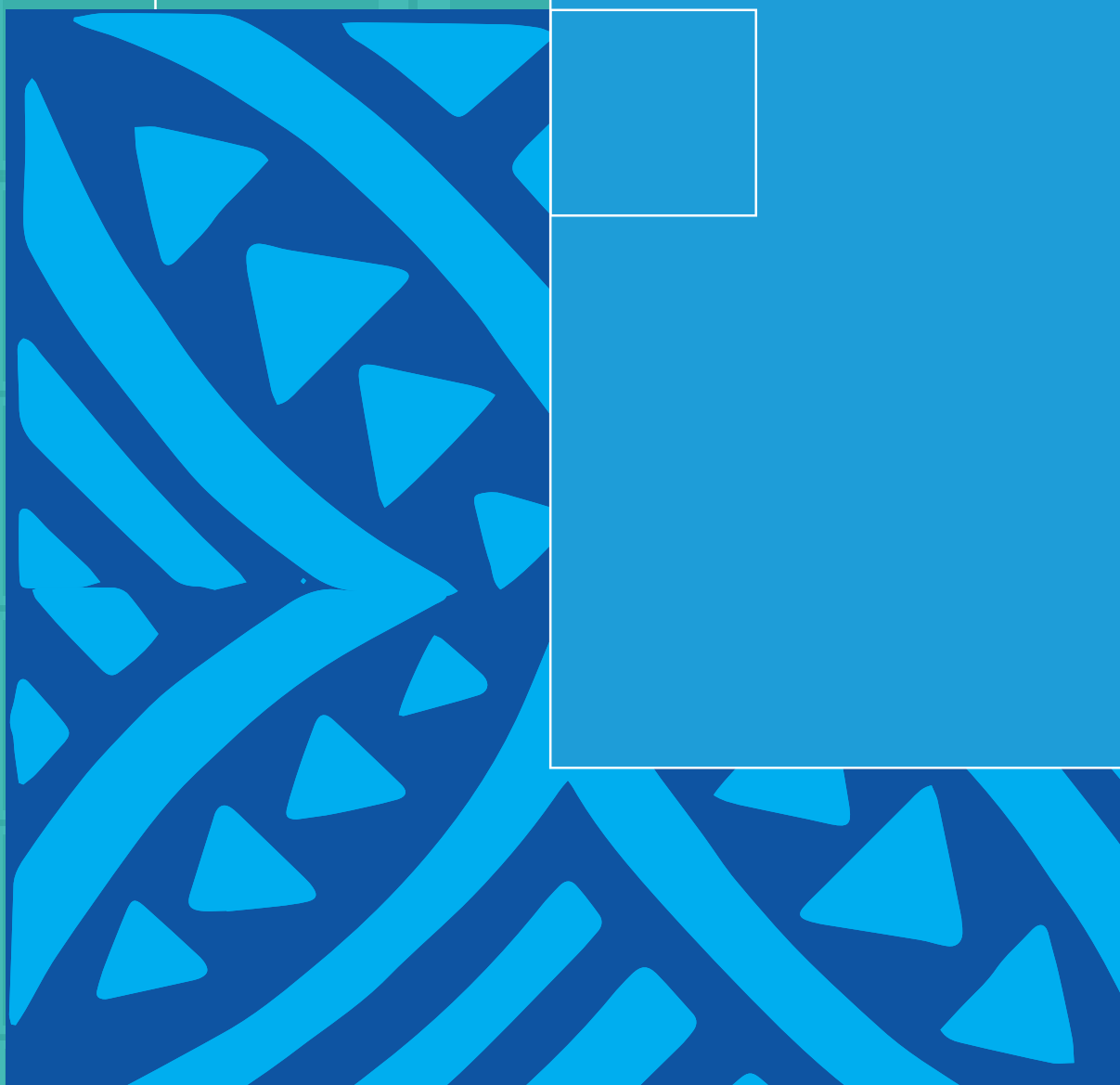




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Report of the Rapid Assessment of Children Working on the Streets of Apia, Samoa: A Scoping Exercise



ABSTRACT

This report presents key findings from focus group discussions and interviews to assess perceptions and knowledge on the topic of child street vendors. Participants in this exercise were small business operators, parents of child street vendors, community members, officials, workers, medical staff, bus operators, market vendors and the general public.

I. Introduction

The Rapid Assessment on Child Street Vendors was conducted in Apia, Samoa as a Pilot Study in September 2015. Following a recommendation from stakeholders to consult parents and community members to assess their perceptions of the situation of child street vendors, a scoping exercise was undertaken in November 18-20th 2015 in Savai'i.

The scoping exercise was initiated by the Validation Forum for the Rapid Assessment Report on Street Vendors in Apia, Samoa in May 2015. The forum requested the feedback from the parents of street vendors and business people who use these children to sell their product on the street and community reaction towards child street vendors.

II. Methodology

Savai'i was targeted for this exercise mainly at Salelologa Market and old Saleleoga town and the Wharf. Research Assistants confirmed were Mr. Mulipola Derek Mulipola (Translator of Rapid Assessment Report), Ms. Tuiloma Susana 'Taua'a (the assistant consultant of the Rapid Assessment) and Mr. Tomasi Peni, the ILO National Coordinator for Samoa. Unfortunately, as Ms. 'Taua'a was not available during the time, Mr. Francis Vaigalepa, a student from the National University of Samoa joined the group to assist with surveying targeting the general public.

The target participants were small business operators from the town and market areas, parents of child street vendors, community members, government officials, market and street vendors, business operators and medical staff in Savai'i.

In addition, 12 interviews were carried out with parents and members of the general public around the market, wharf, and old town areas, including parents from food stalls on the street. Table 1 provides a summary of where the focus group discussions were carried out and the number of participants.

Table 1: Summary of Focus Group Discussions and individual interviews

Location	Focus groups	Number of Participants
Saleloga Village	Community & parents	8
Papa- Puleia Village	Community & parents	10
Satatua Village	Community & parents	8
Samoa Shipping Corporation	Sailors & officials	12
Sataua National Hospital	Medical staff/ nurses	5
Salelologa Market/ bus station	Business operators	10
Asau- Sataua	Business operators	5
Salelologa Market/ bus station & Sataua street stalls	General public- individual interviews	11
Total	8 Focus groups; 11 individual interviews	74 participants

Eight questions were developed for the focus group discussions and individual interviews, and facilitated to allow participants to share their perceptions and attitudes to children's work, child street vending and education.

III. Findings

1. Why are children sent out to sell when they should be in school?

In response to this question, family poverty was identified as the main reason why children are sent out to sell when they should be in school and participants indicated that parents were the ones who were sending their children out to the streets to sell. Participants listed other main reasons why children go out to the streets to sell including parents failing in their role as parents; to get money for the family, community and church obligations; children working to support their families and family business; and parents prioritizing children looking/ selling for money before education.

Main responses to the question “*Why are children sent out to sell when they should be in school?*” related to poverty, low family income, supporting the family, making money for the family needs. These response included:

- Poverty high, no other source of money, need money desperately and quickly
 - » Not enough to look after all their children everyday
 - » Parents were having financial problems that they cannot afford to fund for their children school needs.
- Need the money to support their parents
 - » Get money for their school lunch and other family needs
 - » Get money for school contributions and food for the family
 - » Parents have low income source and need money
- To get money for family, community and church obligations
- Parents own the business/ stalls and send children out to sell; so money may remain in the family business- rather than hiring others
- Parent use children to attract buyers who may be more sympathetic to young children and buy from them
- Parents benefit from the money children earn so do not stop them

- Parents don't want to sell on the streets themselves so use their children
- Parents prioritise the need for children to look for money before education;
 - » Some parents suggested that it is better off sending their children to sell things to make money rather than sending them to school to waste their money but end up failing.

According to the medical focus group,

“parents are poor and that's why they send their children out to the streets to sell goods... most of these parents when they come to the hospital, they ask for medicines on prescriptions to be given on credit and they pay later... sometimes children end up in hospital with injuries from the road or high fever from too much sun”.

Other main responses to the question “*Why are children sent out to sell when they should be in school?*” were related to the roles and responsibilities of parents, culture, peer pressure and bullying from school, and possibility that children selling on the streets were those leaving with their relatives. A summary of these responses included:

- Parents failing in their roles as parents; no close bond between parents and children; some children being disobedient
- Part of our culture before- children provided labour force that families depended on.
- Children being with their friends, other child street vendors; children wanting money for themselves; children who accepting street vending and seeing this as their future
 - » Some children were getting used of having money every day when they go out selling things but when in school they never have a chance to own any cents.
- A lot of the children are not the children of small businesses/ stall owners
- Children discouraged from going to school because their school friends tease them; they do not feel like going to school anymore but joining other kids on the street.

2. Under what conditions are child street vendors working?

Most of the participants indicated that most children who are street vendors start work early morning to late evening to sell food, snacks, drinks, fast food and other products. Responses revealed that there were children who travelled on the early morning buses to be in time for the early morning ferry from Upolu and the opening of the market and then travelled back home after the last ferry had arrived.

Other responses revealed that there were children who sold only sell on Saturdays and some children only sell after school from 3pm to 5pm. However, participants also stated that child street vendors may miss school to sell on the streets some days, in which case they will start in the morning and finish in the evening or late at night.

The main tasks children were required to do related

to selling goods; moving from home to home or around village, town and offices to sell goods; hassling people to buy. However some parents indicated that they only allowed their children to sell from the stall in front of the house or only in the village during the school week.

Some of the concerns shared by respondents in the focus groups were related to situations where children are ordered by parents to stay out late to sell all their products; getting a hiding from parents if they do not want to go out to sell; and also having to go and get more products to sell if they have sold all their initial stock. These concerns illustrate some of the vulnerabilities of child street vendors.

Start Time	Ending Time	What they do	Other Remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early morning 5am - 7pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very late When it is dark; night time After the last ferry has arrived 6pm-7pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sell roast peanuts; fast food; bongos; soft drinks; local food; fruits - mangoes, fish, pineapple During the school week they only sell within own village but on Saturdays they go to sell in the town They go from place to place, home to home trying to sell their goods Also go to offices and businesses Sell in villages, village to village and also through town and market Ask people if they want to buy their product Some even force people to buy Children sell from the stall just in front of the house Some of the children selling here are from Apia - travel from Apia during the busy times like White Sunday, Father/Mother's Day, Christmas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sell goods otherwise parents will not accept them or give them a hiding if they don't do it Out of school children Ordered by their parents not to return until they sell all their products If they finish selling their goods quickly they must return home to get another supply Many of the children start early and are on the same bus as passengers on the 6am ferry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saturday morning around 9am 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish at 2pm 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After school at 2pm-3pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5pm Before the village curfew 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whenever the market opens and the ferry arrives from Upolu Some start before the market opens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the market closes they go to the wharf and hang around there and then walk back to their villages 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On days when they miss school than they start at 7am-8am 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2pm - 4pm Dark, night time 		

3. How do they travel to and from home, places where they sell their products?

Most respondents stated that child street vendors travel by bus, especially when going in to town. Four main ways that child street vendors travel to sell their products identified by respondents were:

- Travel by bus
- Get a ride from other people coming to town
- Walk around their own villages and to other villages; walk to town from nearby villages
- Travel to town in the family car or relatives car

A parent stated that his/her children use bicycles to transport coconuts and another parent stated that his/her children do not need to travel because the stall from where they sell is in front of the house.



4. Who is responsible for the children?

The majority of responses put the responsibility of child street vendors only on the parents. Other responses however also highlighted the roles and responsibilities of the church, community—especially the village governing body; and the government plays in addressing the issue of child street vendors. Main reasons given for identifying who is responsible for the children in street vending were:

- **Parents**
 - » They are responsible for the good future of their own children
 - » They are the first teachers in a child's life
 - » They are responsible for the protection of their children
 - » They are the ones who own the products the children are selling
 - » They are the ones who choose to send the children to sell on the streets rather than go to school
 - » They put money before education
 - » Even though they do not have money they are fully responsible for the child, and if anything should happen to the child
 - » Their wants exceed their needs
- **Church**
 - » Minister's should help children and families
 - » Education for families and providing a solid foundation
- **Community**
 - » Village governing body (pulega a le nu'u) and council to impose and properly enforce a village curfew and talk to parents
 - » To assist families in need
- **Government**
 - » They are responsible for enforcing the laws

A respondent shared an experience she had related to the role and responsibility of stakeholders and members of the public in addressing the issue of child street vendors. When approached by young girls 13-15 years selling fish during school hours, at first she thought to call the Police but instead decided to buy the fish because she felt sorry for these children. This experience highlights the dilemma faced by many when confronted with the reality of child street vendors. *Should you report them? Buy all their products so they can go home early? Chase them home?*

5. What are the underlying reasons why children are sent to sell on the street? Why do parents send them?

According to responses the need for money, linked to poverty and paying for community (including church and village) obligations, the high standard of living and no or low paid jobs were the main reasons why parents send children out to sell on the streets. Other main reasons related to parents not valuing education because they were also poorly educated or because they believed the child was not smart in school; parents using children to sell because they could make better sales; poor law enforcement; and children choosing not to go to school.

► Need for money for the family

- » Parents are poor
- » Parents don't have jobs or have very low paid jobs
- » The cost of living is very high
- » To buy food for the family

► To pay for external commitments

- » To pay off family loans, especially small business development loan repayments
- » To pay for community and church commitments (family obligations)
 - These commitments put pressure on parent's to get money
 - Parents begin to struggle/ get poor and start sending children to sell

► Parent's perception of child's education and work

- » Parent's believe child is not smart at school so should work
- » Parent's believe that child will be able to make more sales as people will be sympathetic and more likely to buy from a small/ young child

► Other reasons

- » Education status of parents; parents are not well educated so do not value the education of their children
- » The failure of parents to ensure children are able to go to school; prioritizing money over education
- » Child refusing to go to school and seeking work
- » Perception that parents are lazy to sell as so send their children to do it for them
- » Lack of law enforcement
- » Some children living with relatives (aunt, uncle, cousin) are treated differently from their own children and sent to sell to support the family and education of the 'own' children in the family



6. If parents are sending children to sell things, why do you think this is happening? Have we failed as parents? Can you explain and give reasons for this kind of behavior.

When participants further explored the reasons *why parents are sending children out to sell*, the responses also confirmed and expanded on previous responses. The key reasons that were discussed could be grouped as (i) to pay for external commitments, in particular the village community and church obligations; (ii) need for money to help the family survive and meet their basic needs; and (iii) parental attitudes.

- **Parents send children to sell to get money to pay for external commitments**
 - » To meet the needs of the community and church
 - » To pay off their loans
 - » Community and churches not taking responsibility in addressing this
- **Parents send children to sell to get money to meet high cost of living**
 - » Desperately need the money for the family
- **Parents send children to sell to get money because of their attitude/neglect etc.**
 - » Parents just give up when children become difficult, rebel etc. and let the children decide or leave them to do what they want
 - » Parents don't care about children anymore so they work fulltime on the streets
 - » Parents are shy to go and sell so send their children instead
 - » Parents think that it is no use to send their children to school

“Parents are the ones that should be on the streets instead of sending their children.”

“We parents also experienced the life of being street vendors and even though we earn money from we think this is not the right future for us if had gone to school while we were young.”

“Children must be in school but not on the streets selling things. Parents should ensure children attend school rather than let the child to decide what they wanted.”

7. What are the parent's perceptions about education and children working?

In response to this question, the majority of respondents stated that education should come first because this is for the children's future and it was the responsibility of parents to prioritize education over sending a child to the streets to make money.

However there were responses that acknowledged the struggles parents were facing and highlighted that there were cases where some children found it hard to go to school as they cannot afford their education so they refused to attend school.

Some responses alluded to the parent's lack of value on children's education largely because the parent's may not have been well educated themselves. Other responses were that parent's felt that if the child was not smart he should go to street vending, or some parents believed that it was worth more for children to sell on the streets rather than to go to school and that children should try to earn a living. Many believed that children in street vending were following their parents who were are also in the same business. However not all respondents believed that parents of child street vendors were street vendors themselves.

In general, many felt that stakeholders should play a bigger role in addressing the issue and that children in street vending should be assisted. Participants highlighted that children feel ashamed as other children see them selling on the streets. They recommended some ways to assist children and address the issue including:

- Vocational courses should be offered to child street vendors.
- In some communities children are sent to the pastor's house for counselling/discipline.
- Children also learn how to weave mats, prepare Samoan food and make handicrafts as part of their 'discipline'.

Responses recommended the need for better enforcement and coordination between government ministries-Police, MESC and others with the support of the village governing bodies. In particular better communication between the parents and the schools was recommended whereby the school should inform parents if children are missing from school and teachers could help by monitoring children's homework.

8. Do you believe that some business operators are using children to sell their goods?

Responses to this question on whether some business operators were using children to sell their goods varied between yes, no and not sure. Although many agreed that business operators were using children to sell their products, parents of child vendors disagreed that they would allow their children to sell other products as they had their own products to sell. These were parents whose children either sold from their own stalls or sold their local food products.

Some responses were that there were no known cases of businesses using children. It was interesting to note the responses regarding children coming from Apia to sell in Savai'i, with respondents stating that these children were possibly working to sell products from businesses.

Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Yes, absolutely we saw it with our own eyes ▸ If you look at what they are selling you can easily tell because where do they get the money from to buy these kind of things? ▸ Saw children selling around the Congregation Compound during the church Conference at Malua every year in June and Chinese company delivery trucks lined up on the side of the road using these children. ▸ Common with Chinese business traders ▸ Through their parents who have the contracts with the companies ▸ They earn more money from doing this ▸ Children asked by parents to look for a job go to the companies who give them products to sell on the streets ▸ Mostly small operators around the market area, not big companies ▸ Because some companies do not have enough staff so use the children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Only send out our kids to sell our koko Samoa, supo esi, vaisalo, things we got from our own environment. ▸ Children selling from own family street stalls/market stalls/shops ▸ Do not agree with our children going out to sell other's products when we have our own