



OASIS BELGIUM

2020

Office: Rue de la Montagne 54,
1000 Brussels, Belgium

Legal Address: Edouard
Hubertilaan 51, 3080
Tervuren, Belgium

www.oasisbe.org
www.itlr.org
www.buurtbar.be



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

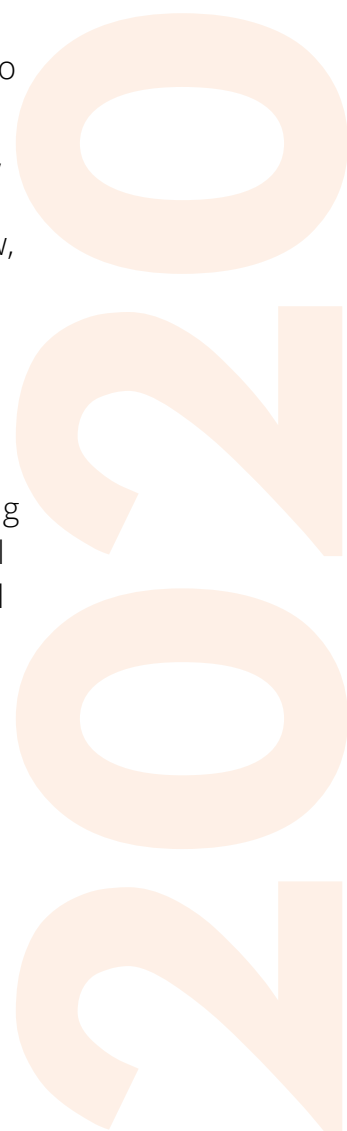
This has been a most unusual year. I'll hazard a guess that I'm not the only person writing that at the end of the year that was 2020! Whilst COVID-19 hit us hard this year, as it did everyone else, I'm very thankful to be able to report that we have got through it this far, and in some ways stronger than we were before. Furlough arrangements, government schemes and the generosity of so many in difficult circumstances have enabled us to keep on doing what we do: supporting some of the most vulnerable in society and helping them to find meaningful community. For me personally, this has been something of a baptism of fire as chair, not because of anything that's been happening within Oasis, but simply because we spent most of it in completely uncharted territory, thanks to the pandemic.

There have been changes in personnel this year. Valentina has sadly left us. We shall always appreciate the time she spent with us. She helped enormously in professionalising our reporting and funding applications, was always willing to go the extra mile and much more besides! We will miss her input enormously, but she goes with our love, blessing and gratitude. Saranja also left us in November, after just under a year working on the Welkom project. All this has helped us to implement some changes which have been in the pipeline for several years now, and I'm pleased to be able to welcome Emma Gooding back to Oasis. Emma worked with us on the Welkom project, and now she is returning as country director, with oversight of all the projects. We were delighted at her application, and we wish her much success in her new role. This has enabled Phil to step down from his role as director, with all the admin that involves, and move into a different role where he can concentrate on his strengths, such as writing, making of contacts and generally being the inspiring person he is! We hope that this will be a positive move for Phil, Rachel and the family, and we are delighted that Phil is remaining part of the Oasis family in Belgium.

Thanks to the input and dedication of our very able staff and volunteers there have been many successes to report this year, which you will be able to read about in the rest of the report.

And finally, I would like to express my thanks to everyone who has supported, encouraged and contributed to the work of Oasis Belgium in any way during these strange times. We couldn't have done it without you!

Andy Williamson, chair



OASIS BELGIUM: SUMMARY

Oasis is a Christian organisation working in Belgium since 2007. Inspired by the life and teachings of Christ, we run projects supporting the children of people without papers, helping them to stay in school, eat well and have stable accommodation whilst helping the parents to regularise their papers and find work. We run projects that help women who have been trafficked to come out of exploitation, find community and employment. Oasis Belgium has a project which helps to connect isolated elderly people to community and also a project which uses running to raise awareness about human trafficking, as well as giving young people access to sport.
(www.oasisbe.org)

ETHOS

In Oasis we are Christ-centered; inspired by the life, message and example of Jesus Christ through whom God's unconditional love for all people is expressed. We are called to love God, and love others as we love ourselves. We therefore seek to work together to extend Jesus' model of the Kingdom of God on earth by living out a lifestyle according to this inspiration.

VISION

Our vision is for community - a place where everyone is included, making a contribution and reaching their God-given potential.

MISSION

Oasis is committed to working in an inclusive, integrated, empowering and comprehensive way so that all people experience wholeness and fullness of life.

OUTCOMES

Local communities that are characterised by high levels of trust, safety, cohesion, mutual support, vibrancy, health and opportunity, and have increasing capacity to address their own issues. People who are excluded from community brought back into community and finding wholeness and fullness of life. The replication of models that effectively contribute to community transformation or bring the excluded into community

STRATEGY

Our goal is to help people back into community, finding wholeness and fullness of life, and seeing local communities growing in vibrancy, health and opportunity. In order to achieve this, Oasis Belgium runs four projects; Oasis Welcome Project, Buurtbar, Brussels Project and In The Long Run. The projects work to address problems such as domestic violence, human trafficking, vulnerability to exploitation and isolation in old age. The project teams are made up of both staff and volunteers and work in Brussels, Beringen, and across Belgium.

THE PROJECTS

OASIS WELKOM PROJECT

Over the last decade, the Oasis Welkom Project has helped many women, mainly from Thailand, who have come into Belgium on a marriage visa. The project began by helping women who had been recruited or trafficked into erotic massage parlours, and has expanded to also bring support to women who are experiencing violence from their partner, which is often the precursor to being recruited into the massage parlours.

The project runs as Thai language helpline, and helps women by listening to them and accompanying them to social services meetings, helping them find medical care, legal services and support as they make a complaint to the police. The team are there for the women for the long-term.

This year, the project helped 59 women in a significant, direct way, and more than a thousand through leaflets on rights and services, and how to stay safe.

The project also helped a Thai woman, who was alone in an apartment in Brussels, very ill with cancer, to return home to Thailand, despite all the regulations for Covid-19 and the lack of flights. It was a real success in bringing together so many agencies, from the Thai Embassy to the UN organisation IOM and the medical services. She is safely at home now with her family.



The Oasis Welkom Project has been able to grow its partnership with the Thai Embassy, and with other NGO networks during the year, including the European Network for Migrant Women. The biggest success in partnerships was the project's acceptance as a partner of the Maisons de Justice, which will mean we can better support many more women in the future.

KEY POINTS FROM 2020

This year has been very difficult due to Covid-19 and the lockdowns that it has caused. This has meant that many women who were already vulnerable were confined in their house with an abusive partner. As lockdown restrictions started to ease, the project had a spike in the number of calls to the helpline, from women requesting help.

The project has continued to serve the women during the year, despite the challenges and restrictions. In the first quarter of the year, the project made 65 visits to massage parlours, but after lockdown on March 12th, that became impossible. Since then, the project has been calling women who were working in the parlours to check on their well-being, and has sent more than a hundred information sheets in Thai and masks by post to the the parlours to ensure the women are safer and know what to do to reduce risk of infection. These parcels have been very much appreciated.



The work has continued to help women who have found themselves in very difficult situations of violence and abuse, often confined in their homes with their abuser. The project has worked closely with the social services and legal services, to ensure that the women can access the help they need online and in safety. On one occasion we worked with the social services to provide a room locally for one of the women, so that she could be alone and have wifi, so she could speak with her lawyer. Her abuser thought she was out at the supermarket, and she was able to find help and safety. Each month during lockdown the project was able to help more than 35 women.

One Thai woman suffered extreme abuse, but after calling our Thai language helpline, we were able to work with social services to get her into a safe house near where she lived. The man defied a court order and kept her daughter with him, and during lockdown it was very difficult to rectify the situation, but eventually the daughter was returned. We have helped the woman to take control of custody of her child. She now has a social house, where she can start a new life.

The project has had to say goodbye to two members of staff this year, as they move on to other opportunities and we all say a huge thank you to Valentina Rossi and Saranja Vanoverschelde for their wonderful work.

BIENVENUE BRUSSELS

Oasis Belgium works with the vulnerable children of refugees, asylum seekers and families struggling with poverty in the centre of Brussels, helping them to stay in school and providing food. Whilst supporting the children, the project also works with their parents. It is a long-term project, which believes that the care of the children means a holistic approach to stabilising the entire family. The work began with helping families and children in one of the biggest squats in Europe, but when the police raided this squat and most of the families had to move to temporary homeless shelters or other makeshift accommodation, Oasis Belgium continues to assist a handful of these families by helping them to find new accommodation, supporting the children in school, and helping single mothers provide for their families.

In the first quarter of the year, the project began a partnership with the Brussels community kitchen, which cooked fifty hot meals once a week, which our project delivered to the school, designated for the families most in need. This was going well, when in March the first lockdown was triggered by the government. Since that time, hot meals have not been delivered, as the schools were closed. The project did, however, deliver them to a local homeless shelter, which was in need of hot meals. Since then, the project has worked with La Sagesse school and with our local supporters, to supply boxes of food, full of tins, pasta and rice and other imperishable foods which the poorest families are in need of.

The work supporting children with breakfast and lunch and with extra lessons and the provision of school materials continues.



THE BUURTBAR PROJECT

Despite the fact that the pandemic made our BuurtBar project very challenging, with many of our coffee bar events cancelled, and elderly care homes often closed to the public, the BuurtBar team continued to do excellent work. While ensuring that the team and their beneficiaries stayed safe, they remained in contact with isolated elderly people by visiting in open air, sending cards, by phone, email and video conference. They also joined with the city-wide volunteer effort 'Beringen Helpt' to make sure elderly with needs are being helped.

Many plans had to be cancelled, but the project kept up a partnership with the drop-in centre 'Het Blauwe Huis', and organised two workshops and two drop-in moments there when the regulations allowed. Just before the lockdown, the drop-in centre organised an event for elderly around prevention to fall with a lot of different partners. BuurtBar volunteers invited elderly, welcomed visitors and served the coffee.



On six occasions when it was safe to do so, caravan coffee bar events were held, and were much appreciated by elderly people who hadn't seen anyone for a long time. It took a long time to organise in a way that kept everyone safe, but it was well worth it!

The project also started a new Alpha group in January, but ended after 4 sessions because of the lockdown (an online version would not create the same level of trust and intimacy that is needed to feel open to talk about faith and deeper issues of life). The participants have been followed up and invited for the monthly 'Themababbels', the follow up for the Alpha where the Oasis 9 habits are the basis for deeper discussion and experiences around these can be shared. There were two elderly who followed the first two Alphas participating in the online version from June onwards. This gave the opportunity to invite other persons connected to the project to join in.

The great work that the project has been doing with the 'Digibabel' events over the years in the library, (including three in 2020), has been noticed by the city authorities and the BuurtBar is at the moment planning a joint project on e-inclusion, BuurtBar taking a co-ordinating role and organising several "Digipunten". A broad public of people vulnerable for digital exclusion can ask their digital questions, access the internet, get support how to use it and (when regulations allow) meet new people in several locations spread over Beringen (e.g. at the library, service center for elderly, community center, het Blauw Huis ...). It will be an exciting step forward for our project!



KEYPOINTS OF 2020

Despite the pandemic, the BuurtBar project managed to continue to support elderly in need, teaming up with a lot of partners: the city (esp. with the Service and community center 'De Klitsberg' and staff workers of the cities department "Samenleven"), two elderly care homes, social workers from the 'Christelijke Mutualiteit', community workers of 'Rimo, a social renting association and other organisations working around poverty issues, the library and the drop-in center 'Het Blauwe Huis'.

Building these partnerships over the years have lead the city to ask to work together on applying for funding to work on digital inclusion - a type of exclusion that became even more obvious and important in this time of compulsory social distance. We hope to create places where vulnerable people with poor digital skills can access the internet, get support with their digital struggles and find community.



Despite the Pandemic, the team managed to organise a team building day, some coffee bar events, off- and online activities and follow up of vulnerable elderly.