

ANNUAL REPORT 2025





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VISION

We envision a world in which drug policies uphold dignity, health and rights.

MISSION

We use data and advocacy to promote harm reduction and drug policy reform.

We show how rights-based, evidence-informed responses to drugs contribute to healthier, safer societies, and why investing in harm reduction makes sense.

We are an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN). We collaborate and partner with allies to strengthen harm reduction, human rights and drug policy around the world.

1

WHO WE ARE

LETTER FROM THE ED

2

2025 was a defining year for Harm Reduction International. HR25 in Bogotá was more than a conference - it was a moment of collective purpose. Around 1,000 advocates, researchers, community leaders and policymakers came together with clarity and determination, reminding us of the strength of this movement: grounded in evidence, united by shared values, and unwavering in our commitment to health, dignity and justice.

Throughout the year, HRI's work remained anchored in rigorous data and analysis. In a political and financial landscape marked by shifting priorities and shrinking civic space, our evidence has been a stabilising force. Governments and partners continue to rely on HRI's monitoring and research to understand what is happening on the ground and to make decisions that protect lives. No other organisation provides global harm reduction data and analysis with this scale, independence and consistency - a role that has become indispensable.

At the heart of our work is a simple truth: harm reduction is a human rights imperative. In 2025, we amplified community voices, challenged harmful narratives and pushed back against policies that criminalise and exclude. We also strengthened solidarity across movements, from climate justice

to gender justice, recognising that our struggles are interconnected and that lasting change depends on collective power.

Despite the challenges, the impact of our work is clear. As we move forward, we recognise the struggle ahead and this has only strengthened our resolve. Funding constraints, punitive policy shifts and broader antirights currents are reshaping the landscape in ways that demand vigilance and determination. This movement has shown time and again that it is ready for the challenge. We will continue to stand firm, grounded in evidence and guided by empathy, dignity and justice.

HRI's work is possible because of the trust and commitment of partners who believe in a world where health and human rights are non-negotiable. As we build on the momentum of 2025, we plan to strengthen our commitment to social justice and the protection of democratic values, and welcome new partners who can support us in this this urgent moment.

In solidarity,
Catherine Cook
Executive Director

A HARM REDUCTION FUNDING CATASTROPHE

3

The global health landscape in 2025 was defined by profound upheaval, placing the sustainability of harm reduction at its most precarious point in decades.



↘ This crisis was triggered by the United States Government's decision to abruptly halt its bilateral and multilateral aid in January 2025. As the second-largest global donor for harm reduction and the largest contributor to the Global Fund to fight TB, HIV and Malaria, this withdrawal sent shockwaves through the global health and development world. This was compounded by reductions in development assistance from several other donor nations.

↘ HRI's research conducted in 2025 revealed a staggering reality: 92% of advocates and service providers deemed harm reduction to be under active threat in their country, with 62% characterising that threat as "high" or "critical".

↘ HRI has monitored the funding landscape for harm reduction around the world since 2007. We provide advocates and policymakers across the world with credible and relevant harm reduction funding data, which they use to advocate for increased investment and political support. This is essential to ensure that harm reduction is not lost amid competing priorities in global and national health agendas.

↘ **Accountability requires data.**
We monitor data to support advocates and hold governments and donors to account.

These funding cuts have had immediate and grave consequences.

1

The Global Fund, the largest donor for harm reduction, had less funding, meaning countries had to reprioritise budgets, leading to less funding for harm reduction, human rights and advocacy.

2

The Robert Carr Fund, a lifeline for community-led advocacy and civil society networks, faced unprecedented shortfalls and uncertainty.

3

WHO, UNAIDS and UNODC lost capacity and key harm reduction expertise amid restructures and reforms. UNAIDS - key champion of harm reduction and the health and rights of people who use drugs and decriminalisation under existential threat.

4

While health budgets were slashed, many governments continued to prioritise spending vast amounts on punitive drug policies over investing in evidence-based responses like harm reduction.

5

Community-led organisations providing services and advocacy were hardest hit, despite being the backbone of harm reduction.

6

Funding pressures intensified for the sector, including international advocacy organisations like HRI, putting critical functions at risk.

In this environment of austerity, HRI's role as a watchdog has never been more vital. We are the only organisation consistently tracking investment in harm reduction to ensure that governments and donors remain accountable to the communities they have promised to protect.

Throughout 2025, we leveraged every available platform to ensure the funding crisis remained a priority in health and human rights discussions at the international level:





OUR CONFERENCE: A CATALYST FOR CHANGE



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4. **Our Conference: A Catalyst for Change**



For over thirty years, the Harm Reduction International Conference has served as the premier global platform for thought leadership, innovation and advocacy. It is the critical movement infrastructure that platforms the movement and acts as a catalyst for change.

We hosted the Harm Reduction International Conference 2025 (HR25) in Bogotá, Colombia, under the theme “Sowing Change to Harvest Justice”.



1,300+
ATTENDEES

60+
COUNTRIES

80+
SESSIONS

1100+
ABSTRACTS RECEIVED

80+
SCHOLARSHIPS

250+
SPEAKERS



4.1 Agenda Setting for the Global Movement

HR25 set a bold agenda by platforming the voices of drug producers in the plenary and highlighting full spectrum harm reduction. These issues have been critical for our colleagues in the Latin American region. By elevating these to the international level, we helped set the agenda for the global movement: drug policy conversations must move beyond health services to address the entire supply chain.



4.2 Nurturing Networks

Our conference provides a conduit for diverse voices and nascent networks to come together.

1



Youth Leadership

The Networking Zone at HR25 hosted the Youth Caucus, facilitated by the Paradigma Coalition. This provided a dedicated space for the next generation of young advocates to connect and strategise.

2



Ecological Harm Reduction

HR25 saw the official launch of the International Coalition on Drug Policy Reform and Environmental Justice. This ground-breaking paradigm links drug policy with climate mitigation.



The Exhibition: An interactive exhibition gathered over 150 responses from participants designing law through an ecological lens.



Lasting Impact: The conference facilitated the first in-person meeting of Colombian coalition members, leading to the establishment of a funded Colombian hub at HR25



Global Reach: Since its debut at HR25, the coalition's exhibition has toured Salento (Colombia) and São Paulo (Brazil), sparking international interest in solutions beyond traditional report-writing.

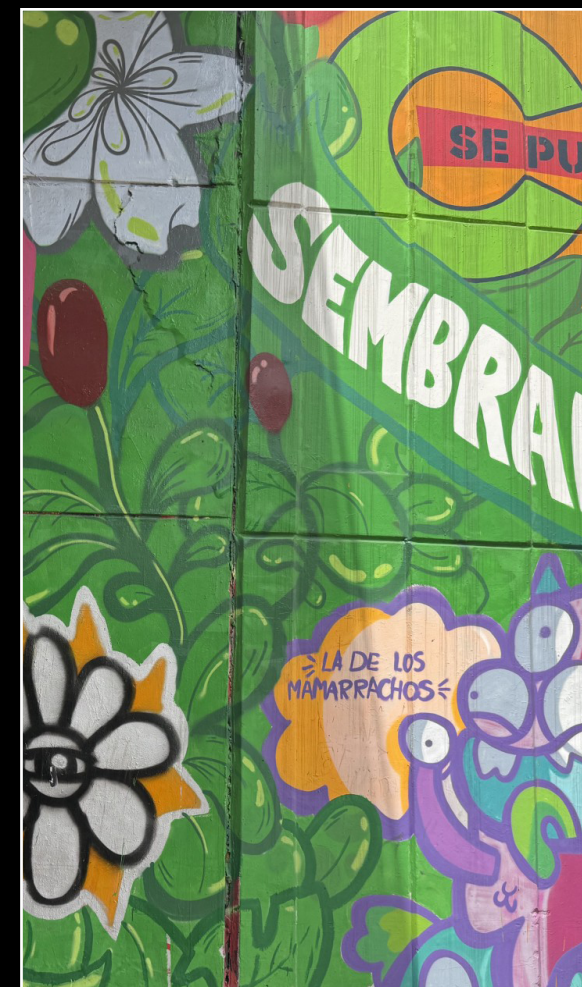
4.3 360-Degree Advocacy: Art, Culture, and Visibility

At HRI, we acknowledge the role of arts and culture in shaping public discourse and in turn, legal and policy change.



1 Public Visibility

We commissioned a local artist to create a striking public mural in Bogotá declaring, “La reducción de daños salva vidas” (Harm reduction saves lives), taking our message directly to the city’s residents.



2 Creative Resistance

Inside the venue, delegates explored the ‘Sartorial Solidarity’ fashion archive and photo exhibits on climate justice. We also hosted an online photography showcase for Juan Manuel Bueno Barrero, highlighting the human faces behind the statistics.



3 Cultural resonance

We collaborated with content creators spanning music and make-up to create digital content about harm reduction and drug policy.



4.4 Media That Meets the Moment

The Harm Reduction International Conference in Bogotá, Colombia achieved the most extensive media coverage in the event's history, ensuring our message reached far beyond the conference walls. In addition to this, we engaged 25 content creators from the Americas in a first-of-its kind project for the harm reduction movement.

Unprecedented press presence:

We hosted nearly 100 media representatives and 30 Public Relations officers from Colombian ministries.

State broadcasting: In a historic first, a media partnership with Radio Televisión Nacional de Colombia (RTVC) Live on National TV for the first time in the history of any harm reduction conference, RTVC live streamed the plenaries and opening/closing ceremonies to audiences across the country, amplifying our message to new corners of the public and political sphere. RTVC also conducted live and recorded interviews with HR25 speakers and delegates onsite for a range of its news and current affairs programmes throughout the week.

Legacy journalists: Supported by Vital Strategies, HRI invited five high-level journalists from outlets including *The Lancet*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, and *The Telegraph*. These journalists have continued to write about a public health-approach to drugs long after our conference ended.

Influencers for social change: We partnered with 25 digital content creators from across the Americas to produce authentic, real-time content. This strategy led to a 423.6% increase in Instagram followers during the conference week. By leveraging micro-influencers (those with under 100K followers), we prioritised trust and engagement over raw reach, reaching a new generation of voters and advocates in three languages.

On-site podcast booth: In a first for the sector, we built a podcast booth to enable creators to interview the rich community of people present at the conference. These stories reached people far away from and long after the conference.

4.5 Legacy

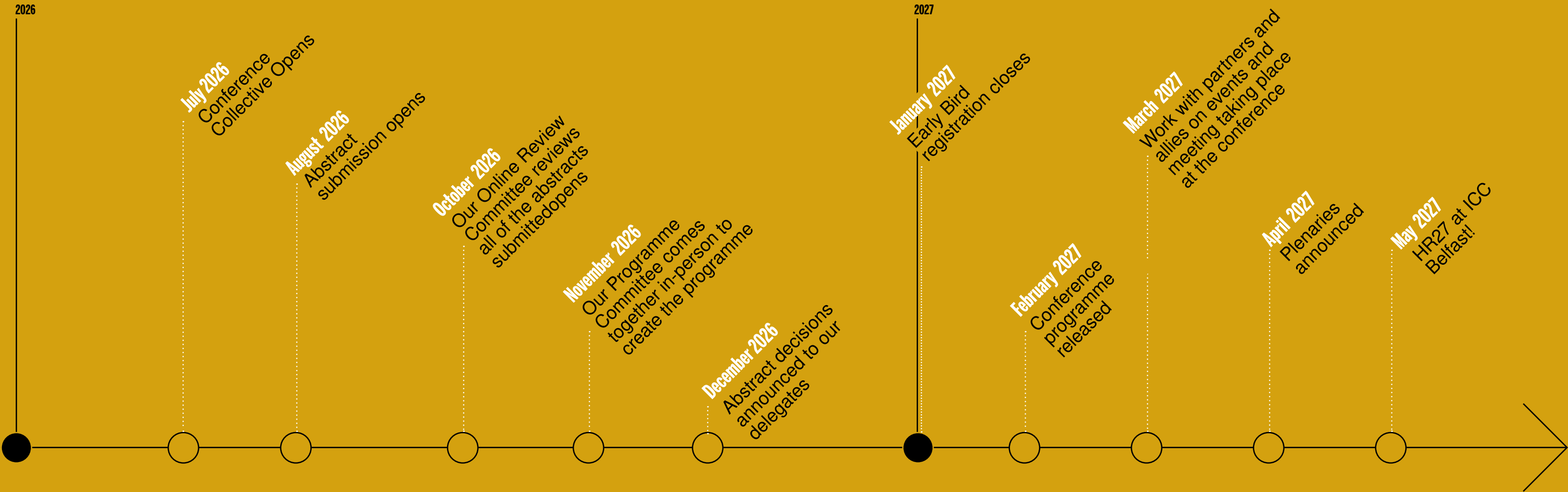
Our Conference Liaison, Marcela Tovar, has since served at the Deputy Minister for Criminal Policy, Director of Drug Policy for the Ministry of Justice and Law in Colombia, and the Colombian Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Vienna. This was a pivotal appointment for the global harm reduction movement, placing a dedicated advocate at the heart of international drug policymaking.





4.6 Roadmap to HR27

As we close the chapter on Bogotá, the momentum from HR25 provides the roadmap for our next gathering. The connections made and the narratives shifted in 2025 will be the foundation upon which we build the Harm Reduction International Conference 2027 (HR27).



AN INTERSECTIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR COMMUNITY, HEALTH AND JUSTICE

5

Our ‘Divest/Invest’ campaign calls governments to divest from punitive response and invest in programmes that support safe and healthy communities, including harm reduction.

↘ Punitive drug laws violate human rights, fuel racial injustice, and accelerate HIV and hepatitis epidemics among the most marginalised - all while wasting public funds on ineffective, harmful policies. Yet governments and donors continue to pour money into punitive drug policies instead of investing in proven solutions that promote community, health and justice. This includes harm reduction as well as other social and community programmes that benefit marginalised people and lead to healthier, safer societies.

↘ HRI has long called for this redirection of funds from punitive drug policy to harm reduction. Because of our expertise in tracking funding, we know what is available for harm reduction versus what is put towards punitive responses such as police and prisons. The latest iteration of this campaign was officially launched in 2023. In 2025, we:

CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

**INVEST
IN JUSTICE**

INVESTINJUSTICE.NET

Published two original reports examining how official development assistance is being used for drug enforcement.

Published 6 case studies of real examples from around the world showing that the Divest/Invest approach works.

Launched a bilingual [website](#) and created resources in multiple languages to make materials accessible to advocates working in different countries and contexts.

Conducted budget advocacy workshops to equip national level advocates.

Partnered with organisations in South Africa, Indonesia, and Kenya to increase domestic support for harm reduction.



Our country partners:

- [Rumah Cemara in Indonesia](#)
- [South African Network of People Who Use Drugs \(SANPUD\)](#)
- [The Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS- KELIN\)](#)

Each of our country partners have pursued different advocacy strategies to build political support for harm reduction funding in their countries. All of them have have achieved some degree of success.

However, this progress is fragile in the face of financial constraints and political turnover.

Partners in each country described HRI’s evidence-based resources and technical support as critical to progress.

KEY CAMPAIGN ACHIEVEMENTS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Social contracting for harm reduction organisations in two provinces of Indonesia.	Increasing provincial funding for proven harm reduction programming in South Africa.
Getting harm reduction enshrined in law in Indonesia.	Securing county-level funding commitments for harm reduction in Kenya.
Influencing Global Fund budget allocations for harm reduction in South Africa.	Efforts to include harm reduction in Kenya’s new Social Health Insurance Fund of Kenya.
Representation for people who use drugs within the South Africa National AIDS Council.	Making harm reduction organisations in Kenya, Indonesia and South Africa more effective at budget advocacy.



Impact at the international level:

↘ HRI's monitoring and consistent sharing of campaign messages has kept harm reduction funding on the agenda, particularly within multilateral spaces.

Global Fund

Funding for needle and syringe programmes increasing by over 50%, from Grant Cycle 6 to Grant Cycle 7. Grant Cycle 7 elevated harm reduction to a 'programme essential', allowed hepatitis responses to be funded outside HIV co-infection programming and disallowed abstinence-focused programming.

UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs

In 2024, the UN CND included harm reduction in a resolution for the first time. This landmark achievement was the direct result of continued evidence-based advocacy from harm reduction advocates globally, while HRI consistently engaged in CND processes with data and evidence.

PEPFAR

Budget data for 2024/2025 showed that PEPFAR's harm reduction funding was set to more than double from 2022, reaching USD 17.5m before US funding cuts were announced.

Funders Concerned about AIDS (FCAA)

reported a 21% increase in philanthropic funds for HIV programmes for people who use drugs between 2022 and 2023, the highest funding level in five years.



Creative campaigning: a gamified experience for social justice

↘ At HR25, HRI broke new ground in how advocacy organisations communicate campaign messages at sector conferences. Rather than a conventional exhibition stand, HRI reimaged its entire booth as an immersive, gamified experience - an approach without precedent in the sector. Visitors were drawn into the Divest/Invest campaign's core arguments not through passive reading, but through play. A custom "Harm Reduction Edition" of Snakes and Ladders made the consequences of drug policy choices visceral and immediate, while a beer pong-style game rewarded community- and health-based responses to drug use with points, and penalised punitive approaches. A touchscreen Drug War Quiz, built on HRI's original research, challenged visitors' assumptions, and a Q&A wall populated with campaign case studies offered bite-sized windows into harm reduction practice across the globe. The result was a genuinely novel model for campaigning at conferences; one that demonstrated how complex policy arguments can be made accessible, engaging, and memorable.



CONNECTING THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

6

Harm Reduction International provides the essential architecture for global harm reduction advocacy. We generate rigorous data and provide tools to advocates which help to bridge the gap between national advocacy and international standards.

This interconnected approach ensures that a victory in a local court or a shift at the national or regional level provides the evidence needed to trigger normative change on the world stage, and vice-versa.



AUSTRALIA

Our advocacy extends beyond UN rooms and into the heart of national parliaments. HRI, alongside civil society partners, contributed to the Australian Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into the global abolition of the death penalty.

Alongside broader advocacy, our contributions successfully framed the death penalty as a tool of drug control. This led to detailed recommendations to the Australian government to develop targeted strategies to promote the abolition of the death penalty for drug offences and prioritise this issue within its diplomatic work at the CND.

MAURITIUS

Our joint submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights resulted in key drug policy issues being included in the List of Issues for Mauritius. These cover the country's transition from punitive drug policies to health- and human rights-based approaches, access to harm reduction services including in prisons, and meaningful participation of people who use drugs and civil society in drug policy governance. The State must formally respond to these issues, keeping harm reduction on the national human rights agenda.

UKRAINE

HRI remains responsive to the most urgent human rights crises. We orchestrated a critical meeting with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) and members of the European Prison Litigation Network (EPLN).

The focus was the illegal transfer of detainees from occupied Ukrainian territories to Russia and the urgent need for release on medical grounds. This intervention empowered EPLN to engage directly with the WGAD and present individual cases, providing a lifeline for those trapped in legal and physical limbo.

ASEAN

Photocredit: AICHR Malaysia



Sustainable change requires consistent, long-term engagement with regional bodies.

In 2024, HRI co-hosted CND side events on the death penalty, creating opportunities for AICHR representatives to speak and engage with the global harm reduction community and contribute to discussions on drug policy and human rights.

This engagement contributed to a broader dialogue on the health and human rights impacts of drug policy in the ASEAN region, including the initiation of AICHR training sessions on these issues.

By co-organising and speaking at these events, HRI is helping to foster a new generation of human rights leadership in Southeast Asia, focused on compassion and evidence over punishment.



OUR FINANCES

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Statement of Financial Position:

↳ Balance sheet as at 31 December 2025

	2025	2024
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	-	-
Total	-	-
Current assets		
Debtors	£49,182	£29,921
Cash at bank and in hand	£304,217	£805,138
Total	£353,399	£835,059
Liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(£48,618)	(£161,821)
Net current assets / (liabilities)	£304,781	£673,238
Total net assets / (liabilities)	£304,781	£673,238
The funds of the charity		
Restricted income funds	£197,737	£224,266
Unrestricted income funds		
Designated funds	£47,532	£93,670
General funds	£59,512	£355,302
Total unrestricted funds	£107,044	£448,972
Total charity funds	£304,781	£673,238

Statement of Financial Activities:

↳ (incorporating an income and expenditure account). For the year ended 31 December 2025

	Unrestricted Funds 2025	Restricted Funds 2025	Total Funds 2025	Total Funds 2024
Income from				
Donations and legacies	£4,594	-	£4,594	£11,873
Charitable activities				
Project work	£84,742	£552,359	£637,101	£990,692
Conferences & support	£610,067	-	£610,067	£252,310
Investments	£2,552	-	£2,552	£2,940
Total income	£701,955	£552,359	£1,254,314	£1,257,815
Expenditure on				
Charitable activities				
Project work	£34	£571,482	£571,516	£688,259
Conference Costs	£706,474	-	£706,474	£246,042
Support Costs	£344,781	-	£344,781	£183,605
Total expenditure	£1,051,289	£571,482	£1,622,771	£1,117,906
Net income/ (expenditure) for the year	(£349,334)	(£19,123)	(£368,457)	£139,909
Transfers between Funds	£7,406	(£7,406)	-	-
Net movement in funds	(£341,928)	(£26,529)	(£368,457)	£139,909
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	£448,972	£224,266	£673,238	£533,329
Total funds carried forward	£107,044	£197,737	£304,781	£673,238

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