



## **When the Bell Rings: Fa'a Samoa and Community Resilience in American Samoa**

**Presented by:** Ninna Mikaela Balauro

**Presentation Abstract:** In many villages across American Samoa, the ringing of a bell can mobilize an entire community within minutes. Long before modern alert systems, these bells have served as trusted signals to gather, warn, and activate response. Rooted in fa'a Samoa - the Samoan way of life - this system reflects a culture built on shared responsibility, strong family networks, and village leadership. Together, these elements function as an informal yet highly effective communication and coordination network, especially in remote island settings where communities rely on one another during times of crisis.

This session explores how traditional practices, including the village bell system, leadership structures, and community relationships, actively support disaster preparedness and response in American Samoa. Participants will gain insight into how culture itself can serve as critical infrastructure - and how culturally grounded approaches can strengthen resilience in diverse emergency management contexts.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Recognize how fa'a Samoa shapes community coordination and disaster preparedness in American Samoa.
2. Understand the role of traditional communication systems, such as village bells, in mobilizing communities during emergencies.
3. Apply lessons from culturally grounded resilience practices to broader emergency management contexts.

**Speaker Bio:** Ninna Mikaela Balauro is an Inclusive Emergency Management student at American Samoa Community College and a member of the first cohort of the program supported by the Pacific Center for Human Security (PACIFIC Atamai). Her work focuses on disaster preparedness, community resilience, and culturally grounded approaches to emergency management in Pacific Island communities.

Ninna is particularly interested in how traditional knowledge, village leadership structures, and community networks contribute to disaster readiness and response. Through her studies and community engagement, she explores how cultural systems such as fa'a Samoa support collective resilience and strengthen preparedness in American Samoa.