



# THRIVEGULU

## Annual Report

FY: 2018-2019



## About Us

At THRIVEGulu, we believe that meaningful existence is more than mere survival. We believe the invisible wounds of psychological trauma deserve healing. And, we believe that functionality and productivity can only flourish when an individual and her community are more-than-surviving. Established in 2010 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we support communities in Northern Uganda to recover from the traumatic effects of war.

Our vision is for a Northern Uganda in which all people are treated with dignity, live in safety, and have the chance to contribute to the good of the community. THRIVE offers two interlocking pillars of support: 1) Mental Health & Psychosocial Support; 2) Individual & Community Empowerment. Our commitment is twofold: Go to the most marginalized and war affected peoples; and work with individuals and communities as partners: “nothing about us, without us.”

# Table of Contents

Letter from our Executive Director	3
Letter from our Country Director	5
Our Impact	6
Mother Program	7
Counseling	7
Empowerment	8
Literacy	9
Grant Programs	11
TROCAIRE/IRISH AID	11
Save the Children International/NORAD	12
Finance Report	13
Giving Circle Donors	14

## From our Executive Director

This was the year of more-than-surviving! A time of tremendous growth proved THRIVE is in it for the long haul: we grew in numbers of staff (16 to 26); field offices (1 to 3); districts served (2 to 5); Empowerment Groups (25 to 40, including 7 Youth Empowerment Groups); schools in which we work (24 to 50); and THRIVERS (1000 to 1600). We launched a 5-year partnership with Save the Children International for which we were chosen to be the lead strategic partner for Child Protection. Additionally, we were selected by an Irish agency, Trocaire, to provide Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to South Sudanese refugees forcibly displaced into Northern Uganda.

These grant partnerships are indicative of THRIVE's burgeoning reputation as an implementing partner who maintains a standard of excellence in service delivery, as well as steadfast fiscal responsibility. As more and more funding bodies move towards "localization" – engaging grassroots organizations over multi-nationals – THRIVE is emerging as the leader of the pack in trauma healing in Northern Uganda. When you factor all of the direct and indirect beneficiaries from all of THRIVE's programs, the number of lives we have touched over the last 10 years is close to 30,000!

THRIVE is on the front line of the 3rd largest refugee crisis in the world today. Nearly 1 million refugees from South Sudan have crossed the southern border in search of safety. Recognizing that the arrival of so many people generates enormous stress on the host community, we provide support services both to the refugees and to the Ugandans who welcome them into their nation. In addition, THRIVE is addressing the epidemic of child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda. Uganda has the youngest population in the entire world with 78% of its population below the age of 30. But, if that isn't a shocking enough statistic, 1 in 4 girls in Northern Uganda have already given birth or are pregnant by the time they are 15 years old. And, 1 in 2 girls is married by the age of 18. THRIVE is providing essential support to the people and places with some of the greatest needs in the world today.

It is largely in response to these social ills that we decided to launch a Youth Empowerment program. Our first cohort of 7 groups offers THRIVE's signature services to 240 young people ages 16-23. The constituency of our groups illustrates the tremendous need for youth centered programming: none of our youth have graduated from secondary school; none of them are economically self-sufficient; most of the young women are teenage mothers, some of two or more children; several were married off as children; many were orphaned from the war; many grew up in Internally Displaced Persons camps; all of them were born during the war. These youth display characteristics of young people who suffer from 2nd Generation Trauma. Their children risk bearing the effects of 3rd Generation Trauma. Since so many of them have been deprived the opportunity for an education, THRIVE developed an innovative literacy manual with funding from Engage Now Africa and the International Foundation, and in partnership with Interweave Solutions. The manual uses real-life stories as teaching aids and was developed entirely by the youth themselves. THRIVE offers these young people hope for a better future both for themselves and their children.

Our original 25 Empowerment Groups continue to thrive – over the past 3-5 years, THRIVE has taught them key skills which have helped them improve their quality of life significantly. Through the services we provided in our “Mother Program,” so many of our original 1,000 THRIVERS now have small businesses, can read and write in their native Acholi language, speak some English, advocate for gender equality, and work collectively to reduce gender-based violence in their communities. Moreover, so many of them can breathe easier, sleep quieter, and smile more often because they have learned about mental health and have received counseling, assuring them that they are not alone and that there are unequivocal reasons to hope for a better tomorrow.

Building upon our successes in Gulu, we extended our signature holistic services to another part of Acholiland. We established 8 new adult Empowerment Groups in Omoro District, Odek sub-division. The homeland of Joseph Kony, the nefarious and still-fugitive leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army, Odek is one of the poorest, most marginalized areas in all of Uganda.

THRIVE is also increasing visibility on the home front. We have overhauled our website, expanded our social media reach, began sending monthly e-newsletters to all our supporters and quarterly print newsletters to our top donors, designed print materials (Brochure, Infographic, Case for Support), and filmed two videos (a 3-minute promo and a 10-minute mini-documentary).

We have a message that needs to be shared widely, shared boldly: survival is not enough. If survival means being condemned to a life of poverty, it is not enough. If survival means missing the opportunity for education that will never circle back, it is not enough. And, if survival means a life condemned to suffering from the trauma of the things you saw, of the things you were forced to do, of the things you endured, it is not enough. We strive for a Northern Uganda in which individuals and communities are more-than-surviving. We strive for a Northern Uganda that is THRIVING!

Thrive on,

Mick Hirsch  
President & Executive Director



# From our Country Director

This year was characterized by increased program growth. From a new partnership with Trocaire aimed at supporting refugees from South Sudan to a new 5-year contract with Save the Children providing support to teenage mothers and child brides, THRIVE's grant programs have demonstrated our ability to win the respect of major international donors. Additionally, our Mother Program extended its activities to one of the most marginalized Districts in Northern Uganda, establishing 8 Empowerment Groups. We also launched our first cohort of 7 Youth Empowerment Groups that will receive a similar set of holistic services as our adult groups, including micro-finance, income-generating activities, counseling and literacy.

The principal duty of the Country Director has been to uphold the Mission and Policies of THRIVEGulu. I ensure that all THRIVE business is conducted professionally and efficiently, and that all THRIVE program activities are completed on time and in a manner of quality. I oversee the excellence of all 26 of our staff and liaise with grant partners to guarantee successful completion of all scheduled activities. One of my important achievements this year was procuring a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda. This is an important step forward for THRIVE, as it legitimizes the work we do in the country.

As we look to a new fiscal year, my hopes are threefold: 1) build a new toilet block to replace our current deteriorating and unsanitary latrine; 2) build a Family Resource Center, so that our Campus continues to serve the needs of the community; and 3) identify new donors, foundations and grant partners to help us further our mission.

I continue to enjoy my tenure with THRIVEGulu and I am very proud of the good work and growth in the organization. I will continue to give my very best for the work of THRIVE!

Alal Single Dora  
Country Director



# Our Impact

## MENTAL HEALTH

**10,000+**

**South Sudanese Refugees receiving Mental Health & Psychosocial Support**

**2,500+**

Individuals received medications & mental health support annually with the mobile clinics



**600+**

Students received counseling in youth school programs from lay counselors

**3,200+**

Students, parents and teachers received psychoeducation to improve academic achievement

## EMPOWERMENT

### LITERACY



**1,000**

individuals enrolled in literacy



literacy graduates in 3 years

### VILLAGE SAVINGS & LOAN



**820%**

growth in income generation over 3 years



**Top Savings goals**

- school fees
- buy land
- start business
- buy livestock

# Mother Programs

The THRIVEGulu Mother Program is the core of the organization, funded by our generous donors, partners and foundations. The Mother Program encompasses Mental Health & Psychosocial Support and Individual & Community Empowerment. Coined to honor the founder of our organization, lovingly referred to by everyone in Gulu as “Mama Judy,” the Mother Program encompasses the services we offer to our local communities in Layibi and Odek.

## Counseling

The mission of the THRIVEGulu Counseling Department is to provide trauma healing through Mental Health & Psychosocial Support services to individuals and communities in Northern Uganda affected by the 20 year conflict. Our purpose is that hope and resilience are built, functionality increased, and productivity improved for the positive development of all. We follow the World Health Organization’s motto, “There is no health without mental health.”

### Key Achievements

- Project initiation in the new project area (Omoro district, Odek Sub-county) was successfully done with support from district leadership, local leadership, and pre-existing structures in the community.
- Increased awareness on mental health issues kicked off well through general psychoeducation on various mental conditions, radio programs on the same and celebration of international advocacy days like Day of the African Child. This awareness and sensitization encouraged individuals to seek for support and enabled them to resolve or cope with challenges that affected their functionality, productivity and relationships with others. It has led to increased access to mental health services seen in the number of calls for individual and family therapy sessions.
- Increased access to mental health services through individual, family and group therapy sessions were carried out utilizing intergenerational and structural family therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Mobile Mental Health Clinics were offered, providing free consultations with psychiatrists and free psychotropic medications.
- We trained two lay counselors and teachers from each of 6 different communities. The lay counselors serve as front line responders to identify potential problems, deescalate harmful situations and refer to THRIVE counselors.



# Empowerment

Our mission as the THRIVE Gulu Empowerment Department is to establish the basic resources of group solidarity, economic independence, basic literacy education and gender-based violence response, so that the people of Northern Uganda can recover from decades of war, poverty and insecurity.

## Key Achievements

**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT GROUPS:** The department identified 235 (18 Males, and 217 females) youth aged 16-23 years. We grouped them into 7 Youth Empowerment Groups and trained them in group dynamics, life skills, and Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) practices. We trained all 7 groups in business selection, planning, and management, and provided a small amount of seed money to support each group in a collective Income-Generating Activity (IGA).

- Since financial health is a major life stressor, we helped each of the seven groups open a bank account to which THRIVE is co-signatory, allowing us to maintain full control of their cash withdrawals. We use this as an opportunity to teach the youth about banking and further help them become financially literate for long term sustainability and self-reliance.

**ADULT EMPOWERMENT GROUPS:** We worked with the leadership of Omoro District, which helped us identify and establish 8 Empowerment Groups, consisting of 320 (133 males and 187 females) vulnerable adults. The groups were trained on group dynamics, VSLA activities, and record keeping and were provided gender-based violence awareness sessions.

- Our original core of 25 Empowerment Groups within Layibi are now operating quite independently. Nevertheless, we continue to provide audit support, conduct group health assessments, offer basic and business literacy instruction, and meet with group leadership. Additionally, THRIVE counselors and our Empowerment Officer (GBV Specialist) provide direct support.
- Above all, we created cohesion among all of our 40 empowerment groups, not only through leadership meetings, but through the Annual Event, whereby members from all the groups came together to plan, contribute financially, and enjoy our biggest celebration to date with over 800 attendees visiting the THRIVE Campus!

**Gender-based Violence (GBV) REPORTERS:** As part of our GBV programming, we identified, trained and engaged 24 GBV Reporters in Odek (Omoro District) and 50 GBV Reporters in Layibi (Gulu District) in GBV prevention and response activities. Having members of the community serve in a leadership role like that of GBV Reporter has proven to be empowering for the whole community and is an example of THRIVE's goal of sustainability for each community.

# Literacy

The mission of the THRIVEGulu Literacy Program is to offer education opportunities to all our beneficiaries that will enable them to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their future goals, improve the performance of their daily core activities in their different homes, and provide leadership skills and service to their communities.

## Key Achievements

- Over 600 households improved on their businesses and home welfare as a result of business literacy education.
- 904 registered learners graduated from one level to the next and 45 facilitators graduated with a certificate in “Master’s of Business in the Street” offered by our partners at Interweave Solutions.

Basic language learners use different stories about real-life situations to learn reading, writing and speaking. After graduating from the basic literacy course, learners continue their education with a multi-year business literacy program, focused on improving small businesses and increasing employment opportunities. Each time someone completes a module in their Literacy Manual, that person feels a little more confident and will be able to pick up new skills and opportunities that previously were out of reach.

This program aims at improving the lives of learners while reducing the so-called ‘dependency syndrome’ that is common when aid organizations provide handouts without educational support. By learning how to think continuously and critically, THRIVE learners begin to fully participate in developing society in a way that is open, optimistic and hopeful for themselves and their children.

THRIVE’s literacy program is unique because it is part of our overall strategy for trauma recovery. It is so much more than empowering individuals with knowledge. In the entry-level program, individuals learn literacy from pictures, associating words with the stories they see. They also have a chance to discuss the images with their fellow learners. Since the images depict real-life situations, the experience is powerful. For example, a picture that depicts domestic violence will spark a discussion about domestic violence. This method further reinforces the psychosocial impact of literacy education as used by THRIVE.

By the end of the fiscal year, almost all of our learners had been studying for three years. Seeing as this was originally intended to be a 3-year program, it was a time to reflect on best practices and lessons learned. Many of the learners will continue to work through the four manuals that are part of the program. Others will graduate to ever new heights. Regardless, the knowledge and experience THRIVEGulu has obtained by working with and learning from our THRIVERS will help us continue to bring literacy to thousands more.



This fiscal year, the Empowerment Team began forming 7 new Youth Empowerment Groups. Literacy activities for the youth are scheduled to begin in FY 2020. In preparation, the Empowerment Team identified a group of 15 youth to serve as a committee to develop an innovative Youth Literacy Manual. The youth decided on the stories to include in the manual. The manual was developed in consultation and partnership with Lynn Curtis of Interweave Solutions with funding by Engage Now Africa and the International Foundation. In June 2019, the THRIVE Campus welcomed hundreds of youth and local dignitaries for the resounding launch of Roco Kwo Pa Bulu youth literacy manual (“Renewing the Life of the Youth”).



# Grant Programs

## South Sudanese Refugee Project: TROCAIRE & IRISH AID

The Humanitarian Program Plan (HPP) under Trocaire addresses the Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) needs of South Sudanese refugees who have been forcibly displaced into Northern Uganda. In the refugee settlement where THRIVE operates, there are over 50,000 refugees, 86% of whom are women and children. At the same time, it addresses the enormous strain on land and resources that the local Ugandans experience as the refugees arrive en masse. In line with THRIVEGulu's mission and vision, the program deploys a unique range of MHPSS services provided by qualified and experienced counselors to help heal the traumatic effects of war experienced by both communities.

### Core Activities:

- Safe access to MHPSS via individual counseling by THRIVE's professional counselors to both the refugees and host communities. THRIVEGulu is also currently providing psychoeducation, mental health mobile clinics, and screening of clients for group therapy. We have made 20 referrals for GBV survivors to African Women Rising.
- More than 100 key service providers, including health staff, teachers, police, and Reception Center staff, all have knowledge of MHPSS, helping them to be more empathetic of individuals experiencing psychological trauma and enabling them to refer cases to THRIVE counselors for follow-up.

### Key Achievements:

**MHPSS Assessment Report.** THRIVEGulu was invited to be the lead organization in conducting an MHPSS Assessment Report of the Palabek Refugee Settlement in Lamwo District to determine the psychological support needs of the refugee and host communities and to identify gaps in the existing structures required to meet those needs.

**Staff Recruitment** In order to implement the HPP, we hired 7 new staff, including 4 counselors, and promoted 2 current THRIVE staff.

**HPP Project Launch and Implementation of MHPSS Services.** The project launch itself was a key activity, attended by various District dignitaries and development partners. The launch helped introduce THRIVEGulu and our partner African Women Rising with whom we cross-refer clients.

# Save the Children International (SCI) & Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)

THRIVEGulu, in partnership with Save the Children International, began its first year of implementing a five-year child protection program, funded by NORAD. The project covers 50 government primary schools in 4 Districts.

## Key Achievements

**THRIVEGulu recruited 3 additional full-time project staff:** one Program Officer and two Psychosocial Counselors. Additionally, a THRIVE counselor from the previous framework was promoted to a 2nd Program Officer position

**Trained a total of 99 teachers on basic counseling and psychosocial support skills.** These teachers represented the 50 government-aided primary schools in the designated project areas.

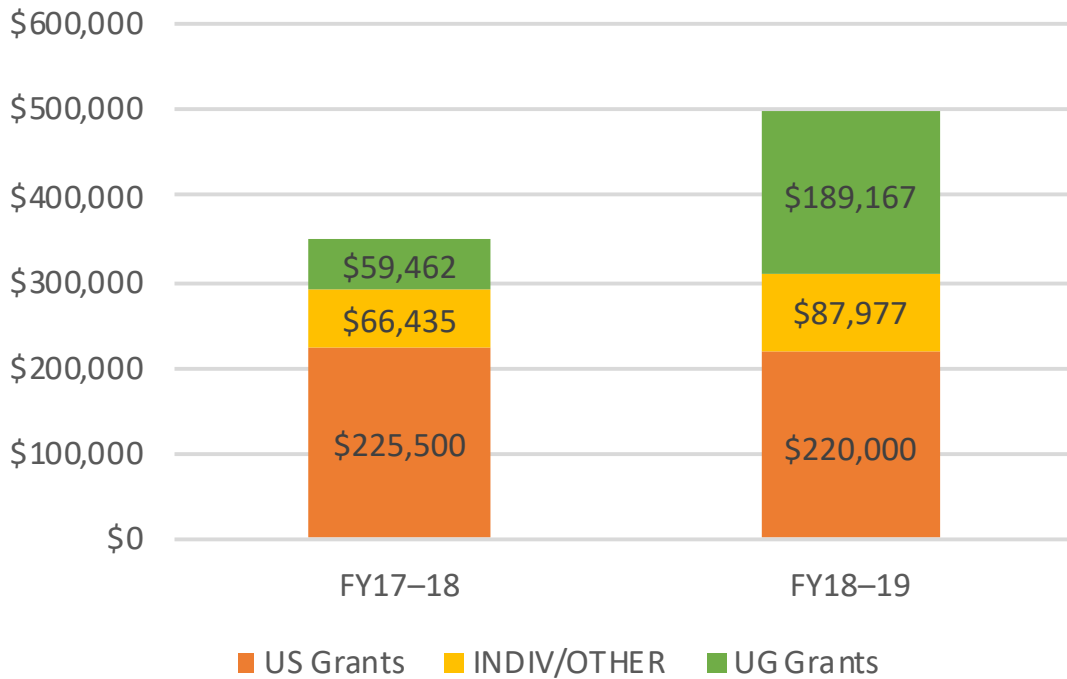
**Identified and trained 46 lay counselors on basic counseling skills, psychosocial support, and child protection.** Each was given a bicycle, identification jackets, and client reporting tools. Lay counselors are provided a small monthly stipend to enable them to reach child mothers and fathers in their respective communities and schools. The lay counselors have reached 96 children (56 girls, 40 boys), providing them basic, lay-counseling services, and referring to THRIVE appropriately.

**Mapping and identification of child mothers / fathers and children with disabilities.** A total of 458 teenage mothers, 111 teenage fathers, and 349 children with disabilities were identified. The identified children are being prepared for school re-enrollment through psychoeducation and individual counseling. The psychoeducation targets not only the children and youth, but also the parents and the community at large.

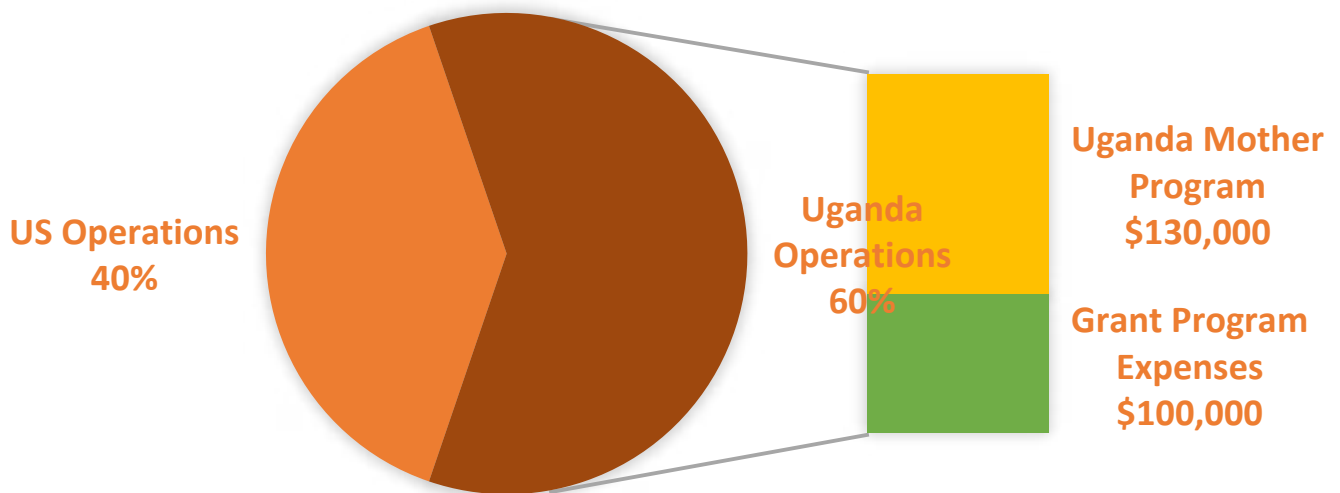


# Finance Report

## Growth in Revenues FY18 to FY19



## FY18-19 OPERATING BUDGET \$430,000



# Our Donors

***We're grateful for the ongoing support of our partners and Giving Circle donors!  
You make a difference everyday helping survivors become thrivers.***

## **Trauma Recovery Specialists \$25,000+**

John de Cuevas  
Eliza Dushku  
Sorenson Legacy Foundation  
The International Foundation  
Engage Now Africa

## **Empowerment Specialists \$5,000+**

Aptive Environmental  
Saundra Buys  
Margaret de Cuevas  
Sue Lonhoff de Cuevas  
Peter-Pike Sloan  
Sometimes Studio

## **Ambassadors-\$1,000+**

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*Contributions between July 2018-  
June 2019. Every effort was made for  
a correct list of donors. We apologize  
for any mistakes.*



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