

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024/25



CHAIR OF TRUSTEES MESSAGE

This past year has been one of transformation and growth at Firefly. While we've continued to deliver impactful and crucial programmes in Bosnia, we've also witnessed the profound impact of our work in Syria, where education and community rebuilding have taken on renewed urgency as the Syrians who we work with begin to return home. In a year marked by both progress and heartbreak, we are especially mindful of the suffering in Gaza and renew our commitment to supporting children whose lives are devastated by such catastrophic conflict. It's been a privilege to watch Firefly thrive and adapt in the face of such challenges, continuing to bring hope and opportunity to the communities we serve.

A major milestone this year was the launch of our Brighter Futures Appeal in November 2024. The energy and support we received at the launch event were extraordinary, setting us on a promising path. Thanks to the generosity of our most committed philanthropists - including an anonymous donation of £50,000, matched by former Chair of Trustees Sebastian Chambers - we've made excellent fundraising progress. Their belief in Firefly's mission has given our appeal powerful momentum and enabled the match funding of subsequent donations.

We were extremely happy to welcome two new members to our team: Amy Stirling, who has brought drive and creativity as Appeal Manager, and Kate Cattell, whose precision and dedication as Finance and Admin Officer have already made a strong impact. Our thanks go to every member of the Firefly staff and volunteer team for their tireless commitment, especially our Charity Director, Jane Critchley Salmonson, whose wisdom, experience, and daily leadership continue to inspire us all.

We also mark the departure of two exceptional figures. Victoria Crawley, the operational heart of Firefly for over a decade, steered us through enormous growth - from kitchen table beginnings to a fully staffed office. And Sebastian Chambers, whose leadership, ambition, and generosity have shaped Firefly's identity and ensured our long-term sustainability. We owe them both a deep debt of gratitude. To our long-time supporters and those new to our work: thank you. Your donations, enthusiasm, and belief in Firefly continue to light the way to a brighter future for the young people we serve.



Diana McMicking

Chair of Trustees

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The most noteworthy achievement this year was the creation of a £250,000 matched giving fund, thanks to the wonderful generosity of our 'philanthropists' – people prepared to give us £1,000 or more. Thanks to this small group of incredibly supportive people, we are now able to go out to the wider public with this message: give whatever you can, and we will match your gift, pound for pound. Over half the fund has been drawn down as match and we are well on our way to reaching our first appeal target of £500,000.

All our overseas partners' activities have been successful in bringing about significant and lasting impact on the lives of the children and young people they reach in their area. All of them face extremely challenging circumstances locally, which they navigate with quiet skill and determination. Witnessing the depth of their commitment to the children of their fellow countrymen and women, is the greatest privilege of my role with Firefly.

The terrible tragedy of Gaza haunts us every day. We are grateful to our former project partners, from the times pre-October 2023 when we contributed funding to their child trauma clinic, for taking the time and trouble to keep us in touch. We aim to return to Gaza when we can. In the meantime, we are pleased to make new friends in Cairo with a group of volunteers teaching Palestinian children and young people. They help meet vital needs for education, play and therapeutic activities.

New opportunities are opening up in Syria for our partners to meet the vast needs there. We are sure they will rise to the considerable challenges they face, in a country left devastated after decades of destruction and corruption, and we invite our supporters to back them in this epochal moment. Lastly, Svitac, our partner in Bosnia, is also facing an increasingly harsh operating climate. We hope you will join us in marking 30 years since Firefly first began in Bosnia, this December 2025, by investing in the future of this unique organisation. It is as important now, as it has been at any time since the war ended.



**Jane Critchley
Salmonson**

Director

SVITAC PROJECT REPORT

In the past year, Svitac continued its vital mission of building bridges between communities in Brčko, a town still living with the legacy of the Balkan War. Ethnic divides between Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats remain deeply rooted, and in this climate, our work promoting tolerance, cultural diversity, and mutual respect is more important than ever.

This year, through language classes, music and art workshops, intercultural events, and youth-led discussions, we provided a neutral and welcoming space for children and young people of all backgrounds. Our summer and music camps were once again a highlight—bringing together youth to collaborate, create, and form friendships that defy the divisions around them. Events promoting peace and inclusion drew in the wider community, offering powerful moments of shared understanding.

With political tensions on the rise in the region, and divisive rhetoric resurfacing in public discourse, the role of grassroots organisations like Svitac cannot be overstated. We confront prejudice not with politics, but through daily acts of connection, creativity, and dialogue. This quiet, consistent work is what sustains the long-term path toward reconciliation.

We are deeply grateful to Firefly International for their unwavering support. Their funding enables us to remain politically independent and community-focused, offering young people hope and opportunity outside of the pressures and limitations of the post-conflict environment. In the face of growing instability, Svitac remains a place of light, resilience, and possibility.



Gordana Varcakovic
Svitac Director

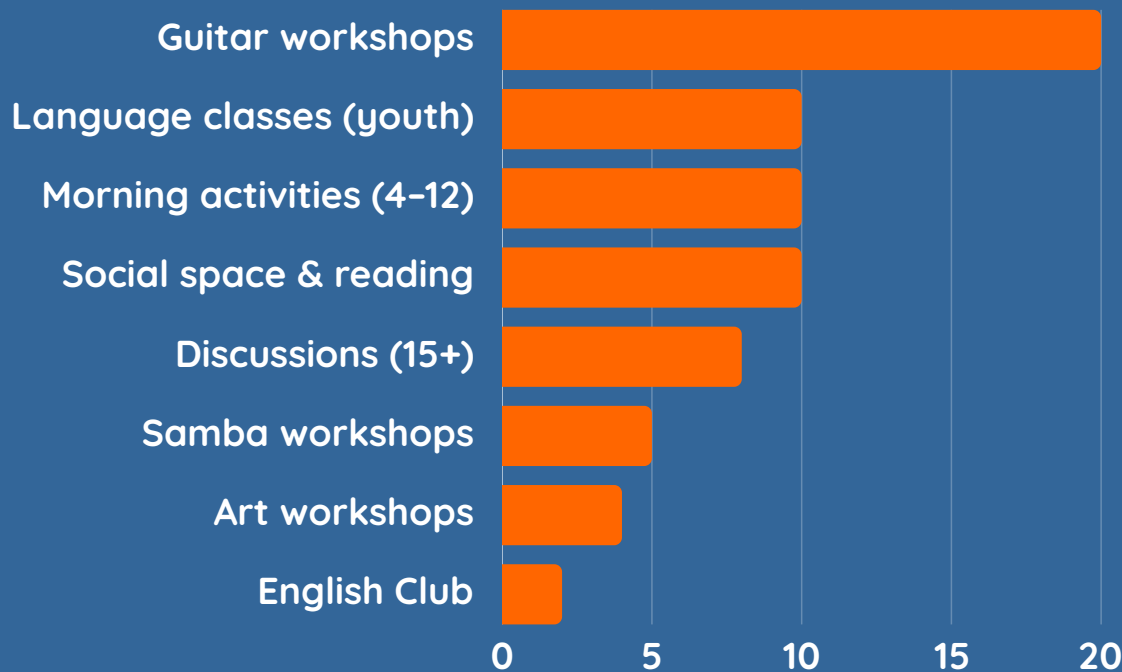
SVITAC IMPACT

1,700 PEOPLE REACHED



Including children, young people, families, volunteers and officials

HOURS OF ACTIVITES PER WEEK AVG. 73HRS



VOLUNTEERS



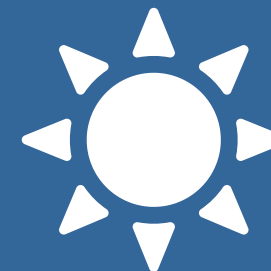
30-40 weekly participants



143 monthly participants



600 summer holiday participants



900 annual event attendees



SVITAC HIGHLIGHTS



A particular highlight this year was Project Director Gordana's invitation to Buckingham Palace - an honour that recognised Svitac's outstanding contribution to peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Late August's Summer Camps (Aug 26–30th) expanded our creative-language and music offerings into a full festival of learning and play. Over four days, participants rotated through art studios and language corners - exploring the future of communication through painting, sculpture, and conversation in English and German. Music workshops ran in parallel, guiding children to discover their voices on guitar, flute, and percussion. On August 31st, Children's Day transformed the Youth Centre into a bustling showcase bringing together the whole community.



SVITAC CELEBRATED 14 INTERNATIONAL DAYS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS EVENTS, INSPIRING YOUNG PARTICIPANTS TO THINK BEYOND THEIR BORDERS:

International Day of Living Together in Peace - Discussions, crafts, and reflection on tolerance.

Universal Children's Day - Creative workshops promoting rights, freedom, and unity.

World Day of Social Justice - Explored social media behavior, trolling, and online justice.

Earth Day, Cultural Diversity Day, Anti-Racism Day, International Day of Peace

SVITAC HIGHLIGHTS

Art reiterates itself as a method of peacekeeping as it is a way to communicate. When we are running the workshops, the primary focus is on what we are creating.

[READ OLIVIA'S BLOG](#)

Volunteer Olivia's reflections on 6 months with Svitac in 2024



SVITAC HOSTED 10 INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS THIS YEAR, FROM THE UK, GERMANY, BELGIUM AND TURKEY PARTNERING WITH THE TURING SCHEME, EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS (ESC) AND WELTWÄRTS

FIREFLY FOR SYRIANS PROJECT REPORT

In what has been a momentous year for Syrians across the world, Firefly for Syrians achieved significant milestones in its mission to support education and community development for Syrian refugees in Turkey and Syria.

In 2024, our centre in Antakya reopened after the earthquake, once again offering a vital safe space for Syrian children. Our online Arabic programme graduated 60 students, welcomed 100 new ones, and added hundreds of interactive exercises and weekly Zoom sessions. In Urfa and Yaladag, young people accessed new hands-on courses in mechanics, electricity, and programming. After our original YouTube channel was hacked and closed, we launched a new one - now with over 1,700 videos and nearly 400,000 views - restoring this vital learning resource.

Inside Syria, our early years projects in Qabasin and Al-Rai continued to support children aged 4-6, while summer catch-up classes and engineering workshops reached older learners. We also trained 119 new teachers in Arabic, science, and early childhood education - now delivering trauma-informed learning across the region.

The need for quality, creative education is urgent. According to UNICEF, over 7,000 schools in Syria have been damaged or destroyed, and approximately 2 million children are out of school - many of them vulnerable and recently displaced by ongoing insecurity. This has created a generation of children who have never enrolled in school and will face serious challenges accessing formal education as they grow. After more than a decade of conflict, rebuilding the country will depend on a generation empowered through learning, imagination, and critical thinking. Firefly for Syrians remains committed to this vision - working face-to-face in communities and creating opportunities for young people to thrive.

With deep thanks to Firefly International and their generous supporters, we look ahead with hope and determination to play our part in rebuilding Syria.



Fadia Shaker

Firefly for Syrian's Director

FIREFLY FOR SYRIANS IMPACT

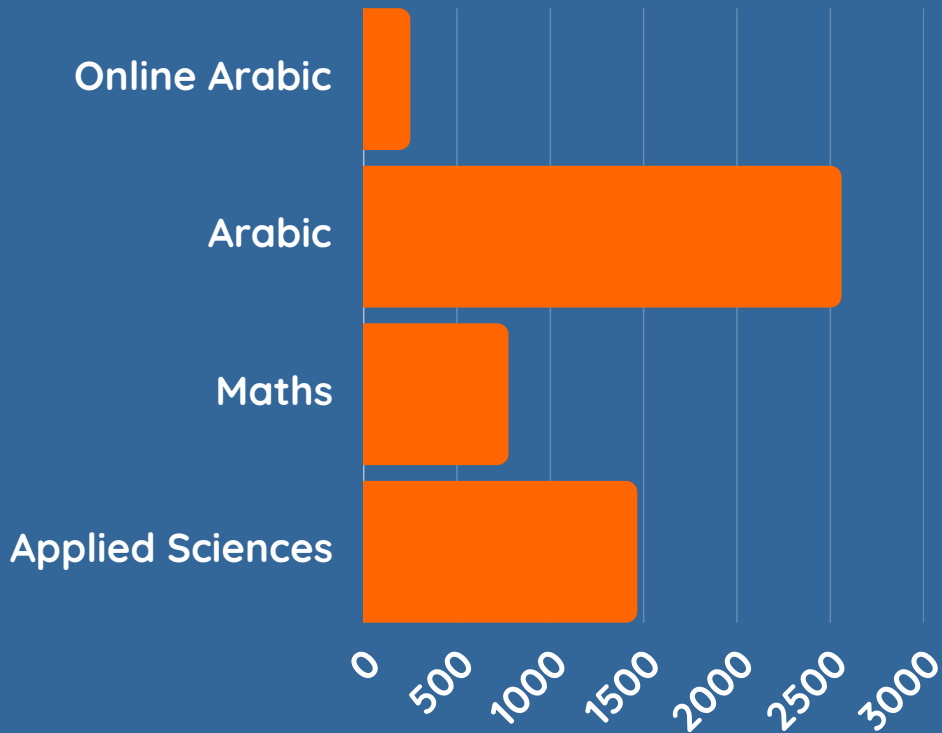


CHILDREN PROVIDED WITH PRE-SCHOOL, ARABIC, MATHS & SCIENCE EDUCATION

119 TEACHERS
TRAINED



NUMBER OF CHILDREN TAUGHT ONLINE AND IN CLASS



FIREFLY FOR SYRIANS HIGHLIGHTS



**OPENING THE NEW CENTRE
IN ANTAKYA AND A VISIT
FROM AMY & MARIA**

Alia*, a six-year-old earthquake survivor, arrived at our Antakya center silent and withdrawn after losing much of her family. Her mother, desperate for help, found hope as her daughter slowly began to smile, play, and connect with her teacher, Khadija. After Eid, she proudly showed off her new clothes, a small but powerful sign of healing. In that moment, we were reminded that our work helps restore what tragedy has shattered.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)



TESTAMONIALS

The Applied Sciences project broadened the students' perspectives, increased their practical knowledge, and enhanced their problem-solving skills in daily life. It also fostered a love for learning, scientific inquiry, and expanded their imagination - Mr. Saif Al-Din Qabbaqji, Director, Abu Hanifa Center in Yayladağı

Students coming from Yara' (Firefly) Kindergarten show a significantly higher level than their peers - reflecting the strong foundational education they received. Teacher Izdihar at Al-Furqan Center, Rural Qabasin

FIREFLY FOR SYRIANS HIGHLIGHTS

I would like to share with you some reflections from my visit to Syria. We were greeted with overwhelming warmth, to the extent that we felt like we were doing something extraordinary. However, we soon realized that this was because the region lacks even the most basic attention to children. Simple efforts on our part, such as providing a clean and colourful space created a significant and remarkable transformation in children's daily lives. We also felt immense relief from parents, who now have hope that their children might have a better future through learning the basics of reading and arithmetic, and playing naturally with their peers. They made us realize that the kindergarten was, for them, a dream they never dared to dream. The extreme poverty, scarcity of resources, and absence of guidance in the area are beyond description.

Fadia's reflections on her first visit to Syria after the fall of the regime - Nov 2024



FADIA RECEIVING AN AWARD FROM AUTHORITIES IN QABASIN FOR FIREFLY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION

GIRLS FROM THE SCIENCE PROGRAMME IN YALADAG WHERE AN ELECTRONICS & COMPUTER PROGRAMMING MODULE WAS LAUNCHED THIS YEAR - [WATCH VIDEO](#)



FIREFLY FOR PALESTINIANS UPDATE

Throughout 2024, Firefly remained steadfast in its commitment to supporting our staff in Gaza under increasingly challenging circumstances. Our efforts included advocacy, maintaining regular contact, and, where infrastructure allowed, ensuring staff salaries were paid. The escalating violence and deepening humanitarian crisis, which has continued to intensify since 2023, has devastated every aspect of life in Gaza - especially for children. Innocent and vulnerable, they face the daily loss of lives, homes, families, and the hope that access to quality education once promised.

In response, Firefly explored new avenues to support children affected by the crisis, turning to the Palestinian refugee community in Egypt. Following our model of identifying and addressing gaps in services overlooked by state institutions and other NGOs, we conducted a needs assessment. This assessment revealed critical shortfalls in classroom based education aligned with the Palestinian curriculum, trauma support, and accessible community activities.

To address these needs, Trustee Malaka Shwaik travelled to Cairo. Leveraging her contacts within the refugee community, she helped identify a grassroots partner that shared Firefly's values and approach. In late 2024, we established an early-stage collaboration with Afhad Al Zeytoun (AAZ) - a volunteer-led organisation providing education, recreational activities, and safe community spaces for Palestinian children in Cairo.

AAZ currently serves around 300 children through weekly lessons, sports sessions, and holiday camps. Their work is powered by a network of dedicated professionals and student volunteers. Firefly has supported AAZ by contributing to essential operating costs, such as rent, and introductions to other donors. Looking ahead to 2025-26, we will work with AAZ to see how we can increase our support to help them extend their activities to encompass the most vulnerable and needy of this population.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

APRIL 2024 - MARCH 2025

Income

In 2024/25, Firefly International achieved a record income of £497,970, thanks to the continued generosity of our supporters. This included £314,276 mainly raised through the Brighter Futures Appeal, along with income from grants and individual donations. We also received funds through challenge activities and corporate support. Income was well-diversified across unrestricted and restricted sources.

Expenditure

We continue to grow our programmes with children in Bosnia and from Syria. Our project in Gaza has been suspended since 7 October 2023 but we maintained contributions towards staff costs. Total charitable spending was £256,937, with the largest share supporting our Syrian partners.

Balance Sheet and Reserves

In line with our strategy to build the sustainability of our partners, we improved our reserves position. We have restricted reserves of £64,792 to carry forward for Syria and expect to allocate designated reserves for Bosnia and Palestine. This financial position allows us to plan our activities with confidence in the year ahead. Please note the figures presented below are still subject to audit but not expected to change.



Firefly International			
Accounts (unaudited)		Actual	Actual
Year ended 31 March 2025		Year to 31 Mar 25	Year to 31 Mar 24
		£	£
Income & Expenditure Account			
Income	Regular giving	34,564	29,731
	Donations & fundraising	314,276	145,415
	Grants - trusts & foundations	145,372	130,444
	Interest	3,758	1,918
	Total Income	497,970	307,508
Expenditure	Firefly in Bosnia	69,990	72,426
	Firefly for Syrians	172,900	162,000
	Firefly for Palestinians	14,047	5,350
	Ellie Maxwell Prize		1,050
	Fundraising costs	9,355	5,137
	Other Charitable Expenses	108,746	58,615
	Total Expenditure	375,038	304,578
Net Income / (Expenditure)		122,932	2,930
Balance Sheet			
	Fixed Assests	1,159	1,159
	Cash at bank	293,447	231,287
	Debtors	36,445	2,489
	Less Creditors	(28,502)	(55,238)
	Net Assets	302,549	179,697
	General Firefly reserve	237,787	71,873
	Firefly in Bosnia reserve	-	-
	Firefly for Palestinians reserve	-	-
	Firefly for Syrians reserve	64,792	107,774
	Total Reserves	302,579	179,647

