



Release International

***The Trustees' Annual Report
and Financial Statements***

For the Year ended 31st December 2020

A Company Limited by Guarantee. Company No. 01506576

Registered Charity No. 280577 and Registered in Scotland No. SCO40456



**RELEASE INTERNATIONAL – THE TRUSTEES’ ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020**

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Trustees’ Annual Report

The Trustees have the pleasure of presenting their Annual Report together with the Financial Statements of the Charity for the year ended 31 December 2020, which are also prepared to meet the requirements of a Directors' Report and Accounts for Companies Act purposes. Release International is a Christian Ministry and will often be referred to in this report as the Ministry.

Message from the Chair



It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to present the Trustees’ Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2020. It has undoubtedly been a challenging year for all of us due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with many people losing loved ones or livelihoods, and others suffering from illness or loneliness, due to separation from their families and friends. Our young people have been unable to attend school and our churches have, in the main, been closed. But what an opportunity this has been to pause, think, pray and to re-evaluate our priorities in life! To count our many blessings and to give thanks for them!

As I wrote last year’s report the first lockdown had just started. We were all adjusting to the ‘new normal’. I reflected then on the fact that however difficult our personal circumstances in the UK appeared to be, they paled into insignificance compared to the daily experience of our Christian brothers and sisters in many parts of the world who are persecuted, imprisoned, tortured or even murdered for their faith. I continue to be inspired by their stories and amazing witness and continue to give thanks to God for the opportunity to play a small role in supporting them.

And what an amazing year 2020 turned out to be, despite the challenges! God has truly been gracious in every sense. In his introduction to this report, Paul, our Chief Executive Officer, details the many ways in which Release International has quickly adapted to changing circumstances, with staff mainly working from home, and increased use of technology to run a comprehensive programme of ‘virtual’ events and meetings. These changes have not only enabled the team to successfully continue our ministry in the UK and Ireland to engage people with their persecuted brothers and sisters worldwide, but to deliver more overseas ministry through our international Partners than was originally envisaged at the start of the year. Thanks to the sacrificial generosity of our many supporters, our financial position is very healthy, going against national trends which have seen many charities lose financial support. We praise God for His provision!

The Board of Trustees has continued to meet ‘virtually’ and has seen some changes in composition in recent months. I take this opportunity to welcome David Bentley and Sue Harrison to the Board, and to thank Dave Landrum, who has resigned from his position, for his contribution and service.

In conclusion I would like to pay tribute to the continuing witness, service and commitment of the Release International team of staff members and volunteers, who have worked tirelessly with our Partners around the world to ensure that the voice of persecuted Christians is heard more widely. I also give glory and thanks to God for our huge network of supporters, whose faithful prayer, time and financial support makes this work possible.

David Armond CBE QPM

Chair of Trustees

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Chief Executive’s Introduction



2020 – what a year! As a Christian Ministry which deals with the unexpected around the world on a regular basis, we were well placed to respond to the news of an emerging global pandemic. Even before the UK Government began to hint at the need for a national lockdown, we were preparing for it, and by the end of the first lockdown’s initial day, our teams were set up to be working from home. We did have a small team going into the office twice a week to manage office-based elements but, apart from that, thanks to the work we had already done as part of a multiyear digital strategy, all our operations were almost immediately being delivered from home.

Unknown to us, that situation would continue for a whole year and being a deeply relational Ministry we were initially concerned our relationships here and overseas would begin to suffer. That has not been the case, in fact it has been interesting to observe how the various strategies we implemented to maintain relationships have proven successful. It has been remarkable to note that even people who are ‘new’ to us, who we have still not yet met in person, really have become part of the Release International ‘family’. However, we do look forward to enjoying fellowship with them in ‘three-dimensions’ rather than seeing them only on flat screens!

The Ministry’s Leadership Team, accountable to the Board of Trustees, has managed the changing nature of the COVID-19 restrictions very well since they began, keeping all team members safe and motivated to go on fulfilling our Calling, *to Love and Serve persecuted Christians*, without any break or slow-down in operational activity. Indeed, as can be seen through the detail of this Report, we have delivered more overseas ministry through our International Partners than we envisaged at the start of 2020, and our ministry in the UK and Ireland to engage people with their persecuted brothers and sisters has successfully been brought mainly ‘online’. Though nationally some charities have lost financial support, our supporters have yet again gone above-and-beyond in giving sacrificially to express their love and support for their persecuted brothers and sisters worldwide. The generosity of our supporters reveals God’s heart of compassion for our persecuted family and that he will meet all their needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19 NIV).

Repeatedly over the years, our International Partners have commented on how much they value the ways in which Release International ‘journeys’ with them prayerfully, pastorally and practically. Our greatest desire is to continue to be obedient to our Calling, constantly seeking to ‘see what the Father is doing’ (cf. John 5:19), and a huge part of that is being able to draw alongside our Partners as they draw alongside those being persecuted for Jesus’ sake. Though we managed very well to frequently ‘be with them’ digitally during 2020 our hope is that in 2021 we will be able to resume international travel to physically be with them in person, to listen to them, hear their voice, discern their needs, provide the ‘tools’ they need to go on living for the Lord right where they are, and to raise their voice effectively in the Church here at home. Finally, whatever comes our way in 2021, as instructed by the Lord in Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 3, we are as determined as ever to continue to remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since we also are in the body. (ESV)

Paul Robinson

Chief Executive

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Our Charitable Objects

- The advancement of the Christian faith;
- The relief of poverty amongst peoples worldwide who are suffering persecution or marginalisation for their Christian beliefs;
- The furtherance of the charitable work of the Ministry by the advancement of such other charitable purposes as the Trustees shall from time to time decide.

The Objects are to be carried out as a proclamation of the beliefs set out in our Statement of Faith which is available on our website releaseinternational.org.

About Release International

Release International was founded in 1968 as the Christian Mission to the Communist World, inspired by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, who was imprisoned and tortured by Romanian secret police under brutal Communism. Following the demise of Communism in Eastern Europe and the increase in the persecution of Christians elsewhere in the world, the Ministry broadened its activities and changed its name to Release International.

Our Calling and Mission

There was an exciting project in 2019 to revisit and define our Calling and Mission and the taxonomy of persecution, which now defines our Ministry.

Our Calling

Through the ministry of Pastor Richard Wurmbrand and Hebrews 13:3 we have been called by God to **Love and Serve Persecuted Christians**.

Our Mission (five Strategic Purposes)

Our Mission is to love and serve persecuted Christians by:

- Raising their **VOICE**.
- Giving them the **‘TOOLS’** they need to live for Jesus Christ.
- Calling UK Christians into **FELLOWSHIP** with them.
- Learning lessons of Christian **DISCIPLESHIP** with them.
- Maintaining Christian **STEWARDSHIP** to honour them.

Our Taxonomy of Persecution

Around the world, we prayerfully, pastorally, and practically help:

- Families of Christian martyrs
- Prisoners of faith and their families
- Christians suffering oppression and violence
- Christians forced to flee

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How our Activities Deliver Public Benefit

The Trustees confirm they have complied with the duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission. Release International seeks to prayerfully, pastorally, and practically help those who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ, and to help Christians, churches, faith-based organisations and the general public understand and engage with the reality of persecution. Those who benefit from our activities are Christians globally whose religious freedoms have been curtailed or abused, and any member of the public wanting to be educated about the circumstances of persecuted Christians and/or become involved in supporting and helping them. Our approach stems from our Charitable Objects (page 5). The Trustees consider Release International’s, Calling, Mission, and Operational Strategies fulfil the duty and are confident the Charitable Company’s activities are delivering public benefit.

Our Achievements and Performance

Strategic Purpose: Raising their VOICE.

Our primary mission is to raise the VOICE of persecuted Christians with Christians in the UK and through evangelical Christian churches. In 2020 we had the first lockdown of the UK in living memory, which closed churches, workplaces and stopped travel. This had a major impact on our ability to share our message in traditional ways, through live events in church settings. However, we were very fast at recalibrating our engagement plans using online and digital channels which proved very successful. We praise God for his amazing blessings in 2020.

We worked hard to focus on our prayer ministry in 2020, as this is our overarching call to the UK church to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters. We continued with our prayer alerts by email, updating supporters on critical news from our Partners working in-country around the world and giving clear prayer points to share with their fellowships or home groups. We also became a lead ministry with Christians in Parliament for their online National Prayer Breakfast in June 2020 which attracted over 3,000 Christians on YouTube. In 2020 we expanded our Prayers for Partners weekly email and continued to deliver children’s prayer resources.

As we were in a new world of lockdowns, our regional Development Managers’ team worked to develop a new series of digital resources for churches in April 2020 entitled ‘Lockdown Church’. This campaign was launched with new short films from Partners, new prayers, fundraising ideas raising funds for prison ministry and Bible studies. This was our main campaign in 2020 and we looked to bring our supporters alongside our persecuted brothers and sisters by making the connection with restrictions here, and restrictions for practicing your faith overseas.

Our VOICE magazine continued to be our flagship engagement tool which provided strong content quarterly to our supporters. We launched our annual Persecution Trends 2020 Report in December which attracted much media attention and interest.

Our important ministry with many Christians conferences and festivals had to be cancelled during 2020. However, we were invited to take part in many online versions of conferences, including making a film for the Keswick Convention, and we translated our ‘Great Outdoor Church Service’ church events into a fantastic online campaign on social media, renamed ‘All out for God’.

We worked with our some of our related Ministries in the [International Christian Association](#) on our first global petition “Where’s Raymond?” Pastor Raymond Koh disappeared four years ago and was

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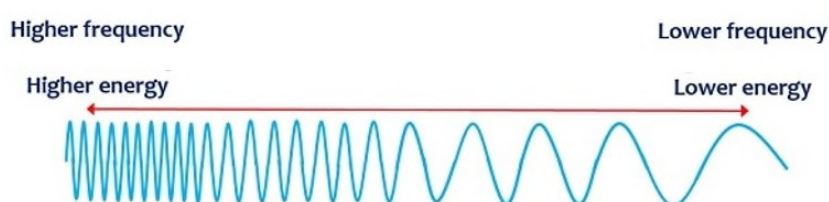
captured on CCTV being kidnapped with military precision. It is alleged that Malaysian security forces were involved. The petition opened in the summer 2020 and is still open. It currently has around 75,000 signatures from 185 countries. (www.releaseraymond.com.)

Key to our work in raising the VOICE of persecuted Christians is our social media, film, web and podcasting output, which continued to be developed in 2020. We were unable to go to meet Partners overseas due to lockdown, so we moved interviews online to generate content for our campaigns and fundraising. Our press and media work with Christian radio and TV also expanded significantly in 2020. We were particularly thankful to Revelation TV who showcased our Ministry on their main broadcast programming on Christmas Day. We also thank Premier Christian Radio who partnered with Release International over the Summer to raise the VOICE of persecuted Christians suffering severe and increased persecution due to COVID-19 and lockdown.

Strategic Purpose: Giving them the ‘TOOLS’ they need to live for Jesus Christ

Release International delivers the international aspects of its ministry by working in-country through local churches or organisations, with whom we have established formal partnerships. Where possible these Partners are indigenous to the area in which our Ministry operates, but sometimes the work is carried out through Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) where they are well connected with the local church. These partnerships form the main connections between Release International and persecuted Christian communities. The very nature of this work makes it difficult to report on it without endangering those being served. However, we can share some stories that demonstrate what we’ve been doing to benefit persecuted Christians overseas.

History has shown that persecution comes and goes around the world. There are a variety of different types of persecutors who have varied reasons for persecuting. No matter who, when or where, the intensity of persecution in the Christian life could be likened to the radio frequency spectrum (see diagram below); at one end, Christians face a high frequency of terrible persecution, at the other occurrences are rare and Christians pay little or no cost for following Christ.



Our international work is focused on the high frequency end of the persecution spectrum. Our own Taxonomy of Persecution is used to ensure the Ministry remains in the right place for the foreseeable future. From the elements of the Taxonomy come four clear areas of ministry: Families of Christian martyrs; Prisoners of faith and their families; Christians suffering oppression and violence, and Christians forced to flee. Having ministered to and with Christians at this high end of the persecution spectrum, Release International is able to continue presenting the first-person VOICE of persecution to those at the lower end of the spectrum, with the hope and prayer that they will become engaged with those suffering and be better prepared when it becomes their turn! (2 Tim 3:12)

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The stories below demonstrate current examples from each element of the Taxonomy.

Families of Christian martyrs

Christians in north east Nigeria have suffered appalling levels of violence for many years. Many have suffered martyrdom because of their faith in Christ. One of Release International’s Partners provides trauma counselling to help relatives come to terms with their loss. One attendee wrote, *“During the art exercise, I drew a woman which signifies my cousin named Jenifer who gave birth one year ago. She went out at about 6pm to a friend’s house just close to her matrimonial home and on her way coming back home, she was attacked by armed Fulani men who killed her and cut her body into several parts but spared her few months [old] child who cried all night. I received a call at about 4am, where I was informed that a dead body had been found with a child. On arriving the scene, I identified my cousin’s corpse and immediately took the baby who had fainted to the hospital. Another brother of mine was killed and beheaded on the same day, on that same road. Today, if I see the baby and remember how the mother left, it burdens my heart. Thank God for sparing the life of the baby”*.

Prisoners of faith and their families

Christians in Pakistan are vulnerable to false charges of blasphemy. Release International’s Partners in Pakistan provide pastoral care, advice and practical support to those who find themselves caught up in this situation. One such case is that of Pervaiz Masih, who with his wife and three children, had been suffering in this way for five years. Eventually he was released due to the lack of evidence against him but after his release his life was in even more in danger because of Islamic extremists. His wife was also arrested, but not held in custody, as a part of the case and suffered a brutal beating from the police which required medical attention. After Pervaiz’s release he was not able to find work. Our Prison Ministry Partners looked after the basic needs of the family and offered ongoing fellowship and counselling. This continued from July 2019 and into 2020, when the family was relocated to secure accommodation at a new location. Happily, this family is now once again able to lead a normal, Christian life. Our Partners still remain in regular contact with the family to make sure they are doing well in their new location, they report, *“He is so grateful for the help and compassion the family has received”*.

Christians suffering oppression and violence

Life for Christians in China is getting harder according to reports from our Partners. Some non-registered churches have been raided and closed. Increasing numbers of registered churches have had CCTV cameras installed in their church building and posters proclaiming communist ideals and beliefs. Civil servants, teachers, lecturers and other professionals have been required to study ‘Xi Jinping Thought’ and sign agreement with it. Teachers, both Chinese and foreign, have been warned not to speak about religion in classes, in school and not even outside of the school or university setting. It seems that students are asked to report on any undesirable words and behaviour. Students are asked if they have religious affiliations and if so warned that this could harm their grades and possible university places or job prospects. Our Partner writes, *“The government under Xi Jinping is increasing its ‘clean up’ of anything that does not advance the government’s communist agenda. They appear to believe that by systematic opposition they can achieve this. They have bought freedom from censure around the world due to many countries trading with China and regarding this trade as essential to their own economy. Continue to inform and encourage more prayer around the world. Continue to support individuals and families working in China”*.

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Christians forced to flee

Despite reports of ISIS being defeated in the Middle East, our Partners in Iraq continue to struggle with the problem of Christians in flight because of their faith. During 2020, they reported many had been persecuted. Syrian Christians have become refugees; between 600-1000 families and the number is still rising. There are also displaced Iraqi Christian refugees, many report a serious lack of trust in political developments, fearing recent history will repeat itself again. Many have been waiting now for years to be able to emigrate to a more stable environment. In the meantime, our Partner continues to provide support in the form of food, housing, basic education and vocational training, and asks us to pray for safety and protection for their team working in the field, for more funding so they can continue helping persecuted Christian refugees and reach out with the Word of God to those around them.

Strategic Purpose: Calling UK Christians into FELLOWSHIP with them

This Strategic Purpose is integrated into the activities of raising their VOICE, and so has not been reported separately on the Statement of Financial Activities (page 25).

Another critical part of the Mission of Release International is to bring our friends and supporters into FELLOWSHIP with persecuted Christians worldwide. Due to lockdown in 2020 this was very challenging to us. Much of our work building fellowship, is focused on ‘live’ ‘face to face’ events in churches or in homes. We particularly had been developing our relational ministry with supporters, by encouraging them to work in their church communities to raise the VOICE of persecuted Christians. All of this was moved online. We did encourage supporters to use Zoom and social media to stay connected.

One success during the lockdown was to expand our publishing outputs and increase our list of testimonies of persecuted Christians for our supporters. In April 2020 we launched the new book by our dear friend Petr Jasek, Ambassador for the International Christian Association. We held an online speaker event with him which was very well attended. We also stocked ‘Free at Last’ by Asia Bibi which was very popular with supporters.

In November we worked on the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, our annual campaign in churches. However, again because of lockdown, we developed an online live event on YouTube which attracted over 1700 Christians. We produced a new film about persecution in India from interviews and previous visits, which was very well received.

Our Release Women team continued to work hard during 2020 and moved fundraising events and meetings online. One very creative response to lockdown was to take our ‘Esther Experience’ live event, and put that online, which proved very successful. Our youth ministry Release Potential also moved live events online.

Strategic Purpose: Learning lessons of Christian DISCIPLESHIP with them

This Strategic Purpose is integrated into the activities of raising their VOICE, and so has not been reported separately on the Statement of Financial Activities (page 25).

Through many of our outputs we increase knowledge of the Biblical perspective on persecution which is critical to an understanding of our Ministry and personal discipleship. At the end of 2020 we finalised a new Bible Study Resource – ‘All for Jesus’ which is a 5-week self-study or small group resource written by our resident author Kenneth Harrod.

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Strategic Purpose: Maintaining Christian STEWARDSHIP to honour them

This Strategic Purpose is integrated into all the activities, and so it is not reported separately on the Statement of Financial Activities (page 25).

We continue to put a great emphasis on a relational approach to our Ministry. Throughout the pandemic we have mainly been working from home. We have sought to care for our staff by risk assessing their home working environments, providing relevant training to our line-managers and offering mental health tips and training. We organised two online staff days with worship, devotional, and training elements. We also hold regular online staff meetings, devotions and opportunities to socialise together.

Due to the investment in laptops and online platforms since 2018 we were able to move quickly and efficiently transition to mainly working from home. From a technology perspective, we continue to strive towards being digital and cloud-based. There has been a small team that has provided cover in the office throughout 2020 to ensure that essential tasks have been maintained.

Volunteers

Volunteering continues to be a significant priority for Release International. Despite the restrictions in 2020 we have continued to actively engage with our volunteers. This proactive approach has seen an increase in volunteers from 197 in 2019 to 218 in 2020 with 34 new volunteers (2019:18). We held our first annual volunteering conference online, which attracted over 120 participants.

We continue the recruitment of specialist volunteers by engaging the following volunteering roles: Church Research and Engagement Volunteer, Project Management Volunteer, Web Analyst Volunteer and Graphic Designer Volunteer. We would like to thank all our volunteers, including Church Representatives, Volunteer Speakers, Events Volunteers and Fundraising Volunteers for their dedicated and loyal service to the Ministry. We also particularly thank our network volunteers, for Release Women, Release Potential (youth ministry aimed at 18-30s) and Prisoners of Faith ministries for their continued loyal support, prayers and giving of their time.

Fundraising

Our engagement and fundraising plans are approved by Trustees and monitored by the Leadership Team. Most of our income is generated through charitable donations we receive from individuals, churches, trusts and foundations (note 3, page 30). In addition, we work in partnership with several International Christian Association (ICA) Ministries who contribute to our international project work.

Our fundraising activities are conducted by our staff team, drawing on the expertise of external fundraising advisors for selected campaigns. We do not contract out fundraising to third parties. We maintain oversight of all third-party suppliers and have written agreements where necessary with them under the Data Protection Act 2018.

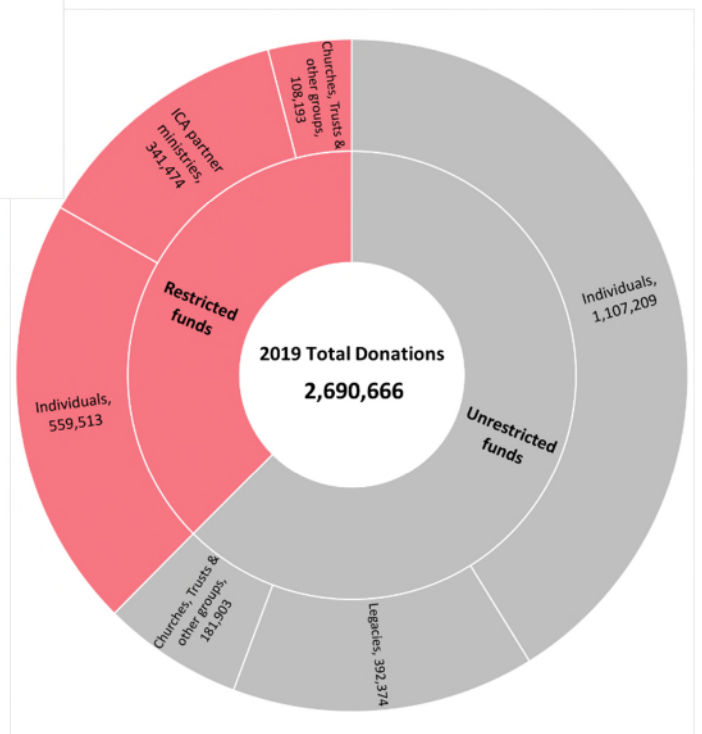
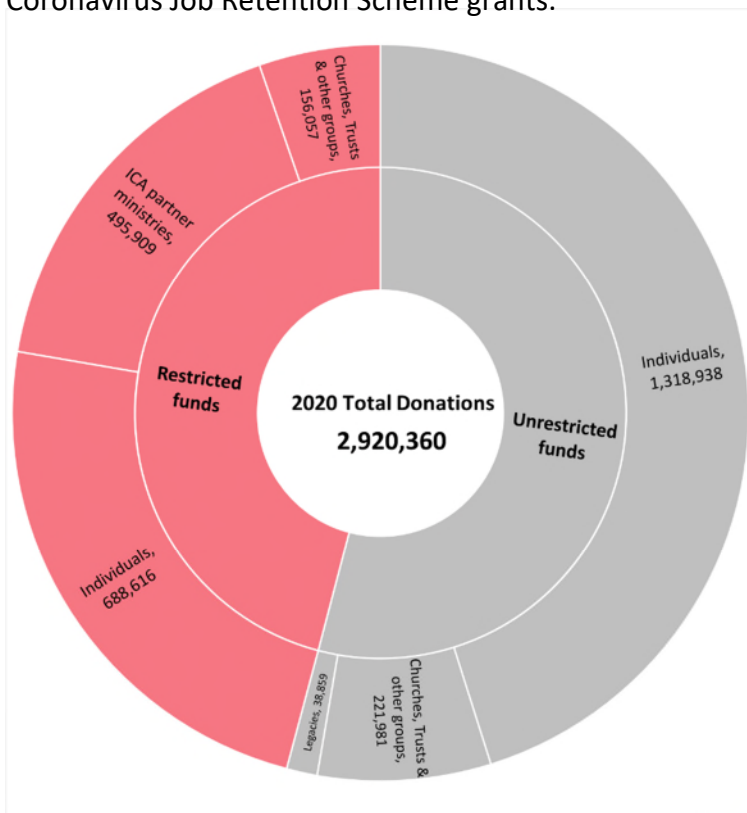
We are committed to the highest standards in fundraising practice. We are regulated by the Fundraising Regulator and abide by the Fundraising Code of Practice which includes guidelines on how to fundraise with people in vulnerable circumstances. In 2020 we handled eight fundraising complaints (2019: 9) through our Supporters’ Complaints Procedure which were all resolved. We have a fundraising policy which gives a clear commitment to protect supporters from unreasonably persistent or obtrusive fundraising practice. We do not undertake donor profiling or sell data to third parties at any time.

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Financial Review Year ended 31st December 2020

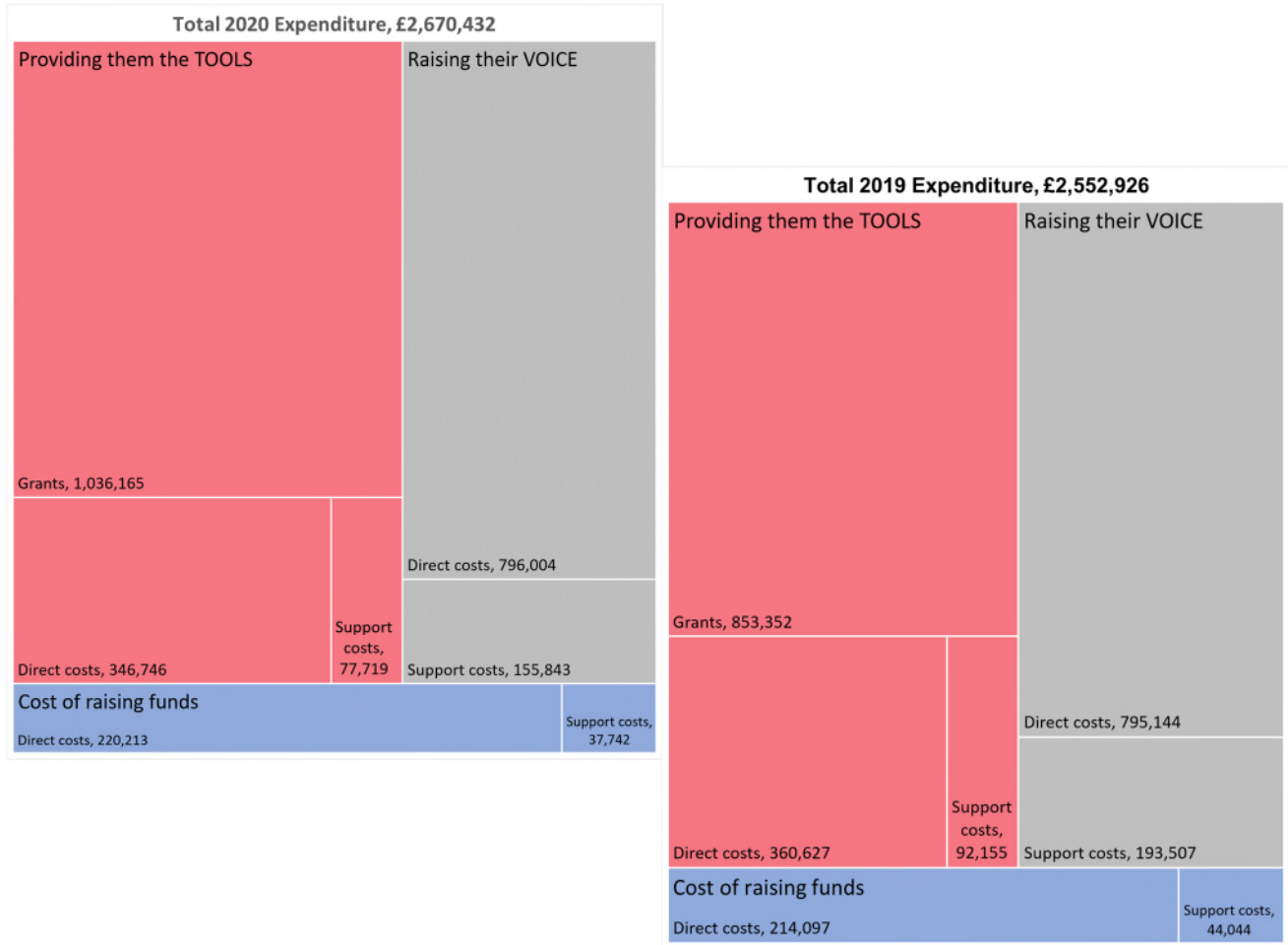
2020 has been a good year financially for the Ministry. Our appeal in May 2020 at the height of the pandemic was our most successful appeal for many years raising over £100k. We thank God for his provision through our many faithful supporters. The Trustees express their gratitude for their continuing generosity.

The diagrams below show the different sources of income. Total income increased by 9% to £2,978k (2019: £2,726k). Legacy income was particularly high in 2019, when legacies are excluded, income increased by 26% to £2,939k (2019: £2,333k). Unrestricted and restricted donations from individuals, churches and trusts increased by 19% and 33% respectively (note 3, page 30). Restricted donations from ICA Partner Ministries (page 15) increased by 47%. Other income includes £25k of Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme grants.



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The diagrams below show the expenditure for the year. Total expenditure increased by 5% to £2,670k (2019: £2,553k). While many activities were curtailed due to the pandemic the expenditure on grants to Partners increased by 21% to £1,036k (2019: £853k). Staff costs increased by 4% to £979k (2019: £938k). This includes a pay increase of 2%, an increase in pension contributions of 1% and an increase in the holiday pay accrual (note 8, page 32). The Board have agreed a 1.5% pay increase and a further 1% increase in pension contributions from 1st January 2021.



Restricted Funds at the year-end were £725k (2019: £542k), an increase of £183k. Restricted donations were high at the end of the year, £196k being received in December 2020. It should be noted that Release International’s overseas projects funds relate to a broad range of international projects, some of which are longer term, multi-year projects. Release International’s policy is to spend balances held in restricted funds as soon as is practicable once all the grant conditions have been met.

Grants Policy

A significant proportion of the overseas work of the Ministry is carried out through agencies local to areas of persecution that are usually indigenous. Grants are made for specific named purposes to agencies that share our objectives. Receipts and reports of the work carried out are obtained. Staff members usually carry out visits to evaluate potential projects, monitor existing projects, and assess the outcome of completed projects on a sample basis. COVID-19 meant that for most of 2020 evaluation and monitoring was online rather than in person.

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Reserves Policy

After considering the Charity Commission’s guidance CC19 (Charities and Reserves) the Trustees have agreed to maintain a ‘range’ as the basis for the level of General funds, which are ‘free reserves’. At the Board meeting in September 2020, it was agreed to maintain this range at £350k to £450k. This would allow the Ministry to keep operating if donations from individuals and churches dropped by 10 -15% from current levels and income from legacies and ICA partners, which are more unpredictable, dropped one third.

The Trustees agreed at the June 2020 Board meeting to designate £200k as a Grant Response Fund to allow Release International to be more agile and give grants to overseas partners, usually funded by restricted gifts in anticipation of funds being received later in the year.

The total General reserves at 31st December 2020 amounted to £726,383 of which £30,582 represented fixed assets, leaving £695,801 of free reserves, which is 55% above target. The Trustees have agreed a deficit budget for 2021 of £160k to continue restructuring the Ministry to meet our revised strategic purposes and a further £150k is planned to be spent from reserves on future property costs. This expenditure will reduce free reserves to £386k which is within target. Trustees deemed this to be a good position and a welcome provision.

Investment Policy

Income is largely received through voluntary donations and cannot be guaranteed; the Ministry has no permanent endowment. The only funds that are not expendable within 12 months of receipt are those held for reserves or money associated with international projects that remain active beyond the year end. The Board has considered this position and seeks to place funds in savings accounts to achieve a balance between accessibility and higher returns. Funds may be invested in accounts with up to 12 months’ notice, but it is not considered prudent at this time to invest income for the longer term. The funds are now spread across five institutions, Barclays, CAF Bank, Charity Bank, Nationwide Building Society and Epworth Investment.

Risk Management

The Board recognises that avoiding and mitigating risk is better than simply being covered by insurance. Release International operates a risk management strategy which identifies generic risks which are reviewed annually each September and from these, dynamic or current risks are assessed and reported each quarter together with strategies to mitigate those risks. This approach has proved helpful in focusing attention on areas which require additional monitoring or action.

A major risk to the Ministry is a significant drop off in income. The fact that our income sources are spread over many individuals and churches mitigates the likelihood of a sudden dramatic change, but we monitor this risk closely. Accordingly, our financial and data systems assess income each month to identify any significant variation and to determine if specific action is required.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not been as significant a risk as was anticipated last year. The leadership/management team have worked hard throughout the year to maintain staff morale and relationships through the prolonged period of working from home.

As for all organisations there is significant risk of a malicious attack on our IT systems. This is mitigated by security measures including proactive testing. Staff are regularly trained and reminded about IT security, particularly phishing attacks.

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Staff have not been travelling internationally for most of 2020, but due to the nature of the Ministry there is a risk when travelling to visit Partners in contexts where they are being persecuted. This is mitigated by good communication with Partners to assess the current situation, extensive pre-trip briefing and security training.

Structure, Governance and Management

Release International is a Christian Ministry which is a registered Charity, regulated by the Charity Commission for England and Wales and also registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. It is constituted as a Company limited by guarantee. The Company operates under its Articles of Association which were updated in June 2017. Release International was founded in 1968 as the Christian Mission to the Communist World, legally changing its name to Release International in June 2017.

The Board of Trustees normally meets four times each year and administers the Charity through its four committees: International Development, UK Engagement, Finance & Governance and Resources. The Leadership Team holds executive responsibility for implementing the policies and strategies approved by the Board and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), appointed by the Board, manages the day to day operations of the Company.

The Board has an established process for identifying and interviewing potential new Trustees. Vacancies are identified where there are gaps in experience and skills. All prospective Trustees will be practising Christians who uphold Release International’s Statement of Faith, Ethos Statement, and Trustee Code of Conduct. Nominations arising from this process are considered by the Board as a whole and they may subsequently be invited to join the Board. Trustees serve no minimum or maximum terms of service but retire by rotation with the opportunity to stand for re-election.

New Trustees go through an induction and training process to familiarise them with Release International, the persecution sector and their responsibilities as Trustees and Directors under Charity and Company law. New Trustees are referred to the Charity Commission’s guide *The Essential Trustee (CC3)* and they also meet with the Leadership Team and other Trustees. Each year the Chair and the CEO plan areas for trustee training which, with the Board’s agreement, are covered in conjunction with other meetings.

Pay for key management personnel

The key management personnel in charge of directing and running the operations of the Charity comprise the Trustees and Leadership Team as set out on page 16. All Trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration from the charitable Company as Trustees (Rev Dr B. Asmelash is paid a retainer as a consultant on Eritrea see note 22, page 39). Expenses reimbursed to Trustees are disclosed in note 8, page 32.

Salaries for all staff, including key management staff, are determined on appointment to post in line with Release International’s agreed 5-level salary banding, and in line with the requirements and responsibilities of the role. All roles are reviewed annually through the appraisal system to ensure that any significant changes which may affect remuneration are addressed. The Trustees will periodically carry out a review of all salaries across the Ministry through a benchmarking exercise to ensure that they remain reasonable and competitive.

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International Associations

Release International is a member of the International Christian Association (ICA). The purpose of the ICA is to provide a relational link between Christian Ministries throughout the world whose foundations were inspired by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand. In doing so member Ministries seek to maintain a focus upon the Biblical mandate of Hebrews 13:3, *‘Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow-prisoners, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering’* (NIV).

As a member of the ICA, Release International co-operates in a range of international projects and shares information and resources with other members. An Annual General Meeting is the decision-making forum for ICA business. Release International is a voting delegate.

Through ICA membership, Release International is directly able to support many more persecuted Christians throughout the world than it could in isolation. Currently Release International’s CEO, Paul Robinson, is an elected member of the Executive Committee of the ICA, which helps co-ordinate the activity of the ICA Ministries.

Release International is also a member of The Religious Liberty Commission, The Evangelical Alliance, Middle East Concern, The Religious Liberties Partnership, and Global Connections.

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL – THE TRUSTEES’ ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Company Information

The Directors set out below are also the Trustees of the Charity and members of the Company.

Board of Trustees

David Armond CBE QPM Chair of Trustees
Rev Dr Berhane Asmelash
David Bentley (appointed 26 June 2020)
Susan Harrison (appointed 27 September 2020)
Dr Dave Landrum (resigned 19 November 2020)

Mary Print

Sarah Shearer FCA

Andy Wayland

Company Secretary

Imogen Cole

Leadership Team

Chief Executive Officer Paul Robinson
Director of International Ministries Chris Badley
Director of Engagement UK & Ireland Laura Hayes
Director of Finance Imogen (Jenny) Cole
Director of Personnel Lynnette Feist

Council of Reference

Dr Sara Afshari Rev Prof Philip McCormack MBE
Lindsay Benn Rt Rev Michael Nazir-Ali
Rt Rev Wallace Benn Rev Dr Francis (Frog) Orr-Ewing
Anna Bishop Dr Amy Orr-Ewing
Martin Goldsmith Dr Ben Pugh

Registered Office

Betchworth House, 57-65 Station Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 1DL

For security reasons, as we work with many people under threat of intimidation, violence or detention, our registered address is our auditor’s Surrey office.

Auditors Moore Kingston Smith LLP, Devonshire House, 60 Goswell Road, London, EC1M 7AD

Bankers CAF Bank Limited, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4JQ

Solicitors Wellers, Tenison House, 45 Tweedy Road, Bromley, BR1 3NF
Edward Connor, 10 The Point, Market Harborough, LE16 7QU

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL – THE TRUSTEES’ ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Plans for the Future

2021 is likely to continue to be a challenging year for the ministry of Release International but we trust in God who is always faithful, and we look forward to delivering the outcomes of our completed strategic review, part of which will be to continue investing in being a Christian Ministry that is digital and cloud-first in a way that engages supporters and volunteers and enhances the help we can offer to overseas Partners.

Throughout the whole of the COVID-19 pandemic we have worked dynamically and efficiently to go on loving and serving our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world while, at the same time, raising their VOICE here in the UK and Ireland.

We are cautiously optimistic that there is now a Lockdown Roadmap in place, issued by HM Government in March 2021, which indicates that it believes that lockdown may finally be fully and irreversibly lifted on 21st June 2021. There will be staged returns to social contact over a period of around four months. Nonetheless we will continue with regular COVID-19 management meetings to make sure we are responsive to any change to COVID-19 restrictions, dynamically bringing change to our operations to continue fulfilling our Calling and Mission.

Internationally, the Ministry proved to be well prepared for the changing circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. We stated this time last year that for the overwhelming majority of our Partners and their projects, it would be a matter of ‘business as usual’; this proved to be the case in 2020 and will continue as such in 2021. The primary role of our Partners is to extend the kingdom of God and His loving care in their communities, whatever the situation they may face. We will continue to support them by listening to their VOICE and providing the ministry ‘TOOLS’ that they ask for.

The increased use of video technology to communicate globally provides us with an excellent facility that will be built upon in the post-lockdown world. Our ability to be able to ‘visit’ our Partners across the internet is valuable, and we will continue to make good use of that. However, international travel will resume at the earliest opportunity. Release International is a relationship-based Ministry and it will be vital that there are opportunities to develop and maintain relationships in person with our Partners around the world. This is the core and underpinning reason for our travel and why much of our work is conducted in person.

There are other reasons why travel is an important aspect of this Ministry and a return to it will begin as soon as possible, for example: it enables us to be an authoritative source for what is happening around the world, speaking out in a timely manner and to produce media which helps to inform and educate people in the UK about matters relating to the persecution of Christians; it is a crucial part of exercising the due diligence and good governance we need to monitor the projects we support. We also want to create opportunities to enhance the Ministries of our Partners through visits, which they testify are beneficial to them and which encourage them in their work.

Many Christians in today’s world are still being forced to flee from their homes, especially in Africa and the Middle East. There are many Christians who have been forced into hiding because of their faith and unable to move because of the pandemic; we pray that in 2021 they will be able to find new places to live out their lives for Christ and we will continue to work to that end as well.

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL – THE TRUSTEES’ ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

The situation is further complicated for Eritrean Christians by the war raging in Tigray, the border region between their country and Ethiopia. Sadly, large numbers of Christians who had fled to Ethiopia to become refugees have had to flee further into Ethiopia in the first months of 2021. Release International is supporting these believers by sending funds to provide emergency aid, which has proved to be timely and is being well received. Our Partners in Ethiopia write, *‘May the grace of the Lord multiply in you. We want to thank you for all your support for our people...’*.

Other Christians face imprisonment which remains an ongoing trend in Eritrea and other places such as Iran and North Korea. We pray on for imprisoned believers and their families, many who remain in need of our practical support.

Nigerian Christians are facing more violence and martyrdom at the hands of Boko Haram and Fulani militants. Sadly this pattern is being replicated in other parts of Africa too. Release International will be expanding its work in this area to help survivors of this deeply concerning situation.

Release International remains committed to developing the bonds of fellowship we have enjoyed with our persecuted brothers and sisters for so long, delivering over 50 projects in more than 30 countries. As persecution in these countries continues, we will go on being creative and flexible to ensure we provide the fellowship and ‘TOOLS’ persecuted believers ask for and need, with or without the outbreaks of pandemics!

The lockdown has seen the UK Engagement team reworking all their annual plans by developing creative online and digital versions of key events and communications campaigns. We have introduced a new and updated campaign *Lockdown Church 2021*, which picks up on the success of our first Lockdown Church campaign which ran in 2020. For 2021 we are focusing on the oppression of Christians around the world in Lockdown. Release International’s original Lockdown Church resources were developed to pick up on the connection between our new experience of facing restrictions and the common everyday experience of persecuted Christians. It was an opportunity for us to both identify and learn from them. In that regard nothing has changed. In fact, in our prolonged experience of lockdown we have an even greater opportunity to identify especially with those of our brothers and sisters who bear the weight of sustained, systemic restrictions because of their faith. Together with them we are learning more about endurance, steadfastness, and hope.

We will also prioritise our prayer resources for 2021 and are embedding prayer into all our campaigns more intentionally. This is because of the importance of prayer to life lived out as a Christian calling. We have always developed prayer resources, but in 2021 we have identified prayer ministry as the top priority. We are looking forward to our *‘Behold the Lamb of God’* worship and communion event on Maundy Thursday, 1st April, as we prepare to celebrate Easter. We will be inviting our supporters to join us as well as volunteers and international project Partners. We will continue to ensure that our engagement plans include calls to prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters worldwide. In May, we will be holding our second annual online event *All Out for God* which we successfully launched in 2021.

In June we are planning another worship event which is now into its third year, The Day of the Christian Martyr 2021 on 29th June. This day of worship and thanksgiving ensures that those of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have laid down their lives for our faith are not forgotten. We are considering at this time, whether we might be able to create a hybrid event, with both live in-church tickets and streaming the event online at the same time, in the hope that churches may once more

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL – THE TRUSTEES’ ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

be open in June. We will also continue to support and develop the International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians in November with our sister organisations CSW and Open Doors. Again, we may be able to hold both an online event and live events in churches around the UK.

In September 2021 we plan to launch our new drama production, *If Prison Walls Could Speak*, which is based on Petr Jasek’s testimony of his time in prison in Sudan. His book ‘In Prison with ISIS – Faith in the Face of Evil’ tells the story of his arrest and ministry. The play is being written and produced by our Partners’ Christian Ministry – Artless Theatre Company based in East London. We are delighted that Petr is working with them to develop a script and we have a provisional schedule of 30 dates across the UK for 2021. Again, due to the uncertainty around Lockdown this year, we are planning live church events and online events. There may be hybrid events too, where we stream online and hold live performances.

Finally at the end of November 2021 we will be holding our annual volunteers conference. In 2020 we launched a very successful online event attracting over 100 delegates. We also invited supporters interested in volunteering to that event. Once again, we do pray that we will be able to hold this event live in-church as we would always want to do, in London. But we will also make sure we have an online option for those who wish to join from home.

God has proved his faithfulness yet again during 2020, and we continue to pray that we will go on being obedient to ‘doing what we see our Father doing’ (see. John 5:19) through our Ministry into 2022.

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL – THE TRUSTEES’ ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Trustees’ Responsibilities in Relation to the Financial Statements

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees’ Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations. The accounts in this report have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Company law requires the Trustees to ensure financial statements are prepared for each financial year. Under that law, the Trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law, the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company and of the income and expenditure of the Company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- Make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- Comply with applicable UK Accounting Standards. These have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable Company will continue its operations.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which are sufficient to show and explain the Company’s transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable Company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable Company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention of fraud and other irregularities. The Trustees are committed to compliance with the *Charity Governance Code*. In March 2021 the Trustees attended a seminar which particularly focused on the updates to the *Governance Code* published in December 2020.

So far as the Trustees are aware, there is no relevant information that the Company’s auditors are not aware of, and each Trustee has taken all the steps necessary to ensure they are aware of any relevant information, and to establish that the Company’s auditors are aware of the information.

Auditors

A resolution to re-appoint Moore Kingston Smith LLP as the independent auditors to the charitable Company was passed at the AGM in June 2020.

The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the Articles of Association, the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities SORP (FRS 102).

This report was approved by the Board on 24 June 2021 and signed on its behalf by,



David Armond CBE QPM
Chair of Trustees

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS OF RELEASE INTERNATIONAL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Independent Auditor's Report

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Release International ('the company') for the year ended 31 December 2020 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2020 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 (as amended), regulations 6 and 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) and the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs(UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the audit of financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS OF RELEASE INTERNATIONAL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' annual report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the trustees' annual report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees' annual report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) and the Charities Act 2011 require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement set out on page 20, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under Section 44(1)(c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Companies Act 2006 and Section 151 of the Charities Act 2011 and report to you in accordance with regulations made under those Acts.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS OF RELEASE INTERNATIONAL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below.

Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

The objectives of our audit in respect of fraud, are; to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud, through designing and implementing appropriate responses to those assessed risks; and to respond appropriately to instances of fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both management and those charged with governance of the charitable company.

Our approach was as follows:

- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory requirements applicable to the company and considered that the most significant are the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 (as amended), regulations 6 and 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended), the Charities Act 2011, the Charity SORP, and UK financial reporting standards as issued by the Financial Reporting Council and UK taxation legislation.
- We obtained an understanding of how the charitable company complies with these requirements by discussions with management and those charged with governance.
- We assessed the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements, including the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and how it might occur, by holding discussions with management and those charged with governance.
- We inquired of management and those charged with governance as to any known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- Based on this understanding, we designed specific appropriate audit procedures to identify instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. This included making enquiries of management and those charged with governance and obtaining additional corroborative evidence as required.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK) we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purposes of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charitable company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS OF RELEASE INTERNATIONAL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charitable company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006; and to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Section 44(1)(c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, and in respect of the consolidated financial statements, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 8 of the Charities Act 2011. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members and trustees those matters which we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to any party other than the charitable company, the charitable company's members, as a body, and the charity's trustees, as a body for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinion we have formed.

Moore Kingston Smith LLP

Andrew Stickland (Senior Statutory Auditor)

for and on behalf of Moore Kingston Smith LLP, Statutory Auditor

Devonshire House
60 Goswell Road
London
EC1M 7AD

Date: 1st July 2021

Moore Kingston Smith LLP is eligible to act as auditor in terms of Section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006

**RELEASE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020**

Statement of Financial Activities

Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 31st December 2020

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2020 Total Funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2019 Total Funds £
Income from							
Donations and legacies	3	1,579,778	1,340,582	2,920,360	1,681,486	1,009,180	2,690,666
Charitable activities							
Literature and Events		23,737	611	24,347	17,259	-	17,259
Interest receivable		3,199	-	3,199	4,495	-	4,495
Other		30,279	-	30,279	13,400	-	13,400
Total income		1,636,993	1,341,193	2,978,186	1,716,640	1,009,180	2,725,820
Expenditure on							
Costs of raising funds							
Fundraising	4	222,658	35,297	257,955	216,051	42,090	258,141
Charitable activities							
Providing them the TOOLS	4	370,154	1,090,476	1,460,630	361,245	944,889	1,306,134
Raising their VOICE		919,395	32,452	951,847	949,228	39,423	988,651
Total expenditure		1,512,206	1,158,226	2,670,432	1,526,524	1,026,402	2,552,926
Net income/ (expenditure)		124,787	182,967	307,754	190,116	(17,222)	172,894
Total funds brought forward at 1 January 2020	16&17	801,597	541,869	1,343,466	611,481	559,091	1,170,572
Total funds carried forward at 31 December 2020	16&17	926,383	724,836	1,651,219	801,597	541,869	1,343,466

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

**RELEASE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020**

Balance Sheet at 31st December 2020

For Release International - Company Number 01506576

	Notes	2020		2019	
		£	£	£	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	11		28,045		44,291
Intangible Assets	11		2,537		5,823
Current assets					
Debtors	12	91,690		459,502	
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>1,613,543</u>		<u>922,031</u>	
		1,705,233		1,381,533	
Creditors – Amounts falling due within one year	13	<u>(84,596)</u>		<u>(88,181)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>1,620,637</u>		<u>1,293,352</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			<u>1,651,219</u>		<u>1,343,466</u>
Reserves					
Unrestricted funds					
General Fund	16		726,383		801,597
Designated Fund	16		200,000		-
Restricted funds	17		724,836		541,869
Total funds			<u>1,651,219</u>		<u>1,343,466</u>

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 and with FRS102.

The notes on pages 28 to 39 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the Board on 24 June 2021 and signed on its behalf by:



David Armond CBE QPM

Chair of Trustees

**RELEASE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020**

Statement of Cashflow

	Notes	2020 £	2019 £
Net cash used in operating activities	20	683,512	(53,600)
Cashflows from Investing Activities			
Purchase of property plant and equipment		-	(25,219)
Purchase of intangible fixed assets		-	(4,000)
Proceeds from sale of fixed assets		4,801	-
Interest received		3,199	4,495
Net cash used by investing activities		<u>8,000</u>	<u>(24,724)</u>
Net increase/ (decrease) in cash	10	<u>691,512</u>	<u>(78,324)</u>
Cash at the beginning of the year		<u>922,031</u>	<u>1,000,355</u>
Cash at the end of the year		<u>1,613,543</u>	<u>922,031</u>

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Accounting Policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) - Charities SORP (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

1.1 Going Concern

The Trustees have assessed whether the use of going concern is appropriate and made this assessment for a period of at least one year from the date of the approval of these financial statements. The Trustees have given due consideration to the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and Brexit. Income increased in 2020 due to the loyal donor base and together with a significant legacy received in 2019 the Ministry has been largely sheltered from adverse financial effects of the pandemic. The Ministry's reserves were above the planned level (page 13). Income estimates for 2021 and 2022 are cautious as with the cancellation of many events in 2020 and 2021 there has been a reduction in the number of new donors, which is being actively addressed. Having reviewed forecasts prepared by management the Trustees are confident that the Ministry will continue to meet its obligations as they fall due and that therefore the going concern basis continues to be appropriate.

1.2 Basis of Accounting

Release International Limited meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

1.3 Fund Accounting

Funds held are either

- Unrestricted general funds which are funds that can be used within the charitable objectives at the Trustees' discretion.
- Restricted funds which are funds that can only be used for specified purposes. The restriction may be imposed by the donor or the terms under which the funds were raised.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the Charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Donations and interest are recognised in the accounts on a received basis. For donations made under the gift aid scheme, the gift aid is recognised in the year in which the gift is received. Gifts in kind are valued at their value to the Charitable Company.

For legacies, entitlement is taken as the earlier of the date on which either: the Charity is aware that probate has been granted, the estate has been finalised and notification has been made by the executor(s) that a distribution will be made, or when a distribution is received from the estate. Receipt of a legacy, in whole or in part, is only considered probable when the amount can be measured reliably, and the Charity has been notified of the executor's intention to make a distribution.

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds are costs incurred in encouraging voluntary contributions to the Charitable Company and their associated support costs.
- Expenditure on charitable activities are costs directly relating to the objects of the Charitable Company and include grants made, direct costs incurred, and an apportionment of support costs as shown in note 6.

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the Charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Support costs include office costs, finance, personnel, payroll and governance costs which support the Charity's activities. The Charity initially identifies the costs of its support functions. It then identifies those costs which relate to the governance function. Having identified its governance costs, the remaining support costs together with the governance costs are apportioned between cost of raising funds and expenditure on charitable activities pro rata to staff full time equivalents.

Grants payable are payments made to third parties in the furtherance of the charitable objectives of the Charitable Company. The grants are included in the Statement of Financial Activities in the period in which the awards are made. Grants where the beneficiary has not been informed or has to meet certain conditions before the grant is released are not accrued but are noted as financial commitments.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

1.6 Tangible Fixed Assets

Fixed assets are all used for charitable purposes and are shown at cost less depreciation. In 2020 the threshold at which purchases are not normally capitalised was increased from £300 to £1,000. Depreciation on assets is calculated to write off the cost over their estimated economic useful lives. Assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over 4 years for computer equipment and motor vehicles, 5 years for office equipment and the remainder of the lease for leasehold improvements.

1.7 Intangible Fixed Assets

Intangible assets are the development costs for specific IT projects which are capitalised at cost, provided it is likely to bring future economic benefit to the Charity. If the criteria for recognition as assets are not met, the expense is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities in the period in which it is incurred. Capitalised IT costs include all direct and indirect costs that are directly attributable to the development process. The costs are amortised using the straight-line method over 4 years being their estimated useful lives.

1.8 Foreign Currencies

Income and expenditure in foreign currencies are converted into sterling at the rates of exchange ruling on the date of transaction. Amounts held at the balance sheet date are converted at the rates prevailing at the balance sheet date.

1.9 Pension Costs

The Charity operates a defined contribution scheme for the benefit of its employees which is funded by contributions from the employee and employer contributions payable to scheme and employees' personal pension plans are charged in the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate. Further details of the scheme are given in note 15.

1.10 Operating Leases

Rentals payable under operating leases are charged on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease.

1.11 Financial Instruments

The Charitable Company only has basic financial instruments measured at amortised cost, with no financial instruments classified as 'other' or basic instruments measured at fair value.

2. Critical Estimates

In the view of the Trustees applying the accounting policies adopted, no judgements were required apart from those listed below.

- the allocation of support costs
- useful economic lives of intangible fixed assets
- depreciation rates of fixed assets
- estimation of legacy accrual

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3. Donations and Gifts

	2020			2019		
	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Individuals	1,318,938	688,616	2,007,554	1,107,209	559,513	1,666,722
Churches & other groups	153,991	141,897	295,888	160,911	104,725	265,636
Trusts	62,690	14,160	76,850	20,992	3,468	24,460
ICA partner ministries	5,300	495,909	501,209	-	341,474	341,474
Legacies	38,859	-	38,859	392,374	-	392,374
	<u>1,579,778</u>	<u>1,340,582</u>	<u>2,920,360</u>	<u>1,681,486</u>	<u>1,009,180</u>	<u>2,690,666</u>

There were gifts in kind of £5,300 (2019: £0) which were books donated by an ICA Partner Ministry

4. Expenditure

	Grants £ (see note 5)	Direct costs £ (see note 6)	Support costs £ (see note 7)	2020 Total £
Costs of raising funds				
Fundraising	-	220,213	37,742	257,955
Charitable activities				
Providing them the TOOLS	1,036,165	346,746	77,719	1,460,630
Raising their VOICE	-	796,004	155,843	951,847
	<u>1,036,165</u>	<u>1,362,963</u>	<u>271,304</u>	<u>2,670,432</u>
				2019
Costs of raising funds				Total £
Fundraising				
Charitable activities				
Providing them the TOOLS	-	214,097	44,044	258,141
Raising their VOICE	853,352	360,627	92,155	1,306,134
	-	795,144	193,507	988,651
	<u>853,352</u>	<u>1,369,868</u>	<u>329,706</u>	<u>2,552,926</u>

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5. Grants made

Grant payments made were for the charitable purposes of Release International. They provided support for:

- Families of Christian martyrs
- Prisoners of faith and their families
- Christians suffering oppression and violence
- Christians forced to flee

The Ministry has taken advantage of the exemption available in the Charity SORP not to disclose specific information in relation to grant making, on the grounds that the disclosure could result in serious prejudice to the grant maker and/or the recipient institution, individuals working for the recipient institution or individuals.

Included in the table below were 5 grants to individuals in South, South East Asia and Other totalling £14,986 (2019: 9 grants South and South East Asia totalling £9,519).

No support costs have been allocated to the total amount of the grants.

	Total 2020		Total 2019	
	No.	£	No.	£
Central Asia	5	38,558	7	34,825
Middle East/Gulf	33	316,863	26	200,962
North East Africa	24	357,357	30	305,601
West Africa	16	113,434	17	75,641
South Asia	39	120,222	83	170,670
South East Asia	22	88,973	20	65,328
Other	1	758	1	325
	140	1,036,165	184	853,352

6. Direct costs

	2020			2019		
	Staff costs*	Other costs	Total costs	Staff costs*	Other costs	Total costs
	£	£	£	£	£	£
*See note 8						
Costs of raising funds						
Fundraising	100,658	119,555	220,213	96,585	117,512	214,097
Charitable activities						
Providing them the TOOLS	211,018	135,728	346,746	199,733	160,894	360,627
Raising their VOICE	486,875	309,129	796,004	459,480	335,664	795,144
	798,550	564,413	1,362,963	755,798	614,070	1,369,868

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7. Support costs

*See note 8	2020			2019		
	Staff costs* £	Other costs £	Total costs £	Staff costs* £	Other costs £	Total costs £
Costs of raising funds						
Fundraising	25,063	12,678	37,742	24,301	19,743	44,044
Charitable activities						
Providing them the TOOLS	51,611	26,108	77,719	50,847	41,308	92,155
Raising their VOICE	103,492	52,352	155,843	106,769	86,738	193,507
	<u>180,166</u>	<u>91,138</u>	<u>271,304</u>	<u>181,917</u>	<u>147,789</u>	<u>329,706</u>

8. Staff costs

	Notes	2020 £	2019 £
Wages and salaries		808,386	782,782
Social security costs		76,176	75,076
Pension costs		85,025	73,654
Group Life policy		9,130	6,203
		<u>978,716</u>	<u>937,715</u>

Total split as follows:

	2020			2019		
	Direct (note 6)	Support (note 7)	Total staff costs	Direct (note 6)	Support (note 7)	Total staff costs
Costs of raising funds	100,658	25,063	125,721	96,585	24,301	120,886
Charitable activities						
Providing them the TOOLS	211,018	51,611	262,629	199,733	50,847	250,580
Raising their VOICE	486,875	103,492	590,366	459,480	106,769	566,249
	<u>798,550</u>	<u>180,166</u>	<u>978,716</u>	<u>755,798</u>	<u>181,917</u>	<u>937,715</u>

The Trustees receive no remuneration. During the year no Trustee received out of pocket expenses (2019: 1 Trustee £230). During the year donations from 5 Trustees (2019: 5) were received totalling £5,656 (2019: £3,115)

The remuneration and benefits received by key management personnel in the year were £310k (2019: £289k). During the year there was 1 employee whose remuneration exceeded £60k. (2019: 1)

At 31st December 2020, the Charitable Company included in creditors accrued holiday pay not taken of £21k (2019: £12k).

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The average number of employees was:	2020	2019
Management	5	5
Administration and support	4	4
Overseas project management and UK information and education	17	17
	26	26

9. Net Income/Expenditure for the Year

The net income/ expenditure for the year is stated after charging:

		2020 £	2019 £
Depreciation of assets	(see note 11)	19,532	26,200
Auditors' remuneration		14,587	11,968
Hire of equipment		3,584	9,138

10. Note to Cashflow

2020	As at 1 Jan 2020	Cash flows	Non cash movements	As at 31 Dec 2020
Cash at bank	298,970	223,713	-	522,683
Cash on deposit	623,061	467,799	-	1,090,860
Net Cash	922,031	691,512	-	1,613,543

2019	As at 1 Jan 2019	Cash flows	Non cash movements	As at 31 Dec 2019
Cash at bank	399,670	(100,700)	-	298,970
Cash on deposit	600,685	22,376	-	623,061
Net cash	1,000,355	(78,324)	-	922,031

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11. Fixed Assets

	Computer Equipment £	Office Equipment £	Leasehold Improvements £	Motor Vehicles £	Total £
Cost					
At 1 st January 2020	97,026	46,203	30,476	12,484	186,189
Additions	-	-	-	-	-
Disposals	(19,184)	(12,127)	-	(12,484)	(43,795)
At 31 st December 2020	<u>77,842</u>	<u>34,076</u>	<u>30,476</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>142,394</u>
Depreciation					
At 1 st January 2020	69,714	41,629	18,071	12,484	141,898
Charge for year	11,349	1,796	3,101	-	16,246
Disposals	(19,184)	(12,127)	-	(12,484)	(43,795)
At 31 st December 2020	<u>61,879</u>	<u>31,298</u>	<u>21,172</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>114,349</u>
Net book values					
At 31 st December 2020	15,963	2,778	9,304	-	28,045
At 31 st December 2019	27,312	4,574	12,405	-	44,291
Depreciation rates: Straight-line	25% p.a.	20% p.a.	Remainder of lease	25% p.a.	

Intangible Assets

	Software Development £	Total £
Cost		
At 1 st January 2020	21,145	21,145
Additions	-	-
Disposals	-	-
At 31 st December 2020	<u>21,145</u>	<u>21,145</u>
Depreciation		
At 1 st January 2020	15,322	15,322
Charge for year	3,286	3,286
Disposals	-	-
At 31 st December 2020	<u>18,608</u>	<u>18,608</u>
Net book values		
At 31 st December 2020	2,537	2,537
At 31 st December 2019	5,823	5,823
Depreciation rates: Straight-line	25% p.a.	

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12. Debtors

	2020	2019
	£	£
Due within one year		
Other debtors	60,829	67,573
Prepayments	30,361	30,929
Accrued legacies	500	361,000
	<u>91,690</u>	<u>459,502</u>

13. Creditors – Amounts Falling Due Within One Year

	2020	2019
	£	£
Trade creditors	37,406	27,932
Other creditors	13,662	36,858
Accruals	33,527	23,391
	<u>84,596</u>	<u>88,181</u>

14. Members' Liability

The Charitable Company is limited by guarantee and each of the members is bound to contribute a sum not exceeding £10 in certain circumstances as set out in clause 7 of the Articles of Association.

15. Pension Commitments

The Charitable Company participates in the Global Connections pension scheme which is a defined contribution pension scheme. The assets are held separately from those of the Charitable Company in an independently administered fund. The pension cost charge representing contributions payable by the Charitable Company to the scheme and to other personal pension schemes amounted to 7% or 9% of gross salaries depending on whether the staff member also contributes (2019: 7% or 8%). At 31st December 2020 there were no significant contributions outstanding payable to the scheme. The Charitable Company's pension arrangements comply with its statutory obligations in respect of auto-enrolment.

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16. Unrestricted Funds

	Balance 01-Jan-20	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance 31-Dec-20
	£	£	£	£	£
General Reserve Fund	801,597	1,636,993	(1,512,206)	(200,000)	726,383
Designated Fund - Grant Reponse Fund	-	-	-	200,000	200,000
	<u>801,597</u>	<u>1,636,993</u>	<u>(1,512,206)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>926,383</u>
	Balance 01-Jan-19	Income	Expenditure		Balance 31-Dec-19
	£	£	£		£
General Reserve Fund	611,481	1,716,640	(1,526,524)	-	801,597
	<u>611,481</u>	<u>1,716,640</u>	<u>(1,526,524)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>801,597</u>

The reserve policy is explained on page 13. The Grant Response Fund allows Release International to be more agile and give grants to overseas partners, usually funded by restricted gifts in anticipation of funds being received later in the year.

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17. Restricted Funds

These are donations received for specific purposes as requested by the donors. The first four funds are for the taxonomy of persecution (page 5) The other funds are many and varied and have been grouped into geographical areas. They are all within our objectives as described on pages 5.

	Balance 01-Jan-20	Income	Expenditure	Balance 31-Dec-20
	£	£	£	£
Families of Christian martyrs	29,316	104,005	(82,112)	51,208
Prisoners of faith and their families	42,079	169,843	(133,553)	78,369
Christians forced to flee	7,020	77,568	(57,607)	26,981
Christians suffering oppression and violence	-	159,942	(121,312)	38,629
Central Asia	1,935	12,526	(7,268)	7,193
Middle East/Gulf	35,171	158,899	(168,468)	25,602
North East Africa	283,355	365,034	(318,616)	329,774
West Africa	44,081	42,842	(58,603)	28,321
South Asia	44,484	92,542	(71,228)	65,798
South East Asia	19,540	20,694	(6,069)	34,166
Personal Support	-	50,221	(50,025)	196
Generic funds and other	34,888	87,074	(83,364)	38,599
	<u>541,869</u>	<u>1,341,193</u>	<u>(1,158,226)</u>	<u>724,836</u>
	Balance 01-Jan-19	Income	Expenditure	Balance 31-Dec-19
	£	£	£	£
Families of Christian martyrs	38,209	97,411	(106,304)	29,316
Prisoners of faith and their families	8,542	97,050	(63,513)	42,079
Christians suffering oppression and violence	-	73,463	(73,463)	-
Christians forced to flee	-	22,977	(15,957)	7,020
Central Asia	9,761	27,730	(35,556)	1,935
Middle East/Gulf	22,759	148,195	(135,783)	35,171
North and East Africa	355,626	204,862	(277,133)	283,355
West Africa	7,532	48,605	(12,056)	44,081
South Asia	65,374	83,910	(104,800)	44,484
South East Asia	14,746	39,372	(34,578)	19,540
Personal Support	-	59,901	(59,901)	-
Generic funds and other	36,542	105,704	(107,358)	34,888
	<u>559,091</u>	<u>1,009,180</u>	<u>(1,026,402)</u>	<u>541,869</u>

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18. Analysis of Net Assets Between Funds

2020	Fixed assets	Cash	Net Current assets	Totals
	£	£	£	£
Restricted funds	-	708,173	16,663	724,836
Unrestricted funds	30,582	905,369	(9,568)	926,383
	<u>30,582</u>	<u>1,613,543</u>	<u>7,094</u>	<u>1,651,219</u>

2019	Fixed assets	Cash	Net Current assets	Totals
	£	£	£	£
Restricted funds	-	528,828	13,041	541,869
Unrestricted funds	50,114	393,203	358,280	801,597
	<u>50,114</u>	<u>922,031</u>	<u>371,321</u>	<u>1,343,466</u>

19. Other Financial Commitments

	2020		2019	
	Office Equipment	Premises Rental	Office Equipment	Premises Rental
	£	£	£	£
Operating Leases				
Due under 1 year	7,060	28,000	6,674	28,000
Due between 2 to 5 years	26,475	61,833	26,696	89,833
Due after more than 5 years	-	-	5,005	-
	<u>33,535</u>	<u>89,833</u>	<u>38,375</u>	<u>117,833</u>

20. Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2020	2019
	£	£
Net Income / (Expenditure)	307,754	172,894
Adjusted for		
Depreciation charge	16,246	22,914
Amortisation charge	3,286	3,287
Profit on sale of assets	(4,801)	-
Interest from deposits	(3,199)	(4,495)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	367,812	(236,917)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	<u>(3,585)</u>	<u>(11,283)</u>
Net cash used in operating activities	<u>683,512</u>	<u>(53,600)</u>

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21. Taxation

As a Charity Release International benefits from exemptions on income and gains falling within Sections 466-493 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 to the extent they are derived from charitable activities.

22. Related party transactions

Revd Dr Berhane Asmelash who is a Trustee receives no remuneration for his role as Trustee. He was paid as a consultant on Eritrea £7,050 (2019: £7,000)

23. Post Balance Sheet Events

There are no post balance sheet events.