

**BLOSSOM  
TRUST**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2019-2020**



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Dear reader,

We are starting a new decade, a time to reflect on our accomplishments of the past decade and look forward to our goals for the coming years. Blossom Trust has been working towards the development of Tamil Nadu for the past 27 years, bringing support directly to the community.

We believe that change happens at the grassroots level. We have worked closely with the local community, the government and international agencies, to bridge the gap between different stakeholders. When we started our work in 1993, we brought programs specifically for women and girls. Over the years we have broadened that perspective to the most vulnerable in the community. Access to health for all has been one of our main objectives, and our projects have reached over 500,000 people.

Going into 2020, we have re-evaluated our goals and set new goals for our future work. Supporting the women in our community will once again be our main mandate, within the four focus areas of health, economic empowerment, social empowerment and environmental protection. It is important that women get a main role in the development of India and we continue to advocate for their rights to the parties involved.

2020 also brought us COVID-19. Like many other countries, India has been heavily affected, with hundreds of cases across the nation and restrictions on movement already being enforced. While we practice social distancing, we continue to create awareness in our communities on how to minimize the chances of catching COVID-19.

As the world is entering an unprecedented scenario, it is hard to predict how the coming year will unfold. At Blossom we will continue to find creative ways to support the most vulnerable people. Especially in time of crisis, it is crucial we continue to give a voice to the voiceless.

Mercy Annapoorani,  
Executive Director



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# ABOUT BLOSSOM TRUST

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Blossom Trust was founded in 1993 as a grassroots NGO with the initial focus on social, economic empowerment of underprivileged women and a safe and nurturing space for vulnerable children living in Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu. Over time, our vision has broadened by supporting those living with HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Diabetes, building community capacity in disadvantaged areas of Tamil Nadu while remaining true to our original objective of child and women's advocacy.

Blossom builds the capacity of communities by forming partnerships with community-based organisations and stakeholders in society. Blossom uses a participatory approach to development, involving beneficiaries in the planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of its projects. We have built our international donor base with volunteer outreach, an internship programme and establishing partnerships with global stakeholders involving beneficiaries in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its projects.

## Mission

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Through women empowerment & gender equality, ensure that communities are self-sufficient in improving their health, environmental, economic and social needs. We aim to achieve this by working in partnership with local and global actors.

## Vision

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Blossoming the power in every individual to reinforce healthy, thriving communities across Southern India.

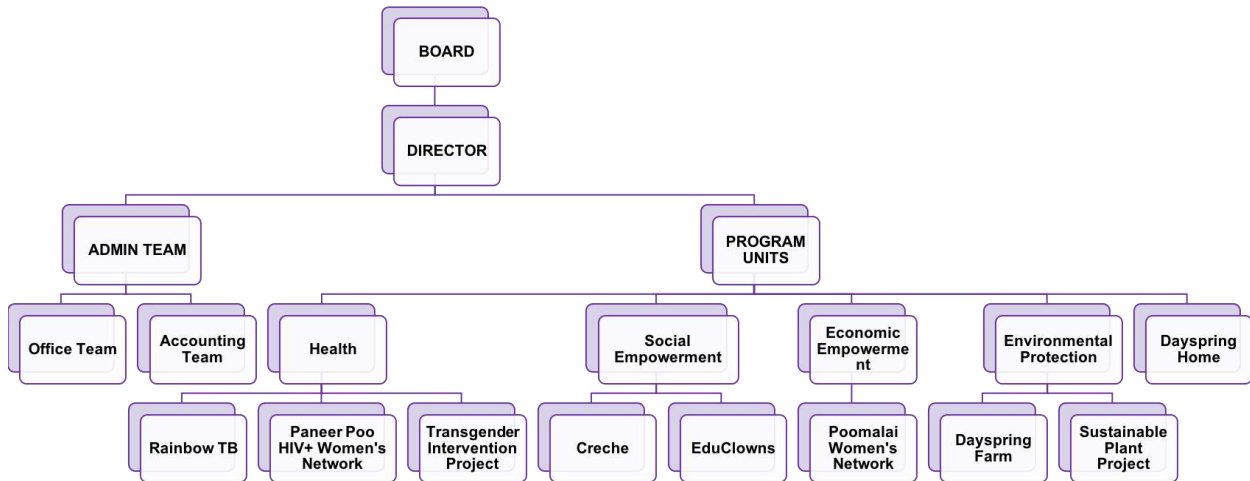
## Blossom Values

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- ❑ *Gender equality.* We believe in gender equality, achieved through the empowerment of women and the inclusion of men.
- ❑ *Community engagement.* We believe in acting on the needs voiced by the community, to bridge the gap between the grass roots and regional, national and international stakeholders.
- ❑ *Universal health.* We believe in the fundamental right to healthcare for marginalised groups, through access to education and access to treatment.

- ❑ *Sustainability.* We believe in sustainable practices that produce tangible results and measurable impact.
- ❑ *Collaboration.* We believe in cross-sector partnerships, harnessing expertise to implement the most effective change.

## Organisational Structure



## Board Members

Name	Qualifications	Member Role	Occupation
Mrs. T. Mercy Annapoorani	M. Com, M.A., M.W.S.	Managing Trustee	Social worker
Mrs. G. Vatsala	Diploma in CDDM	Treasurer	Self employed
Mr. C. John Jasper	B.E., M.B.A.	Trustee	Engineer
Dr. M. J. I. Raj	M.S.W., M.A. (psychology), M.Ed., M. Phil., Ph.D.	Trustee	Principal
B. Mareeswari	Diploma in Costume Designing and Dress Making	Trustee	Teacher



# PROJECTS OF THE YEAR 2019-2020

During the past year we have continued several of our longer running projects, as well as implementing new initiatives. It is important to note that the spread of COVID-19 has already impacted our work this year, and it will most likely continue to do so in the coming months. As access to information about the disease and prevention is limited in rural areas, Blossom will continue to create awareness and help our communities to understand how to stay healthy in this time of crisis.

## Transgender HIV Intervention Program

Since 2018, Blossom Trust has been running a transgender project in the Kanchipuram district, in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society (TNSACS). The transgender project in Kanchipuram reaches more than 100 communities with approximately 3000 transgenders. In India the trans community is often subject to discrimination, and due to a lack of opportunities they mostly work in the informal and entertainment sector, leaving them even more vulnerable, at risk of contracting STIs and/or HIV and experiencing a great deal of sexual violence and physical abuse. Our targeted intervention program specifically targets Transgenders but also includes Female Sex Workers (FSW), Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), Injecting

Drug Users (IDU) and bridge populations such as truckers and migrants.

**Results:** Within the fiscal year 2019-2020, a total of 510 people were tested for STIs, of which 250 for HIV, and 430 trans people were screened for tuberculosis. Next to this, Blossom supported 18 trans people in setting up a savings bank account, obtained 10 voter ID cards and supported 18 trans people to get government insurance. Currently, we are focussing on the distribution of condoms, educating the transgender community about HIV/STIs and providing counselling to those in need. Complementary to these interventions, there is a toll-free helpline number for high risks groups to register complaints on stigmas and discrimination.





## Freedom Cups

Menstruation is in many places still considered as a taboo. In South India, menstruation is an even bigger challenge. Approximately 30-40% of women in rural areas in South India use products that are not specifically designed for menstruation such as cloth. Sanitary pads are often expensive and are not customized to women's needs in specific contexts. To provide them with an inexpensive and sustainable alternative, Blossom collaborated in 2019 with Freedom Cups. Freedom Cups produce menstruation cups, which are sold all over the world.



A menstruation cup can last up to 10 years, making it a sustainable alternative to pads. For every cup that is purchased, one cup is given to a woman who cannot afford it. Under this program, Freedom Cups provided 300 cups to women in the rural areas of Tamil Nadu. Between November 13 and November 16, we visited villages to distribute the cups, providing women with training on how to use the cups and answer any questions they might have. After 4 months, Blossom returned to the villages to see whether the women were using the cups, and what their experiences had been.



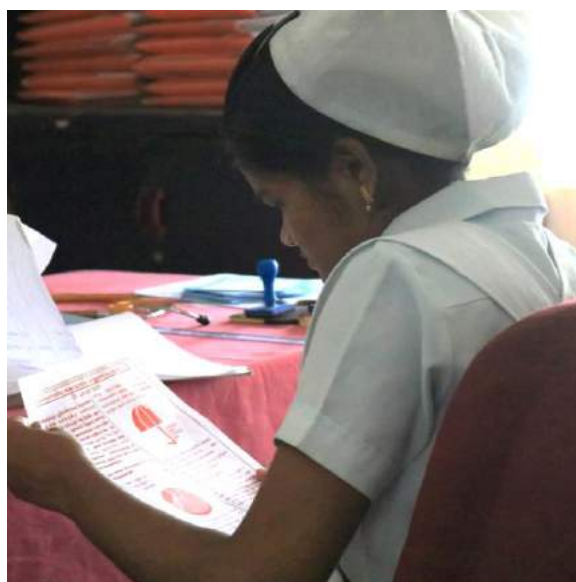
**Results:** In total 300 cups were distributed in 8 villages and in one school. Women felt comfortable to talk openly about their experiences with menstruation and were particularly interested in the opportunity to not have to buy pads anymore. During the next couple of months, Blossom received positive feedback and many requests for more menstruation cups. In March Blossom conducted a study amongst the women who received a cup, to better understand their experiences and possible hurdles. The feedback was a resounding success! 83% of the women interviewed used the cup to some degree, with 67% using it exclusively. Many of the women felt that the Freedom Cup gave them greater freedom during the day, was cost effective and easy to use. Although some women reported some initial fears or concerns, mostly these were easily addressed. Based on the positive response of the project, we are enthusiastic to develop and implement a new phase of the project, to provide even more local women with menstruation cups.



## Universal Health Coverage Day 2019

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Health for all is a goal we have worked towards since our inception. This year we took action for Universal Health Coverage Day 2019, to advocate for access to health for every individual, especially the most vulnerable in our community. On December 11 we took to the streets of Virudhunagar District. Unfortunately, too many people still do not have access to health care in India. While healthcare is free, access varies simply on whether you live in urban establishments or rural communities. In the latter, access to health is considerably limited compared to urban areas. In order to urge our leaders to commit to working towards health for all, Blossom created a signature campaign.



During the 2-day campaign, our EduClowns, armed with petitions and informational flyers, informed the community of the importance of health care for all. People were asked to sign our petition, which aims to urge our local government to once again commit to a healthcare system that is inclusive and takes care of the most vulnerable in our community.

**Results:** During the 2 days, our team covered all 11 blocks of Virudhunagar district, distributing 5000 flyers and received 750 signatures. Our presence was received positively by the community, by the healthcare providers and by patients. The collected signatures were presented to the local Deputy Director of Health Services, who once again committed to putting his efforts towards an inclusive healthcare system.

## EduClowns

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Our EduClowns are an integral component of the Blossom family. The EduClowns have been at the core of our programs ever since its inception. The performers come straight from our communities and self-help groups, representing the communities they serve. This year EduClowns supported our Universal Health Coverage Day project, as described above. Blossom also developed a new Strategic Plan for the projects of the coming years, which intends to shape new opportunities for future EduClowns campaigns. We look forward to seeing the expansion of EduClowns into new initiatives and new projects for improved advocacy and education projects.



## World TB Day 2020

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Every year Blossom observes World TB Day on March 24. By March 2020, COVID-19 had become a global pandemic, impacting the lives of million across the globe. The arrival of COVID-19 has given many people in our communities an added layer of vulnerability.

Unable to go to the people on World TB Day, we launched an online campaign to educate people on how to limit the possibility of exposure of COVID-19. Every day of the week a post was circulated on our social media pages, as well as on WhatsApp.

## International Women's Day 2020

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Gender equality is a fundamental human right, but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful and prosperous world. International Women's Day is a day to celebrate the social, economic and cultural achievements of women across the world. It is also a day to challenge the bias and discrimination that women face in our own societies, and highlight the opportunities that exist to strengthen women leadership and equal share in our communities. To mark the occasion, we attended a local college on March 8th, where our Director Mercy spoke to an audience of over 200 students about

International Women's Day. She spoke about how women should be given a voice, have equal representation and be given a platform to express their opinions. She also spoke about how women should be given equal opportunities to study and work, and be elected into leadership and decision-making roles. This was well received in our audience, with people greeting one-another with "Happy Women's Day!" We then distributed flyers, written both in Tamil and English, and gave out pink ribbons to the girls as a sign of solidarity. **#EachforEqual**

## Self-Help Groups

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Gender equality and women empowerment has been at the centre of Blossom's work for decades. In India women do not have the same rights as men, in their work life, politics or their personal lives. To support women in communities to become more financially independent and giving them the empowerment they need to make their own decisions, Blossom started self-help groups (SHGs). As part of a government scheme called the Women's Development Corporation, several SHGs were formed. Together the women participated in workshops provided by the government or Blossom, and pulled together to support the community as a whole. An example of this is a clean-up initiative where women

participated in the cleaning of streets and school to create awareness about hygiene and health. Over the years many new SHG initiatives were formed, such as our microfinance groups, Poomalai Women's Collective, and our health-related networks Paneer Poo for HIV positive women, Survive Sugar for diabetes patients and Rainbow TB Forum for people infected or affected by tuberculosis. These groups continue to support its members, as well as create awareness for the themes the group stands for. Our Field Coordinator keeps in contact with the leads of the groups and all current and future projects are supported by our SHGs.

## Sustainable Plant Project

Blossom Trust initiated a Sustainable Plant Project in 2019, with the aim to encourage members of the community to learn about sustainability and to encourage eco-awareness. Plant seedlings are grown and nurtured at Dayspring Farm without the use of pesticides and with our rainwater irrigation system, after which they become available for the public for only a 10-rupee donation. The plant project encourages members of the community to grow their own produce, encouraging a sustainable lifestyle rather than continuing to purchase plants for one-time use. It also encourages more interaction with a natural environment and ensures the produce they receive is pesticide free. The plant cuttings sold are primarily herbal and medicinal, with some low-input crops. We

also package and sell fertiliser produced on our farm to enable people to successfully cultivate plants in their own homes.

**Results:** This is a relatively new endeavour, and it has been well received by the community so far - with many families coming specially to buy plants, and children buying plants for special celebrations. During this fiscal year, Blossom sold over 230 plants to people in our community. We intend to continue growing and selling plant cuttings to encourage sustainable living within the community.



## Dayspring Farm

Dayspring Farm has had another prosperous year, and has seen the expansion of many projects within the grounds. Our chicken breeding programme has continued successfully, with many free-range chicks being reared. These will be going up for sale in the upcoming months. The adult hens are also providing eggs that are used for cooking at the Dayspring Home, to supplement the nutrition of the children.

We continue to seek new ways to make the farm both sustainable and self-sustaining. To this end, we recently installed an irrigation system in one of our fields. This system is based on the idea of harvesting rainwater to re-use as a supply to irrigate the field, and draws water from the well on Dayspring Farm grounds. This will help to increase the yield

of this field, and the field has already been ploughed and planted. New solar panels were also installed, which is more sustainable and is helping to reduce the electricity running costs.

The fire of the sheds in 2019 destroyed one of our buildings and injured some staff members. Following this, the fence surrounding the farm and Dayspring Home was repaired thanks to a donation of Caritas Linköping. Recently, thanks to the support of EH-Klub, we have started with the rebuilding of sheds. The work started in February and after a productive start, the foundations are laid and the main frame has been constructed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the construction has been put on hold until it is safe to start working again.



## Dayspring Home

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Dayspring Home has also had another successful year, with all of our children happy and healthy. We welcomed three new children into the Dayspring family, and they have been welcomed by the other children and are adjusting well.

On the Dayspring grounds, we have improved our security by installing protective gates at the entrance of the Dayspring Home. The children also had a refresher course on general health and hygiene, with handwashing lessons and donations of soap and toothpaste to keep everybody healthy. At school the children continue to work hard and progress well. This year three of the girls passed 10th standard, joining the Wireman course in the Government ITI. We are pleased to see our eldest girl completing +2, and she will join college at the beginning of the next academic year. March and April is the exam season for many of the children, and the older boys sat their exams earlier in March. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the schools in the Virudhunagar District were closed until further notice, resulting in the exams having been postponed. Overall, the children continue to work hard and support one-another, ensuring a happy and healthy atmosphere at Dayspring.



## Creche

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Women often experience cultural barriers to become self-reliant and economically independent. One of the main barriers is the expectation of women to take care of the children. Many women in India do not have the opportunity to take up a career because of this. To help women overcome this barrier, the Blossom creche was created. Our certified care takers host a group of children in order to allow their young mothers to work.

Our creche has been operational since 2003 and has hosted hundreds of children over the years. Currently 26 children are part of the day-care while their mothers go to work. During the day the children do fun games and learning activities with our trained staff and receive free nutritious lunches and monthly medical check up. Mareeswari, one of the creche's staff members commented: "After joining Blossom I have earned a good reputation among the people in my community. The women who bring their children to the creche experience the same, as they are now able to support their families. Women empowerment is so important in our community!"



# OUR TEAM

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At Blossom we pride ourselves with the diverse team of professionals who work tirelessly every day to bring support to the community. Next to our local staff, we welcome several international interns each year and host many volunteers. We aim to bring a team together that celebrates diversity by working towards common goals.

## Staff

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Blossom currently has a team of 15 people. We are proud to have a team that consists mostly of women, at all levels of our organization. As Blossom advocates for women empowerment and gender equality, it is paramount we implement the same strategy within our own ranks. Our staff are the face and voice of our organization and we feel very lucky to have 12 female employees as part of the Blossom family. We hope to continue to give women the tools to empower themselves and aim to welcome many more in the future.

## International Internship Program

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Our office team is continuously supported by interns from all over the world. Since 2015 we have run our International Internship Program, aimed to allow young professionals to gain hands-on experience on the ground and develop themselves and Blossom. Since the start of the program we have had over 20 interns from 13 different countries. Many of our interns stay involved with the work Blossom does after they return to their home country, even serving as a representative of Blossom in their own region. Being part of Blossom is being part of a family, and we are incredibly grateful for everyone who has become part of the team in the past years. Are you interested in an internship at Blossom? Please visit our website for more information.



## Volunteer Program



Hosting volunteers has been a privilege for Blossom for many years. Volunteers put in their free time to support our work, bringing us invaluable assistance. In recent years the main focus for volunteers has been to help at Dayspring Farm, helping out our farmer with the maintenance of the grounds. This year we have been lucky enough to welcome 22 volunteers. Some highlights of this year led by our volunteers was a renovation of the kitchen, clearing out land and harvesting new crops. Next to this several volunteers supported us through fundraising activities. Thanks to these fundraisers we have, amongst other things, been able to secure our compound with new gates and organized a Christmas celebration, with a trip to the beach, with the children from Dayspring Home. Are you interested in becoming a volunteer at Blossom? Please contact us at [dayspringhome@gmail.com](mailto:dayspringhome@gmail.com).

## Partnerships

giving  
women

Blossom has established a new, very promising partnership this year with Giving Women. Giving women is a Swiss organisation which seeks to make a meaningful difference in the lives of women and girls in need by non-monetary support. The partnership between Giving Women and Blossom Trust

started in November 2019 and will continue for 18 months in the form of a project cycle. Together with the project cycle team, Blossom Trust is confident that it will be strengthening its role in women empowerment in the local community.

Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society (TNSACS) is a government body that supports the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in Tamil Nadu. At Blossom we believe that to achieve the most, partnership is vital. We have therefore worked closely with many government agencies over the years. Since 2018 TNSACS support our transgender HIV prevention program in Kanchipuram. Together we continue to spread awareness about the dangers of HIV/AIDS amongst the most vulnerable in our community.



Caritas Linköping in Sweden has supported Dayspring Home and Farm since its inception. Their continued support means we are able to provide a safe and happy home between 20 to 30 children. This year Caritas Linköping was able to provide financial assistance for the repairs of our fencing.

Interested to partner with us? Please contact us at [blossomtrust@gmail.com](mailto:blossomtrust@gmail.com).





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Blossom would like to express its sincere appreciation to all its staff, volunteers, members, donors and partnerships with the local authorities whose dedication, contributions and ongoing support have ensured that Blossom has continued striving towards 'Blossoming power in every individual to reinforce community development.' Thank you very much for your support!

## Head Office

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Street Virudhunagar 626001 Tamil Nadu,  
India

## Chennai Office

A/22 Alagesan Nagar  
Chengalpattu Kanchipuram District  
Tamil Nadu, India

## Registration Details

Registration Number: 85/93  
FCRA Approved & Indian Tax Exempt  
Date of Registration: 7 June, 1993  
Act: Indian Trust Act 1882

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## Donations

Blossom provides ongoing social and medical support for marginalized groups in rural communities. With your support we can continue to provide support to vulnerable people and create a better future. Demand draft or cash in favour of Blossom Trust payable at Virudhunagar to send to our address.

### To make a local donation, please transfer to:

Blossom Trust A/C: 10921873022  
IFSC: SBIN 0000951  
State Bank of India Main  
Branch, Virudhunagar 626001  
Tamil Nadu, South India

### To make an international donation, please transfer to:

Blossom Trust A/C  
035801000010525  
IOBA 0000358  
Swift code IOB AIN BB 001  
Branch code 0358  
Indian Overseas Bank Central  
Branch, Virudhunagar 626001  
Tamil Nadu, South India

## Volunteers

Volunteers play a fundamental role in several of our projects, especially in fundraising for the children's home and the farm. This year we are mainly looking for volunteers who can help with the farm. If you are interested in volunteering with Blossom Trust please send an email to: [dayspringhome@gmail.com](mailto:dayspringhome@gmail.com)