wanted to give monetary gifts to old and needy people money, but was advised not to, as someone may report her for bribery.
Reflecting on the outcome she praised the support from UNDP for women candidates but it was too little too late. She lost because she campaigned only for three weeks before the election. She should have given money when she visited voters, and she should have involved the *matai* of her extended family more. She thinks the winning member won the seat because he made many promises and had plenty of money and cars, and also persuaded a rival to withdraw. She learned that money is the main thing that will get you in, and in the longer term, giving at ceremonies (*fa‘alavelave*) helping sick people and sponsoring village development projects. Family is also important if they all support you and campaign for you. Not just your immediate family, but also extended family and members who live in other *pitonu‘u*. Church is also important. All these are important, they all work together, but money is most important. If she runs again, she said, she will take more time, bring people to register, and initiate projects to help needy people such as the disabled people in her village.

**Candidate ten**: This candidate is motivated by her religious faith and was standing for the third time. She lives in the electorate where she has had a long professional career. She hadn’t thought of standing, but in the past had been advised by a political party that she would make a good candidate for parliament. So she decided to stand, for the third time. She asked for and received the support of her village council and asked her friends and relatives in other sub-villages to seek support for her, although she did not go herself. She had no specific platform, but stood on her reputation as a successful woman in the district, telling told people that she made no promises but wanted to use her life to serve them, and that she will know what to do if she is elected because God will guide her. She did not have an electoral committee other than her family and friends who helped her. The only money she spent was about WST$3,000 for travel expenses, and after the election she prepared food to thank all those who supported her. She thought the donor-supported training for women candidates was useful, but the best thing she got from it was the Congresswoman from American Samoa, who said that she kept on standing (11 times) until she finally got in. This, she said, is her role model, so she will continue to stand until God decides it’s her time to win.

Reflecting on the experience, she thinks she lost because it is not her time, saying “I’m really firm, it’s not me, it’s God, and his mission is not complete”. This, her third try, was different, she said, because lots of people showed support and

**Women’s vote didn’t help her at all, she said. In her district only one other woman besides herself sits in the village council; the other women matai live in Apia or overseas. Women don’t encourage one another to vote for women. Women also have to be careful not to be seen to be disobeying instructions on who they should vote for; they have no power within the village, and they are just as vulnerable as men in taking gifts to
she thought her chances were good. But in the last two weeks, her rival was more persuasive and his influential matai supporters won a lot of supporters, people thinking that he will pay their bills for them. Families were divided; some voted for him and some for her. Even up to the night before elections, she said, even at midnight, people were woken up to ask for their support for him. He worked really hard to win. She thought that reporting him was a waste her time because people do fully understand the law, but want to get what they can from the campaign.

She noted that some MPs have never been seen by voters, and only come to village to campaign at election time. She doesn’t believe in making campaign promises, saying that: “God’s plan for me to learn from those who just come in to stand, yet as I live in the village, I know the needs of women, men, youths and others in need. You can’t see these if you live outside. All I see are good lessons for me so I know what to be done when I come in. I don’t tell them what I see that I can do. That’s my secret In my opinion, if I get in, I don’t just do what I see, this is not complete, what I’ll do and should be done by all those who stand, should go in to the villages and talk to all sections of the village; talk to matai, but also to other groups as matai don’t see the need to talk to others. After talking to all groups then get them to prioritise their needs, and then I will work on it.”

**Candidate Eleven**: This candidate had been part of the NGO team that were involved in the negotiation of the Bill for the 10% quota for women in Parliament. She systematically analysed the electoral rolls, to identify areas of population concentration to target with her posters and billboards; she had 1500 posters made, and 20 billboards, a digital ad at on the screen in Apia; (this cost WST$3.000 for 3 weeks), and full-page profile in Observer, TV interviews and interviews on FM radio. She probably had had the largest media campaign of any of the woman candidates.

She has long aspired to become a member of parliament and serve her district and is an advocate for women in parliament. All told, her campaign cost her up to WST $40,000 for media and for gifts of food after the elections. She did not have an electoral committee, but was helped by her relatives and friends, who distributed her brochures and posters. She did directly talk to members of her constituency, nor take people to register to vote or give anybody any money because that was against the law. Despite this, because her phone number was on her publicity material, many people rang her asking for money, one woman caller asking her for WST$4000.00.
Reflecting on her loss, she thinks she did not invest enough time, money and effort based on a strategy. This is because campaigning was a new experience for her. She thinks the successful candidate, the sitting member, gave gifts to voters. What she learned was that it is not enough to put your name forward as a candidate, money is spend on putting your name forward, you also need to spend to get the majority to vote for you.

She does not think she got the women’s vote (as one of two women candidates); she thinks that women tend to be jealous of each other, and to vote as directed by their husbands. Most women depend on men. To get more women elected, women need more economic power, more money in women’s hands. Nevertheless there is a need for more women in government, both at village and national level; this will require a lot of work with tact and diplomacy to break through the men’s circle. Also, more action is needed to stop bribery in the electorate.

**Candidate Twelve:** This candidate had a long term plan to stand for parliament. She had been living in New Zealand and returned to live in her electorate for three years before the elections, in order to qualify. She wanted to give back to her village to the country, in gratitude for the scholarship she got for her education. Because she had lived away from her village for so long, she set up a petrol station and ran it herself as a way of getting to know the village people and for them to know her. She also paid for the village rubbish stands to help beautify her village.

She started her campaign in early 2015. For electoral support, she sought help from local leaders, well known people who are respected by the village, and who know what’s going on in the village. She did not have a formal committee, her brother and another matai of her family were her main helpers and they advised people to register, (she worried that this might be against the electoral law). Others offered to go and get people they know to vote for her. She got the electoral list for her constituency and tried to challenge some names, such as people who may have died, or were from other villages, but this was such a big task, she just alerted the EC office and left it to them to do their own job. She also had a Radio interview sponsored by the donor-supported “election talk” program.

She commented that some people who came offering to help her campaign were really just looking for money and when they didn’t get it, they went to other candidates. In her opinion it is better to have a few people you can trust and who really want you to win.
Her actual campaign cost less than WST$10,000 but this does not count the rubbish stand project for the village that she had undertaken. She provided transport, food and accommodation in Apia for those helping her to ask for support of urban voters who were registered in the electorate. But she commented that she did not trust these helpers and was only sure that they were campaigning for her, and not for another, when her brother accompanied them.

She attended two of the donor-funded workshops, one at which a black American woman spoke, and another at which a male Samoan parliamentarian from New Zealand spoke. Reflecting on this, she thinks it would have been better to have Samoan women politicians to tell women what they did that got them elected. “Bring the women who have succeeded in politics here in Samoa to talk to women”. In her opinion the donors would have achieved more for women if they had given the money to women candidates for their campaigns.

She thinks she didn’t win because she didn’t give out money to prospective voters. To make sure she was not accused of doing this she stayed away from the village the night before the voting began. She also thinks, looking back, that she didn’t recognise the signals from people, for example she gave lifts to a certain church elder from another village in the electorate, but did not realise when he spoke flatteringly to her, that he was expecting gifts of money from her. “I should have given them money, I just didn’t recognise the signals” she said. Another factor was that voters from the constituency living in Apia didn’t know her, because she’d lived overseas for a long time so only the people in the district got to know her, so she got very few votes from urban voter, although she won the most votes in her village, but not the other village in the electorate.

In her opinion her opponent won because he gave out a lot of money and food, especially on the last night and the morning of elections. “He did what men do” she said, “they do whatever it takes to win”. She thinks that women candidates should not be advised to avoid giving because that’s how men get elected, and because that’s what the voters want, and they will vote for you if you give them money. They don’t want to wait until after elections, as she had promised. She had planned that she’d give a gift of money to the village council and the village women’s committee if she won, so when she didn’t get in, she didn’t give any money to anyone (as some other unsuccessful
candidates did according to their narratives in this report). Although service to the village is very important, and there is a need for parliamentarians who know the people best, part of knowing your constituency is knowing who to give money to. If she ran again she would do as she was told that others had done; have lots of money and wait for the night before elections and the morning of elections, as that’s what gets votes.

“There should be more women in parliament” she said “because a lot of women are brighter than most men. A decision is never the best until more women are in to put in good ideas with talents that many men lack”. She said that there are many obstacles to getting women elected; democracy should start from the village. Customary norms mean that if a woman matai is not the senior title-holder she does not speak in the village council, so her views are not heard. She commented that even the villages that allow women to have matai titles are not really convinced that women should have a voice in village government. “After all, it is the extended family who decides to give a title to a woman, not the village. So although her family may accept her, the village is not necessarily convinced that she should have a voice in village decisions. If Samoa is really serious about having women in parliament, they should pass a law for the village fono, the same as the one we now have for at least 10% women in parliament. It has to start from the village for women to sit in the front and allow them to speak as much as any of those men who make decisions in the fono.”

She commented that women do more, lead from behind, but men get the praise. Men don’t want a woman to speak for their village. “There is this idea that if a woman stands, she will become the village spokesperson, she’ll go in [to parliament] as their servant to seek what the electorate wants but they know the authority of the family is a man, and the women is just the advisor (Fa’atuatua).

**Candidate Thirteen:** This candidate grew up in New Zealand but had a vision of helping her village in Samoa. She got her matai title in 1997 and she came to live in the village in 2006. She attended meetings of the village council, and thought about running for parliament. When she saw suffering in her village as people tried to raise funds to improve the village, she decided to stand.

In 2013 she set up an electoral committee with 20 members. With 12 of them, she went to NZ to fund raise funds, obtaining WST$25,000. She used this money to finance meetings, transport expenses, for registering voters In addition she gave donations to the churches in the electorate and her committee contacted all the voters to promote support for her. She saw many problems in her electorate to be addressed, including youth unemployment, threats to the environment, lazy people
who just depended on remittances, not enough effort in agriculture, dependence on buying food, and too much stealing.

Reflecting on her experience as a candidate, she said she thought that she lost because Samoa has become a one-man government under HRPP, so she stood for the opposition. She related that someone had prophesied that God wanted the sitting member be returned as he had unfinished business. She said that she asked God if there was something she didn’t do that she should have done, but He said no. She was saddened by the situation in her village where there is so much to achieve, yet, she said, the matai just look for today, for themselves, and don’t look ahead. A gift to thank the winning political party (momōli) cost the village WST$10,000.

The winning candidate was successful due to the gifts he gave to individuals, she said, and that she would never use this tactic. The village council told people who to vote for. “Political Education from outside won’t work here. Women will not support other women. I don’t think [the workshops] were any use for women who grow up here. Our Samoan people just get confused. It would have been better if some of our own women parliamentarians had come to tell us how to get [elected] here.”

The candidate said she prays ten times daily for a change in Samoa. She believes that women are needed in politics “because women have qualities and skills that men don’t have. They are also more involved with families and children and they see things from different viewpoint than men. Women pick up change faster than men. Their input is needed in decision making which affects everyone’s lives.”

**Candidate Fourteen:** This candidate had a platform of social issues she pledged to try to address as an MP. She campaigned for basic needs: equality, clean water for all, electricity, improved education, and also on addressing domestic violence and youth problems.

Her electoral committee was formed after the Electoral Act was passed in September 2015. Looking back she thinks she did this too late. The biggest job is to identify voters, which is a complicated task in an urban electorate. In the end, she reached about 90% of the people on the roll, but it meant that not much time was left to discuss issues properly, so it became more of an awareness campaign. The committee interviewed voters to identify

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**The assistance programmes for women candidates should have been started much earlier. Although the training and talks were useful they were too close to elections, so they clashed with the campaigning; therefore little of what was learned was used properly. She believes that in future it would be better for the donors to give direct assistance to registered candidates should “We asked for...”**
these public concerns in the platform, and these were described in her campaign brochures. She considered using newspaper advertisements but decided these did not reach many people at work, so concentrated on TV spots. She organised a radio programme with 2AP but these were aired at 10am when most people are at work.

She attended the donor-funded training workshops for women candidates; speakers at these included a Canadian woman ex-politician, a campaign manager from the US and a presentation from an American Samoa Congresswoman. She participated in the Samoa Alamai project, and attended a session at which Su’a Williams, a Samoan MP from New Zealand, spoke.

Her campaign was completely self-funded, costing about SAT$60,000T. She employed 12 people full-time on the committee and paid for their food and transport to go find voters. She gave no gifts to workers but followed the law, telling voters to people to wait until after elections. She said: “Campaigning got quite aggressive at times because my committee found it difficult to just talk about issues as they were told, and actually saw other committees giving food and money to the people they were trying to talk issues with.”

Reflecting on her experience campaigning, she said that she started too late. She commented that in the last two weeks her rivals gave out a lot although this was against the law. Some of the people who were going to vote for her were targeted with food and money by other candidates in the last two weeks. The Electoral Commissioner came out on the media in the last two weeks before elections with false information, telling the candidates it was illegal to take people to the voting booths.

She asked a lawyer to look into this to confirm her understanding of what is legal. She had thought that it was illegal was to influence people to vote for you once they’re in your car, but to take them to the booths is not illegal. The question is “how could the people go to vote? Buses were not running and many people could not or would not pay for taxis to go vote.” She did pay for taxis, (she hired all the taxis from three taxi stands, which cost her a lot of money) but in some cases the people to be transported were not at home; they’d either decided not to vote, or had gone with some other electoral committee. “By the time I realised that this practices was not lawful, my committee had already told people they won’t be picking them up, so when they went out in taxis, many people had been frightened so didn’t bother to go and vote. These rules frightened a lot of people, which is why these elections had the lowest turnout of any other previous election.
She explained that the law said that all campaign advertising materials and campaigning was to stop at 6pm the evening before elections day, yet, that whole night, TV1 was broadcasting the Prime Minister and other ministers opening this development projects. She pointed out that this reinforced the idea in people’s mind that the political party and the government were inseparable, and that the ruling the party was doing good for them, so TV1 was stretching the law and influencing voters to support candidates endorsed by the ruling party. She believes that the church also played a big part in directing people to vote. She commented that the winning candidate gathered all the pastors and ministers, which is very strategically smart, because in urban areas church communities replace the village structure.

“Where are our women? Where is the National Council of Women? There is no organisation to unite women nationally. Women have different experiences and needs that need to be discussed. Women also have qualities that men don’t have. Women are more involved in families and villages, more caring, nurturing, and compassionate. Our government needs these qualities, so women are needed to make their input into village and national governments.”

She comments that women voters did not help women significantly in the election. “The village women’s committee are not strong in voicing what they see as their needs to the government, the government is just giving them projects to do. Take domestic violence, for instance. Donor agencies are leading issues like these, why is there no voice from women, village and national, to stop this abuse. The lack of women voice in village governance is a structural issue. There is no women voice in village councils, very few women matai to voice women’s concerns in the fono.”

Candidate Fifteen: This candidate lives in her electorate, and stood because nobody from her village had ever won a seat in parliament. Since none of the male matai were willing to stand, she decided to. She sits in the village council but said she leaves as soon as the business is concluded to avoid being embarrassed by the men joking. She realised that she didn’t have much of a chance to get in because her village has only got about 200 voters; but she wanted to get her village to realise that they too should have a say in parliament. She had their endorsement. She formed her committee in June, 2015, and registered as soon as registration was open. She did not pay her committee but they provided with food and accommodation by her relatives when they can to town. Nor did she give any money to people who came and said they would vote for her, because she didn’t believe them.
She and her electoral committee of old matai tried to canvass voters from the village living in town, but found most had already been contacted by other candidates from her electorate. She commented that these candidates used some of the new churches in Apia to reach voters, and were handing out money to get some of the young people. Even some of her own relatives had been contacted and did not vote for her. The only she did during the campaign was provide a breakfast for the village council. Other candidates gave the villages in the electorate large sums of money; she saw one giving $2,000 when she was sitting in the village fono. She also saw men drinking beer they said that was given to them by this other candidates. It was rumoured in the electorate that after the election, the candidate who won gave money to the candidate who sued for electoral malpractice.

Looking back, she said, there was another candidate from her village and the outcome of her efforts seems as to have been that she split the ballots. She hadn’t considered this outcome when she decided register the week before the election. She said that she learned that campaigning on issues has no chance against a campaign based on gifts of food and money in the two weeks before polling day. There was a certainly in people’s mind that the ruling party would be returned, so there was no point voting for opposition candidates.

She attended and enjoyed some of the donor-funded workshops for women candidates, but thinks they didn’t help much. She learned that is important to start early and not to wait until the election comes around after five year. She hopes women who missed out will stand again, “e pei o le pa’u a le popo uli” She said she was glad she had not taken a loan to pay for her campaign, commenting that some unsuccessful candidates must be wondering how to repay the loans that they took for their election campaigns.

There are obstacles for women who want to participate in political processes, she said. Few women have matai titles, because women would rather give titles to men. Also, she said, there is no use having women in parliament just because they are women, unless they make useful contributions. It’s not just numbers, it’s also quality. Although men are the head of the family, “e pule le tamā”, a woman may have more wisdom and knowledge so in that case, woman should be allowed to take the lead.

Candidate sixteen: This candidate had ideas for things that needed to be done in her village. She had an electoral committee of six men from her own village. She thought her chances were good because her village had the largest number of voters. She said she told her committee they must only talk to people, but not to give any money; they must obey the law. She commented that some
people might say that she was not educated enough to stand for parliament, but she was confident because she had served her village for many years and was well schooled in village affairs and village decisions, and she had been president of school committee many times, and had also been a leader in the youth group, and in her church. Her title is one of six higher ranking titles and she speaks up in the *fono* and is respected, she says, because she speaks straight and speaks the truth. She had joined the Samoa Alamai towards getting more women to the elections. She said that the Speaker of Parliament and the Prime Minister spoke, and some foreign women, talked to them about the elections. She attended only two of their meetings.

She says that looking back; she didn’t really commit herself to winning. For example she always went back to her village to look after her business there, and left her committee, unsupervised, to canvass votes in town. Her campaign cost about SAT$5,000, for the committee, food and taxi fares. She learned a lot from the experience, she said, the first lesson is to seek women’s votes, which means women need to be made aware to support women candidates. Men should also vote for women, but start with women.

The candidate who won broke the law, she said; he gave people money, for example by provided repayment for women’s small business loans, and buying the things they were selling before the elections, but not afterwards. He gave the village SAT$1000, so she could have reported him. She had thought of giving the village council SAT$5,000 when the promised support for her candidacy, but decided not to because it had been broadcast many times not to do this. “Next time I will give gifts” she said, laughing. She said her candidacy was also affected by a dispute between sub-villages of her village, which as a matai she had been involved in. This cost her votes in one of the sub villages.

It’s important to have women in parliament she said. “God saw Adam needed help, so Eve came in. That’s the same as in the village. Men are devious while women are straight. For example if the *fono* makes a decision to work on the school building, the men *matai* come along without tools, and if they’re asked to do a task, they just do it for five minutes then they sit down and smoke, even the young men, once they get a title, they don’t want to do any work for the village. Women however, jump in and did whatever they’re asked to do. Women want to know where village money goes, but men try and hide wrongdoing. Women’s voice is important. Any matter discussed must have women’s voice.”

**Candidate Seventeen** This candidate stood for the opposition party. She also became involved in rugby and was the president for the district rugby union, providing transport for teams, paying for
their registration and feeding them when they run out of money, yet despite this not many of them voted for her.

She printed six billboards, one for each village. She thought once the people she’d helped in the past would see that was running and that they would vote for her. She was unable to stop working during the campaign and she had to go away in December, but when she came back in January, the billboards were all up. She also used a Facebook page and got lots of moral support from overseas as well as from Samoa as well. She printed pamphlets laying out what her achievements which were distributed door to door by her supporters. She did not have an electoral committee but organised some scrutineers to help her daughter and friends on elections day. Her campaign cost her around SAT$15,000, mainly for bill boards, brochures and food for her supporters, before and after elections. She attended a few of the donor-funded workshops for women candidates, saying that it was a good idea bringing women together, but what the speakers from overseas told us was not relevant to our context, also these measures to encourage women to stand for parliament and to vote for women came too late.

On reflection, she thinks her candidacy had both costs and benefits for her family, but the costs outweighed the benefits by far. She had not committed enough time. She had felt obliged by her family to stand, but looking back she realises that she didn’t have a clear strategy, not even seeking the support of the village council although she thought they would support her. Her successful rival gave out a lot of money in the days before the election, she said. If she runs again, she takes time to do the door to door campaigning herself.

Living in the village and serving the village and the church are not enough, voters are bought with money and food in the last minute and will go and ask for it from the candidates, she said. Also few women voters think for themselves, most feel obliged to vote with their husband, and according to the choice of the village.
She believes the youth problem of today is because the role of the daughter of the village (ualauma) as peace makers in the village is undermined by the wives of the matai (faletua ma tausi). This is due to the fact that women are now marrying into their own villages and when their husbands become matai, they take on the role of the faletua ma tausi and the ualauma are often their own daughters. By marrying into the village they undermine the dignity and honour of the ualauma. In the past the ualauma used to enforce peace regarding decisions of the village council, as was their duty.

Candidate eighteen: This candidate had been involved in programmes to encourage women candidates and voters and decided to stand herself, as that is what she had been advocating. She enrolled as candidate, but did not campaign against the silting member, to whom she is related. She said she left the outcome in the hands of God. She thought the donor-sponsored and NGO promotional activities were excellent, but they should have started much earlier. She thought there was a need to do more research on why women do not vote for women.

Commenting on the success factors for women candidates, she said that a long term electoral committee is very important. She said money was also important too, but she did not wish to comment further on that, but commented that money wins. She lost because she did not campaign, she didn’t go in to win, and she went just to support those other women who stood for the election.

She sits in her village councils and thinks more women are needed in village government. Women’s needs are not discussed in village fono. For example, if the aualauma thinks that a fine imposed on a youth is excessive, they can advise that the council’s decision should be changed. In the past, the house of the aualauma (fale o tama’ita’) was the refuge for anyone in trouble in the village. She commented that if there were more women in parliament there would be more attention to social issues of concern to women, who know more what is needed to improve families, villages and the
country. The main obstacles facing women is that they don’t push themselves to seek leadership enough.

**Candidate nineteen:** This candidate enrolled on the last day open for enrolment, without high hopes of winning but with an interest in seeing how electioneering is done, in case if she decided to stand again in the future. She’s a member of Samoa Alamai, a group that started two years ago after a workshop by UNDP and Legislative Assembly to promote the 10% law for women in Parliament.

She began by meeting with her extended family and village councils in the electorate. She also did a media campaign, with spots on radio and TV and distribution of 3000 flyers. Much of this was sponsored by friends who rang up and offered sponsorship. She formed a committee three weeks before the elections comprise eight relatives’ members of her own ‘āiga. These met twice a week of the three weeks before the Election Day.

**4. LESSONS LEARNED.**

**4.1 Development Partner Assistance**

In this final section of the report, we will summarise some key findings from the interviews. Perhaps the most interesting finding of this qualitative survey of women candidates is on the impact of the development partner assistance. Programs that were designed to increase the number of women elected to parliament did not have much of an impact, according to most of the women who stood for the 2016 elections.

While those who attended workshops found them inspiring, interesting and enjoyable, they noted that although there was an increase in women candidates compared to most preceding elections, they did not significantly increase the number elected. This was mainly because the examples and campaign tactics from modern democracies did not apply to Samoa’s tradition-based electoral system.

Some also thought the ‘women’ issue was over-exposed to an electorate that, in general, was accustomed to male leadership, and which may have ‘switched off’ because most people did not see why it was important for women to be in parliament and so voted according to local preferences. However, it was evident that the measures got many of the women who attended the training thinking about future political participation.

**4.2 Legal obligations**

Among those women who took part in training many said that “playing by the rules”, as specified in the electoral Act (see Appendix 1), was emphasised in the training. However, many of them thought
that by obeying the law against bribery they reduced their chances of winning the seat. Nearly all the candidates said that the successful candidates had not obeyed this law. Most of those interviewed candidates thought that money and gifts impressed voters more than any other campaign measure. Several women noted that whereas they had been in the habit of helping others in their community with gifts of money and food, they could not do this prior to the election because they might be accused of bribery. Several also mentioned that they were afraid to visit prospective voters in their homes because according to Samoan etiquette a gift should be offered on such occasions. It was evident that some candidates had different interpretations of the law, with some fearing that even giving credit to customers in their shop (as was their usual practice) was illegal. A significant number of candidates said that their rivals broke the law in their campaigns.

To be eligible to file a complaint of illegality against rival candidates, the complaining candidate must have 10% of the vote and must have witnesses who can testify to an illegal act. We think that another reason for not reporting illegal behaviour by other candidates, may possibly be that they did not wish to deal with post-election social consequences from the people who supported these candidates. Two women reported that opponents had used intimidation tactics to deter their candidacy during their campaign.

4.2 Voter expectations
Many candidates provided transport for the voters, who expect this service. Noting this, Hon. Fiame pointed out: “As a nation, we should try and build a culture of people wanting to and going to register and to vote themselves, instead of waiting for others to come and take them there.” However, because of voter expectations candidates did feel obliged to provide the service because if they don’t do it, their rival is likely to do so.

Other candidates spoke of the problems for candidates that are posed by the expectations of voters. Not only do they expect to be taken to register and to vote, but they also expect to receive gifts of food and money. These candidates spoke of the need to convince voters to elect candidates on their merits and capabilities, rather than on their ability to spend money. Some suggested that instead, those aspiring to parliament should try to get support for village projects. Several mentioned that this would be a better way to spend aid money; on projects for women candidates and their villages, instead of training and awareness.

4.3 Knowing the electorate
Many candidates emphasised the importance of studying the electoral roll for the constituency. A knowledgeable candidate will be able to identify voters on the basis of their eligibility and where they are living (in the electorate or in town) as well as those whose names should be removed from
the roll because they have passed away. Another comment made by many candidates is the need to
for the electoral commission to more closely scrutinize the rolls to ensure that voters are lawfully
registered.

4.4 Party Affiliation
The largest number of candidates stood for the ruling HRPP (11) and the next most numerous group
stood as independents (8). Only four stood for the opposition Tautua (4). Some of these mentioned
that voters were not sufficiently aware of why there was a need to maintain a two-party or multi-
party presence in a democratic parliament, and the role of a parliamentary opposition.

4.5 Electoral support by women for women
Most of the candidates said that experience had taught them that women voters do not support
women candidates because they are women. Some suggested that this may be because of jealousy,
but others pointed out that women in Samoa are accustomed to men being the leaders and
decision-makers, and that they may believe that women living with the husband’s family (nofotûne)
should vote according to his or his family’s choice. A point made by many is that Samoa will benefit
from having more women in parliament to represent women’s perspectives and concerns. They
emphasised the need to raise the awareness of women voters about issue of particular concern to
women and why having women in parliament to raise these issues is important. Also, to raise
awareness of women’s rights to participate in village level and national level political decision
making. Many said that overall, voter education was needed so people would understand the
meaning of parliamentary democracy and that government project were funded from taxes and aid,
not political parties.

4.6 Campaigns based on single issues
Most of the women who took part in training said participation in a church committee, village
council, and other local organisations were more important than building a campaign around a
single local issue (as in the case of the candidate who campaigned on the issue of village water
supply, or the one who campaign for village development projects). Without voter education people
did not sufficiently understand how parliament works and how development priories are made by
the government. Therefore they did not understand how village problems and issues could be
addressed by an MP. Becoming known by using modern methods of campaigning with posters,
pamphlets, radio and TV and focussing on development issues was also generally unsuccessful with
Samoa voters.
4.7 The importance of Samoan custom and political institutions
Candidates said that by standing for election they had learned the importance of “being there”—if not actually living in the village, then participating regularly and long term in local events, in the village council, in a village church, and having a supportive extended family in one or more of the villages in the electorate. These opinions confirm the 2014–2015 research findings on women and local government in Samoa.

Few women matai sit in the village council (fono) but those who do so have a better chance to make themselves known as decision-makers in the community. In some villages there is an unspoken convention that male matai are the decision-makers, so women who want to take a public role in politics (compared to advising their menfolk privately) need to be quite courageous in taking their places and speaking in the councils.

Some also referred to the importance of holding a title of high rank and seniority as a consideration for a person aspiring to become an MP. This is because a senior, high ranking title carries more prestige than a more minor matai title, and can be more influential, they said. The issue of seniority was alluded to by one of the candidates, who said that while she attended the village council, she did not speak, in deference to a senior holder of the same title as her own, who had that prerogative. These cultural considerations are very important in the Samoan system of politics and governance.

As emphasised by the successful women candidates; electoral success depends on a long term plan. Training, campaigning and NGO activities in the months just before the election are seldom effective. A candidate needs to prepare for at least five years of the electoral cycle before the elections to build support in the electorate, though generosity, participation in village and district and church affairs, and to become well known as a potential village and district leader.

4.8 Feeling “called” to stand
A number of candidates mentioned that they believe that God had called them to stand for the election. Without in anyway minimising their sincere beliefs, such statements could be understood as an inspiration to do something that few Samoan women would have the courage and self-confidence to do, and something which may be socially disapproved—putting oneself forward as a parliamentary candidate. In the context of the risk of cultural disapproval of those who “speak above their status” (tautalaititi) or who claim high status for themselves (fiasili) expressing confidence in “God’s will” can serve as a socially acceptable justification. This reminds us of the great courage of these 24 women candidates, both those who won seats and those that did not. They have acted in the face of a deeply patriarchal system of rural governance of both churches and
villages together with a long history of almost exclusively male leadership which pose severe structural obstacles to women becoming leaders. By standing, these brave women offered their services to their electorate as members of parliament. They have asserted their confidence that women (half Samoa’s adult population), and women matai (only about 10% of all matai) have not only the right to parliamentary representation, but also that women have special insights, talents and opinions to offer in the service of their country.
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Australian National University (ANU) 2016 Samoa General Elections Domestic Observation Report. 15 August 2016 (Unpublished draft)

Government of Samoa. Samoa Electoral Act 1963 Amended 1910


Appendix 1: Definition of Corrupt Practices Samoa Electoral Act 1963 Amended 2010

95. Personation - (1) Every person is guilty of a corrupt practice who commits or aids or abets, counsels, or procures the commission of, the offence of personation.

(2) Every person commits the offence of personation who:

(a) Votes as some other person, whether that other person is living or dead or is a fictitious person; or

(b) Having voted at any election, votes again at the same election; or

(c) Having voted at an election in any constituency or as an individual voter at a general election, votes again in another constituency or as an individual voter at the same general election.

(3) For the purpose of this section a person shall be deemed to have voted if he or she has applied for a ballot paper for him or herself, or has marked a ballot paper for himself or herself, whether validly or not.

96. Bribery - (1) In this section the terms “elector” and “voter” include any person who has or claims to have a right to vote.

(2) Every person is guilty of a corrupt practice who commits the offence of bribery.

(3) Every person commits the offence of bribery who, directly or indirectly by himself or herself or by any other person on his or her behalf:

(a) Gives any money or procures any office to or for any elector or voter, or to or for any other person on behalf of any elector or voter, or to or for any other person, in order to induce any elector or voter to vote or refrain from voting; or

(b) Corruptly does any such act as aforesaid on account of any elector or voter having voted or refrained from voting; or

(c) Makes any such gift or procurement as aforesaid to or for any person in order to induce that person to procure, or endeavour to procure, the return of any person at an election or the vote of any elector or voter, or who, upon or in consequence of any such gift or procurement as aforesaid, procures, or engages, promises, or endeavours to procure, the return of any person at any election or the vote of any elector or voter.

(4) For the purposes of this section:

(a) References to giving money shall include references to giving, lending, agreeing to give or lend, offering, promising, or promising to procure or endeavour to procure, any money or valuable consideration;

(b) References to procuring any office shall include references to giving, procuring, agreeing to give or procure or to endeavour to procure, any office, place, or employment.
(5) Every person commits the offence of bribery who:

(a) Advances or pays or causes to be paid any money to or to the use of any other person with the intent that that money or any part thereof shall be expended in bribery at any election; or

(b) Knowingly pays or causes to be paid any money to any person in discharge or repayment of any money wholly or in part expended in bribery at any election.

(6) The foregoing provisions of this section shall not extend or be construed to extend to any money paid or agreed to be paid for or on account of any legal expenses incurred in good faith at or concerning an election.

(7) An elector or voter commits the offence of bribery if before or during an election he or she directly or indirectly, by himself or herself or by any other person on his or her behalf, receives, or agrees or contracts for, any money, gift, loan, or valuable consideration, office, place, or employment for himself or herself or for any other person for voting or agreeing to vote or for refraining or agreeing to refrain from voting.

(8) Every person commits the offence of bribery if after an election he or she directly or indirectly, by himself or herself or by any other person on his or her behalf, receives any money or valuable consideration on account of any person having voted or refrained from voting or having induced any other person to vote or refrain from voting.

97. Treating –

(1) Every person is guilty of a corrupt practice who commits the offence of treating.

(2) Every person commits the offence of treating who corruptly by himself or herself or by any other person on his or her behalf, either before, during, or after an election, directly or indirectly gives or provides, or pays wholly or in part the expense of giving or providing any food, drink, entertainment, or provision to or for any person:

(a) For the purpose of corruptly influencing that person or any other person to vote or refrain from voting; or

(b) For the purpose of corruptly procuring himself or herself to be elected; or

(c) On account of that person or any other person having voted or refrained from voting, or being about to vote or refrain from voting.

(3) Every elector and voter who corruptly accepts or takes any such food, drink, entertainment, or provision also commits the offence of treating.

97A. Conduct of “O’o” and “Momoli” – Despite the other provisions of this Act, the traditional presentation of “O’o” and “Momoli” by a Member or Candidate for Parliament or a person acting on behalf of such Member or Candidate shall not be considered as treating or bribery or an illegal or corrupt activity or practice provided that the presentation is made within the period commencing with the 180th day and ending with the 90th day from expiry of the then Parliament at five (5) years from the date of the last preceding General Elections.
97B. Conduct of “tautua faaauau” - (1) Despite the other provisions of this Act, the traditional service or assistance of “tautua faaauau” by a Member of Parliament or a person acting on behalf of such Member shall not be considered as treating or bribery or an illegal or corrupt activity or practice, where the service or assistance is given before 90 days prior to the expiry of Parliament at five (5) years from the date of the last preceding General Elections or given after the close of Poll on polling day.

(2) For the purposes of this section, “tautua faaauau” means the provision of service or assistance in any form or manner rendered or given to any person or organisation provided such service or assistance:

(a) Is considered to be culturally appropriate or expected;

(b) Is not excessive in the circumstances; and

(c) Is not a “O’o” or “Momoli”.

(3) This section does not apply to the provision of service or assistance at a funeral or to the Member of Parliament’s church minister.

98. Undue influence - (1) Every person is guilty of a corrupt practice who commits the offence of undue influence.

(2) Every person commits the offence of undue influence who:

(a) Directly or indirectly, by himself or herself or by any other person on his or her behalf, makes use of or threatens to make use of any force, violence or restraint, or inflicts or threatens to inflict, by himself or herself or by any other person, any temporal or spiritual injury, damage, harm, or loss upon or against any person, in order to induce or compel that person to vote for or against a particular candidate or to vote or refrain from voting, or on account of that person having voted for or against a particular candidate or having voted or refrained from voting; or

(b) By abduction, duress, or any fraudulent device or contrivance, impedes or prevents the free exercise of the franchise of an elector or voter, or thereby compels, induces, or prevails upon an elector or voter either to vote or to refrain from voting;

(c) By himself or herself or any other person on his or her behalf withholds a Certificate of Identity belonging to another elector or voter and in doing so induces that elector or voter to vote for a particular candidate, or prevents that elector or voter from voting for a particular candidate or from voting in that election.

99. Procurement of voting by unqualified electors or voters - Every person is guilty of an illegal practice who induces or procures to vote at any election any person whom he or she knows at the time to be disqualified or prohibited, whether under this Act or otherwise, from voting at that election.

99A. Illegal activities during period of election - (1) In this section “period of election” means the period during any election or by election, commencing on the day after the Commissioner gives public notice of polling day and ending at the close of the Poll on polling day.
(2) Every candidate who, during a period of election except at a funeral, directly or indirectly, by himself or herself or by any other person on his or her behalf renders or makes presentation of any food, beverage, money or other valuable to an elector of his or her constituency or to an individual voter at a ceremony or activity is guilty of an illegal practice.

(3) Every elector or voter who, during a period of election except at a funeral, obtains or attempts to obtain, directly or indirectly by himself or herself or by any other person on his or her behalf, any food, beverage, money or other valuable from a candidate for election, is guilty of an illegal practice.

(4) Repealed by the Electoral Amendment Act 2009, No.21.

General Provisions

100. Cinematograph films - (1) For the purposes of this section the expression “cinematograph film” or “film” includes any screen advertisement of any description.

(2) For the purposes of this Act, the exhibition of any cinematograph film except on polling day shall not be deemed to constitute bribery or treating or an illegal practice, and any payment or contract for payment in respect of any such exhibition shall not be deemed to constitute an illegal practice notwithstanding that the film may be wholly or mainly an advertisement.

101. Punishment for corrupt or illegal practice – Every person who is guilty of any corrupt practice or any illegal practice shall be liable on conviction:

(a) In the case of a corrupt practice, to imprisonment for a term not less than two (2) years and not exceeding four (4) years or to a fine not less than 20 penalty units and not exceeding 50 penalty units, or both such imprisonment and fine; or

(b) In the case of an illegal practice, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three (3) years or to a fine not exceeding 20 penalty units, or both such imprisonment and fine; and

(c) Any conviction under this Part shall be recorded as a criminal conviction by the Ministry of Police and Prisons Services.

102. Persons charged with corrupt practice may be found guilty of illegal practice - Any person charged with a corrupt practice may, if the circumstances warrant that finding, be found guilty of an illegal practice; and any person charged with an illegal practice may be found guilty of that offence notwithstanding that the act constituting the offence amounted to a corrupt practice. ...