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

Sponsored by:
The One Sky Giving Circle
CA, United States of America
THE MEASLES ANGELS
Talofa lava!

This Engage Edition is not your normal Newsletter, as we ended 2019 with great sadness.

From the inside cover right to the end, we paid tribute to our beloved children, who have been taken way too soon from us due to the measles epidemic. We will see the families of the departed children at a loss. Nevertheless, we will also see a community in solidarity, as we come together as one, to support, to help and to care for each other as Family.

It had been a struggle; mentally, physically and spiritually. But through it all, we endured. We have to because despite the catastrophe brought about by the measles, there is a lot more to be grateful for.

Our child protection work have seen justice being served for the abused children, children being saved while vendors have been placed back to school. The rehabilitated men, women and young offenders of violence have become role models for behavioural change in their families and village communities. The economically empowered nofotane women went from strength to strength with their innovation and improved self-esteem. Our youths took up their responsibilities as caretakers of our environment by fronting up the Climate Resilience program. As for the children of hope, their resilience saw them becoming Ambassadors of violence free families by sharing their stories as part of our community awareness programs. Lastly, we continued to gather families from here and abroad to support this work further.

It was therefore fitting that the face of the Positive Movement Campaign and the recipient of the Young Commonwealth Innovative Award 2019, Ms. Leilua Lino, was recognized as one of the nominated Persons of the Year 2019 by the Samoa Observer. It surely sets the positive mentality we take with us through to 2020.

I therefore represent our growing SVSG Family to wish everyone a most prosperous year ahead!

Georgina Lui
Chair, SVSG Board
1. **SVSG's MEASLES PREVENTION & HELPING HAND OUTREACH**

1.1 **Identifying the Need to Assist**

As the country struggled to deal with a virus that upon arrival onto our shores, caught each and every one of us grievously unprepared, the SVSG Family gathered to seek God’s guidance as the Group sets out to be there for our families during these difficult times.

Lead by the SVSG Patron Honorable Tuisugaletaua Sofara Aveau, SVSG launched the Measles Prevention and Helping Hand Outreach late November. It is SVSG’s normal proactive approach towards its life saving work.

The Outreach was only supposed to be for 3 weeks from 30 November to 21 December 2019, however based on the identified need for assistance, the Christmas and the New Years passed us by while we were on the road, attending to our people’s call for help.

The Outreach reassured the families who have lost children to the measles that we are a Family that remained stronger together during these trying times. It included the provision of trauma counseling for the grieving parents, awareness and education on the importance of household hygiene, how to care for the affected children and the provision of basic necessities. The Outreach formed part of SVSGs’ child protection work and as such, we ensured that the statistics being gathered are accurate and complete for reporting purposes.

The efficiency in which SVSG was able to reach the families severely affected by the measles was through the SVSG village representatives, who travelled with us to get to the affected families.

Most importantly, the Outreach found some of the fatalities of the measles who are not included in the official death toll as recorded, including children who died at home before they reached the hospitals, hence their being unregistered on the system.
1.2 Spiritual and Psychological Preparation

“The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Galatians 2:20

Following in house training for the staff and volunteers on the objectives of the Outreach, the Teams were ready to hit the road.

We knew that we will be treading on a very delicate situation, but the SVSG President encouraged us along. “Let us walk in faith today with Christ, and enjoy our day.”

And in the lyrics of the ‘One Day at A Time’ by John Lennon, we were encouraged to hit the road.

Despite being on the road all day to cover as many families as possible, at the end of each day of outreach, we gathered around the table for debriefing and to prepare for the next day’s program.

We started with just a few of us, but eventually increased in numbers as more and more of our volunteers offered to be there for our families in need.

The mentality was simple as we weathered the storm together as a Family.
1.3 A Heart Breaking Journey – The Outreach

No amount of training really prepared us for what we encountered each day we went out to the community. There was grief and there was denial. There was anger and there was confusion. There was death and there were small graves. It was a catastrophe like no other we have ever experienced since years of being a support service provider for the people of Samoa. Highlighted herein are some of the unforgettable stories the Outreach Team was able to capture and shared in memory of the children victims of the measles:

The first family being reached at Laulii lost three children to the measles. According to the father Tuivale Luamanuva Puelua, “my children’s death came like a thief in the night, so sudden and unexpected.”

The Tuivale family lived in an open house further inland and tucked away at the end of a long dirt road. Literally, the grieving mother felt like she has reached a dead end road, with the loss of her 3 younger children. “I kept pinching myself to see if I am dreaming ….. sadly, 3 small graves brought me back to reality.”

Down the road, we found the 8 months pregnant Veronika Hala in mourning. A very young couple, Veronika and her husband Pula were grieving the loss of their only child Joseph Hala claimed by the measles at only 11 months old. Veronika is remaining strong only because of her unborn child, who is at a high risk of being infected.

25 year old Enite Lefeau of Manono-uta, had just buried her 9 months old daughter when SVSG arrived. “I don’t know who to blame, so I just vented out at my parents, my husband, even my surviving children.” Enite was 5 months pregnant at the time and as such, she was kept away from her infected child up until she died. “I only got to spend 2 hours with my daughter before she was buried; I felt like I have been robbed of my right as a mother to care and to say goodbye to my daughter.”

In Kind Donors
- Laine Alefosio Lesa & Kolone Alefosio – 3 bags of clothes
- Mareko & Siali – stationery supplies for the children
- Elenor Aelay, Peace Corps Volunteer of Lufilufi – bag of clothes
- Pak Auto Vaiusu – 2 x ctn. tinned fish, 2 bottles oil, bag of rice, vegetables and taro
- Lucky Seumanu of Pure Pacific Water – water dispenser for the SVSG Office

A special thank you to SVSG’s ongoing partners assisting with the children’s caring:
- Toleafoa Elon Betham and the team at the Le Aute Gas for 2 x monthly gas refills for the House of Blessings;
- 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
- Greg & Maria Meredith for the children’s daily supplies of bread;
- Epi Smith for the children’s bread supplies twice a week;
- Tuato & Anna Ryan for the children’s Sunday toanai & bread supplies;
- Luamanuva Dr.Kapuana D. Ainuu 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;
- Uncle Johnny for the children’s ice cream supply every Sundays;
- Motuipuaa Dr. Aisoli Vaai of the Saleufi Medical Clinic, for the children’s free medical consultation;
- Taulealeausumai Dr. Titi Lamese of the Ola Fou Clinic, for the children’s free medical consultation;
- Zhenna Chan Mow-Fa’auiga of the Niu Pharmacy for the children’s free medication supplies;
- The Fatima Apostolate Fellowship of Mulivai Apia for hosting the children every Tuesday for Rosary and their evening meal; and
- The churches, villages and individuals that donated food and miscellaneous supplies to assist with the children’s daily needs;

SVSG Melbourne

Donations were received during December from the Directors of the SVSG (Melbourne) Mrs. Lome Pele $1,000 and Mr. Fuiaialii Anthony Sofe $500 to assist with SVSG’s work. Thank you Lome and Fuiaialii for the continuous support towards our work here in Samoa. God bless!
FINANCIAL & IN KIND DONATION

As we’ve come to the end of the year, SVSG acknowledges the support from our families, friends and donor partners, without which, SVSG will not be able to continue with its work. Thank you for your belief, your trust, and for being there whenever we needed support.

For November & December, SVSG acknowledges with gratitude and appreciation the kindness of the following donors:

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<td>Court Office</td>
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<td>Magic Mike of California</td>
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Jesus Waymaker of Seattle USA

Representatives from the Jesus Waymaker Group of Seattle Washington met with the SVSG President in December to find out more about SVSG’s work and how the Group can help out.

Born out of the conviction of a young man name Brandon Afoa whose life-changing accident in 2007 left him paraplegic, Brandon’s story is a familiar one to SVSG and its work with the victims of life’s unfortunate twist of events. Thank you Brandon for the donation of $1,000 towards our work.

SVSG Queensland

Thank you Eseta Frost and the Team at SVSG (Queensland) for the kind donation of $2,000 received in December specifically for the staff. Thank you for acknowledging the hard work of our staff and volunteers during this busy period of our work. Wishing you and your families all the best this new year.

For Leanne Tomasi of Vaitele, she simply gave up on life. “I wanted nothing else but to be buried with my babies.” Leanne lost her 1-year-old child and a newborn child to the measles.

“I looked at my surviving children and I got mad at them for being alive.” Inside the family house before the back door, we found 2 small graves next to each other. Three children ages 3, 5 and 6 were playing around the graves.

At Faleasii, an elderly grandmother Gina Penoa took the loss of her 11-month-old grand-daughter really hard, resulting in her minor stroke.

According to Gina, “It is one thing to suddenly lose a child, but to have her taken to her mother’s family for burial is too much for me to bear; there is not even a grave of her so it was like she was never here with us.” Toaso Penoa, who is the father of Baby Margaret, is Gina’s son, but the couple decided to take their daughter to be buried at Tamalii’s family at Afega (about 20 minutes by car from Faleasii). Tamalii is Baby Margaret’s mother. The extended family of Gina is providing that much needed support for her, not only as she grieved the loss of Baby Margaret, but also as she now needs a carer due to her health condition.

Leaving No One Behind

It was one thing to learn of a loved one’s death through their parents, but to see the infected children still battling the virus is heart wrenching.

Some of these children have been discharged from the hospital 3 – 4 times, yet they looked so weak.
Others have caught the virus before they were even immunized and the parents were taking care of them at home.

Still others were taking up the role of parents, caring for the surviving siblings while the parents were caught up in their grief.

We saw the pain and the suffering our families went through on a daily basis, but we endured, so that no one is left behind.

The very sick children were immediately referred to the hospital.

The ones that have not been vaccinated were transported to the nearest Immunization Centre while those requiring food and clothing were assisted with accordingly.

A common factor amongst 98% of the families assisted by the Outreach is the existence of poverty.

Having more than 10-15 members living in a small house; is simply overcrowded.

The poor living conditions, the lack of access to clean water and proper sanitation breed diseases and the prolonged measles virus.

It was a perfect Christmas gift for the families to alleviate the challenge of fetching clean water for their daily needs.

All of the families benefiting from the Clean Water Project have completed welfare assessment where access to clean water was identified.

It is in this connection that SVSG conveys its gratitude and appreciation to Mark Burns and his lunch colleagues for their heart to be part of the difference we are making in the lives of the underprivileged members of our community.

Refresher Career Counselling Training of Trainer (ToT) Postponed

A refresher session for the youths who were trained as trainers of the Career Counselling previously held in May 2019, scheduled for December 2019 was postponed due to the measles outbreak.

Funded by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and coordinated by an expert from the ILO Suva Office, and as such, all UN in-coming missions were put on hold until the measles epic was cleared. Thank you Tomasi Peni, the ILO National Coordinator for Samoa, for supporting our youth unemployment program this year.
7. **SVSG JUNIORS**

The visibility of SVSG’s youth work speaks volume of the commitment from our young people to take a leadership role in addressing some of the pressing issues facing our youth today.

From youth empowerment to removing child vendors off the streets to engaging men and boys to end violence against women and children.

There was a good cheer at Satapuala just before Christmas when four families received 1,000 litres of water tank under the youth’s Clean Water Project.

Five more water tanks will be supplied early January 2020 all fully funded by Mr. Mark Burns of the ANZ Bank (Samoa) Limited, and his lunch colleagues.

**The Strength of a Community**

The SVSG Measles Outreach visited 140 family households within 37 villages in Upolu.

A total of 1,216 people from these 140 families were reached; 85% comprised of children up to 18 years old.

70 deaths, of which 8 were unregistered, were recorded by the Outreach Team.

This is a huge coverage achieved only through the love of God planted in our people’s hearts, both here and abroad, to lend a helping hand.

We had the young and the old, both here and from abroad, braving the rain and the sun, walking to reach families who live inland from the main roads.

The commitment from the SVSG village representatives is beyond us. Proud in their yellow uniform, they are our access to families in village communities.
And through it all, we had our moments to shine as a growing family out there to support, to help and to care for our people during these difficult times.

The fourteen months project from 1st December 2018, to 31st January 2020 has the participation of organizations from six countries, with extensive experience in the field: 1. CENTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE (CHSJ), INDIA 2. CENTRO RURAL JOVEN VIDA (CERUJOVI), SPAIN 3. DIPUTACIÓN PROVINCIAL DE CÁCERES, SPAIN 4. EMANCIPATOR, NETHERLANDS 5. FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATIVE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT LTD. (FISD), SRI LANKA 6. SAMOA VICTIM SUPPORT GROUP INC. (SVSG), SAMOA 7. YOUTH FIRST, MADAGASCAR

The Team returned eager to continue where they have left off with the ‘Start with the Men’ Campaign, to maintain the momentum of the project as it catches the attention of the youths being reached thus far.

SVSG is appreciative of the opportunity to work with experienced organizations that have started on engaging men and boys to end violence against women and looked forward to continuing the network while implementing local programs to this effect.

SVSG had signed MoUs with all the 6 organizations while they were in Samoa for the Initial Meeting of the Project in January 2019, and as such, a global network is secured to strengthen our work with men and boys to end violence against women.

**Shark Freight and Straight Up of Sydney Australia**

An opportunity presented itself in December for SVSG to establish a partnership with Shark Freight of Sydney Australia for the mutual benefit of the people we help support.

Thank you Olotauatia Sialoa for being open to the opportunity to work in partnership with SVSG while you were in the country.

We are excited of how we can help our people in Samoa through the multitude of Shark Freight services.
Australian Volunteer International Partnership Expo, Millenia Hotel Sogi

On the theme Let us build bridges together; the Australian Volunteer International hosted a partnership expo in November, inviting existing and potential partners.

The Expo was an opportunity for our partner organizations to gather and explore ideas around potential assignments, engaging with other partners; for Partners to find out about volunteer schemes that are available on the program to support them; and for new partners to get an idea about how volunteers have supported partner organizations.

Thank you Patricia Netzler-Laga’alia, Program Manager for the Australian Volunteers for International Development Program in Samoa for extending the invitation to SVSG. We will definitely utilize this opportunity to apply for volunteers to support the capacity gaps within our organization.

Final Conference, Breaking the Cycle Project: Engaging Men & Boys, Cáceres, Spain 29 November – 4 December 2019

Despite the short staff while coordinating SVSG’s response to the measles outbreak, we farewell 3 members of our Team as they head off to Spain late November.

The Spain gathering saw the Final Conference of the ERASMUS+ project Breaking the Cycle: Engaging men and boys for promoting gender equality and ending violence against women.

How Measles Robbed Samoa of Its Young

The government declared a State of Emergency on 17 November 2019; schools were closed, children under 17 were banned from public gatherings and vaccinations were made compulsory. For 2 days from 5 – 6 December 2019, the government shut down to focus on a nationwide vaccination campaign.

It was one of the most trying times for SVSG and its work, as we saw how the measles robbed Samoa of its young ones; the death toll as recorded by the National Emergency Operation Centre had gone past 70 by then.

There was a lot of mistrust amongst the families we visited as babies were dying day by day; and we don’t blame them. Other families were reluctant to receive any help for fear that it would be a one off visit without any follow up. Even the families whose children were infected without any fatalities seem to be in a mourning state. These are some of the psychological effects brought about by the measles.

The irony of the measles situation to SVSG is this:
- In the wake of a series of abandoned babies in Samoa, SVSG launched the Saving Lives Campaign early September 2019;
- It was a nation-wide call to our people that ‘life is a gift from God, and not for us to take unto our own hands;
- Yet in October 2019, the measles started to claim the lives of our children.

What? Why? How? When? were amongst the most pressing line of questions that remain with us to date.

But if one can answer how our surviving children continued to smile while playing on their siblings’ graves, then perhaps, the unanswered questions brought about by the measles epidemic can be resolved.
And as an advocate for human rights, SVSG continued to be the voice of the voiceless, sharing the stories of:
- the lost children;
- the grieving mothers;
- the brave fathers struggling to remain stronger for his family;
- the weakened grandparents; and
- the surviving children.

SVSG therefore acknowledged with gratitude the support of our families and friends from here and as far as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Vietnam, Denmark, Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Australia and New Zealand; we have seen humanity at its best during these trying times. As a family, we remained stronger.

The Donors
The support from our families, friends and supporters has been overwhelming. There was both in kind and monetary donations, and not forgetting the volunteer support. From churches to the business community to law firms to individuals across the world through the SVSG Givealittle page, we are humbled.

A special thank you to the SVSG village representatives who walked with us throughout this outreach. What a proud network of village and church leaders; and this is the added value of a community based approach adopted by SVSG for its measles outreach.

We pray that our merciful God will bless you and your families for the good that you have done to others:

Le Aute Gas (CMN Company Ltd) 500.00
Lend a Hand of Seattle USA (Taito Family Ministries) 7,387.00
Tofialu Sharlene Lesä of the Tofilau Fashions Samoa 1,000.00
Lui & Chang Lawyers 500.00
Zachery & Margie Snyder of USA 286.48
Surech Mahboobani of Thailand 259.34
CCK Trading Limited 500.00
Jim & Mindy Wiese of USA 128.20
Samoa Stationery & Books 300.00
Samoa Stationery & Books (shopping voucher) 200.00

Workshop for Pacific Island States on Gun Violence and Illicit Small-Arms Trafficking from a Gender Perspective, 12-15 November 2019 in Suva, Fiji
SVSG was represented at the Gun Violence & Illicit Small Arms Trafficking from a Gender Perspective workshop by the Group’s Communication & Networking Manager.

It was an opportunity for SVSG to be part of the regional dialogue on the gender issues surrounding gun violence, peace and security. The Workshop was coordinated by the UN Regional Centre for Peace & Disarmament (UNRCPD) for members of parliament and non-governmental organizations in the Pacific region.

Pacific Regional Workshop: Strengthening Intersectional Advocacy on Anti-Discrimination14-16 November in Nadi Fiji.
Following on from a successful initial meeting of the regional partners of the Equality and Justice Alliance (EJA) earlier in March 2019, EJA hosted the Pacific Regional Workshop: Strengthening Intersectional Advocacy on Anti-Discrimination.

The workshop builds on the progress made since the initial meeting in March, to formulate advocacy plans to develop and strengthen laws and policies on anti-discrimination. The workshop saw the continued working in partnership of the partners of the EJA in the region in lobbying and advocating for anti-discrimination legislations.

The Equality & Justice Alliance (EJA), which was created in early 2018 amidst the backdrop of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting wherein the UK government, acknowledged the UK’s role in establishing discriminatory laws affecting women and girls and LGBT+ people during the colonial-era.

SVSG was represented to the regional workshop by the Accounts and Administration Manager; continuing the capacity development of SVSG staff as per its human resource development priority.
The economic empowerment of nofotane women in Samoa is SVSG’s strategy to ensure that the unemployed women survivors of violence who have sought assistance with SVSG are no longer being left behind.

This is part of SVSG’s work to address the inequality in status, rights and opportunities faced by the nofotane women in village communities.

SVSG continues to seek other funding opportunities to support the sustainability of the income generation activities of the newly self-employed nofotane women.

Besides having the women’s products displayed for sale at the SVSG main office in Apia, orders for fans, lopa seed accessories and other handicraft products are placed directly with the nofotane women themselves. So if you would like to support the nofotane entrepreneurs, please visit our office and see for yourself the variety of products available for sale on behalf of the women.

Buy the ‘Nofotane’ brand and support the economic empowerment of our women in the village communities.

6. LOCAL & REGIONAL NETWORKING
Samoa Country Plan Review

SVSG was invited to participate in a review consultation workshop on the Australian funded gender program in Samoa, namely the Samoa Country Plan 2015-2018 and way forward for the Samoa Country Plan 2020 – 2023.

It was also a great opportunity for SVSG to share with the stakeholders work being done on gender, specifically with the Nofotane Project; sharing on what has and has not worked, lessons learnt and suggestions for further work on gender from the SVSG perspective.

Anonymous Donor 286.01
Fexco Samoa Ltd 3,000.00
SVSG Melbourne 5,000.00
Laulu & Moana Westerlund of Blue Bird Construction 2,000.00
Bluebird Lumber & Hardware 800.00
Tualu Joe & Sarona Ponifasio of the Travellers Point 1,000.00
Samoa Life Assurance Corporation 200.00
Brian & Nelda Atkins of the Pacific Aluminium 1,000.00
Sunrise Restaurant 300.00
Niu Pharmacy 500.00
Julie Tunufono of De La Salle College NZ 200.00
Bathurst FT Service of Brisbane 872.90
The Alofa Charitable Trust of NZ 2,000.00
Samoa Alofa Trust of Christchurch NZ 1,987.00
Wilson McKay Barrister of New Zealand 5,022.25
McCaw Lewis Ltd of New Zealand 1,683.50
Pastor Lene Molia & Congregation Au Uso Kerisiano Ranui Church NZ 1,661.00
Milia & Isla Sopoaga of the United Kingdom NZD1,500.00
Ashburton Community Canterbury NZ NZD1,000.00
Maude Sewell of De La Salle College NZ NZD100.00
Staff of the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE) of Christchurch NZ NZD150.00
CCK Trading Limited - bags of clothes
Lavalava Samoa - bags of clothes
Anastasia Stowers - clothes

Tofilau Sharlene Lesā

Jim & Mindy Wiese Missionaries of Samoa for the balloons and shoes for the children
Thank you Dress a Girl Around the World for the beautiful donation of girls dresses towards the SVSG Measles Prevention & Helping Hand Outreach as well as the girls at the Campus of Hope. We appreciate your assistance very much and know that your beautiful dresses put back the smiles to many young girls in such trying times.

Digicel Samoa Team presenting the company’s $10,000 worth of donation for the SVSG Measles Outreach Program.

$5000 Food Voucher and $5000 worth of phone credits for the families affected by the measles. Thank you to the Board, Management and staff of Digicel Samoa. Seki a Digicel.

Two boxes of diapers and 18 cans of baby milk formula were received from Jada Fa’anana-Schultz of The Hut, Brisbane Australia.

The donation was put together by donors from the Brisbane community to assist with the measles outreach.

Ariana Paul of Tri Maori Charitable of New Zealand who donated 30 assorted gift bags specifically for the mothers who have lost their children to the measles.

Thank you Ariana for the lovely gesture and the encouraging message behind the heart-butterfly pendant for the mothers.

4. **ADVOCACY PROGRAM FOR OFFENDERS OF VIOLENCE**

There were 31 men, 18 women and 2 youths referred from the Courts to SVSG’s Advocacy Program for perpetrators of violence during November and December.

Participants age range from 19 years old to the elderly at their 70s. But despite this huge age gap, we have seen how the participants have formed their own support network amongst themselves, encouraging each other while undergoing their relevant counselling programs with SVSG.

Behavioural and mentality changes are the rewards of SVSG’s work with the offenders of violence referred from the Family and Youth Courts.

SVSG therefore acknowledges the commitment from the volunteer counsellors who facilitated these programs as part of their services to the community. We would not be able to effect these positive changes amongst the participants to the program without your support. Thank you so much Team for this year’s work. We have managed to influence changes in the lives of the participants with some of them returning to assist with the program.

SVSG continues to run the Perpetrator’s Program since mid-2013 through fundraising activities and donations from our generous donors.

5. **THE NOFOTANE WOMEN**

Nofotane women from Utualii and Tufulele who are registered under the SVSG Economic Empowerment Program received an extra income in November from putting together an order of 120 fresh flower garlands for a birthday celebration.

Thank you Brenda Heather-Latu for supporting the nofotane women.
These new products have been a hit with our supporters with demand far exceeding the supply by the children. If you would like to support the livelihood skills training at the School of Hope, please feel free to sign up a volunteer form available at the main office in Apia.

Thank you to the Ministry of Education for supporting the School of Hope, as well as our volunteer trainers who are part of the teaching staff at the school.

November also saw the children being introduced to creating their own Lifebooks thanks to the volunteer support from Aso Vavau of Auckland New Zealand. Also always set aside time to do volunteer hours with us whenever she is in the country. Thank you Aso for encouraging the children with your positive attitude.

3.3 Child Vendors – The Hot Soup Skill Building Training

SVSG received in November a grant of USD10,000 or ST28,413 from the US Embassy Office in Apia to continue the success of the Hot Soup Skill Building Training for child vendors removed from the streets.

While the training was also closed mid-November when the State of Emergency was in force, the young boys were able to complete an order of printed sarong and t-shirts placed with the Training Centre.

There were 15 children trained at the Centre when it closed for the year with more children being enrolled for 2020.

SVSG acknowledged the continued support from the Charge d’Affaires Antone Greubel and the staff at the US Embassy Apia towards SVSG’s program to address the child vendor problem in Samoa.

20 children have been placed back to the mainstream education in 2019 and SVSG is once again working with the donors who funded these scholars for school fee assistance in the new year.

Hyundai Samoa for allocating 1 x mini van for a week outreach transportation.

Donation of clothes from Gustav Lesā of New Zealand as well as volunteering his time to be part of the Measles Outreach Team. Thank you Gustav.

Thank you also to the Pacific Forum Line for coordinating the shipment of donations to SVSG as part of the partnership support with the Company. Thank you Ms. Suzanna Rawson and the Team in Auckland for your prompt response when we referred donations requiring shipment.

Last but not the least, thank you to the Chair of the SVSG Board, Mrs. Georgina Lui for being there together with us throughout all this time.

We greatly appreciate the positive energy you have towards SVSG’s work moving forward.
2. FAMILY VIOLENCE

SVSG’s casework assistance continued as usual while the Measles Outreach was underway. Sadly, at such trying times, family violence and all its ugliness continue its battering for some family members.

SVSG’s casework database recorded 35 new cases lodged in November and 41 in December to the Apia main office. For the Tuasivi Office in Savaii, there were 19 cases lodged in November compared to the 17 in December. SVSG assisted a total of 112 during this period. This is on top of the fight against the measles epidemic which was at its peak at the time.

Of great concern to SVSG during this period is the increase in the number of sexual abuse cases involving girls 10 years old and under. Yes, the horrific nature of abuse is now seeing girls as young as 5 years old being sexually violated.

The saddest part is that most of these abuses happened within the safety of their own homes; with the perpetrators being family members.

One such case lodged with SVSG in November was by informers who alerted SVSG of a biological father who apparently, has been raping his 16 year old daughter since the girl was 10. According to the informers, the mother knows what has been happening but remained as she feared her husband. SVSG sought the Courts assistance in bringing the girl in as the family had removed the girl from the village and placed her with other relatives. The Police had been tasked with locating the girl and evacuating her to the shelter for her safety, while the case is progressed through to Court.

On a different case, while children were dying from the measles, this young child was battling an abusive environment at home.

The SVSG Measles Outreach Team was alerted of the case while out in the community and the young child was immediately referred to the shelter for his safety.

The Police are investigating the matter.

Pupualii Family of Vaoala

The measles outbreak might have forced the closing of the Campus of Hope to visitors and volunteers, but it didn’t dampen the spirits of the children and grandchildren of the Pupualii Family who represented their parents to say ‘Thank you’ to Samoa Victim Support Group, for looking after the abused children at its Campus of Hope shelter facility.

In a single line, the grandchildren walked through the corridors of the SVSG’s main office, bearing bags of goodies for the children. What a marvellous gesture; simply heart-warming.

According to one of the children, “we have travelled from New Zealand, Australia, America to spend time together as a Family, and our own children have been looking forward to this visit.”

Thank you so much family for including a visit to SVSG as part of your reunion. It is through the belief of our community and the willingness to lend a helping hand, which makes a difference in the work we are doing.

3.2 School of Hope

The children of hope continued to excel not only in their academic studies but also in their innovation approaches to their livelihood skills training.

80 children were taught at the School during November & December including 5 children with disabilities.

And while schools across the country were closed earlier than usual due to the measles, the children at the Campus spent this time to create coffee tables from used tyres and hanging quotes hand painted on old timber at their yard.
Joseph Parker in the House

Christmas for the children of hope was brought to the SVSG office by Joseph and the Team Parker when they could not give them out themselves due to the Campus being closed.

An assortment of toys, stationeries and coloring books were amongst some of the Christmas gifts prepared by the Champ himself for the children of hope.

Thank you Joseph for always giving towards the children whenever you are in the country.

General Council of the Samoan Assemblies of God, New Zealand

The Superintendent and the First Lady of the General Council of the Samoan Assemblies of God in New Zealand, Reverend Tafunai Tooseu & Vaepa Muaiava brought with them jolly good tidings from the members of the Samoan AOG in New Zealand, when they visited the office of the Samoa Victim Support Group in Apia.

Bearing monetary gift of NZD5,000.00 to assist with SVSG’s work for the children survivors of abuse cared for at the Campus of Hope shelter facility, Reverend Tafunai and Vaepa of the SOG Mt. Roskill, represented the General Council of the Samoan Assemblies of God in New Zealand and its members, in brightening up our spirits as we continued to struggle to remain positive amidst the measles and its effect on our precious children.

The donation will greatly assist the operation budget for the Campus as we head on to the New Year. Thank you to the leaders of the General Council of the Samoan Assemblies of God in New Zealand for this substantial donation towards SVSG and its work with the children.

In December, three children ages 2, 3 and 4 were referred to SVSG for shelter care as they have been mistreated by their grandmother’s husband. The grandmother herself brought the children to SVSG. The children’s mother is the grandmother’s daughter from a previous relationship. The children are victims of a broken family; and SVSG gladly took the children in for their safety.

As such, SVSG is increasing its public awareness through road-side signboards, encouraging our children to speak out and alert someone once they are encountered with such treatment. The signboards reiterate the need to call the 24-hour Help Line for immediate assistance.

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

3. CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

SVSG’s child protection work was severely tested during this period due to the measles.

Out of the total 1,216 people assisted by the Measles Outreach, 75% or 912 were children ages new born to 18 years old; 820 of these children were affected the measles; 68/70 of the deaths reached by the SVSG Measles Outreach were children.

We were fighting a problem beyond our control, but we did not waver in the support services we provided.
Sadly, as our country battled the measles outbreak, SVSG continued to fight for justice for the children survivors of sexual and physical abuse whose cases were lodged with our office.

The partnership with UNICEF Pacific is therefore very much appreciated as without it, we would be very much at a loss.

December saw the UNICEF Child Protection in Emergencies Ms Silvia Finaurini from the Bangkok Office, who was in Samoa to be part of the Psychosocial Support during the measles outbreak, catching up with SVSG to find out how else they can assist with the child protection work.

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.

**Court Cases**

To minimize the exposure of the sheltered children to public gatherings during the State of Emergency, all of the court cases scheduled for November and December for the children of hope were requested to be deferred until a later date. The request was through the Office of the Attorney General and was accepted.

**The Reintegration Program**

A 15 year old child who ran away from home for fear of being constantly abused by her parents, was reunited with her family in November following a successful mediation facilitated by SVSG.

Despite the parents anger towards their daughter for running away, and the daughter’s fear of being abused again, SVSG managed to resolve the family matter amicably. And seeing the reunion of parents and child was such a rewarding experience.

SVSG’s village representatives are monitoring the re-integration of the child to her family.

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**Dianne Mimilo of New Zealand**

It was good to catch up with one of our longest serving volunteer, Ms. Rita Tugia of ANZ Bank when she presented to SVSG in December donation of toys, reading books, coloring pens and $200.00 from Diane Mimilo of New Zealand.

Thank you Dianne for the kind donation for the children.

**Sina Mauigoa & Family of New Zealand**

An assorted of white goods including sandwich maker, toaster, steam iron and cordless kettle, as well as diapers, baby wipes and container loads of loom bands were kindly donated by Sina Mauigoa and family from New Zealand.

In addition, $500 was presented to the SVSG President to assist with the shelter operation. According to Sina, “the donation is our family’s way of saying thank you to SVSG for remaining committed to helping our people. Thank you so much Sina and the family for this generous donation.

**Assembly of God Satapuala**

Pastor Sale Uelese and the congregation from the AOG Satapuala gathered at the SVSG office before Christmas to present stable and bulk food supplies to assist SVSG in caring for the children.

Pastor Sale also used the opportunity to acknowledge SVSG’s work for our people throughout the year.

Thank you Pastor Sale and the congregation at Satapuala for thinking of us despite the devastating effect of the measles on our families.
Fijian Friends

Eight friends of Fijian national working in Samoa visited the SVSG office in November bearing donation of food and toiletry supplies to assist with the daily needs of the children at the Campus.

Working at the Bank of the South Pacific, Hyundai Samoa, BAT and the BDO, the friends have heard of the work of SVSG and have all chipped in to purchase the donated goods for the children.

SVSG President received the donation on behalf of the children and acknowledged the generosity of these Good Samaritans.

Catholic Church of Moamoa

The children benefited from a Love Offering put together by the Women’s Fellowship of the Catholic Church at Moamoa comprised of clothing, cutleries and outdoor furniture.

Thank you Father Mikaele Lafaele, Deacon Tulolo Fetuli & Faletua, and the Women’s Fellowship for this kind donation.

Pastor Esther of New Zealand

Donation of assorted stationery supplies were presented by Pastor Esther following a meeting with SVSG in November.

Thank you for the donated stationery, the opportunity to meet today and most especially, your continuous prayers for SVSG and its work.

God bless.

3.1 Campus of Hope

Following the immunization of all the sheltered children early October, and in maintaining the safety of the children residence, the Campus of Hope was closed off to all visitors, volunteers and staff from the second week November to January 2020. Only the live in matrons and security guards continued working to operate the shelter facilities.

The precautionary measure was a priority in light of the measles epidemic. For new admissions to the shelter, they were all checked to ensure that they have been vaccinated prior to being admitted. As a result, all of the 86 residence of the Campus of Hope during this period survived the severity of the measles with no one being affected.

It has been a very difficult time especially the festive season with families already planning Christmas activities with the children of hope. However, we politely cancelled all of the Campus activities and programs, with visitors and volunteers channelled towards the main office in Apia.

Even the normal Rosary session for the children every Tuesdays at the Mulivai Cathedral was put on hold, but instead, the children prayed their Rosary at their multi-purpose hall in the mornings and the evenings.

It was something the children enjoyed as they went through the Shut Down period in prayer and in solitude.
And with the cyclone season upon us, we have to be proactive in preparing the Campus from fallen trees and flooding.

As for the young ones, they continued as if nothing was happening outside the security of the Campus gates.

Highlighted below are some of the happenings at the Campus and the generous visitors who were diverted at the main office when the Campus was closed off due to the measles:

**Catholic Church of Vaitele-uta**

Thank you Father Ioane, Catechist Paulo and Ruta of the Tino Paia Catholic Church of Vaitele-uta for the lovely fellowship with the children early November.

The children enjoyed the fellowship and engaging with the children from the Parish. We look forward to your next visit.

**Pacific Forum Line Volunteers**

November saw the beginning of the volunteer services from the staff of the Pacific Forum Line as part of the Company’s partnership with SVSG.

A group of volunteers were rostered to assist with looking after the babies, cooking, reading and cleaning the compound.

Thank you Teuila Eteuati, PFL’s Agency Manager for coordinating such a helpful initiative.

**Sistahood Project**

A mother and daughter survivors who once were residence of a women’s refuge in New Zealand visited the Campus early November.

It was encouraging to see how survivors of violence have recovered and lived to testify on the power of healing.

Thank you Shana for sharing your story with us and we look forward to having Sistahood as part of our team here at the Campus of Hope.

**St. Vincent de Paul**

Ivan being assisted by the children in assembling a donated clothes line courtesy of the St. Vincent de Paul.

Thank you Peter Bendinelli for always going that extra mile to support SVSG and its work. God bless.

**Japanese Volunteer Donates**

To ensure that the children are adequately protected from the measles, our Japanese volunteer Ms. Junko Naledi donated hand sanitizers and tissues in November.

Thank you Junko for such a thoughtful donation during this time.