



There is immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to work toward the same goals.” – Idowu Koyenikan



Annual Report

2021 - 2022

About OPEnE

As the name suggests, OPEnE, or the Organisation of People for Engagement and Enterprise, is an organization that believes in the inclusive engagement at all levels of society in order to promote sustainable change. OPEnE was created in 2016 by a group of like-minded and motivated individuals, who continue to engage as board members, advisors, and staff. OPEnE is committed to strengthening systems for community empowerment, and fostering enterprise, recognizing the importance of business for a community, particularly when used for social good. OPEnE works with some of the most marginalized groups in Sri Lanka, such as agricultural and coastal fishing communities, and has helped provide these communities with the same opportunities available to those in more developed parts of the island

Our work currently contributes towards the following Sustainable Development Goals:

1. No poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Peace, Justice, and strong Institutions
7. Life below water
8. Life on land

Our Vision

A pluralistic Sri Lanka where all are empowered and included

Our Mission

To empower individuals through knowledge, skills, tools, and networks to make sustainable changes in their own lives and the lives of their community

Core values

- **Human Dignity**

OPEnE recognizes that everybody possesses a special value intrinsic to them and should be treated with respect regardless of age, ability, status, gender, ethnicity, religion or orientation

- **Transparency and Accountability**

OPEnE believes transparency and accountability are critical elements to achieve higher quality governance and empower organizational members and stakeholders to have confidence in the decision-making and management processes of OPEnE

- **Good Governance**

OPEnE strives to ensure the division of power and responsibilities between the board, management, and staff are clear to ensure accountability to our stakeholders

- **Participation**

OPEnE believes in collaborative engagement at all levels of society to build inclusivity and thus promote sustainable change

- **Creativity and Innovation**

OPEnE as an organization has an open culture that is always learning and embracing challenges to improve its functioning

Where We Work

We implement our programs in the Mannar district, focusing on the Manthai west, Madhu, Nanattan, and Musali DS divisions. Mannar district, situated in the northwest of Sri Lanka, comprises mostly Tamil and Muslim communities. In 2022, we have expanded our program to include the Poonakary DS division in the Kilinochchi district.

The regions that we focused on were devastated by protracted conflict, with little opportunity for growth and development throughout the decades-long war. Communities experienced continuous displacement from 1990 onwards, only to be resettled after the end of the armed conflict in 2009. The conflict and upheaval have left lasting impacts on families and communities.

How We Work

- Partnership with target groups in a manner that emphasizes human dignity and cultural diversity and strengthens their organizations.
- Participation in decision-making leading to greater and sustained commitment to achieving developmental objectives. We believe in a

high level and quality of participation by the weakest segment of society in the decision-making of their development initiatives.

- Development as a process and not a gift. We hold as a fundamental tenet that people living in poverty have, in varying degrees, personal capacities, local resources, and external opportunities for their own self-development.

OPEnE's Strategic goals

- Households' income and nutrition is resilient through sustainable, climate-smart practices and diversified income
- Community successfully advocates for their rights and improved services
- Create an inclusive platform for vulnerable communities to network and collectively advocate with duty bearers and other stakeholders to ensure sustainable socioeconomic development of their communities
- Students exiting school education are equipped technically and mentally to pursue their life choices
- Increased participation of women in economic, social, political, and other engagements
- Disaster prevention, preparedness, and response (mitigation and remedies)
- Promoting values of social cohesion among the community and students including psychosocial care

Our Key Achievements

1. Education

We focused our education programs on improving English language skills and promoting digital learning by:

- building teacher capacity
- improving English language education
- supporting the use of digital devices and resources and
- strengthening the involvement of parents in school education.

Mannar and Kilinochchi districts

- 117 teachers in 57 schools in Mannar and Kilinochchi districts were trained to improve their capacities in 1) teaching English as a second language and 2) the use of digital resources and devices to promote interactive and self-learning.
- We continue to support teachers in all 57 schools on an ongoing basis to improve their capacity to effectively use digital platforms and resources during English classes.

Outcomes:

- 8150 children are benefitting through these initiatives. In order to promote interactive and digital learning, 33 smart panels and 25 2TB external hard disks have been distributed with partial financial contributions from schools' development societies to promote digital and interactive learning.
- Parents have been sensitized to the importance of acquiring English language skills, digital learning, and self-learning.
- We have provided opportunities for the children, particularly in rural areas to be familiar in the use of digital devices and equipment and gained access to a wide range of learning resources.

Madhu education zone

- All 49 schools in the Madhu education zone were provided with worksheets and English handwriting booklets benefitting 3699 students
- 318 students were distributed with pen drives containing digital English learning resources to promote mainly home-based education in the midst of Covid.
- During Covid, using 30 village-based volunteers, we supported 775 students to engage in home-based education.



We piloted an English camp to improve spoken English skills benefitting 44 students and hope to scale up in the future.

- 382 members of school development societies were mobilized and trained to actively participate in school development activities including fundraising.

- We helped 11 schools to set up environment-friendly school gardens to impart agricultural skills to students.

In terms of overall outcomes, we have contributed to the increase GCE (O/L) pass rate of English in the Madhu Education Zone from 22.36% to 35.28% in 2020, being the highest increase in the northern province. We still have a long way to go to improve English proficiency, particularly in spoken English.

2. Community Capacity Building



Our community capacity-building strategy focuses on grassroots women's empowerment through the Self-help group (SHG) approach. Each self-help group is

autonomous and governed by itself. These SHGs provide a platform for training women, collective action, and promoting good financial management within their groups.

OPEnE plays a role in initiating and strengthening these groups, and rejuvenating groups that have fallen behind. We do this by providing training to meet needs identified by the SHGs: to improve SHG governance, financial management, leadership, psychosocial affairs, and livelihood opportunities.

During 2021-2022 we worked with 189 self-help groups consisting of 1833 members.

We saw many positive outcomes from the community capacity-building program this year. SHGs have gained skills in household financial management, problem-solving, participatory decision-making, dealing with debt, communication, and conflict management, and learned approaches to promote pluralism and social cohesion.

Women empowered through this process are supporting their peers in times of need both materially and emotionally to cope with challenges as a result of Covid and the slowing down of the economy. They have also played an active role in resolving internal conflicts in their groups as well as in their community. Women were also

collectively engaging in advocating to improve their services to their community by duty bearers and other stakeholders.

The psychosocial first responder training provided immediate support to families under stress to cope with that particular situation.

The remote rural women are significantly empowered to engage at a grassroots level with community stakeholders, Government, and private sectors, enhancing their influence in social, economic, and political spheres. Further, women's overall well-being and resilience to cope with challenges has improved.

3. Food Security and Economic Empowerment

This year we focused on food security and economic empowerment initiatives that could help households to cope with the COVID pandemic. Economic activities slowed down in our target communities as a result of Covid. Programs became difficult to run as inputs and transport were affected.

We focused our attention on home-based activities that would promote food production for consumption and earn additional income for survival for 640 households. As the emergency continued for several months, food produced at home complemented and supported the food needs in the community. The training and ongoing technical support at the household level contributed to improving agronomic practices including the shift to organic practices.

livelihood initiatives such as livestock rearing, freshwater aquaculture, provision of fishing gears, micro-enterprise, and agriculture helped 140 households to cope better with the crisis.



OPEnE also facilitated market access of remote village communities to retailers in Mannar and other small towns in the district.

This year we commenced some aquaculture initiatives. OPEnE recognizes the potential of developing small-scale aquaculture in some of our target areas. We also see opportunities for women entrepreneurs to enter this space. We are also concerned about large-scale commercial aquaculture ventures which can threaten the environment and life and lifestyles of small-scale fishing communities. The way forward is for communities to own and manage aquaculture initiatives in a sustainable way and not become mere aquaculture laborers in their own backyards.

We have begun some initiatives to train the community in aquaculture and facilitate women to obtain the license to set up aquaculture farms and access the low-interest capital to start the ventures.

We have a particular focus to empower women to be involved in economic development and also be involved in the areas that were male-dominated in the past.

4. Environmental Justice

We continued our work to raise awareness of the impacts of some land use practices on the environment and to encourage more sustainable practices.



Climate change and over-exploiting the environment such as IUU? practices, sand mining, and irresponsible use of chemicals and fertilizers have become major threats to sustainable living. The lack of knowledge and will to arrest these situations

is alarming. OPEnE is conducting the program to sensitize communities on these issues and explore alternative ways through which lifestyles and livelihoods can become more environmentally friendly.

Our focus of work has been on coastal communities, women's groups, and schools. We will continue to explore good practices in economic development activities that will reduce the negative impact on the environment and encourage communities to take more responsibility to protect the environment.

Along with other civil society actors, we continue to lobby with the state to ensure adequate environmental safeguards are in place in mega commercial projects such as ilmenite mining.

5. Emergency Preparedness and Response

Covid was a major disaster in our target areas. We focused our attention primarily on Covid prevention work. We supported the strengthening of 73 Covid prevention committees to improve their leadership capacity and safety while exercising their duties. Covid prevention committees were the mechanism set up by the Government at the grassroots level to lead Covid prevention activities and to support Covid victims.

We also supported intermediate Covid care centers established in Mannar districts by providing bed linen and sanitary items for Covid patients.



The SHGs structure was an immense help when mobility was restricted and the savings accumulated were very useful for emergency expenses. The emotional support provided by the groups during this disaster was a great relief.

400 daily wage-earning, extremely vulnerable families were provided with food dry rations during the lockdown when they had no other means of

income. OPEnE home garden initiatives became an important means of boosting nutritional food and food diversity.

Overcoming future challenges

Challenges

Economic and political instability is growing. The agriculture policy to go organically quickly is expected to have serious food security challenges and also serious blocks in migrant worker income sources. These challenges have created an open mind for communities, civil societies, and state actors to find alternative solutions to hope in life. Communities are willing to try different options to maximize the resources available to them in their neighborhood. Local food production and consumption of local produce are increasing. The deep realization that local food production and rural community life should not entirely compromise and really solely on export and service-oriented economy. The role played by social media and other virtual communication has had both positive and negative impacts. It has been possible to reach remote grassroots communities virtually and the trend is growing.

Future Plans

We anticipate a food crisis and loss of traditional livelihood opportunities including foreign remittances and a reduction in Government services. OPEnE will continue to focus on building resilience with an emphasis on food security, by optimizing the sustainable use of available local resources for food production. We will also work to diversify livelihood opportunities through a value chain approach to harness land, water, and sea resources with an eye for protecting the environment as well.

Women still remain underrepresented in the economic development process in our target areas. We will continue grassroots-level initiatives to strengthen and empower women in ways that increase their influence in the political, economic, and social spheres.

Education will continue to play a major role in shaping the future generation to face the challenges of rapidly changing work environments and community engagement. OPEnE will continue to support the education system to narrow the gap between current practices and future needs. We will intensify our work in English language education, teacher capacity-building, use of digital devices and resources, and strengthening the involvement of parents in school development

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31ST MARCH 2022

	2022	2021
Non Current Assets		
Property Plant & Equipment	15,744,280.00	12,601,165.00
	15,744,280.00	12,601,165.00
Intangible Assets		
Software-Quick book	450,000.00	
Current Assets		
Staff loan	40,000.00	-
Cash & Cash Equivalentents	30,427,313.66	6,855,167.54
Total Assets	46,661,593.66	19,456,332.54
Accumulated Fund	21,227,832.86	16,311,768.10
Project Fund	21,717,554.85	875,050.05
	42,945,387.71	17,186,818.15
Non Current Liabilities		
Payable Overheads	-	-
Taxation	929,878.16	494,757.45
Provision for Salary Gratuity and Bonus	2,606,327.79	1,734,756.94
Audit Fee	180,000.00	40,000.00
	3,716,205.95	2,269,514.39
Total Funds & Liabilities	46,661,593.66	19,456,332.54

Bird's view of projects implemented

During the Year April 2021 - March 2022

Donor	Private donors, ZOA, Australian Volunteers International and Hope4Child	Woord en Daad	Diakonia	Neelan Tiruchelva m Trust (NTT)	GIZ SRP	World Vision Lanka	The Asia Foundation	Kindernothilfe (KNH)
Area of focus	Education	Community Capacity Building, Environmental Justice, Food Security & Economic Empowerment	Community Capacity Building, Environmental Justice, Emergency Response & Economic Empowerment	Education and Emergency Response	Community Capacity Building & Economic Empowerment	Food Security	Community Capacity Building & Economic Empowerment	Community Capacity building
Project cost in LKR	3,042,812.53	7,927,649.2	11,642,883.72	2,484,066.72	11,046,246.82	1,068,166.72	427,367.84	1,926,532.80
Project status	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Completed	Completed	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Targeted populations	3750 students, 30 Teachers and 1000 parents	700 fishers, 325 families, and 1000 students	575 families, 100 teachers, 2800 students, and 50 GN level committees	2675 students & 40 teachers	1950 Self-Help Group members	210 families	400 women, 100 youth, and 100 other community members	2,100 Self-Help Group members
Geographical locations covered	Manthai West and Madhu DS Divisions, Mannar district	Manthai West, Musali, and Madhu DS Divisions, Mannar district	Manthai West, Musali, and Madhu DS Divisions, Mannar district	Manthai West and Madhu DS Divisions, Mannar district	Manthai West and Musali DS Divisions, Mannar district	Nanattan DS Division, Mannar district	Manthai West DS Division, Mannar district	Manthai West and Musali Divisions, Mannar district

Our contribution to Change

Story 1 : Expanding family businesses



Kalista lives in Vaddakandal, Paladiputhukulam with her three children who were affected by the war. She and her husband were injured physically in the war and could not go to work outside and the family lives in poverty. Kalista became depressed because she could not meet their basic household needs.

During this time, she joined a Self-help group (SHG) and gradually began to make savings. With the savings, she planned to start a snack mixture production business. There is a demand amongst the school students and others in her village as the mixed ingredients were delicious. She was happy and started expanding her business with the loan taken from the SHG.

She received advice on how to calculate the cost of production and analyze the profit which helped expand her marketing facilities outside her village. With the income earned, she was able to meet the basic needs of her family.

Story 2: Supporting COVID prevention work

Prashanth Sathanantham is a 29-year-old young Grama Niladhari. His native place is Adampan. He was appointed in October 2020 as a frontline COVID prevention worker for the Vellankulam GN Division. He is responsible for Vellankulam, Kanesapuram, Indian housing scheme, and Seva kiramam villages. These villages are backward. The primary occupation of the people living here is agriculture. About 900 people live here, and most of them were uneducated.

As a frontline worker, Prashanth Sathanantham works directly with the people at the village. He stated "Our GN has a team named Covid Prevention Committee to monitor the effects and guide the people to stay safe from Covid 19 virus. The government instructed us to reform the Dengue prevention team into Covid 19 prevention team on the 1st of April 2020. After a year we had a reformation among the team".

This group was formed to provide instructions to the public, create awareness on Covid 19 virus and monitor people coming from outside of the village to minimize the spread of the virus. There are about 10 members in the Covid prevention committee. Grama Niladhari is the leader of this committee. This committee has to work with the public to promote health guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus.

Covid spread cases are found in the village but the people continue to be careless. He stated that "It is most difficult to explain the Covid-19 prevention implications and to follow the health approaches associated with it for the village people ", and he stated Complete knowledge regarding the handling of Covid 19 prevention kit was found to be lacking among community members".

In order to strengthen community capacity building during this pandemic situation, OPEnE provided Covid prevention kits and safety kits for frontline workers working in the villages. Prashanth Sathanantham stated 'Considering the safety of our team, no one has yet provided prevention kits'.



Frontline workers are seen as normal wage earners. They can't afford the cost of safety kits during the pandemic. When expressing thanks, he said "There is a difference between being told to wear a mask and being told to wear a mask and providing it. Even though these materials are not enough to use for long, action taken with such social concern should be appreciated". The

safety kits provided for them could be used by the team for three months. This is an essential need that needs to be met at the right time. He declared "The

instructions provided by the OPEne were instrumental in handling health practices and providing our services to the people".

OPEne arranged a meeting with DS, PHA, MOH, and Covid prevention community (frontline workers) when providing prevention kits and discussed the issues faced by the frontline workers, their duties and responsibilities towards the community, and instructions on how to protect themselves and others from the virus spread. After this kind of gathering, they feel that they are more united and they have other government and non-government officials support to work for the community. Prashanth Sathanantham stated that "Explanation of the use of prevention kits and the assistance provided will enable us to engage in fieldwork more vigilantly and effectively in future". After the gathering, they arranged meetings twice a month to strengthen the community and to provide the right information at right time to the District secretariat. When talking with him he said, "We have to make all the people in our village to handle the health practices properly" .

Our Team

Board of Directors

1. Mr.Adaikalam Lesley Jesurajan –Chairperson
2. Mr. Eliyathamby Christy Jeyaruban –Member
3. Ms. Nishika Cherine Fonseka –Member

Staff Members

1. Mr.Arulpragasam Suthagar, Team Leader
2. Mr .Varuna Ragavananda Alphonsus –Advisor
3. Jesuthashan Anexly - Project Officer
4. Christhuthash Mariyavanistala – Caretaker
5. Rajavarotheyam Oampragash- Admin & Finance Coordinator
6. Kunthavi Umanath- Senior Project officer
7. Ragunathan Mary Victoriya - Project Officer
8. Joy Jenivan - Driver & Logistic officer
9. Marynathan Qunson - Programe Officer
10. Sahayanathan Mary Asvini Coonghe - Project Officer
11. Anthonipillai George - Programe coordinator
12. Robert Roxcy - Project Officer
13. Subakeerthana Selvam Sacredheart - Project Officer
14. Francis Alex Roche -Project Coordinator

15. Tharmakulasingam Sivananthan - Project Officer
16. Mohamed Akbar Fathima Fainas - Admin & Finance Assistant
17. Anthonopillai Jacob - Project Officer
18. Mahenthiran Kajenthiran - Project Officer
19. Thommai Michel Collins - Project Officer
20. Mahenthiran Thevakanthan - Project Officer
21. Peter Thivishan - Project Officer
22. Sivatharsini Raveenthiran - Project Coordinator
23. Kalyani Balathas - Project Coordinator

Our Partners

OPEnE is very grateful to the many individuals and organizations who have assisted us in fulfilling our mission. Our partners throughout the past year included local volunteers, government and non-government organizations, and international volunteers such as student interns from the University College of Leuven-Limburg in Belgium, a long-term volunteer based in Mannar (ESL trainer, curriculum developer from Poland). We are also extremely grateful to our donors, who included:



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