

A close-up portrait of a Black woman with her hair styled in braids. She is wearing a bright pink top. The background is dark and out of focus.

THRIVEGULU

Annual Report

FY: 2019-2020



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.”**

10 Years of THRIVING

When the THRIVEGulu Recovery Center was established ten years ago, it was the only drop-in counseling center in Northern Uganda. It's founder, Professor Emerita Judith Dushku, reasoned that women survivors of the Lord's Resistance Army's onslaught needed a designated safe space to gather, share stories, recover from mental trauma, and reclaim their lives. We recognize the original desire to help even one woman rise up with dignity and hope. We celebrate the contributions of "Mama Judy," her late husband Jim Coleman, her daughter Eliza Dushku, and Judy's many students, friends, and supporters for impacting not one but **tens of thousands of THRIVERS!** We express our deepest gratitude to Joseph & Kathleen Sorenson and their foundations for providing annual awards that have enabled us to concentrate on our mission.

On the occasion of our 10-year Anniversary, we commemorate the women and men, boys and girls, whom we have helped make a life-changing transition from survivor to THRIVER. The stories of our THRIVERS have built the foundation of THRIVEGulu's trauma recovery programs. Their stories are important and impactful. **They matter.** This year, as we recall stories told and listen for others to unfold, we look forward to **10 more years of THRIVING!**



From our Executive Director

THRIVE continues to provide essential trauma recovery services to individuals and communities who have endured one of the most vicious wars in modern times. Our unique, holistic model of support not only addresses the invisible wounds of psychological trauma, but also empowers our THRIVERS with micro-finance structures, literacy, and the means to fight gender-based violence. Our partnership with Save the Children has confirmed that we are a regional leader in child protection, including the “lost generation” of youth. With Trocaire, THRIVE has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response on the border with South Sudan, attending to the mental health needs of refugees.

This success ushered us into our 10-year anniversary! Our “10 Years of THRIVING” campaign was an opportunity to celebrate the staff, Board Members, partner organizations, donors, and beneficiaries over the years who brought us to this milestone. Especially, it was a time to celebrate the vision, courage and dedication of THRIVE’s founder, Judith Dushku, Professor Emerita of Suffolk University. Mama Judy’s unwavering belief that no matter where we come from, we all deserve a chance to thrive in this world, undergirds our mission.

The unexpected arrival of COVID-19 demanded innovations to meet the complex challenges before us, including lockdowns and travel restrictions. THRIVE was able to prove its worth and necessity in a world of uncertainty:

- Our anniversary gala, where we were to be showcased as a Community Partner of Boston’s Longwood Symphony Orchestra (LSO), was canceled. We pivoted to a tremendously successful online event, featuring a presentation by Dr. Lisa Wong, Co-Director of the Arts & Humanities Initiative at Harvard Medical Center, as well as a musical performance by the LSO’s conductor and cellist, Ronald Feldman, and world-class harpist, Elizabeth Morse.
- We were selected to be a member organization of the Gulu District Task Force Health Team. This gave us continued access to people and places during a time of severe government restrictions and crackdowns. **Our staff never once hesitated**—they took all necessary precautions and went to work, helping those who were otherwise cut off from essential support services.
- We developed or expanded several programs, including radio call-in shows, caravans (rent a pick-up truck and PA system to access the hard to reach rural areas), partnerships with trained Lay Counselors / Gender-Based Violence Monitors, and tele-counseling. These innovations attracted the attention of the World Health Organization, the Lancet Psychiatry, and the Mental Health Innovation Network. MHIN invited THRIVE to write a blog post, and our Country Director, Dora Alal Single, appeared on an international webinar hosted by the UNHCR.

Our 10-year celebration is far from over. We’re already thinking of an unorthodox 11th Anniversary Celebration to properly acknowledge the love and goodness that grounds this organization. With the support of our partners and donors, we are already working on 10 more years of THRIVING!

Thrive on,

Mick Hirsch
President & Executive Director



From our Country Director



This fiscal year 2020, we continued to deliver our signature programs in mental health & psychosocial support, and community empowerment through micro-finance, gender-based violence prevention and response, and literacy. We continued to serve communities in five districts in Northern Uganda with funding support from two large grants - Save the Children International and Trocaire - as well as US-based foundations and individual donors.

In seven years as Country Director, I was never more proud of our team in Gulu than during the COVID-19 crisis. We adapted or developed activities like radio programs, which we increased from once per quarter to once per week.

For the first time, we utilized tele-counseling to provide continuity of care for our clients. We worked with government psychiatric teams and ensured patients continued to receive their medications during the lockdown periods. Because these small innovations made such a big difference in bringing hope and healing, THRIVE was featured in the WHO blog series “Stories from the Field.” Additionally, I was invited to sit as a panelist on an international webinar, “Innovations in Mental Health Care During COVID-19,” sponsored by the Lancet Psychiatry, Mental Health Innovation Network, and others, and hosted by the UNHCR.

As Country Director, my priority is to guarantee the excellence of our organization. I do this by upholding the Mission and Policies of THRIVEGulu; I regularly participate in grant writing; I ensure that all THRIVE business is conducted professionally and efficiently, and that all program activities are completed on time and in a manner of quality. When necessary and appropriate, I exercise my own psychology background and offer therapeutic support to individuals in need. My greatest joy is working closely with all 29 of our national staff in Uganda, supervising them and helping to develop their professional skills. The organizational culture I aim to foster at THRIVEGulu is rooted in trauma therapist Karen Saakvitne’s assertion, “Everyone has a right to have a present and future that are not completely dominated and dictated by the past.”

Our growth is a cause for celebration, yet it also comes with new responsibilities and requirements. As we look to a new fiscal year, I have two hopes: 1) build a new toilet block at our THRIVE Center that accommodates the ever-growing number of visitors and improves the health and sanitation of our campus; and 2) identify new donors, foundations and grant partners to help secure a long future of helping survivors become THRIVERS!

I continue to enjoy my tenure with THRIVEGulu, and I am very proud of our many achievements. I will continue to give my very best for the work of THRIVE!

With gratitude,

Alal Single Dora
Country Director

Impact Highlights

14 lives

saved from suicide

2,500+

reached by Covid-19 caravan broadcasts

468

children reached by Mobile Mental Health Clinics during Covid-19 lockdown



85%

of our learners can read & write in both Acholi & English



5,828

refugees received direct mental health services



30,000+

family members benefited from indirect services in the refugee settlement



169

teenage parents re-enrolled in school



175

cases of gender-based violence supported

Mother Programs

The THRIVEGulu Mother Program is the core of the organization, funded entirely by our generous donors, partners, and foundations. Coined to honor the founder of our organization, lovingly referred to by everyone in Gulu as “Mama Judy,” the Mother Program comprises our **40 successful Empowerment Groups**. Each group has access to THRIVE’s signature holistic trauma recovery services.

Counseling

The mission of the THRIVEGulu Counseling Department is to provide trauma healing through individual, family, and group counseling; education and awareness-raising on signs, symptoms, and solutions for psychological distress; mobile support clinics to hard-to-reach areas; and training community Lay Counselors / Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Monitors. We support survivors, including 2nd and 3rd generations, who bear the invisible wounds of psychological trauma, stemming from the Lord’s Resistance Army’s insurgency. Our counselors declare, **“A healthy mind is the precondition for helping survivors become THRIVERS!”**

Key Achievements

- We delivered awareness-raising workshops in 15 villages and 1 school, **reaching 235 individuals directly and hundreds more indirectly**. Participants learned how to identify early warning signs of mental distress and where to seek help. In the process, we destigmatize mental illness—we teach communities to accept patients and treat them with dignity. Individuals and communities advocate for better access to mental health services—several local leaders approached THRIVE, asking us to provide mental health workshops for their villages.
- We continued our quarterly **radio call-in programs on mental health awareness**. The programs are broadcast over more than a dozen districts, meaning individuals outside our Empowerment Groups can access information. We received 120 calls with questions, including how to seek help, how to support someone with a mental illness, and what are the causes of behavioral disorders. Over 80% of our callers received a minimum of 2 counseling sessions, many of which were delivered as tele-counseling.
- We trained 52 community Lay Counselors / GBV Monitors. These volunteer workers serve as front-line responders to identify potential problems, de-escalate harmful situations, and refer cases to THRIVE staff. With their help, we were able to make **89 counseling interventions**.

Empowerment

Our mission as the THRIVEGulu 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.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence prevention and response is an important component of our holistic trauma recovery program. During the war, GBV was used as a weapon to terrorize and humiliate young girls who were abducted and forced to be child brides. After the war, the intense, haunting feelings of trauma too often manifest in a cycle of GBV that is passing from generation to generation. THRIVE addresses the problem of GBV through its Empowerment program because **we aim to empower women and communities to identify and eliminate the threat of GBV from their lives.**

- We provided community education on GBV prevention and response to over 300 individuals. Additionally, we offered 3 call-in radio programs to raise awareness about the warning signs of GBV and the procedures for seeking help. We trained local government officials, police, teachers and healthcare workers on how to protect their communities and treat survivors with compassion.
- We supported **175 cases of GBV**, including sexual assault, domestic violence, teenage pregnancies, and child neglect.
- We trained and supervised **52 Lay Counselors/GBV Monitors**, who serve as front-line responders in their communities. The GBV Monitors provide crisis intervention and intake & referral to THRIVE Empowerment staff. Not only do the GBV Monitors frequently prevent violence before it occurs, but they also improve access to referral services.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT GROUPS

- Our 7 Youth Empowerment Groups encompass nearly **200 young people** from Layibi sub-county, Gulu District. They have demonstrated that a generation of adolescents and young adults are equally able to develop business plans, adapt their plans in response to real-life experiences, and successfully engage a savings and loan program.
- We trained the youth in how to select and develop a viable **business plan**. Somewhat different from our Adult Groups, the seed money was immediately deposited into their group savings account from which individual youth could borrow loans to use towards their own **micro-businesses**. Youth selected such income-generating activities as growing beans and cassava, bakery, hair salon, and brick laying.
- Through income-generating activities and financial literacy, our youth were able to increase their **self-reliance**. Youth reported that they had no time to be idle, and that they were proud to pay off their loans, meet basic needs, and even help their families financially.



ADULT EMPOWERMENT GROUPS

While we continued to provide limited supervision to our original 25 Adult Empowerment Groups in Layibi sub-county, Gulu District, our primary focus this year was on building the capacity of our **8 new groups** in Odek sub-county, Omoro District.

- Our oversight for the original 25 Empowerment Groups consisted of random spot-checks on their Village Savings & Loan Associations. Our Audit of Group Health indicated that all groups, all of which graduated from our 3-year empowerment program, are maintaining the standards needed to **continue successful economic growth**.
- We helped our 8 new Empowerment Groups in Odek to **develop group business plans**. Our model for business success begins at the group level. We encourage each group to select an income-generating activity in which they collectively take ownership. All 8 groups got off to a successful start.
- From the initial savings, group members were able to borrow money to help establish their own individual micro-businesses. Group members demonstrate ability to provide for their children's education, support family health, guarantee food security, and increase agricultural productivity. Increased daily income improves family relationships and cuts the cycle of violence. **THRIVE is helping entire communities emerge from poverty and begin to reclaim their lives!**

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, and provide leadership skills and service to their communities.

The beneficiaries themselves helped to create the manuals that they use, drawing from real-life situations to tell the stories they learn to read. By learning how to think creatively and critically, our learners showed a significant decrease in 'dependency syndrome' - the long-term reliance on aid organizations all too common among other development organizations. Our THRIVERS gained confidence to raise their voices through greater participation in the decision-making processes of their communities and by advocating for their best interests.

Key Achievements

- **85% of our learners can read and write words in both their native Acholi and English!**
- Many of our learners report greater success in their small businesses due to increased literacy. Furthermore, they have improved their personal savings. These successes lead to **decreased levels of poverty and increased quality of life amongst our THRIVERS.**
- We trained 14 youth to be leaders and literacy teachers in their respective Youth Empowerment Groups. THRIVE staff, as well as several of our Adult Literacy Facilitators, mentor and supervise the Youth Literacy Facilitators.
- We distributed Literacy Manuals to 14 Empowerment Groups and 7 Youth Empowerment Groups. These manuals included "ABCs of Business" and "English for Business Success" for the adults and the introductory manual "Renewing the Lives of the Youth" for the youth.





Emergency Response to Covid-19

With the outbreak of COVID-19, the staff in Gulu reached out to those of us in the USA, asking for help—not for themselves, but for the communities suffering from the twin threats of the virus and government crackdowns. On the US side, we launched an Emergency Appeal, **raising over \$8,000 to provide humanitarian assistance in Gulu.** For the months of May and June, THRIVEGulu was on the front lines of the pandemic crisis.

- We increased our radio call-in programs from quarterly to weekly, offering 6 shows with **193 callers**, more than twice as many as usual. Three shows addressed the effect COVID-19 was having on mental health (depression, stress), while others focused on raising awareness of increased gender-based violence while families and communities were under lockdown.
- We utilized caravans to access 32 of the most isolated villages, **reaching approximately 2,500 people.** We rented a pickup truck and a PA system, and ventured into areas where individuals had limited access to information. Together with government personnel, we provided public health outreach and shared a message of hope and healing.
- In two months, we **supported 41 cases of gender-based violence**, more than twice as many as usual. With schools closed and children home all the time, there was an increased level of vulnerability. And with women's income-generating activities stymied, there was heightened risk of intimate partner violence. **THRIVE was one of the few organizations still in the field providing direct support during the peak of COVID-19.**
- We instituted a dedicated call line that was used for **tele-counseling.** Clients could call 24-hours a day and leave a confidential message that would be returned within 24 hours by a THRIVE staff counselor. Both clients and counselors adjusted to the shift away from in-person sessions. THRIVE staff also utilized the call line to provide supervision to our Lay Counselors who remained on the front lines within their respective villages.

Grant Programs

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

THRIVEGulu is in her second year of implementing an integrated education program in partnership with Save the Children International and funded by NORAD. Our objective is to reduce child marriage and teenage pregnancy and the adverse effects on access to education in 4 districts by working with and in 50 government-aided primary schools.

Key Achievements

- **We re-enrolled back to school 169 teens** (120 moms, 49 dads), paid all their school fees, and provided them with scholastic materials for the first term of 2020.
- We trained **150 Teachers, 46 Lay Counselors, and 22 community-based volunteers** on psychosocial support, basic counselling skills, child rights, safeguarding, and basics on disabilities/special needs. THRIVEGulu provides ongoing supervision to community volunteers.
- We gathered 40 teen mothers in a Mother Care Group, where they learned about psychosocial support, child rights, safeguarding, nutrition, and care for their infants and young children. The Mother Care Group provides continuous parental support to adolescent mothers who have re-enrolled back to school.
- We were able to **reach 468 vulnerable children** during our Mental Health Mobile Clinics within the period of COVID-19 lockdown.
- We supported 8 children with disabilities with assistive devices, including wheelchairs, braces and standing frames.
- We provided **psychosocial support and counselling services to 1,222 children** and their families.
- THRIVEGulu, in collaboration with local government leaders, conducted awareness campaigns on COVID-19, child rights, child protection, and GBV through our caravans during lockdown.

South Sudanese Refugee Project: TROCAIRE & IRISH AID

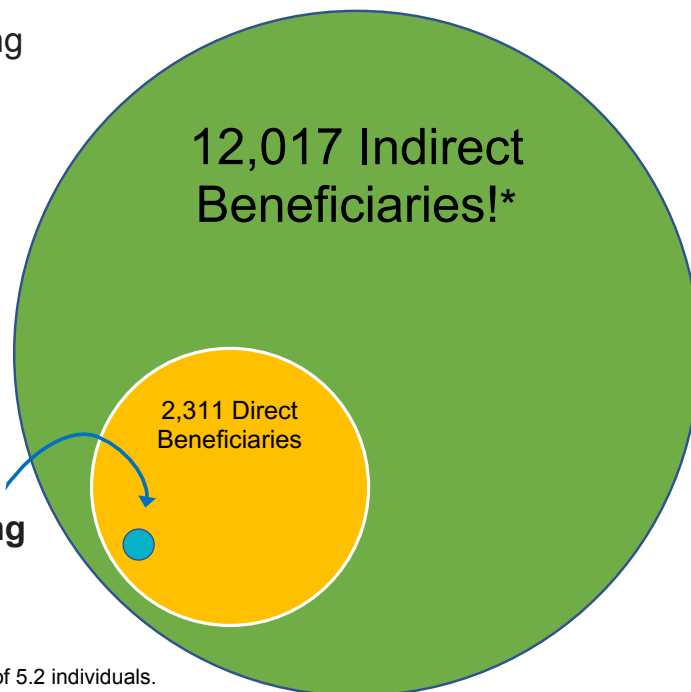
The Humanitarian Program Plan (HPP), conducted in partnership with Trocaire and funded by Irish Aid, addresses the Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) needs of South Sudanese refugees who have been forcibly displaced into Northern Uganda.

In the Palabek Refugee Settlement where THRIVE operates, **there are more than 50,000 refugees, 86% of whom are women and children.** Local Ugandans suffer under the enormous strain on land and resources, which they now must share with the refugees. In line with THRIVEGulu's mission and vision, the HHP 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.

Key Achievements

- We trained 23 border checkpoint staff on Psychological First Aid and 74 COVID-19 front line workers, including health center staff and police, in stress management.
- We identified and trained 30 Lay Counselors on basic MHPSS to enable them to provide basic support services, crisis intervention and referrals for both refugees and their host communities. They were able to **reach a total of 2,311 individuals.**
- We brought 3 Mental Health Outreach Clinics to the settlement and host communities. A total of 239 clients received counselling from THRIVE's professional counselors and mental health medication from the medical providers who join us for these clinics.
- We delivered mental health awareness-raising workshops in schools and villages, **directly reaching a total of 772 students and 1,989 community members.**
- Our professional counselors provided therapeutic support to 537 refugees and residents of the host communities.

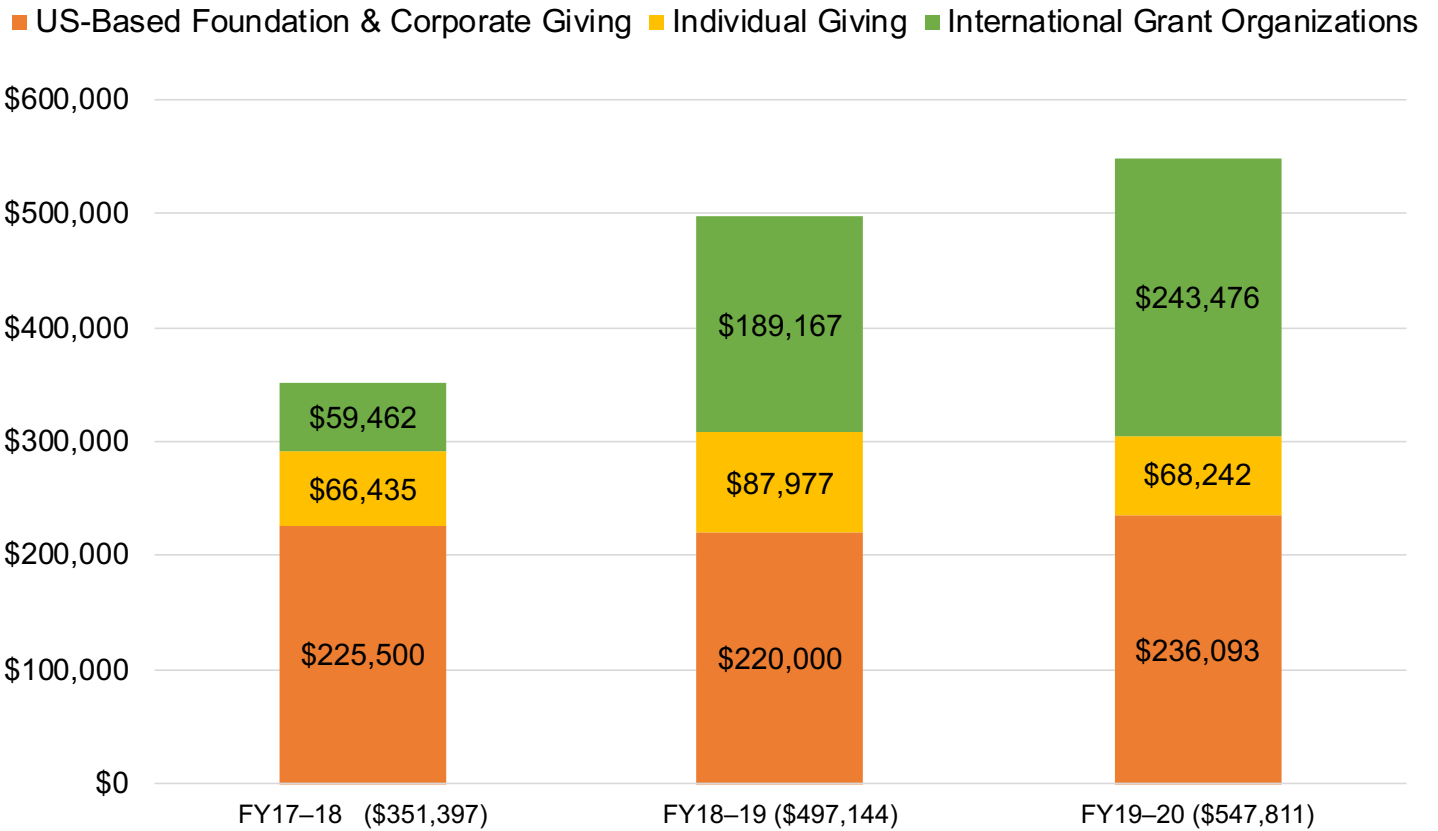
Training 30 Lay Counselors enabled THRIVE to provide support to 2,311 people, benefitting the 12,000+ people in their households!



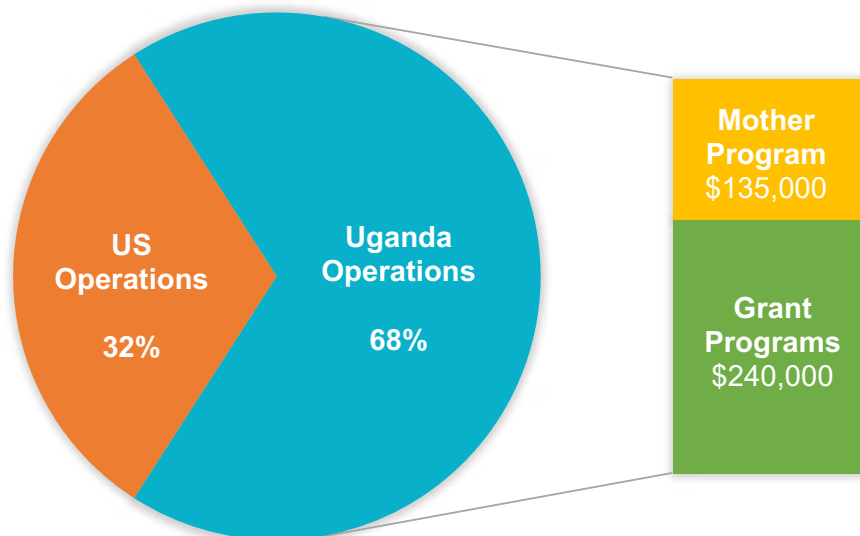
* Each direct beneficiary indirectly impacts her entire household, an average of 5.2 individuals.

Finance Report

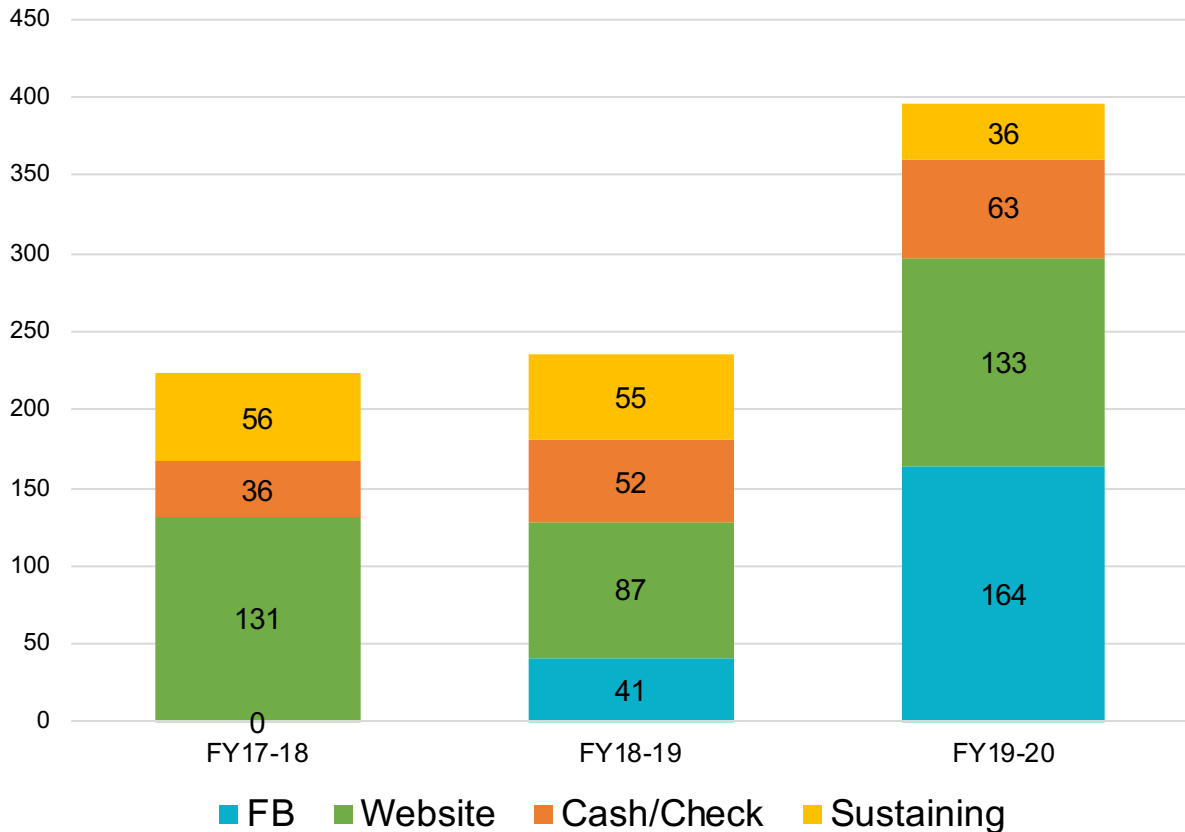
Growth in Revenues FY18 to FY20



FY19-20 OPERATING BUDGET \$550,000



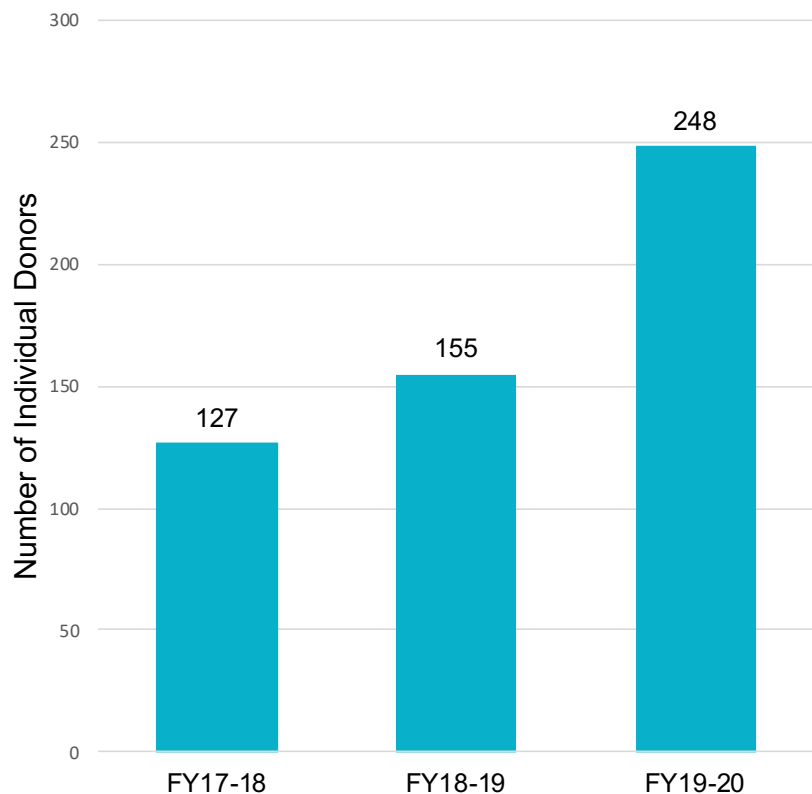
Number of Donations by Type



Growth in Number of Donors!

One of our goals for this year was to expand our social media presence to enable us to reach increasing numbers of supporters, particularly in a climate of isolation due to COVID-19.

An amazing result of this is a large number of donations coming through our social media outreach efforts. **We raised nearly \$10,000 just through Facebook!**



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.

Visionaries

Joseph & Kathleen Sorenson Legacy Foundation

Trauma Recovery Specialists \$10,000+

Sorenson Legacy Foundation *

Empowerment Specialists \$5,000+

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Sue Lonoff de Cuevas
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Literacy Specialists-\$1,000+

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Advocates-\$25+

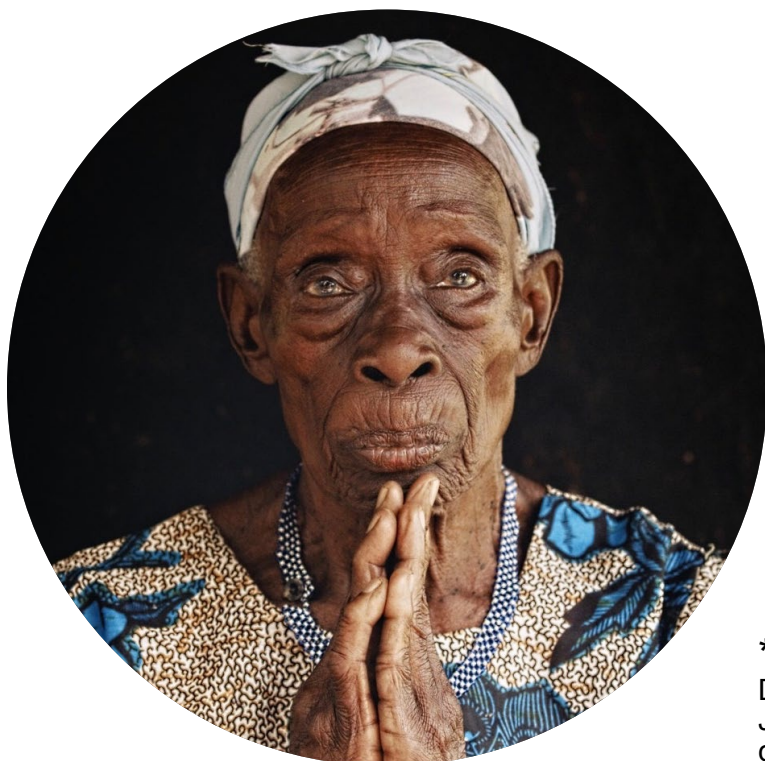
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For over 10 years, the Joseph & Kathleen Sorenson Legacy Foundation and the Sorenson Legacy Foundation have been fundamental in our mission. *Thank you!*

* Donated every fiscal year since July 2016. Donors listed are from contributions made between July 2019-June 2020. Every effort was made for a correct list of donors. We apologize for any mistakes.







THRIVEGULU

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