

MEDIA RELEASE

Canada Fund Supports SVSG Social Movement Against Drug Threat to Mental Health and Violence in Samoa

08 September 2025

Apia, Samoa:

SVSG management and staff launched their initial capacity-building training last Saturday, focusing on mental health and drug addiction in Samoa. This 'training of trainers' marks the first phase of SVSG's preparatory program, equipping staff before they engage with communities to raise awareness about this critical issue, which deeply concerns SVSG and its partners.

The initiative stems from a recent surge in cases reported to SVSG involving child victims of rape, incest, and violence against women and girls, with drug use emerging as a significant contributing factor. The first Training of Trainers session is designed to enhance SVSG's ability to understand and address the mental health challenges resulting from drug addiction, a growing concern among those seeking SVSG's help.

With support from the Canadian Government through the Canada Fund, SVSG's much-needed social movement is now a reality. The funding and partnership from Canada, a longstanding ally, make this crucial effort possible.

The training sessions, attended by SVSG management and staff, were delivered in partnership with GOSHEN Trust and the Samoa Police. Afioga Naomi Eshraghi, CEO of Goshen Trust Samoa, spoke on mental health, while Police representative Afioga Samau led a discussion on drug addiction and its role in violence and other crimes in Samoa. SVSG management also took the opportunity to refresh staff knowledge on the SVSG Child Safeguarding Policy, counselling protocols, and the Code of Conduct guiding all SVSG personnel.

The capacity-building phase of this project will soon extend to all SVSG Sui Auai (village representatives), volunteers, and the SVSG youth advocacy group, who will help lead this social movement within selected communities and schools across Upolu and Savaii. The advocacy programme aims to increase awareness among community members, young people, and students about the dangers of drug use and the risks it poses to their families and communities.

SVSG's President firmly believes that, despite the many challenges, hope remains as long as we empower our people to confront this dangerous issue. By working together to address drugs and violence, we can protect our children and ensure everyone's right to be informed and empowered to stand united against this threat.

SVSG extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Canadian Government for their support, which has turned words into meaningful action.

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Ensuring that victims of crime and those in need are well supported to be safe and in control to restore their lives

2016: With and for Girls Award – Star Foundation of London

2017: Innovation & Excellence Team Award – Samoa Public Service

2018: Finalist, International Children's Peace Prize 2018 – Kids Right Foundation of Amsterdam, Netherlands

2018: Human Rights Champion in Samoa – UNESCO

2019: Innovation for Sustainable Development Award – Commonwealth Secretary-General

2020: Nominated Person(s) of the Year – Samoa Observer

2021: Outstanding Contributions to Human Rights Promotion & Protection – Samoa Office of the Ombudsman/NHRI

2023: Healthy Islands Best Proposal Award – World Health Organization