

# Action for Child Trauma International



## Annual Report & Accounts for the year ended March 2024

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## What we do and why



### **We have trained people in 17 countries**

Last year's report was written against the backdrop of war in Ukraine and an earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. Distressingly, this year we have to add Israel's military operation in Gaza to destroy Hamas following its attack on southern Israel in October, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages. Since then, the Hamas-run health ministry says over 36,470 people have been killed in Gaza including 16,000 children. This war has had a very direct and personal impact on ACT International, as the team in Gaza were not just our trainees but our friends and colleagues. They are now displaced and live in fear for their lives, moving from place to place with their families to escape repeated Israel Defence Force attacks. The photograph of them in happier times in last year's report is heart-breaking to look at now, one year later.

It is an under-statement to say that our work has never been more needed, and we have done incredibly well, in the face of a cost of living crisis that has undermined so many UK charities, to have delivered a total of 8 full CATT courses this year across 3 continents (see section 4.1). CATT training is now being recognised as effective in filling the gap between the scarce commodity of highly specialised individual psychological treatments and broader psychosocial support for groups of children. Our anxiety and resilience programme is still very appropriate for areas where it is hard to train professionals, and we ran another online anxiety and resilience course for Yemeni teachers just before Houthi attacks on shipping made the practicalities of working there even more difficult (see section 4.2.1).

We have also continued to support groups of counsellors working for a number of international NGOs, whom we have trained in the past, and are looking to form ever closer partnerships that will sustain our work in the future (see section 2).

This report describes our work in detail and thanks all our committed volunteers (section 1) our generous donors (section 4.5), and many valued organisational partners who provide facilities and select trainees on the ground. Collaboration by like-minded humanitarian agencies has got to be the key to healing this troubled and traumatised world.

***Don't forget: we can't change what has happened, but we can – and do – change what happens next. By healing young minds, we give them another chance at a normal life.***

## **1. Reference and administration details**

### **Charity name and details**

Luna Children's Charity, working name: Action for Child Trauma International.

Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in England & Wales, **Number 1272010**

**Registered address:** 184 Medstead Road, Beech, Alton, Hampshire GU34 4AJ

**website:** [www.actinternational.org.uk](http://www.actinternational.org.uk)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/ActionChildTraumaInternational](https://www.facebook.com/ActionChildTraumaInternational)

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/LunaChildren>

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/actinternational.insta/?hl=en>

### **Charity trustees**

Victoria Burch (Clinical Lead Trustee)

Stella Charman (Chair)

Jenny Cuffe

Dr Yara Fardous

Anne Feeney

Saif Ghauri (Treasurer)

Barbara Simpson (Safeguarding Lead)

Simon Stewart (Digital Transformation Lead)

### **Officers**

Fahed Al-Oqaili – Middle East Operations Manager

Elias Byaruhanga - Uganda Operations Manager & senior trainer

### **Specialist volunteers and paid consultants this year**

Zoe Aristotelous – social media volunteer

Pippa Barlow – private Facebook group administrator and researcher

Madeline Elmitt – research assistant

Brenda Graham – CATT Counsellor Support Fund

Lily Holland - psychology assistant

Penny Jeffcoat – fundraiser

Lucy Rolington – child and youth rights consultant

Aggie Tait – social media volunteer

### **Interns**

### **Spanish-speaking trainers active this year**

Pilu Rivas Lobo

Ximena Zambrano

**Uganda-based trainers active this year**

Sister Florence Achulo

Timona Asua

Elias Byaruhanga

Umar Candia

Syson Kamwebaze

James Nsereko

Paul Waluya

**Middle-East based trainers active this year**

Mervat Ahmad

Dr Ghalia Al Asha

Fahed Al Oqaili

**Armenian trainers active this year**

Narine Abrahamyan

Lilit Karapetian

## **2. Governance and management**

This year has been remarkably busy and productive, as section 4 of this report illustrates. However, ensuring the good governance and sustainability of even a small charity, without paid staff or corporate infrastructure, is becoming increasingly challenging as regulatory frameworks tighten up and operational threats grow. This year we have become aware of many UK children's and young people's charities closing down or cutting back. For ACT International, the issue is not so much finance as volunteer capacity and longevity, so we have been actively exploring a long-term strategy to ensure the sustainability and growth of our work, and perhaps to transfer more responsibility and control overseas. All children's charities must now be trauma-aware with properly trained staff. We have therefore been working on closer collaboration or a merger with one or more charities that share our values and recognise the importance of children's mental health as an integral part of children's health and wellbeing. In this day and age, charities are competing for increasingly scarce resources, and we must join forces to raise more funds and help more traumatised communities in need.

Nevertheless, for now we remain blessed with a stable team of trustees and volunteers, plus a growing group of active trainers who can work all over the world (see section 1) in three widely-spoken languages. We continue our search for a bilingual French/English psychologist to help us expand into francophone Africa.

Our fundraising efforts (see section 4.5), led by volunteer Penny Jeffcoat, have this year been successful in attracting some very welcome new grant funding which has supported projects in the Yemen (section 4.2.1) and Uganda (sections 4.1.1-4.1.3). We maintain a careful balance between our projects and fundraising for them, so that we ensure we deliver on our commitments and do not embark on projects for which we do not have funds available. And of course our overhead costs remain very low, as section 5 illustrates.

In April 2022 our new trustee, Barbara Simpson, took up her role as trustee for training quality and safeguarding officer. She has helped us to review and update all our policies (not just the safeguarding ones) and came on the trip to Uganda to experience CATT training at first hand. As in previous years, ACT International relies heavily on its trustees and specialist volunteers to lead and undertake the key tasks and ensure a highly professional approach to running the charity.

### 3. Objectives and activities

ACT International exists to advance the rights, education and health of children and young people affected by conflict and trauma. Formally, its objectives are:

- i) The advancement of education and preservation of good health of children and young people affected by conflict and/or trauma.
- ii) To advance the education of the public in children and young people's rights in part, but not exclusively, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

ACT International's charitable objectives are achieved through the delivery of training to help children with anxiety and resilience (our A&R programme), who suffer from diagnosable PTSD symptoms using the Children's Accelerated Trauma Technique (CATT), providing trauma awareness programmes and supporting individual counsellors working in remote or under-resourced locations. Our work is led by requests which come directly from local people or community organisations. Below is a summary of our methods:

**Training** of people working with children in their communities, both in person and online:

- **Children's Accelerated Trauma Technique (CATT)** created by Dr Carlotta Raby with follow-up case supervision.
- **Anxiety and Resilience Programme (A&R)** compiled by Victoria Burch
- **Teaching for Recovery Technique (TRT)** developed by Children & War Foundation.
- **PTSD Awareness:** bespoke training or materials (printed leaflets, social media campaigns and videos) to meet the needs of people of different cultures or experience.
- **Safeguarding** based on Keeping Children Safe guidance for relief and development charities, and integrated into all our training as appropriate to the local culture or context.

**Special projects** offering wider support in areas of particular need or for specific types of children, in support of community-based organisations.

**Supporting individuals** who work unaided or in isolation, in areas of need and who may need resources to support their practice. Our CATT Counsellor Support Fund is a key vehicle for this.

**Developing educational materials** for use in different languages, specific contexts, or to support good practice. The leaflet below was designed for Uganda and made available in Luganda and Swahili versions.



The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty, under section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 to have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance and regulations on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of the charity in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2024.



## **4. Achievements and performance**

### **4.1 CATT training and supervision**

#### **4.1.1 CATT training and supervision in refugee settlements in Uganda**

Uganda now hosts nearly 1.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from South Sudan (57%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (32%), Somalia (3%), and Burundi (3%). In 2018 we began CATT training for workers in refugee camps in the west of the country (specifically Nakivale and Oruchinga). In early 2019 we ran our first CATT course in partnership with UK charity Christian Relief and Education for South Sudan (CRESS), and in 2021 the International Rescue Committee (IRC) commissioned us for the first time to train its staff. Since then we have returned several times to repeat the training, as both staff and refugees tend to move around, and we have now trained over 100 counsellors in total. CATT counsellors take their skills with them so knowledge of trauma and how to treat it spreads to help children elsewhere; for example some of those trained in Arua have recently returned to South Sudan. Every six months we return to the settlements to provide case supervision and support, and each settlement now has a small team of counsellors who can help each other and provide trauma education to families and communities. Elias Byaruhanga and Candia Umar are our senior trainers who provide supervision and support, both online and in person, in groups and one-to-one.

Specifically in 2023, CATT training took place for the IRC in Arua City in July (15 counsellors), and Yumbe in September (9 counsellors). The participants had a variety of professional backgrounds, including doctors, psychiatric clinical officers (PCOs) and nurses. The trainers were Candia Umar and Timona Asua, and the course was funded in full by IRC, at no cost to ACT International.



**Group supervision for CRESS in Mijale**



**IRC staff CATT training in Yumbe**

#### **4.1.2 CATT training in Lira, Uganda**

Trauma still constitutes a serious and widespread problem across all communities in northern Uganda, torn apart by 24 years of war and now exacerbated by poverty. Young people there are stuck in a cycle of inter-generational trauma stemming from continuous conflict and intermittent violence since independence, in particular the frequent violent raids and abductions by the Lord's Resistance Army between 1987 and 2006. Child soldiers and girls forced into marriage then returned to their communities with often unwanted children, who



suffered from the consequences of their parents' traumatic past. This legacy of trauma - transferred from parents to children and then grandchildren, combined with poverty, sexual violence and child trafficking, mean that today's children in northern Uganda are at heightened risk of PTSD and abuse.

This CATT training project was delivered in partnership with Bishop Asili Community Development Foundation (BADCF) and funded in the main through a grant from the Peace of Mind Foundation (PoM). It comprised a 5-day training course for people working with traumatised children and young people in local communities. It was designed to build on last year's course, as the organisations involved then identified an urgent need for more training, especially for people working further north, in the Kitgum and Pader regions. However, for practical and financial reasons it proved to be more efficient to transport these staff to Lira for training rather than to deliver it there. A further 25 people were invited to attend in February 2024. 13 trainees came from the Lira district and 12 from Kitgum and Pader. A special allowance was provided to their employer, the Centre for Adolescent Reproductive Health (CEFARH), to facilitate their attendance. Sister Florence Achulo Osara, director of BADCF and one of our senior trainers, hosted the training which was led by Elias Byaruhanga. They selected a newly-qualified trainer, Paul Waluya, to assist them.

13 of the 15 trainees received CATT counsellor certificates following the course, which cost in total £4730, or £364 per certificate awarded. This is a little higher than most of our Ugandan courses, explained by the fact that we made an additional allowance to CEFARH to enable its 12 staff to attend.



**Classroom at the Bishop Asili Centre, Lira**



**Presentation of certificates**

#### **4.1.3 CATT training as part of the CAMHS Diploma at the PCO School, Butabika Hospital Uganda**

We have entered into an agreement with Mbarara University and the Uganda Ministry of Education's School of Psychiatric Clinical Officers (PCOs) to sponsor the trauma module of the children's mental health (CAMHS) diploma, which is run annually. In January 2024 we supported this course, which incorporates the teaching of CATT, and trustee Victoria Burch co-trained together with James Nsereko and Elias Byaruhanga. Trustee Barbara Simpson also attended the course as a trainee learning CATT, and to get first-hand experience of how the training is delivered. The course was attended by 14 other trainees, 7 of whom were on the

2-year diploma course, plus a further 7 others selected by Elias from NGOs working in refugee camps or providing mental health services. 13 of the 15 trainees received CATT counsellor certificates following the course, the total cost of which was £1660, or £128 per certificate awarded.



End of course photo, outside PCO School Butabika Hospital, February 2024

#### 4.1.4 CATT training and training of trainers in Colombia

At the end of November 2023 Pilu Rivas Lobo supported by Ximena Zambrano travelled to Bogota, Colombia, to run a second CATT course in partnership with Children Change Colombia (CCC). As this organisation's website<sup>1</sup> explains, this is a country suffering from extreme poverty and a damaged economy following conflict that has led to *'the displacement of over 8.2 million Colombians, many of whom are children. The peace deal signed in 2016 to end 52 years of armed conflict between the Colombian government and the country's largest guerrilla group, the FARC led to the demobilisation of many child soldiers, now needing support and care to rebuild their lives. However, various illegal armed groups continue to operate in Colombia and many neighbourhoods are controlled by armed groups and gangs, including former paramilitaries. Murder, extortion, sexual violence and other human rights abuses by these groups continue to drive large numbers of people from their homes..... Between 2020 and 2021, there was an astounding 88% increase (from 12,481 to 23,465) in the number children and young people affected by the conflict, including displacement, recruitment, abuse, and sexual violence.'*

Pilu and Ximena trained another 22 people to use CATT. They came from a variety of organisations across the country, supported by CCC, working with children in some of the most challenging situations. They used some experienced CATT counsellors from the 2022 cohort to share how they

<sup>1</sup> <https://childrenchange colombia.org/why-colombia/>



had been using the CATT protocol, which added depth and relevance to the training but only one had done enough cases and had the breadth of understanding to become a trainer at this stage. However, some of the new trainees already had a wider knowledge of trauma so a training of trainers course may be possible in the coming year. The trainees are now receiving regular support and supervision with Pilu via Zoom.

Thanks to the generosity of Children Change Colombia, this course cost ACT International only £2,600, or £118 per certificate awarded.



**New CATT counsellors with their certificates**



**Pilu supervising CATT practice**

#### **4.1.5 Gaza Child Mental Health Centre**

This is the hardest section to write, because the clinic was doing really well until October 2023 when the Hamas attacks triggered an enormous ongoing military response by Israel which totally destroyed the clinic. Its staff, trapped in Gaza, have been frequently displaced and live in fear for their lives. We keep in touch with them via text messages and the occasional e-mail, and will salvage what we can when the war is over, together with our funding partners.



**Mohammed with his family in his apartment in Jabalia, now further destroyed by more recent bombing by the Israeli military**

#### 4.1.6 CATT training for Idleb/Sarmada, northwest Syria

The Syria conflict is now out of the news but has been going on for thirteen years. The country is divided between the Assad government-controlled south and northern areas held by other groups including the Turkish-backed opposition in the northwest (cities of Idleb and Sarmada). The area is hard to access, with limited crossing points from Turkey. Here medical and humanitarian services are provided by international NGOs, one of which is our partner, the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations (UOSSM). CATT training was requested for their staff here in July 2023. 22 psycho-social workers (PSWs) were trained, together with in-person support trainer Mervat Ahmad and Dr Ghalia Al Asha as lead trainer online. This approach worked well, the trainees had a good experience and learned the skills they needed to treat children with some of the most complex traumatic problems. All the new CATT counsellors received regular online supervision from Dr Ghalia in two groups until March 2023. This was the first CATT training programme ever delivered in this hybrid way in order to overcome the challenges of such a remote and insecure location, so it is especially important in this report to recognise their hard work, courage and commitment to making it happen.

Financially, the course and follow-up supervision cost £2,700 or only £123 per CATT counsellor trained, thanks to excellent collaborative working with UOSSM.



**Dr Ghalia teaching CATT online, with Mervat in the training room**

Northwest Syria has children suffering from complex PTSD with some of the most severe symptoms to be found anywhere in the world, so Dr Ghalia's follow-up supervision for the counsellors has been especially important. We have permission to show you below and on this report's cover, a picture of one boy during CATT treatment with his counsellor. He fled with his family to this part of Syria from further south, where he had already been living a very difficult life as a refugee when the devastating February 2023 earthquake struck. He was buried for many hours, severely injured, and when finally rescued his arm had to be

amputated. Most of his family died in the earthquake. Before treatment for his trauma he showed highly disturbed behaviour with self-harming. After CATT treatment he is now much calmer and doing well.



#### **4.1.7 CATT counsellor support fund**

This fund of £1000 was set up and is administered by ex-trustee Brenda Graham to support CATT counsellors. It offers small grants to those working with very few resources and in remote areas. The fund was publicised in April 2023 on our two private Facebook groups – English-speaking and Arabic-speaking. Ten applications were received, all from Ugandan counsellors, which were screened to make sure they met our criteria. Several of these were for laptops and associated IT equipment, which we regard as important to support good clinical record-keeping, and are frequently not available in local schools and communities. A selection panel was set up, comprising Brenda, Pippa Barlow and Jenny Cuffe. The outcome was that four applications were successful, allocating £970 plus a small amount for bank charges. Alternative funding was found by ACT International for four other applicants, as their bids formed part of wider training programmes or special projects. Two people were unsuccessful, as they did not sufficiently meet the criteria. This initiative creates a significant impact for a relatively small sum of money, and is a real boost to the morale of individual CATT counsellors as well as providing us with an insight into their successes and challenges, and access to quality information about the use of CATT. Trustees intend to continue this initiative in future years, and are tremendously grateful to Brenda for setting it up and overseeing the process.



**Didas Mpura, a teacher and school counsellor at Mbarara Hope School, unpacks his laptop and printer**



## **4.2 Anxiety & Resilience (A&R) training**

### **4.2.1 The Yemen: Hajjah province**

Tragically, the civil war in the Yemen which began in 2014 continues, despite recent attempts to broker a ceasefire. According to the UN, more than 11,000 children are known to have been killed or wounded as a direct result of the fighting and the entire population is suffering from hunger, poverty and lack of healthcare. In mid-2023, together with Bridges to Peace and Solidarity (BtP&S), we were planning another online A&R training for workers in schools, this time in the Houthi controlled Hajjah province. We were delighted to receive funding for this from the Peace of Mind Foundation (PoM) and Ferguson Trust. However, at the end of 2023 the Houthis began attacking international shipping in support of Hamas and, although we managed to deliver the course itself in November, the security situation subsequently prevented us from completing the follow-up work or undertaking the impact assessment which had been planned and funded, to take stock of our work in the Yemen since 2021.

The course was set up on the ground in the Yemen by Nabd Development and Evolution Organization (NDEO), which secured the necessary permissions from the Houthi government, before selecting trainees who work directly with children and adolescents in schools in the province and have basic counselling and social work skills. The 3-day programme was delivered online by Dr Al-Asha and Mr Fahed Al-Oqaili. A total of 25 participants attended, and expressions of appreciation were immediately received, although further follow-up by the BtP&S in-country supervisor has not been possible. Preparation of an online questionnaire for the impact assessment also took place before it became apparent that we would be unable to administer it. Therefore in March 2024 ACT International trustees took the decision to halt work on behalf of Yemeni children for 6 months, until hopefully the security situation changes and both data collection and training can safely be resumed later in 2024. £1251 in unspent funds were returned to PoM. The total cost of the A&R course was £9,000, or £360 per trainee.





**Hajjah school playground**

#### **4.2.2 Armenia: Nagorno Karabakh**

In July 2023 we renewed our partnership with the Yerevan Children's Center and the Armenian Association of Social Workers (AASW) to offer online A&R training to professionals working with children (primarily social workers and psychologists) in the four regions of Nagorno Karabakh (known as Artsakh in Armenia), and subsequently towns on the border with Azerbaijan. This isolated Armenian enclave had been under blockade by the Azeris for several months, with living conditions for the population deteriorating and families, many with children, separated. The first task of this training was to teach people techniques to contain and manage anxiety, and promote resilience among children in their local area, which they could then pass on to a wider group in their community. The first phase of the training was delivered by our two Armenian trainers, with some difficulty due to connectivity problems, at a cost of £2,800 from private donations. Then in September 2023 Azerbaijan launched a full-scale attack and almost the whole Armenian population fled to Armenia. On 1 January 2024, the Republic of Artsakh was formally dissolved and has become part of Azerbaijan. As a consequence, the second phase of the project has not happened and we are awaiting the situation in Armenia to settle before attempting to resume activity. £1,900 remains in our restricted funds for this purpose.

### **4.3 Bespoke training and materials**

#### **4.3.1 Refugee charities in UK: training for volunteers working with troubled children**

During the year we have maintained contact with several charities in the UK which look after refugees and struggle to find mental health support for the children in their care. In March 2024 a one-day course was run for the Rural Refugee Network in Hampshire, designed and led by Toria Burch, to help its volunteers who are working with families containing troubled children. As the picture below shows, the course included the use of creative techniques.



A follow-up course has been requested for psychologists supporting a residential programme for young refugees in the Summer of 2024.

## **4.4 Special projects**

### **4.4.1 The Friends of Butabika Children's Ward, Kampala, Uganda**

At the very start of the year, we were saddened to say goodbye to Rev Dismas Bwesigye, Chaplain of Butabika Hospital, who has been our friend, supporter and facilitator for the work of the Friends since its inception in 2013. We helped the hospital, and specifically the children's ward, to mark his retirement by providing funds for a farewell event, raised through a special appeal to people in the UK who knew and had worked with this inspirational man over the years. The hospital management gave permission and the event was organised by our ward volunteer Dismas Lwagula in conjunction with ward manager Medina Asibazuyo and her staff. 70 people were invited (including up to 30 children) and a budget of £680 allocated.





**Rev Dismas with his wife, guests, staff and children of the ward on the occasion of his retirement, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023**



Fortunately, this event coincided with an Easter holiday visit by a group of pupils and parents from Gordon's School near Woking, Surrey, who were guests of Red Chilli Hideaway, situated opposite Butabika Hospital. Its owner, Debbie Willis, had approached us about a charitable project which would enrich their experience of Uganda and they fundraised for items needed by the children's ward under the auspices of the 'Friends' project, as well as contributing to the event. In addition, a range of items were provided by one of the East London/Butabika NHS Link's recent volunteers who had visited the ward in January, and ACTI trustee Toria Burch donated textbooks for the PCO School. Further items, notably a much-needed water tank and fridge, were donated directly by Red Chilli Hideaway in Uganda and a cooker through UK donations. Both the visit and the party in April were a great success, and we want to express here our grateful thanks to everyone whose enormous generosity made this project happen and the event so memorable. The UK visitors and Red Chilli team are pictured below with Dismas Lwagula, and at Red Chilli with some of the items donated to the ward.





Over the past 10 years, the ‘Friends’ project has worked to provide activities and resources on the ward through St Luke’s Chapel volunteer Dismas Lwagula. However, since 2016 we have had no formal project manager, and since 2021 his work has been funded from ACT International’s mainstream budget rather than from a separate fundraising campaign. This work has always fallen outside the scope of our primary trauma training activity, so in June 2023 the trustees took the decision to transfer the management of Dismas Lwagula to the Ugandan subsidiary of UK charity, Play Action International, together with two year’s funding, so that his skills can be more effectively used and integrated into its wider work in Uganda. The Friends’ project has therefore been formally closed, although we keep in touch with Dismas Lwagula and the Butabika Link with East London NHS Foundation Trust.

## 4.5 Fundraising

Despite the cost of living crisis and the generally challenging environment for UK charities, we have increased our income this year to an all-time high of over £36,000. This was largely due to the efforts of our volunteer fundraiser Penny Jeffcoat, whose bid-writing skills generated £15,000 from two significant new donors, the Ferguson Trust and Peace of Mind Foundation (PoM). Unfortunately bids to the Greenhall Foundation, RG Hills and Effective Altruism’s Mental Health Funding Circle were unsuccessful. Funds from Ferguson Trust and PoM supported the training for the Yemen (see 4.2.1), which was explicitly prioritised by trustees, plus another CATT course in Lira (see 4.1.2). For the coming year we will focus our fundraising efforts on developing training initiatives for those who can help children traumatised by the ongoing war in Gaza, plus hostilities on the West Bank.



We are very grateful for the loyal and ongoing support of past donors and our ‘family’ of individual supporters who make regular donations by BACS or via our CAF account. The CAF Donate platform has been working well, in particular for the special appeal for the Butabika Hospital Children’s Ward (see section 4.4.1), and the website’s ‘Donate’ page has been much improved thanks to trustee Simon Stewart. We want to thank all our donors listed below, and those who prefer to remain anonymous. Individual donations this year represented a lower proportion (35%) of our income than last year (53%) and we’ve not been very active in arranging or supporting fundraising activities and events.

#### **Donations from corporate sponsors, charitable and grant-giving foundations:**

- £5,000 Joan Ainslie Trust
- £2,000 Chartwell Industries Ltd/Cripps Foundation
- £10,244 Peace of Mind Foundation
- £4,500 Ferguson Trust
- £1,122 Nicky Clinch Ltd

#### **Online campaigns and fundraising events:**

- £725 from Gordon’s School for Butabika Children’s Ward

#### **Individual donors:**

- £3,000 the Ghazaros family
- £2,000 Rosemary & Mike Lambert, Marine House at Beer Art Gallery
- £7,610 in regular or ad hoc giving by Ian & Muriel Tegner, Dr Neil Appleyard, Alex and Una Henderson and other supporters who prefer to remain anonymous

<b>Funding sources (%) year ended March 2024</b>		
<b><u>Funding source</u></b>	<b><u>amount</u></b>	<b><u>%</u></b>
Charitable Trusts/Foundations/Corporates	22,843	63%
Campaigns & events	725	2%
Individual donations	12,610	35%
Income from activities/interest/refunds	130	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,308</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **4.6 Website, social media & profile-raising**

Our site had 20,000 unique<sup>2</sup> visitors this year, a 38% increase on last year. Around 60% of visitors were from the UK and 10% from the US. Around 90% of traffic is from direct visits, which reflects our lack of investment in paid social, search and referrer partnerships. A review of traffic from search engines<sup>3</sup> indicates that most users are specifically looking for the charity, CATT or individual trustees. An examination of how many viewers read more than one page and for how long, indicates an interest in our work in places like the Gaza and Uganda,

<sup>2</sup> This means that approximately 20,000 different individuals visited our site but perhaps fewer if some of those users are multi-device users, perhaps more if they are users who use the same device

<sup>3</sup> This means those not simply clicking on links in emails etc. - most were from people who searched for ACTI, CATT or trustee names (rather than, for example, people who searched for "trauma" or "children's charity")

suggesting there is an audience segment engaged with the detail of what we do. Following discussion, it was agreed that a campaign to raise our profile on social media would lead to more new people finding the site but that, given our limited capacity, this represented encouraging growth and showed that the website was doing a good job for us.

In January we were fortunate to receive social media assistance from two recent graduates, Aggie Tait and Zoe Aristotelous. They developed a strategy for us, launched our Instagram account and have supported regular postings on both Instagram and Facebook. We have ceased to post on X, although we have not closed our account. Our aim is to educate and advocate for children suffering from the symptoms of trauma and PTSD, promote their rights, and raise our profile. We try to align ourselves with other humanitarian agencies working on behalf of children, such as UNICEF, and 'like' their posts. So far we have not embarked on using social media platforms for fundraising, but hope to do so in 2024-25.

In pursuit of our aims (which correlate with our charitable objectives) Aggie and Zoe created an engaging infographic on CATT, and a video illustrating our work in 2023. Subsequent posts in 2024 have publicised the training in Kampala with short interviews with trainees highlighted the crisis in Yemen and its impact on Yemeni children and demonstrated our support for our team in Gaza. Whilst not indicating any political alliance, this post did call for peace. Our social media reach remains small, but we have a foundation upon which to build should more resources become available for this activity later in 2024.

#### **4.7 Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)**

Measuring the quality of our training and its impact on children and their families continues to be a priority, and we collect immediate feedback from trainees on each of our training courses. In addition this year we commissioned wider impact assessments for our work in the Yemen and the Gambia. Both countries presented challenges; the Yemen because of its ongoing conflict between the government and the Houthis, and the Gambia because of extreme poverty and a lack of mental health services and expertise.

Two years after ACT International trained the Gambia's first cohort of CATT counsellors, we asked Pippa Barlow, a child and adolescent mental health practitioner, to find out whether they had put their new skills into practice and with what result. We also wanted to know if the training had helped them identify trauma that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Six of the 18 counsellors were interviewed in depth. Although a lack of child-centred services in the Gambia meant that few of them had the chance to practise CATT directly with children, they all said that it enabled them to recognise symptoms of trauma and to educate parents and caregivers about the appropriate response. In a country with high levels of child abuse and domestic violence but little public awareness of its serious effects on mental health, they felt this was an important step forward and all of them wanted ACT International to provide further training. Pippa described their responses as 'a massive vote of confidence and gratitude' to ACT International.

In the Yemen where we have been working with Canadian-based charity Bridges to Peace and Solidarity, we have now delivered an on-line Anxiety and Resilience programme to more than 90 teachers and mental health workers across five provinces, including those controlled by



the Houthis. The pilot took place in 2021 and the training was rolled out in three subsequent phases. At the end of each training course, participants completed questionnaires about its content and delivery and the training was adapted and improved each time.

In November 2023, we launched the third phase of this training (see section 4.2.1) for 25 participants funded by the Peace of Mind Foundation which also contributed £1500 for monitoring and evaluation. ACT International commissioned Madeline Elmitt, a graduate in Arabic Studies, to carry out an assessment of the programme's impact. She subsequently produced a questionnaire for participants asking how they applied the lessons learned to their work with children and how these were received by the children themselves. Unfortunately, the deteriorating security situation in the Yemen and concerns about the safety of participants has made it impossible to distribute the questionnaire or progress the assessment. However, we intend to review the situation later in the year. We remain committed to our work in the Yemen and expect to complete the impact assessment in 2024-25, and to report on it in this section next year.

## **4.7 Safeguarding**

### **Our approach**

ACT International is a child-centred service, where safeguarding is at the heart of everything we do. Our programmes are focused on strengthening resilience and developing coping skills. We strive to empower children and young people in order to ensure that they are better equipped to face the many and significant challenges that they encounter, often on a daily basis, and help them to reach their full potential.

We work with partner organisations in countries where children's rights may not be sufficiently protected by law or culture. People are often working in difficult circumstances to treat and support children and minimise risks of harm. We need to work sensitively with partner organisations who ask for our involvement, as their situation may constrain their approach to safeguarding. We seek to understand their local context and share our expectations for working with them.

Although definitions of 'child' and 'child abuse' may differ according to national and cultural understandings, organisations need to be clear that in international law 'children' are defined as all those under 18 years of age, and that 'child abuse' includes the range of acts, intentional or otherwise, which harm children.

We speak out and advocate for children in a way that will enhance their lives today and leave a legacy of improved childhood experiences for future generations of children and young people.

### **Reports involving incidents of safeguarding concerns**

We have not been required to manage any safeguarding referrals, situations or concerns in the 2023-24 period. However, we have been approached for advice and/or consultation where individual workers feel stuck with a situation or are worried about the safety of a child. For example, during our recent visit to Uganda Toria Burch was approached by Rebecca

Akello, a counsellor for the NGO Hope for Justice working in Kampala with children and young people who are sexually and criminally exploited. She needed advice about an especially complex and challenging young women whom she was treating.



Toria, Rebecca and Stella in Kampala February 2024

### **Butabika Hospital**

In our 2023 Annual Report we reported on the ongoing under-staffing in the Butabika children's ward in Uganda and continuing difficulty with resettlement of children back to their families and community due to under-resourcing of social work. Our work with the East London Hospital/Butabika Link and transfer of key staff to the employment of Play Action International later in 2023 have helped with this, although we no longer have any formal responsibility or input to the ward.

### **Using photographs and video footage of children**

The ethics of publishing photographs and video footage of children has been subject to discussion. As a result, we have now published our Communications and Children's Images and Information policy, which details our procedures for when we use information and visual images of children and young people, including photographic stills, and audio and video recordings. Our overriding principle is to maintain respect and dignity in our portrayal of children, families and communities. The policy details our procedures and reflects that the safety, dignity and rights of children are central to what we do and how we portray children in our work.

**Awareness of where issues of culture and safeguarding children may collide**

It is critical that all countries develop a strong safeguarding culture. However, issues of faith and race in safeguarding children reveal examples of misunderstandings leading to over intrusive practice or inactivity in the face of child maltreatment. We always seek to understand the local context and to share our expectations of working with them. This has been strengthened by materials introduced in our Training the Trainers programme which embeds matters connected to safeguarding in all aspects of the training, and also equips trainers to manage difficult situations with sensitive approaches and practical advice.

*We ensure that every individual within our organisation receives clear instructions on their obligation to act to prevent and report abuse. This applies to trustees, paid employees, appointed trainers and volunteers. We also require our organisational partners to report to us about any child who may have come to harm as a consequence of trauma treatment.*

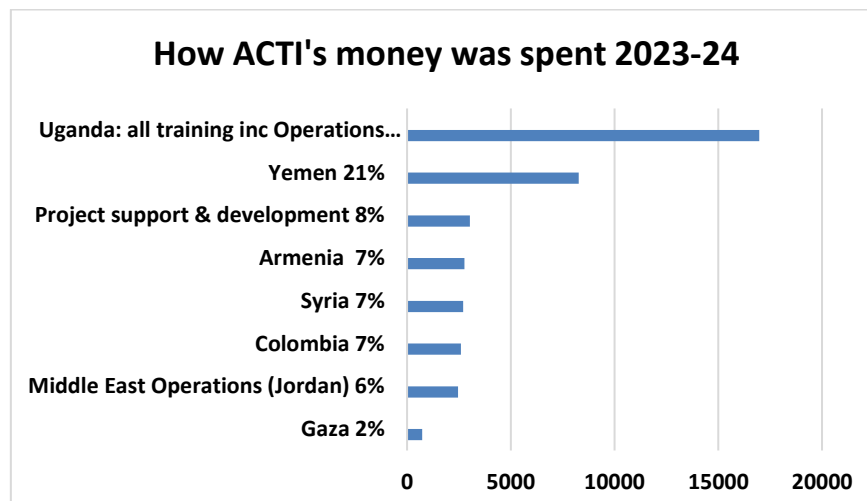
## 5. Financial review

The overall economic climate during the year remained challenging domestically and from a global perspective. The combination of war in Ukraine and unrest in the Middle East has enhanced the suffering of disadvantaged and impoverished communities in Africa, Middle East, and Asia. Many communities are now displaced and seeking new opportunities in Europe and elsewhere. The combination of an energy crisis, trade wars and high inflation increases the need for charitable services while at the same time affecting those who so generously support charities both domestically and internationally. Unfortunately, many charities are going out of business and the UK sector is shrinking. The rise of geopolitical unrest over the past years remains a dominant feature at present. However, current economic indicators provide some encouragement that future growth will generate confidence across the sectors, and may yet provide a boost to charitable giving.

ACT International's trustees continue to have the appetite, drive, and initiative to deliver training where it is warranted and needed. In 2023/24 they have sought to match funding with ability to optimise impact and value. In addition, they set up a project to explore opportunities in complementary operations via partnership or suitable and equitable merger propositions. Operational teams continue to show tremendous resilience and cooperation by mobilising and logistically delivering their strategic programmes to a much wider audience in Africa, using Uganda as a hub. . These are positive steps particularly when the operational environments impose limiting factors. We are also fortunate to have core sponsors and donors who have supported the challenging work we undertake internationally at a difficult time and our finances remain sound.

In 2023/24 our total donations at £36,178 was 30% up on 2022/23 with almost a 50:50 divide between general and restricted funds received. In the year we applied £36k on training programmes internationally. In doing so we restricted the deficit in the year to £3k compared to £8k last year. Our liquidity levels are matched to the scope we can deliver. We remain grateful to our operational teams of volunteers, fundraisers and those who donate and sponsor the mission and scope of ACT International.

This year our accounts have again been independently reviewed as required by the Charities Commission, and have received a clean bill of health.



## 6. Annual accounts

Income and Expenditure Statement for the Year ended 31st March 2024									
						£	£		
						2023	2024		
<b>Incoming Resources</b>									
	Restricted Funds					3,600	17,721		
	General Funds					24,126	18,457		
<b>Total Donations</b>						27,726	36,178		
	Other income						144		
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>						27,726	36,321		
<b>Resources Expended</b>									
	Programme Activities	Restricted Funds				5,913	15,454		
		General Funds				28,575	21,049		
	Project Support & Development					1,515	1,621		
	Merger Integration Project						1,401		
<b>Total Cost of Charitable Activities</b>						36,003	39,525		
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year</b>						<b>(8,277)</b>	<b>(3,203)</b>		
Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2024									
						£	£		
						2023	2024		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>									
	Prepayments						863		
	Cash at Bank and in hand					20,369	16,302		
<b>Current Assets</b>						20,369	17,165		
	Accruals								
<b>Current Liabilities</b>									
<b>Net Assets</b>						<b>20,369</b>	<b>17,165</b>		
	Restricted Reserves					2,187	3,887		
	Unrestricted Reserves					18,182	13,278		
<b>Total Funds</b>						<b>20,369</b>	<b>17,165</b>		



Action for Child  
Trauma International



# **Action for Child Trauma International**

## **Executive Summary of Annual Report & Accounts for the year ended March 2024**

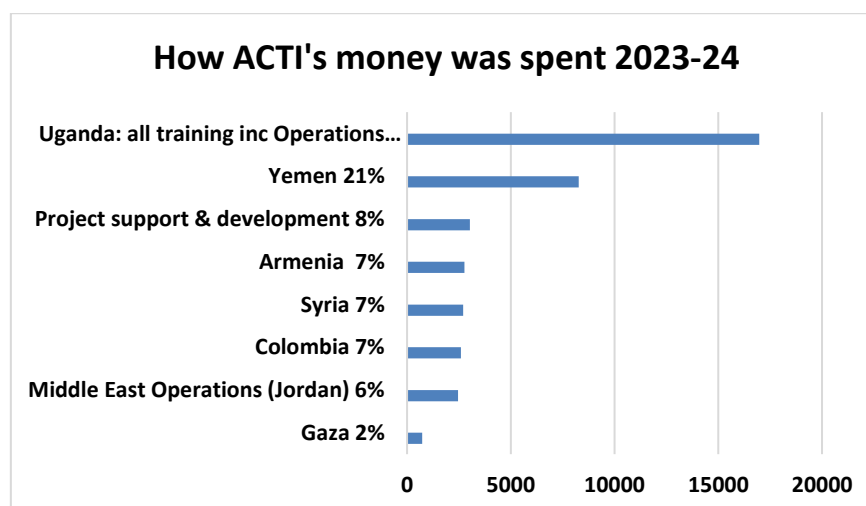


Last year's report was written during challenging times, including the war in Ukraine and an earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. Unfortunately, we now have to face the military action in Gaza, which started after Hamas attacked southern Israel in October, resulting in the loss of 1,200 lives and 251 people being taken hostage. Since then, reports from Gaza indicate that over 40,000 people, including 16,000 children, have died. This conflict has deeply affected ACT International, as our team members in Gaza were not only our trainees but also our friends and colleagues. They are now displaced and living in fear, constantly moving to escape ongoing attacks. Looking at their photo from last year when they were smiling is heart-wrenching, especially now, a year later.

So, it's an understatement to say our work has never been more important. Despite the challenges caused by the cost of living crisis affecting many charities in the UK, we've successfully delivered 8 full CATT courses this year across 3 continents. Our CATT training is now recognized for effectively bridging the gap between rare, specialized psychological treatments and broader support for groups of children. Our anxiety and resilience program continues to be very relevant in places where training professionals is difficult. Just before increased Houthi attacks on shipping made things even harder in Yemen, we managed to run another online course for teachers there.



**We have trained people in 17 countries**



This year has been our busiest and most successful so far, as you can see from section 4 of the full report. However, running a small charity without paid staff or a big organization is getting harder because of stricter rules and more challenges. We've seen many children's charities in the UK shutting down or reducing their activities. For us at ACT International, the main concern isn't just money but having enough volunteers and keeping them for the long term. That's why we're looking at a plan to make sure our work can continue and possibly give more responsibility to training teams overseas.

We have also been supporting both individuals and clusters of counsellors who work for various international NGOs that we've trained in the past. We're aiming to build stronger organisational partnerships that will help sustain our work in the future. Today, every children's charity needs to understand and address trauma, with properly trained staff. We are therefore working to partner or merge with other charities that share our mission and recognize children's mental health as a key part of their overall wellbeing. With more charities vying for limited resources, it's important for us to unite to raise funds and support more communities in need.

Our fundraising efforts have been successful this year, bringing in valuable new grant funding for projects in Yemen and Uganda. We are careful to balance our projects with the funds we have, ensuring we only take on what we can afford. Plus, as we function as a network of volunteers, our administrative costs continue to be very low.

<b>Funding sources (%) year ended March 2024</b>		
<b><u>Funding source</u></b>	<b><u>amount</u></b>	<b><u>%</u></b>
Charitable Trusts/Foundations/Corporates	22,843	63%
Campaigns & events	725	2%
Individual donations	12,610	35%
Income from activities/interest/refunds	130	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,308</b>	<b>100%</b>

The full report goes into detail about our activities and expresses gratitude to our dedicated volunteers, generous donors, and important organizational partners who help provide facilities and select trainees on the ground. Working together with like-minded humanitarian organizations is crucial for healing this troubled and traumatized world.

**Remember, while we can't change what has already happened, we can—and do—make a difference in what comes next. By helping young minds heal, we give them a better chance at a normal life.**

## Annual accounts

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## **Independent examiner's report to the Trustees of Action for Child Trauma International**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Action for Child Trauma International for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

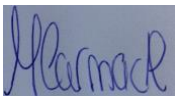
As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act'). I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5Xb) 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 Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- 2) The accounts do not accord with those records; or
- 3) The accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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 to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Name: Martin James Lewis Carmack

Qualification: ACMA

Address: 28 Raleigh Road, Enfield, EN2 6UB

Date: 20th August 2024