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

Pacific Heart

THOMAS PHARMACY

Pearl Medspa

Le Aute Gas

The Samoan Way

Sponsord by:
SVSG has engaged the support of the Little Angels Foundation of New Zealand to provide welfare assistance to our vulnerable children.
FINANCIAL & IN KIND DONATION

SVSG continues to be grateful to its network of supporters who have been helping us financially and through in kind donations, to keep our doors open, to receive our people in need. Fa’afetai! Fa’afetai! Fa’afetai tele lava

Donors | Donation for: | Amount
--- | --- | ---
Peace Chapel Christian Fellowship | Court Office support | 300.00
Mark Tofilau of Sydney Australia | Shelter | 1,200.00
[towards shelter needs & security at the Campus]

A special thank you to SVSG’s ongoing partners assisting with their daily 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 Greg & Maria Meredith for the children’s daily supplies of bread;
- To Tuato & Anna Ryan for the children’s Sunday toanai & bread supplies;
- To Lote Lam Yuen of Siusega donating bread for the children;
- To Elder Meliula Fata, 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 Alfred Fong, who has been a committed volunteer assisting with the children’s spiritual program, donating bibles and food for the children;
- To the churches, villages and individuals that donated food and miscellaneous supplies to assist with the children’s daily needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF BEING ENGAGED:

Talofa Siliniu,
Gardenia will be very happy to see that the books have finally reached their preferred destination.
Our appreciation of your hard work over there for our people. Much love Lina and staff.
Alofa tele atu
Ross, Peta, Shantelle, Natassia, Minerva and Michaela.

Talofa Lava

I trust this third Edition of the Engage Newsletter reaches you and your families in the best of health.

Thank you to those who took the time to read and commented on the previous edition. It surely encouraged us to continue being transparent with our work while accountable to our donors. Thank you also to those who have come to learn of SVSG’s work, and advocated accordingly thereby raising awareness amongst the community of why we exist.

March brought along its own set of challenges and rewards. We have SVSG village representatives actively participating in being the informal social welfare structure for members of the community in need, and in seeking justice. The extent of alleged incest cases brought forward through the SVSG village reps speaks volume of their advocacy role.

Then we have children seeking shelter support with SVSG for themselves and their siblings, which highlighted a direct link between SVSG and secured shelter facilities. Even the Courts and the Police now look towards SVSG to fill this gap in the system.

And in response to violence and the effects of gender inequality on unemployed women, the Nofotane Project is making steady progress. March saw the products by the nofotane women making breakthrough both in the local and the international markets. The number of families, village and church communities benefiting from the socioeconomic advantages of an empowered woman has reached 300, out of 500 targeted for this project with UN Women Fund for Gender Equality.

So as we have gone past the first quarter of this year, we remain grateful of the partnerships we have established along the way and the achievements we have made. To God be the glory always.

Blessings

Georgina Lui
Chair, SVSG Board
1. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Out of the total 72 cases lodged with SVSG (in Upolu and Savaii) during March, 44% were domestic violence while 6% were sexual abuse. SVSG applied for 16 Interim Protection Orders, protecting 14 mothers and 26 children. From the 72 cases lodged, 36 children were affected either directly or indirectly.

Most notable during March was the need for secured shelter facilities not only to keep the children safe from the perpetrators of domestic or sexual abuse, but also from family members who wanted get to their children so the children can change their stories that implicate family members, especially for incest cases.

To SVSG, we have to act on the best interest of the child, and by sheltering them, the children are not only safe, but they are able to recover while seeking justice for the wrong committed against them. It was why SVSG was set up in the first place, to be family to children whose families (especially mothers), have turned on them.

Two pregnant girls were admitted to the Campus of Hope in March, both were victims of incest, one from an uncle and the other from a cousin.

Even the Police continued to rely on the shelter services provided by SVSG for the safety of the children whose cases have been referred to the Police. In March, the Police referred 2 teenagers from the rural villages in Upolu for shelter care while it continues with its investigation into the matter. A woman survivor of violence with disabilities and her child were also referred by the Police for shelter and welfare assistance.

Then we had two children who were found in front of SVSG’s office early Sunday morning, seeking shelter assistance.

These incidents attest to the importance of a secured facility to shelter children in different circumstances. If not for the Campus of Hope, where will these children end up at? Highlighted below are some of these cases:

It was the school’s first time at the Campus and we were humbled by their generosity. Thank you Sister Susana Vei for coordinating the visit and the donation for the children at the Campus.

Malua Theological College

SVSG supporters at the Malua Theological College paid our children a visit during Easter as their way of keeping in touch with SVSG and its work.

The potential church ministers presented donations of food and toiletry supplies to help out with the children’s daily needs.

LDS Youth from American Samoa

The Campus of Hope was transformed into a playground for a Fun Day activity coordinated by the Mesepa International Ward (MIW), a Youth Group of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints from American Samoa.

More than 50 LDS youth from stakes of the Church in American Samoa paid a side visit to the children at the Campus of Hope while in Samoa for their annual visit to the Mormon Temple. The Youth Group organized fun games, lunch and snacks for the children as well as a hired bouncy castle to the children’s delight.

President Aomalo Suesue spoke on behalf of the youth group leaders, to acknowledge the work of SVSG, and the love that emanates from around the Campus of Hope. LDS Church in Samoa plays a crucial role in sustaining the shelter management service that we provide for our children in need, as such, the visit was an extension of that support. Thank you Bishop Andrew Craig for initiating the visit.
11. GLOBAL UPDATES
SVSG (Christchurch)

Pastor Jeremy Faumuina of the SVSG (Christchurch) visited SVSG in March to discuss the Alofa Homestay Program coordinated by the Christchurch supporters of SVSG for the older girls at the shelter.

As usual, it is always good to catch up with our global family members and while Pastor Jeremy was on the island, he met with President Lina and Sam, visited the children at the Campus and presented donation of toiletry supplies for the older girls, and visited the staff with their donation of stationery supplies while treating them to morning tea. Thank you so much Pastor Jeremy for the visit, despite it being short, we were blessed as always. Thank you also for buying the Nofotane Brand in support of our newly self-employed nofotane women.

12. VISITATION AT THE CAMPUS & DONATIONS

A Giving Heart

March saw Ms. Rexie Esera of Vaimoso, presenting 6 boxes of reading books and toys courtesy of Gardenia Peters a.k.a Michaela Peters of Cuthbert College New Zealand. Michaela is a 17 year old 7th Form student who collects books and toys for the children survivors of violence and sexual abuse cared for at the Campus of Hope.

Ms. Michaela’s parents, Ross & Elizabeth Peters have been valuable supporters of SVSG over the years. It is therefore humbling to know that their daughter, Michaela, has her parents giving heart, and continues the family tradition of donating for the Campus of Hope.

Missionary Infant School Moamoa

The infants attending the Missionary School at Moamoa shared the Lenten Season with the children at the Campus during March.

The children together with their parents put together donations of food and miscellaneous supplies for the Campus which they presented during their visit.

Woman survivor of violence with disability and a malnourished child

A woman survivor of violence with disability and her 1 year old malnourished child were found by the Police roaming the streets and got referred to SVSG for shelter and welfare assistance. The child was seriously ill. While the woman is mentally disabled, the child was more a concern as she was seriously ill. SVSG’s priority was to refer the child to the hospital where she was admitted despite having to deal with the mother, who constantly tried to snatch the child from SVSG’s Case Officer. With the child safe in hospital, SVSG visited the woman survivor’s family to assess her situation and found the family very supportive. The family currently looks after 3 of the woman survivor’s children while she just goes around with the baby. The family thanked SVSG for helping the woman survivor and her child.

A child advocating for another child

Early Sunday morning found two sisters in front of the SVSG office. The older one at 17 years old accompanied her 9 year old sister with disabilities while advocating for shelter assistance. Theirs is a story similar to many other children who found their way to the SVSG office or at the Campus of Hope. They are from a broken family. Their mother took off with another man, leaving them at home with 6 other siblings. Their father remains at home with them, but works at night as a security guard. As the older child could not take care of her sick sister, she went looking for her mother in town, only to be told by their mother to go back home. SVSG took the sisters in for it was a Sunday, and the next day, the Case Officers visited the family where the grandmother is now looking after the children.

Sexual Violation

At 15 years old attending Year 10 at a College in town, this child’s dreams have been shattered when she became a victim of sexual violation. The perpetrator is her own cousin. What’s worst for the victim and her parents was that amidst all that has happened they were told by the head of the family to leave. The extended family had sided with the perpetrator, leaving the victim and her family stranded. Pregnant and without a home, the parents entrusted their daughter to SVSG for shelter care and to seek justice. SVSG immediately referred the matter to Police for further assistance. In the meantime, the victim has been undergoing regular check-ups and counselling support at the Campus.

For immediate support, please call the 800-7874 Help Line.
It is FREE and it is a 24-hour service.
2. COURT SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ABUSE

While there were 4 sexual abuse cases in March, bulk of the cases lodged with SVSG were domestic violence related, accounting for 32 (44%) out of 72 total cases lodged (for Upolu & Savaii).

Out of the 32 domestic violence cases received in March, SVSG applied for 16 Interim Protection Orders (IPO), protecting 14 mothers and 26 children.

At SVSG, any case requiring an IPO is a priority to the Child Protection Team. The victim lodges a complaint with SVSG, the victim is then referred to the Police Domestic Violence Unit to officially lodge a complaint. The victim would then be referred back to SVSG to apply to the Courts for an Interim Protection Order. Once all the IPO documentations are completed, SVSG gets to accompany the victim to the Court to be sworn and lodge the IPO. All these work are carried out to ensure that the IPO is served immediately, for the protection of the victim and any children it covered.

Sadly, despite SVSG’s efforts to prioritise the application for Protection Orders, the IPOs got lost or not served for days, sometimes weeks, up until the matter is called at the Family Courts, only to find the couple had since reconciled. But because we are dealing with people’s lives here, SVSG could never rely on assumptions that all will be resolved amicably as there are always cases that warrant the Court’s protection as per the IPOs.

With an average of $300 a month donated from the Peace Chapel Christian Fellowship this is allocated to finance SVSG’s court support service covering the administration costs of applying for an IPO, food and water for the victim while awaiting the completion of the documentation at SVSG office and the transportation for the victim to the Courts. For the Courts and the Police, all that we asked for is to sign and serve the Interim Protection Orders accordingly.

3. CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

SVSG prides itself of its child protection services despite much criticism. This is due to its advocacy role of being the voice for the voiceless. And over the last 10 years, SVSG has been struggling to finance its child protection services until UNICEF came on board and provided much needed funding support from late 2015 onwards.

Rolling out the Fine Mat of Scripture Conference

SVSG was represented at the New Zealand Institute of Pacific Research Conference held at the Piula Theological College Hall in March, by 2 of its staff members.

The Conference discussed a study titled ‘Rolling out the Fine Mat of Scripture’, Transforming Church response to gender based violence against women in Samoa. SVSG was invited to the Panel Discussion with other service providers NGOs.

SVSG’s discussion focused on the support services it provides for women and children survivors of violence, the perpetrators of violence and the family as a whole. Further discussions identified the challenges that we continued to face in fronting up such support services besides challenging common understanding on gender based violence against women.

10. SVSG JUNIOR

SVSG’s youth group has been kept busy during March with its ‘Man of Change’ Campaign promoting gender equality and ending violence against women. The rationale behind the campaign is to break the cycle of violence by engaging men and boys as agents of change.

At the Wesley College, Ray Rahmat of the Bahai Youth, Gordon Lemisio, the SVSG Junior Coordinator and Michael Temunikairoi of the Advocacy Alumni got the attention of the students as they encouraged the students to stand up and be a change within their families, schools, and the community.

Introducing the program at the college level encouraged young men to advocate for change in their families and become role models of change in their school.
Bank of the South Pacific at the Campus

The Chairman of the BSP Sir Kosta Constantinou and Group CEO, Robin Fleming from Papua New Guinea included a visit at the Campus of Hope while in the country in March.

The visit was to see the work BSP in Samoa did for the children at the Campus as part of their community projects in 2017.

Country Manager Mrs. Taituuga Maryanne Lameko-Vaai accompanied the visiting BSP delegation. Mrs. Georgina Lui, the Chair of the SVSG Board and SVSG President Siliniu Lina Chang hosted the visitors. Bulk food and toiletry supplies were presented by the BSP delegation for the children.

SARF Outreach

March saw the coming together of more than 30 families to meet the team from the Samoan Adoptee Restitution Trust in Utah, a Trust set up by the High Courts in America.

In 2009, SVSG and the Samoan Restitution Fund Trustee of Utah, USA, had signed an MoU officiating SVSG as the contact point for biological parents here in Samoa to enable communication with their children that were adopted under the Focus on Children Program. This arrangement was due to a Court ruling in the Utah Courts following the FOC scandal of the recent years.

It was an emotional gathering as the parents and their children in Samoa, got to hear from their grown up children in the States and made arrangement for continued communications when the Trust closes. Included in the visiting SARF Team were Mrs. Sarah Gobble, the Chair of the SARF Board, Ms. Jini Roby, the Executive Director of the SARF and Priscilla Beckstead, a Board member of the SARF.

To date, the extension of SVSG’s child protection services to the vulnerable children outside the Campus of Hope (such as the Hot Soup training initiative), and the magnitude of the success of the rehabilitation programs we provided the children, speak volume about SVSG’s commitment to being a child protection service provider.

Highlighted below are some of the achievements of SVSG’s child protection work for the children in March;

3.1 Campus of Hope

March saw the Campus flourishing not only with program development but most importantly, the development in the children survivors themselves. Individually, the changes have been noticeable, and similarly as a group of children, the grace of God has been obvious.

Against All Odds

We have a child born of a 12-year of rape victim that turned 2 in March, defeating the odds against his survival. From when he was born to date, the child continues to fight for his right to live, the clear evidence of an unwanted pregnancy and the attempt at abortion from a pregnant child herself. Even the doctors were not sure he could live this long. He had undergone 2 operations to assist with numerous complications from his heart, to his throat to his epilepsy symptoms. Our young hero had spent more days at the Paediatric unit of the National hospital than at the Campus, that even his first birthday in 2017 was celebrated with doctors and nurses.

Today, our child with a fighting spirit rewards us with a smile, with his ability to hold an object, to sit up by himself without being supported or his ability to crawl. These are some of the things we always take for granted in our own children, until we saw the struggle of our child hero.

With love and the grace of God, we continued to nurse this bundle of joy into a strong toddler. If not for the Campus of Hope, where would our child be by now?
The Resilience of a Child

The success of the rehabilitation programs for the children at the Campus of Hope is measured by their resilience to rise up from the circumstances that affected their young lives.

While SVSG had received some criticisms over the years through the operation of its shelter facilities, based on the assumption that no child can really be without a family to take care of them, many children are finding their way to the Group for shelter or assistance of some sort.

And as long as the Campus of Hope exists, it is a sure sign that our work is important for the protection of children. To the volunteers, staff and the leaders of SVSG, the Campus reminded us of what we are working for, thus the children survivors of violence and sexual abuse, became our children.

During the Easter holidays, the staff and volunteers took all the children for a day out at the beach, including the babies, the disabilities and the pregnant girls.

It was one big family enjoying a swim, games and some quiet moments at a private beach. Their smiles were priceless, and attest to their resilience as children.

3.2 School of Hope

Three months into the 2018 school year, the School of Hope had been providing continuing education for 72 children survivors of violence and sexual abuse cared for at the Campus of Hope. There were 14 male and 58 female inclusive of 4 children with disabilities and 2 pregnant girls.

Despite the delay in receiving the annual funding from the government through the Ministry of Education, to assist with the teachers and trainers salaries, the school has been in session.

President of the Samoa Victim Support Group, SVSG, Siliniu Ms. Lina Chang, has tried for many years to get the women to expose their abusers by speaking out with virtually no success. “We have a lot of women who come to us to complain about being sexually harassed but when we try to get them to speak out, everything shuts down,” Siliniu moaned. “The main problem we have found is Samoa is too small and as a victim, the fear is that once you speak out everyone would know what happened. “Nobody wants that kind of exposure, and we tried to talk them out of it but they will not budge.” Siliniu recalled one case when the parents of a girl called in to complain about a daughter who had just started working after graduating from scholarship studies. They alleged that a senior executive where the girl worked was sexually harassing her but they refused to speak out publicly about it. “I can understand their concern about repercussions for their daughter in the office environment and this is where the problem lies and not just in the office but with the families. “A married woman who complains publicly about being sexually harassed is fearful of the reaction in her family if they’re to speak out publicly about their experience.”

What Siliniu has learned since the steady stream of complaints by women to the SVSG is that they want the organisation to handle the issue discreetly. For the parents whose daughter was being harassed, the SVSG President placed a direct phone call to the accused and effectively put a stop to the harassment by warning him of the consequences. With the SVSG huge workload, Siliniu is not in favour of indirect intervention by her watchdog organisation. She would rather the complainants speak up and overcome the problem by exposing the people responsible for the abuse.

The ‘Me-Too’ campaign is a global movement that is now designed to take up the women case and in New Zealand it is being fronted by prominent news personalities with the support of media outlets. The campaign is based on tip-offs for the media to investigate alleged harassment and abuse. The New Zealand organisers of the movement, however, have to move carefully in their investigations over legal concerns. Identities of alleged wrongdoers under investigations are withheld not only for legal reasons but the risks of damaged reputations whether those named are guilty or not.
“Me-Too” Campaign

The working leader, a co-founder, the President and ‘Mama’ to all the children survivors of violence that have been cared for at the Campus of Hope has been behind SVSG’s vision of reaching out to the survivors of crimes and those in need.

She has been the target of criticisms and has been charged in the Courts for her boldness to stand up for justice.

In celebrating the International Women’s Day 2018, the SVSG staff and volunteers congratulate Siliniu Lina Chang for her bravery, for her heart and for her perseverance in the work of SVSG.

And in tribute to your boldness as a leader, we are re-printing an article on the Newsline Samoa newspaper expressing your views on the ‘Me-Too’ Movement.

Newsline Samoa
March 13 at 8:02am ·
‘Me-Too’ Is Too Sensitive For Samoa
By Staff Writer
Cap: President of the Samoa Victim Support Group, SVSG, Siliniu Ms. Lina Chang

The rapidly growing border crossing ‘Me-Too’ movement, is not going to be a serious issue in Samoa in the near future. “Me-Too’ started in the USA by sexually harassed women who spoke out publicly to expose rich, influential men in positions of power who abused them. Since then it has spread to many of the advanced countries in the world.

The movement is now in Australia and last week it started up in New Zealand. But whether or not it will be taken up by women in Samoa is not likely any time soon according to a top expert opinion on abused women.

While Sister Kinghorn of the LDS Charity continues to provide English classes for the older girls, we welcomed back Alfred Fong from the United States of America, who assisted with the children’s spiritual guidance program.

With the increase in the number of children attending the school while the older children outgrow their uniforms, we therefore need assistance with the children’s school uniform. Please feel free to contact our office on 25392 or email svsginsamoa@gmail.com if you are able to help us with this specific need.

3.3 Child Vendors – The Hot Soup Skill Building Training
There has been a steady progress in the Hot Soup skill building training camp. Talking about enthusiastic and commitment from the child vendors who are mostly from the Tafaigata Landfill and the Vaitele area. For close to 20 child vendors now in training, they are at the Campus gate before 7.00am and for most of the older ones, they don’t leave until close to 4.00pm. Besides the hot soup they have while in training, they are also provided with bus fare to and from the shelter, to ensure that they do not miss a day’s training.

In March, the vendors started to learn fabric printing and designing while continuing with their mosaic mirror creations and making sei. In addition, the older boys have built a small shelter inside the Campus gate, to sell the products they have produced.

The basic literacy and numeracy training form part of the Hot Soup program especially for the older children who have never been to school before. Thank you to all the supporters who volunteer their time to teach the child vendors a skill and to assist them in learning how to write their names.

The Hot Soup skill building training is still a work in progress, but we are proud of the achievements of the trainees to date.
With and For Girls Award

The older girls at the Campus of Hope joined in celebrating the International Women’s Day in March.

In supporting the theme With and For Girls #PressForProgress International Women’s Day 2018, the girls enjoyed zumba exercise out in the community accompanied by the SVSG Junior members.

Since becoming one of the award winners for the Star Foundation ‘With and For Girls Award’ in 2016, the young girl survivors of violence and sexual abuse under the care of SVSG have pressed on with the progress of their rehabilitation programs and their smiles say it all. Rewind to when they were first admitted to SVSG, and all we had were suicidal girls with very low self-esteem. Funds from the Novo Foundation Fund of Tides Foundation have been funding the girls’ livelihood rehabilitation programs as part of the Award.

4. DISABILITY SUPPORT

SVSG’s disability support received a great boost in March with the coming on board of Manuia Leuii who brought with her a wealth of experience on supporting people with disabilities, having worked for the MWCS, Senese and more recently, with Northcott Disability Services in Canberra.

This is part of SVSG’s welfare support for individuals with disabilities, specifically, those from underprivileged families. And through the partnership with the Little Angels Foundation of New Zealand, we have been able to support the welfare needs of our people with disabilities.

In March, the SVSG President joined Manuia during her assessment visit of the disabilities requiring support in Savaii. There were 3 families with disability family members visited and assessed for follow up:

- 4 year old whose body and muscle’s remained tense and stiff since birth. The parents were shown of ways to assist their daughter. A wheelchair was provided by SVSG with $200.00 from the Little Angels Foundation;

Some of the nofotane products such as beauty accessories were showcased recently by the models during the MaugaLui fashion house show. The nofotane women are therefore making positive gains day by day towards gender parity.

Then we had the Samoa Police Women Advisory Network or the SPWAN today continued with its tradition when celebrating the International Women’s Day of honoring the work of SVSG for the children survivors of violence and sexual abused under its care, through in kind donations of various supplies for the children’s daily needs.

During the presentation of the donation, the President of the SPWAN Senior Sargent Efo Moalele commented on the Police’s relationship with SVSG. According to the Senior Sargent, “The Police can’t do its work without the support of SVSG. The partnership has therefore makes our work much easier.”

To end today’s celebration, the volunteered mothers behind the Tina Faufautua program were honored for their hard work, their commitment and their contribution in rehabilitating women champions of violence.

Last but not the least, one of SVSG’s eldest village representative, Mrs. Faamomoi Taituuga was visited to acknowledge her volunteer work for SVSG. She was humbled but thankful to SVSG for continuing to support our people in need.

“At the end of the day, whatever we have achieved, the glory and honor should return to our Heavenly Father while we humble ourselves as unworthy servants.” Siliniu Lina Chang, SVSG President
9. EVENTS

International Women’s Day
SVSG joined women’s rights activists worldwide to celebrate the International Women’s Day in March. On the theme ‘Press for Progress’ to accelerate gender parity as a global momentum, SVSG is positioning itself accordingly through its various programs.

At the Campus of Hope, the young girls who are survivors of sexual abuse have made press for progress in their rehabilitation programs, thanks to the Star Foundation and the ‘With and For Girls’ Award won by SVSG in 2016.

The rehabilitated women champions of violence under the SVSG’s Tina Faufautua program joined the children survivors of violence and the women volunteers, to share their stories in celebrating their rise up. The testimonies were very powerful, as the rehabilitated women champions of violence saw for themselves the reality of the abuse suffered by the children from within their families, as evidence by the many children residence at the Campus. Seeing is believing, as the women saw for themselves the extend of SVSG’s work which prompted their willingness to help out through a vegetable garden for the children.

The press for progress in the economic empowerment of women saw one of the most vulnerable groups of women in Samoa, the unemployed nofotane, being trained on livelihood skills for income generation and self-employment. From July 2017 to February 2018, Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) has been providing livelihood training workshops for over 2,000 unemployed nofotane women as part of its economic empowerment program with UN Women Fund for Gender Equality. From these 2,000+ trained nofotane women, 400 have started small businesses and have earned an income from the skills being trained on.

- An elderly man who was injured during zumba exercise in 2015 is now confined to a wheelchair donated by SVSG. Demonstration on how he could exercise to assist with his back injury;
- An elderly who suffered from a mild stroke was assisted with how he could exercise to improve the movement of his right hand and leg;

The rehabilitation program for 5 resident children with disabilities at the Campus of Hope is now under the coordination role of Manuia. The activities included stretches and passive movements incorporating fun-time activities such as face painting, story-telling and play time.

5. ADVOCACY PROGRAMS FOR OFFENDERS OF VIOLENCE

March saw the SVSG President Siliniu Lina Chang visiting SVSG’s support services for people in the big island of Savaii.

She is pictured here with men and women who were referred from the Family Court at Tuasivi, to attend the SVSG Advocacy Program in Savaii.

The Savaii Advocacy is facilitated by SVSG village representatives Vui Pule of Lano, Tautali Ropeti of Falelima, Seualuga Tauasa of Manase, Sera Fidow of Fogapoa and Tapualii Lagaia of Faala Palauli, who volunteer their time to provide relevant counselling programs for the offenders of violence. All of these SVSG village representatives were adequately trained to facilitate the advocacy program. There were 10 men and 2 women attending the SVSG Advocacy program in Savaii during March.

In Upolu, there were 6 men and 2 women referred from the Family Court to join 8 men and 5 women who continued on from February, taking the total number of attendants to the SVSG Advocacy Program for Upolu to 14 men and 9 women.

Most notable during March were nature of the offences being insulting words and physical assault between husbands and wives. Couple counselling, parenting skills and strengthening family relationship were amongst the most relevant programs offered to the offenders during March.
Further analysis of the referrals found the majority being perpetrators of family violence cases initially lodged by the wives with SVSG. These perpetrators were then referred to the Police Domestic Violence Unit and were later referred back from the Police to SVSG for the Protection Order application. Once these cases reached the Family Court, the offenders ended back at SVSG’s Advocacy Program. Since 2013, SVSG has been providing this service voluntarily for the Family Court with no funding support.

However, despite the funding challenge, it is the effect of family violence on the whole family that lead to SVSG’s work being extended to provide support for the offenders through counseling programs. This is to ensure a safe environment for the women survivors and the innocent children.

6. SVSG VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVES & THE NOFOTANE PROJECT

March has been one of the busiest months for the SVSG village representatives not only in assisting SVSG’s support services, but also in coordinating the livelihood training for the Nofotane Project. As a strong volunteer network in the village community, the SVSG village representatives are hereby acknowledged for their commitment to go that extra mile to save a life:

Case Referrals
There were 16 cases lodged with SVSG in March that were referred from the SVSG village representatives. Some of these cases are highlighted herein:

Incest Case: Two SVSG village representatives from the eastern side of Upolu have been working together with the Police in seeking justice for a 17 year old incest rape victim. The perpetrator is none other than the girl’s step-father.

Incest Case: An attentive SVSG village representative from the north-eastern side of Upolu alerted SVSG of a father-daughter sexual relationship resulting in the daughter being pregnant. Due to the delicate nature of the biological relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, SVSG continues to work with the village rep given that the family denied the allegations for fear of being punished by the village.

According to Sioa, “as we celebrate Easter this year, it’s a time where we remember the sacrifice that our Savior, Lord Jesus Christ made for us. He was abused and was beaten down to death. But He rose again and conquered all. It’s the perfect time to remind all victims even though you are used, abused and beaten down, you will rise up and overcome this obstacle and achieve great things in life.”

To celebrate Easter, the team at House 88 supported SVSG by donating 50% of all sales made from all Cross Styled earrings in store. When I met with Lina she asked “Sioa is it going to be OK for your business?” I didn’t tell her this at the meeting but one of the things I’ve learned from my father is that no one has ever gone poor from giving. Giving will not jeopardize anything or anyone. Lina, you are truly amazing, your courage, your heart not forgetting your team-working endless hours to support victims. This is the beginning of a life-long relationship with SVSG.

8. VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

To celebrate the International Women’s Day in March, SVSG honoured the volunteer support from Mrs. Tutaia Mariner of Salelologa Savaii, Mrs. Milo Cortz of Afiamalu, Mrs. Fiu Leaupape of Nofoalii and Vaitele and Sister Schwenke of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints.

These mothers are often mistaken for staff members as they are seen at the SVSG office nearly every day. They are behind the behavioural changes noted by the families of mothers who have been referred from the Family Court to undertake anger management counselling coordinated by Tina Fauautua Program.

A Program which provides counseling rehabilitation for women offenders of violence referred from the Family Court. This is SVSG making progress in addressing family violence in Samoa. While statistics on case referrals from the Courts to SVSG in 2017, recorded 33% being women compared to 67% of men, SVSG’s program for both men and women takes holistic approach in addressing family violence. The families, village and church leaders of the reformed offenders attested on the behavioral changes in the lives of these mothers following the counseling rehabilitation. As such, it was appropriate to honor the 3 volunteer mothers during the 2018 International Women’s Day.
7. MARCH PARTNERSHIPS

Mapu Maia NZ

A Pacific Addiction and Public Health service in New Zealand called Mapu Maia reached out to SVSG in March during its scoping visit with providers of similar services in Samoa.

During a meeting with SVSG President, Paula Snowden and Pesio Ah Honi highlighted the importance of ascertaining where they may be able to offer support, expertise and/or resources to our community.

Mapu Maia provides counselling and education to Pacific families who are affected by problem gambling, however the organisation is mindful of co-existing issues such as family violence. Mapu Maia supports all its clients and their families which is a similar approach SVSG is taking to address family violence in Samoa.

The meeting with Mapu Maia NZ ended with talks of an MoU between the two organisations to formalize a working partnership.

Incest Case: During the livelihood training for the Nofotane project at a village in the western side of Apia, a family approached the training team requesting assistance in evacuating a 17 year old incest rape victim who was 6 months pregnant. The family requested shelter assistance for the victim as the perpetrator was her uncle. The Nofotane project training team brought the victim to the office and was later referred to the Campus of Hope. While her case is now with the Police, SVSG attends to her medical check-ups and counselling while at the Campus.

From the cases referred by the SVSG village representatives in March, it is obvious that they mostly related to sexual crimes where the families tried to cover up the crime for pride and for fear of the village’s traditional punishment. It is apparent that having bold and commitment village representatives who are usually leaders in their own villages, has make SVSG’s work in the community much easier.

Welfare Assistance:
The SVSG village representatives not only advocate for justice through case referrals, but they also advocate for welfare assistance for members of the community in need.

During March, Fiu Kitiona of Savaia coordinated the collection of stable food such as taro and banana from his village for the children at the Campus.

In Savaii, Village Rep Oloapu Ta of Iva advocated for welfare assistance for a 4 year old disability child. SVSG President personally visited the family during her official trip to Savaii and assessed their situation. Through SVSG’s partnership with the Little Angels Foundation of New Zealand, the disability child is being supported with welfare needs. A wheelchair from SVSG is now assisting with her mobility.

From Satufui Satupaitea, Village Rep Toleafoa Ainea requested welfare assistance for a mother with 4 children with disabilities. An assessment was carried out and the family is now under the Little Angels Foundation assistance.

House 88

The owner of a new fashion house in Samoa, House 88 located at the Chan Mow Apartments, was amongst the latest addition to SVSG’s partnerships established in March. Mrs. Sioa-Heavea Tuionetoa first found out about SVSG through a billboard and she knew she wanted to be a part of the Group. However, according to her, “I thought I was too busy to help and I was not financially stable to be able to help others.” Through her story, Sioa shared an Easter Message for us all, and an encouragement for the children survivors of violence and sexual abuse cared for at the Campus of Hope.
The Nofotane Project:

The livelihood training of nofotane women reached the Faasaleleaga No. 2, Faasaleleaga No. 4 in Savaii, and the Faleata West, Vaimauga West in Upolu during March. While these women and their families shared the excitement of acquiring a skill or two, many more nofotane women who have gone through the livelihood training sessions, are enjoying the socioeconomic benefits of being empowered.

The improved self-esteem that comes with being able to financially provide for one’s family, the ability to be involved in decision making within her family, the fulfillment that comes from being able to take her child to hospital when sick or to put her child to school, are the measures of the economic empowerment of the nofotane women as per the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality project.

In 3-months, the project will be completed, however SVSG will continue to work with the empowered nofotane women to ensure the sustainability of the results we have achieved.

Highlighted below are some of the products our empowered nofotane women have produced and how far these products have reached the local and overseas markets:

Coconut shell accessories
Lopa seeds accessories
Lano nofotane women making bags from trash

Pastor Jeremy Faumuina of the SVSG (Christchurch) with his siapo from the Nofotane Brand
Paula Snowden and Pesio Ah Hoi of the Mapu Maia in New Zealand buying earrings from the Nofotane Brand

Some of the nofotane products such as the lopa beauty accessories, trash bags and other products were showcased by the models during the MaugaLui fashion house show in March. The nofotane women are therefore making positive gains day by day towards gender parity.

Local and Overseas Market
SVSG has been taking advantage of the WIBDI Night Markets at the STA Village Ele’ele Fou to showcase some of the nofotane products. During March, SVSG received orders for white hats for Mother’s Day as well as trash bag accessories. Sales from the Night Markets all goes back to the nofotane women who produces these products.

Through a newly established partnership in March with the Mapu Maia NZ, an order of 550 lopa lanyards for the Cutting Edge Conference in New Zealand has been placed with the producers of lopa accessories.

SVSG continues to source out markets for the nofotane products to ensure sustainable self-employment of the nofotane women under the program.