Last but not the least, SVSG would like to acknowledge the belief, the heart and the support from its established partners. Thank you for supporting SVSG, and thank you for being engaged with our work:

Mari’s Bakery
Ola Fou Clinic
Saleufi Medical Clinic

ENgage
February 2020
Alofa Connection Inc. of NSW

Catching up with our family of supporters from overseas is always a blessing. In February, we had the opportunity to catch up with the Alofa Connection Inc. Director, Cecilia and her husband Phil Theodore.

Cecilia is one of the founding members of the SVSG (Sydney) now legally registered as an NGO in Sydney Australia, as the Alofa Connection Inc.

Thank you Phil and Cecilia for a pleasant surprise visit, breakfast for the staff as well as the donation of AUD500.00 presented to assist with our work.

Lowell High School’s Polynesian Club of San Francisco

More donations of clothes and miscellaneous supplies arrived in February to assist with the families affected by the measles.

Thank you Adrianna Faagau-Noa, Co-President of Lowell High School Polynesian Club of San Francisco and all those who have contributed towards this donation.

Working the Land [Sheltered Children & Nofotane Women]
We acknowledge with gratitude and appreciation the generosity of our supporting community here and abroad, without which, we will not be able to be of service to our people in need. Faafetai! Faafetai lava.

**Financial & In Kind Donation**

Financial Donors

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Donation for</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace Chapel Christian Fellowship</td>
<td>Court Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dunedin City Baptist Church</td>
<td>Campus of Hope</td>
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A special thank you to SVSG’s ongoing partners assisting with the children’s caring:

- To Toleafoa Elon Betham and the team at the Le Aute Gas for 2 x monthly gas refills for the House of Blessings;
- To Felise Sam Chong and the team at Origin Energy for the gas refill for the House of Hope and your prompt response for our call for assistance;
- To Mr. & Mrs. Ken Newton and the CCK Trading Limited for the donation of clothes for the children;
- To Greg & Maria Meredith for the children’s daily supplies of bread;
- To Epi Smith for the children’s bread supplies twice a week;
- To Tuato & Anna Ryan for the children’s Sunday toanai & bread supplies;
- To Luamanuva Dr. Kapuana D. Ainuū, and the LDS Office for coordinating the regular donations of food, the ongoing maintenance of the Campus and the volunteer support for the children’s rehabilitation programs;
- To Uncle Johnny for the children’s ice cream supply every Sundays;
- Maurice & Elanit Mitry of Australia for donating towards the Campus water rates;
- Motuipuaa Dr. Aisoli Vaai of the Saleufi Medical Clinic and Taulealeausumai Dr. Titi Lamese of the Ola Fou Clinic, for the children’s free medical consultation;
- Zhenna Chan Mow-Fa’auiga of Niu Pharmacy for the free medication supplies;
- To the Fatima Apostolate Fellowship of Mulivai Apia for hosting the children every Tuesday for Rosary and their evening meal; and
- To the churches, villages and individuals that donated food and miscellaneous supplies to assist with the children’s daily needs;
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February saw the beginning of the hold-off to some of SVSG’s programs and events, due to circumstances outside our control. The measles Road to Recovery experienced some delays, the child protection community awareness programs were cancelled and the international meetings in which SVSG representations were confirmed for, were postponed. First, there were tropical cyclones that thankfully, moved away from Samoa without causing much damage. Then there was the health crisis posed by the corona virus, which disrupted travel and the planned activities in the coming months.

Nevertheless, as a support service organization, we had to re-strategize, to re-plan and to re-think on how best to keep our doors open in anticipation of the tensions that a catastrophe such as a global pandemic poses.

I therefore thanked the governance arm of SVSG, the Board and the Executive, for always being one step ahead of the challenges as anticipated.

To our families and friends, let us do the best we can to ensure the safety of our families; to be the voice for the abused and the most vulnerable; to look after our children, our elderly and our families with disabilities to avoid unnecessary stress and disorder in our households.

Remember, SVSG is always here to help whenever you are in need. God bless!

*Georgina Lui*

Chair, SVSG BOARD
1. ROAD TO RECOVERY

**December 2019: Leauvaa**

A 19 year old beneficiary of the Measles Outreach Program, Noella Fa’atauu’u, who was 7 months into her pregnancy when she lost her 12 months old daughter Noel to the measles in November 2019.

**February 2020: Leauvaa**

The Road to Recovery Team found the 6 weeks old Baby Miracle, giving the young mother Noella more reasons to stay stronger and smile as she goes through healing from losing her eldest child.

**December 2019: Faleasiu**

An elderly grandmother Gina Penoa took the loss of her 11 month old grand-daughter really hard resulting in her minor stroke. It was a double tragedy for the family; losing a child and a severely ill grandmother.

**February 2020: Faleasiu**

Gina was up and about doing her normal chores when we visited her. She still misses her grand-daughter, but found comfort in knowing that her family had gained an angel.

6.2 Education

A youth representing the children survivors of domestic violence was awarded with a scholarship to support his education for 2020, courtesy of the 6th SSAB Scholarship Awards.

One of the new awards to SSAB’s Scholarship program is the Justina Sa’u Memorial Scholarship Award dedicated by SSAB’s President and CEO Tofilau Fiti Leung Wai to a child from a domestic violence background.

Thank you so much Tofilau Fiti for supporting programs that highlighted the importance of education in our children’s lives.

6.3 Clean Water Project

The youths are continuing to source out sponsorship to finance water tanks for families identified during the Measles Prevention Program, that do not have access to clean water.

To date, close to 25 families without access to clean water, have benefited from the Project.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 is one of 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations.

It calls for clean water and sanitation for all people.

The SVSG Junior’s contribution in ensuring that the underprivileged families in Samoa, are supported to access clean water and sanitation, is part of the youth’s main program in village communities.
5.4 Volunteering Women

The strength of women as caretakers for their families is highlighted by their compassionate ability outside of their family circle, through their volunteer work in the community.

In February, SVSG celebrated the 74th birthday of one of its long serving volunteer, Mrs. Fiu Fetinai Leaupepe, a pioneer woman who utilizes her counseling skills to rehabilitate the offenders of violence referred from the Family Court to SVSG’s Perpetrator Program.

A woman with a positive attitude, Mrs. Leaupepe portrays the empowerment of women in leadership, in caring for our families and in volunteering for the betterment of a collective.

6. SVSG JUNIORS

6.1 Start with the Men Campaign

The outcome document produced from the 12 months-project in which SVSG and five other international NGOs implemented throughout 2019, was finalized in February 2020.


SVSG’s youth sub-group, the SVSG Junior is tasked with implementing the Group’s ‘Break In’ program in village and church youths using the Good Practice Guide being formulated.

While some of the parents were progressing well with healing from losing their children to the measles, others were still struggling. One of them was Anniversary Sione of Luatuanuu, who had sought SVSG’s counselling support in February as she continues to be traumatized by the loss of her child to the measles.

The local and international media followed SVSG during its Road to Recovery program. And we welcomed them to tag along with us, capturing the reality of life for some of the most vulnerable members of our community, who made up the majority of those who have lost children to the measles.

We laughed and we shared. We cried and we moved on.

Most importantly, we prayed together for God’s divine healing for the grieving parents and families.

And the outpour of love and support continues, as per the donation of baby clothes, stationary, medical supplies and water filters courtesy of Jim and Mindy Wiese Missionaries of Samoa.
2. GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

In times of crisis, we know that women and girls are often at greatest risk of GBV. As such, SVSG was very mindful that this is an especially dangerous time for people struggling with the uncertainty of the looming corona virus pandemic and the current state of the cyclone season in February.

Whatever the situation may be, please be reminded that help is always available through the SVSG tool free Help Line number 800-7874. If you are unable to talk safely on the phone, you can message us on the SVSG Facebook (SVSG Samoa) or lock on to this link: https://www.facebook.com/samoavictimsupportgroup/

2.1 Casework Assistance

There was a noted reduction of 23% in the number of new cases lodged in February (56) compared to January (69); 35 with the Apia office and 21 for the Tuasivi office.

Despite this reduction, 54% of the total cases lodged were gender based violence:

- Sexual – 6
- Domestic – 14
- Intimidation – 10

From SVSG’s experience with the cases lodged with the office, there is always the existence of an ‘intimidation’ element in both sexual and domestic violence incidences. The victims are usually threatened, persuaded and/or frightened. There is that power and control by the perpetrator over the victim.

As such, SVSG’s awareness raising program in villages continues to emphasize the importance of ‘speaking out’ as it is the initial act of the victim that lessens the power and control gained by the perpetrator over the situation.

Highlighted below are some of these cases to give you more insight into the magnitude of the work of SVSG in addressing gender based violence:

For immediate support, please call the 800-7874 Help Line.
It is FREE and it is a 24-hour service.

5.2 Women Leadership

Madame President, Siliniu Lina Chang had taken women leadership beyond the norm, as she advocates for equality and inclusivity for all, under the Equality and Justice Alliance (EJA).

EJA has been working with CSO in the Pacific (including SVSG), to reform laws that discriminate against women and girls and LGBT.

In November 2016, the government of Samoa passed the Labour & Employment Relations Regulation 2016 that provides for the protection of domestic workers, majority of whom are nofotane women. SVSG had lobbied for this legislation change as part of the Nofotane Women’s Economic Empowerment Program that it rolled out from 2016-2018 with UN Women FGE.

Mrs. Chang was invited to a convening of the Equality & Justice Alliance Commonwealth CSO Forum, scheduled to be held at Seychelles from 10 – 14 February 2020. However, for her safety and protection from the COVID-19 pandemic, she was unable to attend. It is apparent that in advocating and lobbying for women’s empowerment in all its aspect, Mrs. Chang herself emanates women empowerment.

5.3 Voice of the Pacific Youth

Ms. Leilua Lino, a child rights activist, a girl child survivor of incest rape and the 2019 Commonwealth Secretary-General’s Innovation for Sustainable Development Award recipient, was invited by DFAT to the Symposium on Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls.

To be held in Bangkok from 25 – 27 February, Leilua was to represent the voice of Pacific youth at the Symposium, which aimed at informing DFAT’s EVAWG roadmap to guide foreign policy and programming on EVAWG.

While Leilua was excited to contribute to the symposium, the looming COVID-19 spread across Asia posed a threat to her safety. As such, the Symposium was postponed until such a time when the participants will be safe to gather as initially planned.
4. **PERPETRATOR OF VIOLENCE SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

A total of 32 new referrals to SVSG’s Perpetrator Program from the Family & Youth Courts both in Upolu and Savaii, were registered for February: 19 men, 10 women and 3 youths.

Majority of the male perpetrators were charged with assault, intimidation and actual bodily harm against their wives. For the female perpetrators, most of them were charged with assault either against family members or non-family members. For the 3 youths age 14, 15, 16, all were involved in armed with a dangerous weapon and throwing stones.

The 32 new referrals joined the 20 continuing participants to the Program. Going on to 7 years now from mid-2013 to date, close to 2,000 men, women and young offenders have gone through the SVSG Perpetrator Program.

The Program continued to be self-funded by SVSG as it is directly linked to breaking the cycle of violence strategy rolled out by SVSG to address gender based violence.

5. **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

February saw the progress of women empowerment in all its aspects within the work of SVSG and the beneficiaries of its programs. Highlighted below are some of the progress made in women’s fight for equality and empowerment:

5.1 **The Nofotane Women**

Twelve nofotane women and their families relying on subsistence agriculture for a living are the beneficiaries of a grant received by SVSG from the Australian High Commission under its Direct Aid Program (DAP).

Valued at ST20,000, the grant is to assist with sustaining the income generation activities of nofotane women farmers under SVSG’s economic empowerment program.

This is through purchasing garden tools, seedlings and a 1 x 1,000 litre water tank per household; 8 in Upolu, 3 in Savaii and 1 for children of hope.

09.02.20: Neglect & Welfare Assistance

A 41 year old mother of 7 children (9 months to 21 years old), sought SVSG’s help for support; not to get her husband back from another woman he was with, but to request assistance for food and schooling assistance for her children. We applaud the bravery and the courage of this woman to come forward and seek help. Rather than crying over her estranged husband, she prioritises her children’s need for the basic necessities and their education. SVSG’s child protection team worked alongside the mother during the weekend. There was the provision of counselling support and at the same time, the basic food and toiletries to get them through, while the mother looks for a job to support her family.

24.02.20: Abused Women

This was a case of one man, emotionally abusing not just 1 but 2 women; his ex-wife and his current wife. There was anxiety, depression and stress disorder experienced by both women, and they ended up abusing each other instead of the person that causes the trauma. Ironically, each woman lodged separate complaints against their shared partners, separately.

It was here that SVSG intervened and brought them in together for counselling support. Once again, the children’s best interest was paramount in the women’s decision to reconcile and move on with their lives.

Penny Dawber Well done you strong, brave and caring ladies. You put your children and yourselves first. Aroha

26.02.20: Child Abuse

Police referred an 18 year old young lady with mental illness to SVSG for assistance due to the physical abuse she endured at the hands of her older brother. She had bruises on her arms and back from a cable wire used during the abuse. The matter was referred back to the Police Domestic Violence Unit for their investigation. The victim is currently under SVSG’s shelter care while working with her brother on how to better care for his sister given her mental illness.
CHILD PROTECTION

There was excitement news that surrounded the child protection work in Samoa and the Pacific region in February, as the 84th extraordinary session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child will be hosted in Apia from 2 – 6 March 2020.

This in-country/regional session is the first ever of this kind in the Treaty Bodies system, and as a child’s rights activists, SVSG will take advantage of this rare opportunity to ensure that the children’s voices will be heard at the forum.

This is because as the wound of the measles outbreak that claimed the lives of 83 children in Samoa in 2019, is yet to be fully healed, children continued to be at the centre of family violence disputes, of gender based violence and of neglect.

Children are also intimidated by the elders to sexual violation and while some of these cases have been reported to SVSG and the children are now safe at the Campus of Hope, SVSG believes that many more of our young ones are silence by fear, or they matters are now swept under the carpet due to pride within families.

From SVSG’s casework assistance, 7 out of 56 new cases lodged in February directly affected children; from sexual to child abuse, neglect and intimidation. For the Campus admission, there were 2 additional children (female (18) and male (14) sheltered due to child abuse.

For the rest of the new cases lodged, a total of 82 children were indirectly affected by the violence committed against their mothers and fathers or unrelated members of the community.

Field Trip

Students from the primary and secondary levels went on a field trip at the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum in February.

The students were taken out for a tour of the famous writer’s residence. A few of them have heard of the Scottish writer while the rest have never heard of such a person before.

The Field Trip forms part of the children’s learning outside of the Campus, and something that they enjoyed every now and then. Thank you so much Margaret and the staff for coordinating the educational tour of the museum for our students. They thoroughly enjoyed it.

Child Vendors – The Hot Soup Skill Building Training

An additional 4 vendors enrolled for training in February joined 4 young boys from January, bringing the total vendors removed from the streets for skills training, to 8.

Innovative ideas continued to be generated from the Hot Soup camp as new students with different ideas joined. In February, the students created upcycling ideas from materials around them, such as plastic bottles. These were transformed into pots for plants either for sale, or for decorating homes.

Others experiment the mixing of different colours for fabric painting, using different leaves as background for their painting.

We have seen how the students are excited of learning new ideas. For SVSG, we are glad that these children are out of the streets, and are learning some skills that could support themselves and their families.

Thank you to the US Embassy of Apia for the grant that is enabling SVSG to clear our streets of child vendors, while exposing them to a positive environment of learning.
Shelter Developments

We are glad to bring you a new look at the eastern side of the House of Hope. The extension work is to accommodate the disability children’s access to their outdoor activities. There are 4 children with physical and 3 with mental disabilities cared for at the Campus. The space also provides a breezy environment for the just to sit and relax during the day.

This development was funded by the SVSG (Melbourne) with Directors Lome Pele, Fuaialii Anthony Sofe and all of our supporters in Melbourne.

3.4 School of Hope

A total of 81 children attended the School in February allocated to 4 classes:

Pre-school – 20 students; ages 2 – 5 years old
Primary – 28 students; ages 6 – 13 years old
Secondary -25 students; age 14 – 18 years old
Home Economics – 8 older girls; age 19 - 20

Out of the 28 students in the primary level class, 11 or 43% have been assessed as slow learners, given they have never been to school before.

There are 3 skills taught at the Home Economics class; sewing, cooking and baking. Trainers from SVSG’s pool of volunteers are rostered to take up these lessons for the older girls.

Whatever the case may be, SVSG had ensured that the children are well protected and safe as they rightly deserve.

The partnership with UNICEF Pacific therefore provides a valuable support towards SVSG and its child protection work for the children of Samoa. Thank you so much Tupe Esera-Aumua, the UNICEF Child Protection Officer for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau for always being on the look-out for opportunities to support us further with our work. We also acknowledge the assistance from Katherina Hodges, the Child Protection Specialist of the UNICEF Pacific Multi Country Office for the timely correspondence on program reports and acquittals.

3.1 CRC 84th Session Preparation

Child Labour

SVSG had been invited to be a part of the panel discussion hosted by the ILO Office as a Side Event at the 84thCRC Session. The focus would be on the Alliance 8.7 – “Working for a world without forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour”

Child’s right to protection from abuse and neglect

The children of hope have been invited to take part in the Talanoa sessions coordinated by the UNICEF as part of its parallel event for the 84th CRC Session.

In addition, the SVSG President Siliniu Lina Chang, and the Child Rights Advocate (and residence of the Campus) Ms. Leilua Lino were invited to be part of the panel discussions on the key child protection concerns faced by Pacific children and existing systems addressing them.
3.2 Court Support
The closure associated with a successful day at the Court is an important part of the rehabilitation programs for the children at the Campus.

For the 14-year old rape victim referred under SVSG’s shelter care in 2019, the guilty plea by the perpetrator and the Court’s subsequent decision to sentence him to 4 years in prison is sweet victory.

But the young survivor knew that her journey towards reintegration will not be as easy, as she had to tolerate the stigma and the discrimination associated with her being back into the community.

Three other Campus residences have their cases heard at the Family Court in February, where their applications for Interim Protection Orders were set final by the Court.

One interesting referral from the Family Court was a 17 year old youth, who has been a shelter residence since he was 4, yet he kept running away when he was brought to the office for interview regarding his case. As the child lived off from one family after another and on the road for most of the time, he picked up some bad traits which contributed to his being under court watch under the care of SVSG.

Another child victim of rape also had her case heard in Court in February; with the perpetrator now pleading guilty to the offence. The sentencing had been set for March 2020.

A visit from New Zealand Doctors
Associated Profession Dr. Faumuina Tai Sopoaga, a long-time supporter of SVSG, was accompanied by Dr. Corina Keeling, both from New Zealand, to spend time with the children of hope while in the country in February.

Thank you Doctors for the powerful testimonies shared with the children, and encouraging them to work harder and stay committed in order to achieve their dreams. We look forward to seeing you when you next visit.

Bracing for the Cyclone Season
With not just one but two Tropical Cyclone warnings issued for Samoa in February, TC Vicky and TC Wasi, our youth members (the SVSG Juniors) braced the heavy rain and strong winds while keeping watch at the Campus during this time.

The young children were frightened of the noise especially during the nights, but the older girls were in prayer for their safety.

Fortunately, both cyclones moved away from Samoa leaving only debris and lots of dirt for the young ones at the Campus to clean.

We thank God for his protection over our children during this time.
LDS Humanitarian Welfare Visit
The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints had its Pacific Area Humanitarian Welfare / Self Reliance Team from New Zealand visiting the Campus while in Samoa in February.

Coordinated by Sister Mary Elizabeth Aiono, the visit was for the Welfare/Self Reliance Team to meet with SVSG President on the needs of the Campus given the partnership between SVSG and the LDS in supporting the Campus of Hope.

Birthday Celebration
This birthday celebration in February was extra special as it was for one of our newly admitted children, who are not only sisters, but they are also twins.

Both were sexually abused at their home by a non-relative and are now sheltered at the Campus of their safety while their case is progressed through to court. Thank you Tasi & Finafinau Paul for all the hard work put into creating the colourful cakes for the twins and enjoyed by all the children at the Campus.

ANZ Bank (Samoa) Limited
While the country was issued with cyclone warnings mid-February, staff representatives from the ANZ Bank in Apia presented donations of toys, children’s books, coloring pens and miscellaneous children supplies, put together by the ANZ Bank (New Zealand).

The donation kept the children occupied while they remained indoors during these poor weather conditions. Thank you to our ANZ family in Samoa and New Zealand for continuing to support the children residence of the Campus of Hope.

3.2 The Reintegration Program
Two of the sheltered children were successful reintegrated in February; one was a 13 year old rape victim and another was a 13 year old victim of child abuse.

In addition, the families of four other children were visited as part of the pre-reintegration assessment and preparation prior to releasing the child back into the community. All of the families are based at the rural villages, relying mostly on subsistence agriculture for a living. While the mothers in these families are now supported under the SVSG economic empowerment program for unemployed women, family group counselling sessions have been conducted to prepare them mentally for the return of their children home.

Featured in this Edition is a rape victim at nine years old, and was evacuated to the safety of the Campus in August 2016. She was raped by her aunty’s husband who she was living with at the time. Both her parents have remarried.

The victim spent 3 years and 5 months under the care of SVSG while her case was progressing in Court. In February 2020, case was successfully completed with the perpetrator scheduled for sentencing in March 2020.

While at the Campus, the victim grew into a respectful young lady, she was always curious of life outside of the Campus and she was eager to continue with her studies.

The victim was in Primary school when she was brought under the SVSG care. Upon her evacuation to her biological father, she was of the age to attend College, perhaps in Year 9 this year.

When the Child Protection Team visited our child for follow up, she beamed with excitement as she just got home from school. She is now in College, and enjoying her much smaller family with her biological father, step mother and two other siblings.
3.3 Campus of Hope

A total of 90 children and 1 mother were cared for at the Campus in February; there were 5 new admissions and 1 reintegration.

It is a 24/7 responsibility, from preparing the children’s breakfast, putting them to school, attend to their medical needs, transport them to the Police for interview, and then the usual evening happenings of shower, bath, playtime, feeding, praying before calling it a day.

According to ‘Mama Lina’ the President and the matriarch of this shelter facility, “this is what it’s all about; being obedient to God’s calling and being of service to the children.”

There were 9 babies age 8 months to 2 years old; 16 boys age 3 – 15; 1 boy age 17; 64 girls age 3 – 18 years old; 8 girls age 19 – 20 and 1 abused mother.

Despite the increase in number of the children in our growing family of hope, the volunteers, the matrons and the staff know each of them by name; it is a must, because it is the first step in establishing a sense of trust and a feeling of belonging amongst the children.

We are never short of volunteers, with a range of experience offered to help out at the Campus.

In February, Ms. Finafinau Paul introduced yoga to the children and had scheduled a 2-hour session with them once a week.

Thank you Fina for your time and the good laughs shared with the children.

Return to Paradise Outing

The annual treat every Christmas for the children of hope courtesy of the Management and staff of the Return to Paradise, was put on hold in 2019 due to the measles outbreak.

In February, the children were transported to the cool surroundings of the Return to Paradise, for a day of fun activities and laughter with the staff of the Resort.

For a moment there, the children forgot about all the worries surrounding their being at the Campus, as they enjoyed themselves.

The staff members were accommodating as usual, attending to the children’s needs from the moment we arrived up until we bid them farewell.

Thank you so much to Resort General Manager and Matriarch of the extended family of staff Ramona Su’a Pale for maintaining this tradition of treating the children annually at the Resort.