

A Home to Call their Own

SSVP helps single mother and her daughter escape abuse from family member, gets them a rental flat and furnishes it into a home



BEFORE



AFTER



Life has never been easy for Angela*, 37. Her father walked out on the family in 1991, never to be seen or heard from again and her mother passed away in 2008. She lived in the family's three-room HDB flat along with her brother and her daughter Mia, now 16.

Mia was diagnosed with kidney issues at birth. Even after surgery, her kidney functions are below normal. The girl also suffers from asthma, incontinence and a gynaecological condition. Her medication often leaves her feeling fatigued. Since Mia has special needs, she attends a special school. Despite her medical condition, she is like her mother, fiercely independent and full of life.

Things were fine at home until Angela's brother got married in

2014. The family dynamics changed. Her brother became abusive and expected Angela and Mia to do all the household chores. When a son, Ryan was born to Angela's brother and his wife, the mother and daughter were expected to care for the child too.

Angela did all the cooking, laundry and paid for the utilities and groceries, yet her brother resented her presence. Angela felt he did this because he wanted the flat for himself.

His behaviour towards her and her daughter became worse when his relationship with his wife became rocky. His wife left him in 2018 and he became depressed and the abuse towards Angela and Mia escalated. Around this time Angela was introduced to the SSVP Community Services Office and she

A month after moving in, home sweet home. Almost all household items were donated or purchased with SSVP aid as well as from kind donors.

started receiving counselling from Community Services Manager Ms Meera Ramachandran.

The use of coarse and vulgar language became the norm at home and the young Ryan also started to mimic his father, often shouting when displeased with Angela and Mia, threatening them saying: "This is my father's house, you should get out!"

As a part-time security guard, Angela had a small but steady income. Never in the best of health herself, Angela who is diabetic, started to experience severe migraines daily. Repeated visits to

Continued on Page 2...

... Continued from Page 1

the doctor brought no relief.

One day in February 2020, she had a seizure and collapsed at home. Angela was found to have excessive amounts of fluid in her brain and was hospitalised for six weeks for treatment and recovery.

This was when Mia's torture at home increased. Her uncle did not allow her to visit her mother in the hospital. Her every movement was monitored and she was expected to call her Uncle multiple times a day to check-in. This became a constant source of stress as she wasn't allowed to use a mobile phone in school but her uncle insisted that she must call him before and after school, during recess, lunch and CCAs. She was also expected to take over all the chores at home including cooking and caring for the six-year old Ryan.

Mia would be pulled out of bed late at night by her uncle and put to work, even though she was fatigued after a long day at school and also experiencing the side-effects of her medication.

He would accuse her of "pretending to sleep" to dodge her chores and made to bathe Ryan as late as 10pm! Bathing Ryan was a huge safety concern because there was no water heater and Mia would have to boil and transfer the hot water to the bathroom.

Often Mia would break down, calling Angela in tears after finishing her chores. When Angela tried to intervene, her brother insisted that she produce a letter from Mia's doctor stating that the 15-year old cannot take care of his son.

This was the last straw, Angela knew she had to move out for her daughter's sake. "I was scared because my brother is a violent person," she said. When she told her

brother of her decision, he taunted her, not believing she would do it, but she did and moved to a shelter in May 2020.

Staying at the shelter during the Covid-19 pandemic was a challenge. Angela had to quit her job because she had to abide by the strict time schedules of the shelter which were incompatible with her work shifts. Moreover, she suffered another seizure while at the shelter. Mia too fell sick. In October, she was hospitalised for three weeks due to a gynaecological condition.

Although Ministry of Social and Family Development's Social Service Office started providing assistance for their daily living needs from June, mother and daughter continued to be overwhelmed by the fear of being made homeless as Angela's small savings were dwindling.

Meanwhile, Vincentians from St Francis Xavier (SFX) Conference, worked with Ms Meera to apply for an HDB rental flat for the mother and daughter. Getting the flat was a challenging process but the SSVP team never gave up. Finally, Angela got the keys to the rental flat in January.

SFX Conference helped smoothen the path with financial

assistance for the expenses incurred for the flat's deposit and rental, conservancy charges as well as funds to purchase basic items for the new home.

Looking at the flat a month later, it looked and felt like a well-lived in home. Essentials and furniture are a mix of new and preloved; sourced by SSVP. Vincentians from the St Joaquim Conference has since taken charge of caring for Angela and her daughter as the rental flat falls within the boundaries of the Conference.

"It has really been a great blessing for us with all the help we have received from SSVP. Ms Meera has been like a family friend to Mia and me. We are so happy and grateful for all she and SSVP have done," said an appreciative Angela.

The move to a place of their own has boosted the confidence of the mother and daughter. Angela now speaks with a sparkle in her eyes. She shared: "I feel peaceful now... I want to finish my second nursing certificate (to become a Healthcare Assistant)!"

Mia too has plans. She exclaimed: "I have freedom! I'm looking forward to (studying) in F&B."

Meanwhile, relations between Angela and her brother have become better. What started with weekly video calls between Mia and her uncle as well as nephew now includes Angela going back to her old home fortnightly to cook for them as her brother's diabetes has worsened.

"I have great respect for Angela and Mia for their strength and resilience despite their difficult circumstances," said Ms Meera.

Things are definitely looking up for the mother and daughter.



**names have been changed to protect their identity.*

SSVP's Community Services Office (CSO) was set-up to provide information and referral services for families and individuals in need through casework and counselling and provide more holistic assistance to our Friends-In-Need (FINs) in Singapore.

**To contact CSO:
Call 9068 9948 (9am to 6pm,
Mon to Fri) or email
somanager@ssvpsingapore.org**

SSVP Ltd gets IPC status

SSVP Ltd., an affiliate of the Society of St Vincent de Paul National Council of Singapore (SSVP NCS), has achieved a significant milestone as it received approval as an Institution of a Public Character (IPC) from 19/03/21.

As an IPC, SSVP Ltd. is able to issue tax deductible receipts to donors for qualifying donations. In other words, qualifying cash donations of \$50 and above will

be eligible for 250% (or whatever rate the tax authorities determine) tax deduction which makes it attractive for donors, especially corporations*.

The funds raised by SSVP Ltd. will support programmes and services that are centrally managed nationwide, namely:

- The Community Services Office (CSO), which has two full time professional social workers who assist our FINs who have

complex issues.

- Milk & Diapers (MaD) Programme which provides nutrition and diapers for babies up to three years old.
- New national Social & Development Programmes to better address the complex needs for the low-income and disadvantaged in Singapore, including eligible SSVP NCS FINs.

Angel gets an angel

CSO and MaD come together to help a family

When nine-month-old Angel's mother was arrested last year her aunt, Ms H, a single mum, became her angel.

The call from the police changed Ms H's life. Her sister had been arrested. Ms H, 34, was already having a tough time. She is a single mum with a 13-year old teen of her own and also the main caregiver for her mother, a stroke victim suffering from worsening dementia. Her plate was full. Now she had to care for her sister's child Angel, all of nine months old.

Having to take care of this three-generational family, Ms H could only work part-time as a pre-school teacher, earning \$600-\$700 a month. Paying for milk and diapers for both Angel and her mum took up half her income. "I'm a very independent woman, I don't believe in asking for help unless I really need it," asserted Ms H.

Providing the best for Angel was Ms H's top priority and she knew she needed the help of others to do that. "She is a princess in my house. I want Angel to know what it is to be part of a family, having a good education, what is good for her to have a good life," shared Ms H. On the advice of a cousin whose child is a beneficiary of the Milk & Diapers Programme (MaD), she reached out to SSVP's Community Services Office.



In March 2021, the family received a welcome knock on the door by MaD volunteers, or as they are fondly called "MaD Angels", bearing Lactogen milk and Drypers diapers.

"They were so positive and very kind. They said they could tell (Angel) is very close and attached to me," said Ms H of the first home visit made by the MaD volunteers (above). Having been adopted by MaD also means one less financial worry for her and she can now spend some money on other essentials for Angel like clothes. Angel also receives aid and emotional support from SSVP St Teresa's Conference's members. 

What MaD does

MaD Programme provides milk and diapers to babies and young children of low-income families in Singapore, regardless of race, nationality or religion. Earlier this year, the programme which is run by volunteers, was centralised and is no longer divided into East and West sectors. This is to improve operational co-ordination and efficiency.

Volunteers, who currently number 130, help with the distribution of milk and diapers as well as provide friendship and support to the families they visit on a monthly basis.

Need help?

All applications for MaD assistance must be recommended by (a) Social Service Office (SSO), (b) Family Service Centres (FSC) or (c) the SSVP Community Services Office, confirming that the family qualifies for assistance. Only babies, newborn to three years old, will be provided with milk and diapers.

What we need?

Volunteers able to distribute in Choa Chu Kang, Yishun, Woodlands and \$300,000 funding for this year. To volunteer: email: milk.n.diapers@ssvpsingapore.org.

***To donate:** Go to www.giving.sg/ssvp-ltd_14295888 or issue your cheque donation to 'SSVP Ltd.' and mail it to 7A Lor 8, Toa Payoh, #04-01, Agape Village, Singapore 319264. Please include name and tax reference number (NRIC, FIN or UEN) for donations of \$50 and above for tax deduction.

SSVP in Action

Vincentians go door to door distributing care packs

While many of us have adjusted to the new Covid-norm, it has not been so easy for the financially vulnerable or disadvantaged in our community, who face greater levels of stress and financial burden.

SSVP's 29 Conferences distributed much needed and appreciated essential items across the island to all its beneficiary families numbering over 2,000, first in June and then in December 2020. Each care pack contained masks, anti-bacterial hand wash/wipes, biscuits, Milo, medicated oil and cream, towels etc.

Said Ms Suhaini, one of our FINs: "Thank you SSVP for the care pack! I'm touched beyond words and am truly grateful.

My little ones enjoyed the snacks and it made their day.

I sincerely thank all the donors and volunteers involved. God bless all of you!"

Ms Amanda Binny and Ms Christine Ng, two SSVP youth volunteers who were involved in the distribution of the care packs said: "The SSVP care pack distribution was a very



meaningful experience for the both of us! As we were able to carry out this project from the beginning to the end, the process allowed us to fully recognise the importance of the support SSVP provides for our beneficiaries of all ages and backgrounds. Throughout the distribution process, we experienced first-hand and understood how grateful the families were for the continuous provision of aid from SSVP!"

The two youth volunteers not only helped with the packing and distribution, they also made a video documenting the project which can be found on SSVP's YouTube Channel.

SSVP thanks all donors including an anonymous donor, Temasek Trust, Credit Suisse Corporate Citizenship, the many SSVP Vincentians and volunteers! SSVP is now gearing up for another nationwide Care Pack Distribution in June. Watch this space!

Sacred Heart's Operation Christmas Drop

SSVP's Sacred Heart Church Conference organised "Operation Christmas Drop" to bring goodwill and cheer to 119 Friends-In-Need (FINs) by gifting them essential domestic appliances generously donated from a donor who wished to remain anonymous. Each FIN was given a choice. They could choose one of the following items: electric kettle, rice cooker or desk or standing fan. Vincentians and volunteers responded enthusiastically to help





Fruits and a gas-oven burner; simple and practical gifts for our FINs.

with the distribution and were all smiles despite the wet weather.

Said one of the volunteers, “It is indeed a rewarding and heart-warming experience to see our FINs happy and to be a meaningful part of SSVP in bringing joy to those in need!”

Holy Family’s Christmas Bakes Project

Holy Family Conference held a special Christmas Bakes fundraising project that also provided an opportunity for Conference members to grow in fellowship.

Parishioners either pledged a bake by donating money for Vincentians to bake the cakes for the FINs or purchased a bake made by the members.

The Project kicked-off in late November and member bakers baked a grand total of 110 bottles of biscotti, 87 bottles of butter cookies, 63 bottles of coffee

biscuits, 38 bottles of Nutella tarts and 46 French chocolate cakes. Members also baked gingerbread men, chocolate chip cookies and butter cakes.

The Conference raised over \$9,000 from the project.

SLDM touches hearts during Advent

As part of the Church of St Vincent de Paul’s Advent Encounter Programme which was conducted over three months, Vincentians from the church’s St. Louise de Marillac (SLDM) Conference “buddied” with parishioners, and visited 36 FIN families, bearing modest gifts of food and household items. They also offered prayers for each family and lent a

listening ear to them. Vincentians raised over \$17,000 in support of the Advent Encounter and the ongoing work of the Conference.

During the three months of the programme, there were on-line reflections by Fr Eugene Vaz and Fr JJ Fenelon on the Pope’s Year of the Poor Message.

Said Thomas Lew, President of SLDM Conference, “We started this Advent Encounter with hope and promise. We ended it with gentle affirmation that God’s work is served and supported, not with grand gestures, but the simplicity of walking with Jesus. Our gratitude goes to the parish priests, pastoral council, parishioners and prayer groups for their wholehearted participation and unstinting generosity.” 



Our Combined Thanksgiving Prayer Session on Feb 5, 2021 which marked the end of the Programme.

Youths Ignited

Holy Cross Confirmands Raise \$12,316 for SSVP

In December 2020, the confirmands and facilitators from Church of the Holy Cross organised Project G.O.D., an annual Advent event which serves to bond the community and also to raise funds.

Organising Project G.O.D. was no easy feat in the middle of a pandemic and the 41 youths, with the guidance of the catechists, creatively curated a host of events and activities to cater to the different interests of the parishioners.

This included staging an adaptation of the Broadway musical “Godspell” by Stephen Schwartz and John-Michael Tebelak which was directed by Franciscan Friar



Martin Low, OFM with a guest performance by Holy Cross Parish Priest Fr Henry Siew.

They staged two sold out shows.

There was a “Bake and Coffee” stall. The stall also sold handicrafts, tote bags and knick knacks, many designed and made by the confirmands with delivery included as part of the service. The aim was to donate the funds raised for SSVP.

“While working on Project G.O.D., I was grateful that I could use the gifts God has given me to help people with needs and I hope to be able to continue to use them in the future for others,” said Eleanor, a confirmand and artist for the tote bags.

Some of the confirmands had the opportunity to team up with Vincentians and visit the FINs. Said Sally, a catechist who worked with the confirmands: “We adopted SSVP because it has a Conference in Holy Cross and we thought it would give the youths a better “link” in the church. It was a great opportunity outside catechism



lessons to know more about each other and that they worked together with a common goal - to help the less fortunate.”

On 7 February, Florence Tan, President SSVP National Council and members of SSVP’s Youth Wing met the confirmands at the Church of the Holy Cross. Florence and SSVP Holy Cross President Benjamin Liew presented certificates of appreciation to the confirmands.

The confirmands in turn presented a cheque of \$12,316 to SSVP.

Adonara Mucek from the SSVP Youth Wing spoke to the Holy Cross Youths about the mission of SSVP and the programmes and services provided by SSVP which the funds will help support. She also shared more about the activities specifically organised by the Youth Wing which includes faith formation as well as projects they embark on for the community-at-large, which encompasses those in need regardless of race or religion. 

Vincentian Youth Engagement 2021

SSVP Youth Wing hopes to engage more youths and provide them the environment to love God and love their neighbours.

Apart from fun, games, fellowship outings and community engagements, plans include spiritual formation that will provide the youths the platform to enter the right disposition to be synchronised

with the Holy Spirit.

This year, the calendar of activities include “Project Compassion” where youths will lead with the aim to integrate the disadvantaged back into society. A fund-raising project called SSVP Art Jam is also planned for July.

Get in touch with Anselm Vincent (email: anselm_2@hotmail.com) to find out more about SSVP Youth Wing! 



Young sisters Cook Up a Fundraiser

It all started with the rain.

Seven-year-old Caitlyn and her nine-year-old sister Natalie saw workers toiling hard in the rain at a construction site across their home. This inspired the sisters into action to do something positive for those in need.

With the encouragement and guidance of their mother Adelyn Chan, the sisters spent two days brainstorming and drawing up the plans for their first-ever fundraiser. They called it “Granola Goodness”.

Said Ms Chan: “When they suggested they wanted to help the workers who were toiling in the rain, my first question to them was, ‘Do you have money?’ They innocently told me that they could sell granola to make money. I thought this was a great opportunity to discuss and put into action gratitude, kindness, generosity and charity, among

many virtues. They also had to be responsible!”

The sisters decided to adopt SSVP Ltd. as the beneficiary. Why SSVP? They had witnessed first-hand the impact of SSVP’s work, having joined their families of their godparents in a SSVP food distribution activity earlier.

“We want to help young children like us and their families. We can all do something to help the needy in this pandemic, even in small ways,” said Natalie and Caitlyn.

The Granola Goodness campaign was launched just before Christmas on giving.sg and offered donors delicious granola lovingly made by the girls with a minimum \$20 donation.

The response from supporters and donors was absolutely



overwhelming, and the campaign reached the target of \$1,000 within days. It eventually raised \$3,000.

Said the sisters: “We hope that this little fundraiser has helped to create some awareness for SSVP Ltd. and will inspire others to come forward to contribute too. Our friends have asked if this will be an annual affair - maybe that’s an idea to explore!” 

Fr Vaz’s 50th Sacerdotal Anniversary

Fr Eugene Vaz was ordained a priest 50 years ago on February 13, 1971.

To mark the Golden Jubilee of his ordination, a mass was celebrated at the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour (OLPS), the very same church where he was ordained 50 years ago. While only 100 people could attend the mass at OLPS, it was watched by many more via livestream on YouTube.

Fr Vaz has been SSVP’s spiritual advisor since 2013. 



There's something new at the SSVV Shop

The much awaited SSVVCafé at the SSVV Shop in Geylang is now open. The SSVVCafé had been part of the blueprint from day one and it has finally become a reality. The SSVVCafé provides

an added space and amenity for shoppers and visitors alike to have a tete-a-tete over coffee, tea and pastries.

Profits from the SSVVCafé will help fund and sustain SSVV

programmes and initiatives for its Friends-in-Need (FINs).

Despite having its operations disrupted because of the Covid pandemic, SSVV Shop has a growing following especially among the Catholic and 'thriftig' communities. It has expanded its social media presence to include Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Carousell.

During these difficult times when many are tightening their belts, prices are kept affordable so that the community, including the disadvantaged, have a place to purchase quality, new and pre-loved merchandise such as apparel, accessories, electrical and household items.

To make things even more wallet-friendly, the SSVV Shop will be offering a whopping 30% discount during the Great Singapore Sale (June) period. 



Follow and Like Us: Be the first to hear about the latest promotions, flash sales and online sales!

<https://www.facebook.com/SSVPSHOPSINGAPORE>
https://www.instagram.com/ssvshop_sg/
https://www.tiktok.com/@ssvshop_sg
<https://www.carousell.sg/ssvshopsg>

Location: 501, Geylang Road Singapore 389459

Tel: 69742480

Operating Hours: Tuesday - Sunday
(10am - 4pm) Closed on Monday

Donate for a Cause

You can donate pre-loved items that are new or in good condition, Our wish list includes fashion accessories (handbags, sunglasses, watches, jewellery, etc.), electrical items (handphones, notebooks, etc.) as well as kitchenware and household appliances. We are unable to accept bulky items, shoes, books, video/audio discs or toys and, for this period, apparel. They may be dropped off at the Shop during operating hours.