



Executive Summary¹

Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko, *Christian Faith and Family Violence: A Report for Samoan Communities in New Zealand*.

Dunedin: Centre for Theology and Public Issues, University of Otago, 2016.

The continued increase in family violence among New Zealand communities conveys a clear message, that family violence is everyone's concern. In some ethnic communities in New Zealand, family violence tends to be ignored through a culture of silence, and the fear of a direct ethnic approach. In the absence of ethnic-specific data on family violence in New Zealand, the issue of family violence continues to negatively affect women and children. In joining government ministries, non-government organisations, church organisations and others, the Centre for Theology and Public Issues (CTPI) at the University of Otago, has contributed in advocating for the role of the Christian faith in addressing family violence among Samoan communities in New Zealand. CTPI begins the conversation by addressing family violence in the contexts of Samoans in Samoa and Samoans in New Zealand.

The aim is to unveil the realities of Samoan communities, and how these realities could help in the process to encourage family violence research on specific ethnic groups that make up the New Zealand population. A number of key points have been identified in the document, such as the need for greater research on this issue, in order to gain a clearer understanding of its multifaceted causes and effects. Being informed by general existing statistics on family violence in New Zealand, this report reflects the lack of ethnic-specific data. It underscores the significance of theological, biblical and cultural insights concerning family violence. By incorporating these understandings, the report brings on board the central role of the church as an agent of change and hope for both victims and perpetrators of violence.

The search for an appropriate approach in addressing family violence among Samoan communities lies in its core cultural and Christian values. The application of these core values as an approach towards preventing family violence is an on-going process that conveys the importance of respecting and not undermining or severing relationships created by God for the well-being of humankind. Therefore, the application of these values entails collaboration among family members and in church communities.

This report highlights the paradox of the seeming contradiction between the core Samoan-Christian values and the prevalence of such violence nonetheless in Samoan communities, which are all thoroughly anchored in the church. What accounts for this paradox is patriarchy, which has managed to over-ride these very positive cultural and Christian values. It's just particularly striking in the Samoan community because ostensibly Samoans are so committed to cultural and Christian values. The challenge is for the Samoan churches themselves to take the lead in restoring the core ethical values to the forefront of Samoan family and community life. Those values need to take precedence over patriarchy, which allows men to have control over women. There is an urgent need for church ministers to address this paradox.

¹ Full report available at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/ctpi/resources/otago609049.html>