



Humanists
INTERNATIONAL

Annual Report 2024

Strengthening our Foundation, Shaping our Future



President's foreword



Dear friends,

I come to the end of my fifteen years on the Board of Humanists International and my ten years as President with a strong sense of optimism.

The chapter in our history that it has been my responsibility and pleasure to write has been characterized by growing professionalism, increased global representativeness, and clearer purpose than ever. We have seen the appointment of our first Chief Executive, an expanded staff team, a globally diverse Board, and a renewed focus on supporting our Members as a truly international network. And all these present achievements carry promise for the future.

In a world darkened now by rising authoritarianism and existential challenges to human rights, our role as humanists has never been more essential. Having been in a unique position for 15 years to meet and to know humanists around the world, I believe that we will continue to rise to meet the challenges with fortitude and dedication.

This Annual Report captures our progress across all strategic aims. One of the most significant shifts has been in our Humanists at Risk program. Faced with unprecedented demand, we embarked on a necessary transformation to strengthen the capacity of our Members and Associates to offer support locally, while partnering globally with those better placed to handle individual casework. This model will be more likely to be sustainable and will allow us to deepen our research and advocacy, to better understand, and influence, the conditions humanists face worldwide.

As I prepare to hand over the presidency, I make one plea to the humanist community in every place: may we continue to look outward. In a time when the temptation of comforting retreat has never been stronger, we must have the courage and resolve to stay open, to foster solidarity, and to build on our shared commitment to human rights and secularism together. The years ahead offer challenges but together we are equipped to meet them.

I want to express my deepest thanks to the Board and to our staff team, whether longstanding colleagues or new arrivals, whose professionalism and passion have been an inspiration to me. But I also want to thank every humanist reading this report: thank you for your support, your partnership, and your belief in this global cause. I know that, powered by your energy and vision, Humanists International will continue to be a light in the darkness for all those who believe in human dignity, freedom, and reason.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Copson". The script is fluid and cursive.

Andrew Copson
President, Humanists International



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Chief Executive's introduction

Driving Operational Excellence, Charting Our Future

Dear friends and colleagues,

It is my pleasure to introduce our 2024 Annual Report — a reflection not only of the progress we've achieved, but also of the solid operational and strategic foundation we are building for the future.

In 2024, we focused on three core priorities: placing our members at the heart of every decision, strengthening partnerships across the global humanist community, and enhancing our governance, risk management, and financial oversight. These priorities shaped our work throughout the year, ensuring our operations remained both resilient and mission-aligned.

Although we had budgeted for a significant in-year deficit, we reduced it from 46% to 29% by year-end — a testament to prudent financial management. We introduced a comprehensive new Risk Register, approved by the Board, to proactively identify and manage key threats to our mission. At the same time, we streamlined financial operations across our UK and US entities and improved the effectiveness of our financial reporting. These improvements have laid the groundwork for long-term sustainability.

With stronger systems in place, we expanded our global reach. Our digital subscriber base grew

by nearly 5,000 — more than triple the growth seen in 2023 — thanks to targeted outreach, enhanced resources, and fruitful collaborations, including with the American Humanist Association. Donor retention also increased, underscoring growing trust in our message and impact.

Through our revitalised Grants Program, we distributed £80,000 across 13 projects worldwide, supporting work in development, digital humanism, humanist ceremonies, regional networking, youth engagement, and our Café Humaniste series. These initiatives reached over 170,000 people — a powerful expression of our global commitment. Youth engagement also showed modest growth, with the number of organizations identifying youth leaders rising from 60 to 61.

One of the year's most important strategic developments was the evolution of our Humanists at Risk program. With 94 applications by mid-year — far beyond our capacity for direct casework — we transitioned to a model focused on empowering Member and Associate organizations to provide local support, while engaging specialist partners for frontline case management. This approach not only enables a more sustainable response but strengthens local infrastructure and improves long-term impact.

Our advocacy work continued to raise the humanist voice on the world stage. At the UN Human Rights

Council, we spoke out on issues from Afghanistan to Burundi, defending freedom of belief, gender equality, and LGBTI+ rights. Our analysis on global intolerance was cited by the UN Secretary-General — a clear recognition of our growing influence. In Europe, we joined 400+ civil society organizations in urging the incoming EU leadership to protect democratic institutions and civic space.

In August, our General Assembly and International Humanist Conference in Singapore — themed "Secularism and Interfaith Harmony" — brought together our global family for a powerful moment of learning and connection. We welcomed vibrant new members from Malaysia and Indonesia, and earlier in the year equipped others through our well-received Grant Writing Workshop.

Looking ahead, we are preparing to launch a bold new global initiative to strengthen the capacity, resilience, and leadership of humanist organizations worldwide. My team and I are conducting wide consultations to ensure this responds directly to the needs and realities of our members. We are also reimagining the format of our General Assemblies to enhance accessibility and participation as our network grows.

None of this would be possible without our exceptional team. Our 90% staff satisfaction score reflects a professional, values-driven culture marked by respect and shared purpose. In a year of leadership transitions, we welcomed new colleagues and built capacity for the journey ahead.

Humanists International enters 2025 with renewed focus and momentum. Together, we are building a more agile, connected, and mission-aligned global movement — one ready to defend human rights, champion secularism, and advance humanist values with clarity and confidence in an ever-changing world.

In solidarity,

Gary McLelland
Chief Executive, Humanists International

Our Mission and values

Vision

Inspired by humanist values, we are optimistic for a world where everyone can have a dignified and fulfilling life.

Mission

We build, support and represent the global humanist movement and work to champion human rights and secularism.

Our values

We support democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.



Our Board



President:
Andrew Copson
United Kingdom



Vice-president:
Roslyn Mould
Ghana



Treasurer:
Yvan Dheur
Belgium

Appointed 1 September 2024

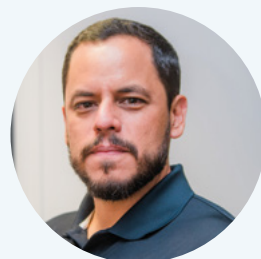


Alavari Jeevathol
United Kingdom



Apsara Karki
Nepal

Until 1 September 2024



David Pineda
Guatemala



Leo Igwe
Nigeria



Debbie Goddard
United States
of America



Maggie Ardiente
United States
of America



**Mary Jane Valenzuela
Quiming**
Philippines



Nina Fjeldheim
Norway



Boris Van Der Ham
Netherlands

Until 1 September 2024

Humanists International, Inc. is a US not-for-profit 501-c(3) registered in New York. Registered address: 1821 Jefferson PI NW, Washington, DC 20036. The Board of Directors meets six times per year to agree and monitor the organization's strategy and activities, including risk management and performance.

Humanists International has a Board Handbook, which sets out role descriptions for the officers of the Board, code of conduct, conflict of interest policy and a policy for Board member expenses.

On appointment, new Board members sign the declaration, committing them to give their time and expertise. An induction programme for new Board members includes an initial meeting with the President and Chief Executive to discuss issues of relevance to the organization, the history of the organization and its purposes and the roles and responsibilities of the board. New Board members are given a copy of recent board minutes, a copy of the most recent accounts, a copy of the Bylaws

and copies of the Office of the New York State Attorney General's "Responsibilities from the start – responsibilities of not-for-profit corporations".

All Board members give their time freely and no remuneration was paid to Board members in the year. Board members are required to disclose all relevant interests at each board meeting and, in accordance with the organization's policy, withdraw from decisions where a conflict of interest arises.

Humanists International has developed a risk management process that allows the identification, assessment and management of significant risks, which may impact on the achievement of their objectives. The board and staff meet once per year in October to review the risks and risk management arrangements annually, in addition to the board's regular quarterly reviews. The Board members have assessed the major risks to which the organization is exposed and they are confident that going forward, exposure to major risks will be mitigated.



Our personnel



Chief Executive:
Gary McLelland



Director of Advocacy:
Elizabeth O'Casey



**Casework and
Campaigns Manager:**
Emma Wadsworth-Jones



**Membership Development
Officer & Young
Humanists Coordinator:**
Javan Lev Poblador



**Director of Finance
and Operations:**
Jean Zong



**MENA Advocacy &
Casework Consultant:**
Kacem El Ghazzali



**Advocacy Officer
(Europe):**
Tania Giacomuzzi Mota



**Fundraising and
Development Manager:**
Victoria Howson



Advocacy Officer:
Leon Langdon

(From 4 September 2023)



**Finance and
Admin Officer**
Henry Keen

(From 10 June to 9 December 2024)



Our strategy

Our strategy is underpinned by the Vision, Mission and Values of the organization.

Vision

Inspired by humanist values, we are optimistic for a world where everyone can have a dignified and fulfilling life.

Mission

We build, support and represent the global humanist movement and work to champion human rights and secularism.

Our values

We support democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

In addition to the clear vision, mission and strategy set by the Board, the CEO set out some additional important goals for the organization in 2024. These were:

1. Members at the heart of everything we do
2. Partnerships with like-minded organizations
3. Strengthen governance and risk management



Report on activities and values

Below is a summary of the key achievements and performance, listed under the four strategic aims:

1 Successful and sustainable humanist organizations exist in every part of the world and are networked together

At the start of 2024, Humanists International had 114 Members and Associates, a decrease from 127 at the end of 2023. This fluctuation was primarily due to a number of Associate organizations not submitting their financial information in time for fee calculations, as required by our bylaws.

It's important to note that many of these Associates were not expected to renew their memberships. Notably, our core membership of full Members saw a slight increase, moving from 60 to 61, and Associates from 54 to 55, demonstrating a stable base. We also continue to provide free individual memberships for humanists in countries where establishing a humanist organization is prohibited, ensuring their connection to the global movement.

Strengthening and developing humanist organizations worldwide remains a central goal for Humanists International. Throughout 2024, the Board of Trustees actively pursued improvements under Aim 1, focusing on enhancing our support for members. The Aim 1 Working Group concluded its work, leading to the implementation of several key recommendations. A significant achievement was the launch of an annual suite of online training events. In the first quarter of 2024, all Humanists International personnel participated in a "Training of Trainers" program, equipping them to develop and deliver tailored training solutions based on feedback from our Members and Associates.

Building on these successes, the Board of Trustees has approved further developments for implementation in 2025. These initiatives, detailed in the "Future Plans" section, are designed to further enhance our support and engagement with our global membership.

In 2024, Humanists International distributed over \$89k in grants to our Members and Associates, with a significant focus on supporting organizations in UN-defined developing countries. These grants facilitated a diverse range of initiatives, including development projects, digital capacity building, regional networking events, humanist ceremonies, youth engagement programs, and our innovative "Café Humaniste" pop-up events.

The impact of these grants was substantial, enabling our members to reach over 170,000 individuals – our widest reach in recent years. This demonstrates the effectiveness of our grant program in amplifying humanist values and activities globally.

Recognizing the importance of engaging younger generations (defined as those under 35), we prioritized programs and resources that resonate with youth. We are pleased to report a slight increase in the number of our Members and Associates with dedicated youth engagement leaders, rising from 60 in 2023 to 61 in 2024. Additionally, attendance at Young Humanists International events saw a modest increase, from 125 to 129 participants throughout the year. We remain committed to further expanding our youth engagement efforts in the coming year.

In the last quarter of 2024, we surveyed our Members and Associates, the following is a selection of the feedback we received from them:

“

A strict collective and orchestrated human rights watch is imperative these days to protect secular and non-religious minorities from diabolic machinations of repressive regimes. After the USA election results, other rogue elements and oppressive states would be free to employ horrendous tactic of harassment for voices of dissent throughout the world. Eavesdropping and unlawful state surveillance and vigilantes would go scot-free if there are not held accountable by international communities...

Anonymous

“

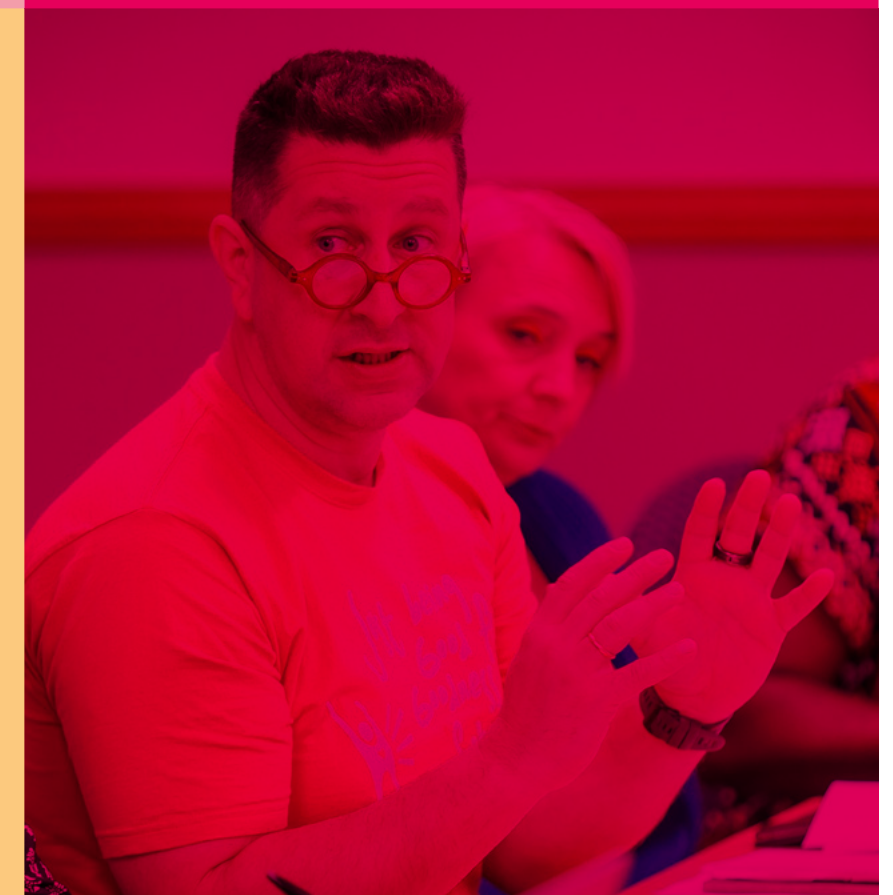
We appreciate your efforts and really love the work you're doing."

Anonymous

“

It is important to me as I have used resources from HI to include in my curriculum, hence introducing humanism to my students. Even more, teaching them about compassion, empiricism, empathy and discouraging the ideas of witch and other superstitions."

Humanists Liberia





2 Humanists are no longer at risk for their beliefs or identity

Despite the dedicated efforts of our casework and campaigns manager, demand for support continued to exceed our capacity. This led us to make the difficult decision in June 2024 to close the program to new applications.

We proactively communicated this decision to the leaders of our Member and Associate organizations, providing them with a list of alternative resources available on our website. This transparent approach aimed to manage expectations and ensure that humanists seeking assistance were directed to appropriate support channels.

Over the course of the year, we provided tailored direct support to 68 people from over 20 countries across the globe. This support included direct advocacy and public campaigning, letters of support for asylum claims, and the provision of emergency grants, as well as signposting and networking humanists at risk with those better placed to help them.

As a direct result of our work together with our partner organizations, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued a determination that the arrest and continued imprisonment of Nigerian humanist leader Mubarak Bala was unlawful, and called for his release. Bala was freed later that year, and as a movement, we continued to work to ensure his safety. Further, several other cases wrote to inform us of other positive developments in their cases, such as their ability to relocate permanently, or undertake study abroad, and the approval of their asylum claims.

The demand for casework support remained high, with 94 applications received by July 2024, compared to 92 during the same period in 2023.

"I am deeply grateful to you and your organization for everything you have done for me. Standing by the side of a stateless person and contributing to building a new and secure life means more than words can express. Your efforts have played a significant role in shaping my present and future."

This underscored the ongoing need for such services and highlighted the limitations of our existing model.

To address these challenges, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of our current casework approach, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. This analysis confirmed that the current model is unsustainable without a significant increase in resources.

We are committed to developing a more effective and sustainable approach to supporting humanists at risk. Details of our future plans in this area can be found in the "Future Plans" section of this report.

"I'm so glad that I found Humanists, I believe that if it wasn't for the organization, the outcome would've been different, I believe that there are many people who have experienced and experiencing circumstances similar to mine and I kindly ask and hope for an opportunity to contribute back and be a part of something that actually makes a difference."



3 Human rights priorities based on humanist values are influential at international institutions

Humanists International maintained its strong focus on advocacy within the United Nations system, while also expanding its influence in the European Union.

Early in 2024, we actively engaged at the UN Human Rights Council, submitting reports, participating in sessions, and successfully countering attempts to reinforce blasphemy laws. In Europe, our advocacy centered on the European elections, highlighted by the launch of the Humanist Pledge, which secured commitments from numerous candidates to uphold humanist values.

Despite the Director of Advocacy's absence during the latter half of the year due to parental leave, the Advocacy team, comprising the Advocacy Officer and European Advocacy Officer, demonstrated exceptional resilience and effectiveness. They continued to engage with UN bodies, addressing issues such as religious hatred, and successfully navigated complex internal dynamics, including a strategic withdrawal from a UN NGO committee to maintain alignment with humanist principles.

Throughout the year, we prioritized strengthening our network and empowering member organizations. This included training 13 representatives from 6 organizations on local advocacy strategies and facilitating their participation in international forums. We also expanded our network by building relationships with 33 key stakeholders, enabling us to influence 7 UN resolutions and participate in 9 joint advocacy actions.

Our commitment to impactful advocacy is evidenced by delivering 20 statements at the UN Human Rights Council, a slight decrease from 30 in 2023. These statements, along with our other advocacy efforts, are detailed on our website: <https://humanists.international/what-we-do/advocacy/advocacy-statement>. We also responded to calls for input from UN Special Rapporteurs, particularly on the intersection of freedom of religion or belief and torture, and prioritized collaborative advocacy within the EU, focusing on equal representation in Article 17 dialogues.

4 We have sufficient reputation, resources and effectiveness to achieve our objectives

Throughout 2024 the CEO developed a comprehensive Risk Register which was adopted by the Board, with each Board member taking ownership of various specific risks.

Throughout 2024 Humanists International ran an in-year planned deficit. At the start of the year this was expected to account for around 46% of the annual budget, but by the end of the year this had reduced to 29%. The primary reason for this high deficit was due to planned expenditure of legacy income in 2023. The Board of Trustees expects to run in-year deficit budgets for the coming years. These will be funded by income from our US parent organization, Humanists International, Inc.

The 2024 personnel satisfaction score remained high at 90%, same as the previous year.

Our email audience grew in 2024, with 4,905 new subscribers joining our newsletter list compared to 1,588 in 2023. The retention rate for our regular donors increased slightly in 2024 to an average of 52%, up from 50% in the previous year.



Future plans

The personnel team and Board members met together in person in Glasgow in October 2024 to review the strategy and operational progress made towards their achievement.

The Board of Trustees, in close collaboration with the Chief Executive, has undertaken a thorough review of our casework and protection of humanists at risk. It is clear that our current approach has become unsustainable, placing undue strain on our casework and campaigns manager and, more importantly, failing to adequately meet the needs of those we seek to serve. We are committed to developing a more effective and sustainable model. The Chief Executive will be leading a process of internal and external consultation, engaging with our members, associates, donors, and partners to refine our strategies and ensure we are best positioned to protect humanists worldwide.

A strategic priority for the coming year will be a significant investment in Aim 1 of our strategic plan: to support and develop humanist organizations around the world. We recognize that strengthening the global humanist movement requires robust, well-supported local organizations. To this end, we will be developing a comprehensive leadership and support

program designed to empower the individuals who lead these organizations. This program will focus on building capacity, fostering collaboration, and providing the resources necessary for our members and associates to thrive. We believe that by investing in the organizational strength of our movement, we can create a more resilient and effective network for the protection of human rights and the promotion of humanist values.

Furthermore, following careful consideration, the Board has decided to remove Aim 2 as a distinct strategic objective. While initially added to address a specific and pressing need, it has become apparent that this aim is not fully aligned with the broader mission of Humanists International. We will no longer provide direct, face-to-face support to individuals at risk. Instead, we will pivot towards a model that focuses on supporting and developing local humanist organizations to provide that crucial care within their communities. In addition, we will pursue strategic alliances with organizations that are better equipped to provide direct support to individuals at risk globally. We believe this shift will allow us to leverage our resources more effectively and create a more sustainable and impactful approach to protecting humanists around the world.

Following these changes, the new strategy of Humanists International is articulated below:

Vision:

Inspired by humanist values, we are optimistic for a world where humanists are no longer at risk for their beliefs or identity and everyone can have a dignified and fulfilling life.

Mission:

We build, support and represent the global humanist movement and work to champion human rights and secularism.

Our values:

We support democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.





1 Successful and sustainable humanist organizations exist in every part of the world and are networked together

Change pathways:

- 1.1 Leadership teams are supported and developed to create and sustain humanist organizations
- 1.2 Humanist organizations are supported to develop their activities
- 1.3 Humanist organizations have ongoing opportunities to connect and collaborate with each other
- 1.4 Humanists in countries with no humanist organization are supported to establish one

2 Human rights priorities based on humanist values are influential at international institutions

Change pathways:

- 2.1 UN bodies, agencies, and senior officials make decisions that implement our human rights priorities
- 2.2 Other NGOs understand our priorities and take action on them
- 2.3 Our members are capable of advocating in relation to our priorities at international institutions

3 We have sufficient reputation, resources and effectiveness to achieve our objectives

Change pathways:

- 3.1 A globally diverse and sustainable Board
- 3.2 Sustainable, reliable, and ethical core operations team
- 3.3 Funding from multiple financial sources
- 3.4 Flexible and safe working conditions

Our members and associates

At the end of 2024, Humanists International's ratified membership was:

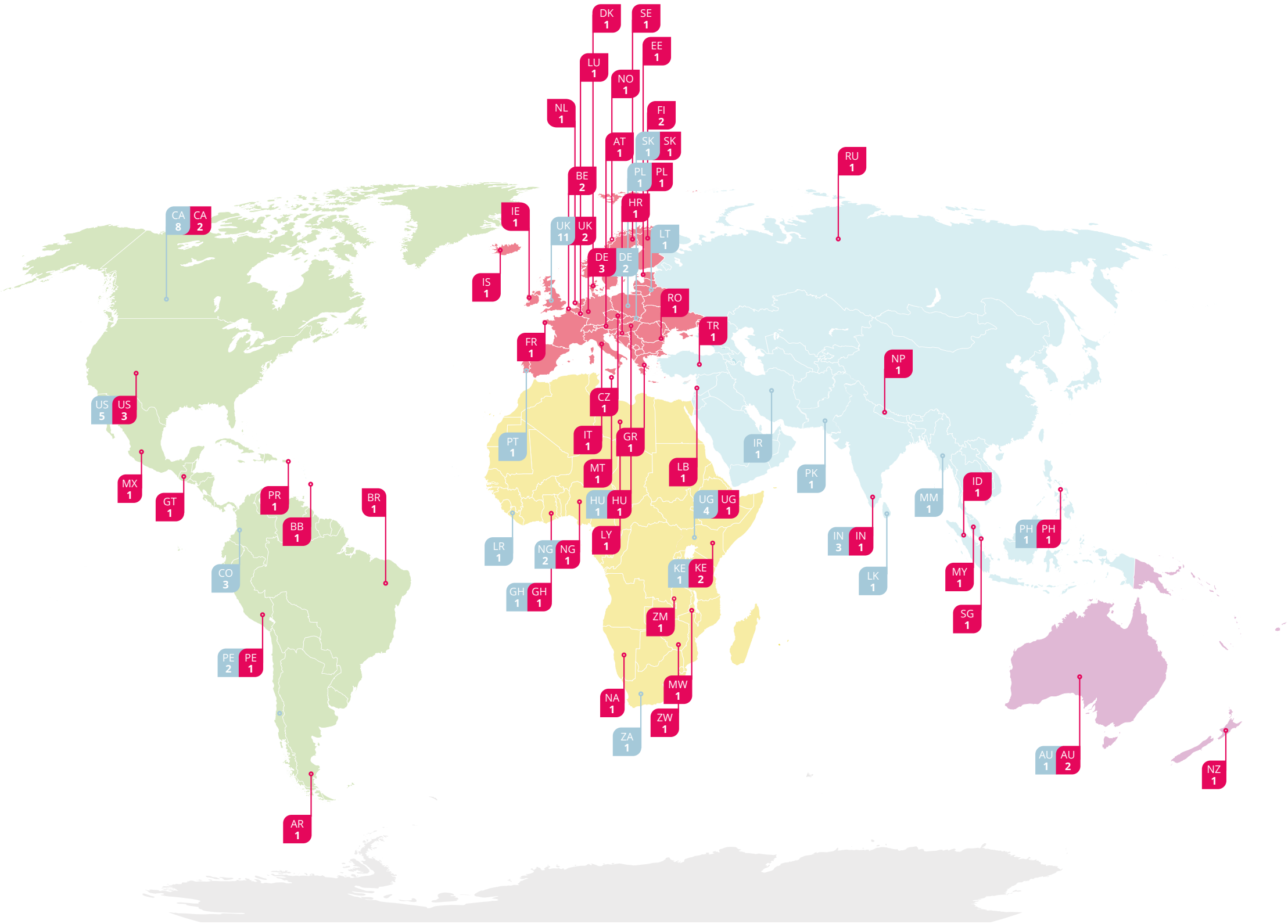
Members: 61
Associates: 55

New members in 2024:

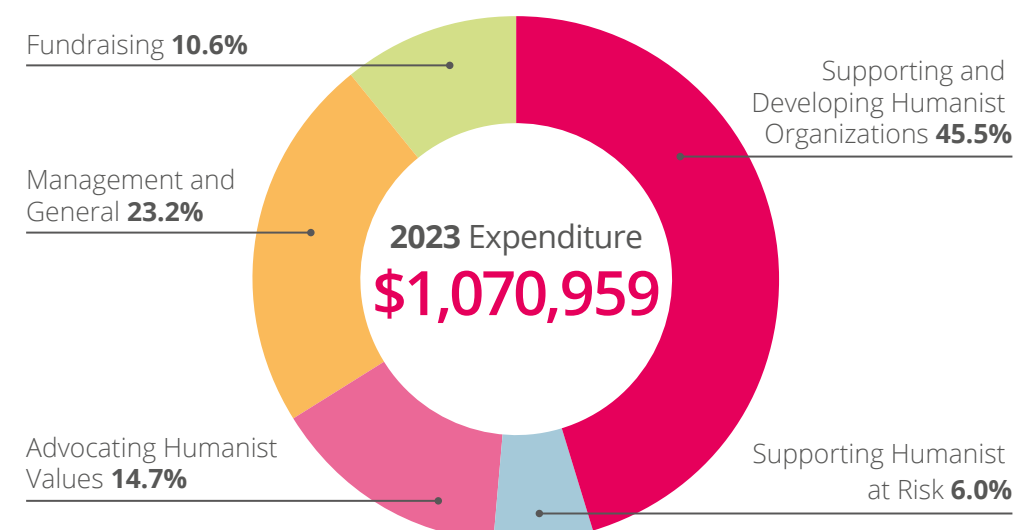
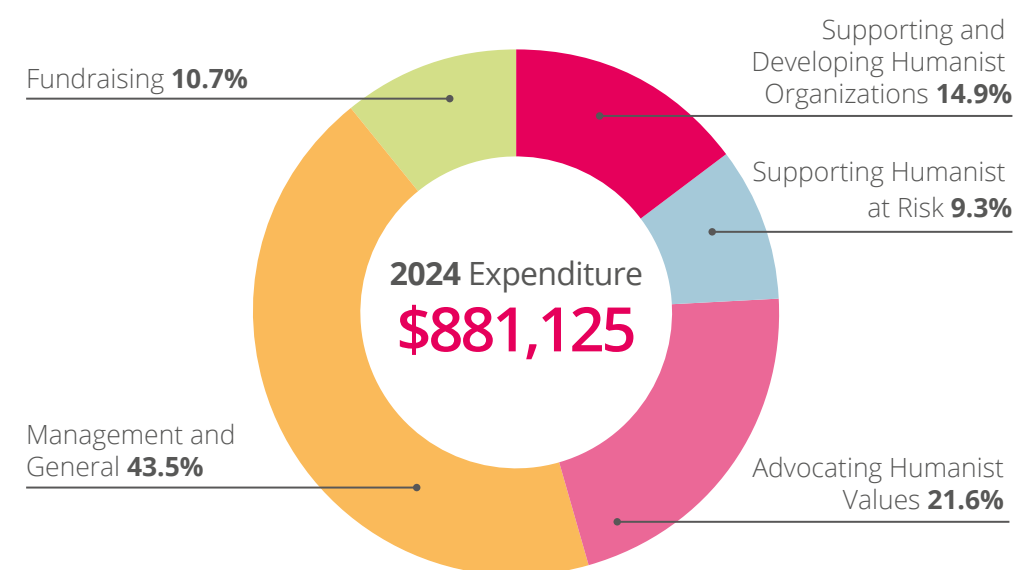
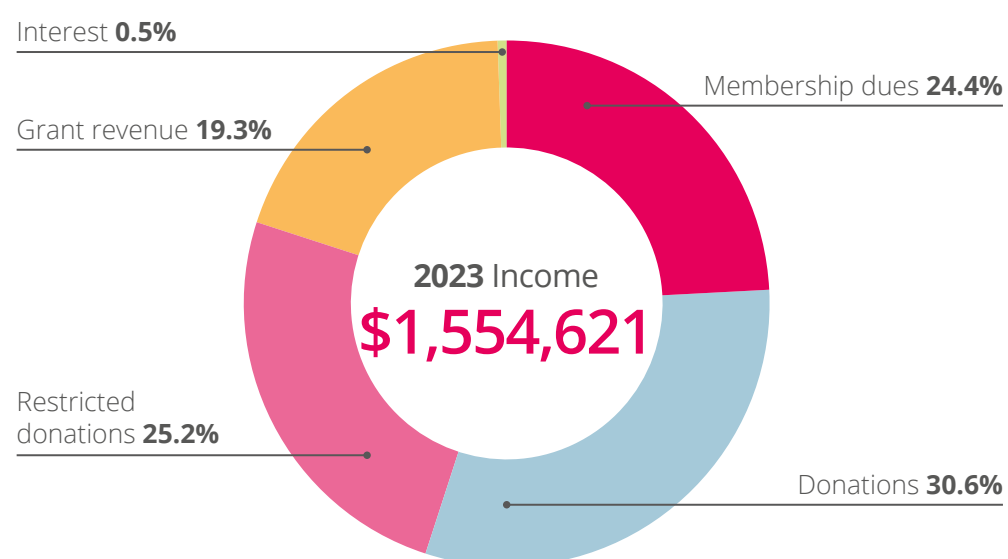
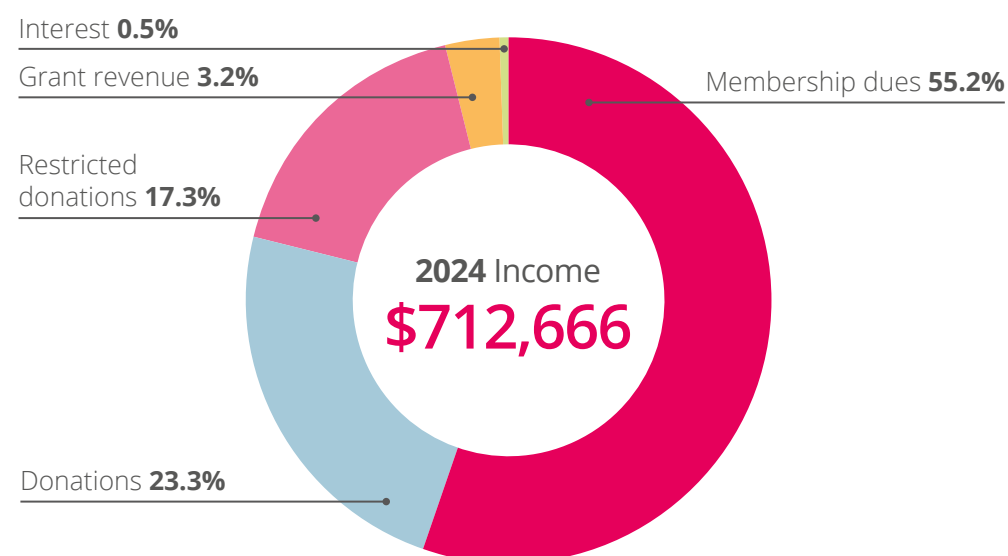
- Members:**
- Humanesia
 - Humanists Malaysia
 - Union des Familles Laiques

- Associates:**
- Humanist Association of Northern Nigeria
 - Central Ontario Humanists Association
 - Secular Humanists - gbs Rhine Neckar
 - Oniros Philosophie Foundation

Members
 Associates



Finances



In 2024, the global economy experienced slower growth, shaped by high interest rates, tighter financial conditions, and ongoing geopolitical uncertainty.

While momentum eased compared to the previous year, many regions continued to demonstrate resilience. This more cautious global environment was reflected in our organization's income performance.

Membership dues increased by 4%, rising from \$379k in 2023 to \$393k in 2024, reflecting continued commitment from our global community. However, donation income, including both unrestricted and restricted contributions, declined significantly, falling from \$868k in 2023 to \$290k in 2024.

Total income for the year was \$713k, down from \$1.55 million in 2023. This decrease was driven by several factors: lower-than-budgeted fundraising income due to a more challenging external funding environment and increased competition for donor support; and the conclusion of three projects previously supported by restricted funding. Additionally, 2023 income was significantly boosted by \$407k in accrued legacy income, which was anticipated at the end of 2023 and received in February 2024. Excluding this one-off legacy contribution, the year-on-year difference reflects a more consistent operational baseline, though still affected by the ending of several restricted funding streams.

In 2024, the US investment market value grew by 9%, a more moderate pace compared to the 20% increase in 2023. This slowdown aligns with broader market trends, as the investment landscape adjusted to a more stabilised post-pandemic environment. While growth has tempered, the continued positive trajectory underscores the resilience of our investment strategy amid evolving market conditions.

At the end of 2024, Humanists International's financial position remained stable, with total assets of \$4.49 million and liabilities of \$64k, compared to \$4.48 million in assets and \$90k in liabilities for 2023.

Summary of Expenditure on Activities (\$)

	Total 2024	Total 2023
Supporting and Developing Humanist Organizations	130,872	487,236
Supporting Humanists at Risk	81,703	64,204
Advocating Humanist Values	190,684	157,665
Management and General	383,576	248,037
Fundraising	94,290	113,817
Total	\$881,125	\$1,070,959

Income and Expenditure

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2024 (\$) Total	2023 (\$) Total
Income				
Membership dues	393,144	-	393,144	379,155
Donations	166,176	123,506	289,682	867,500
Grant revenue	22,563	-	22,563	299,963
Interest	7,277	-	7,277	8,003
Total income		-	\$ 712,666	\$1,554,621
Expenditure				
Personnel	566,135	-	566,135	630,116
Professional fees	84,164	-	84,164	123,720
Office expenses	40,273	-	40,273	37,678
Conferences and meetings	55,098	-	55,098	29,922
Insurance	2,304	-	2,304	3,549
Occupancy	2,569	-	2,569	2,877
Information technology	37,241	-	37,241	26,750
Travel	4,218	-	4,218	50,134
Grants and assistance	89,123	-	89,123	163,112
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	3,101
Total expenditure		-	\$ 881,125	\$1,070,959
Refund of Contributions	-	-	-	(39,420)
Exchange (losses)	(34,905)	-	(34,905)	(91,263)
Net assets released	150,693	(150,693)	0	0
Net investment return		242,088	242,088	464,385
Net Movement in Funds	(176,177)	214,901	\$ 38,724	\$817,364
Balance at January 1, 2024			4,387,774	3,570,410
Balance at December 31, 2024		-	\$ 4,426,498	\$4,387,774

This financial summary has been extracted from the organization's audited consolidated accounts. Copies of the US and the UK audited accounts are available on our website.





Humanists

INTERNATIONAL

Humanists International, Inc. is a US not-for-profit 501-c(3) registered in New York. Registered address: 1821 Jefferson Pl NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Humanists International is also the trading name of Humanists International 2020, a Scottish (UK) charity no. SC050629. Registered address: 272 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4JR, UK.

Email: office@humanists.international

