



Firefly International

Building Bridges through Education and the Arts

Annual Report 2016-2017





Firefly International

Building Bridges through Education and the Arts

Firefly International works to promote locally-led initiatives in conflict and post-conflict settings that work through education and psychosocial support to create safe, supportive and inclusive spaces for young people. This provides opportunities for young people to develop their intellectual skills, self-esteem and psychosocial confidence, opportunities that would not otherwise exist. We currently provide administrative, fundraising, public outreach and volunteer recruitment support to local partners in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Palestinian West Bank and Syria.

Through our work, we:

- R** Reach out to young people who have been denied essential rights by conflict.
- E** Engage with educational needs while enhancing learning and future prospects
- A** Advance artistic engagement, creativity and self-esteem
- C** Contribute core funding and project management support to local partners
- H** Help to heal divisions and psychological traumas in communities impacted by conflict.

REPORT OVERVIEW

Report Overview

This report, which covers the reporting period March 2016-March 2017, is being written as part of Firefly International's annual monitoring obligations to the [Scottish Charity Regulator \(OSCR\)](#). In addition to providing an overview of Firefly International and our working partners, it also provides an insight into important recent innovations and developments. In concluding, it takes stock of ongoing challenges and obstacles before setting out strategic priorities for 2017 and beyond.

The current report breaks down into six separate sections. The first section provides insight into Firefly International's background and also highlights key focus areas. It sets out our key contribution, references current strengths and traces structural outlines. The accounts for the past financial year are then set out, and close reference is made to relevant incomes and expenditures. The work of each of our local partners is then presented in further detail. Each individual working context, along with associated challenges, is then referenced before partner origins, focus areas, program provision and structure are set out in more detail.

The report then distinguishes the separate dimensions of our ongoing contribution. It distinguishes the administrative, fundraising, publicity and volunteer-related components of our work, thereby clearly demonstrating how we are helping to make a real difference to our partners and the communities that we work with. Strategic priorities are identified and set out in more detail before an action plan demonstrates how we will work towards key priorities over the course of 2017.

INTRODUCTION

Firefly International: Origins, Focus Areas, Contribution, Strengths and Structure

[Firefly International](#) (registered charity number SC 028744) is a Scottish NGO that was established in 2003. It emerged from Firefly Youth Project, a youth-focused NGO which was founded by Ellie Maxwell (in 1998), which previously operated in Brčko District, in the north-east of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It works with [Svitac](#) in Bosnia-Herzegovina (since 2003), [Project Hope](#) in the Palestinian West Bank (since 2006) and the [Antakya Project](#) in Turkey (since 2016).

It is a youth-focused NGO whose assistance is focused upon education, recreation and creative activities. It provides administrative, donor engagement and fundraising assistance and contributes to the work of local NGOs within three separate working contexts. This support is cost-effective and flexible – with the exception of two permanent part-time staff, our volunteers work on an ad hoc basis, responding to the specific needs and requirements of partner organisations. Our volunteers are highly qualified, with PhD-level expertise in subjects such as post-conflict peacebuilding and the politics of development aid. Other volunteers have extensive experience of the NGO sector and fundraising.

Our volunteers are sufficiently distanced from the NGO sector so as to be able to critique many of its shortcomings. In contrast to those who are more enmeshed within the system, they are better able to bring in critical insights and perspectives. Having worked closely with our local partners over a substantial period of time, they are also aware of the need to align their work with the needs and requirements of local contexts – regrettably this is not always true of external donors and institutions. Their work is currently supported by [volunteer committees](#), [trustees](#) and [patrons](#), who work together to fundraise, engage wider networks and promote the work of Firefly International and our local partners. Firefly International relies on a flexible structure made up of dedicated project committees. Each committee focuses upon the work of one specific local partner and cooperates with the other committees in general Firefly International activities.

HIGHLIGHTS

OUR CONTRIBUTION

During 2016, Firefly International:

- Helped to publicise the work of our partners by engaging with wider international audiences
- Engaged with external donors (e.g. through proposal writing and networking) with a view to putting in place the basis for working relationships
- Further strengthened working relationships
- Directly funded ongoing work in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Turkey

Fundraising Grants

- Firefly for Bosnians: £39,482
- Firefly for Palestinians: £8,014
- Firefly for Syrians: £40,059

A number of grants do not appear in Firefly International's Accounts – this is because grant-writing staff were volunteering directly for Project Hope:

- Three-year \$180,000 (USD) grant from UNIFOR (\$60,000 (USD) per year)
- Single payment of £5,000 from IMET2000
- Single payment of \$15,000 (USD) from the New Zealand Embassy in Ankara

Fundraising Events

Our work benefits from support that was provided both by individual and collectives. Relevant examples include the 2016 edition of the Firefly Gala, which was held at St Paul's Church in Covent Garden, London. In bringing together the different elements of Firefly's work, this event provided a cultural fusion of Balkan, Middle Eastern and Western music. Glyn Richards raised £2,000 by running just over 26 miles in the London marathon, while John Chambers, Louis Hall and Gertjan Hoetjes also put on their running shoes to support Firefly International's ongoing work.

HIGHLIGHTS

OUR CONTRIBUTION

Support in Maintenance and Administration

- The vast majority of IT work is now carried out by local partners
- Websites and social media accounts are maintained by local staff. Antakya, which is still going through the start-up phase, is an exception in this respect – it still largely relies upon Firefly International's website to promote its work.
- Monthly reports are compiled and edited by local staff, with Firefly International helping local staff to compile and edit other periodic reports

Public Engagement/Outreach

- Firefly International helps to organise public outreach and fundraising events
- Firefly International staff engage with present and past volunteers, helping to draft blogs and promotional materials, thus contributing heightened visibility to the work of our partners

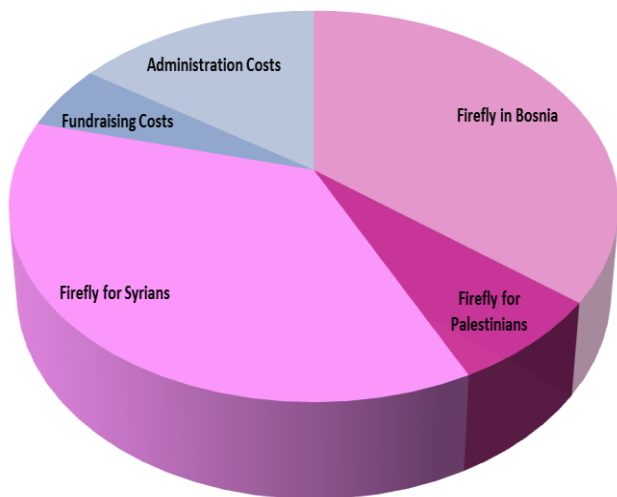
Volunteer Recruitment

- Firefly International staff work with local partners to help to publicise ongoing volunteer opportunities
- Assisting Svitac in transitioning towards a heightened reliance upon self-funding volunteers
- Administering the EVS scheme and reporting back to the British Council.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

We aid local start-up projects to grow while helping them to maximise their ongoing contributions. Whilst we constantly seek to engage new partners with a view to addressing existing needs, we remain committed to previous partners that still require our assistance.

Firefly International - Expenditure 2016-2017



Firefly International			
Accounts			
Period End	31 March 2017	Actual Mar 31 2017	Actual Mar 31 2016
		£	£
Income & expenditure account - year to 31 March			
Income	Direct debits, donations and fundraising	£79,411	£61,847
	Grants	£16,704	£47,351
	Interest	£40	£2
	Total income	£96,155	£109,200
Expenditure	Firefly in Bosnia	£39,482	£49,165
	Firefly for Palestinians	£8,014	£9,651
	Firefly for Syrians	£40,059	£8,948
	Fundraising Costs	£6,003	£18,715
	Administration Costs	£17,072	£18,416
	Total expenditure	£110,630	£104,895
Net Income / (Expenditure)		(£14,475)	£4,305
Balance sheet - at 31 March			
Cash at bank		£16,568	£31,042
General Firefly reserve		£7,446	£14,542
Firefly for Syrians reserve		£9,122	£16,500
Total reserves		£16,568	£31,042
Cash flow - year to 31 March			
Cash bought forward 1 April		£31,042	£26,737
Surplus / (deficit) within the year		(£7,096)	(£12,195)
Increase / (use) of specific reserves		(£7,378)	£16,500
Cash balance at 31 March		£16,568	£31,042

PROJECTS SUPPORTED

Firefly for Palestinians

Firefly's local partner [Project Hope](#) has brought together local and international volunteers to provide education programmes to Palestinian children and youth for more than 10 years. Each year about 75 international volunteers deliver a range of classes and activities including languages, arts, technology, and sports. Located in [Nablus](#) in the West Bank, Project Hope provides education and relief to young people in underprivileged communities, including refugee camps and rural villages that have endured occupation for almost 50 years.

Firefly in Bosnia

Firefly's local partner [Svitac](#) helps young people in [Brčko](#) (Bosnia) to overcome the ethnic divides that have persisted in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the end of the country's three-year civil war (1992-1995). It does so through a year-round programme of arts and language classes, workshops and lively community events, opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to young people living in this small city. Firefly International's support to Svitac reiterates its commitment to provide long-term core funding to local partners in conflict or post-conflict regions – this support will persist even after other external actors (such as donors and the international media) have largely disengaged.

Firefly for Syrians

The [Syrian Refugee Education Project](#) is helping a group of refugees to design, fund and setup a youth education centre in [Antakya, Turkey](#). Based close to the Syrian border, the city is currently hosting several thousand refugees. Syrian children are often forced by necessity to work in subsistence jobs, with limited school places open to them. We aim to reintegrate working refugee children back into school through educational and recreational activities.

FIREFLY for PALESTINIANS

Project Hope — Helps Palestinian Children to Develop and Engage the World
Through Arts & Education

Website: www.projecthope.ps - Video: <http://fireflyinternational.org/?sermons=the-project-hope-story>



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Working Context

Nablus is a city of almost 200,000 inhabitants that is situated within the northern West Bank. It is a city with a rich history which previously made an important economic and cultural contribution to wider Palestinian life. During the Oslo years it was superseded by Ramallah (which emerged as the *de facto* capital of the West Bank). The city was also profoundly impacted by the events of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, the impact of which is still clearly discernible in many parts of the city. In working within Nablus, international and local actors are confronted by a range of challenges, which can be broadly broken down into the following categories:

Educational

- Education services within Nablus are over-burdened and under-resourced

Political

- An occupation that suffocates economic, political and social development
- Authoritarian political governance by the Palestinian Authority (PA) – accountability, broad political participation and transparency are still clearly lacking.

Social

- Palestinian society is hierarchically organised and is not conducive to originality, individuality and innovation

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Project Hope: Origins, Focus Areas, Program Provision and Structure

Project Hope was formed by two Palestinians and a Canadian in 2003, at a time when the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* was at its height and the Israeli army was besieging the city. It provided a locally-led response to the lack of educational and recreational opportunities for young people in Nablus and, as a volunteer-based initiative, offered a means through which international volunteers could travel to Palestine and learn more about the realities of occupation. In its initial years, it had extremely limited resources and its work was restricted to the city's four refugee camps.

As the largest volunteer-based organisation of its kind in the West Bank, its work is currently focused on youth engagement and participation. Its core focus areas are education and recreation, although cultural engagement and advocacy also feature prominently in its work. Its core program output (which operates under the single umbrella of *Future Hopes*) currently caters to around 15,000 participants per year, reaching out to a broad range of age-groups and abilities. At present, program provision can broadly be broken down into English language, French language and Creative Activities. Project Hope currently employs seven staff – the director and treasurer, the coordinators who oversee each programme, the Computer Program Coordinator and an IT Assistant.

FIREFLY in BOSNIA

Svitac – Helps Bosnian Children to Overcome Ethnic Divides Through Arts & Education

Website: <http://fireflybosnia.org/> - Video: <http://fireflyinternational.org/?sermons=svitac-2015-promo-video>



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Working Context

Svitac works in Brčko District, which has a total population of just over 90,000. In the aftermath of the Bosnian Civil War, Brčko District, which is situated in north-eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina, was awarded a unique status of self-governance in 1999. It has since emerged as the only part of the country in which the respective national groups (Bosniak, Croat and Serb) live alongside each other and which functions (albeit imperfectly) upon a genuinely multi-ethnic basis. Whereas over two-thirds of the population in Republika Srpska and the Federation are from a single ethnic group, the demographic balance in Brčko District is different - 40% of the local population are Bosniaks, 40% are Serbs and 20% are Croats. Ongoing challenges can be broadly broken down into the following categories:

Educational

- Schools within Brčko continue to use formalised approaches to teaching, restricting opportunities for individual and creative expression

Political

- The political situation within the wider country remains uncertain and unstable, in large part due to the fact that the respective political leaderships continue to exploit tensions and divides for their own purposes

Social

- Wider society continues to reinforce narrow and exclusionary forms of identity, making it more difficult for young people to think and act across the divide

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Svitac: Origins, Focus Areas, Program Provision and Structure

Svitac was registered as a local NGO in 2002. It continued on from Firefly Youth Project, addressing itself to the same challenges, specifically the relative absence of opportunities for young people and the fragility of the reconciliation process within Brčko District. Its work has previously been sustained by local volunteers and European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteers, who have enabled Svitac to overcome the suspicion with which it was initially regarded. From the outset, Svitac's work has had an important international dimension, as evidenced by the emphasis which its work places upon universal themes, such as human rights.

Its work helps to promote reconciliation by bringing young people from different national groups together within an open and inclusive educational and recreational environment. In engaging with Svitac's work, young people come to define themselves by what they can achieve together rather than by what sets them apart. Svitac emphasises the importance of youth engagement because young people are more open to this vision. Svitac's work is focused upon two specific age-groups – young children (4-7 years-old) and schoolchildren and teenagers (8-14 years-old). On a daily basis, around 60 participants (30 per age-group) engage with Svitac's activities (which include language learning, arts and crafts, music and sport)

Svitac employs four staff (three full-time, one part-time) - a director, an international and local volunteer coordinator, a music coordinator and an EVS coordinator (two are Bosniaks and two are Serbs). Our director has worked with Svitac since it was locally registered; our volunteer and music coordinators have almost 20 years' experience between them. Svitac also employs five local volunteers who assist international volunteers in their work.

FIREFLY for SYRIANS

Syrian Refugee Education Project – Helps Young Refugees to Rebuild Their Future Through Education

Website: <http://fireflyinternational.org/what-we-do/firefly-for-syrians/>



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Working Context

After the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011, massive population displacement ensued, with Turkey accepting the largest number of refugees – out of over five million Syrian refugees, three million are resident in the country. Young Syrian refugees have been exposed to unimaginable sights and experiences, with many of them now suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Displacement has disrupted their childhood and educational development in numerous other ways. Our project is providing the educational and psychosocial support that young Syrian refugees so desperately need.

In engaging with the Syrian refugee crisis, Firefly International has focused its work on Antakya, a city of around 250,000 in southern Turkey which is around 100 kms from war-ravaged Aleppo in north-western Syria. While Syrian refugees are confronted by challenges of unimaginable scale, they have repeatedly shown immense resourcefulness and adaptability. However, children are a particularly vulnerable group – all too often, they are forced into subsistence work, seeking out the bare minimum required for survival. Young Syrian refugees are confronted by a range of challenges, which can be broadly broken down into the following categories:

FIREFLY for SYRIANS

Syrian Refugee Education Project – Helps Young Refugees to Rebuild Their Future Through Education

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Educational

- The Turkish government has only recently committed to admit all Syrian refugee children to its public schools
- Turkey's public schools continue to be both oversubscribed and under-resourced
- Turkish schools have insufficient capacity to cope with the sheer scale of the influx or to meet the personalised needs of Syrian refugee children

Political

- Turkish law is still adjusting to ongoing events – as a result, there is still a considerable degree of regulatory uncertainty
- In responding to the crisis, the Turkish authorities have sought to limit the free movement of people within the Hatay province

Social

- Syrian children are exposed to a heightened risk of marginalisation, both inside and outside Turkish schools
- There is a shortage of social spaces within which Syrian children can meet and socialise
- Syrian families are exposed to heightened stress by limited employment opportunities and high rents

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The Antakya Project: Origins, Focus Areas, Program Provision and Structure

The Antakya Project emerged as Firefly International's response to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, which has overwhelmed 'frontline' states by imposing unprecedented demands upon social systems and coping capacities (in Lebanon, the pre-war population has increased by a third). In recognising the overextended capacities of local and international actors, it provides educational and psychosocial support to young Syrian refugees, with a view to enabling them to integrate into the formal educational system. The project originated as a grassroots pilot project which had the potential to, through the 'force of example', establish the basis for a wider network of educational and recreational centres.

The Antakya project provides courses in Arabic, English, Turkish, Applied Sciences, Maths, Origami and Handcraft Arts through four three-month cycles a year. It also provides various forms of psychosocial support that are addressed towards children evidencing signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It also acts as a contact point within a referral system that ensures appropriate treatment at other locations for those in particular need. The project currently employs eight staff (four full-time, four part-time) - a director, three full time teachers, and four part-time teachers. The project's director is a Syrian refugee who is responsible for hiring the other staff members from the local refugee community. The centre is registered with the Turkish Government. In accordance with Turkish law requirements, it is overseen and supported by a board of Turkish Nationals and submits its financial accounts to a Turkish Accountant.

FIREFLY INTERNATIONAL

MOVING FORWARD INTO 2017: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities of our local partners diverge widely, in large part due to their levels of organisational development and the very different challenges that they currently face. This sub-section briefly identifies and summaries key strategic priorities and therefore anticipates steps that will be taken over the course of 2017.

Project Hope

Project Hope has undergone substantial change in a short period of time, substantially expanding its program provision in the process. Accordingly, its key priority is to consolidate what has been achieved. It has a number of comparative advantages in this regard. Firstly, it has a demonstrated ability to attract large number of international volunteers – in addition to providing a sustainable source of financial income, this also provides the human resources which sustain its program output. Secondly, its rootedness within the local community provides an equally important resource upon which it can draw.

Svitac

Svitac is currently faced by a very different challenge – specifically the need to diversify its sources of financial income. At present, it is heavily reliant upon Firefly International as its main institutional donor. Its ability to diversify and broaden its donor base is complicated by several factors. Firstly, its ability to attract external support is inhibited by the fact that donors and external agencies have largely disengaged from Bosnia-Herzegovina – this is attributable both to the reorientation of donor resources and a sharp decline in media interest and engagement. Firefly International remains committed to help Svitac to make this challenging transition. Secondly, the existing source of volunteer recruitment (EVS) is insufficiently adjusted to Svitac's long-term needs and requirements. This also applies to the broader context in which Svitac's work operates – there is no established local volunteering culture and the requirements imposed by the local authorities account for a considerable amount of Svitac's time.

Antakya Project

In direct contrast to Project Hope, the Antakya Project's main priority is expansion. At present, demand for the centre's classes substantially outstrips existing provision. In addition to expanding participant numbers, the project will also look to expand the range of current activities. Ultimately, Firefly International will also seek to establish a network of centres, while putting in place measures for the sharing of 'common pool resources', such as staff and knowledge. Expansion in each of these respects will be sustained by the attainment of large-scale grants which will be achieved by Firefly International's current efforts to build up dedicated large consortia.

FIREFLY INTERNATIONAL

ACTION PLAN

Project Hope

- Consolidate Existing Program Provision
- Strengthen Existing Program Oversight (e.g. reporting, impact assessment)
- Focus on core grants (IMET2000 and United Palestinian Appeal (UPA))

Svitac

- Seek to gain core funding support from a range of external donors
- Seek to gain donor support for the youth engagement project
- Engage with the impact assessment agenda
- Undertake fundraising initiatives in support of small-scale activities (e.g. day-trips/study visits)
- Transition towards a greater reliance on self-funding volunteers
- Engage with other community actors, with a view to developing a shared agenda that can be presented to local authorities

Antakya

- Gain core funding support from large-scale external donors
- Expand centre capacity
- Expand personnel capacity
- Build a regional network of centres
- Standardise educational programmes
- Initiate personnel training