



Annual Report and Accounts  
2023 - 2024

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# What We Do and Why

- ❖ Firefly supports children affected by the ravages of war
- ❖ Healing, teaching and peace building
- ❖ Firefly isn't political or religious – our only cause is children
- ❖ Firefly reached over 3000 children last year
- ❖ Firefly's focus is on Bosnia, Gaza and Syrian refugees
- ❖ Firefly helps war affected children for as long as they need us
- ❖ Firefly doesn't leave when the news crews depart





# Where is Firefly active?

Until 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 Firefly was active in 4 countries - Bosnia, southern Turkey, northern Syria and Gaza (our Gaza project is currently suspended).

From the UK we support our locally led partners with:

- ❖ Support in Fundraising

Researching and submitting grant applications, maintaining and nurturing donor relationships.

- ❖ Support in Governance and Administration

Ensuring good governance and legal compliance, project monitoring and evaluation, reporting and accounts management.

- ❖ Support in Raising Awareness

Website, social media and digital activity, regular updates through newsletters, organising fundraising events.



# Vision, Mission and Values

## Our Vision

Our vision is of children growing up in communities affected by war, with all the benefits that peace brings: stability, a good education, tolerance between different groups and freedom from fear of losing home and family.

We believe that all children have the right to a safe childhood and a good education.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to support locally led projects working in areas damaged by war that provide safe and inclusive spaces for children to learn, create, play and thrive. We support activities that break down barriers in communities and build self-esteem. We believe that enhancing the prospects of young people helps to stabilise communities.

## Our Values

We are child centric, locally led and for the long-term. We believe that empowering local organisations achieves the best outcomes for the children in those communities. We make long term commitments to our partners to help them develop sustainable programmes. We offer support and access to all regardless of politics, gender, religion or ethnicity. We work with integrity to achieve the highest standards of accountability to our partners, donors and supporters.



# Our numbers for the year

- ❖ Over **3,000** direct participants across all our projects every month
- ❖ more than **17,800** subscribers to Firefly for Syrians' online learning YouTube Channel with **6.2 million views**
- ❖ **Income**  
**£307,508**
- ❖ **Expenditure**  
**£304,578**
- ❖ **Net Income**  
**£2,930**





# Chair of Trustees message

Sebastian Chambers

The need for Firefly International is now. The number of children affected by war in the regions in which we operate has surged. The war in Gaza is devastating – with the indiscriminate death and destruction being compounded with malnutrition and disease. Our programme in Gaza has been suspended.

Our role is to give children hope for a better life. We are called Firefly because of being ‘a light in the dark’ for children. We are able to do that in Bosnia and with our programmes for Syrian refugees and we plan to start re-engaging with children in Gaza as soon as the situation allows.

Our core values are to be **child centric**, **locally led**, and for the **long-term**. We impact 1000s of children each month in programmes that are run by amazing local teams over many years. It is your support which enables Firefly to live by these values and I cannot say how much it is appreciated.

A massive thank you to all our staff, volunteers, trustees and supporters both overseas and in the UK.



# Director's Report

Jane Salmonson

Tragic events in Gaza dominated Firefly's world this last year and the crisis continues as this Annual Report is finalised. After the massacre in southern Israel on October 7th 2023, and the ensuing onslaught by the Israeli Defence Force, the work of the child trauma clinic was suspended, with the premises bombed and the staff scattered. Firefly is committed to returning to Gaza as soon as possible, to help the surviving children in the way that best meets their needs and best draws on our years of experience of supporting war affected children.

**Firefly for Syrians** has achieved increasing successes in northern Syria. The numbers of children reached in this very poor, war-torn area have grown significantly and we have been training many more teachers in the Qabasin district in our teaching methods. These methods are to be appropriate for children of families who may have been displaced several times to escape outbreaks of violence, and whose own education may have been disrupted by the civil war. In southern Turkey, the effects of the February 2023 earthquake continued to shape our partners' educational programmes.





Many Syrian refugee families are still living in temporary accommodation, with some still on the move, hence the continuity of children's attendance needed to teach reading and writing, was often absent. Instead, we drew on our experience in using mobile science workshops, to hold 'drop-in' sessions where children can come together to learn through simple engineering tasks. Apart from enhancing skills and powers of concentration, the therapeutic value of these workshops, for children still traumatised by loss of homes, friends and family members in the earthquake, is enormous.



The Svitac team in Brčko, north east Bosnia, continued to go from strength to strength. The work of local Bosnian youth volunteers from across the deepening ethnic divisions of Serb, Muslim and Croat has become better known internationally. Svitac youth participants joined international gatherings during the year, to present to other organisations their approach to tolerance and peace-building. We are proud that they are being offered as an exemplar of what can be achieved by young people in their own communities with a recent history of war.

The generosity of our supporters underpins all our achievements. We would be nothing without them. The biggest thanks of all are due to our regular givers – people who give us a monthly donation by standing order. They are the brightest 'Fireflies' who lighten the darkness of war for children in our project countries.



# Firefly for Syrians Report

Project Coordinator – Maria Chambers

## Teaching displaced Syrian children in southern Turkey and northern Syria

Our programmes address the educational needs of Syrian children and have a psychosocial aspect. Our teachers offer normalisation of daily existence after traumatic experiences. They help prevent depression, and feelings of hopelessness and isolation.

Our experience since 2016 in this area, and the high level of training amongst our trusted staff, enabled us to continue to respond to children's needs. This year our focus has been on children's wellbeing and educational needs in the aftermath of the earthquake in February 2023 and ongoing aftershocks.

We worked with determination to re-establish effective learning for children who faced the trauma of surviving the earthquake, when many of their friends and relatives did not. We trained and mentored teachers embedding skills and raising teaching standards within the refugee communities we serve.





We have **1190** children registered in our programmes in Turkey and Syria.

❖ **In Turkey** : Online Arabic literacy programme for **80** children living in camps around Antakya.

❖ **In Syria** : Pre-school Arabic and maths for **870** children from remote villages.

Arabic and maths for **30** children B'zaa orphan centre.

Pre school programme for **110** children in Al Rai area.

Our mobile science laboratory and workshops provided ideal opportunities for collaborative learning, developing confidence and a sense of community in the post-earthquake environment.

This year the emphasis has been on the psychosocial benefits of this programme addressing the needs of newly displaced children.

**1575** children attended our once weekly applied science programmes in southern Turkey and northern Syria.

Our primary education resources platform on YouTube has had over **6.2 million** views since its launch in April 2020; we have uploaded **448** new lessons since upgrading our channel began in July 2023.

We trained a total of **101** teachers this year:

- **49** young student teachers were trained and mentored in early years literacy inside Syria
- **42** trainee teachers in our applied science curriculum
- **5** trainee maths teachers
- **5** teachers were trained to create learning videos for our YouTube channel.





# Firefly in Bosnia (Svitac) Report

Svitac Director – Gordana Varcakovic

**Svitac** supports children and young people in Brčko overcome the ethnic divides still plaguing the region since the Balkan War. We work on interethnic reconciliation, confronting prejudice and promoting cultural diversity. We teach the value of tolerance and mutual respect by providing a neutral space for the different ethnic groups (Bosniak, Serbs and Croats) who still live in a deeply divided community.

Through art, music, language classes, workshops and lively community events Svitac provides opportunities otherwise unavailable to children and young people in this small town.

Funding from Firefly enables Svitac to remain politically independent.

## 2023-2024 Svitac numbers

- 30-40 attend Svitac's activities on daily basis
- 140 attend activities on monthly basis
- 600 attend summer activities (June-August)
- 900 attend Svitac's annual events
- 1600 people were impacted by Svitac's work this year (*this estimate includes children, young adults, parents, relatives, friends and authorities*)



Svitac's educational activities continue to provide local children and young people with unique opportunities to develop new knowledge and skills, helping them overcome fears, uncertainty, anxiety and depression caused by the very difficult political situation.

600 children and young adults of different ethnicities took part in the [summer camps](#). They had a chance to implement a variety of activities on the topic "learning together", and learned about different cultures and diversity. The music camp encouraged teamwork, cooperation, and enhancing communication through making music together.

Sixth former Mollie, who had supported Svitic by fundraising in her school for the [summer camp in Pecka](#), then travelled to Brčko to take part in the camps herself.

**European Week against Racism** – 80 high school students spent time discussing the racism problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitution, racism on the borders and migration into Europe. They also shared personal experiences of discrimination. Svitic facilitated these discussions.



**Democracy and Non-Violence Days** – 60 participants discussed the importance of young people's role in promoting democracy. Svitic developed activities that advocated non-violence through education and public awareness campaigns. These were designed to reaffirm the desire locally for a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence.

**Volunteers** - Svitic hosted 23 international volunteers from the UK, Germany, Finland and Turkey who came to Brčko through the Turing Scheme, European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and Weltwärts volunteering programmes.

**Svitic organised 10 overseas placements for volunteers from Bosnia** who spent time in Germany, Turkey, Spain, Croatia, Poland, Romania and France.



# Firefly for Palestinians Report

Child trauma project in Gaza, in partnership with IMET2000 and Action for Child Trauma International.

The year began in Gaza with a bombing raid in April followed by another one in May. The centre staff continued to treat children for trauma and also advised parents looking for guidance on how to cope with their children's fears during, and in anticipation of, aerial bombardments. We, and the other UK partners, agreed at the start of the year to continue to support the project with funds and technical assistance.

Firefly contributed £15,000 towards the running costs of the child trauma centre. The centre staff protocol of circulating quarterly activity and financial reports proceeded as before. Firefly and our partners agreed a way forward for the recruitment of local trustees in readiness for handing over management to a local non-governmental organisation.

In the first quarter's report, child treatment outcome scores showed good results and the first open day clearly brought joy to the eighty children who joined for a day of art, play, song and dance.

Everything stopped on 7<sup>th</sup> October and we now fear very greatly for the lives of the children we treated, their families and the five centre staff.



Open Day, Gaza, August 2023



Gaza, October 2023



# Fundraising Overview



- ❖ **Thank you** to all our supporters who responded so fantastically to our appeals throughout the year. **St Columba's Church of Scotland**, London chose Firefly for their Lent Appeal raising £6,540.55. **Jago** presented Firefly to his school and raised £1,250, **Marmalade Schools** raised over £5,000 from their sponsored wheelies and Sixth former **Mollie** raised over £6,500 for the Svitac Summer Camps.
- ❖ A total of **£731.43** has been raised for Firefly via [Easyfundraising](#) and [Give as You Live](#) – where free funds are raised for charity when customers shop on line. Please click on the links to find out more.
- ❖ In November we held an event at **Fishmongers Hall** in London raising over £10,000. It was our best year yet for **Firefly runners** with over £3,000 raised by our sporty supporters.
- ❖ Continuing the sporting theme, we were delighted to be one of just 25 charities accepted onto the **Sporting Chance Prize Draw** which ran for 2 weeks in March and in our first year we raised over £5,000.
- ❖ We were also successful in gaining grants from **trusts and foundations** totaling £190,182.
- ❖ Following the event at Fishmongers Hall, our **regular monthly giving** increased by £7,000. This regular income provides an absolutely vital element in our ability to forward plan.



# Firefly at Fishmongers' Hall

Firefly's reception at the Fishmongers' Hall in November was a huge success. Attended by Firefly supporters and our amazing patrons Joanna David and Sophie Thompson, who came and spoke directly from the heart about Firefly's work. Our thanks to Waverton who sponsored the event and to the Fishmongers' Company for the use of their amazing room. Also huge thanks to the wonderful [Lucy Temple](#), who donated one of her fabulous art works for the auction. We raised over £10,000.

Click on these links to view the **short films** shown on the night:

**Firefly in Gaza:** [CLICK HERE](#)

**Firefly in Bosnia:** Featuring Eldar and Amila - current volunteers at Firefly Bosnia - [CLICK HERE](#)

**Firefly for Syrian refugees:**

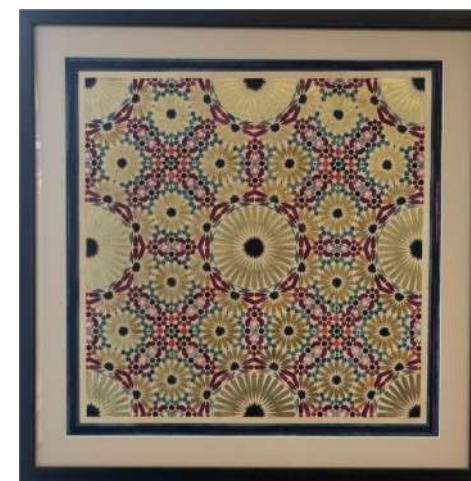
Firefly in northern Syria - [CLICK HERE](#)

Firefly in southern Turkey - [CLICK HERE](#)

Huge thanks to our patron Pandora Colin who provided the voice over for the Firefly for Syrians films.



L-R: Firefly Charity Manager Tor Crawley, Firefly Patrons Sophie Thompson and Joanna David and Firefly Director Jane Salmonson



Lucy Temple artwork auctioned on the night



# Running for Firefly

Thank you to all our runners!

Instead of sending Christmas cards this year, the Crawley family ran a Santa Dash in Edinburgh on 17th December asking family and friends to sponsor them instead of sending them a card. They raised £1,150.

At the start of March Andrea ran a marathon around the Metropolitan area of Austin in Texas and raised \$1,150 for Firefly.

That same weekend in March Denise, Katie and Margaret travelled from the USA to run the Paris half marathon and raised \$1,150 for Firefly.

And Catriona, who set up and manages [Blast Running](#), a running club in Edinburgh, chose Firefly as one of the Blast charities this year. £1 from every entry into the Innocent Half marathon was donated to Firefly - raising £150.

We love our new bright orange Firefly running shirts and so do our runners!





# Schools & Church Fundraising



In May 2023, Sixth former **Mollie** organised a fundraising concert to raise money for the **Firefly in Bosnia Summer Camps**. The concert held at Mollie's school raised over £6,500. During the school holidays Mollie travelled to Brčko in Bosnia and volunteered at the [Svitac Summer Camps](#) that she had helped to fund. Mollie you are an inspiration to us all. Thank you so much.



Also in May **Marmalade Schools** organised a number of 'sponsored Wheelie's' raising over £5,000 across their six nurseries in the London area.

9 year old **Jago** presented to his school Charity Committee, and won the prize for the best presentation. His school raised an amazing £1,250 for Firefly in their charity sale. His presentation is [HERE](#).

When **St Columba's Church of Scotland**, Pont Street, London SW1 chose Firefly for Bosnia as the subject of their Lent Appeal, Firefly's trustee **Saška Haramina**, who was with our founder **Ellie Maxwell** at the time Firefly first began in Bosnia in 1995, spoke at St Columba's in March. In this photo Saška is joined by Firefly's former Chair of Trustees Margot Wilson. St Columba's Appeal raised an incredible £6,540.



# Sporting Chance Prize Draw and Firefly's Pub Quiz

As part of the [Sporting Chance Prize Draw](#), Firefly volunteers Rosie, Lara and Liv organised a **Pub Quiz**, with one round of questions based on the **Sporting Chance Prize Draw**.

Huge thanks to everyone who donated to Firefly during the **2024 Sporting Chance Prize Draw**. Firefly was one of just 24 charities to take part in this amazing initiative where **every penny** raised goes to charity. Firefly raised £5,367.

There were **2 'Firefly' prize winners** - Congratulation to Dom who's off to the Team GB Ball, and to Isi who'll be going to a Leicester Tigers home game!

**The Sporting Prize Draw** will take place again in 2025 from 28<sup>th</sup> February to 14<sup>th</sup> March. Keep an eye out for the list of incredible prizes!





# The Ellie Maxwell Award 2023

The **Ellie Maxwell award ceremony** took place on Wednesday 31st May at The University of Edinburgh, Old College.

The winner, Joana GC Rodrigues won for her charity [In2Med School](#).

Joana was presented with her award by Chrissie Hirst, programme manager for [Corra Scotland](#) who was on the panel of judges.

The event was attended by staff, patrons, volunteers, and friends of both Firefly and the University of Edinburgh. The award celebrates the winners past and current, and honours the legacy of Ellie Maxwell, founder of Firefly International.

Celebrating “students as agents of change” was the message from Siddharthan Chandran, Head of the Edinburgh Medical School who spoke at the ceremony.

Also present was Saloni More winner of the award in 2022 for [the Mahim Aboli Foundation](#).



L-R: Siddharthan Chandran, Chrissie Hirst and Joana



Joana with 2022 winner Saloni More

# Patrons and Trustees

## Patrons

The Rt Hon The Lord Alderdice

Sarah Anderson

Adrian Beidas

Viscountess Bridgeman CBE FRSA

Patricia Broke

Rosemary Chambers

Pandora Colin

Virginia Constable Maxwell

Lady Julia Craig Harvey

Sir Andrew Cubie CBE

Joanna David

Charles Fitzherbert

Professor Colin Green

Dr Patsy Hickman

Caroline Hornyold MVO

Lady Zara Jellicoe

Adrienne Kennedy

Rose Leslie

Sally, Countess of Malmesbury

Isabel Sheinman

Neil Stuke

Sophie Thompson

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Warsi

Dr Jeremy Wildeman

## Board of Trustees

Sebastian Chambers, Chair

Samer Chamsi Pasha

(appointed March 2024)

Benedict Constable Maxwell

Henrietta McMicking

Diana McMicking

Fenella Dawnay

Saška Haramina

Dr. Malaka Shwaikh





# Corporate, charitable and other individuals, groups and organisations who have supported us this year

Andy Nash Accounting

Andi Best Freelance Design

Baillie Gifford

Bert Christian Group

Blast Running

CIL Management Consultants

Churches Together in Winchester

De Vitre Fund

Ellis Campbell Trust

Professor Colin Green

Kingsford Estates

Lucy Temple

Marmalade Schools

M&G plc

Network for Social Change Charitable Trust

St Columba's Church of Scotland, London SW1

The Fishmongers' Company

The Lewin Trust

The Perivoli Foundation

Sporting Chance Prize Draw

Waverton



# Accounts

Our finances for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

## Income

We achieved an income in excess of £300,000 thanks to the generosity of our supporters. We are fortunate to have a good range of funding from regular giving, events and sporting challenges to corporate grants. In the previous financial year our income was boosted by the earthquake appeal.

## Expenditure

We continue to increase our programmes with Bosnian and Syrian children. Our project in Gaza has been suspended since 7th October, but we have been able to continue providing support for staff salaries. Fundraising and administration costs in the UK remain within our target for non-project expenditure of 15-20% of revenue.

## Balance sheet and reserves

We have maintained the level of our reserves during the financial Year. This level of reserves gives us the confidence to continue to support our projects in periods of fluctuating income levels.





# Firefly International

## Accounts

Year ended 31 March 2024

		Actual	Actual
		Year to	Year to
		31 Mar 24	31 Mar 23
		£	£
<b>Income &amp; expenditure account</b>			
Income	Regular giving	29,731	27,848
	Other direct debits, donations and fundraising	145,415	307,292
	Grants	130,444	77,500
	Interest	1,918	3
	<b>Total income</b>	<b>307,508</b>	<b>412,643</b>
Expenditure	Firefly for Bosnians	72,426	56,586
	Firefly for Palestinians	5,350	20,000
	Firefly for Syrians	162,000	163,592
	Ellie Maxwell Prize	1,050	1,000
	Fundraising costs	5,137	13,012
	Other charitable activities	58,615	44,199
	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>304,578</b>	<b>298,389</b>
<b>Net income / (Expenditure)</b>		<b>2,930</b>	<b>114,254</b>

## Balance sheet

Fixed assets	1,159	-
Cash at bank	231,287	174,807
Debtors	2,489	6,952
Less creditors	(55,238)	(5,042)
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>179,697</b>	<b>176,717</b>

General Firefly reserve	71,873	71,664
Firefly for Bosnians reserve	-	-
Firefly for Syrians reserve	107,774	105,053
<b>Total reserves</b>	<b>179,647</b>	<b>176,717</b>



# Governance and Management

- ❖ Firefly is registered in Scotland with the Office of Scottish Charity Register (OSCR) and has a board of trustees from all over the UK who meet 4 times per year.
- ❖ The board of trustees monitors the work of Firefly in the UK and the partner organisations in southern Turkey (for Syrian refugee children) Bosnia and Gaza.
- ❖ Trustees comply with OSCR's rules and abide by Firefly's constitution. A trustee holds office in three-year terms with a maximum of 9 years.
- ❖ Firefly works with both UK based and International partners. We undertake rigorous due diligence on each partner we work with.
- ❖ We updated our constitution in 2021, our safeguarding policy in March 2023 and our policy for donation and grant acceptance in October 2023 - these are available on our [website](#). In 2024 we updated our financial policies and procedures.





# Reference and Administration Information

Charity Number  
SC 028744

Charity Address  
26 Dublin Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 6NN  
[www.fireflyinternational.org](http://www.fireflyinternational.org)

## Accountants

Thomson Cooper Accountants  
22 Stafford St  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7BD

## Banking

Barclays Bank plc

## Part-time Firefly Staff

Jane Salmonson - Director  
Tor Crawley - Charity Manager  
Maria Chambers - Projects Coordinator

## Volunteers

Jessica Richardson and Emily Clements -  
Social Media

Rosa Bersi, Lara Welch & Liv Stobart -  
Events

## Local project staff – outside the UK

Gordana Varcakovic – Firefly in Bosnia  
Fadia Shaker – Firefly for Syrians  
Mohammed al Sharif – Firefly for  
Palestinians





Thank you to everyone who has helped by donating over the last year and especially to our supporters who give to us regularly by monthly standing order.

Huge thanks too, to the trusts, foundations, churches, schools and companies who have supported us and to everyone who has attended our events.

Special thanks to those who have taken on a personal challenge or organised an event.

Every donation makes a difference to children affected by war.

[www.fireflyinternational.org](http://www.fireflyinternational.org)

