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**Our mission**

- *Provide quality community based services and advocacy for people with mental disorder and their families by working directly and in partnership with other stakeholders*

**Vision**

- *A Samoa that understands mental disorders and is compassionate towards those who experience these disorders, is supportive of their families, and facilitates health and wellbeing.*

## **GOSHEN TRUST MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES SAMOA**

Key Word : Mental health services, Family rights, Right to special Resources, Right to care and Treatment, Right to live a normal life, Right to health, Right to education, Right to family planning, Right to employment.

### **Background and framework<sup>i</sup> [See Annexure 1]**

Goshen Trust was born and formed out of a vision by Savea Tutogi Soi Too – Arundell and from working experiences and rapport built with many Pacific people that have travelled and paddled this journey together in Mental Health services within New Zealand and other sides of the globe. Mental Health is defined as a “state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (WHO, 2001)

Goshen Trust ("Goshen") was registered in 2009 and fully established in 2010 to “Provide quality community based services and advocacy for people with mental disorder and their families by working directly and in partnership with other stakeholders”

With a new thinking emerged since the birth of Goshen in 2010, questions were asked why are there so many people roaming in the streets? What is happening to the Samoan culture? Where are the values of the Samoan culture that gives this country the most treasured hospitable warmth and friendly people? These questions I hope will help to guide major innovations for future mental health service delivery. People with a mental illness have the rights and must be entitled to receive equal opportunities as a citizen of Samoa. Below are the written values and principles in the Samoa Mental Health Policy (2006)

### **VALUES AND PRINCIPLES**

- a) Mental wellbeing is grounded in the *aiga* and the community. The Samoan understanding of dignity and self-esteem is collective and relational in nature. Quality Mental health service that is accessible to all people
- c) Respect the rights of all people to access mental health care
- d) Recognition that mental, physical, social and spiritual health is indivisible and holistic approach best addresses this
- e) Evidence-based treatment and therapy
- f) Dignity of Family and Community
- g) Rights of the family and community to quality information
- h) Community recognition and respect for the rights and dignity of persons with mental disorders.

This report is submitted by Goshen Trust Mental Health Support Services ("Goshen"), to bring attention to special needs/care of people of Samoa who suffer with mental disorders and other disabilities. The issues address in this submission is to ensure inclusive of mental health field in government future planning and Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The significant of having a Samoan holistic understanding of mental illness. Mental Health needs to be fairly considered within the context of the Samoan culture.

### **Executive Summary**

#### **Mental well-being is grounded in the *aiga* and the community**

International research findings suggest that 1 in every 5 people in any country is likely to experience mental illness. Despite the prevalence of mental illness in society it is often

*misunderstood, misinterpreted* and people who experience mental illness are often *mistreated* through a society who stigmatizes and discriminates against them. Within the context of Samoa, the public face of mental illness has been the people who roam the streets of Apia, sometimes begging, often murmuring something to themselves or others and often looking unkempt and walking around aimlessly. The recent Tsunami that resulted in the trauma and tragedy of lives lost has highlighted the fragility of peoples mental health as some people struggle to cope with loss and trauma, some of this has already manifested in people becoming mentally ill.

Mental Health as a key component of our total wellbeing and just as important as our physical and spiritual dimensions, must be understood and respected.

In saying the above, the area of ‘mental health’ is not only about the peoples who roam the streets of Apia who are obviously mentally unwell, nor is it just about those who are struggling with the loss of a child, wife, husband, mother, father, grandparent or friend as a result of the recent Tsunami, nor is it just about the families who struggle the best way they can to support a loved one who has been diagnosed with a mental illness, BUT, mental health is about each and every one of us, our ability to think, reason, cope with life and what it dishes out, and our struggle to feel loved and valued. Simply put, Mental Health is about each and every one of us.

Therefore, it is essential for supports to be in place for all people in Samoa, whether young or old, whether living with a mental illness or not, to maximize their mental health and the betterment of a healthy society.

Not only are mental disorders linked to certain physical illnesses and increased mortality from suicide, they also bear a complex and poorly understood relationships to many of the most toxic public health problems of our day such as interpersonal violence, criminality, addictions, homelessness and poverty.

*Goshen Trust acknowledges the assistance and partnership of the Government of Samoa and the current leadership around the area of mental health including the creation of a Mental Health Act 2007, a mental health policy 2006 and related responses towards mental health in Samoa.*

However Goshen Trust notes the following recommendations from Samoa’s first UPR process and submits its follow up recommendations with the hope that Samoa will continue to create a society that respects and protects the human rights of all its citizens and especially survivors of mental health.

## **RIGHT TO HEALTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (MENTAL ILLNESS)**

**RECOMMENDATION 73.34: Support the work of organizations devoted to promoting accessibility and the rights of persons with disabilities.**

Goshen Trust works in partnership with the Mental Health Unit of the Ministry of Health in providing treatment, medications and rehabilitation. However there is a need for further financial assistance to ensure that our organization as the only Samoan based organization caring for people with mental illness is able to provide the programs, services and activities that we do to ensure that our clients are properly cared for and absorbed into the community following their treatment and rehabilitations.

## **Key Recommendations:**

- The Samoan government must create more awareness and programs about mental illness so that people with mental disabilities do not continue to be isolated, stigmatized and ostracized because of the current lack of understanding of mental illnesses in Samoa.
- There is also a need for appropriate financing by government on prioritized services including community service (people with mental illness who live in the communities and awareness of mental illness in the community) to ensure quality improvement in the treatment of people with mental illness as well as appropriate responses by the community.
- The Samoan government should fully resource and implement the Mental Health Act 2007 including awareness and training of this law and the issues of mental health including raising awareness and improved information systems on suicide prevention, drug and alcohol abuse and early recognition and management of mental disorders including informed care.
- The Samoan government should strengthen the protection of women and children with mental illness from domestic violence, sexual (child and adolescent abuse) through tougher legal penalties.
- The Samoan government should strengthen its support services to family members with mental illness and help to preserve the dignity of the family including building capacity for leadership and advocacy to members of the community, health workers and community support workers for mental illness including RESPITE facilities.
- The Samoan government should provide financial support to NGOs providing SRHR services to ensure that the specific needs of women with mental health is addressed and protected. This will also ensure that they are able to access sexual and reproductive health services without discrimination of age, class, marital status or minority groups.
- The Samoan government should develop national policy or alternative education opportunities for young girls with mental and physical needs who are able to learn.

### **Recommendation 74.31: RIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT/WORK – See photos in Annexure 2**

There remain challenges for people with mental illness in working with the government. Despite treatments and medications and the improvement to some of our clients, there is still no opportunity created to ensure that recovering patients are able to work in government.

## **Key Recommendations**

- However there are few mental health clients who now work in our Trust.
- We recommend that government creates a quota system to ensure that our clients who are responding well to treatments and medications are able to work in government and support their families.
- Government should review employment laws to ensure that discrimination is addressed effectively in all the work places.

### **Recommendation 73.35: RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

In order to ensure that its responses around national socio-economic development are targeted and includes people with mental illness, the government of Samoa needs to undertake a research and document cases of people with mental illness in Samoa. This research must include and involve people with mental illness and the Goshen Trust who work closely in this area. The research should only be able to capture the extent of violence and abuse faced by women and children to form appropriate interventions for these vulnerable groups.

### **Recommendations 73: 1-3; 7-8; 10-12; RATIFICATION OF CRPD**

Goshen Trust notes that while the government has signed the CRPD, it has not taken steps to ratify the CRPD and therefore strongly urges the government to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and domesticate the provisions of CRPD in its national laws.

### **Conclusion**

One of the struggles of people with mental illness in Samoa is the stigma attached to the disability and further the lack of appropriate response to create awareness around this disability. Mental illness is often argued as not a disability in Samoa, therefore there needs to be more awareness and acceptance by the government of this disability in order to strengthen intervention strategies that involve survivors of mental illness in Samoa and appropriate financing of our programs in Samoa.

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### Values

- **Family** – Basic social structure of Samoan society which exists within a broader community
- **Respect** for the **dignity** and human rights of everyone in which the service comes into contact with.
- **Culture** – Recognition that culture is important in the recovery and wellbeing of our community.
- **Evidence Based Practice** is reflected in all of our activities
- **Alofa and Compassion**
- **Holistic view of people** that integrates the physical, spiritual, mental and family/community wellbeing
- **Partnership**
- **Openness**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Spirituality**

### The services we provide<sup>i</sup>

- Residential Services including Respite Care
- Family and Community Support Services
- Step – down units
- Services to promote the understanding of mental health and mental illness and to eliminate the stigma and discrimination against peoples with mental illness and their families