





Restoring
Dignity,
Justice
and Hope


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2020 Annual Report



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Our community members have demonstrated their ability to adapt creatively in the face of adversity. We have so much to learn from them, and they are the very inspiration that continues to drive us as an organisation.

Let compassion continue
to grow in our city.



Letter from the Executive Director

We all found ourselves enduring various levels of pressure and anxiety as we dealt with disruptions and uncertainties over the past year. It has been an extremely challenging year for most people, as many companies and organisations in various sectors have struggled to survive amidst the pandemic and the turmoil in Hong Kong's socio-economic and political environment.

Vulnerable people, always struggling with a lack of resources, become even more marginalised during crises. Asylum seekers and trafficking survivors encounter more severe challenges related to their physical and psycho-social needs than most of us as they do not qualify for government relief packages. Access to food and daily commodities became more challenging, whilst the experiences of lockdown and uncertainty sometimes trigger traumatic memories.

We want to highlight the strength and resilience of our communities since many are accustomed to disruptions and uncertainties. Some members have encountered similar if not more painful experiences previously. With these experiences, they have utilised their ability to cope and extended their knowledge to help others.

We continue to provide care for those in need, while at the same time addressing a growing demand for emergency relief. Our team reached out to those in need and assisted in creative ways. We also formed new partnerships with many new donors and volunteers.

The turmoil provided us with the best opportunity to understand the pain and distress of those most marginalised. We are deeply touched and grateful for the people who extended their giving despite the current economic downturn. We can see there is compassion in Hong Kong.

We hope you find strength, encouragement, and inspiration as you read the stories of our incredible survivors, and the generosity and timely contribution of our supporters.

May peace be with you.



Aman Yee
Executive Director





Our beneficiaries have demonstrated their adaptability in the face of adversity and inspired us to continue courageously.

COVID-19 Response

The refugee and asylum seeker (RAS) community and the vulnerable victims and survivors of human trafficking have been hit hard by the pandemic. Branches of Hope (BOH) has worked tirelessly to ensure that the vulnerable and marginalised communities in Hong Kong did not struggle alone.

Our beneficiaries have demonstrated their adaptability in the face of adversity and inspired us to continue courageously. Refugees and victims of trafficking

struggled with having a sufficient supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and depended on International Social Service, BOH, and other NGOs for PPE.

They also struggled with food price inflation. The fixed value of the government's prepaid supermarket cards has meant that the RAS community had to rely on BOH to bridge the gap. The regular food sponsors for the victims of human trafficking were no longer

available. The RAS community was often in isolation at home due to the constantly changing social distancing rules. The pandemic also triggered memories of their past traumas and added additional anxiety to them.

The school closure also added additional stress to the refugee families as the children often lacked the electronics needed for online learning. Studying in a foreign language was already challenging prior to the pandemic, they now juggled

keeping up with the schoolwork at home on their own.

In addition, we received more calls from human trafficking victims than prior to the pandemic. Many foreign domestic workers (FDW) lost their jobs and had to leave Hong Kong within 14 days if they did not get a new job. During the transition, they stayed in cramped boarding houses and were exposed to a high risk of contracting the virus. The pressure to continue earning an income

made them more vulnerable to take on risky jobs that could exploit them.

For victims of trafficking, most of their work and usual activities came to a halt, increasing their stress and anxiety as they had nothing to take their minds off of their personal and legal issues. The current situation also further complicated their plans to return home. Many medical assessments and immigration cases halted, adding to the overall delay.

Branches of Hope provided a crisis hotline, a self-care workshop, and assisted in online schooling. As part of the crisis response, we conducted home visits to check on the wellbeing of our beneficiaries. We were able to adapt our casework meetings around the social distancing restrictions and continued to support them. We delivered in-kind donations, conducted self-care workshops, and provided affirmation cards along with hygiene supplies. We offered online educational support through YouTube videos and Zoom classes. We also equipped FDW with the knowledge to safeguard their rights and protective measures.

The increase in demand for our services and the reduction of funding from our donors meant that we had to do more with less. Inspired by the resilience of our beneficiaries, we were able to cope. We continued to learn from them, who managed to adapt quickly even in very difficult and unforeseen circumstances.



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ROAD

REFUGEE OPPORTUNITY
AND DEVELOPMENT

The ROAD programme delivers comprehensive and holistic care to our refugees and asylum seekers (RAS) community. We equip, educate, and empower individuals and families to become positive and contributing

members of society. We deliver holistic care through three main channels: relief, development, and social reform. As a result of COVID-19, we have given more attention this year to relief.



Relief

Social Services

An increase in food prices and the lack of resources resulted in an additional 75 RAS individuals referred to us. We provided legal and medical referrals, and partial school fees. We also delivered in-kind donations.

Our one-on-one casework allows RAS to discuss their diverse needs, such as house-hunting, healthcare, and general wellbeing. These casework sessions also empowered individuals to spread the word to others in their community. Although there were more people seeking

assistance, we managed to assist most of them, making referrals for counselling, legal aid, clinics, or hospitals.

The protests and the pandemic triggered past traumas for some members. We created a task force to manage some of the cases and made referrals to specialists to provide more in-depth assistance as needed.

Financial Assistance

In addition to the 75 individuals who received one-off assistance, we are supporting 450 individuals on an on-going basis. However, we have not

yet been able to clear the 60 families on the waiting list for the Secret Angel sponsorship programme.



450 *Financially supported*

Development

Integration

Despite the employment allocations to recognised refugees in January, many job offers were retracted due to the current circumstances. We managed to place 10 adults in job positions, ranging from administration to catering.

In partnership with Daly & Associates law firm, a legal clinic was organised to help refugees and asylum seekers understand the Unified Screening Mechanism (USM).



10

Placed in jobs



Education

Education is an integral part of the ROAD development channel. Our ROAD education programme integrates refugees and their families into their communities by ensuring that children are in school and enhancing access to

extracurricular activities, academic and vocational support. We also provide sponsorship for school fees for kindergarten kids and university students.

Keeping Kids in Kindergarten (K3)

The Hong Kong government provides free public education until secondary school, but this excludes the costs of registration, uniforms, textbooks, and transportation. The K3 programme addresses this issue and provides for these needs. Through K3, we sponsored 68 kids this year.

Post-Secondary Education Assistance (PSEA)

Hong Kong does not provide scholarships for the RAS, and their university tuition is treated as if they were international students. The PSEA programme provides a pathway to higher education and subsequent wider opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Currently, we support five students who are studying psychology, business & management, and computer science in Hong Kong universities.



68

 Kindergarten students sponsored


5

 In PSEA programme




38 Children received help in homework support group



25 Students in tutoring programme



74 Adults received training

Children Education

Before the pandemic, we held classes that allowed children and youth to experience music, arts, and science through supplemental educational programmes on a one-off or regular basis. As the pandemic impact deepened, we provided financial assistance (\$500) to 68 kindergarten kids. We also visited 30 households to identify challenges and find ways to support online learning among refugee families. Homework was a major challenge, often related to language or technology issues. We created a WhatsApp homework support group run by 11 volunteers from our partner

international schools. We were able to help 38 children at the primary and kindergarten levels. We also launched our one-on-one tutoring programme where 13 volunteers tutored 25 primary and kindergarten-level children. The aim is to normalise the lives of students by allowing them to interact with people outside their immediate circles. 20 volunteers from international schools also created fun primary-level science and math videos, which we aired to our ROAD's YouTube channel and received 134 views.

Adult Education

We provide courses and vocational training in English on a one-off or regular basis. 74 students received training and classes in English, computer literacy, fundamental street law, vocal lessons, and career development. We also had a series of workshops with the University of Hong Kong, faculty of law to educate asylum seekers' fundamental rights in Hong Kong. A one-off event was also held with LinkedIn and S&P Global on CV building and interview skills.

Ladies group also meets weekly to foster a sense of community and empower

women. They had classes in arts and crafts, exercise, health and mindfulness.



Impact Story

Jo*

When Jo arrived in Hong Kong, he wanted to go to university but he couldn't speak English or Cantonese. He spent six to eight hours every day studying English, using mobile apps such as the BBC and British Council for Kids. Despite many complications, Jo eventually got accepted into the University of Sunderland's Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business and Management programme. However, his lack of finances continued to be a challenge.

The PSEA programme is helping Jo achieve his academic and career goals through scholarship. He is currently studying business to help shape the business plan of the social enterprise he wishes to create one day. Through this programme, Jo is fulfilling his dreams of pursuing higher education and gaining skills that will help him thrive in Hong Kong and beyond.

“Jo is fulfilling his dreams of pursuing higher education and gaining skills that will help him thrive in Hong Kong and beyond.”

* Name changed to protect privacy

Social Reform

Public Education



World Refugee Day Celebration

In partnership with the Vine Church we celebrated World Refugee Day by listening to some testimonies of refugees & asylum seekers. Two past members shared their stories from Canada via video, and three current members shared their stories live.

Media Relations



South China Morning Post

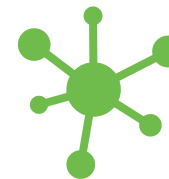
Letters, “Hong Kong third wave: Help NGOs rescue refugees and asylum seekers from added misery” (Aug 14, 2020)

Featured in article “Charity drive moves Hongkongers to donate HK\$10,000 pandemic payout to help needy, neglected groups” (July 5, 2020)

Community-building Events

Christmas Celebration

Over 280 RAS shared the joy of Christmas during our annual celebration that featured singing, dancing, food, and gifts.



Sports

Before COVID-19 disruptions, five members participated in the rugby training with Rugby Union, practising for the rugby festival that unfortunately got cancelled due to the pandemic.

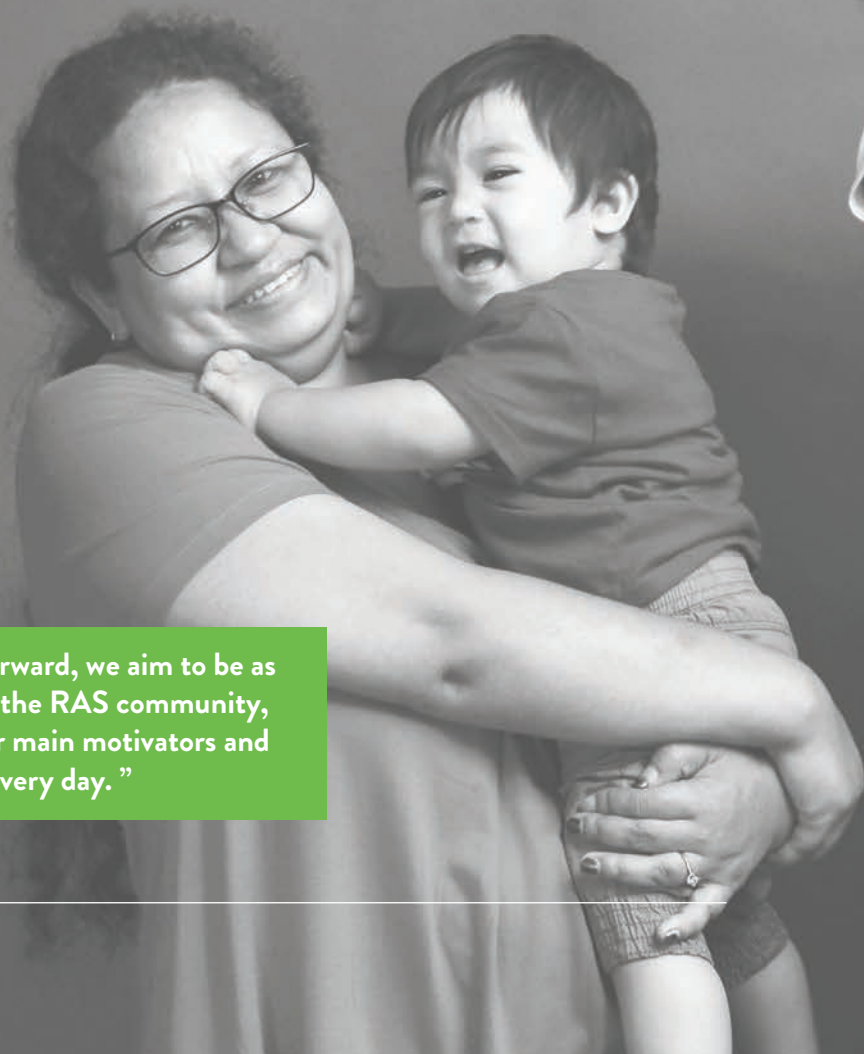
A handful of our teenagers also practiced cricket with AP Sports Academy.

Looking Ahead

Branches of Hope and the RAS community have demonstrated their ability to adapt creatively in the face of adversity. When the pandemic hit, Branches of Hope moved its programmes online and developed new programmes to accommodate the emerging needs. When

restrictions eased, we resumed face-to-face classes. Moving forward, we aim to be as resilient as the RAS community, who are our main motivators and inspire us every day.

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STOP.

STOP TRAFFICKING OF PEOPLE

STOP is a Branches of Hope programme that acts as a lifeline for those who have suffered or are suffering from human trafficking. Survivors continue to face significant challenges in Hong Kong, including meeting basic needs such as food and shelter, whilst experiencing trauma, stigmatisation, visa and legal issues. Unfortunately, because victims, especially sex workers are not protected from prosecution, they rarely report their traffickers. Yet, in the face of Covid-19, they have demonstrated massive resilience and have continued to better their lives.

“Without STOP, I cannot survive.”

- Lily*, a new client currently trapped in a complicated legal situation with no right to work

“I came to STOP at the lowest point in my life. Your help brought me back to stand on my own feet. Each and every one of the staff was patient and helpful, always listening and doing their best.”

- Malika*

* Name changed to protect privacy

Social Assistance

This year, we served 13 survivors, of which nine have on-going legal cases. STOP staff have been present with personalised and holistic support in finding shelter, seeing a doctor, or obtaining visa renewal. We also followed up with legal cases with our partner human rights law firms.

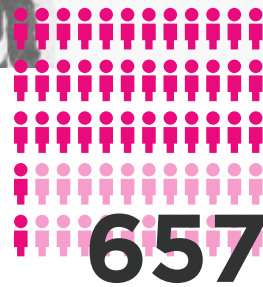
The wellbeing of our clients is STOP's highest priority as we accompany survivors on their journey to recovery. We launched a self-care workshop, whereby our counsellors shared self-care resources with three survivors and followed up with one-on-one counseling with one client. We also sent Affirmation Cards with self-care tips to all of our clients, as part of care packages that included face masks and sanitisers.

9/13 STOP served 13 survivors, of which 9 have on-going legal cases this year.



Outreach

STOP expanded outreach visits to districts in all three of the main areas of Hong Kong. We also explored online outreach strategies to reach a broader demographic of exploited persons. We conducted 53 hours of outreach visits that included meetings with 657 potential trafficking victims. STOP also provided English classes to nine sex workers and wrote letters to three migrant women in prison.



STOP conducted 53 hours of outreach visits and meetings with 657 potential trafficking victims.

Network Building

STOP takes a collaborative approach to advocacy. This year, in particular, we worked closely with members of the Civil Society Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force to coordinate a response to the pandemic. We also have been actively monitoring the impact and implementation of the Action Plan to Tackle Trafficking in Persons and to Enhance Protection of Foreign Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong 2018 by the Hong

Kong Government. STOP and civil society have lobbied the government for a better legal framework to fight trafficking and build more robust protections for victims.

Public Education

Through our **Beyond the Label** campaign, we helped raise public awareness about avoiding purchases of everyday products that involve slavery. We also launched our **Take the Stage** campaign to empower and raise the voices of those hidden by human trafficking. **Take the Stage** and **Beyond the Label** campaigns reached 8,608 people.

We gave a presentation to the Rotary Club of Wanchai to raise awareness of human trafficking. We also held eight workshops for migrant domestic workers, secondary and university students, and professionals in corporates.

Research

We completed 15 stakeholder interviews for a project titled "Exploitation and sex trafficking of local youth sex workers in the Hong Kong sex industry." This research provides a better understanding of local youth who are vulnerable to exploitation. STOP will be

able to leverage these findings and recommendations from this research to support policy advocacy against sex trafficking. We are progressing with interviews and look forward to sharing our findings with the public next year.



8,608

People reached



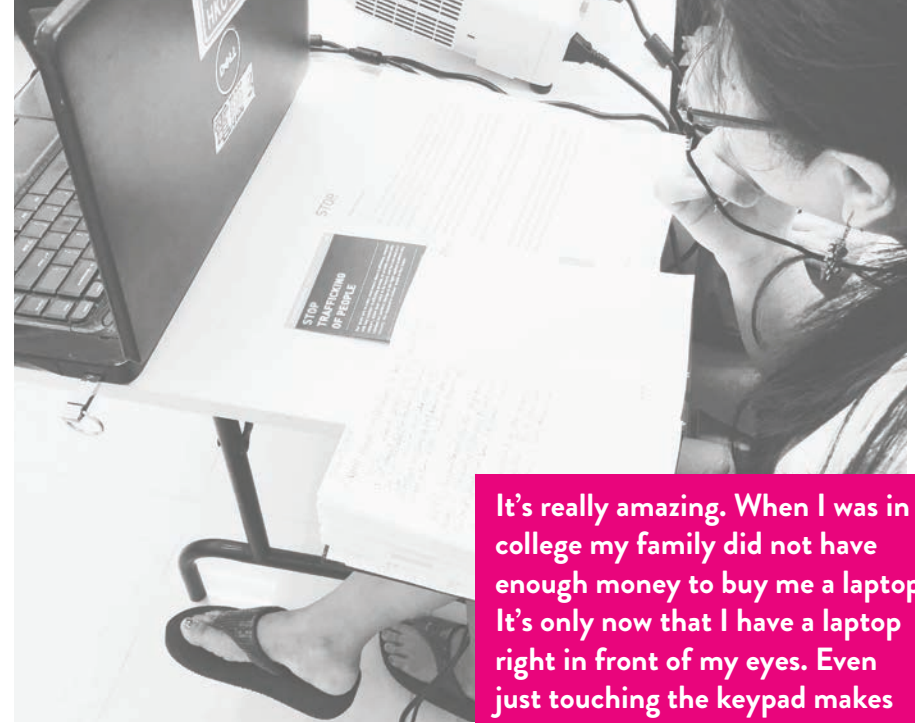
8

Workshops



15

Stakeholder interviews



It's really amazing. When I was in college my family did not have enough money to buy me a laptop. It's only now that I have a laptop right in front of my eyes. Even just touching the keypad makes me happy.

- Catherine*, a survivor with a passion for learning

Impact Story

Catherine*

When we first met Catherine*, she was visibly malnourished, emotionally distressed, and covered in bruises. At one point she thought of committing suicide. Today Catherine has regained her health and has a sense of purpose. Our computer classes were especially important to her. When computer classes were suspended due to the pandemic, she borrowed a laptop

from us so that she could start practicing at home. She still does not know when she can return to her home country, but with the new computer skill, she hopes to become a missionary or work for an NGO. Inspired by those who supported her, she hopes to help her family and community once she returns.

* Name changed to protect privacy

Looking Ahead

Using the findings from our research project, we plan to further strengthen our networks with the local community to advocate for comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation.

Crisis Intervention and Care Programme

Accumulating the experience of care service for trafficking victims in the past two years, STOP will continue to develop a trauma-informed care programme to accompany the recovery journey of the survivors. We aim to empower our clients to walk the path of dignity and restore their purpose and hope. We are conducting a project evaluation with our clients, our partners, and other stakeholders to assess the impact and to plan the next phase of our programme activities.

Public Education and Prevention

Some of our clients have warned others about the deceptive tactics traffickers use, to help prevent individuals from being tricked and trafficked to Hong Kong. Our new STOP website provides an easy to understand toolbox to combat human trafficking. We envision it as a resourceful tool to equip everyone with knowledge about human trafficking and to fight it together.

Thanks to our programme partners!



**DALY 帝理律師行
& ASSOCIATES**



We aim to empower our clients to walk the path of dignity and restore their purpose and hope.



Sponsorships

Sponsorships make up 20 percent of our donation income, and we have around 137 individual donors in addition to foundation sponsors.

 **137** Private individual donors

Keeping Kids in Kindergarten (K3) Sponsorship Programme

We started in 2013 when we were only able to sponsor two kids. This year, we supported 68 kids, thanks to our existing granters, American Women’s Association and the Foreign Correspondents’ Club and a new sponsor, Starfish Charitable Foundation, along

with 33 individual donors. Barefoot Love, a social enterprise, created a card-making workshop with the kids at the Vine Church and raised money to sponsor two kids in kindergarten.



 **146** Households subsidized

 **100** Angels donated

Secret Angel Sponsorship Programme

We are supporting 146 refugee & asylum seeker (RAS) households through this financial subsidy programme. More than 100 Secret Angels are making monthly donations ranging from \$800 to \$3,200. The need is always greater than the supply. To close the funding gap, we launched a crowdfunding campaign so that donors can make a one-off payment or less than the \$800 threshold. We raised

\$41,000 from crowdfunding.


We held an intimate gathering with a dozen Secret Angels, who were able to hear stories from the RAS. One was a single adult, and the other is a family of seven. Even though their stories and journeys were quite different, there were many points of overlap in their struggles.

Fundraising Campaigns

\$10,000 Reasons

The \$10,000 Reasons campaign was launched at the Vine Church when John Snelgrove, one of the founding pastors, gave a sermon on World Refugee Day (14th June 2020) to celebrate the journey of our RAS community members. He challenged Hong Kong permanent residents who have received the \$10,000 pandemic subsidy to consider sharing part or all of that government subsidy with the RAS community here in Hong Kong. The

campaign continued afterwards with video promotions and announcements at the Vine, along with publicity in South China Morning Post for the city-wide campaign. Around 250 donors joined this campaign, more than half of whom were new donors.

 ~250 Donors
 >50% New



COVID-19 dealt a blow to our fundraising work, reducing our funding. The pandemic forced our organisation to cancel planned charity events, such as our annual Ma Wan Treasure Hunt and our annual fundraising dinner. We are thankful for all the people who fundraised for us.

Christmas celebration is a tradition for our RAS community. The Vine Church congregation generously donated \$87,400 in gift vouchers and \$24,000 in cash as part of this annual Christmas celebration.



Our annual Run for STOP took place in conjunction with the Bangkok Marathon. Five runners raised a total of \$38,000 to help raise awareness and fight human trafficking.

Jo Lodder celebrated his 50th birthday by completing 58km in biking and hiking. Despite requiring eight stitches and having a broken collar bone, Jo raised a total of \$30,000 for STOP.



There were 24 runners participated in the FringeBacker Covid-19 Hong Kong Virtual Marathon, where they raised awareness for Branches of Hope and \$6,400.

Partners

Retailers & Media

We increased partnership with various retailers and media:

- Donation box at more than 100 Pacific Coffee branches in September
- Kee Wah Bakery collaborated with us for the charity mooncake sale
- Heart01 by HK01 fundraising campaigns

Organisations

We also increased partnership with various organisations in three different categories:



Personal Protective Equipment

- Agency for Volunteer Service
- Asian Charity Services
- Bellaberries
- Chinese International School the free clinic
- Hong Kong Church Network for the Poor
- Hong Kong Council of Social Service
- Island ECC
- Me2You
- Rotary Club Wanchai
- South China Morning Post
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)
- YMCA



Food Relief

We called for supermarket and meal vouchers, and food packs, from the various partners.

- Feeding Hong Kong, Rotary Club and SCMP - water, snacks, and supplements
- HandsOn and FoodAngel - \$107,000 in meal vouchers for Fairwood and 7-11
- Hong Kong Church Network for the Poor - \$6,000 in meal vouchers, milk powder, 110 sets of shopping vouchers
- The Vine Church Congregants - raised \$33,400 in supermarket vouchers
- Sunshine Action and HandsOn - 350 care relief packs



Technology

- Individuals, Hong Kong Academy, the Women's Foundation and Rotary Club of Quarry Bay - donated 50 laptops and 45 sim cards

Schools

The students and the teachers at these schools raised awareness for STOP and ROAD and fundraised.

- Harrow International School - fundraised for refugee children to access online schooling
- Hong Kong Academy - donated \$53,000 over the two years from ticket and beverage sales at the RISE talent show
- International College Hong Kong (Primary) - donated laptops for computer class
- Hong Kong International School - raised \$1,500 for STOP
- Island Christian Academy - raised money by bringing awareness to refugees to their class
- Island School - hand-made 20 dolls for refugee children
- King George V School - wrote Christmas cards to our community
- Renaissance College - raised \$2,400 at their market day
- YMCA of Hong Kong Christian College - raised \$6,500 on their casual dress day

Partners (cont.)

Corporates

We increased our corporate engagement with various multinationals to seek staff participation and successfully reached:

Barclays, Clifford Chance, Goldman Sachs, HSBC, ICAP, JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley, SCMP.

Goldman Sachs, Credit Suisse, the Economist Group and Zeshan, Macquarie Bank match donations from their employees. For any employee that donates to BOH, the company will also match the amount.

Foundations

We also increased our income from foundations via various grants, which varied from COVID-19 relief to designated funding for programmes.

- American Women's Association
- An International Foundation
- Centaline Charity Fund
- HER Fund
- Mars Wrigley Foundation
- Starfish Foundation

Thank you!

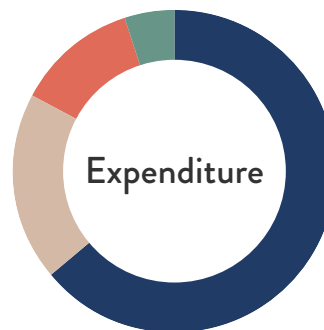


Financials

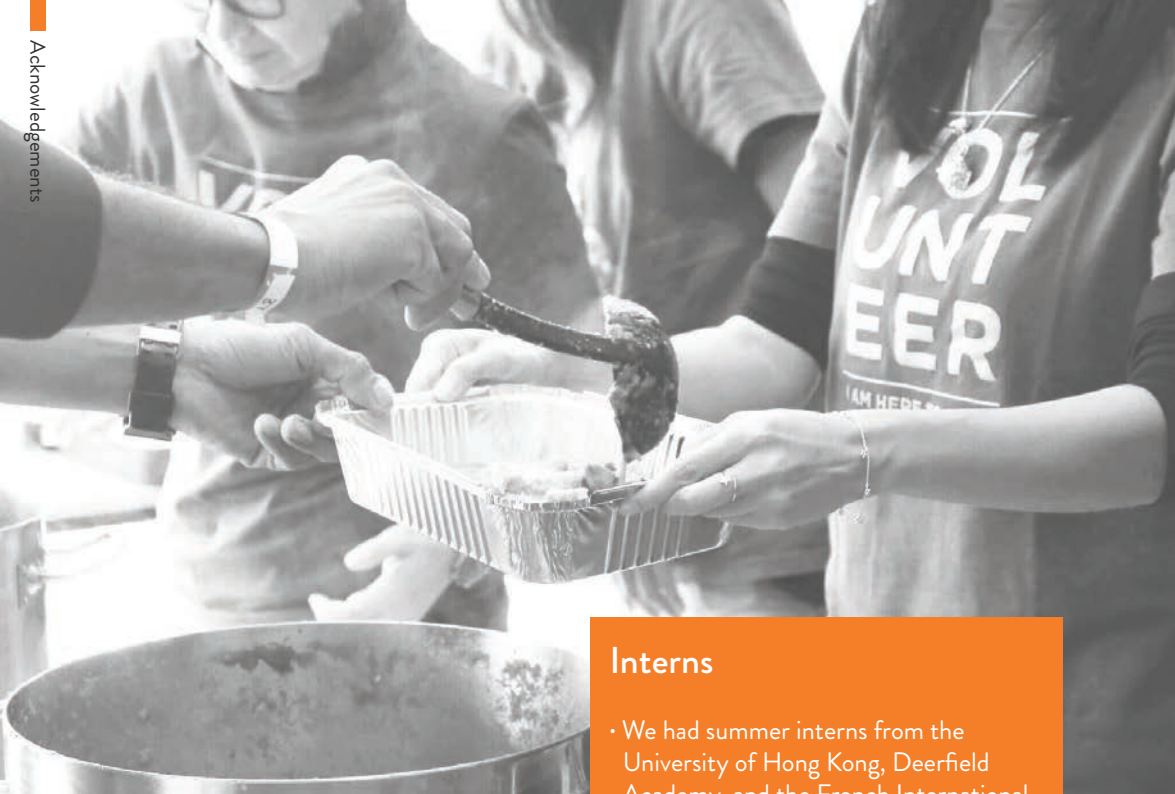
2019-20



The Vine	\$3,600,000
Monthly Sponsorship	\$2,256,022
General Donations	\$2,629,710
Campaigns & Events	\$1,042,501
Grants & Foundations	\$1,094,217
Other Income	\$459,723
Total	\$11,082,172



ROAD	\$6,607,119
STOP	\$1,239,384
Advocacy	\$544,577
Operation & Fundraising	\$1,969,152
Total	\$10,360,232



Acknowledgements

Giving comes in various forms, including people who volunteer their time and skills. Some volunteers help with one-time events, such as our Christmas party. Others commit to longer-term projects, sharing their skills and care with particular Branches of Hope programmes on an ongoing basis.

- Chinese International School, Christian Alliance International School, S&P Global, and the Vine Church helped with catering, childcare, donation packing, and distribution.

Interns

- We had summer interns from the University of Hong Kong, Deerfield Academy, and the French International School, who conducted a research project on the education system for refugees in various countries.
- We also had an intern from City University who translated our website and social media postings into Chinese.

Volunteers

- A homework support club was run by 11 volunteers for primary students and kindergarteners. It was created to provide the support that asylum seeker students lacked whilst being home-schooled.

Supporters' Words

"Every time I interacted with a refugee or asylum seeker I was reminded why the employees and volunteers at Branches of Hope are so passionate about their work. This passionate attitude is something I aspire to for my future."

- Julia Verdict, an intern from the University of Hong Kong

"I always believe that we are stronger together. We are not made to do good alone or in isolated silos. To have a kingdom impact, we need the strengths of each other. Partnering with Branches of Hope in our annual Hope for Christmas cards not only gives voice to kids to make a difference, but also invites businesses, schools, and church bodies to come together to advocate and support refugees and asylum seekers. By coming together, programs such as Branches of Hope's Keeping Kids in Kindergarten can continue to support children from refugee and asylum seekers to attend the local schools in Hong Kong."

- Gloria So, Barefoot Love

"No one chooses to be a refugee. Extending love to the refugee community brings hope in their journey."

- Lawrence Tse

"Working with Branches of Hope has been one of the most enriching experiences our students have had in secondary school. Through various campus visits and events, our students have learned about forced migration, the experience of asylum seekers in Hong Kong, and the vital work of Branches of Hope. Connecting to the stories of individuals has allowed our students to develop empathy and a desire to make a difference. Our Action for Refugees team has organised two fundraising arts festivals to support the work of ROAD, and our students are keen to continue this partnership for years to come."

- Ellen Thorne, Hong Kong Academy

