

2019 YEAREND REPORT



MESSAGE FROM ORAM'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2019 was a challenging year for LGBTIQ people fleeing their homes due to violence, persecution and intolerance. As the number of asylum seekers and refugees overall climbed to the highest level in recorded history, borders continued to tighten, migration rhetoric worsened and changes in the asylum and refugee systems made it harder for those fleeing persecution to find safety and protection.

For these very reasons, ORAM has doubled down on our mission to advocate for and protect LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees globally - delivering legal assistance, advancing economic inclusion through livelihood programs, building coalitions, spearheading work in new countries, championing the rights of LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees and promoting sustainable solutions.

ORAM began a new chapter in 2019, when it established operations in two new geographical locations -Kenya and Mexico - focusing on protecting, empowering and safeguarding LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees both on the move and where they are. Beginning in Kenya, we started to support refugee-led livelihood projects, including an entrepreneurial soap-making business and rabbit and poultry farms, enabling asylum seekers to become economically self-sufficient and develop valuable skills. Soon after, we began work on the U.S.-Mexico border providing legal advice and assistance to vulnerable LGBTIQ people who have fled their homes, fearing violence and persecution, as they seek asylum and safety.

Despite the many challenges in the last year, we were continually inspired by our beneficiaries' resilience, courage and adaptability in the face of immense difficulties. We witnessed LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees become small business owners, transform themselves into community leaders and empower themselves by understanding their legal rights so they can make informed decisions about their futures.

As ever, I would like to acknowledge the efforts and generosity of the supporters, staff and volunteers over the last year, but especially the LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees themselves who continue to inspire us and teach us the meaning of resilience and authenticity every day. I would especially like to thank our parent organization Alight (formerly the American Refugee Committee) for their continued belief in and support of our work.

There is still a lot to achieve in 2020. In the year ahead, ORAM will continue to advance our efforts, develop solutions, and demand action. Some of our new programs include empowering communities via educational trainings to understand their rights as asylum seekers and refugees, continuing to assist LGBTIQ asylum seekers through legal support, providing vocational skills-based training and mentorship opportunities, and developing innovative new digital solutions to address the needs of LGBTIQ refugees and asylum seekers.

2019 was significant for ORAM and we hope that this report provides some insights into our evolution and development over the past twelve months.

In Solidarity,



Steve Roth
Executive Director



MISSION

**ORAM PROTECTS AND EMPOWERS
LGBTIQ ASYLUM SEEKERS AND
REFUGEES GLOBALLY, CREATING
SUSTAINABILITY AND
SYSTEMATIC CHANGE.**

OUR HISTORY



Founded in 2008, ORAM – the Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration is a pioneer in advocating for the protection and well-being of extremely vulnerable LGBTIQ refugees and asylum seekers globally. ORAM is recognized as the first international NGO to assist people fleeing persecution based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and has since become a thought leader in LGBTIQ migration.

We have a long and proud history educating and training refugee professionals on the particular needs of LGBTIQ asylum seekers and supporting LGBTIQ asylum seekers navigating the long asylum process from the moment they arrive in their first country of asylum to being resettled to a safe third country. We collaborate with local partners and our beneficiaries to ensure that our work is built around the people we serve.

MEET OUR BENEFICIARIES

Meet just a few of the hundreds of LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees ORAM serves around the world every year.



MEET MARJORI

Marjori is a transgender woman from Guatemala who fled her home country after fearing for her life there. Since arriving in Tijuana, Marjori has found refuge at a collective house for members of the LGBTIQ migrant community that is one of ORAM's partners along the border. We asked her why ORAM's legal program is so important to her:

"Through the legal program, I've learned how to express myself to others, how to get rid of the past things that hurt me, and most importantly, how to have confidence in myself and my story."
– Marjori, Guatemala

After a month working with ORAM's team, Marjori is confident and better prepared for the complicated legal process ahead of her when she seeks asylum in the United States.

MEET AISHA

Aisha is a lesbian who fled Uganda after suffering abuse from her community because of her sexuality. She is currently part of the LGBTIQ refugee-led soap making business ORAM is supporting in Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya. The soap training program offers LGBTIQ refugees the chance to learn how to produce and sell soap, earn an income and prepare for their future.

"Being part of this program has been really positive for me. We don't want to be a burden. ORAM has given us the chance to manage our own lives and earn an income to become independent."
– Aisha, Uganda



MEET THE LEADERS OF LGBTIQ COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN NAIROBI

For many of the community-based organizations (CBOs) ORAM is engaged with in Nairobi, a topic that came up repeatedly was the challenges of successfully applying for and landing international funding.

In August, together with our partner Alight we helped organize and fund a two-day training on grant proposal writing for the leaders of some of the CBOs.

Kennedy, an LGBTIQ asylum seeker from Uganda, told us: "I acquired new knowledge and skills in writing a strong proposal with a competitive edge. I've shared the skills I learnt with other LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees."
– Kennedy, Uganda



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

At ORAM, we believe that creating a sustainable livelihood is key to success, security and freedom for many LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees. So last year, ORAM began supporting several livelihood programs in Kenya.



Together with a local partner, ORAM supported the launch of a group of enterprising LGBTIQ refugees in starting their own soap making business in Kakuma refugee camp. The soap-making business is giving LGBTIQ asylum seekers the chance to earn an income, acquire key entrepreneurial skills in business management and sales and learn transferable skills which will provide them with a steady foundation for the future. So far, twelve LGBTIQ refugees have successfully completed training and are now in the early stages of development, including constructing their shop and preparing soap production, ready for sale.

Alongside this, ORAM assisted Refugee Trans Initiative (RTI) a transgender refugee-led community based organization in Nairobi to develop and expand their rabbit business. This program enabled LGBTIQ asylum seekers to earn an income and learn the tools they need to become self-sufficient.

We also supported the Foundation for Lesbian, Bisexual, and Other Queer Refugees (FLBQR) develop their jewelry making business, connecting them with relevant stakeholders and helping them find a place to sell their products.

With ORAM's assistance, each business is expanding and flourishing.



" STARTING THE RABBIT BUSINESS WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT BUT WITH ORAM'S HELP AND GUIDANCE I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXPAND AND GROW MY BUSINESS IN KENYA "

- VANILLA, FOUNDER OF THE RABBIT BUSINESS



SUPPORTING LGBTIQ ASYLUM SEEKERS ON THEIR JOURNEY TO SAFETY

In 2019, ORAM started developing programmatic work in Tijuana, Mexico after the dramatic increase in LGBTIQ people seeking asylum on the U.S.-Mexico border. ORAM discovered that one of the critical challenges facing LGBTIQ asylum seekers along the border was the lack of legal assistance. We partnered with two inspiring grassroots LGBTIQ shelters in Tijuana and launched a program through which ORAM provides pro bono direct legal assistance to LGBTIQ asylum seekers who wish to apply for asylum in the U.S.

In 2019, ORAM supported a number of LGBTIQ asylum seekers on an individual case-basis, helping them fill out necessary paperwork and prepare affidavits, as well as supporting residents in general group sessions on the general asylum process. The program is providing LGBTIQ asylum seekers with the tools to understand their right to seek asylum, preparing them on how to navigate a complicated legal system and empowering them to make informed decisions which will lead them to a safer life.

To assist ORAM's legal assistance work, we began partnering with the University of Minnesota Human Rights Clinic on developing country of origin reports (COI) for central American countries.



EMPOWERING LGBTIQ ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS

In 2019, ORAM identified that one of the main issues LGBTIQ asylum seekers face upon arrival to a new host country is the lack of information on the asylum process as well as their rights and responsibilities in that new country. We started developing an educational training for LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees which will provide information on the asylum process, specific information relevant to sexual and gender minorities, as well as rights and obligations of asylum seekers and refugees. In order to ensure that the training includes all relevant information, we partnered with a local community-based organization called Refugee Coalition of East Africa to conduct pre-training surveys with over 50 LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees in Kenya. ORAM has evaluated the data and in 2020 will start developing the material for the program.



CHAMPIONING THE RIGHTS OF LGBTIQ ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES GLOBALLY

In 2019, ORAM continued successfully increasing awareness of the challenges and vulnerabilities of LGBTIQ refugees around the world. We maintained a strong presence at both international and EU-specific forums and conferences, we shared our expertise and knowledge as an organization and continued to strengthen and consolidate our relationships with key stakeholders in the field.

Some of our highlights have been organizing a panel for the Human Rights conference during New York's Pride Week; speaking at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Berlin consultation; attending the UNHCR – NGO Annual Consultations in Geneva

and the EASO Consultative Forum in Brussel; participating in a panel discussion at the Seattle Queer Film Festival; and speaking at the ILGA Conference in Prague.

In 2019, ORAM continued successfully increasing awareness of the existence and vulnerabilities of LGBTIQ refugees through the distribution of ORAM's Sexual Orientation Gender Identity Toolkits to more than 46 countries worldwide. These toolkits continued to provide refugee professional with the knowledge and resources on how to make their organizations and services more accessible to LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees. And we have continued to nurture our relationship with UNHCR in key geographies, including Kenya.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO EXPAND OUR GLOBAL REACH

ORAM has continued to provide online advice and assistance to LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees worldwide. The Helpline, one of the organization's first and oldest projects had continued to grow and flourish. It allows ORAM to provide assistance to a greater number of LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees and enables the sharing of our knowledge and expertise with those outside the organization's geographical and physical presence. In 2019, ORAM was able to provide over 3,000 responses, with requests from over 50 countries and provided LGBTIQ individuals the chance to receive tailored information about their specific circumstance.

IN 2019, OUR HELPLINE ANSWERED OVER **3,000** INQUIRIES FROM LGBTIQ ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES, WITH REQUESTS FROM OVER **50** COUNTRIES

In 2019, ORAM launched a new partnership with the Worcester Polytechnic Institute to optimize our Helpline and develop a mobile app, an innovative new approach to provide timely advice and assistance to LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees globally.



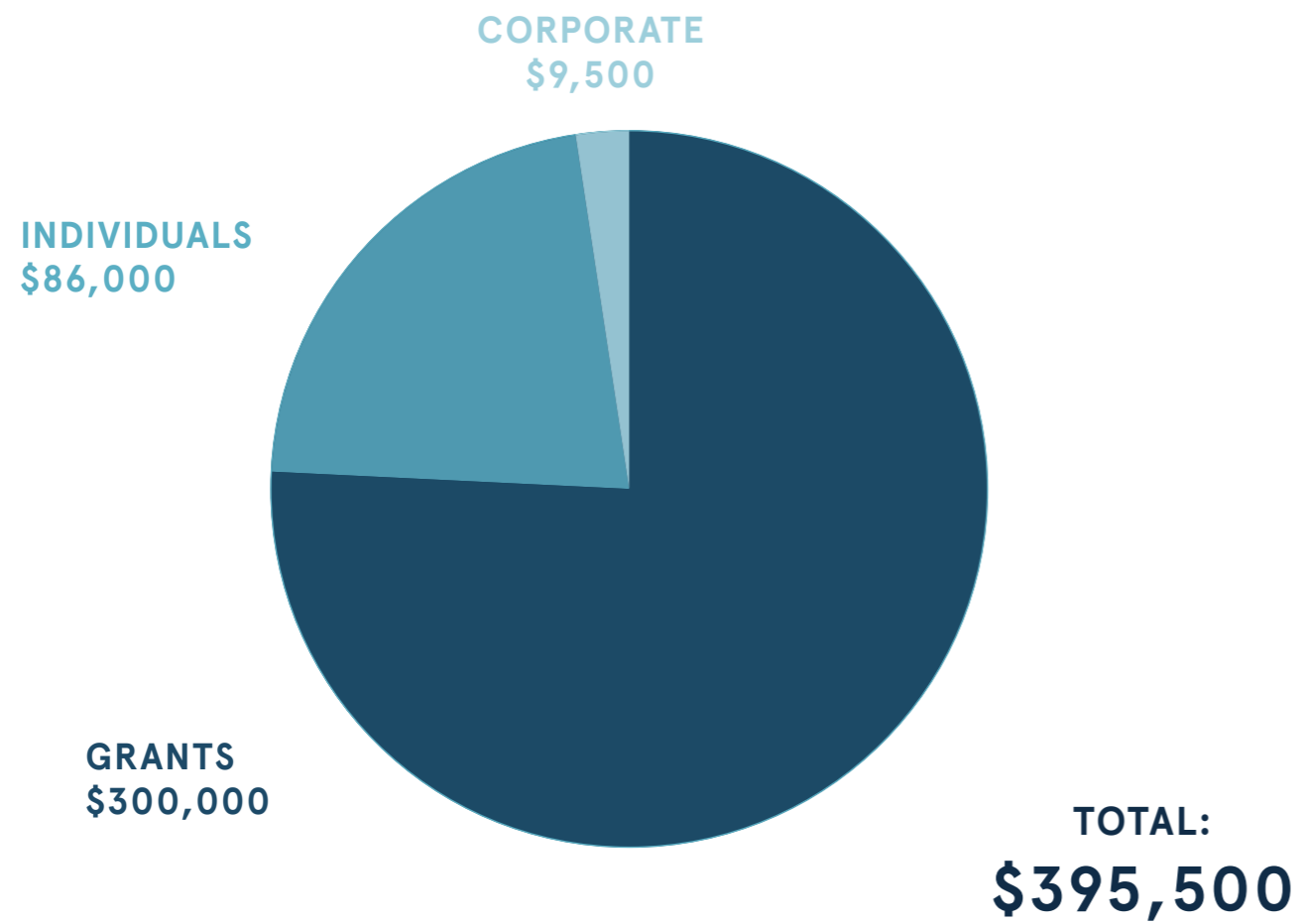
PARTNERING WITH ALIGHT TO DO THE DOABLE

In 2019, we collaborated with our partner organization Alight on their Changemakers 365 projects. Changemakers is an initiative which supports "doable" daily projects of around \$500 or less to help make real change in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. We implemented these daily support projects in some of the LGBTIQ shelters in Tijuana as well as with CBOs in Nairobi. They included:

- Buying and installing a new computer and printer at both of the LGBTIQ shelter in Tijuana
- Investing in some new bunk beds for the shelter so more residents can stay.
- Buying some essential equipment like shelves to keep the shelter organized and tidy.
- Funding a trip for all the residents of the shelter to go to the beach
- Hosting a party for LGBTIQ refugee in Kenya, jammed packed with a catwalk show and delicious food.

FINANCIALS

FY20 (April 2019 – March 2020)
Fundraising by Type



THANK YOU

ORAM is deeply grateful for its staff and supporters who help us advocate for LGBTIQ displaced people around the world.

OUR SUPPORTERS

- Alight
- Arcus Foundation
- Brand g Vacations
- Give Now at Horizon Foundation
- Ivan Morton Sherman Fund at Greater New Orleans Foundation
- LGBT Community Charities, Inc.
- Sephora
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- YourCause

WE ALSO WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING GENEROUS INDIVIDUAL DONORS FOR THEIR SUPPORT:

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EIN: 26-3748676

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Join ORAM's community at our website or on social media to receive important updates about our work and ways to help us advocate for refugees and displaced people.

www.oramrefugee.org
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