

OPEN HANDS

ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024



OPEN HANDS

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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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OPEN HANDS

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Charity number	1136482
Trustees	Rebekka Single (Chairperson) Trevor Meadows (Treasurer) Andrea Van Hoven Julie Horn
Address	Millbank Cottage Horringford Newport Isle of Wight PO30 3AP
Independent Examiner	J R Caladine FCCA Caladine Limited Chantry House 22 Upperton Road Eastbourne East Sussex BN21 1BF
Bankers	Co-operative Bank 78/80 Cornhill London EC3V 3NJ

Registered Charity Number: 1136482

Registered Office:

Open Hands Charity

Millbank Cottage

Horringford

Newport

Isle of Wight

PO30 3AP

Open Hands Trustees:

Rebekka Single – Chairperson and Trustee

Trevor Meadows –Treasurer and Trustee

Andrea van Hoven – Trustee

Julie Horn - Trustee

Trustees Report
For the Year Ended 31st March 2024

The trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Status, Governance and Management

Open Hands is a charity registered in England and governed by its Trust Deed dated 21 May 2010.

The trustees who served during the year were:

Rebekka Single
Trevor Meadows
Andrea van Hoven
Julie Horn

Trustees are appointed by existing trustees. They meet regularly to manage the activities of Open Hands.

Trustee and friend Ian Taplin

On 10th September 2023 our dedicated Open Hands Trustee and dear friend Ian Taplin suddenly passed away. Ian suffered complications from long-term health conditions that were only discovered a few days before.

Ian used the skills that he acquired as a former lawyer and accountant to help the charity. He was a man of integrity who gave security to the charity but more than that he became a friend and trusted personal advisor. Ian is being greatly missed by myself and the Open Hands team.

Objectives and Structure

Open Hands remains committed to providing valuable and on-going support for vulnerable children and their families living in disadvantaged areas, primarily in Romania. The objects of Open Hands, as documented in our declaration of Trust in May 2010 are:

- (a) The prevention or relief of poverty in Romania and the surrounding countries by providing: grants, items and services to individuals in need and/or charities or other local organisations working to prevent or relieve poverty for orphan and neglected children, and among the Roma community.

- (b) To relieve poverty (or financial hardship) among the Roma community and their dependents living in Romania and the surrounding countries by providing health/housing/advice and education

This report demonstrates how we have achieved these objects within the financial year 2023-24, and we hope it will be an encouragement to our supporters and friends.

Open Hands operates in Romania through its locally registered sister foundation, Fundatia Open Hands (FOH). All monies raised in the UK not needed to meet local governance and similar costs or to comply with our reserves policy are transferred to FOH.

Public Benefit

The trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the Charity should undertake.

Risk Statement

The trustees have assessed the risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the charity, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate our exposure to the risks.

Trustees' Responsibilities

We are required as trustees to prepare financial statements each year which include the payments and receipts of Open Hands Charity for the year. The trustees are responsible for keeping accurate accounting records; this ensures that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011.

Open Hands Mission

Open Hands was set up, and is run, by Christians who want to express their faith in Christ by showing his love in practical action. Our work is based on Christian values but welcomes persons of all beliefs and none. We work among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people in Romania and our programs aim to transform their lives.

Rebekka Single first travelled to Romania in 2008 and was moved by the needs of children in the country who were still suffering from a lack of love, care, nurture, clothing and shelter. These children were of no importance to the wider communities in which they were living and had no one to be an advocate on their behalf. In 2010 Rebekka formed Open Hands Charity; she and her team have since become a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Open Hands Vision and Values

Our vision is a world free of poverty and injustice. A world where every child in every community is valued and loved. A world where every child, regardless of their ability or background can access the resources to thrive and reach their full potential.

The work of Open Hands is underpinned by our core values:

Integrity

- We are committed to work transparently with all resources entrusted to us and strongly believe in being accountable to our supporters. We strive to keep our administration costs to an absolute minimum and our expenses in Romania are carefully budgeted and reviewed to ensure good stewardship.

Respect

- We respect the human worth and dignity of every person we serve. We believe that every person, regardless of ethnicity, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or beliefs is of immense value and uniquely gifted. We promote inclusiveness for all people we work with and challenge discrimination in all its forms.

Compassion

- We act with compassion and kindness and strive to bring unconditional love to those we are helping. We believe that every child needs to experience a loving and stable environment, where their emotional, material and social needs are met.

Empowerment

- We promote and support people's right to make their own choices, provided this does not threaten the rights, safety and legitimate interests of others.

Collaboration

- We empower families to be active participants, and to become involved, in decisions and actions affecting their lives. We build relationships and partnerships to ensure that children and families can access the services that they need. We work together with local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and families.

Holistic Approach

- We provide support that looks at the whole person, not just their immediate circumstances. We seek to cover all aspects of a child's life, including their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, as well as their family life, community and societal environments.

Where Open Hands Operates and What it Does

Open Hands main office in Romania is in Suceava, a city situated in north-east of the country. However, our work is carried out in two locations: in villages around Suceava and in the small town of Gheorgheni, in eastern Transylvania.

We work with children and families in rural communities who suffer from isolation and poverty, typically caused by a complete lack of education and poor opportunities for work.

Because of this, many families struggle to manage their meagre financial resources efficiently. Many parents had a traumatic up-bringing themselves. They have lost hope, knowing it is almost impossible for them to meet their children's basic needs without help from outside. Governmental authorities often lack empathy when it comes to supporting poor families. Children have no positive role models in their families and so, left to their own devices, the poverty cycle continues for another generation when they reach adolescence and then adulthood. Open Hands is often the first and only support these families receive.

Our children's centre, the Rainbow House, is based in Gheorgheni - a town affected by high unemployment, depression and alcoholism. Many families here lead lives of complete desolation.

Most children and families we work with here are of Roma ethnicity and face severe hardship and destitution. Discrimination, lack of education, unemployment, homelessness, extreme poverty and hunger are part of their daily lives.

Achievements and Performance - 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Rainbow House (RH)



Care

We first opened the RH as a day centre in 2016, after witnessing the extreme deprivation that Roma children are exposed to living in the local slum. Since then, we have had the same children attending the RH program on a regular basis. The children are eager to come to the RH because our team lovingly cares for each child. The children are fed, washed, changed into clean clothes, helped with homework and do many fun activities, including trips to the cinema or zoo. Over the years the children have formed strong friendships and see the RH as their second home.



Space for Teens

Many children have come to the RH since we opened its doors in 2016. Since then, some of these children have come into their teenage years and require more specialised support. To meet their needs, we have developed a Teen Project which offers support throughout secondary school education. The project aims to support young people to become healthy, well-rounded, independent and responsible adults who make positive contributions to society. As the RH is very small in size, we have furnished a room in a portable cabin, which is situated in the garden of the RH. The teens can call this new space their own. It is separated from the smaller children and used for down time, workshops, meetings and home learning.

Partnerships

We are thankful for the opportunity to partner with the Caritas Youth 4 Change Program. This partnership involves a Youth Worker who works with our young people at the Rainbow House or the Caritas base on a weekly basis for two years.

The program aims to broaden young people's perspectives on different professions, which will help them to choose a career path that fits their abilities. Topics such as Roma identity,

music and art are also explored. The program is another stepping stone for our Rainbow House young people towards a self-determined future.



New Playground

The new Rainbow House playground is a colourful place of hope that brings the children much joy and distraction. It is an oasis in the midst of deprivation. Here the children find safety and happiness from their poverty grinding days.



Breaking the cycle

A strong emphasis is placed in supporting children on their educational journey. Each child develops at their own pace but we continue to see steady, overall improvements. Open Hands is making sure that all RH children are enrolled in some form of education; the younger ones are at kindergarten, those with additional needs learn at a special school and those that are able are integrated into the mainstream school in town. A large percentage of the children we work with do not meet the developmental milestones of a healthily developed child of similar age. Due to a disadvantaged start in life, many RH children are developmentally delayed or/and have a disability of some sort. For these children it is a big achievement when they learn how to read and write. Our RH manager is regularly in touch with schools to make sure that the children attend. She frequently advocates on their behalf and addresses any problems that arise. The Children usually come to the RH after kindergarten and school to eat and do their homework.

All RH children and families receive regular visits at home through our Family Support Program.

Summer

Children in Romania tend to have a long summer holiday of up to 3 months. During this time the RH remained open, apart from the month of August, and offered its usual services to the children and families. Various summer activities took place, such as traveling to the swimming pool in the nearest bigger town, BBQs and summer parties.

Family Support (FS)

Aim

It is our aim to see every child, regardless of their ability or background thrive and reach their full potential. FS provides a way out of poverty. It enables children and their families to escape its devastating effects. However, change takes time – particularly in view of generational poverty.

Hands-on support for families living in remote areas involves: providing children with food, clothing, school supplies and access to education, access to health care, parental counselling, and in some cases house renovations and access to drinking water by drilling wells.

New well

This year we were able to support Julia* (*name has been changed), mother of four to gain access to water. For years the family has been living in an isolated location, without neighbours and access to water. The existing well from which they once drew water did not function anymore and Julia relied on relatives to occasionally bring water. This situation

contributed to an overall decline of Julia's mental health. A woman who had gone through multiple traumas in her life already and as a result struggled to take good care of her children. Open Hands commissioned a company to drill a new well which now gives excellent water and is a great help to Julia and the entire family.



Holistic Approach

To help children reach their full potential we must look at them holistically. This means ensuring their physical and emotional well-being, as well as looking at their family life and their life in the context of their community.

By working with children in our programs, both at school and within their home, we get a clearer picture of what they need to thrive. Regular home visits allow us to see children in the context of their family and community life. Understanding the context in which a child lives helps us to tailor our support to meet their needs and improve their conditions. It enables us to connect and work with their parents who are often vulnerable adults themselves, in need of support.

Housing

Most families we first come in contact with live in overcrowded, dilapidated and unsanitary places. Alternative housing is often not available, and we therefore spend much time, money and effort to make existing homes properly habitable. Sometimes a new roof is needed, sometimes a home needs to be re-built in whole or part. Often windows and doors need replacing. Usually, homes need a thorough clean and fresh lick of paint. All this work and much more is done in collaboration with parents. We are supported by some local authorities on these projects and sometimes local businesses help out as well, all with one aim - to create safer and humane living conditions for children and families.

New Roofs

New Roofs

This year we provided new roofs for two large families living in the Roma slum. The slum is home to a community of around 400 people who live in over-crowded conditions with no sewage-system, showers or toilets. Decades of exclusion and a lack of access to inclusive education and other services have contributed to a strong social and economic decline of its inhabitants.

The families of Maya* and Ionella* (names have been changed) both lived in unsafe homes with dilapidated roofs, close to collapsing on them and their families. The lives of both these women are exemplary. While living with their own children in abstract poverty, they took in children who were abandoned and destitute to live with them.

Open Hands worked together with the husbands of these women and local builders to provide new roofs for these families. This contributed to a much safer living environments and overall improvement of these families well-being.



Support

The Romanian Child Protection Service or family doctors frequently refer children and families who are in urgent need of support to us. Although we continue to add new cases and aim to help as many in need as we possibly can, a waiting list remains. We currently support a total of 180 children in our program. Although provision is unique and tailored depending on the child's need, we typically enrol every child in either kindergarten or school and we provide clothing, food and hygiene articles. We support families in relation to welfare issues and health care needs.

children within their homes, in special schools, kindergarten and by liaising with specialist therapists. Open Hands workers also take on the role of an advocate for these children and families to ensure that they receive their government entitlements. Children with disabilities are welcome and included in all Rainbow House and Lighthouse activities and are valuable members of the Open Hands community.

Birthdays

Many children we work with do not even know when their birthday is, let alone having ever experienced the enjoyment and fun of celebrating one before. We want them to know how precious they are – this is why we celebrate each birthday with a cake and gift and most importantly their friends from the program.

Our Lighthouse Programs (LH)

We currently run two Lighthouse Programs in the rural communities of Suceava county. One Lighthouse is based in the village of Ciprian Porumbescu and the other in the community of Timoceni. The concept of Lighthouse is to break generational cycles of poverty through education. Lighthouse is a program designed to supplement the school curriculum and to broaden children's perspectives by creating new opportunities and experiences, such as outdoor activities, arts and crafts, sight-seeing and more. To encourage school attendance the children can only come to Lighthouse if they have been to school that day.

Lighthouse – Ciprian Porumbescu

The children come to our centre in Ciprian Porumbescu right after they finish school to receive a hot meal. The program runs each week day from 12pm until 4pm and supports up to 26 children with their education, creative learning, outdoor activities, day trips and more.

Children who attend classes also receive clothes, shoes and school supplies from Lighthouse. Birthdays are also celebrated with cakes and balloons.

We also offer advocacy and Family Support as part of the program. Both our Lighthouse programs operate in collaboration with the relevant local authority. The space of our centre in Ciprian Porumbescu is provided by the local authority free of charge to Open Hands. Thanks to a generous donation we were able to completely refurbish the classroom, kitchen, hallway and playroom this year.



Lighthouse Summer

During the long summer break, our staff organises a number of indoor and outdoor activities for the children. This year the children enjoyed being on a steam train and on a boat for the first time in their lives. We took them to eat out in restaurants and they learned and found joy in visiting museums and castles.



Lighthouse – Timpoceni

Our Lighthouse in the community of Timpoceni is currently still run at the local school of Capu Codrului. The school offered us the use of one of their classrooms and we started a daily program for the children after school. For this a local teacher was hired by Open Hands who works together with our project manager on a daily basis with 16 of the most marginalised children of the community. Due to the severe neglect and poverty the children experience, many suffer from developmental delay and struggle with their learning. We also provide food, as the children usually come hungry to the program.

Over three years ago the old school in Timpoceni was torn down and the mayor promised to re-build it. This promise is now finally taking shape with building work moving forward. Since the old school was torn down, Open Hands organised a bus so that the children from Timpoceni are brought to the nearby school of Capu Codrului to learn. We continue to establish a very positive working relationship with the teachers at the school.



Ukraine

Our headquarters are based in the northern city of Suceava which is only a short drive from the Romanian-Ukrainian border. Since the outbreak of the war Open Hands has been actively assisting Ukrainian refugees. Since the early summer of 2022 a part of the Open Hands team began travelling to Western Ukraine on a regular basis to bring aid to those displaced by war inside Ukraine. Relief items were brought to children and adults who experience extreme hardships through sickness, disability, poverty or by living in an orphanage.

This year we continued to deliver food and other vital items to an orphanage with 52 disabled children who were displaced by war and are extremely vulnerable, many suffering from malnutrition.

However, despite the great need, the greatest gift is not the material items we bring. It is our time. It is human contact. It is knowing that someone cares. There is, as Mother Teresa once said, a terrible hunger for love. We visit to ease the pain of loneliness. And we bring aid. In addition to that we raise awareness of the unacceptable treatment of children with disabilities in Ukrainian's orphanage system by meeting with local authorities and connecting with other NGOs.

Team Weekend

In March 2023 our first Romanian team weekend was held. The weekend took place in the tranquil countryside of Transylvania. We spent productive days during which our team spirit and vision were strengthened. We left the weekend refreshed and armed with new ideas and a stronger sense of togetherness.



Aid Transports

This year three aid transports were made in June, November and in March. Volunteers drove with sprinters all the way from southern Germany to deliver warm clothing and shoes, toys, blankets, children's bikes, school materials, furniture and many other items to our Rainbow House in Romania. The donations are stored in a container at the RH and distributed throughout the year to families and children in need.

Christmas 2023

Our Romanian team had a busy Christmas period once again, as 552 Christmas boxes were brought to households and schools, such as the local school for children with disabilities. As well as visiting children in need and delivering gifts to their homes, we held multiple Christmas parties at our Rainbow and Lighthouses. Due to the growing number of children in our

In December 2023 St Nicholas Day was celebrated with all Open Hands children. The children had a celebration, received gifts and were visited in their community. Christmas gifts continue to brighten the children's lives. Some tell us that receiving a Christmas gift from Open Hands has been one of their happiest memories.

Financial Review

At the time of writing our finances hold up and we are able to cover the costs of all our activities in Romania. We are glad that our donors faithfully continue their support and that new donors come to support us on a regular basis. As the cost of living continues to rise and the need for services in Romania grows, we continue to rely on monthly donations and face the challenge that our regular income does not cover our regular expenses. The deficit is covered each month by additional fundraising efforts and by one-off donations. It is our aim to continue to stabilise the foundation of our work by equalling out our income and expenses.

There was a surplus for the year on operations of £19,300, brought about by one specific legacy of £25,000. Reserves carried forward were £67,633 as at 31 March 2024.

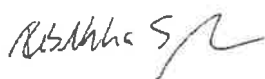
During 2021-22 most German based donors migrated to Open Hands e.V. with the result that the income of Open Hands Charity inevitably dropped significantly as compared with previous years. Since the formation of our Open Hands e.V. branch in Germany (2021) we have established a very close working relationship sharing one aim - a better future for the poorest children in Romania. Although both charities serve the same aim, they are separate entities and therefore accountable to their respective national authorities.

With Thanks

Finishing this report, I would like to mention how incredibly fortunate we are to have so many skilled and gifted people in our team. Our board of Trustees, our volunteers and our dedicated staff on the ground in Romania bring such a range of professionalism and experience to the charity. Their commitment and contributions to what we do are inspirational.

I would like to extend my gratitude to our faithful sponsors who believe in our work and enable it to flourish. Without their giving this work would not be possible. We receive support from individuals, churches and companies – all of whom keep our work alive with their large and small donations – I am immensely thankful.

Your sincerely,
Rebekka Single



30 November 2024

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF OPEN HANDS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of Open Hands ('the Charity') for the year ended 31 March 2024, which are set out on pages 17 to 19.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the Charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- (1) accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- (2) the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**J R Caladine FCCA**

Caladine Limited
Chartered Certified Accountants
Chantry House, 22 Upperton Road
Eastbourne, BN21 1BF



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RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Receipts				
Donations	114,671	-	114,671	58,918
Interest	475	-	475	57
Gift aid	5,442	-	5,442	10,041
Total receipts	120,588	-	120,588	69,016
Payments				
Projects and aid to Romania NGO	99,760	-	99,760	88,467
Travel costs	-	-	-	717
Insurance	431	-	431	431
Professional fees	-	-	-	-
Office costs	257	-	257	2,792
Accountancy and Independent Examination	840	-	840	780
Bank charges	-	-	-	35
Other expenses	-	-	-	-
Total payments	101,288	-	101,288	93,222
Surplus / (Deficit) for the year	19,300	-	19,300	(24,206)
Cash funds at 31 March 2023	48,333	-	48,333	72,539
Cash funds at 31 March 2024	67,633	-	67,633	48,333

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STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

	<u>2024</u> £	<u>2023</u> £
Cash funds		
Cash at bank	<u>67,633</u>	<u>48,333</u>
Other debtors		
Gift aid receivable	<u>6,359</u>	<u>5,022</u>
Liabilities		
Accountancy and Independent Examination	<u>828</u>	<u>798</u>

Approved by the trustees 

Trevor Meadows
Treasurer

30 November 2024

NOTES ON FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1 Accounting policies

1.1 Basis of accounting

The Financial Statements have been prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis, as allowed under section 133 of the Charities Act 2011 for small charities that are not companies.

1.2 Income and expenditure

All income and expenditure has been included when received and paid.

1.3 Funds

General unrestricted fund

The Charity operates an unrestricted General Fund that can be used in accordance with the charitable objects at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

2 Trustees

Trustees received no remuneration in the year.

In the year, Trustee Trevor Meadows was reimbursed expenses of £431 (2023: £431) for insurance payments.