



The Elders



GLOBAL THREATS, GLOBAL SOLUTIONS

ANNUAL REVIEW 2023

ABOUT THE ELDERS

The Elders are independent global leaders working for **peace, justice, human rights** and a **sustainable planet**.

The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.



MARY ROBINSON
CHAIR



BAN KI-MOON
DEPUTY CHAIR



GRAÇA MACHEL
DEPUTY CHAIR



GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND



HELEN CLARK



ELBEGDORJ TSAKHIA



ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN



HINA JILANI



ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF



RICARDO LAGOS



JUAN MANUEL SANTOS



ERNESTO ZEDILLO

Lakhdar Brahimi, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and **Jimmy Carter** are Elders Emeritus. **Ricardo Lagos** became an Elder Emeritus in February 2024.

Desmond Tutu (1931-2021) and **Kofi Annan** (1938-2018) were founding members of The Elders and served as Chairs from 2007 to 2013 and 2013 to 2018 respectively.

Ela Bhatt (1933-2022) and **Martti Ahtisaari** (1937-2023) were members of The Elders from 2007 to 2016 and 2009 to 2018 respectively.

Cover image:
Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon visit the Tent of Nations during their trip to Israel and Palestine, June 2023.

Photo: Saleem Anfous

Photos of Elders:
Jeff Moore and Thabi Monnagotla



The Elders

ANNUAL REVIEW 2023

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The Elders, who are the trustees for the purposes of charity law and directors for the purposes of company law, present their Annual Review and statutory report together with the financial statements of The Elders Foundation for the year ended 31 December 2023.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

“ The challenges we face can only be met by cooperation, solidarity and compassion.

Mary Robinson



Photo: The Elders / Tihabi Monnakgotla

The Elders launched a new strategy in 2023 to guide our work for the next five years. Our work over this period will focus on three existential threats facing humanity – the climate crisis, pandemics and nuclear weapons – alongside our continuing work on conflict.

We also welcomed a new Elder: Helen Clark, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand and head of the UN Development Programme, who has already made substantial contributions to our work on climate change, conflict and pandemics.

In October 2023, we sadly mourned the passing of our dear friend and Elder Emeritus Martti Ahtisaari. It was my honour to represent The Elders at his state funeral in Helsinki in November, where his global legacy as a peacemaker was rightly acclaimed.

Ricardo Lagos has also decided to join the ranks of Elders Emeritus. We offer him our deep gratitude for all the wisdom he has brought to the group since he joined in 2016.

Across the last year, Elders undertook a wide range of activities in support of our strategic objectives. These included our first visit to Israel and Palestine for eight years in June 2023, and sustained political engagement at the UN and elsewhere to encourage greater progress on pandemics and nuclear negotiations.

Ahead of and during the COP28 climate conference, Elders also sustained a high level of public and private engagement to secure the first ever references to fossil fuels in the final outcome document, and to hold big emitters and other leaders to account.

But it is clear as we move into 2024 that the world sorely needs a change of direction, after the death, destruction and failures of leadership seen in recent months.

As I write, the war in Gaza continues, with Palestinian civilians paying an unconscionable price, and Israeli citizens feeling no safer than they did before 7 October. Israel's military assault has not defeated Hamas.

President Biden's support of the indiscriminate Israeli bombing of Gaza has tarnished the reputation of the United States, with potentially damaging consequences for multilateral cooperation on other global challenges.

The brutality in Israel and Palestine unleashed by the Hamas terrorist attacks of 7 October and Israel's disproportionate response has at times seemed to overshadow the ongoing war in Ukraine. Yet Russia's aggression against Ukraine also constitutes a deepening attack on the concepts of international law and sovereignty.

As what has become a war of attrition grinds on, sustained engagement is needed to support



Elders with Nelson Mandela at their bi-annual board meeting in South Africa, May 2010.
Photo: Jeff Moore

Ukraine's struggle for a just peace. Anything less would be a terrible betrayal, not just of the brave Ukrainian people but of the values of the UN Charter itself.

The Elders remain convinced that the values and institutions of multilateralism, however imperfect, are vital for resolving these conflicts, as well as addressing the existential threats of the climate crisis, pandemics and nuclear weapons.

Effective multilateralism requires a political and psychological shift towards what we are calling "long-view leadership", rooted in the values of truth, justice and human rights.

Long-view leadership means showing the determination to resolve intractable problems, not just manage them; the wisdom to make decisions based on scientific evidence and reason; and the humility to listen to all those affected. It means thinking beyond short-term political cycles to deliver solutions for both current and future generations.

Such leadership should inform urgent changes in policy, at the domestic and international levels, to help tackle existential threats.

This must include how to finance the transition to a safe and healthy future powered by clean energy, relaunch arms control talks to reduce the risk of nuclear war, save millions of lives by concluding

an equitable pandemic treaty, and start to build the global governance needed to make Artificial Intelligence a force for good, not a runaway risk.

In a year when more than half the world's adult population will take part in elections, we encourage all those seeking office to follow the example of our founder, Nelson Mandela, who remains the embodiment of long-view leadership.

The challenges we face can only be met by cooperation, solidarity and compassion: qualities and values Mandela espoused throughout his long life.

The words I heard him speak thirty years ago, on the day of his inauguration as President of South Africa in May 1994, echo still today:

"We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity."

The Elders will continue our work throughout 2024 to realise this vision – and as ever, we remain profoundly grateful for all the support we receive in our collective endeavour.

Mary Robinson, Chair
 January 2024

FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

“ The new strategy has given Elders renewed focus, and a compelling narrative to their work.

Alistair Fernie



2023 was the first year of the Elders' new strategy, which four Elders launched in Washington DC in January alongside the unveiling of the Doomsday Clock.

The clock's hands moved to 90 seconds to midnight, reflecting the range and seriousness of the existential threats affecting the world, three of which our strategy focuses on – the climate crisis, pandemics and nuclear weapons (as well as our ongoing work on the conflicts that continue to divide the world so badly).

The new strategy has given Elders renewed focus, and a compelling narrative to their work – that current leaders are not responding to these existential threats and bitter conflicts with the urgency, far-sightedness and wisdom needed. It has been good to see how well this narrative is resonating with our partners around the world.

The reduction in programmes to four under the new strategy has enabled Elders and the Secretariat to focus more on how best to maximise impact, through both private diplomacy and public advocacy. Our programmes in conflict and climate change are well-established, while Elders are ramping up their work on nuclear weapons,

and successfully launched a new pandemic programme in this year. This programme was given extra momentum by the arrival in September of our newest Elder, Helen Clark, who brings great expertise from co-chairing the Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response with fellow Elder Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, which Ernesto Zedillo was also a member of.

The conflict in Gaza dominated the last quarter of the year, for Elders as for so many others. Our first visit to Israel and Palestine for many years had happened less than four months before the Hamas attacks on Israel, with Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon coming away convinced something terrible was going to happen somewhere in the Palestinian territories. Sadly, they were right. The Elders' strong moral voice on the need for international law to be applied in the crisis has bolstered beleaguered voices, and raised our profile. Elders were also able to visit our other conflict focus countries of Ukraine (twice) and Myanmar, discussing with leaders in both countries how their wars might end.



Elders together for their bi-annual board meeting in Seoul, May 2023.

Photo: Kim Jun

Engagement by all twelve Elders continued to grow in 2023 as COVID constraints receded, with nine Elders attending our first ever Board meeting in Asia (in Seoul) at the end of May, and ten Elders attending the October Board meeting (with an 11th joining virtually). Other highlights included two visits to both China and New York, three women Elders joining forces at the Women Deliver conference in Kigali, and Mary Robinson's high-profile insistence that the climate outcome at COP28 must follow the science, particularly on transitioning away from fossil fuels.

A combination of Elders' messages on COP28 and Gaza drove up our media coverage at the end of the year, and we raised our profile further in middle-income and low-income countries (though there is more to do there).

We ended the year in good shape financially, which enabled us to cope with high inflation but also support 24 Elders' visits to 17 countries around the world, while increasing Secretariat staffing from 17 to 21, including additional expertise in conflict.

After the sad death of President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland in October, I looked through the many wise words this Emeritus Elder had said and written during a lifetime of service to peace. One phrase best encapsulates the spirit of the Elders: *"If the political will is there, we can solve anything"*.

As 2024 begins with a growing sense of gloom across the world, I take hope in that reminder of the determination and optimism which inspired Nelson Mandela to set up the Elders.

Alistair Fernie, Chief Executive
January 2024

2023

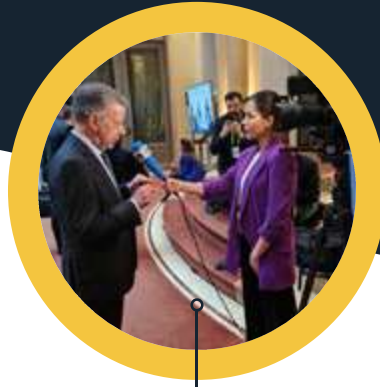
A YEAR IN REVIEW



January

DOOMSDAY CLOCK

Mary Robinson and Elbegdorj Tsakhia joined members of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists for the unveiling of the Doomsday Clock in Washington DC, USA, which moved to 90 seconds to midnight - the closest it has been to catastrophe since its creation in 1947.



February

MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

Gro Harlem Brundtland, Elbegdorj Tsakhia, Juan Manuel Santos and Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein attended the Munich Security Conference for a series of discussions with Foreign Ministers, senior officials and civil society on peace and security.



March

JAPAN AHEAD OF THE G7

Mary Robinson travelled to Japan where she met with the Mayor of Hiroshima and other political and civil society leaders in Tokyo and Hiroshima to build support for the Elders' priorities ahead of Japan's G7 Summit in May.



July

WOMEN DELIVER

Mary Robinson, Graça Machel and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf attended the Women Deliver conference in Kigali, Rwanda, where they held discussions on the importance of women's leadership in tackling existential threats, and met with community members and healthcare workers on the impact of COVID-19.



August

DIGITAL ADVOCACY: CLIMATE HUB

In August, The Elders launched a digital climate hub to communicate the group's key calls to climate action in the run up to COP28, and to amplify a diverse range of voices from across the climate movement.



September

AFRICA CLIMATE SUMMIT

Graça Machel and Ban Ki-moon travelled to Nairobi, Kenya for the Africa Climate Summit, where they encouraged African leaders to show greater climate ambition and leadership.

2023 IN NUMBERS

17
Countries
Visited

9
Heads of State
Met



April

VISIT TO MYANMAR

Ban Ki-moon met with military leaders in Myanmar and called for an immediate cessation of violence and implementation of ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus.



May

ELDERS TOGETHER IN SEOUL

The Elders met in Seoul for their bi-annual board meeting, and released a statement urging for global co-operation to manage the risks and share the benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI).



June

VISIT TO ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon visited Israel and Palestine on the first Elders' mission to the region since 2015. They warned that a 'one-state reality' was rapidly extinguishing the prospect of a two-state solution.



October

HELEN CLARK JOINS FIRST BOARD MEETING AS ELDER

The Elders were pleased to welcome former New Zealand Prime Minister and United Nations Development Programme Administrator Helen Clark as the newest member of their group.



November

DEAR PRESIDENT BIDEN

The Elders sent an open letter to the President of the United States, Joe Biden, on Israel and Palestine, urging him to set out a serious peace plan and help build a new coalition for peace to deliver it.



December

COP28

At COP28, The Elders welcomed the signal that the fossil fuel era must end, but called on world leaders to take more urgent ambition in addressing the existential threat of the climate crisis and supporting the most vulnerable.



Photo: The Elders / Jeff Moore

“

His wisdom and determination should inspire us to redouble our efforts to secure peace in these deeply troubling times.

Mary Robinson
Chair of The Elders

”

MARTTI AHTISAARI (1937-2023)

The Elders were deeply saddened at the passing in October 2023 of their dear friend and colleague Martti Ahtisaari.

Martti Ahtisaari joined The Elders in 2009 and was a hugely admired and respected member of the group, before becoming an Elder Emeritus in 2018. He contributed significantly to the organisation’s work on conflict prevention and resolution, joining delegations to South Sudan, Myanmar, North Korea, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

He was always guided by his deeply-held belief in egalitarianism and fairness, and his conviction that no conflict was too difficult to be solved provided there was sufficient political will on both sides.

Martti Ahtisaari won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008 for his tireless work over three decades in helping resolve conflicts on several continents, including in

Namibia, Aceh, Kosovo and Northern Ireland. After stepping down as President of Finland in 2000, he founded CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, a leading NGO in the field of peace-building.

Mary Robinson, Chair of The Elders, said:

“The Elders are devastated to learn of the death of Martti Ahtisaari. He was a deeply admired friend and colleague who inspired us all with his dedicated commitment to resolving conflict and promoting a fairer world. His wisdom and determination should inspire us to redouble our efforts to secure peace in these deeply troubling times.”



The Elders together at their bi-annual board meeting in London, October 2023.

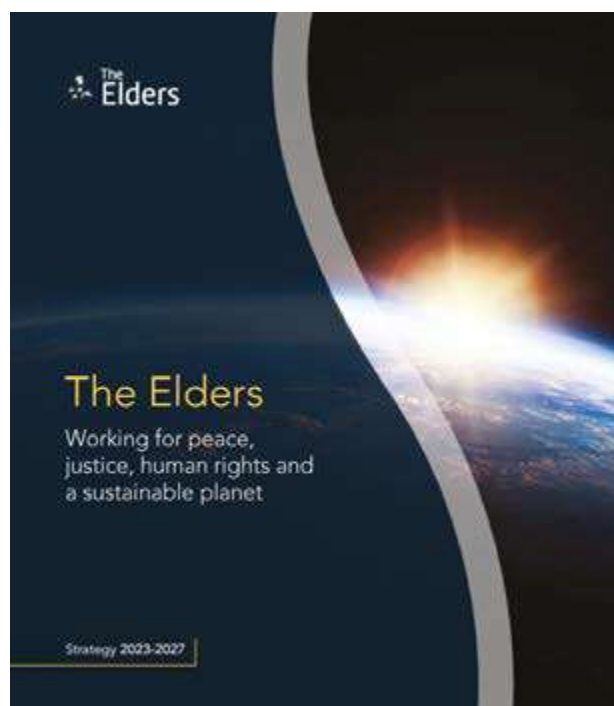
Photo: The Elders / Jeff Moore

THE ELDERS' STRATEGY AND VISION

The Elders are a group of global independent leaders working together for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet.

Founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007, the group has been chaired since 2018 by Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

When Nelson Mandela launched the group, he expressed his hope that *“using their collective experience, their moral courage and their ability to rise above the parochial concerns of nation, race and creed, the Elders can help make our planet a more peaceful, healthy and equitable place to live”*.



The Elders' vision is of a world where people live in peace, conscious of their common humanity and their shared responsibilities for each other, the planet and future generations; where there is universal respect for human rights; where poverty has been eliminated and people are free from fear and oppression, and able to fulfil their true potential.

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Department of Government
Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution



Juan Manuel Santos and other Elders address Georgetown University students in Washington following the Doomsday Clock 2023 announcement
Photo: Georgetown University

Their mission is to use their experience and influence to work for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet. They will engage with global leaders and civil society through private diplomacy and public advocacy, to address existential threats, promote global solutions, and encourage ethical leadership that supports the dignity of all human beings.

Their strategic goals are to seek urgent action on existential threats; promote global solutions to global challenges; encourage ethical leadership and inclusive government; and to support the dignity and rights of all human beings.

Elders work in a variety of ways, drawing on their rich personal and political experience and understanding of international politics, diplomacy, negotiations and mobilisation.

Private diplomacy

The Elders believe that personal contact and relationships at the highest level are critical drivers of change. Through private dialogue with world leaders and decision-makers, they can have sensitive discussions, help broker solutions, and stimulate negotiations. They are well placed to offer private advice and use their collective

experience, independence and influence to help resolve tensions.

Public advocacy

The Elders seek to influence world leaders and policy-makers through communications and engagement. Elders engage with mainstream, specialist and digital media around the world to amplify marginalised voices and solutions, and inspire ethical decision-making. Their public narrative balances an emphasis on existential threats with the spirit of hope at the heart of Mandela's mandate.

Partnerships

The Elders work in partnership with civil society organisations, think tanks, academics, international organisations, media and other stakeholders to inform their strategy and activities. These partnerships help Elders extend their influence, reach and visibility with decision-makers, and amplify the influence of other organisations that share some of their objectives. Working more closely with selected partners, and developing more partnerships with Global South organisations, are important parts of the Elders' work in this strategic period.



Helen Clark and other Elders speak on a panel about the existential threat of pandemics in New York, September 2023.
Photo: The Elders



For the five-year period from 2023-27, the Elders have decided to focus on three programmes that address existential threats to humanity requiring a collective response: the **climate crisis**, **pandemics** and **nuclear weapons**. They will also continue their longstanding work on **conflict**, which is both a threat in itself, and a risk factor for other threats.

The overall programmatic goals for the Elders' initiatives in 2023-27 are:

- **the planetary climate emergency is contained and the most vulnerable protected through revitalised global cooperation;**
- **the world is prepared for the next pandemic, through a transformed multilateral system that is sustainably financed, inclusive, transparent, and equitably governed;**
- **current and future generations are free from the threat of nuclear destruction;**
- **global peace and security are improved through enhanced respect for international law, and more inclusive national and international dialogue.**

In addition, four **cross-cutting commitments** are intrinsic to all aspects of the Elders' work and will be incorporated across the four programmes: **multilateralism**, **human rights**, **gender equality and women in leadership**, and **intergenerational dialogue**.



CLIMATE CRISIS

THE ELDERS' IMPACT



THE IMPACT WE SEEK:

The planetary emergency is contained and the most vulnerable protected through revitalised global co-operation.



LONG-TERM OUTCOME:

Big emitters are held to account for policies that align with the 1.5 degrees limit and the global nature goal.



2023 IMPACT:

The Elders built a strategic relationship with the COP28 Presidency that maintained pressure and focus on securing the first global commitment to transition away from fossil fuels in Dubai.

The COP28 summit was held in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates in November and December 2023. The conference was controversial owing to both its location and the Presidency being held by Sultan Al Jaber, who is also CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

Throughout the year many voices in the climate movement denounced the choice of Presidency, arguing it risked the achievement of positive outcomes from COP28 and eroded trust in the wider multilateral process of climate diplomacy. The Elders remained committed to the success of the multilateral COP process and thus used their independence throughout the year to build a relationship with the Presidency. Through an extensive programme of international activity, they maintained clear messaging on what a good outcome from the COP would look like.

The Elders identified and facilitated opportunities for direct communication between Mary Robinson, in her position as Chair, and Sultan Al Jaber in private and public fora. Once this relationship was established, Mary Robinson used the opportunity to exert influence on the need for the COP28 outcome documents to make direct reference to a fossil fuel phase-out, to help make progress on holding big emitters and leaders to account.

To maintain the pressure for an ambitious and credible outcome at COP28 that reflected the realities and needs of climate-vulnerable states and populations in Africa, Elders spoke at events including the Africa Climate Summit in Kenya and the Women Deliver conference in Rwanda. These also provided an opportunity for Elders to deliver on their cross-cutting commitments on gender equality and intergenerational dialogue, by amplifying the voices of women and youth leaders calling for just transitions, especially for those most vulnerable to climate change. Graça Machel gave an interview to the BBC at the end of the Africa Climate Summit emphasising the importance of African leadership and an equitable global approach to the climate crisis.



DUBAI 2023



Mary Robinson with COP28 President, Sultan Al Jaber at COP28 in Dubai, December 2023.

Photo: The Elders

As COP28 drew close, Mary Robinson secured agreement from Sultan Al Jaber to engage in the online summit “She Changes Climate”. This was aimed at highlighting the gender perspective at COP28 and supporting women’s leadership in wider multilateral fora, in line with Elders’ cross-cutting commitments.

At this summit, streamed to an online global audience, Mary Robinson and Sultan Al Jaber held a vigorous debate on the scientific realities of climate change and the viability of phasing out fossil fuels. Sultan Al Jaber’s views were heavily criticised in the media and by veterans of climate diplomacy including former US Vice-President Al Gore, while Mary Robinson was widely praised for her principled and measured stance.

Mary Robinson’s public debate with Sultan Al Jaber captured media attention as COP28 began, but Elders’ messaging emphasised the importance of all parties collaborating towards a robust outcome that was grounded in scientific realities. Sultan Al Jaber requested a private

meeting with Mary Robinson during the summit, reflecting the high regard in which she was held by senior stakeholders. This meeting was subsequently publicised on the COP Presidency’s social media channels, underscoring the pivotal role Mary Robinson played in Dubai.

After a year of consistently exerting public and private pressure on the need for a fossil fuel phase-out to hold big emitters and leaders to account, Elders welcomed the first ever reference to fossil fuels in the final outcome documents. They nevertheless expressed disappointment that it fell short of committing to a full phase-out, and urged all leaders to show even greater ambition in 2024 and beyond.

Their efforts, whilst not solely responsible for this outcome, helped contribute to the significant pressure that was focused on COP28. Mary Robinson’s engagement with Sultan Al Jaber directly led to science being put front and centre in the final negotiations, setting a precedent for future COPs to follow.



Graça Machel speaks at an event on the importance of intergenerational dialogue in tackling the climate crisis at the African Climate Summit in Nairobi, Kenya, September 2023.

Photo: The Elders

Other climate highlights:

● Supporting Youth Negotiators

In line with their cross-cutting commitment to intergenerational dialogue, the Elders championed equitable action on the climate crisis throughout 2023. Acknowledging the long-term nature of the threat and the need for sustained action over generations, the Elders supported the Climate Youth Negotiator Programme (CYNP), a civil society initiative that offers training and capacity building to youth delegates. Ahead of COP28, 58 countries participated and over 200 individuals benefited from the training. Mary Robinson and Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein took part in several training sessions over the course of the year, sharing insights into international negotiation processes. Graça Machel also met with a group of young African negotiators at a private dinner during the Africa Climate Summit and shared her insights into multilateral negotiations as an African woman. The Elders received positive feedback that their participation had given the young negotiators greater confidence and skills to present their views, both in formal proceedings and behind the scenes within their delegations.

● Preventing G7 backsliding on coal in Japan

Amid concern that Japan would use its G7 Presidency to try to water down climate commitments and pressure other G7 states to back its so-called “clean coal” stance, Mary Robinson visited Tokyo in April. She aimed to hold the country and other big emitters to account and push for policies aligned with the 1.5 degrees goal. Her interventions – through speeches, media interviews and private meetings with ministers – made her one of the first international voices to publicly question Japan’s draft “Green Transformation” policy both in private and public settings. The timing of Mary Robinson’s visit and the strength of her interventions encouraged others to speak out domestically and internationally. Amid growing pressure and critical media coverage, the final outcome of the G7 climate and environment ministerial did not endorse Japan’s push for more efficient fossil fuels.

The Guardian

“ **We need urgent, meaningful investments in order to fortify people, economies and ecosystems against the escalating threats of the climate crisis.** ”

Graça Machel and Ban Ki-moon

News outlet: The Guardian

Date: November 2023

Ban Ki-moon at the Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi, Kenya, September 2023. **Photo:** The Elders





PANDEMICS

THE ELDERS' IMPACT



THE IMPACT WE SEEK:

The world is prepared for the next pandemic, through a transformed multilateral system that is sustainably financed, inclusive, transparent, and equitably governed.



LONG-TERM OUTCOME:

Global leadership on pandemics is aligned with the recommendations of independent panels.



2023 IMPACT:

The Elders leveraged their profile and access to keep global attention focused on pandemic risks.



Gro Harlem Brundtland speaks at a reception marking the World Health Organization's 75th anniversary. **Photo:** WHO/Pierre Albouy

The Elders' new pandemics programme set out an ambitious first year of outcomes and activities to promote transformative leadership, financing and equity in pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPR).

These outcomes were framed in the wider context of Elders' cross-cutting commitments on multilateralism, human rights and gender equality.

The outcomes remained challenging in a global context where leaders' attention was often focused on more immediate crises including Russia's war on Ukraine, the Israel/Hamas conflict and food, energy and inflation shocks.

The Elders' priority was to use their profile and access to ensure global leaders remained cognisant of and responsive to the risks posed by future pandemics, building on existing collaboration with groups such as the Global



Graça Machel and Mary Robinson greet staff at a health centre in Rwanda, July 2023.

Photo: The Elders

Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) and the Independent Panel on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (IPPPR).

Throughout the year, Elders warned that global leaders were not demonstrating they had learned sufficient lessons from COVID-19, and that there was an urgent need to be better prepared for the next pandemic.

At the Munich Security Conference in February 2023, Gro Brundtland had a bilateral meeting with the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, during which she relayed Elders' concerns at insufficient progress in multilateral negotiations on a Pandemics Accord.

Following this meeting, she was invited to deliver the opening speech at a reception marking the WHO's 75th anniversary in May in Geneva, and used this opportunity to reiterate the call for enhanced global political leadership on pandemics.

The Elders' strategic positioning, profile and track records resulted in numerous other invitations and opportunities to keep pandemic risks in focus. Following an op-ed in TIME to launch this new programme of work, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was invited to address the World Bank in Washington DC on the margins of its Spring Meeting where she called for firmer commitments for a new Pandemics Fund.

Ultimately leaders failed to agree on a new global leadership body on pandemics in 2023, but feedback from partners and stakeholders suggests that the Elders' public support and private diplomacy nevertheless helped keep the idea on the table for future discussions rather than it being rejected out of hand. This engagement will continue in 2024 and beyond to strengthen the position of campaigners and move future discussions beyond technical detail and political obfuscation.



Mary Robinson, Graça Machel and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf hear from community members on the impact of COVID-19 at a health centre in Rwanda, July 2023. **Photo:** The Elders

Other pandemics highlights

- **Maintaining pressure at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA):** The High-Level Week of the UN General Assembly in New York in September offered Elders an opportunity to increase pressure on leaders to make progress on pandemic PPR. Mary Robinson, Helen Clark, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein and Juan Manuel Santos participated in a side-event co-organised by the Pandemic Action Network. This show of force by Elders was the most visible pandemics side event of UNGA High-Level Week, and was attended by senior officials from the WHO, the US and other countries. It represented a significant moment in raising awareness of the need for continued engagement on pandemic PPR, on the eve of the first ever UNGA High-Level Meeting (HLM) on the topic. Disappointment about the Political Declaration agreed at the HLM voiced by Elders provided a necessary counterbalance to the excessively positive tone struck by some governments. These points were reinforced in an interview by Helen Clark and Mary Robinson with The Associated Press which was widely syndicated worldwide.

- **Frontline perspectives from Africa:** Listening to and showing solidarity with marginalised communities is integral to the mission and values of the Elders. While attending the Women Deliver conference in Kigali in July, Mary Robinson, Graça Machel and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf met with women, many of them sex workers and HIV positive, and community health care workers (CHWs) on a visit to a local health centre. They heard first-hand accounts of the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 on these groups, including around access to medicines and increased stigmatisation. These encounters informed messages the Elders then delivered at public and private engagements on the need for women's leadership and support for the vital work of CHWs.

TIME

“ **If we follow the same inconsistent, inefficient, and inequitable approach as we did to COVID-19, we risk not only a significant global health threat but also economic, political, and security catastrophe.** ”

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

News outlet: TIME

Date: March 2023

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf speaks at an event on the importance of women's leadership on existential threats at the Women Deliver conference in Kigali, Rwanda, July 2023.
Photo: Women Deliver





NUCLEAR WEAPONS

THE ELDERS' IMPACT



THE IMPACT WE SEEK:

Current and future generations are free from the threat of nuclear destruction.



LONG-TERM OUTCOME:

International attention on the nuclear threat is increased.



2023 IMPACT:

The Elders used meetings with US, Russia and UN officials to push for action on the nuclear threat.

The Elders' work on nuclear weapons in 2023 was focused on consolidating previous engagement on the issue through the new strategic prism of existential threats, and using Elders' political access to keep nuclear risks at the top of leaders' agendas amid increasingly fraught geopolitical tensions.

In Washington DC in January, Mary Robinson and Elbegdorj Tsakhia participated in the unveiling of the Doomsday Clock, which moved to 90 seconds to midnight, the closest in its history. This was combined with an Elders statement and an op-ed from Mary Robinson in South Africa's Mail & Guardian.

The two Elders were joined by Juan Manuel Santos and Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein for other bilateral meetings in Washington DC, with senior Administration officials, Congressional leaders and diplomats. They used these private discussions to press for restoring dialogue between the nuclear states.

The Elders published a new policy paper on nuclear weapons in July 2023, highlighting the urgency for global cooperation and need for tangible action towards disarmament and de-escalation given the heightened geopolitical tensions around Russia's war on Ukraine and Sino-US rivalry, as well as new technological developments such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). This was accompanied by an op-ed by Mary Robinson in TIME magazine, and public engagement around the release of the Oppenheimer film.

The Elders have long identified the fault lines between supporters and opponents of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as an impediment to progress on managing and decreasing nuclear risks. In November 2023, Ernesto Zedillo was invited to speak at the second meeting of the states parties to the TPNW in New York. The Elders used this opportunity to partner with the Permanent Mission of Malaysia to the UN to hold a private meeting between countries with different views on the TPNW. This was used as an important moment to highlight that the nuclear threat should not be seen as the exclusive preserve of the P5 and other declared nuclear states.



While divisions remain between supporters and opponents of the TPNW, the meetings demonstrated Elders' convening power and their ability to facilitate constructive discussion between states on how to reduce the growing risk of nuclear conflict.

Ernesto Zedillo co-hosts a dialogue with the Malaysian Government on the sidelines of the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Photo: Permanent Mission of Malaysia to the United Nations

Other nuclear highlights:

- **Oppenheimer:** A strategic outcome for the Elders' nuclear work is to support building a more broad-based and inclusive anti-nuclear movement to maintain pressure on world leaders. To this end, the Elders used the release of Christopher Nolan's film *Oppenheimer* to increase global media attention on the nuclear threat. They co-hosted a panel event, including the first UK cinematic screening of the film, at which Mary Robinson introduced the Elders' new policy position paper on the nuclear threat and spoke on an expert panel. Juan Manel Santos participated in a virtual event with the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists on the implications of the *Oppenheimer* film and current risks of nuclear conflict. These events were galvanising moments for the anti-nuclear community, where Elders were able to draw on their own experiences in leadership to call for renewed efforts and commitments by decision-makers.

- **Hiroshima:** Mary Robinson visited Hiroshima in March as part of a wider visit to Japan to support its G7 Presidency efforts to reduce nuclear risks. She laid a wreath on behalf of the Elders at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and held meetings with Hiroshima's Governor and Mayor, decrying the terrible impact of nuclear weapons on civilians across generations.

At an international conference in Tokyo focused on Japan's G7 Presidency, she emphasised the critical role the G7 needs to play in de-escalating nuclear risks and tensions. At the subsequent G7 leaders' summit, nuclear weapons were mentioned in the communiqué for the first time, reflecting the greater international attention on the nuclear threat which Elders helped to amplify.



CONFLICT

THE ELDERS' IMPACT



THE IMPACT WE SEEK:

Global peace and security are improved through enhanced respect for international law, and more inclusive national and international dialogue.



LONG-TERM OUTCOME:

International law and accountability are reinforced in conflict contexts, and inclusive dialogue promoted.



2023 IMPACT:

Elders' visits to Israel/Palestine, Ukraine and Myanmar promoted justice and dialogue, and bolstered support to civil society and human rights defenders.

The Elders visited each of the three regions agreed as conflict priorities in 2023: Israel/Palestine, Ukraine and Myanmar.

In line with the 2023-27 strategic objectives, engagement focused on improving global peace and security through enhanced respect for international law, and encouraging more inclusive national and international dialogue.

Progress towards a lasting resolution of the three conflicts was set back by a range of factors, including the terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October and Israel's subsequent assault on Gaza, the lack of a decisive military breakthrough by Ukraine against occupying Russian forces and resistance to negotiations on both sides, and further entrenchment of military rule in Myanmar alongside a lack of concerted action by ASEAN and the UN.

Nevertheless, the Elders' visits to all three conflict countries in 2023 contributed to the maintenance of global pressure to uphold international law and accountability, and offered support to civil society groups and human rights defenders in challenging circumstances.

Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon visited **Israel and Palestine** in June, the first Elders' visit to the region since 2015. They met Israeli and Palestinian political leaders and civil society, toured East Jerusalem, and visited a Palestinian farm in Area C of the West Bank surrounded by illegal Jewish settlements. Through private diplomacy and media engagement, Elders highlighted the factors that have created a "one state reality" on the ground and stressed the growing evidence of apartheid. They called for accountability for violations of international law on both sides of the conflict, whilst emphasising Israel's dominant position as the occupying power, and warned that all parties needed to act "to avert a descent into uncontrollable violence".

Following the 7 October attacks and ensuing waves of violence, Elders have spoken out publicly through statements and media interviews on the atrocities being committed by both sides, and on the grave human rights and humanitarian crisis in Gaza.



Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon meet Mohammad Shtayyeh, Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, in Ramallah, June 2023.
Photo: The Elders

Their statements, stressing that Israeli and Palestinian lives should be valued equally, were welcomed by civil society groups and human rights defenders on both sides as an important demonstration of solidarity in an ever-more polarised and traumatised environment.

Building on meetings with former Israeli diplomats and security officials in June, Elders met privately with families of Israeli hostages held by Hamas, as well as medical personnel in Gaza and civil society and human rights defenders on both sides of the conflict. In November, they co-signed an open letter to President Biden, calling for him to set out a serious peace plan and help build a new coalition for peace to deliver it, which received notable coverage on CNN, the BBC and other global news outlets. Through media coverage and digital amplification, it is estimated that over 143 million people worldwide engaged with the open letter.

Project Syndicate

“

Failure to defend the core principles of sovereignty and independence anywhere risks opening the door to autocratic and aggressive regimes everywhere.

Ban Ki-moon and Juan Manuel Santos

News outlet: Project Syndicate

Date: February 2023

”



Mary Robinson with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Greta Thunberg, Margot Wallström and others to launch the High-Level Working Group on the Environmental Consequences of the War in Kyiv, June 2023.

Photo: Office of the President of Ukraine

On **Ukraine**, Elders engaged in support of the proposed special tribunal to try Russian leaders for the crime of aggression, and for this to be mandated by the UN General Assembly to ensure maximum international legitimacy. The Elders have pressed for the fully international model to ensure that immunities for the top Russian leadership can be overcome. Ban Ki-moon wrote an op-ed in *The Jakarta Post* in April in support of the proposal, and participated in a video campaign designed by the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to explain why an international special tribunal is the best way of securing justice. Mary Robinson also promoted the initiative at a June 2023 press briefing during the first of her two visits to Kyiv this year as a member of the International Working Group on the Environmental Consequences of War. This working group is supporting Ukraine's pioneering efforts, despite the ongoing conflict, to hold Russia accountable for crimes against the environment and to ensure that the natural world is no longer a silent victim of conflict. These interventions were welcomed by the Ukrainian government as helping to build support for elements of President Zelenskyy's peace formula, including accountability and environmental justice.

In April, Ban Ki-moon visited **Myanmar** at the rare invitation of the country's ruling military junta. He held private meetings in the capital Naypyidaw, including with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, during which he raised Elders' concerns related to the ongoing civil conflict. This included messages urging an immediate cessation of violence, constructive and inclusive dialogue between all parties, and the release of all arbitrarily detained prisoners. Ban Ki-moon also warned that holding elections under current conditions would risk further violence and division. These messages were reinforced in a public statement issued at the visit's conclusion. He and other Elders have since held private meetings with the National Unity Government to discuss their position and vision for Myanmar's transition to peace, democracy, and civilian rule.

Messages from the visit were also conveyed privately to ASEAN leaders. Whilst it is not possible to attribute decisions made by the military leadership to Ban Ki-moon's visit, it can be noted that around ten days after the visit, the military announced the release of around 2,100 prisoners, including some political prisoners. This was the largest prisoner release since the military coup in February 2021.



Hina Jilani speaks to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk at the "Vienna World Conference 30 years On: Our Rights - Our Future", June, 2023
Photo: The Elders

CROSS-CUTTING COMMITMENTS

In their 2023-27 strategy, Elders committed to incorporating four cross-cutting themes across all areas of their work: multilateralism, human rights, gender equality and women in leadership, and intergenerational dialogue.

A cross-cutting coordinator was appointed in the Secretariat to ensure consideration of these commitments across all four programmes, as well as to ensure regular tracking and reporting to the Board of Trustees. Impact related to cross-cutting commitments is captured within the programme sections above.

Elders are also committed to ensuring that cross-cutting commitments are considered in how they work. An assessment of panels attended in 2023 found a reasonably positive picture: 53% were gender diverse, all were geographically diverse and 60% were multigenerational. However, in many instances it was the Elders' own participation that created the diversity.

Staff also undertook research to better understand and leverage the synergies between cross-cutting commitments and thematic areas of focus.

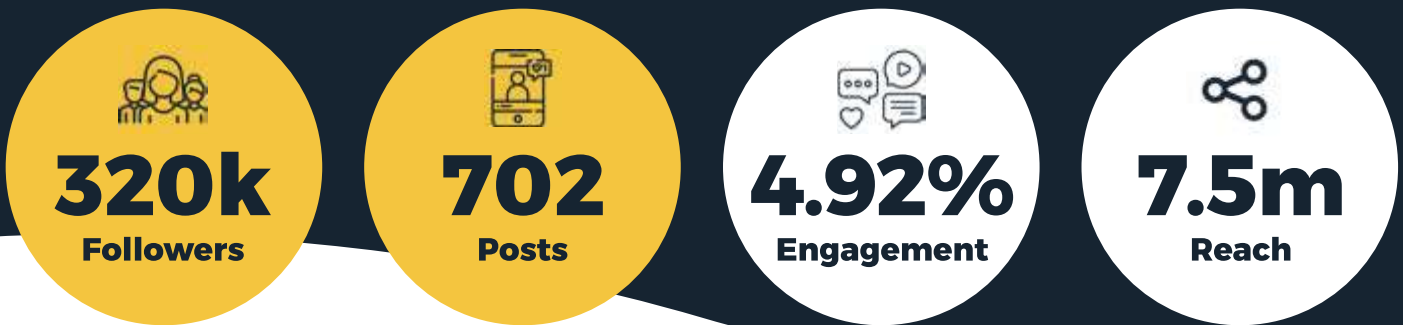
The values of human rights and multilateralism are intrinsic to all aspects of the Elders' work and identity. A highlight in 2023 was Hina Jilani's participation in the Vienna+30 conference in June at the invitation of the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights. She used her keynote address to highlight the value of a human rights-based approach to tackling existential threats and conflict, noting how the climate crisis is already having a multiplier effect on conflicts and governance issues throughout the world.

The Elders also helped draw public attention to the 80th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights in December, with a digital campaign focused on Nelson Mandela's legacy to human rights. Several Elders shared thoughts and reflections about Mandela in December, marking both the UNDHR anniversary, and the 10th anniversary of his passing.

COMMUNICATIONS SUMMARY

The Elders' digital engagement grew in 2023 to reach 320,098 followers across social media platforms. The organisation's website was relaunched to reflect the new strategic priorities and programmatic focus on existential threats and conflict work.

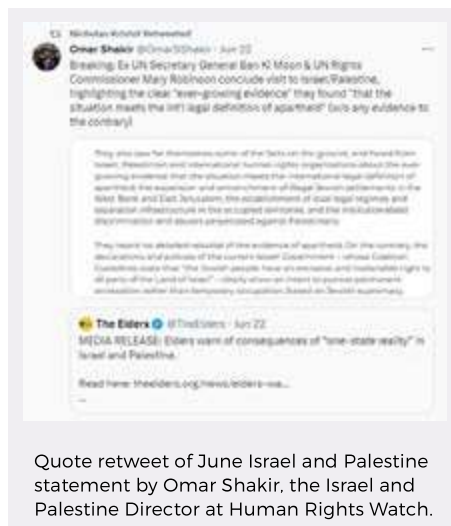
New digital hubs were launched on the site to promote advocacy and civil society engagement with regard to the climate crisis and pandemics. The climate hub was launched in August around the Africa Climate Summit, and the pandemics hub around the High-Level Week of the UN General Assembly in September.



The Elders invested more time and resources in developing other social media platforms including Instagram, which is more widely used by younger generations.

Instagram engagement rates between May-October 2023 were 47% higher than the equivalent period in 2022, suggesting an increase in programmatic content has resonated with target audiences. The utilisation of carousel post formats to repackage op-eds and statements for an Instagram audience has continued to garner good engagement.

Twitter/X nevertheless remained an important platform and engagement tool, particularly regarding the amplification of the Elders' open letter to President Biden in November 2023 on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



MEDIA SUMMARY

The Elders engaged intensively with international media throughout the year, including interviews, op-eds and press conferences.

A particular emphasis was placed on increasing reach and exposure to media in the Global South, including the Jakarta Post, O Globo in Brazil, BBC Africa and the Mail & Guardian in South Africa.



The biggest spikes for media coverage coincided with the visit by Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon to Israel and Palestine in June, Mary Robinson and Helen Clark's interview with The Associated Press in New York during UNGA High-Level Week, and Elders' reactions to the war in Gaza including interviews with the BBC, CNN and Latin American media.

Overall global media combined reach amounted to 13.49 billion in 2023, compared to 9.5 billion in 2022, up 42%. Media mentions rose 37.8% to 4.18k in 2023 compared to 3.04k in 2022.



GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE ELDERS

Governance

The Elders Foundation ('The Elders') is a charitable company limited by guarantee, the governing document being the charity's Articles of Association. The charity's objectives as set out in the Articles are to: prevent and relieve poverty; relieve sickness and ill health; advance environmental protection and improvement; advance conflict resolution and reconciliation; promote human rights; education; and any other charitable purpose. The members of The Elders are the Board of Trustees, and no trustee has any interest in the charity's funds.

The Elders is governed by its Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees meets twice a year and is responsible for setting strategic direction and the governance of The Elders. The Board of Trustees has delegated the oversight of the organisation between Board meetings to an Executive Committee made up of four or five trustees. The Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee have delegated the day-to-day management of the organisation to the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team. The Audit, Finance and Governance Committee, chaired by Gro Brundtland, provides a further level of scrutiny.

New trustees are appointed by the Board, and are selected based upon their skills, track record and experience. There is an aim for geographical and gender balance across the trustees. Each year a third of the trustees, being those longest in office, retire. Retiring trustees may be reappointed. The Board of Trustees may appoint Emeritus Elders and Patrons. The Board of Trustees has appointed an Advisory Council which provides support and advice to the trustees and the Chief Executive.

During 2022 the Board of Trustees approved a five year strategy for 2023-2027. Annual objectives are agreed by the Chair and the Chief Executive based on the strategy and reviewed along with the budget and financial performance.

Small Company Provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Small Companies Regime under the Companies Act 2006.

Public Benefit

The Elders exists and operates for the public benefit through its private and public advocacy and other activities. The trustees confirm that they have paid due regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission under section 17 of the Charities Act 2011.

Fundraising

The Elders Foundation does not carry out direct fundraising with the public, or use any third party organisation for that purpose. Throughout the year, direct approaches are made to individuals and organisations by The Elders staff. The Elders is voluntarily a member of the Fundraising Regulator in the UK and follows best practice. No complaints were received about its fundraising activities during the financial year. If a complaint were to be received, it would be handled by a senior member of staff or trustee.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are directors of the company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which 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 then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102);
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable United Kingdom Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for the keeping of proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for the safeguarding of the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Each of the trustees confirms that:

- so far as the trustee is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware; and
- the trustee has taken all the steps that he/she ought to have taken as a trustee in order to make himself/herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditor is aware of that information.

This confirmation is given and should be interpreted in accordance with the provisions of S418 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

FINANCIAL AND RISK REVIEW FOR THE YEAR TO 31 DECEMBER 2023

Income

The Elders' income for the year was £3.5 million (2022: £3.3 million). This includes £0.09 million (2022: £0.3 million) of restricted funding used for our programmatic and communications work. All restricted income was fully expended during the year.

Expenditure

The Elders' expenditure for the year was £3.1 million (2022: £3.1 million). This relates primarily to the delivery of a global programme of activities agreed by the Elders, supported by a Secretariat based in London. The Secretariat provides the Elders with policy research, conducts advocacy and communications work, and is responsible for logistics and other support activities.

Reserves

The approach of The Elders is to maintain sufficient available reserves to enable normal operating activities to continue for a period of time, should a shortfall in income or unexpected expenditure occur, taking account of potential risks that may arise. The policy during 2023 was to maintain available reserves sufficient to meet at least 12 months' normal operating expenditure. In October 2023, Trustees approved a new reserves policy, reflecting professional advice and UK charity sector practice, resulting in a requirement to maintain sufficient reserves for nine months' operating expenditure. During 2024 and subsequent years, some reserves will be spent down to fund more charitable activity.

Reserves at the end of 2023, all unrestricted, were £4.0 million (2022: £3.6 million), of which £256K

was represented by the charity's fixed assets, with a further £400K being designated by trustees at the balance sheet date, leaving available reserves of £3.4 million which represents over 10 months expenditure based on the 2024 budget.

This is more than the nine months required under the revised 2024 reserves policy.

The designated fund has been set aside for programmatic activity as a result of a change in donor income arising from different giving patterns in 2023 and is expected to contribute to the first four months of 2024 operations.

Based on the reserves position of the charity at the end of the year and indications of the Board and the charity's funders to continue the work of the charity into the foreseeable future, the trustees have concluded that there are no material uncertainties related to events or conditions that cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern.

Key Management Pay Policy

The charity aims to pay staff at comparable levels to other charities operating in the United Kingdom, taking into account the global reach, experience and gravitas needed by the Secretariat and the responsibility of serving a Board of eminent global leaders. The trustees consider that they, together with the Senior Management Team, comprise the key management personnel in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the charity on a day-to-day basis. Members of the Senior Management Team are listed on page 35. None of the Trustees received any remuneration for their role as a member of the key management personnel during the year.

The salary of the Chief Executive is agreed by the Nominations Committee on appointment, while other salaries are approved by the Chief Executive on appointment. Annual salary increases for all staff are approved by the Executive Committee, and the Chief Executive has delegated authority to adjust the salaries of individual staff.

Carbon Offsetting

The Elders have partnered with UK-based charity Climate Stewards to offset the carbon emissions generated by business flights. In 2023, The Elders donated £11,726 to Climate Stewards, based on total flight emissions of 469 tonnes of CO₂. Climate Stewards will use these funds to support projects that aim to remove, avoid and reduce carbon emissions and also bring multiple benefits to people and places being hit first and worst by climate change. Partner projects, based in Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Nepal and Peru, work with schools, churches and local NGOs to manage small-scale schemes that improve biodiversity, soil conservation, clean water and improved health.

Risk Management

The Elders maintain a robust risk management process to identify, assess and manage risk. A risk register is maintained and reviewed twice annually by the Secretariat's Senior Management Team and once annually by the Board of Trustees. Each risk in the register is assessed according to likelihood and potential impact, and any controls put in place to mitigate the risk are implemented and monitored by a designated risk owner.

Effective delivery of The Elders' 2023-27 strategy requires a group of Elders with a global profile, who are committed to and engaged with our programmes. In order to maintain a such a group of Elders, the Chief Executive meets with the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees regularly to discuss new Elder recruitment. A longer-term pipeline of potential candidates is maintained in anticipation of some existing Elders ceasing their active roles.

Maintaining sufficient and diversified funding streams is crucial to The Elders' financial stability and ability to fulfil its mission. The Director of Development and Corporate Services and the Chief Executive consistently monitor the organisation's finances and funding pipeline, with a focus on diversifying funding streams and securing a range of donors who commit to differing levels of funding across varying timescales.

The Secretariat must be adequately staffed and equipped to support Elders in the delivery of the strategy. The staff and consultancy profile of the organisation is constantly evolving as new priorities emerge and needs change. The Trustees receive organisational updates bi-annually at Board meetings, as well as receiving ad-hoc updates on major Secretariat changes as needed.

Finally, there is a risk that The Elders is not seen as the truly global and independent organisation that it was set up and aspires to be. This risk is carefully managed by taking an even-handed global perspective across all activity. The geographical diversity of Elders themselves, as well as Advisory Council members and Secretariat staff, can also contribute to this perception, and remain under regular review.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees:

Ban Ki-moon

Helen Clark (Appointed 14 September 2023)

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

Ricardo Lagos (Became an Elder Emeritus 2 February 2024)

Mary Robinson (Chair)

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Gro Brundtland

Elbegdorj Tsakhia

Hina Jilani

Graça Machel

Juan Manuel Santos

Ernesto Zedillo

Executive Committee:

Mary Robinson (Chair)

Ban Ki-Moon (Deputy Chair)

Ernesto Zedillo

Graça Machel (Deputy Chair)

Gro Brundtland

Patrons:

Richard Branson

Peter Gabriel

Elders Emeritus:

Martti Ahtisaari (Died 16 October 2023)

Jimmy Carter

Fernando H Cardoso

Lakhdar Brahimi

Senior Management Team:

Alistair Fernie (Chief Executive)

Claire Ireland (Director of Programmes)

Vanessa Smye (Director of Development and Corporate Services)

Luke Upchurch (Director of Communications)

Registered Office:

3 Tilney Street, London, W1K 1BJ

Auditors:

Buzzacott LLP
130 Wood Street
London, EC2V 6DL

Bankers:

HSBC Bank plc
21 Kings Mall, King Street
London, W6 0QF

Lawyers:

Bates Wells Braithwaite
10 Queen Street Place
London, EC4R 1BE

Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP
Adelaide House, London Bridge
London EC4R 9HA

By order of the Board of Trustees



Mary Robinson (Chair)

On 16 April 2024

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ELDERS FOUNDATION

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Elders Foundation (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 December 2023 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, and statement of cash flows, the principal accounting policies and the notes to the financial statements. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of 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 2023 and of 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.

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 the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable 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 charitable 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 trustees 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 (being the "Message from the Chair", "Forward by the Chief Executive" and "2023 - A Year in Review", and all of its associated sub-sections) other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon.

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.

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 course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. 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' report, which is also the directors' report for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the trustees' report, which is also the directors' report for the purposes of company law, has 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 charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees' report. We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires 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; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the trustees' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, 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

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 the 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:

How the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities including fraud

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- the engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- we identified the laws and regulations applicable to the charitable company through discussions with management, and from our commercial knowledge and experience of the sector;
- we focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the charitable company, including the Charities Act 2011, Companies Act 2006, anti-bribery and employment legislation;
- we assessed the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations identified above through making enquiries of management and inspecting legal correspondence; and
- identified laws and regulations were communicated within the audit team regularly and the team remained alert to instances of non-compliance throughout the audit.

We assessed the susceptibility of the company's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur, by:

- making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud; and
- considering the internal controls in place to mitigate risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions;
- assessed whether judgements and assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates set out in the accounting policies (note 1a) were indicative of potential bias; and
- used data analytics to identify any significant or unusual transactions and identify the rationale for them.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;
- reading the minutes of trustee meetings;
- enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims; and
- reviewing any available correspondence with HMRC and the company's legal advisors (although none was noted as being received by the charitable company).

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

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. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters 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 anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Edward Finch (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Buzzacott LLP,
Statutory Auditor
130 Wood Street
London
EC2V 6DL
16 April 2024



THE ELDERS FOUNDATION STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(Incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

		2023			2022		
	Note	Unrestricted £000	Restricted £000	Total £000	Unrestricted £000	Restricted £000	Total £000
INCOME FROM:							
Donations and grants							
- General		3,294	-	3,294	2,926	-	2,926
- Project funding		-	95	95	-	340	340
Interest income		100	-	100	36	-	36
Other		-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL INCOME		3,394	95	3,489	2,962	340	3,302
EXPENDITURE ON:							
Raising funds	2	217	-	217	324	-	324
Charitable activities	2						
Climate Crisis		834	85	919	664	85	749
Pandemics		558	-	558	-	-	-
Nuclear Weapons		542	10	552	-	-	-
Conflict		818	-	818	493	42	535
Ethical Leadership		-	-	-	548	38	586
Refugees and Migration		-	-	-	234	41	275
Universal Health Coverage		-	-	-	215	40	255
Access to Justice		-	-	-	272	94	366
Total charitable activities expenditure		2,752	95	2,847	2,426	340	2,766
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		2,969	95	3,064	2,750	340	3,090
Net income and net movement in funds	3	425	-	425	212	-	212
Fund balances brought forward		3,608	-	3,608	3,396	-	3,396
FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD		4,033	-	4,033	3,608	-	3,608

There are no gains or losses other than those shown above.

THE ELDERS FOUNDATION BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Note	2023 £000	2022 £000
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	7	256	336
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	8	272	432
Short term deposit		1,924	1,400
Cash at bank and in hand		2,032	2,498
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		4,228	4,330
LIABILITIES			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	9	(356)	(1,058)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		3,872	3,272
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		4,128	3,608
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	10	(83)	-
Provision for liabilities	11	(12)	-
TOTAL NET ASSETS		4,033	3,608
The funds of the charity			
Represented by Tangible fixed assets		256	336
Represented by General funds	14	3,377	3,272
Represented by Designated funds	14	400	-
Total unrestricted funds		4,033	3,608
TOTAL FUNDS		4,033	3,608

The notes on pages 41 to 46 form part of the financial statements. These were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees and signed on behalf by Mary Robinson (Chair) 16 April 2024



A registered charity in England and Wales. Reg. no. 1132397

A company limited by guarantee in England and Wales. Reg. no. 06317151

THE ELDERS FOUNDATION STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Note	2023 £000	2022 £000
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:			
Net movement in funds for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)		425	212
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation charges		108	67
Interest income		(100)	(36)
Change in cash and cash equivalents due to exchange rate movement		(8)	(4)
Decrease (increase) in debtors		160	(10)
(Decrease) increase in creditors		(607)	305
Net cash (used in) provided by operating activities		(22)	534
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:			
Loss from the disposal of property, plant and equipment		-	106
Purchase of equipment	7	(28)	(210)
(Purchase) sale of short term deposits		(524)	500
Interest income		100	36
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities		(452)	432
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		(474)	966
Cash and cash equivalents at the start of the reporting period		2,498	1,528
Change in cash equivalents due to exchange rate movements		8	4
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		2,032	2,498

The Elders Foundation does not have any borrowings.

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items initially recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policies or notes. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006. The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements are presented in sterling and are rounded to the nearest thousand pounds. In the Board's opinion, there are no significant accounting estimates or areas of judgement in these financial statements.

b) Going concern

The trustees have assessed whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in preparing these financial statements. The trustees have made this assessment in respect to a period of at least one year from the date of approval of these financial statements. The trustees have concluded that there are no material uncertainties related to events or conditions that cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern. This is because of the reserves position of the charity at the end of the year and indications of the Board and the funders to continue the work of the charity into the foreseeable future.

c) Income

Income is recognised in the period in which the charity is entitled to receipt, the amount can be measured reliably and it is probable that the funds will be received. Income is deferred only when the charity has to fulfil performance related conditions before becoming entitled to it or where the donor or funder has specified that the income is to be expended in a future accounting period. Donations are recognised when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity.

d) Expenditure

All expenditure is recognised on an accrual basis, and is classified in the SOFA according to the activity to which it relates. Expenditure includes VAT, which cannot be recovered, as part of the expenditure to which it relates. Any grants payable are expensed at the point at which the funds are committed. Costs of raising funds comprise the costs associated with attracting voluntary income. Expenditure on charitable activities includes all direct and indirect costs of delivering the charitable activities. Expenditure on the charity's programmes has been apportioned based on the percentage allocation of staff time spent on programmatic activity. Support costs are allocated in proportion to the costs of activities undertaken directly, and include the cost of staff, plus allocated overheads, whose primary functions are: financial management, human resources, information technology, office management and general management.

e) Operating Leases

Operating lease rentals are charged in the SOFA on a straight line basis over the life of the lease.

f) Pension costs

Pension contributions paid by The Elders in respect of employees are to a defined contribution scheme and are charged to the SOFA as they become payable.

g) Foreign currencies

Assets and liabilities in foreign currencies are translated into sterling at the rates of exchange ruling at the balance sheet date. Transactions in foreign currencies are translated into sterling at the rate of exchange ruling at the date of the transaction. Exchange differences are taken into account in arriving at the net movement in funds.

h) Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets above £1,000 are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful economic lives. Depreciation is provided at a rate calculated to write off the cost of each asset over its expected useful life as follows:

- Computers, software and equipment:
3 to 5 years
- Leasehold improvements and furniture:
5 years taking account of the remaining period of the lease.

i) Debtors

Debtors are recognised at the settlement amount, less any provision for non-recoverability. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid. They have been discounted to the present value of the future cash receipt where such discounting is material.

j) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand represents such accounts and instruments that are available on demand or have a maturity of less than three months at the balance sheet date. Deposits for more than three months but less than one year have been disclosed as short term deposits.

k) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised when there is an obligation at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are recognised at the amount the charity anticipates it will pay to settle the debt. They have been discounted to the present value of the future cash payment where such discounting is material.

l) Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are those that are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are for use only on the purposes prescribed by the donors.

2. EXPENDITURE

	2023			2022		
	Direct Costs £000	Support Costs £000	Total £000	Direct Costs £000	Support Costs £000	Total £000
Cost of raising funds	118	99	217	116	208	324
Charitable activities						
Climate Crisis	499	420	919	270	479	749
Pandemics	303	255	558	-	-	-
Nuclear Weapons	300	252	552	-	-	-
Conflict	444	374	818	163	372	535
Ethical Leadership	-	-	-	122	464	586
Refugees and Migration	-	-	-	55	220	275
Universal Health Coverage	-	-	-	52	203	255
Access to Justice	-	-	-	58	308	366
Total charitable activities expenditure	1,546	1,301	2,847	720	2,046	2,766
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,664	1,400	3,064	836	2,254	3,090

In 2023 The Elders adopted a five year strategy with four programmes on the climate crisis, pandemics, nuclear weapons and conflict. Programmes from the previous strategy were either stopped or became part of the new strategy.

	2023 £000	2022 £000
Analysis of support costs:		
Staff	466	890
Governance	20	15
Other	914	1,349
Total	1,400	2,254

3. NET INCOME

	2023 £000	2022 £000
Net expenditure is stated after charging:		
Depreciation	108	67
Statutory Audit Fees		
· Current year	13	11
· Other Services	-	3

4. STAFF COSTS

	2023 £000	2022 £000
Wages and salaries	1,289	1,128
Social security costs	141	137
Pension costs	125	110
Other employee benefits	5	4
TOTAL	1,560	1,379

The Elders has a defined contribution pension scheme to which the company contributes 10% of pensionable salary. No employees receive benefits under a defined benefit pension scheme. There were no severance payments included within salaries and wages (2022: £0).

NUMBERS OF EMPLOYEES

	2023 Number	2022 Number
The average number of full time employees for the year was:		
Corporate Services and Executive	9	11
Communications	5	4
Programmes	7	4
TOTAL	21	19

REMUNERATION

	2023 Number	2022 Number
The number of employees whose remuneration during the year fell within the following bands were:		
£60,001 - £70,000	1	-
£70,001 - £80,000	2	3
£80,001 - £90,000	1	2
£90,001 - £100,000	2	-
£140,001 - £150,000	1	1

Pension contributions totalling £62,175 (2022: £53,862) were paid in respect of these higher paid employees, all of whom were accruing benefits under a defined contribution pension scheme.

5. KEY MANAGEMENT REMUNERATION

Total employee remuneration and benefits paid to key management personnel, being the members of the charity's Senior Management Team, in the year totalled £521,000 (2022: £532,000).

6. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES

No trustee received any remuneration in the year.

The charity arranges collectively, and pays directly, for the costs of trustees to attend meetings and events on behalf of the charity. These costs are attributable collectively to the charitable activities of the charity rather than support costs, as are the costs reimbursed to trustees.

During the year travel expenses of £428,531 were paid directly to airlines, hotels and other suppliers for 12 trustees (2022: £299,224 for 11 trustees) to cover their travel costs whilst on trips delivering the charitable activities of the charity. No individual travel expenses were reimbursed to any trustee (2022: £0) to cover their travel costs whilst on trips delivering the charitable activities of the charity.

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	2023			2022		
	Computers, Equipment & Furniture £000	Leasehold Improvements £000	Total £000	Computers, Equipment & Furniture £000	Leasehold Improvements £000	Total £000
Cost						
At 1 January	201	338	539	205	327	532
Additions	28	-	28	46	164	210
Disposals	-	-	-	(48)	(152)	(200)
At 31 December	229	338	567	203	339	542
Depreciation						
At 1 January	122	81	203	111	122	233
Charge for the year	35	73	108	32	325	67
Disposals	-	-	-	(23)	(71)	(94)
At 31 December	157	154	311	120	86	206
Net book value at 31 December	72	184	256	83	253	336

8. DEBTORS

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
Prepayments and other debtors	218	378
Rent Deposit 3 Tilney Street	54	54
Total	272	432

The rent deposit is to be repaid on exit of the lease at 3 Tilney Street.

9. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
Accruals and Deferred Income	193	936
Other creditors	123	122
Rent Free Accrual	40	-
Total	356	1,058

Included in the above is £118,000 of deferred income (2022: £815,000) for work to be undertaken in future accounting periods.

10. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
Rent Free Accrual	83	-
Total	83	-

The rent-free accrual for 2023 reflects the signing of a new 5 year lease in January 2023.

11. PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
Provision for dilapidations	12	-
Total	12	-

12. COMMITMENTS UNDER OPERATING LEASES

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
At 31 December 2023 the charity had the following future minimum commitments in respect of non-cancellable operating leases:		
- within one year	216	-
- between one and five years	655	-
Total	871	-

13. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

With the exception of the disclosures in note 5 and 6, there were no other transactions with related parties in either the current or prior years.

14. FUND ANALYSIS

RESTRICTED FUNDS	2023				
	At 1 January £000	Income £000	Expenditure £000	Transfers £000	At 31 December £000
Climate Crisis	-	85	85	-	-
Communications	-	10	10	-	-
TOTAL	-	95	95	-	-

	2022				
	At 1 January £000	Income £000	Expenditure £000	Transfers £000	At 31 December £000
Climate Crisis	-	85	85	-	-
Communications	-	86	86	-	-
Strategic Review	-	169	169	-	-
TOTAL	-	340	340	-	-

Specific grants from Foundations were received during the above years for our climate crisis work and nuclear communications, which were all expended in the year.

DESIGNATED FUND

The designated fund of £400k has been set aside for programmatic activity as a result of a change in donor income arising due to different giving patterns in 2023 and is expected to contribute to the first four months of 2024 operations.

The Elders are grateful to the members of the Advisory Council, whose support and advice enables them to carry out their work.

Richard Branson
Virgin Unite

Peter Gabriel
The Peter Gabriel Trust

Jeremy Collier
Jeremy Collier Foundation

Don Gips
Skoll Foundation

Srik Gopal
Humanity United

Lisa Harris

Judith Lingeman
Dutch Postcode Lottery

Randy Newcomb
Omidyar Group

Jean Oelwang
Virgin Unite

Rob Phillpot
Gravel Road Ventures
and Foundation

Muneer Satter

Shannon Sedgwick Davis
Bridgeway Foundation

Jeff Skoll
Skoll Foundation

Lulit Solomon
Jeremy Collier Foundation

John Taylor
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

Supported by



World's third-largest private charity donor



SATTER FOUNDATION

Donation of €500,000 in 2023



The Elders are also grateful to all other donors who provided generous support in 2023, including:

- Caldera Foundation
- Anonymous donors

“ The Elders can speak freely and boldly, working both publicly and behind the scenes.

They will reach out to those who most need their help.






They will support courage where there is fear, foster agreement where there is conflict and inspire hope where there is despair.

Nelson Mandela, Founder of The Elders - 2007



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The Elders Foundation

3 Tilney Street
London
W1K 1BJ
United Kingdom
+44 (0) 207 013 4646

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