

Annual Report 2020



Dear Friends and Supporters,

2020 was quite a year. The landscape for our work continued to be dominated by unprecedented global challenges – from the COVID-19 pandemic to a generation-defining election and borders tightening around the world. This past year has confirmed that ORAM’s work is needed now more than ever.

Amidst the turmoil, we’ve moved quickly to respond to emerging challenges across the globe. We pivoted our work on the U.S.-Mexico border in response to the extended border closure, as we expanded our livelihoods programs and other initiatives on behalf of LGBTIQ refugees in Kenya.

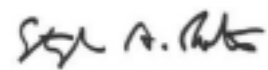
We are proud to present our 2020 Annual Report. Within these pages, you will learn more about how over the last year, with the help of our supporters, we have provided critical COVID-19 information, resources and emergency support to the communities we serve; continued to provide legal assistance and developed new innovative ways to connect with our beneficiaries; championed the rights of LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees on the global stage; and developed economic livelihood opportunities that provide a path forward for LGBTIQ refugees.

There are still many challenges and opportunities ahead of us. But with the momentum we’ve gained and the strength of our collective efforts and resources I have no doubt that we can meet the task – particularly with the partners and allies that we’ve cultivated along the way.

Through it all, we have been inspired by the resilience, courage and adaptability of the LGBTIQ refugees and asylum seekers we serve. I am grateful for the support and commitment of our staff, supporters, board members and volunteers over the last year – and especially to our parent organization Alight who continue to be an amazing partner in this work.

These are indeed challenging times, but I am proud to lead an organization that continues to fight to protect and empower the most vulnerable members of our community. As we look back over the last year and plan for the next, please know that we are grateful for your support, encouragement, donations, and friendship every step of the way. Thank you for believing in our work.

In solidarity,



Steve Roth
Executive Director





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 one of first international NGOs to assist people fleeing persecution based on their sexual orientation and / or gender identity and expression and has since become a thought leader in LGBTIQ migration.

Over the last decade, ORAM has trained NGOs, governments and UNHCR on the unique protection needs of the severely marginalized LGBTIQ refugee population. We support LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees from navigating the long asylum process from the moment they arrive in their first country of asylum to being resettled to a safe third country. ORAM collaborates with local partners and our beneficiaries to ensure that our work is built around the people we serve.

Our Mission

ORAM protects and empowers LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees globally, creating sustainability and systemic change.

Our year in numbers



150

Refugees impacted by the livelihood programs



\$12,000

raised to support the victims of the Moria fire in Lesbos



500

community members received COVID supplies



40

40 clients benefited from our legal advice



100

Refugees received rent support



300

Refugees received emergency food support



We focused on:

- Delivering legal assistance
- Advancing economic inclusion through livelihood programs
- Building coalitions
- Championing the rights of LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees
- Promoting sustainable solutions
- Providing emergency response
- Developing research and reports

2020 in review



Economic Empowerment

After fleeing persecution, one of the most effective ways LGBTIQ refugees and asylum seekers can rebuild their lives with dignity is through the opportunity to earn a living.

Soap Business in Kakuma

Together with our local partner Upper Rift Minorities, ORAM has continued to support and expand livelihood projects in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya.

In 2020, ORAM supported the growth and expansion of 'Kakuma Cleans', an enterprising LGBTIQ refugee-led soap business in the camp. Kakuma Cleans provided in-depth training, work and income to 27 LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees in the Kakuma Refugee Camp.

“The soap business is helping my future... it gives me the possibility to earn money so I can survive”

Abdu, Kakuma Cleans Member

As well as providing seed-funding, ORAM helps with strategic planning, monitoring and evaluating, reporting, marketing, and international outreach. As the COVID-19 pandemic spread, Kakuma Cleans saw an opportunity to help prevent and contain the virus by expanding its product line. The business started developing hand sanitizer to provide much-needed protection for the community.

In the time of COVID-19, we celebrate LGBTIQ refugees who are on the frontlines and fighting this pandemic. We've seen everyday heroes from all walks of life step up to join the response.



“ORAM has been pivotal in supporting and boosting the livelihood projects of LGBTIQ refugees in Nairobi through skills trainings, capital, mentorship, monitoring and evaluations. Thank you for your continuous support.”

- Edith

Meet Edith Mats Josh!

Edith understands the incredible potential that LGBTIQ refugees can have on society when they're given the opportunity to start afresh.

After fleeing persecution in Uganda, Edith started out as a newly arrived refugee with dreams of supporting people in need. Now, with ORAM's help Edith is able to assist LGBTIQ refugees from all walks of life to get their livelihood projects and small businesses up and running.

Livelihood Projects in Nairobi

In 2020, we collaborated with our partner the Refugee Coalition of East Africa (RefCEA) to support livelihood projects created by residents in Nairobi and develop trainings to strengthen and foster autonomy within the LGBTIQ refugee community.

ORAM organized a number of workshops for the community. This included a two-day training for their poultry farms that covered marketing techniques, poultry rearing, and other important skills to grow their livelihood projects into sustainable businesses. The hands-on tutorials were attended by representatives from 10 different community-based organizations led by LGBTIQ refugees in Nairobi. Following the training, the businesses were given the opportunity to apply for seed-funding to help grow and scale their businesses with the knowledge and skills learnt at during the training session.

Responding to the Pandemic

Throughout this turbulent year, ORAM has provided COVID-19 emergency response to the communities we serve around the world. LGBTIQ refugees are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus, as many have weakened immune systems due to HIV, have less access to healthcare and are forced to live in cramped quarters, like shelters, dorms and camps, where physical isolation is difficult, and the virus can spread quickly and with damaging effects.

We have worked with LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees from Kenya to Greece to provide education and tools and equipment so that they can stay healthy and slow the spread of the virus in their communities.



In the face of a global pandemic and other immense challenges, we were inspired by the LGBTIQ refugees who kept their communities safe, informed, and fed.

Here are a few examples of how we supported the communities we serve through the pandemic:



Sanitation supplies

ORAM, together with our partners at Alight, distributed critical sanitation supplies to Jardin De Las Mariposas in Tijuana and Kakuma Refugee Camp. These included hand sanitizer, soap, masks, gloves, portable hand washing stations and isolation tents for self-quarantine to help provide a safe environment for the community.

Providing information

Many LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees live in isolation and are unable to access in-person counseling and information on prevention and containment. With our partner Alight, we focused on raising awareness of the disease through our online platforms by distributing vital resources in multiple languages with information on the virus, how it spreads, who is most at risk, how to best prevent it, what to do if you're sick, and more.



Emergency Support

ORAM provided emergency food and rent support to LGBTIQ refugees that we serve when the pandemic made it difficult for them to pay their bills and survive.

After the devastating fire in Moria Refugee Camp in Greece, ORAM raised over \$12,000 to provide vulnerable LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees with vital items including emergency shelter, food, sleeping bags and hygiene supplies.

Dental Care

Asylum seekers and refugees often experience a higher burden of oral diseases and the pandemic exacerbated their already limited access to oral health care.

We worked with our partner Humble Smile Foundation to provide LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees in Kenya, Mexico and Greece critical dental health education and hygiene kits.



Helping Amplify LGBTIQ Voices

With the still-growing pandemic and immigration proceedings halted along the U.S.-Mexico border, ORAM pivoted our programming in 2020 to support LGBTIQ asylum seekers stuck at the border.

At ORAM, we believe it's vital that we help amplify the voices of the most marginalized – yet resilient – in our communities so we can learn from their experiences. These stories have the power to remind people of our shared humanity. In 2020 we supported LGBTIQ asylum seekers along the U.S.-Mexico border to raise their voices.

Digital Storytelling Workshops

In the summer of 2020, ORAM organized and facilitated a Digital Storytelling Project which documented the lives of LGBTIQ asylum seekers along the US-Mexico border during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This collection of video, photography and written word gave LGBTIQ asylum seekers the tools to both tell their own stories and process their experiences of the pandemic. Led by filmmakers, journalists, and photographers, these workshops allowed the participants to share their feelings and their personal stories through digital means. The project focused on teaching LGBTIQ asylum seekers the tools to tell their own stories in their own words.

“Stories humanize people. Listening to stories can build empathy in those who haven't gone through the same experiences and can make us feel connected and close to our community when we hear similarities or common themes from others' experiences, and this is something that is needed now more than ever before.”

Steve Roth, ORAM's Executive Director



English Language Classes

For LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees, learning the language of their host country can make a huge difference in someone's opportunities to find employment, access services and connect with new people. Without adequate provision for language learning, the long-term options for people forced to flee from violence and persecution are limited.

We partnered with the non-profit SPEAK to develop English languages courses and cultural classes for the residents of El Jardin de las Mariposas to help prepare participants for their potential future life in the U.S. The classes provide a comprehensive overview of U.S. society, culture and norms, as well as assist the participants in reaching level B1/B2 English (usually required to work in the U.S.).

Meet Maritza

Maritza was a resident of our partner shelter El Jardin de las Mariposas and took part in ORAM's English classes.

Maritza told us,

“The English classes are really good. We have learned how to introduce ourselves in English and are learning through practicing speaking. We all really like our teacher and the pace. The sessions keep us really busy and help us focus and prepare for our future”.

Supporting Refugees on Their Journey

Focusing on transit countries, we support LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees on the move as well as those spending prolonged periods of time in refugee camps to access legal assistance and vital asylum information.

Our Legal Program

ORAM discovered that one of the critical challenges facing LGBTIQ asylum seekers in Mexico was the lack of legal assistance.

In 2020, ORAM continued our legal program in Tijuana, Mexico to support LGBTIQ asylum seekers. ORAM's legal program provides one-on-one direct legal assistance support and information to help asylum seekers understand the U.S. asylum process. ORAM also led a series of legal orientation sessions providing up-to-date information and developments concerning U.S. immigration and the border.

We have partnered with U.S.-based legal organizations Immigration Equality, Oasis Legal Services and Al Otro Lado to build a referral mechanism once clients cross into the U.S. and assuring continued legal representation.

ORAM's Helpline to Address the Needs of LGBTIQ Refugees

At ORAM, we strive to ensure that LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees around the world can access trusted organizations, services, and find reliable information about the asylum procedure during their search for safety.

In 2020, ORAM launched our new digital help platform. This platform can be used to find useful local and international refugee and/or LGBTIQ organizations and services around the world and learn the basics of asylum procedures and definitions that will help to navigate the international asylum system.



Research and Publications

We partnered with the Immigration and Human Rights Clinic at the University of Minnesota to create and deliver a cutting-edge Country of Origin Information (COI) Report entitled '[Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression in Honduras](#)'. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the legal, social, political and religious situation for the LGBTIQ community in Honduras. COI reports are instrumental in providing information relevant for the adjudication of asylum claims. This report is intended to help adjudicators credibly assess claims of LGBTIQ asylum seekers from Honduras, by contextualizing personal stories of persecution. ORAM has also started working on a COI about Guatemala which will be published in 2021.



Campaigning

In 2020, ORAM continued to increase awareness of the challenges facing LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees around the world.

As COVID-19 spread, like the whole world, we turned to digital means of communicating. We worked throughout the year to amplify the voices and stories of LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees through educational webinars, film screenings, online fundraising events and many more.

Highlights from the past year:

- [“Black, LGBTIQ and Refugees: An Intersectional Lens,”](#) the first in our educational webinar series about the experiences Black, LGBTIQ refugees face during their search for safety, from fleeing their home country to being resettled in a safe third country.
- [“Refugee Rainbow Extravaganza,”](#) a spectacular talent show that raised critical funds for ORAM and our partner Refugee Coalition of East Africa’s work supporting LGBTIQ refugee’s livelihood projects in Kenya.
- [“RefugeePride,”](#) ORAM’s first virtual fundraising event to celebrate World Refugee Day and Pride 2020.
- ORAM’s Pride Awareness Campaign #PrideMeans where we shared the stories of the people we serve from Kenya to Mexico, asking them ‘What does Pride mean to you.’
- Transgender awareness campaign, ORAM’s educational campaign to raise awareness of the most common terminology used when speaking about gender.



Economic inclusion

Empowering refugees to earn a decent living and enter the job market and participate in local economies requires the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders. ORAM coordinated with development agencies and private sector companies to enhance inclusion and access of refugees to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities and related services and programs.

Mentorship Guide

Mentorship can help LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees find work and advance their careers.

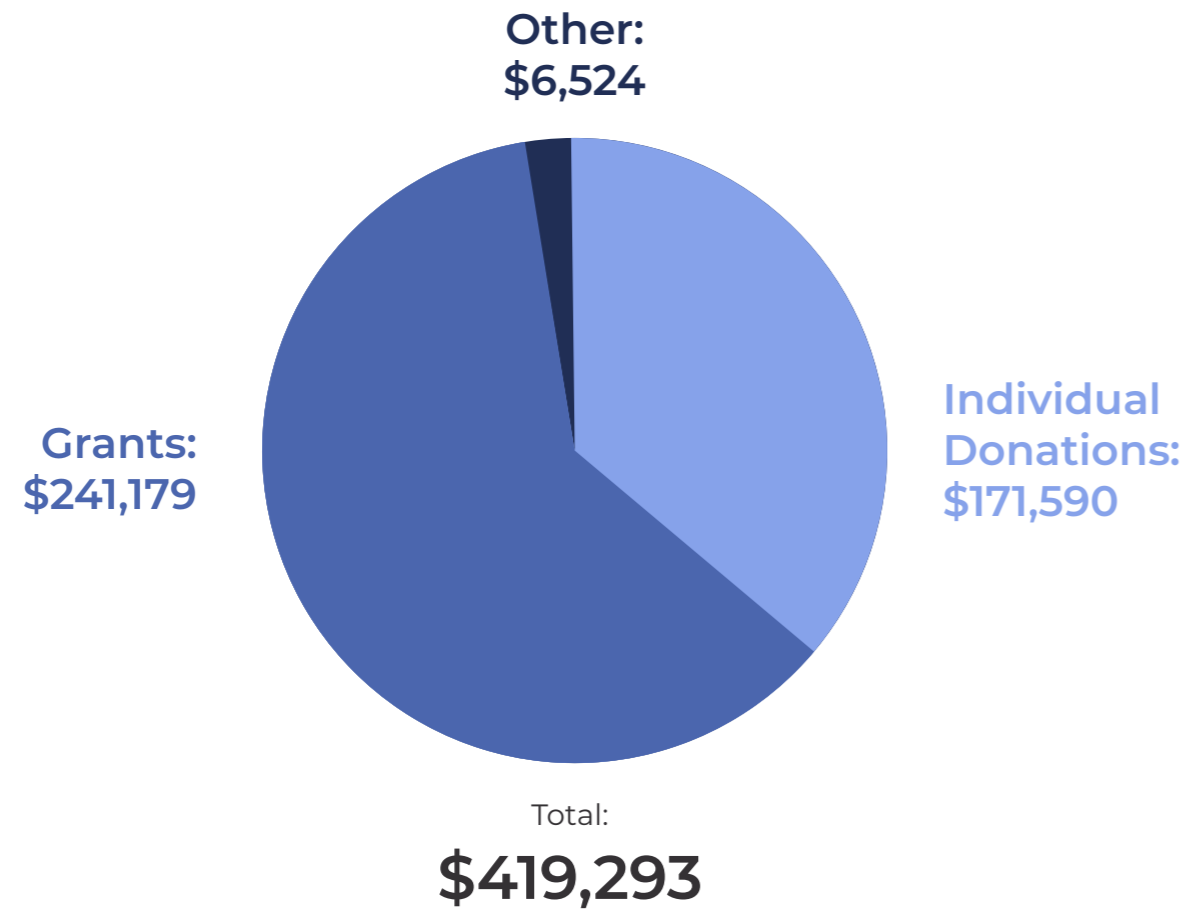
In 2020, we collaborated with Tent Partnership for Refugees to write a step-by-step guide [“How Companies Can Mentor LGBTIQ Refugees”](#) to help companies start their own mentorship programs for LGBTIQ refugees. The guide advises companies on how to set up mentorship programs, create training materials for mentors, and develop resources for mentor-mentee meetings. Through the guide, LGBTIQ employees and allies will have the opportunity to utilize mentorship to help LGBTIQ refugees strengthen their professional skills, understand cultural workplace norms, and develop a strategy for their career trajectory.

To view the mentorship guide, visit [our website](#).



FY2021 Revenue

April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021



Thank you

To our partners and allies

Thanks to each of the organizations with whom we have collaborated and partnered over the last year to build a community of support for LGBTIQ refugees and asylum seekers globally. A special thank you to Alight, our parent organization, for always seeing the light in our work.

- Alight
- Al Otro Lado
- Brand G Vacations
- Copenhagen 2021
- El Jardin de las Mariposas
- Immigration Equality
- Oasis Legal Services
- Rainbow Railroad
- Refugee Coalition of East Africa
- Safe Place International
- SPEAK
- Upper Rift Minorities

To our supporters and funders

We achieve nothing alone. Everything we do at ORAM, and the difference we make, is the result of the support we receive and those with whom we collaborate. All donations, both small and large are hugely appreciated.

Many thanks to the organizations, foundations, companies and individuals who have made significant contributions this year to support our work.

- Accounting X LLC
- Alight
- Arthur Kozlovski
- Benevity Impact Fund
- Bob Morrison Giving Fund
- Branden Smith and James Clark
- Daniel Creekmore
- Emily Rosenberg and Darlene DeManincor
- Ivan Morton Sherman Fund
- James Zaniello
- Jessica Harper
- Jody Cole
- Lease Family Fund
- Linda & John Massopust Fund
- Lise Enloe Foundation
- Mark Hiemenz and Charlie Rounds
- Mark Pellegrino & Stuart Kent Fund
- Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation Inc
- Mo Bidair
- Piscean Butterfly LLC
- Rainbow Railroad
- Rajiv Desai
- Selisse Berry
- Solidaire Network
- Solidaire Rapid Response
- Steve Dumas
- Steven Walker
- The Florian Fund
- The Rising Foundation
- The Voelbel Family Fund
- Thomas Hake
- Witkin Family Fund



Our Staff

Steve Roth Executive Director
Anja Limon Program Manager
Bella Stevens Communications and Development Coordinator
Yeray Albelda Legal Program Coordinator (Tijuana)

Our Board

Rajiv Desai Chair
Selisse Berry Vice Chair
Jody Cole Secretary
Perry Witkin Treasurer
Krishna Omkar – Member
Ari Adil Bilici – Member

A special thanks to
Charlie Rounds
Karla Nagy
Mark White
Rich Voelbel

Our Volunteers

Alex Bourgeau Tech Support
Santiago Vazquez 2020 Fellow
Jolan Goutier Legal Intern

Isaias Castro Interpreter
Margarita Artyushina Interpreter

Join us today

Donate

Give online at <https://www.oramrefugee.org/donate>
or by mail to: ORAM 615 1st Avenue, NE Suite 500 Minneapolis, MN, 55413

EIN: 26-3748676

Join the discussion

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 @ORAMREFUGEE.



Fundraise

Start your own fundraising campaign and ask your friends and family to join you in raising LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees' voices. You can start your own fundraiser on [Facebook](#).