

Samoa

Official name: The Independent State of Samoa

Capital: Apia

Land: 2,820 sq. km

Population: 187,820 (2011)

Currency: Samoan Tala

EEZ: 98,500sq. km

Language: English and Samoan

Economy: Agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing and tourism

Religion: Mostly Christian: 32% of the population affiliate to the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, while the Roman Catholic, Latter-Day Saints and Methodist churches account for around 19%, 15% and 13% of the population, respectively (2011 census).

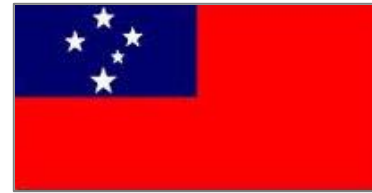
Brief history:

Migrants from Southeast Asia and Melanesia are believed to have arrived in the Samoa islands over 2,000 years ago and from there settled the rest of Polynesia further to the east. Samoa's pre-European history was interwoven with chiefdoms of Fiji and the kingdom of Tonga, with archaeological records supporting indigenous genealogies and oral tradition telling of interisland voyaging and intermarriage.

The first major European settlements occurred in the 1830s for missionary work and trade and in 1899 Samoa became a German colony. New Zealand assumed control of Samoa following the outbreak of World War I and the islands became a mandated territory of New Zealand under the auspices of the League of Nations. Between the wars there was considerable agitation for the removal of foreign control over Samoan affairs. After World War II, Samoa was administered by New Zealand as a United Nations trust territory and measures were gradually introduced to prepare for self-government. In 1962, Samoa became the first Pacific Island country to gain independence. With effect from 4th July 1997, a constitutional amendment changed the name of the country from Western Samoa to the Independent State of Samoa (or Samoa).

Political overview:

The government is a parliamentary democracy with a parliamentary term of five years. The Prime Minister, who is chosen by Parliament and appointed by the Head of State, leads a Cabinet of thirteen members. The governing Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) is dominant in Samoan politics. It came into office in 1982, led then by the late Hon. Tofilau Eti Alesana. The HRPP was re-elected in 1988, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 and most recently in March 2011. It currently holds 37 of the 49 parliamentary seats. Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele



(Source: www.lonelyplanet.com)

Malielegaoi has been Prime Minister since November 1998.

The Tautua Samoa Party (TSP) is the formal opposition party in Parliament. In April 2008, two HRPP members resigned to become independents. They banded together with other independents to form a new political party, the TSP.

In July 2012, His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi was re-appointed Head of State for a further five-year term.

Economic overview:

Samoa is a small, fairly liberalized economy, with a GDP of around NZ\$815million (to the end of 2012). It is reliant on foreign imports and has a large trade deficit. The economy is largely driven by tourism (20-25% of GDP), remittances (25% of GDP), and foreign aid. Samoa is one of the highest recipients of remittances in the world as a proportion of GDP. This is a by-product of large expatriate Samoan communities in New Zealand, American Samoa, the United States and Australia, who retain strong links with their relatives back in Samoa. Fisheries, construction and, to a lesser extent, agriculture and small-scale manufacturing also contribute to GDP. Samoa's exports consist mainly of fish, coconut products, beer, automotive parts (as re-exports from the Yazaki wire harness factory), noni fruit products and taro. The increasing cost of fuel has also created challenges.

Samoa's economy remains highly vulnerable to fiscal shocks and natural disasters. For example, the devastating tsunami which struck Samoa on 29 September 2009 killed 143 people and wiped out large stretches of the south and south-east coasts on the main island of Upolu. Tourism was particularly badly hit by the tsunami, which damaged around 25% of Samoa's tourist accommodation stock, including several high-end resorts in one of the most scenic parts of the country.

Only around 12% of Samoa's total population is engaged in formal paid employment. Two-thirds of the potential labour force is absorbed by subsistence village agriculture, a dominant sector in the Samoan economy. Private sector growth is constrained by a narrow resource base, limited infrastructure, isolation, dependence on fuel imports, lack of skilled labour and a small domestic market.

Employment has been affected by a downturn in the manufacturing sector and a reduction of the operations of Samoa's single largest private employer, Yazaki (a Japanese firm which produces wire harnesses for motor vehicles for export to Australia). Yazaki employs around 1,000 people, down from a high of 2,000, due to reduced orders from Australia and the impact of the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami. Unemployment figures were exacerbated by the down-sizing of the canning industry in American Samoa.

The current framework for economic and social development is the Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS) 2012-2016. The SDS identifies fourteen key development priorities within the economic sector, social policies, infrastructure sector and the environment. These priorities include promoting sustained macroeconomic stability, enabling tourism and business development, health, education and improved access to essential social services, sustainability for key infrastructure such as water, sanitation and transport, and the implementation of environmental protections.

Education overview:

Samoa's education system comprises an eight-year primary and five-year secondary programme. Education is not compulsory for children over 14. Literacy rates are high compared to other developing countries, and figures show a 65% participation rate for 15 to 19-year-olds at secondary school. Pre-school education is

informal, largely organised at the village level. Samoa Polytechnic and the National University of Samoa offer tertiary studies, and the University of the South Pacific's School of Agriculture is also located in Apia.

New Zealand provides substantial assistance to support basic education in Samoa and scholarships for tertiary study in New Zealand (45) and the region (8). Vocational and workforce training is also supported through the Short-Term Training Awards (for study in New Zealand) and the Samoa In-Country Training Programme. In 2010, New Zealand and Australia jointly funded a major new initiative providing school fee grants to state, mission, and special education schools that removed the need for families to pay school fees. The scheme evolved as a response to the economic pressure on families from the Global Economic Crisis but has been taken on as a long term policy by the Samoan Government, and aims also to strengthen education standards in schools. Funding for this initiative has been extended for one more year.

Accrediting agency:

The Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA) was established in 2006 with an establishment legislation passed in Parliament in 2006. This legislation was later replaced with the current 2010 legislation which empowers the Authority to carry out its functions.

Mrs Fepulea'i Sinapi Mōlī is the current and founding Chief Executive Officer of the SQA and she is supported by four Assistant Chief Executive Officers for Quality Assurance (Mrs Kovi Aiolupotea), Qualifications Services (Mrs Tea Tepora Wright), Research, Policy and Planning (Mrs Easter Silipa) and Corporate Services (Mr Maposua Mose Asani). The current complement of SQA staff is thirty eight.

SQA regulates all forms of post-school education and training (PSET) in Samoa. As of September 2014, SQA has registered 20 providers and listed 28 qualifications with the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS).

Immigration:

Travellers to Samoa must have a return or onward ticket, possess a passport valid for a minimum of 6 months after the intended date of departure from Samoa, have a valid visa or permit for entry into the country to which they will travel from Samoa, state their accommodation arrangements and have documented evidence of sufficient funds for self-support.

References:

Fact Monster. 2014. Samoa. <http://www.factmonster.com/country/samoa.html> . Accessed 14th May, 2014.

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.2013. Samoa. <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Samoa.php>. Accessed 1st May, 2014.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. 2012. Member Countries. <http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/about-us/our-partners/member-countries/>. Accessed 1st May, 2014.

Samoa Immigration. 2014. Entry Requirements. <http://www.samoaimmigration.gov.ws/VisitorServices/EntryRequirements/tabid/6858/language/en-US/Default.aspx>. Accessed 21st July, 2014.