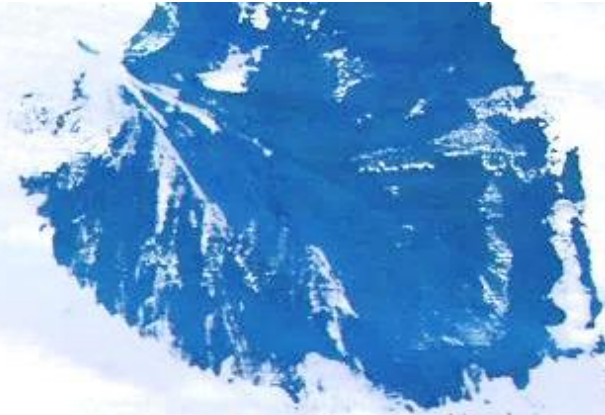




Firefly International

Building Bridges through Education and the Arts

Annual Report 2017-2018



This report covers the reporting period March 2017-March 2018 and it has been written to uphold the Firefly team's reporting responsibilities to both its own Board of Trustees and the [Scottish Charity Regulator \(OSCR\)](#).

We hope it will also be of interest to current or future supporters of our work. Additional questions or enquiries can be emailed, info@fireflyinternational.org, directly communicated (+44 (0)7780 872550) or posted to us (27a Royal Terrace, Edinburgh, EH7 5AH).

Introducing Firefly International

[Firefly International](#) (registered charity number SC 028744) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) that was established in 2003. It emerged from Firefly Youth Project, a youth-focused association that was founded by Ellie Maxwell (in 1998) in Brčko District, in north-eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina. We have worked with [Svitac](#) in Brčko District since 2003 and the [Antakya Project](#) in southern Turkey since 2016.

In recognising the limitations of external interventions that have failed, or which have even been counterproductive, we commit to work through local partners and in accordance with the principle of empowerment. In contrast to more 'top-heavy' and well-resourced aid and NGO competitors we are well-placed to provide flexible support that responds to local needs.

Our volunteer team and two part-time staff are currently supported by trustees and patrons, who help to oversee the team's work and also contribute their experience and knowledge to Firefly International's work. We work through both partners by providing administrative, fundraising, public relations and volunteer-based support, helping to support opportunities that would not otherwise exist.



Introducing Our Local Partners

The Antakya Project

Working Context: The Antakya project is an education centre that is located in the city of Antakya in south-west Turkey, which is located around 53km north-west of Idlib city and about 87km west of Aleppo. Sudden and unpredictable influxes of refugees have imposed considerable strains upon both Antakya, a city of around 220,000, and the surrounding Hatay Province. While the situation has recently stabilised, there is the perpetual threat that future offensives by the Syrian regime in Idlib Province could cause large-scale refugee influxes to resume.

Over the course of the crisis the Turkish government, which is the largest global recipient of Syrian refugees, has gradually moved towards a policy of integration. It is now government policy to teach Syrian refugee children within Turkish schools, although this project continues to be complicated by capacity and cultural (e.g. the use of Arabic language in the classroom) limitations. In the wider context, the Turkish government has closed down several larger Syrian NGO and there are continued tensions between local and refugee communities.



Introducing Our Local Partners

The Antakya Project

Background: The Antakya project was established in 2016, originally being conceived as an education project that would provide educational and psycho-social support to Syrian children. It developed in response to the limitations of humanitarian aid projects that position recipients as passive beneficiaries and therefore seeks to empower refugees. It was in this context that the idea of a Syrian-led centre began to emerge and develop.

Key Objective: To provide a safe and productive learning environment and educational activities that will enable Syrian children to develop new skills and abilities.

Organisational Structure: A **Board** that includes both Turkish and Syrians nationals who uphold administrative requirements; a **Director** who is responsible for the centre's day-to-day running, meeting of paperwork/registration requirements, staff recruitment and the submission of accounts and other key information to Maria Chambers. A **Head of Curriculum** who is responsible for the development of teaching content and structures; **three science teachers** who prepare and teach applied science and contribute to the development of the online teaching program; **two part-time language teachers** who prepare and teach classes. One teacher also teaches creative mathematics; and **two part-time workshop facilitators** prepare biology and computer programming workshops. The centre also employs a **cleaner**.

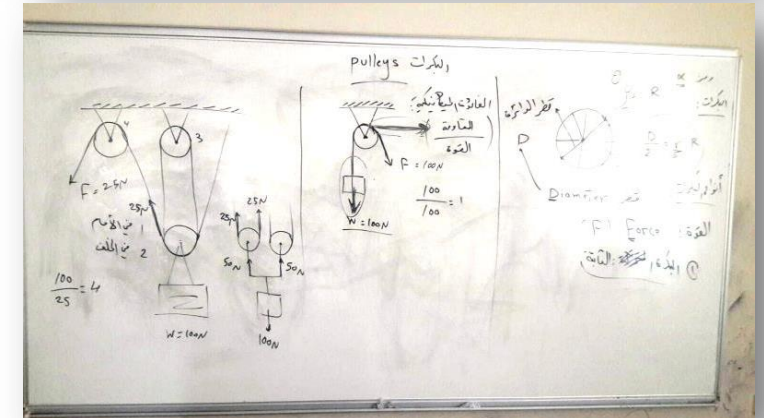
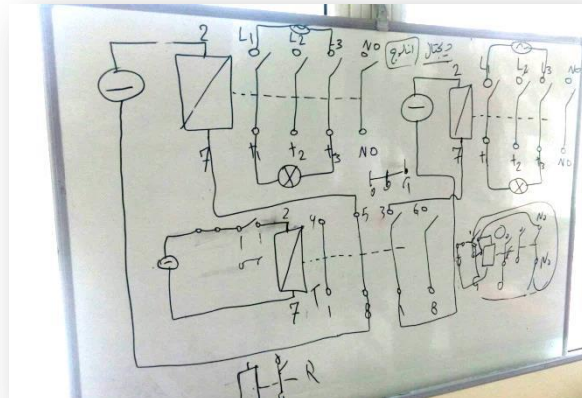


Introducing Our Local Partners

The Antakya Project

Core Programs/Activities: Classes and workshops focused upon applied science, creative maths and language classes (300 annual participants); Pilot Project focused upon online teacher training in Syria (20 participants; 8 successfully trained and are currently teaching up to 200 children in rural Iblib and the outskirts of Aleppo - 12 are currently being trained); Summers Girls' Program focused upon the teaching of the pasteurisation process to girls, during which they made cheese and yoghurt (21 participants).

Local/International Partners: Difficulties in working with official institutions, most notably schools. The Antakya works with a number of local NGOs, and we provide educational classes and workshops at centres within the city during the weekend (during the week, classes and workshops are held at our centre in Antakya).



Empowerment

“I chose this picture because it shows these two teachers with the resources that they have prepared in support of an applied science curriculum they developed.

Our science teachers were professional engineers before they had to leave Syria. They have been retrained as teachers in our centre and have developed this highly innovative activities program that is suitable for children that have had few educational opportunities.

Children are learning complex science in a hands-on way that will improve their future employment opportunities”



Maria Chambers

Firefly International Projects Coordinator

Introducing Our Local Partners

Svitac

Working Context: Brčko District has a total population of around 90,000 that broadly breaks down into a 4:4:2 ratio (40% Bosniak, 40% Serb and 20% Croat). It was established in 1999 as a self-governing enclave that operated under international supervision. International administrators were, in contrast to other parts of the country, able to oversee the return of Brčko's Bosniaks and this resulted in it becoming one of the country's very few remaining multi-ethnic communities. But relations between the separate national groups remain complicated and reconciliation is still very much a goal to be aspired to.

Background: Firefly Youth Project was established by Ellie Maxwell in 1999, in response to the lack of opportunities for young people in the District. In its initial years it focused on projects that established a multi-ethnic cultural festival, integrated Roma children into mainstream education and set up various youth centres. In 2003, Firefly Youth Project split into two: Firefly International was registered in Scotland and Svitac began operating in the District.



Introducing Our Local Partners

Svitac

Key Objective: To contribute to the establishment of an environment of mutual respect and tolerance within the local community and improved relations between each of the national groups (Bosniak, Croat and Serb) who live in the District.

Organisational Structure: A director manages all aspects of Svitac's work (including administration fundraising and volunteer recruitment/oversight) and oversees a team of two full-time staff, who coordinate international and local volunteers and implementation of activities and work within the wider community.

Core Activities: Svitac provides youth-focused activities that benefit children aged between 4-14. Over time its activities, which are focused upon creativities and language learning, have become consolidated, meaning that staff have a clear awareness of their responsibilities and associated demands.



Introducing Our Local Partners

Svitac

Local/International Partners: The NGO sector in Brčko District remains underdeveloped and opportunities for local cooperation are limited. Svitac will occasionally work with Proni and Vermont, although even in these instances cooperation will be limited by very different focus areas. Research work by interns has provided an opportunity to engage with national NGOs and international organisations. Svitac's main international partners are currently Firefly International and organisations that participate in EVS (European Voluntary Service), such as Omprakash and Weltwärts. Through its engagement with EVS, Svitac has become established as a sending organisation, and it continues to support international exchange and personal development by sending local volunteers to countries such as Cyprus, Germany and the Netherlands.



Our Contribution in 2017-18

Fundraising

- **2017 Gala Event and Christmas Event:** The Firefly International Gala Event, which is organised by a committed team of Firefly International volunteers, is held annually. Through sponsorship and variable donations from supporters and the general public, Firefly International fundraises for its work. The 2017 Gala fused Middle Eastern and Balkan literature and music and featured performances from the Taqasim Middle Eastern Music School and the She Koyokh Balkan Band. It was held in St Paul's Church in Covent Garden, London. Peter Maxwell spoke about the origins of Svitac and Svitac's work in Bosnia while Maria Chambers spoke about the Syrian refugee crisis and the contribution of the Antakya project. Augusta Higson, the event organiser, spoke about the Gala and acknowledged the various contributors and contributions that had made the event possible. £14,000 was raised in support of Firefly International's work.
- The Edinburgh Christmas Event was a panel discussion organised by Victoria Crawley and Margot Coles that raised £2,000 in support of Firefly International's work.
- On December 5, Maria Chambers, Margot Coles and Tor Crawley spoke at a meeting that brought together various different religious faiths and on December 6, Maria Chambers spoke at Edinburgh Academy about Firefly's general work.



Our Contribution in 2017-18

Fundraising

- **The Southall Trust** committed £1,000 in support of the FutureShorts film festival, which is held in Brčko District on a bi-annual basis. This support also contributed to a intercultural evening that was held alongside the film festival. Firefly International assisted with the submission of the original proposal and the subsequent reporting. A UK church, which wishes to remain anonymous, also contributed £5,000 to Svitac.
- **The Perivoli Trust** committed substantial funds in support of the Antakya Project
- **A Village in Syria (AVIS)** committed £6,500 to the Antakya Project.
- **Individual Fundraising:** This form of giving remains an important source of income for Firefly International as it provides a discretionary source of funding that can be directly addressed to organisational needs and priorities. Individual donations ranged from £3 to £30,000. Individual contributions tended to be fairly evenly divided between single and monthly donations. Louis Hall raised over £3,000 by running in the Rome Marathon and Glyn Richards. raised almost £2,000 by running in the London Marathon. Churches Together, Mungo Chambers, and Justgiving campaigns in memory of our friends Stephen Butcher and Bill Mitchell also contributed during the year.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank these fundraisers (too many to mention here individually), along with everybody else who contributed funds or fundraised on our behalf. We hope you will continue to support our work in 2018!



Where Your Donations Go

“This is a very poignant photograph for me as the child in red came to our centre having fled Aleppo at a time when the fighting was at its most intense.

She is an 11-year-old who lost a leg and her parents to the fighting. She is now being raised by her 22-year-old brother in the most difficult and challenging of conditions. Her family was able to receive monthly food packages and winter fuel support from the Red Crescent, which has enabled her brothers to stop working and attend the center.

Through participating in small group activities she has gradually regained confidence and is beginning to regain the ability to learn!”

Maria Chambers

Firefly International Projects Coordinator



Other Developments in 2017-18

Change of Directors/Trustees: We would like to take this opportunity to thank Siama Ahmed who stood down as our Director at the end of our financial year. Siama is continuing to support Firefly International through her work in fundraising. We are delighted to announce the appointment of Diana McMicking as our new Director. Diana joins us after spending over ten years as the Learning Director at Jupiter Artland, where she helped develop the charitable foundation, which offered creative activity to a broad range of participants nationwide and grew from a zero base to 9,000 annual participants. Diana has a background in education and the arts. She is a Trustee for The Crawick Multiverse Trust, Outset and the Hopetoun House Preservation Trust. Diana is able to work closely with Victoria Crawley, who runs our administration and finances, and Margot Wilson, who has taken over as Chair of Trustees, because they are all based in Edinburgh. Sebastian Chambers has now stepped down as the chair of board of directors and has been replaced by Margot Coles. Virginia Maxwell has also stepped down as a trustee and has been replaced by Ben Maxwell. Jeremy Wildeman, our former director, is stepping down as a trustee in order to more fully commit to his research activities. We thank Jeremy for his past contribution, both as director and trustee, and wish him the very best for the future.

Ending of Support for Project Hope: Firefly International has been proud to support the work of Project Hope for more than a decade. During this time, we have made a real and lasting contribution to the life prospects of youth in the West Bank City of Nablus, whose life prospects and fundamental rights continue to be impeded by an occupation that has persisted for more than half-a-century. While our commitment to the values and principles of Project Hope's work remains as strong as ever, our ability to meet this commitment has weakened and we have been forced to take the difficult decision to discontinue support for Project Hope. A number of factors contributed to this decision. Firstly, the budget of Firefly International and Project Hope are now almost the same size. The comparable size of the two organisations raised, for us, clear questions about whether it was suitable for Firefly International to continue to be positioned in a supporting role. Given the comparable size of the two organisations, we felt it was appropriate for Project Hope to either develop independently or seek out an alternative partner who would be better-placed to meet its unique needs and requirements. Secondly, there are also a number of internal governance issues that primarily relate to the role of the Canada Board and its ability to provide the required level of oversight and support. These issues will require a substantial amount of time and effort to address and will impose demands that exceed our current capacity. We believe that Project Hope now needs to demonstrate independent initiative in addressing this and other ongoing challenges.

Other Developments in 2017-18

Fundraising Teams (Svitac): In seeking to gain financial support for its annual summer camps Svitac has, with the assistance of Firefly staff, begun to organise Firefly fundraising teams that are made up of former Svitac volunteers. In assisting and overseeing their efforts, which are publicised and supported by online fundraising platforms such as Justgiving and Omprakash, we hope to raise funds that can contribute to the costs of the annual summer camps, which are currently financially supported by Firefly International. Current fundraising efforts are focused upon the US, which is home to a significant Bosnian diaspora

Internships (Svitac): Administration places considerable demands upon Svitac's time and resources, often detracting from energies and time that would be better spent elsewhere. With a view to addressing this ongoing challenge, Firefly International, with the support of Alternatives, its Canadian partner, established an internship scheme that initially took on two Canadian university students as interns. They assisted with general administrative duties, contributed to research by conducting interviews and also participated in Svitac's day-to-day activities by working alongside local volunteers and staff. The internships were initially conceived as a pilot initiative, and Alternatives, Firefly International and Svitac will now assess the initiative before deciding whether to take it forward.

Due to the various registration difficulties that it has encountered, the Antakya Project became, in May 2017, a registered company that produces educational resources. This limits its class size to 20. An application to register the Project as an educational centre is still in process.

Firefly International**Accounts****Year ended 31 March 2018**

		Actual Year to 31 Mar 18 £	Actual Year to 31 Mar 17 £
Income & expenditure account - year to 31 March			
Income	Direct debits, donations and fundraising	90,958	79,411
	Grants	33,614	16,704
	Interest	-	40
	Total income	124,572	96,155
Expenditure	Firefly for Bosnians	32,613	39,482
	Firefly for Palestinians	7,161	8,014
	Firefly for Syrians	56,488	40,049
	Fundraising costs	3,884	6,003
	Administration	17,793	17,072
	Total expenditure	117,939	110,620
Net income / (Expenditure)		6,633	(14,465)
Balance sheet - at 31 March			
Cash at bank		23,205	16,568
General Firefly reserve		17,705	7,446
Firefly for Bosnians reserve		5,500	-
Firefly for Syrians reserve		-	9,122
Total reserves		23,205	16,568
Cash flow - year to 31 March			
Cash bought forward 1 April		16,568	31,042
Surplus / (deficit) within the year		15,755	(7,096)
Increase / (use) of Syria reserve		(9,122)	(7,378)
Cash balance at 31 March		23,205	16,568

Concluding Thoughts from Our Director

A substantial part of this Annual Report has focused upon the important contribution that our local partners have made, and continue to make. I would now like this opportunity to consider how Firefly, in its established and mandated role, can improve and further develop the support that it currently provides. In the short time that I have been director, I have clearly identified that we have a number of strengths: we have a committed team of volunteers who are able to respond to the requirements of our partners on an flexible basis. This is a key feature of Firefly International – as a small organisation, we are endowed with considerably greater flexibility than our competitors. Our small size also means that we are more accountable to our supporters and the general public. We have very low overheads (we only have two part-time staff), and our supporters can therefore be confident that the money contributed will have a direct impact on the ground.

Looking forward to the next year, I have identified a number of key areas that require a more sustained focus and attention. **External communications, fundraising, improved record-keeping, internal communications** and a clarification of the role of trustees within our work are all areas where I will be focusing, with the intention of driving sustained improvement. Our 15th anniversary as an organisation also provides an ideal opportunity to reconsider where we intend to go as an organisation and how we intend to take forward Firefly International's core values and commitments. A **strategy day** focused upon branding, mission and vision will lend added cohesion and focus to the work that we do while providing a clearer sense of direction. Volunteer recruitment that is focused upon Edinburgh, our home city, and London will also have a crucial role to play in this future development.

These are not steps that we will make alone, and we will need your support as we look to help Brčko District and Syrian refugees build a brighter, better future.