



Ministry of
Education, Sports
and Culture



Family Life Education in Samoa

Conceptual
Framework

Family Life Education in Samoa

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Apia
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This document was prepared by the FLE Multi-Sectorial Steering Committee, and approved by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture

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Preamble

Family Life Education became a terminology in vogue in school curricula in Samoa when subject organisers from the Ministry attended a regional workshop in Suva, Fiji convened by the UNFPA Office for the Pacific States in 2017 with the following objectives

- To improve the support environment for family life education including a comprehensive policy framework and community support.
- To improve the quality and delivery of FLE programme through strengthened curricula, pedagogy and teacher training.
- To improve social protective factors in young people's learning and social environment.
- To improve the monitoring and evaluation framework for FLE.

The participants examined the components of the IPPF Comprehensive Sexuality Education Framework and the CSE Content in "It's All One Curriculum" in order to find out what CSE content is included in the school curriculum and other materials in their own country.

For the Samoa team, the main curriculum materials in which CSE content was identified were the Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum statements and materials. Nowhere in this 'subject' which is part of the Samoa school curriculum was FLE mentioned. The main conclusion reached by the team was that a great deal of comprehensive sexuality information and materials already existed in the HPE curriculum but then more work should be done to fill in some of the gaps identified.

From then on, FLE became a commonplace phraseology and MESC worked with UNESCO and UNFPA to design a joint project to "Strengthen Family Life Education in Samoa" but there was no conceptual framework for FLE, and the terminology was as yet not completely defined and extrapolated within the context of Samoa.

Introduction

The need to delineate and clarify a conceptual framework for Family Life Education in Samoa was identified through the conduct of a situational analysis to determine the extent and status of the implementation of FLE in Samoa in 2019-20. The survey was conducted by Kristen Joyner from New Zealand. Her report was submitted to a Validation Workshop of all key stakeholders in FLE in Samoa in September 2020 and a set of recommendations was accepted by the stakeholders. The need to clarify a conceptual framework for FLE in Samoa was one of the priority recommendations endorsed.

A Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee (MSC)¹ was set up to provide oversight of the Action Plan of all FLE Activities and the task of development of a Conceptual Framework for FLE in Samoa² became their priority responsibility.

The design process has involved a survey of all relevant literature both internationally and locally and MESC documents as well as documents from the joint UNESCO /UNFPA project “Strengthening Family Life Education in Samoa” for both Phases I and II. In particular, the Multi-Stakeholder consultations on the Situational Analysis Report for FLE in Samoa³ provided valuable information from discussions and recommendations.

The FLE-MSC approached the task by addressing five pivotal questions first.

1. Should the Conceptual Framework for FLE encapsulate all practices in school and out of school or should it focus on the Samoa national curriculum only?
2. What needs in Samoan society exist that FLE is envisioned to address?
3. What strengths and weaknesses exist in Samoan culture and faasamoa?
4. What context of family must be taught/reinforced in FLE?
5. What are Sex and Sexuality Taboos in Samoa?

In addition, the MSC addressed the paper, “Advice on the development of the Family Life Education conceptual framework” provided by the FPNSW who is a partner in the UNESCO/UNFPA project. The suggestions included looking at the 9 Essential Components of Comprehensive Sexuality Education from the UNFPA Operational Guidance. The MSC discussed these documents thoroughly in order to arrive at a definition of FLE in Samoa to guide the development of the Conceptual Framework.

¹ Recommendation from the K. Joyner Report which was validated by stakeholders at a workshop in September 2020.

² FLE_MSC TOR

³ Joyner, Kristen Situational Analysis: Implementation of the Samoa FLE Program: Report (Phase 2).

What is Family Life Education in Samoa? Problem of Definition

“Family Life Education is gender transformative and life-skills based education designed to help students acquire knowledge, explore and nurture positive values and attitudes, and develop life skills necessary to make informed life decisions, understand the consequences of a particular behavior, and adopt healthy behavior to avoid risks to their well-being on their transition into adulthood. As adolescence is a period when minds, bodies, values and personalities are being formed, introduction of family life education as early in life as feasible is an important aspect of the successful outcomes of family life education.”⁴ This definition focuses on adolescent education and does not in any way explain the centrality of ‘family’ in FLE. On the other hand, UNFPA defines FLE as ‘a rights based and gender focused approach to sexuality education, whether in school or out of school’⁵ Again ‘family’ is left out on a limb in this definition focusing on the development of the individual, and the rights of an individual related to sexual and reproductive health. For a communal society in which family is of central importance such as that of Samoa, the definitions above do not resonate well. Rather, family life education should have as its ultimate goal ‘that of optimizing family well-being’ and considers the varying components that contribute to strengthening families through an educational and preventive approach.⁶

There is a suggestion that family life education (FLE) should be used interchangeably with the terminology, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). This however is not supported by the FLE –MSC as there is a perception that FLE is more comprehensive while CSE is limited to sexuality education which by itself is a component within FLE and is considered subsumed in FLE. FLE is considered therefore to be the more acceptable terminology to be adopted in Samoa.

The definition adopted by the FLE-MSC therefore is that,

Family Life Education in Samoa is rights based, gender inclusive and life skills based and considers all components that contribute to strengthening families through an educational and preventative approach. Sexuality, sexual and reproductive health is an important component but so are human growth and development, understanding diversity, individuals in social contexts, interpersonal relationships, parenting education and guidance and family dynamics in the Samoan socio-cultural context of village and community life which include healthy living, good nutrition and sustainable lifestyles.

The 9 components of the UNFPA Guidance for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: A focus on Human Rights and Gender Goals

The MSC is supportive of the 9 components but has made a reservation on the inclusion of gender diversity in the school curriculum.

4 Definition provided in a Family Life Education : conceptual framework document provided for the MESC: author unknown and date unknown

5 http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_OperationalGuidance_WEB3_o.pdf

6 Darling, Carol. A. et al “The Foundation of Family Life Education: Understanding the Field” in the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Science*.

Scope of FLE in Samoa

Schools as well as many agencies in Samoa have a variety of programmes which fall within the ambit of FLE as defined above. The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development run programmes for young people as well as adults in the community on sexuality and reproductive health as well as the development of self-esteem, gender and related matters such as gender violence, gender disparities and equality. The Samoa Family Health Association has been conducting not only educational programmes on Sexual Reproductive Health but also provide services for young people such as guidance and provision of contraceptives and care of young pregnant mothers.

This FLE conceptual framework therefore encompasses all services that are provided by Non-Government Organisations, faith based organisations, other Government ministries as well as the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture through the school curriculum and other related activities for out of school youth and young adults. Family Life education in Samoa take into account, the school curriculum as well as all educational programmes and services delivered by other Government ministries and civil society that help support the achievement of family well-being in Samoa.

Comprehensive sexuality education is a component of family life education and is the responsibility not only of the MESC, MOH, MWCSO and NHRI but also NGOs such as Samoa Family Health Association, SVSG and community based organisations. Aspects of sexuality education is also included in the school curriculum.

FLE and Samoan Culture

Family is central and is the basis of Samoan culture. Family life education therefore must take into account the intricacies of family affiliation and relationships that exist in the concept of *aiga potopoto* or extended family. *Faasinomaga* is the basis of Samoan identity and enables one to have a sense of belonging to a family, a village and ultimately the culture and the country. Every child in Samoa belongs to an intricate system of family interrelationships in which *feagaiga* and *va tapuia* are critical. Self-development and self-esteem are supported by identification with *suafa matai* and land, *eleele* located within the *nuu* or villages which have *talatuu* or narratives and *agaifanua*, folklore that go back generations and thus provide meaningful and continuity of identity. This is what constitutes the *faasinomaga* of a Samoan whether living in Samoa or offshore in other countries.

This concept of family must be sustained through education so that Samoans will continue to know who they are in the complex and impersonal globalized world of today. Within this framework of family explained above, comprehensive sexuality education must be located and integrated. Hence family life education is more than just the subjects in the school system in which comprehensive sexuality education is integrated. It also include all activities, practices and services that take place in the community through the work of other government ministries, NGOs, faith-based and community based organisations.

FLE in the School Curriculum

As extrapolated above, Family Life Education in the curriculum therefore is across the school curriculum in various subject areas; there are aspects of FLE in Social Studies, in Science and Biology and predominant in Health and Physical Education (HPE). Health and Physical Education is identified as the main carrier subject in the school curriculum and this is where Comprehensive Sexuality Education is mainly integrated and will be strengthened in content as well as in methodology.

Both Social Studies and HPE are taught at all levels in primary schools from Years 1 to 8. Social Studies is currently mandatory at Years 9 and 10 at secondary level. HPE is offered at all levels at secondary level but optional for students. The MESC has agreed in principle to make HPE mandatory at secondary level which essentially means that age appropriate sexuality education will be taught throughout primary and secondary schooling.

Beginning in 2021, the MESC is putting in place what is known as 'streaming' at secondary level where students are given general education at year 9 but at year 10, students will be given the choice to pursue studies in the TVET stream, or the Arts stream or the Science stream or the Commerce stream. The Ministry is working to finalise the details of this change which also means a decision or not to make HPE mandatory at secondary level.

It is of crucial importance that FLE in the school curriculum is clearly mapped so that teachers understand how FLE is woven into various 'subjects' in the national school curriculum. This is a task that the sub committees⁷ of the FLE-MSC will address as top priority in their work.

Across the curriculum reinforcement of concepts and learning is critical and clear identification of FLE across the subjects is important.

⁷ *The FLE Curriculum sub committee and the FLE Teacher Training Sub Committee.*

FLE and Out Of School Practices and Programmes

Other ministries and NGOs will continue to provide FLE in their programmes of outreach to out of school youth and young adults as well as young couples. Some of these programmes focus on comprehensive sexuality education for example, the Samoa Family Health Association.

The Samoa Family Health Association (SFHA) is the sole CSO service provider and a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights services for all Samoans. The Association is the leading champion of Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) within the country and has been very active for the past years also as an advisor on SRHR to the Government of Samoa.

In close collaboration with other NGOs and the private sector to provide sexual and reproductive health services, SFHA also disseminates SRHR information to specific vulnerable and underserved communities including out of school young people and people living with disabilities.

Approximately 40 percent of the organization's activities are based on Family Life Education -comprehensive sexuality education- using a peer education and other approaches. The program also targets the general population in the rural and hard to reach communities.

SFHA works towards a nation where women, men and young people everywhere have control over their own bodies, and therefore their destinies; a nation where they are free to choose parenthood or not; free to decide how many children they will have and when; free to pursue healthy sexual lives without fear of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; a nation where gender or sexuality are no longer a source of inequality or stigma. We endeavor to

do everything we can to safeguard these important choices and rights for current and future generations of our country.

The Matuaileoo Environmental Trust Institute (METI) on the other hand focuses on improving lifestyles especially the provision of knowledge concerning threats to lifestyles. In this way, 'FLE would provide the tools for enhancing family and community resilience. Resilience implies being able to bounce back from adverse effects, which implies earlier preparedness, which implies prior knowledge of the adverse effects to come." The Samoa Education Network (SEN) emphasizes the achievement of family and community resilience through the promotion of SDG 4.7 and engages in educational advocacy especially in pursuit of that SDG goal which they believe fall within the ambit of Family Life Education.

Other programmes focus more on the approaches to eliminate violence against women and girls by addressing human rights, and gender rights, for example the National Human Rights Institute. Education for victims of violence or abuse and perpetrators are provided by agencies such as the Samoa Victims Support Group, the National Human Rights Institute, the Family Court Administration and others. General community education on the eradication of violence against women and children is also a major part of the work of the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.

All such practices and programmes come under the ambit of Family Life Education in Samoa.

Taken together what should be the goals of Family Life Education?

Goals of Family Life education

The primary goal of FLE is to optimize family well-being⁸ in Samoa.

The second goal is to enable all learners in school or out of school to acquire age appropriate knowledge and information on comprehensive sexuality education, that includes the core universal values of human rights and responsibility, an integrated focus on gender, a focus on scientifically supported information, the skills of communication and critical thinking to enable decision-making that supports their development physically, spiritually and intellectually in order to contribute to the enhancement of their families and their communities.

The third goal is to reduce the social ills resulting from dysfunctional families and communities in Samoa. Such social ills include a high rate of teenage pregnancies, high incidence of violence and abuse against women and children in the community, school violence including bullying and high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and AIDs and high incidence of Non Communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity.

8 Darling, Carol. A. et al "The Foundation of Family Life Education: Understanding the Field" in the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Science*.

Family well-being

Family well-being includes the ability by all family **suli** (heirs) to understand and articulate their **faasinomaga**, their genealogies, their affiliations and their interrelationships. It includes knowledge about social organizational structures, **aganuu** (culture) and **agaifanua** (cultural traditions) that pertain to Samoan society and village identity. It also include an understanding of relationships such as **feagaiga** (brother-sister relationship) and **va, (space) va tapuia (sacred space) and va fealoaloa'I** (reciprocal space) that articulates relationships, between people (roles and responsibilities) and between people and the environment or between people and God. This is the cultural context and can be taught informally in the homes and in village communities through the activities and practices of everyday life.

It can also be taught in the schools in the school curriculum especially as it allows students to interrogate through cognitive tools the philosophies behind such practices.

Individual well-being

A human being is body, mind and spirit. Individual well-being is achieved when the body, the mind and the spirit are healthy, peaceful and in tandem. Samoans are family oriented and community minded individuals because they live in families in village communities. Even in the newer communities that have grown up around urban areas, communities around families are soon formed and supported. Healthy and thriving individuals result in healthy families and thriving communities.

Family well-being is thus very much dependent on the development of individual members of the family through the processes of socialization informally in the family, through NGO and CBO programmes and formally in the schools. As is evident from an analysis of the subjects in the school curriculum that have aspects of FLE noted above, FLE should be designed to contribute to “the development of the student’s intellectual, social, emotional, physical, psychological, moral and spiritual capacities in order to encourage self- image and respect for others.”⁹

9 From Prince Edward Island (Canada) Family Life Curriculum FAM421A.

Values and FLE

Values are central to Samoan society because they represent what is generally accepted as worthwhile in daily life. Values guide the alternatives available to us in solving personal and social problems, in preserving a democratic society and in striving to ensure that all peoples existence has meaning and worth. They are the core that make us Samoans.

Samoa is founded on God and from God flow the values that are meaningful to our families and our communities. The following values underscore our existence.

Respect for self and others	Faaaloalo, Vā, Vā tapuia, Vā fealoaloa'i
Reciprocity	Fefa'asoa'a'i, Fe'oe'oea'i
Cooperation	Galulue faatasi, Autasi
Honesty	Faamaoni, Amiotonu
Justice	Moni ma Amiotonu
Equality of all people before God and Humans	E tutusa tagata uma I luma o le Atua
Responsibility: All human rights have a set of responsibilities without which rights cannot be articulated meaningfully	O nafa ma matafaioi
Mercy	Fefa'amagaloa'i
Tolerance	Le faailoga tagata
Service	O le ala I le pule o le tautua
Gender equality	Avanoa tutusa o tagata uma
Peaceful means through	soalaupule and Autasi
	Alofa

These values must underpin all family life education activities and programmes. In the school curriculum, they must be apparent in the teaching of the curriculum especially in Social Studies and Health and Physical Education.

Glossary of Samoan Terms

<i>Aga</i>	Protocols
<i>Agai'fanua</i>	Village protocols
<i>Aganuu</i>	Cultural protocols
<i>Alofa</i>	Love, Compassion
<i>Amiotonu</i>	Just behaviour
<i>Autasi</i>	Consensus
<i>Avanoa tutusa</i>	Equality
<i>E tutusa tagata uma I luma o le Atua</i>	Equality of all before God
<i>Faamaoni</i>	Honesty
<i>Faaaloalo</i>	Respect
<i>Faasinomaga</i>	Identity and Heritage
<i>Fefaamagaloa'I</i>	Forgiving
<i>Fefaasoa'a'i</i>	Sharing
<i>Fe'oe'oea'i</i>	Reciprocity
<i>Galulue faatasi</i>	Working together
<i>Le faailoga tagata</i>	Tolerance
<i>Matafaioi</i>	Responsibility
<i>Nafa</i>	Duties
<i>Nuu</i>	Village
<i>Soalaupule</i>	Sharing authority/Consensus making
<i>Suli</i>	Heirs
<i>Va</i>	Relational Space
<i>Va fealoaloa'I</i>	Relationalspace dynamics
<i>Va Tapuia</i>	Sacred relational space

Implementation Framework of FLE

