

2019 Annual Impact

REPORT



**THEIR STORY
IS OUR STORY**

Letter from the Executive Director

The year 2019 was filled with foundational milestones that will shape the future of Their Story Is Our Story. One of the most exciting developments was the establishment of the Global Refugee Archive at Brigham Young University, where TSOS stories will be permanently housed, ensuring their long term protection and increased accessibility to the public. Simultaneously, TSOS developed several Community Programs where we are forging connections that will allow our stories to educate, actuate integration, and advocate for refugees worldwide. At an international level, TSOS shared our stories and message at two United Nations conferences and RootsTech London.

Much of our work in 2019 has enabled TSOS to adapt to the pandemic's unique challenges. For example, TSOS was able to pivot to virtual story gathering through Community Programs. And many virtual interns have had the chance to learn from and work on the Global Refugee Archive team thanks to groundwork laid in 2019.

Reflecting back on this tremendous year of growth for TSOS, I'm more convinced than ever that storytelling is the heart and soul of our work. But storytelling itself is not enough. The refugee crisis is not improving. The UN estimates 79.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes. The stories we share paint a grim reality of impossibly difficult journeys and looming challenges to resettlement. It is not enough to listen to hard stories. The stories we share also give us shining examples of hope, resilience, and the capacity of the human spirit. When TSOS stories inspire ordinary people to act--to make life better for refugees in their communities, then we have succeeded.

We're so proud of the accomplishments laid out in the 2019 Annual Impact Report. Let's continue to work towards changing the perception and reception of refugees worldwide. We still have much work to do!

Sarah Wood
Executive Director

Mission and Vision

Mission: We share stories of the refugee journey to advocate and educate, and to actuate integration.

Vision: To bridge the gap between refugee-newcomers and established local citizens, so that there is no "them", just us.

Executive Summary

This annual report covers the progress of Their Story is Our Story (TSOS) for 2019. The overall goal of the organization is to gather and share first-hand refugee stories in order to encourage interaction with and support from local communities for the newcomers. In 2019, TSOS conducted four major story gathering trips (to Bangladesh, Jordan, Seattle, and Arizona), collecting over 60 new refugee stories. While collecting the stories from refugees, a greater emphasis was placed on collecting the stories from refugee advocates about their work as well. Since these advocates possess unique perspectives regarding the local systems for refugee support and integration, and are familiar with the difficulties associated with navigating these systems, their contributing stories are important to driving the overall mission and vision of TSOS.

2019 also marked the launch of TSOS community programs. Under the direction of a Community Program Director, a total of 7 programs initiated activities and will continue to expand through partnerships with regional refugee groups, using TSOS stories to help foster interaction and support for refugees on a local level. The activities and stories collected in 2019 brought to the forefront the need to focus on three pillars of work: to educate, advocate, and integrate. Contributions from individual donors and grants greatly contributed to the organization's ability to carry out its work, and to hone its focus on these three pillars going into 2020.

Funds and Grants 2019-2020

TSOS was the recipient of three grants in 2019. The Sorenson Legacy Foundation has provided \$25,000 to help fund education in Utah, four paid internships, A/V equipment, and elementary and secondary school curriculum and presentations. A grant from the McCarthy Foundation will allow TSOS to interview and produce the stories of over 200 refugees, strengthen campus chapters, and share stories with thousands of k-12 students through assemblies and presentations. Finally, a grant from the Smith Family Foundation is allowing TSOS to redesign its website. This work will primarily take place in 2020.

Volunteer Workforce

TSOS remains a completely volunteer-operated organization. As of December 2019, there were 93 volunteers on staff from various countries in Europe and across the United States.

Highlights and Achievements

Story Collection: The table below shows the total number of stories collected in 2019 from both refugees and advocates according to their country of origin. These stories were recorded by TSOS volunteers during story collecting trips to Bangladesh and Jordan, as well as from Seattle, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Utah in the United States. refugees.

Country of Origin	No. of Refugees Interviewed	No. of Advocates Interviewed	Interview Location
Afghanistan	1		Seattle
Angola	1		Seattle
Cambodia	1		Seattle
Congo	4		Seattle, Utah, Ohio
Guatemala	5		Phoenix
Honduras	6		Phoenix
India	3		Seattle
Iran	1		Seattle
Iraq	5		Jordan, Seattle, Las Vegas, Utah
Mexico	1		Phoenix
Myanmar	13	4	Bangladesh
Pakistan	2		Seattle
Palestine	2		Seattle
Philippines	1		Seattle
South Korea	1		Seattle
Syria	16	2	Jordan, Seattle
Ukraine	1		Seattle
USA		25	Ohio, Phoenix, Seattle, Utah
Vietnam	1		Seattle

Community Programs: Eight Community Program Coordinators helped TSOS engage with local refugee advocacy groups, participate in service learning opportunities, and facilitate story gathering and storytelling around the country. Each CPC represented TSOS at their local World Refugee Day events with the positive result of networking and providing opportunities for future interactions and partnerships with refugees. Groundwork was also established for future curriculum and educational partners.

Timeline

February 2019	Frankfurt International School Multimedia Evening presentation and music by local refugee groups
March 2019	Bangladesh Storygathering trip BYU: Women's Studies Honors Course lecture UN Commission on the Status of Women, Manhattan, NYC presentation on Rohingya refugee women
June 2019	World Refugee Day events in CA, UT, VA, MT, and IN
July 2019	Prague Euroseminar 2019
August 2019	Grace Hudson Museum presentation 68th Annual Civil Society Conference, Salt Lake City Utah. "My Story: Leonard Bagalwa", August 23rd, Utah Valley University. Screening followed by panel discussion Gala Event Modern West Art, Salt Lake City, Utah
September 2019	Weller's Book Works signing event in SLC
October 2019	KSL TV: Interview with Dalton Bradford, TSOS BYU Campus Chapter lead and Dumdi Baribe, Nigerian refugee DESERET NEWS: 3-Day Refugee Integration Stories in Frankfurt. Roots Tech London: PowerPoint Presentation, "Digging Into Your Refugee Roots"
November 2019	Jordan and Seattle story gathering trips
December 2019	Conference on the Education of Displaced People, Geneva, Switzerland. Main Speakers: Sharon Eubank, Gérald Caussé.

Story Gathering Trips

Bangladesh: Three TSOS volunteers took a 10-day trip to Cox's Bazar where they interviewed Rohingya Refugees. TSOS partnered with HumaniTerra and Hope Hospital for Women, focusing on maternal health and results of rape and sexual assault perpetrated by Burmese armies.

Jordan: Three TSOS volunteers visited Amman, Jordan and the Za'atari camp along the Syrian border. This 10-day trip was a collaboration with HumaniTerra, focusing on pediatric health care and surgery for Syrian refugees living in Jordan.

Seattle: TSOS volunteers visited the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project headquarters in downtown Seattle. Here they collected several dozen stories with an emphasis on resettlement.

Arizona: A small team of volunteers visited Phoenix, Arizona collecting stories from asylum seekers who were newly released from detention centers and area church volunteers. These stories focused on arrival and reception.

Social Media Outreach

TSOS regularly updated social media and saw significant growth in the number of followers on both Facebook and Instagram. The demographics of those most likely to engage with social media posts are as follows:

Female: 77%
Male: 23%

Top Countries:
USA
Germany
UK
France

Top Cities:
Provo, UT
Salt Lake City, UT
Mesa, AZ
Phoenix, AZ

Lessons Learned

As a year of great growth in strength and numbers for TSOS, both in volunteer capacity, as well as stories collected, 2019 highlighted three overarching lessons, (1) the overall objective and vision of the organization, (2) the area of story collection and data preservation, and (3) the area of organizational and logistical functionality of the organization.

Objective and vision of TSOS: During 2019, as highlighted above, TSOS conducted numerous trips to collect the stories of the refugee journey. These trips were not only fruitful in the story gathering efforts, but also in refining the overall objective and mission TSOS seeks to accomplish in the future. Always reassessing its practicality and functionality as a “helper” to the actual storyteller, the refugee, TSOS grew to understand better that it best functions as a catalyst, refocusing its objectives on using stories to educate, advocate and actuate integration. As a result, TSOS also determined that it does not function as a “voicer giver” but rather as a sounding board. As a result, TSOS has omitted the “giving a voice to refugees” statement from its logo, to more accurately reflect its purpose in amplifying the stories as told by the refugees themselves.

Story collection and data preservation: As the number of stories collected during 2019 kept growing, TSOS quickly realized that for these stories to receive full utilization, they would need to be made more accessible to the public through the TSOS designated website and through a data archive, which would function as a repository. As a result, TSOS created an Archive team, and initiated discussion with Brigham Young University Harold B. Lee Library to serve as a potential host for such a data repository. It further discussed the ethics of story collection, and conducted numerous activities to ensure privacy and dignity, as well as safety of interviewees are guaranteed, by keeping a close track of NDAs and expressed wishes of the interviewed individuals.

Organizational and logistical functionality of the organization: It was identified that as the organization grows, there is a greater need to streamline processes, structure teams in a way to allow for better reporting and accountability, but also for flexibility in execution of the tasks. As a result, a number of documents needed to be produced, to help orient volunteers, help support organizational structure, reporting and transparency among various team members, and to highlight the main mission of TSOS. These documents include TSOS work in education, advocacy and integration, as well as the business plan, welcoming packages, and training materials.

