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## Workshop Held On Ani-Violence Programs

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Samoa Observer

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Samoa Victim Support Group on Thursday hosted a workshop in partnership with UNESCO and community partners focusing on lessons learnt through Spotlight Initiative programs delivered in communities.

The program on Thursday, which revolved around the theme "My Village My Pride", is based on the hopes of ending violence against women (VAWG) and spreading awareness on the issue. It was held at the Taumeasina Island Resort.

Ellen Lekka, a culture program specialist with the UNESCO, worked together with the SVSG staff and local communities within the framework of the Spotlight Initiative. The Spotlight Initiative is funded by an EU and UN Joint Project which also includes other UN agencies.

This program is based on UNESCO's contribution to the joint program using cultural education and communication to address gender-based violence within Samoa.

For this initiative, they have tried to formulate a more innovative approach on delivering their messages to change mindsets and deeply rooted perceptions on gender norms and relations.

By using performing arts, they would be able to capture the interest of the community in tackling issues that are hard to openly talk about in the community.

UNESCO together with the SVSG –who have a well-functioning network in the villages in Samoa – identified eight villages to deliver this program to. Various types of performing arts that included music, dance and oration based on domestic violence and intimate partner violence was used to deliver their message to the communities.

Ms. Ellen recalled the village of Satalo, Falealili where the Spotlight Initiative was launched, and made reference to what she described as an impressive turnout and participation of children, women, youth and men who were all so engaged and committed to the program.

"This was a way of creating a space for community dialogue where sensitive issues related to gender-based violence, domestic violence and Intimate partner violence, which are hard to address verbally can be delivered through performing arts creating a softer approach on these types of issues," she said.

**Ellen Lekka, the Culture Program specialist from UNESCO. (Photo: Junior S. Ami)**

Emphasizing that performing arts is a more effective approach as people were more open, receptive and engaged, Ms Ellen said this was what they had hoped for as it was different in that people would be able to receive what would slowly and gradually change their perceptions and behaviour.

She added that this was in respect to cultural context and apply methods that are relevant to the country which will develop better gender relations and ultimately end violence against women and girls.

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**Link:**  [Samoa Observer](#)