

GOOD SHEPHERD SISTERS

Nong Khai Thailand



ANNUAL REPORT
2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Covid-19 Response _____	2
Letter from Sr Pranee Sitti _____	3
Projects overview _____	4
Personnel overview _____	5
VILLAGE OUTREACH PROGRAMME _____	6
CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME _____	10
VILLAGE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE _____	14
SUFFICIENCY LEARNING CENTRE _____	15
REGINA WOMEN'S SELF-HELP CENTRE _____	17
Women's Income Generating Activities _____	20
HANDS OF HOPE _____	21
Additional Income generating Activities _____	24
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT _____	25



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COVID -19 RESPONSE



The unprecedented changes happening in our world this year due to Covid-19, have impacted people's physical, mental and financial health and while Thailand has miraculously escaped the ravages of infection that has tragically resulted in over 1,000,000 deaths world wide, socially and financially there has been a toll, particularly within our vulnerable target groups.

In March, when so much was uncertain about the spread of infection, we chose to take early precautions. Mask wearing became the norm, long before it became mandatory and those in our economic justice programmes, began a three month 'stay at home' period. This was particularly important for producers in Hands of Hope with compromised immune systems. Participants were registered for government assistance, which most ended up receiving.

Another vulnerable population was that of the Garden of Friendship and immediately protocols were followed to safeguard the residents with a ban on visitors and increased hygienic procedures. Outreach staff limited their village and hospital visits to the most essential but kept contact with clients by phone.

Schools had already closed for the long end of year break (March to May) and this was then extended to July. Hearing of the plight of people trying to return to Laos who were sleeping on the roadside while their requests could be processed, we opened the facilities of the Village Vocational Training Centre - no longer accepting guests for seminars - to house them. This happened on three occasions with groups supervised by government officials.

With the generous assistance of our benefactors, we have been able to continue food support to the poorest families in the villages impacted by lack of employment and hope to continue this assistance for as long as it is needed and we thank those who have provided materials or funds.



TO OUR MISSION PARTNERS

Dear Friends,

Since first coming to Nong Khai almost 40 years ago (we mark that milestone in October 2021), I have never experienced change on the level we did this past year. We have always been used to 'making a change', by providing opportunities, seeing dreams come to fruition, improving landscapes and bringing people together. The results have mostly been positive and the impact we have been able to make, encouraging.



While still experiencing these types of changes in 2020, there were others that occurred that were painful, as we made the decision to close projects dear to our hearts.

Here in Thailand we have thankfully not been affected with the enormous infection rates and deaths from Covid-19 tragically seen elsewhere in the world, yet the economic fallout has impacted the way we work and the families of those we work with.

So much of our work is visitation and connecting with our clientele and while for a few months, we made essential visits only, maintaining contact by phone, with few infections in our area, we continued to engage with others, while maintaining necessary safeguards. We were therefore able to assess the economic difficulties of individuals and families and offer appropriate support.

You will see in our expenditure and income summary report, that this is the first time when self-generated income fell below 30%. Three months of non-production, a decrease in craft sales, the closure of the Regina Centre and a new direction for the Village Vocational Training Centre, were all contributing factors of this outcome.

We were greatly encouraged by the messages of solidarity from within our congregation and from friends around the world and the donations received, enabled us to provide food and health assistance, while working with communities to look for alternative means of self generating income. We owe a debt of gratitude to many. We hope you feel part of our work in the field, for without your grants, donations, in kind services and sponsorship, what you see on the following pages would not have been possible.

From March onwards, welcoming international visitors was missed and we were sad to see volunteers and friends, return to their home countries. We are unsure at this stage whether or not 2021 will allow for international travel but we look forward to the time when such visits may resume.

In the meantime, we continue to pray for you and for our world, the wide distribution of vaccines and an end to the pandemic that has changed life for us all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Sr. Pranee Sitti". The signature is written in a cursive style with a decorative flourish at the end.

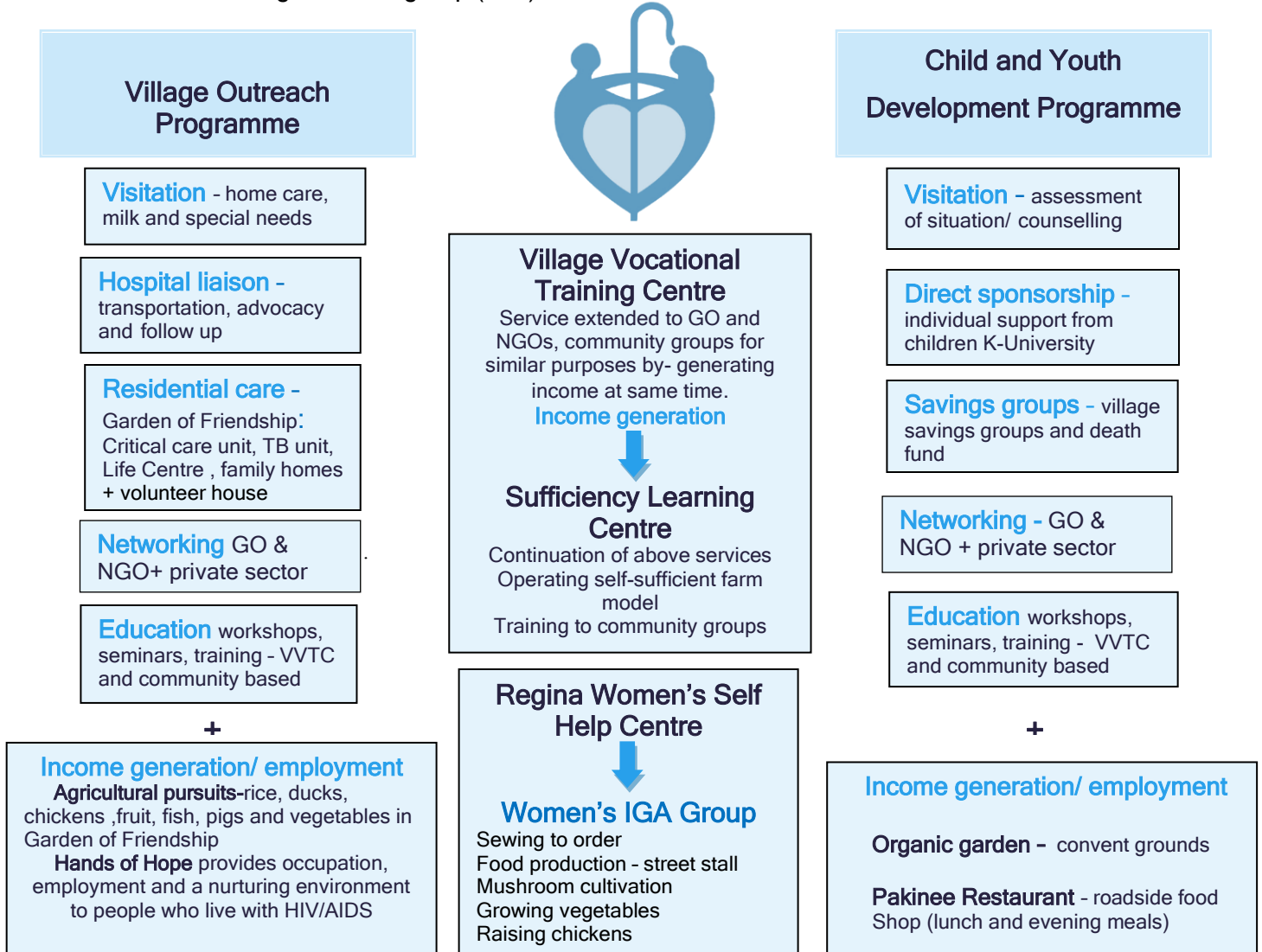
Sr Pranee Sitti
President

Good Shepherd Sisters Nong Khai Foundation

January 10th 2021

PROJECTS OVERVIEW

The picture has altered from that presented in 2019. We had identified two main areas of work and while these have remained the same, during 2020 the Village Vocational Training Centre ceased to operate in March as such and with new focus and leadership, transitioned into the Sufficiency Learning Centre. The Regina Centre closed in July and the women remaining, formed a Women's Income-Generating Activities group (IGA)



Personnel & Beneficiaries 2020

Sisters 4

Staff : 13F 9M

Volunteers : 14 Thai 2 International

Number of people regularly assisted by programmes 1,301

Additional indirect beneficiaries 3,206



PERSONNEL OVERVIEW

Sisters

- Sr Pranee Sitti • Community Leader :Good Shepherd Sisters' Nong Khai
President: Good Shepherd Sisters Nong Khai Foundation
Director: Village Outreach Programme
- Sr Virginia Hiranyagan..... • Director : Regina Women's Self- Help Centre (until February 2020)
Convent hospitality
- Sr Sutisa Utalun • Director: Child & Youth Development Programme
Responsible person - Sufficiency Learning Centre
- Sr Jintana Phimsan..... • Director: Regina Women's self-Help Centre (February - July)
Support Person - Women's Income Generating Activities
Postulant director - January - March
- Antonia Symonds • Project Manager: Hands of Hope
Support Person - Women's Income Generating Activities/Volunteers
Project Officer GSNK - Website, reporting, proposals, correspondence
- Katrine Grove Sorensen..... • Assistant to staff in Outreach Programme - (left May 2020)

Village Vocational Training Centre

- Kuttaya Tangtrakool..... • Village Vocational Training Centre Co-ordinator (Until March 2020)
GSNK Accountant - audit preparation
- Weerasak Tangsiriwatthana... • Trainer/support person for Village Vocational Training Centre (Follow
up work with farmers, continuing after VVTC closure)

Village Outreach Programme

- Patcharporn Sitti..... • Social Worker & co-ordinator -- Village Outreach Programme
- Kunnika Chinwirutsirisuk • Social Worker -- Village Outreach Programme
- Perm Sak Tipayasoot..... • Hospital liaison/home visitation
- Khemchira Suksuworachot... • Registered nurse
- Angkarn Boonyai..... • Activities co-ordinator (until April 2020)
- Thong Bo Champakun • Field worker (until November 2020)
- Boonsom Thorsana • Driver
- Manop Srisanga • Driver (until July 2020)
- Deth Phetdala • Assistant nurse
- Bunliang Srilawang • Assistant nurse

Child & Youth Development Programme

- Wiriya Buransan • Seminar Co-ordinator/presenter
Project writer
- Waraporn Khansara..... • Administration/project coordination
Field worker
- Anuwatchai Chairamat • Driver
- Wimon Srihathat • Restaurant manager
- Siripa Ponrachom • Accountant
- Paweena Wongjan • Field staff (until Dec 2020)

Regina Women's Self-Help Centre

- Prapaphan Jantanee..... • Production Manager/communications
- Pranee Tantasuth • Accountant/Catalogue
- Pornpith Hongsang • Stock control
- Nippaporn Surachasin • Local sales co-ordinator



VILLAGE OUTREACH PROGRAMME

The focus of our programme has always been to connect with people - reaching out to the most vulnerable in society.

We increased visitation while still adopting safe practices

The threat of Covid-19 infections to our mostly immune compromised target group and the subsequent restrictions placed by the government regarding gatherings, impacted our normal routines and practices.

With the Garden of Friendship as the base for the Outreach Team, where HIV+ patients and families reside, it was paramount to put into place, protocols that would keep the residents safe. The fact that our target area recorded only 11 cases for the whole year, did not alter our resolve to safeguard those in the programme.

Early in the year, too much was unknown and not being prepared to put people at risk, we limited our visitation schedules to villages and hospitals. Later in the year, when infection numbers in Thailand were contained, we increased visitation while still adopting safe practices.

The target area encompassed 9 districts in Nong Khai, 8 in Bueng Kan and 3 in Udon Thani and within those districts, we liaised with all provincial and district hospitals.

HIV+ Adults When visits were not possible, phone contact was maintained with clients, following up hospital appointments, offering advice and availing people of their rights for services offered by the government.

While gatherings of large numbers were not allowed during the months of March to July, in August, a seminar was given for 32 adults about the side effects of long term use of ARVs, especially on those with diabetes, blood pressure

Quick facts

- **525** Adults with HIV/AIDS currently in programme (9 deaths)
- **16** Newly admitted adults with HIV/AIDS
- **18** Children infected with HIV - no new cases 4 children transitioned into adult group
- **35** General medical needs in adult clients 2 new and 2 deaths
- **26** General medical needs amongst children
- **46** current children affected by HIV/AIDS - with PLWHA
- **77** Infants/ special needs children receiving milk formula/food/ hospital appointments - 23 new/23 exited programme
- **80** patients accommodated in the Care Facility, Life Centre and TB Unit.

or kidney disease. The speakers from Welcome Home Nong Khai and the HIV Isan Network, also addressed discrimination and self acceptance.

We were approached by Red Cross Bangkok and the Nong Khai hospital, to work with HIV+ migrant workers in Nong Khai from Laos. Undocumented, they were unable to access testing and ARV medication freely. Working with the Public Health department, our social workers were able to obtain health cards for 8 workers, which entitles them to 50% reduction in the cost of testing and medications. Our programme will support them for the next three years.

HIV+ children This group continues to decrease, with no new cases in the past twelve months. As the children reach 18 years of age, they transfer to the adult group. Teenagers are particularly vulnerable, as they protest the taking of daily medication, so contact through visits, maintaining hospital appointments and phone calls, were essential to monitor their physical and mental health.



General adult patients Visits providing home care were continued throughout the year, to those who live alone or have family members unable to provide assistance. These services included cleaning of the home environment, bathing, changing catheters, organizing medicines and the provision of non-perishable food. Unable to attend hospitals on their own, transportation and liaison with medical staff was also provided.



Milk recipients and children with special needs

Delivery of the milk formula, which usually occurs monthly, was changed to bi-monthly for half the year. On alternate months, phone contact was made with the children's guardians who had been provided with progress charts on which they could record benchmarks reached or concerns to be discussed. A more streamlined process for home visits was introduced which maximized the time allotted to each child and provided staff the ability to monitor physical, social and intellectual development.



Establishing positive relationships with government and non-government organizations is crucial to the well-being of our clientele.

With Covid-19, came the loss of jobs and many families saw members returning from other provinces where factories or businesses relying on tourism had closed. This put extra pressure on families and so we responded with either food relief or assisting them to engage in activities that would offset some of their household costs - growing vegetables, raising chickens, selling commodities. Our social workers assisted 13 parents and guardians of children with special needs who had no regular income, to access government social welfare assistance.

Networking We have found that it is not possible to work in isolation in this type of work. Through the Good Shepherd Sisters Nong Khai Foundation, our work is known in Nong Khai and establishing positive relationships with government and non-government organizations is crucial to the well-being of our clientele.

Locally, this encompasses hospitals, clinics, Departments of Health, Social Welfare, Labour, Immigration, Community Development and NGOs Welcome House and Sarnelli House. We liaise with the Red Cross, with Mercy Centre Bangkok and the Catholic Committee on HIV/Aids Thailand.

It is from all of the above that clients are referred and those from the Nong Khai hospital are often followed up with visits from medical staff to the Garden of Friendship, to assist in their recovery. Without financial assistance we also could not function and thus we are extremely grateful to our friends and benefactors, to embassies, charitable groups and international grantors, for partnering us in this work.



Volunteers Our international volunteer, Katrine Grove, who had worked alongside the Outreach staff for almost two years, returned to Denmark at the end of May. We were most appreciative of her service but decided that no new volunteers would be admitted for the remainder of the year.

The volunteer house was then utilised for quarantining people returning from other provinces in Thailand/Laos, with four available rooms and private bathrooms. Separated from the rest of the Garden complex, it was the perfect facility, with food left outside the doors.



Garden of Friendship The everyday work is dependent on the dedicated Outreach Team under the guidance of Sr Pranee Sitti. Due to family and health considerations, three of the staff left over the course of the year and the duties of the remaining seven subsequently increased. It is a 24 hour programme and the commitment of staff members is commendable. Not only are there night duties but drivers and field workers often return from specialist hospitals late into the evening or are called out to cases during the night.

Critical Care Unit

- Admissions 9M 12 F
- Transferred Life Centre 4F
- Transferred out 3M 4 F
- Deaths (in hospital) M1 F1
- Current (Dec 20) 5M 3F

Life Centre

- Admissions 8M 16 F
- Transferred out 4M 10 F
- Transferred Critical Care 1F
- Children with mothers 1M
- Current 4M 5F

TB UNIT

- Admissions 8M 5 F (1 Covid quarantine stay)
- Transferred out 5 F (5 Covid quarantine stays)
- Transferred Critical Care 3M
- Transferred Life Centre 1M
- Transferred SMC 1 M
- Current 3M

Sr Mary's Cottage SMC

- Admissions 2M 2 F
- Transferred Critical Care 2F



The load was eased with three residents taking night duties in the Life Centre, where people are mobile and need little specialised care. The nursing staff continued to provide assistance to those in the Care Centre, Sr Mary's Cottage and TB Unit.

Self - help agricultural initiatives While we rely on grants and donations in the execution of this programme, it has been our intention to offset some expenses through developing the land of the Garden to provide produce for consumption and sale. To this end, we annually grow rice and 2020 yielded a bumper crop of 74 sacks from only the back 9 rai of land. Eggs from chickens and ducks exceeded production from previous years with 49,970 duck eggs laid. Kitchen gardens provided fresh vegetables for the kitchens. Able bodied residents participated in the fields and gardens and those confined to wheelchairs, contributed daily to the preparation of harvested vegetables, cleaning eggs or the cutting of banana tree trunks for duck feed.

The garden's pigs multiplied with all sold at the end of the year. We will not be continuing pig rearing but putting our resources into plant production.

Drainage canals and a holding pool for flood water were dug in the front rice fields, in preparation for a large covered vegetable garden project to be started in the new year. This will continue to decrease our food bills and provide extra income through sales.

In readiness for this, the gardeners made organic compost throughout the year.



“Our children should be properly introduced to the world in which they live.” – Thomas Berry



CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In 2020 there were 569 students who received sponsorship. Schools in Thailand closed from March to June, in a response to Covid-19 and when they re-opened in July, schools adopted different measures for keeping the children safe - alternate attendance for classes, mandatory face masks and desk shields. During lockdown, classes were online but many children were disadvantaged without the necessary technology or people available to guide them.

Sponsorship funds were distributed to the students on two occasions prior to the new semesters.

On 8th May 2020 for the start of the new educational year, the ceremony was presided over by Mr. Ronnachai Jitwiset, the governor of Nong Khai.



Ganyaporn Khotsila

Danai Bannarak

Naiyana Singha

Quick facts

- **569** students provided support for their education 353F/139M from 139 schools in 120 villages
- **448** in Kindergarten to High school
- **50** Students in vocational training
- **38** students in pre-bachelor courses
- **33** Students attending university (23 F)
- **7** completed Pre-bachelor degrees
- **7** graduated with Bachelor Degrees
- **340** members of village savings groups
- **1,088** members of village funeral fund



Funds were given out for the second semester in December, with the children divided into two groups due to providing safe practices regarding Covid-19.

Sponsorship support given by Mary's Friends has always adopted a different distribution protocol and this money was distributed to the children on four occasions in January, May, August and December.

Meetings for the sponsorship students and their guardians, were organised on 9th February and 15th May 2020 in order to inform them about the operation plan during Covid. Additionally, the staff addressed the students according to educational levels and the requirements of each. Letter writing and correct personal care and presentation was also discussed. Guardians were provided instruction regarding the safe guarding of those in their care.



Visitation

During the 'stay at home' period, it was important to know the situation of the students and as much as possible staff would visit or phone. The committee members in the villages assisted this follow-up. Emergency cases took priority when government advice was to restrict visits. Communication with sponsors or with sponsor organisations continued, as well as the translation of letters between both parties. We were happy to be able to deliver gifts from the sponsors to families struggling with their expenses.

The usual number of sponsors visiting their students was of course decreased in 2020 with the exception of Enfants Du Mekong, a French organization based in Thailand, who were able to visit.



Community Assistance activities

The Saving Groups continue to assist members with the capacity to save regularly (50 baht up) and to have access to funds, reducing their dependency on loan sharks. There are 340 current members from the sub-district of Ban Fang. A meeting was held by the association in March, to deliver the financial report and revue regulations. With 3,500,000 available in the fund, each member could borrow between 10,000 - 20,000 baht.

The Community Support Fund ('Death Fund') has 1,088 families, who make small regular contributions. When a member dies, the family receives 19,600 baht for funeral expenses, a bouquet of flowers and floral paper offerings for those attending to give to the deceased prior to cremation. This fund relieves the financial anxiety at such a vulnerable time.

Programme Evaluation and development

November 12th - 13th, saw an external evaluation made of the programme by Asst. Prof. Dr. Bhuchong Senanooch and Prof. Benjabhorn Buasamlee who gathered with staff and network partners to discuss the work's impact. Assessment is on-going but their feedback was positive.

*The welfare of the children in the programme
is of primary concern*

It is important for the staff to continuously upgrade their knowledge on matters pertaining to the welfare of the students in the programme and so opportunities were provided for this training and evaluation to take place.

August - Protection Policy for Children at Camillian Social Center, Lad Krabang, Bangkok.

September - SWOT analysis of programme and re-defining roles of staff, held at the Sufficiency Learning Centre.

September - operational guidelines policy meeting with all staff of Good Shepherd Nong Khai.

December - joint training on "Child Safeguarding Policy with Good Shepherd Sisters and staff in Nong Khai and "Human Resources Development" for the staff of Child & Youth Development Programme, by Fr. Apisit Kritsaralam in Chiangmai.

Welfare and protection work

The welfare of the children in the programme is of primary concern and special arrangements are made for children who are 'at risk'. Eleven students were consequently placed in boarding schools for the school terms and during the holidays, seven lodged with the Good Shepherd programme in Bangkok, three returned home for short term stays and one remained in his school. What they required in the way of school supplies, were also provided.

With the signing of a MOU with the government concerning the protection of children and young

women, cases can be referred by police, the courts or social welfare departments for consideration. Sr Sutisa, who serves as counselor twice a month in the psycho-social counseling clinic at the Nong Khai provincial court, where she supports those serving prison terms, is contacted when special cases for protection surface. A Laotian woman who had been taken advantage of by her employers, was referred and was provided temporary accommodation and employment in the Sufficiency Learning Centre, while the police investigated her case and assisted her to acquire documents that would allow safe stay in Thailand.

Networking

During the course of the year, Sr Sutisa and her staff took part in multiple exchanges with government departments concerning labour rights, agricultural development, anti-trafficking and child protection.

Supporting resource personnel.

The knowledge and experience of those responsible for the programme was passed on to others in similar fields, through training provided on four occasions, to resource personnel in local organizations with a total of 115 people benefitting.

Programme Activities to assist families

The Equitable Education Fund (EEF) was a government community based agricultural development initiative to teach occupational skills to women without opportunities for sustainable living - finding markets and increasing income.

50 unemployed women were chosen to participate from Nong Khai town area and another group of 50 from the Bang Fang sub-district - one of the poorest areas.

Subsequently, the following activities were implemented:

November 9th - 10th, Training Step 1; "Learning the principles of agriculture and new ways of occupation" with 39 attendees at the Sufficiency Learning Centre. It was theoretical input.

November 23rd -24th, the second group attended with 51 participants.

Practical applications of what was learned will take place in the new year with training in mushroom cultivation. The programme will finish in May 2021.





“Every day in 100 small ways, our children ask,, Do you hear me? Do you see me? Do I matter? Their behavior often reflects our response.”

- L.R. Knost

Operation Covid support

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 that impacted the country economically, when work places closed, the unemployed had to return to their homes. This included Laotian workers. They travelled from Bangkok and other provinces to Nong Khai, to the Thai-Lao Border Checkpoint.

However, when they arrived in Nong Khai, they found that the border was closed and were forced to rent rooms, as Lao authorities had limited quarantine facilities. Some were taken advantaged of, by locals trying to benefit from their predicament.

The recruitment agency for migrant workers is located near the Thai-Laos border and having seen many workers camping on the roadside, they began providing some services. However, as the numbers increased and locals worried about Covid infections, they approached the Good Shepherd Sisters Nong Khai Foundation.



Coordinating with local government agencies, Good Shepherd opened the Sufficiency Learning Centre to provide accommodation and the agencies covered the cost of food prepared in the centre. The Foundation provided support from May to June.

With financial assistance from Miseen Cara, we supported 14 families affected by the outbreak of Covid-19, through the "Nutritional and livelihood support for families severely impacted by Covid-19 programme." This provided families with the means of producing food or generating income through the provision of mushroom bags or chickens.



Visitors from Singapore provided food support - rice and canned fish), to 50 families on two occasions in different geographical areas and Good Shepherd Australia/New Zealand also financed food parcels.

MOT Thailand 2019 Foundation

The MOT vision is to build a warmer and safer society, and the MOT mission is to develop robust youth, by strengthening in them, awareness and courage. MOT Thailand, of which Sr Sutisa is the president, works with the local school participants (directors, teachers and coordinators) to build 3 values and 4 principles in their students.

Values: courage to live, courage to care and courage to say no

Principles: work proactively, promote culture, build responsibility, reinforce the positive and celebrate the whole person.

During the year 2020, 190 participants from government schools were trained to be MOT coaches using MOT Basic Education and in November, 14 Catholic schools participated. There are 33 MOT schools and 190 MOT coaches in Thailand and 5,838 youth who are taking part.

Self-Help programme initiatives

Three years ago, the Child and Youth Development Programme were looking for ways to offset some of their expenses and so took over the running of the Krua Suan Pakinee restaurant (Convent Kitchen Garden), from the Regina Centre. It was beginning to do well at the start of 2020 but Covid-19 soon changed that. While take-aways were made available during the 'stay at home' and the restaurant opened again in July with restricted seating, patronage was not enough to make any gains financially.

Two years ago, it was decided to use a space in the convent grounds, where the programme has its office, to prepare an organic vegetable garden. This space was covered for all year round production. Produce has been prolific in the last year and it is used to give away to families, for use in the restaurant and for sale. As a space for learning, it promotes healthy eating without the use of chemicals.



VILLAGE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

Since 1985, the Village Vocational Training Centre (VVTC) offered training workshops and implemented agricultural activities in the villages of those taking part. Thousands of families, were assisted to:

- raise native cows and bulls
- grow organic vegetables,
- raise chickens and fish
- plant fruit trees

Savings groups started in the villages, saw groups empowered to develop their own livelihoods and Animal Medicine Banks, guaranteed access to vaccinations and medicines, not only to members but to farming communities.

For over 35 years, the VVTC served its purpose well

In its grounds, it provided services to GO's NGOs, schools and community groups to hold seminars on a range of topics, with overnight accommodation and meals provided to up to 12,000 people a year.

It was highly praised by international funding organizations who collaborated in the work being done.

However, in the past ten years, life style has changed for those living in rural communities. Family owned land decreased in size and with children educated to a higher level than their parents, 'farming' was not the profession of choice. For over 35 years, the VVTC served its purpose

well but a change in direction was called for.

This change occurred in March and in the months preceding closure, there was a slow ceasing of operations.

It was however, to be newly purposed, with the Child and Youth Development Programme taking over the management. This meant that the impressive infrastructure that had been built over the years - seminar halls, accommodation blocks, outside meeting areas, dining facilities, water pumps and mushroom station - could continue to be used.

The Cow Bank in the village of Huai Sai, will for the time being continue. While the last three year project cycle has finished, follow up of the last three training groups will continue for two more years and according to the Cow Project policy, calves will be returned to the Cow Bank.

Special mention should be made of Sr Pranee Sitti - Director of the Centre, Kuttaya Tangtrakool (Thida) - Accountant and Co-ordinator of facilities and Weerasak - Manager of the Cow Bank and trainer in Animal Husbandry, who served the project and its participants with commitment for 35 years. Weerasak continues to follow the progress of the cow bank members.

We are grateful to all benefactors and project partners, who enabled the promotion and implementation of agricultural alternatives, to supplement productivity of farmers beyond the former sole practice of rice growing.



SUFFICIENCY LEARNING CENTRE

In April 2020 the VVTC was renamed, the “Sufficiency Learning Centre - for human resource development and empowerment” and responsibility for its new operations, was taken by the Child and Youth Development Programme.

...keeping alive the traditions of farmers committed to working the land for self-sufficiency.

Like the Village Vocational Training Centre (VVTC), the “Sufficiency Learning Centre (SLC) - for human resource development and empowerment”, is still committed to skills training and informal education and will, like the VVTC in the past, be offering its facilities for use by NGOs, Government Departments and community groups. While the VVTC focused on farmers and improving their quality of life, the Sufficiency Learning Centre, will primarily focus on schools, offering its skill development activities, to teachers and students and keeping alive the traditions of farmers committed to working the land for self-sufficiency. Between May and June the grounds were redesigned with the pro-bono assistance of local government - Nong Khai Provincial Office and the Nong Khai Provincial Administration Office. Thirty one days use of heavy duty machinery as well as labour, was provided. This was to establish an optimum learning environment for those who will use the existing facilities, comprised of seminar halls, dormitories, dining room, salas, work stations, and administration block - established over the years through our funding partners. Learning stations were marked out with canals dug and the land ploughed in readiness for replanting.

However, since opening, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the SLC could has not been able to run at full capacity, as training numbers were limited.

Animals were acquired through donations and the grounds are now home to goats, cows, wild pigs, turkeys, ducks and chickens - all of which will be used for the education of visiting groups. The existing mushroom station was revitalized and the tradition of cultivating mushrooms for training and for sale, continues.

One crop of organic rice was planted and harvested, providing another example of sufficiency farming for the groups targeted for training.

The former food stall/co-operative store at the front of the grounds which faced onto the road, was extended and now runs as a noodle shop, serving takeaway and sit down meals for those working locally. Staff were sent for training in Udon Thani where they learnt the trade from a successful shop owner.

To reduce electricity costs, solar panels have been installed in the compound.

It is a ‘work in progress’ but we are pleased to see the exceptional facilities of the VVTC continuing to be utilized.





The expectation of the Sufficiency Learning Centre is to provide a model of a sufficiency farm for access by the following groups:

- Students and teachers from schools and places of learning;
- Selected individuals from target villages for training in agricultural practices
- Children and youth with social problems who wish to learn to be self-reliant;
- MOT Thailand for youth empowerment programmes
- NGOs and GOs wishing to conduct their own training/meetings/seminars

It will work to promote conservation of the environment - soil, water, forest - in regard to the culture of the Isan (northeastern) people, thereby preserving successful traditional methods of agriculture, while at the same time, adopting new practices.



REGINA WOMEN'S SELF-HELP CENTRE

In July, the decision was made to close this centre.

As we reported in a letter that went out to friends and benefactors in August 2020, there were a number of contributing factors that led to closure.

Begun in the 1980's with a centre in Nong Khai town, it expanded to the village of Huai Sai, so as to offer training and employment to young women from the villages who left school and married early. The Isan Weaving Centre which opened in 1998, a third sewing centre in the Village of Don Wai in 2002 and the provision of work to women at home caring for young children, saw, at it's peak, 450 women participating daily.

In the last five years, the village centres and Isan Weaving closed, as other opportunities - including pursuit of higher education - became available to young women.

While in former times, international sales provided the majority of income for the project, last year, local sales surpassed the total from overseas, with an increased attendance at fairs, churches and schools in Bangkok. However, the Covid-19 pandemic put an end to these outlets for the foreseeable future.

Additionally, with numbers reduced pre-Covid to just 20, workers skilled in the production of some popular designs moved on and Covid-19 saw a further reduction in producers, as families made life changing decisions about their futures.

To continue paying salaries to the key staff with few orders coming in and sale restrictions still in place, was beyond our means and so a decision to close the Regina Centre was made.

It was paramount to find additional ways for self-support

The first months of the year, saw the women engaged in 'life as normal' with orders received, sales attended locally and visitors welcomed. The year began with 19 women.

In February, there was a change of the programme's director with Sr Virginia replaced by Sr Jintana.

Local sales for 2020 more than doubled the income from international sales - a trend that had increased over the past two years but with the Covid 19 pandemic and restrictions placed on gatherings, opportunities were limited.

Visitors were welcomed to the centre in the first three months of the year from Belgium, Singapore, Germany and from within Thailand but the remaining months saw only a limited number of Thai visitors. In March, during her visit, the CEO of the Good Shepherd Mission Development Office in Malaysia, Teresa Symons, gave a workshop about 'rights based' approaches to development and the women's ability to access government services.

The 'stay at home' government directive saw the

centre close for the month of April.

During that month, a group of women produced face masks in large numbers to distribute to Good Shepherd programme participants and to the local hospital. During the month of April the Sisters and staff, distributed food parcels, hand sanitiser and face masks to all in the projects.

When the women returned in May, they set about finding new ways forward. With restrictions placed on selling internationally, as described above, it was paramount to find additional ways for self-support while awaiting orders.

Women began selling street food, or growing vegetables at home. They also attended training between the 7th -9th May, to better position themselves to enter a competitive market when it came to selling drinks and Thai delicacies. They started their enterprise a few days later, masked and practicing social distancing. Donations from benefactors, helped finance these start up activities.



The women have continued the cleaning and upkeep on the former sewing centre in the village of Huai Sai, 45 kms away, which closed two years ago, going periodically to tend the grounds. They were joined by parents and children from the Child and Youth Development Programme at the end of May, for a large working bee.

During this period, local sales continued, along with custom orders but it was clear that the longevity of the project was in question. Sr Jintana, began preparing her staff through evaluation processes and providing access to information and training in finding the best way forward.

In June, they took part in a workshop, "Adaptation after COVID", run by the Office of Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion, with the emphasis on digital marketing. In July, the group made a field trip to a farm practicing the sufficiency economy model in the neighbouring province of Bueng Kan, where they saw what was possible with limited land available.

The announcement from Good Shepherd Australia/New Zealand, that The Trading Circle would close its doors in October, prompted a meeting of the Good Shepherd Income Generating Projects (IGPs) from across Thailand, where project managers and sisters, evaluated the IGPs impacted by the pandemic. It was at this meeting that the decision to close the Regina Centre, was made.

By July, five of the women formerly working in the

center, had found other occupation. The fourteen remaining, decided to form a "Women's Group' to continue activities they had begun to see as beneficial during the year of change. They would continue to use the Regina Centre's facilities, taking mostly local sewing orders but open to those from overseas too where shipping was possible. Unfortunately, some of the skilled cutters had left and consequently, not all previous items can now be produced.

Sincere thanks must be expressed to the thousands of people involved

As you will see on the following pages, the women are also selling food items, agricultural products, drinks and flowers.

Sr Jintana's role is one of adviser, with the women taking responsibility for all aspects of production, sales and marketing They had developed these skills during their many years in the Regina Centre.

Sincere thanks must be expressed to the thousands of people involved in the project since it began in 1984. Sisters - especially Sr Mary Hayden, staff, participants, benefactors and customers. We make special mention of Rosemary Taylor, who supported the project from the beginning and sadly passed away at the start of the year.





“All labour that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.” Martin Luther King Jr.

WOMEN'S INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES

New initiatives



After the closure of the Regina Centre in July, a group of 14 women continued to work together, in order to generate income for themselves through various activities. The list of initiatives is on-going but for the remaining months of the year, they engaged in:

- Sewing for local and international customers
- Selling breakfast food on the roadside in front of the Pakinee Restaurant in the convent grounds
- Growing vegetables at home - also sold on the stall, along with vegetables from the Child and Youth Development's organic garden, for which they received a commission
- Farming mushrooms - selling fresh and developing food items using the mushrooms
- Selling floral arrangements for Buddhist days
- Raising chickens at home



The women plan to open their own bank account in the new year and will undertake their own marketing, customer contact and accounting. Years of assuming such responsibilities while in the Regina Centre, has made this possible.





HANDS OF HOPE

The year began with 22 producers and an encouraging arrival of orders.

On February 5th, the project celebrated its 15th birthday, remembering those who had worked in the project, our volunteers, customers, visitors and friends, who had encouraged and supported us.

Using a donation from Thai Smiles in Belgium, the exterior of the centre was painted during February and March, just before the 'Stay at home' directive was issued by the government, due to Covid-19. The producers, with compromised immune systems, due to their HIV + status and anxious about the severity of the new virus, had actually decided a week earlier to cease coming to work. For the next three months, all but three were able to access government financial assistance and for those that couldn't and for those waiting for approval, the project provided support.

Good Shepherd International gave food support and this was distributed during the month of April, along with masks and hand sanitiser.



So much was unknown and the future uncertain and so a meeting was called in May to review work options and the way forward both personally and for the project.

As with the Regina Centre, we faced shipping restrictions and knew that long time international customers had reduced marketing opportunities

in their own countries due to lock downs and limited numbers of people allowed to gather.

Yet, we did not want to close our doors.

During the 'stay at home', funds were provided to the members, to initiate income generating activities at home to supplement their income and training was provided, in making natural compost and planting. This changed the psyche from one of despondency to optimism and when we came together at the end of June to share the initiatives, the gathering was extremely positive.

Such enterprises initiated, included: Crochet for the local temple; Handwork for the Fatima Centre in Bangkok; Growing vegetables; Raising ducks; Raising frogs; Planting fruit trees; Raising chickens; Healing massage for the elderly; Selling mops and other household commodities; Preparing land for rice planting; Making 'kanom' (sweet treats) for sale; Washing dishes in a relative's restaurant; Selling salted duck eggs; Patient care, cleaning and household duties in the Garden of Friendship; Selling banana leaves, Selling bamboo shoots; Making organic compost and natural fertilizer; Cleaning in a Nong Khai clinic; Making brooms; Blending fruit drinks for sale; Drying and selling fish; Building a hut for watching over the rice field; Selling fruit; Preparing charcoal for sale; Cleaning for elderly neighbours; Learning to make Bai Sri decorations for the temple. It was an impressive list.

Wanting Hands of Hope to continue but to be in a viable position to do so, we had to make some changes.

Few activities brought in the same income as they received in Hands of Hope but they were being proactive and helping to meet their basic needs.

We fare-welled six producers at the end of June with another leaving prior to the meeting. Two left the following week, finding alternative work. In the course of the following months, one more chose to



“Motivation comes from working on things we care about. It also comes from working with people we care about.” - Sheryl Sandberg



to work at home. Twelve remained by December 2020.

Wanting Hands of Hope to continue but to be in a viable position to do so, we had to make some changes. Two days a week employment a week was assured for the producers with additional days given when orders were received. Over the course of the remaining months, an average of three days work a week was given.

A reduction of days was necessary for the following reasons:

- Not wanting to stockpile goods.
 - Inability to sell locally with events cancelled
 - Postal restrictions - no SAL and no options at all to Australia/NZ other than Courier.
 - Customers unable to hold sales in their countries
- Even so, during this period, we received just 13 orders less than the same period the previous year.



Knowing the need to help ourselves further, we established a women's self-help initiative, making doll keychains called Dolls of Hope. Thanks to Sr Pranee's contacts, we received initial large orders and while there were orders for the remaining months of the year, most of the sales happened in August - October. Attempts to sell in markets and temples were not successful but the enterprise did provide additional income to the women for two

months and the activity broke even with all money initially borrowed from Hands of Hope for materials, paid back.



At the end of October, the Good Shepherd supported project in Australia - The Trading Circle - closed its doors after 25 years. They had always been one of our major customers and as we enjoyed working over the years with sisters, staff and volunteers, we were saddened by this news. Since the closure, we picked up three new customers, who wanted to continue purchasing our products and decided to deal with us directly, despite the increased shipping charges to Australia due to Covid restrictions. This was encouraging.

December 1st World Aids Day, was celebrated on the 5th, with current and former members of Hands of Hope, joining the patients and residents in the Garden of Friendship for a sports day, organised by the Outreach staff. Everyone happily participated in ability matched games.

The year finished with a celebration in the centre prior to Christmas, attended by the sisters but with no international friends - a 'first', since we began. We gave thanks for our 'patron saint' Sr Mary, for deceased friend, Rosemary Taylor, who had supported Hands of Hope for many years along with the Regina Centre and Children's Sponsorship Programme and for all our friends, benefactors and customers. We look towards 2021 with some anxiety but with a determination to continue and to help one another to stay positive.





ADDITIONAL INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES

While Hands of Hope producers continue the activities they began during the year at home, with some choosing to do so full time, they also decided to work on communal agricultural activities in the Friendship Centre itself.



A meeting was facilitated half way through the year by Sr Pranee and the agricultural co-ordinator in the Garden of Friendship. They discussed the possibility of utilizing the land in the Friendship Centre to grow vegetables, as many in the group do not have land of their own. They learned the process of making organic compost as well as liquid fertilizer and received instruction regarding planting seeds from a local teacher of organic farming.

Before the Christmas break, the first inroads were made with the group activity:

- ✓ Setting up the first composting containers with collected leaves and layers of cow manure
- ✓ The construction of vegetable beds using bamboo from the adjoining forest
- ✓ Soil preparation and planting of seedlings cultivated by Sanit at home
- ✓ Forays into vermicomposting - an activity begun by Antonia during the year

Future plans include extending vegetable beds to a disused lawn area at the front of the centre and the construction of a floating fishing pier over the pond from which fish will be raised in holding cages.

Donations received into the project, will be used to finance additional activities undertaken by the producers, both at the centre and in their homes.

"I have always used my hands for craft making and have never done agriculture before and I don't have much knowledge. But this year I am willing to learn and am pleased that I can contribute to the work with my friends." - Wasana

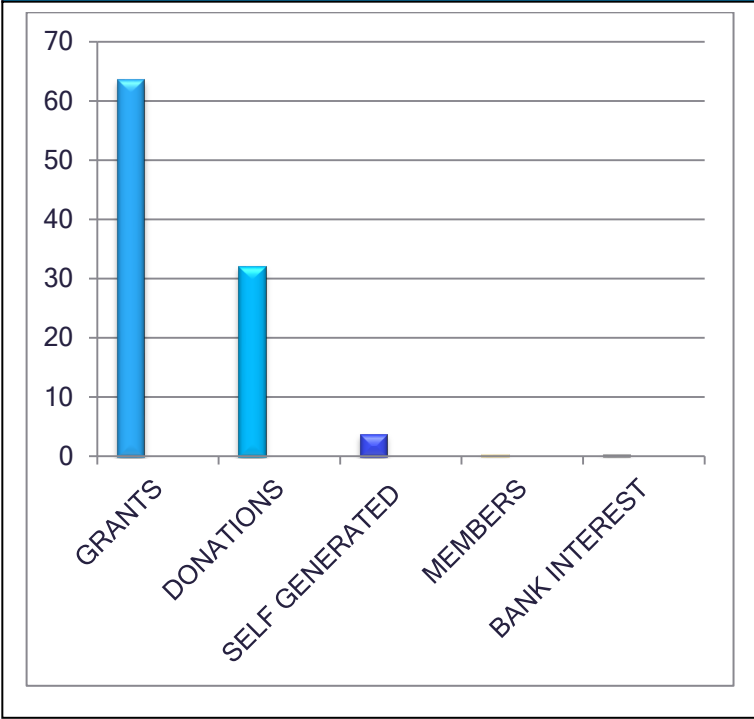


ORGANISATIONAL INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

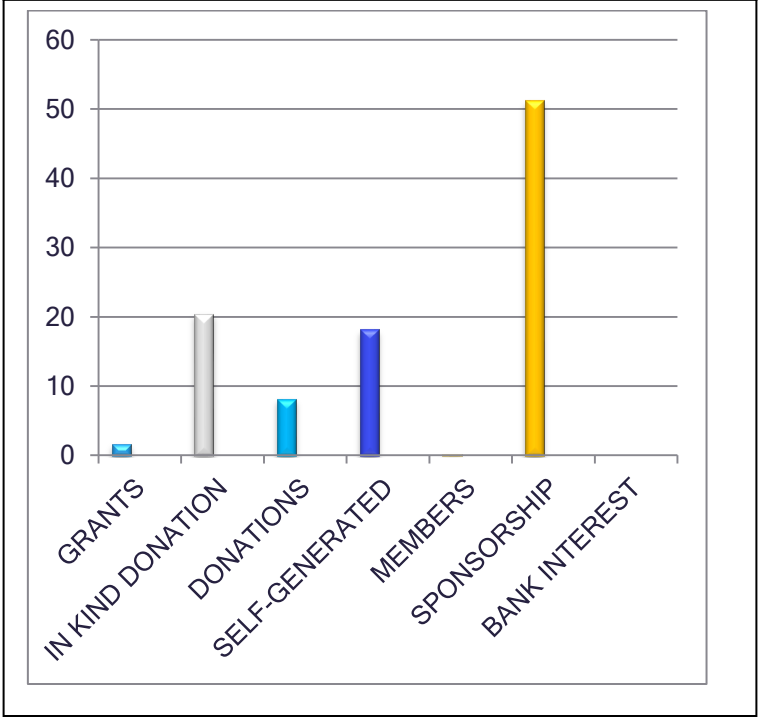
The following pages provide an overview of income sources across the project areas and a collective view of expenditure.

SOURCES OF INCOME ACROSS THE PROJECTS %

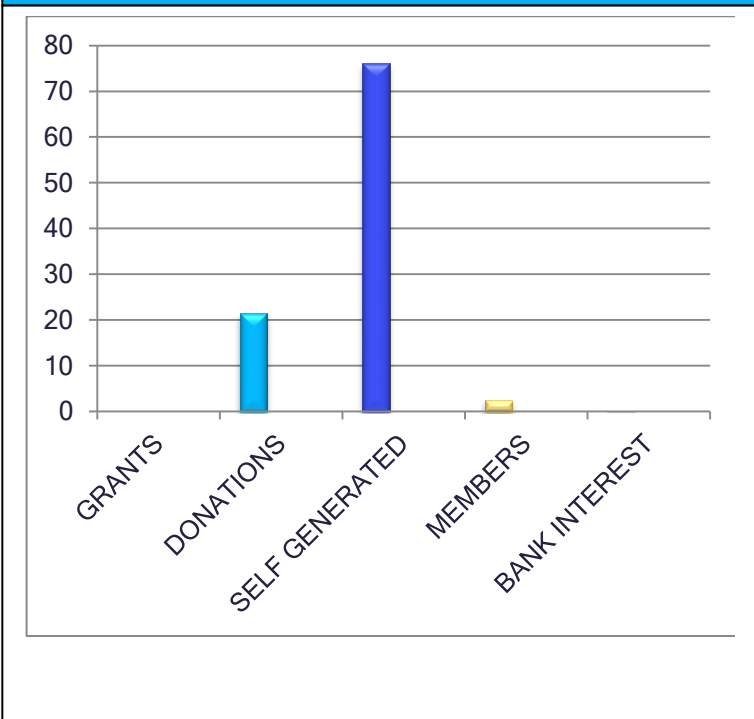
OUTREACH PROGRAMME



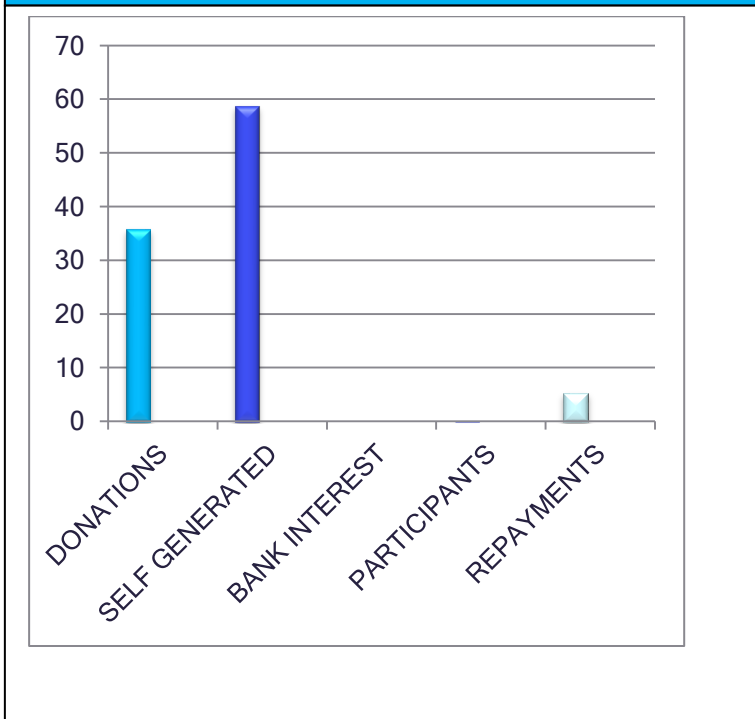
CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

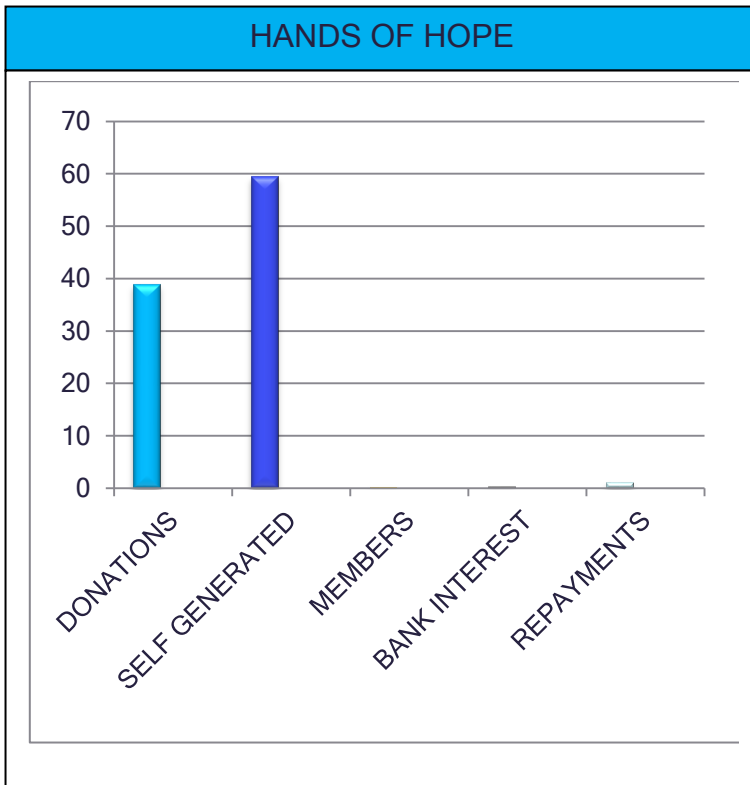


VILLAGE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE



REGINA WOMEN'S SELF-HELP CENTRE

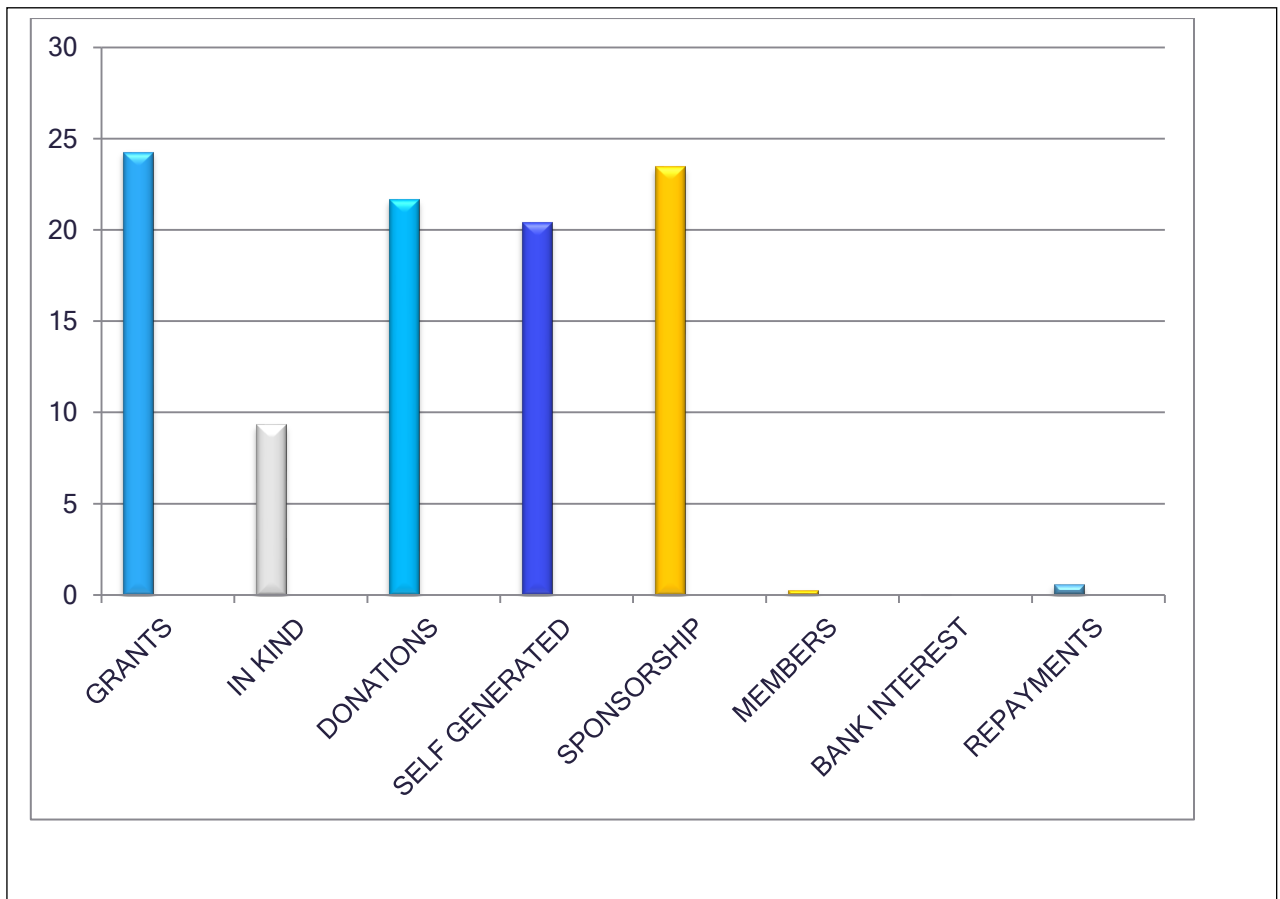




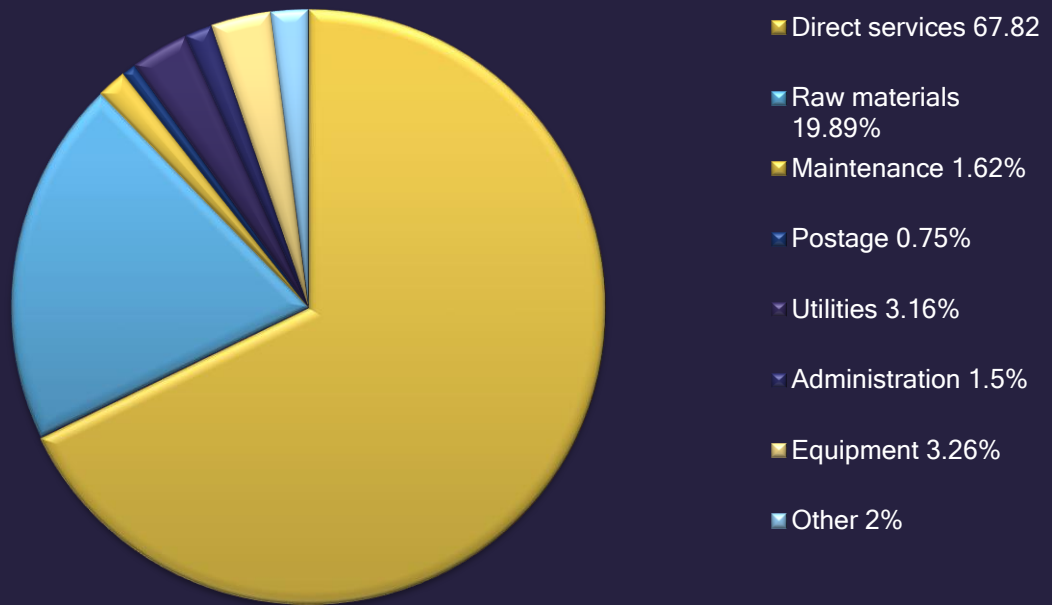
20.42 %
self -
generated
income across
the projects

PROJECTS' COMBINED INCOME

Total income 25,926,917.60 baht (Including 2,420,310 baht in kind)



Combined project expenditure



Total expenditure 23,723,238.52 baht (Including 2,420,310 baht in kind)

Notes on Expenditure

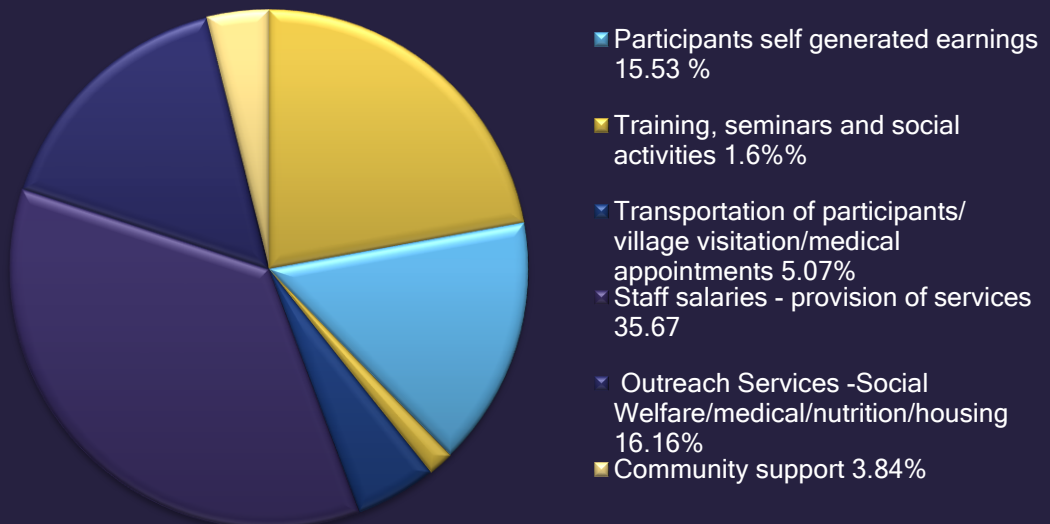
Direct services account for **67.82%** of the expense budget.

25.52 % of the budget is used in the execution of the projects ie. Raw materials, postage of produced items and maintenance.

Equipment

6.66 % for Administration (incl. audit), utilities + other

Analysis of Direct Services





With gratitude