



GOVERNMENT OF SĀMOA  
**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORTS & CULTURE**

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## **National Statement of the Independent State of Samoa**

The voice of Small Island Developing States such as Samoa in shaping the priorities of education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in this year's Education Summit is timely as we thrive to recover from the setbacks of COVID-19.

Setbacks in economic development are aggravated by inflation worldwide and felt by our people as the price of living continues to rise. The need for fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate economic growth in Samoa has not come easy as job loss becomes a reality; contributing to a rise in the vulnerability situations of families impacting school-age children. Education sectors are overwhelmed to now address out-of-school social and economic-related issues that impede the basic needs of education.

Samoa supports *Action Track 1* in achieving quality education. However, the reality of the pandemic urges the need for TES, to look at addressing the grassroots issues intensified by the impacts of COVID 19 if we are to attain inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools. It is fundamental that research data and survey is key to identifying hardships and all forms of vulnerability existing in schools, within families, and across communities. Worldwide, 66% of violent-related issues against children are being reported.

Samoa calls for inclusion on the TES agenda decisions related to mobilizing dedicated funding to address targeted vulnerabilities impacting students in Small Island States. Namely in the areas of nutrition, health, wellbeing, ICT, and technologies - encompassing all our basic needs for learning.

Samoa is committed to *Action Track 2* with more resources invested in improving literacy and numeracy for Early Childhood Development (ECD) as Samoa's priority for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Governments and multilateral partners must embrace Early Childhood Development (ECD) as the foundation for developing literacy and

numeracy knowledge of students. Therefore, Samoa calls for dedicated funding invested in the area of ECD or the first 1,000 days of a child's development to equip preparedness for Early Childhood Development. Funding and resourcing in this area are vital if progression and engagement in ECE are to improve.

Samoa calls attention to *Action Track 3* particularly in teacher shortage and innovation for discussion, particularly in the sciences. Deliberation on strategies to fully harmonize virtual professional development and micro qualifications for Small Island states is critical. Samoa calls for free, continuous, and relevant online professional development and platforms for sharing best practices across regions and nations. Micro qualifications must be offered and fully funded if our leaders and teachers are to meet the evolving demands of teaching and learning.

The shift to digital learning, digital technologies are acknowledged as the new normal for education as per *Action Track 4*. A change that has seen a digital divide for the most vulnerable and more so for the Small Developing Island Nations. High costs of internet connectivity and maintenance costs threaten access and potentially widen the learning gap as parents are burdened with costs to devices and connectivity to access online resources.

To harness and maximize the full potential of digital learning to benefit the most vulnerable, Samoa urges for free open education resources (OER) and quality educational content in all areas of learning and at all levels of learning. We urge systems that are sustainable, affordable, and content relevant to our country's needs to ensure we are not left behind. Data collection systems for Pacific Island Nations must also be addressed. The value and role of data collection systems for identifying progress made in achieving key indicators for SDG 4 and the Action track for TES are critical.

The government of Samoa is committed to providing free education under the One Government Grant (OGG) for ECE, primary and secondary. 4.8 of GDP goes to public education spending with 16.21% of its budget invested in education. Bilateral and multilateral support for education has declined, and in the wake of COVID-19 government is pressured to make ends meet for education. Our commitment to all 4 Thematic Areas for Transformation Education will impact government as priorities become more urgent for social-economic recovery.

Samoa calls for a multi-dimensional coordinated approach between multi-lateral and bilateral partners in supporting all 4 key thematic areas if Small Island Nations are to commit to achieving the SDG 4 indicators as per the 2030 Agenda and Thematic Areas of Transforming Education. A call for greater access to direct

funding modalities in education with flexibility in processes to enable reallocation of funding to government priorities now fully recognized in the midst of COVID 19 is critical.

Lastly, Samoa appreciates the support and partnership provided by its multilateral and bilateral partners in education. Samoa is committed to seeking innovative partnerships and building broader and stronger partnerships and networks to support education in different ways.