

# Annual report

2017-18



**open briefing**  
the civil society intelligence agency



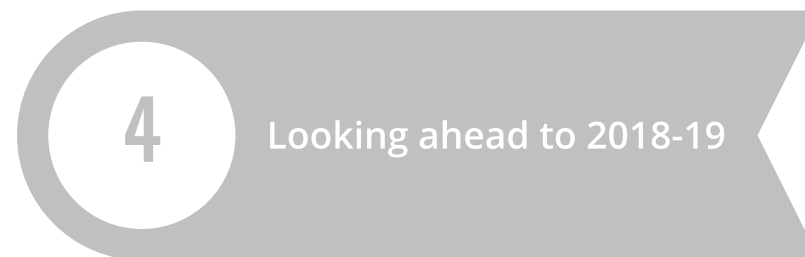
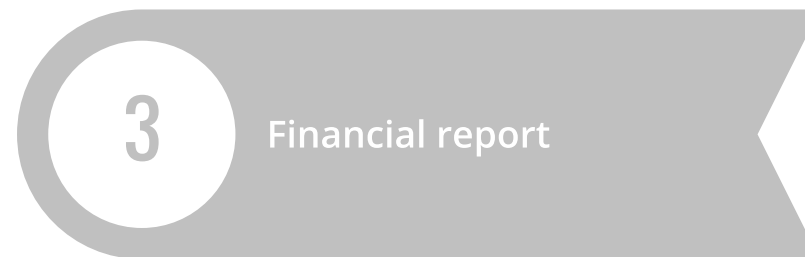
The nature of our work protecting human rights defenders and humanitarians means that we operate largely behind the scenes. Nonetheless, this report attempts to outline the considerable impact that Open Briefing is having; an impact way beyond what our size and budget would suggest possible. The organisations named herein have given their given their permission for us to do so.

Open Briefing has been an essential service to me and my organisation.

Their expert team couples on-the-ground knowledge of complex, insecure environments with pragmatic solutions. Their staff are tireless in their patience to explain security strategies and to work with my team to support our varying levels of knowledge.

I am grateful Open Briefing exists; they permit me to make well-thought-out decisions on how to oversee my organisation's duty of care

**Jessi Ginther, Operations Director, Center for Civilians in Conflict**



# About Open Briefing

We believe in creating a stronger civil society that can protect vulnerable communities and a fragile environment and support the development and implementation of policies based on diplomacy, human rights and the rule of law.

Our direct contribution to this is to support at-risk organisations and activists around the world by ensuring their **physical, digital and psychosocial security** or through enhancing their campaigns with **intelligence and research support**. We do this by providing low-cost, high-impact:

- Audits and consultancy
- Training and capacity building
- Tools, advice and signposting

We focus our resources on supporting high-risk, low-capacity organisations and campaigners, but have worked extensively with the senior management teams of international donors and NGOs.

By working with us:

- human rights defenders (HRDs), humanitarians and others on the frontlines of civil society can properly understand and manage the threats to them and their work; and
- charities and other NGOs can meet their duty of care and safeguarding obligations to staff, local partners and beneficiaries.

Launched in 2011, Open Briefing was the first non-profit to provide professional security, risk and intelligence services to NGOs and other social change agents. With the addition of digital security, safeguarding and psychosocial support to our portfolio of services this year, we continue to be pioneers in this field.

We are a member of the [International NGO Safety & Security Association](#) (INSSA), the [Charities Security Forum](#) and [BOND](#) and a certified member of [Social Enterprise UK](#).

Last year alone, at least

**312** human rights defenders,

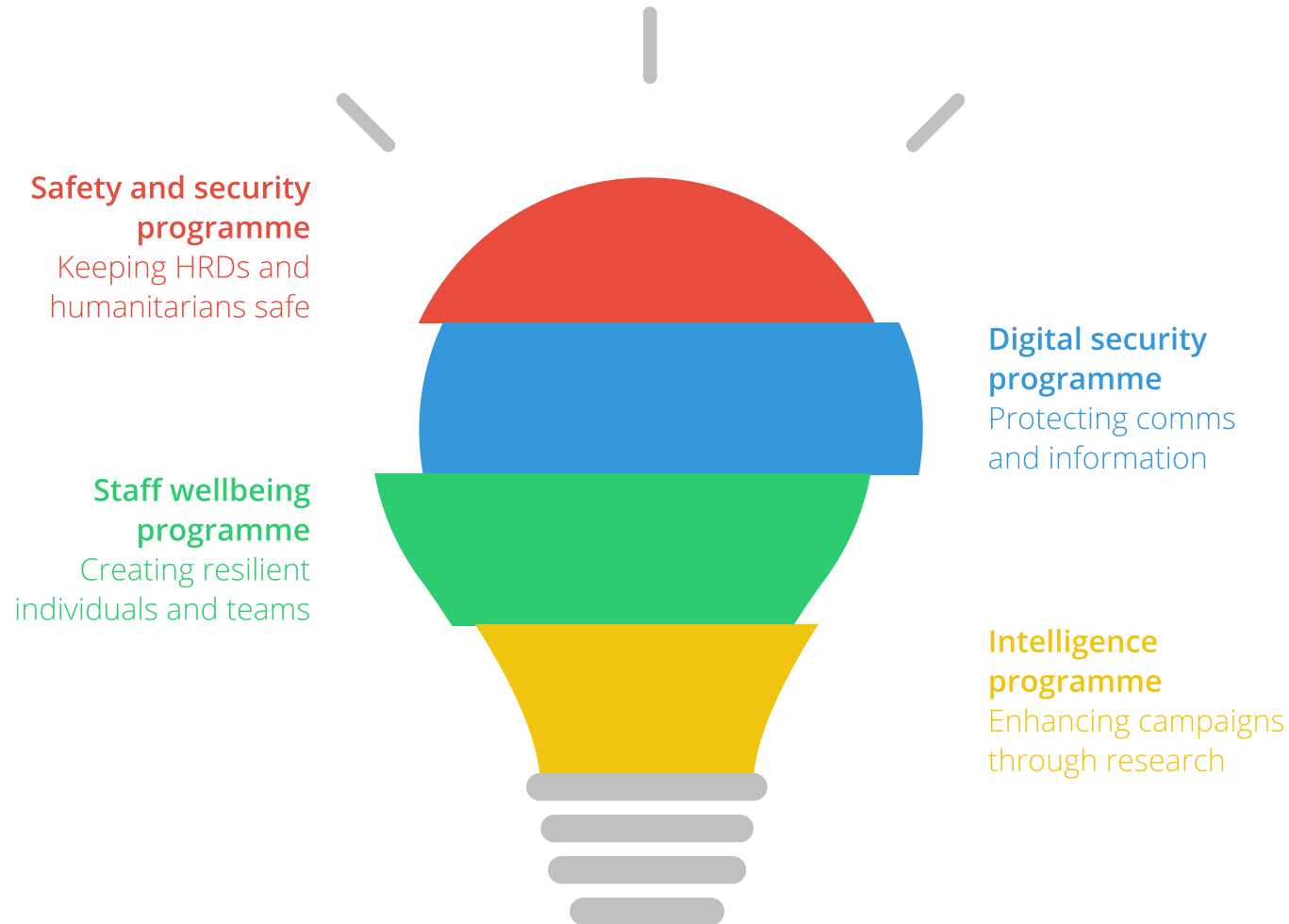
**100** journalists and media workers and

**188** humanitarian aid workers

were killed around the world.

**Enough is enough.**

# What can we do?



## Safety and security programme

Our safety and security programme focusses on keeping humanitarians and human rights defenders safe from harm.

This is our flagship programme. Formally launched in October 2016 after a period completing security assignments behind the scenes, our safety and security programme continues to expand in scope and scale and is building a reputation for the highest quality training and consultancy.

A highlight of 2017-18 was producing complete packages of context assessments, security risk assessments, security plans and crisis management plans for 10 local offices of an international organisation across Iraq, Nigeria, Ukraine, Jordan, Yemen and Afghanistan.

**Activities:** Security management and duty of care audits; security risk management frameworks; crisis management plans and crisis simulations; building security assessments; hostile environment and first aid training; security risk management workshops; GPS trackers, sat phones, first aid kits and body armour.

## Digital security programme

Our digital security programme focusses on protecting the online communications and digital information assets of organisations and campaigners.

This is a new programme in Open Briefing, launched in October 2017. In addition to our Europe-based digital security team, Open Briefing works with a national network of trusted consultants and trainers in the United States through our civil society partner the Digital Security Exchange (DSX).

A highlight of 2017-18 was being chosen to support two winners of the Goldman Environmental Prize and their organisations in southern Africa with training and consultancy to secure their digital communications, websites and devices.

**Activities:** Digital security audits; information security policies; workshops and online training.

Open Briefing delivers its activities through a combination of an in-house staff and consultant team, partnerships with private and third sector organisations and signposting.



## Staff wellbeing and resilience programme

Our staff wellbeing and resilience programme focusses on creating resilient individuals and teams.

This is the newest programme in Open Briefing. Launched on *Time to Talk Day* in February 2018, this programme seeks to challenge the taboo around stress and mental health among those working in insecure or hostile environments. It also addresses safeguarding, which is a somewhat related – and often overlooked – element of duty of care.

**Activities:** Staff wellbeing and resilience audits; counselling; Psychological First Aid training; family liaison officer training and supervision during crises; safeguarding audits.



## Intelligence and research programme

Our intelligence and research programme focusses on enhancing other organisation's campaigns and projects through the provision of actionable intelligence and high-quality research.

This is Open Briefing's longest-running programme. Since 2011, it has responded to numerous requests from NGOs for intelligence briefings on issues ranging from the use of 'barrel bombs' by the Syrian government to corruption within the pharmaceutical supply chain to the global south. It has also produced widely-reported research, particularly in relation to armed drones and the other elements of 'remote warfare'.

This year, the programme produced 33 publications on a range of issues relevant to human rights defenders and humanitarians. This included a major report on the violent Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria for the Oxford Research Group.

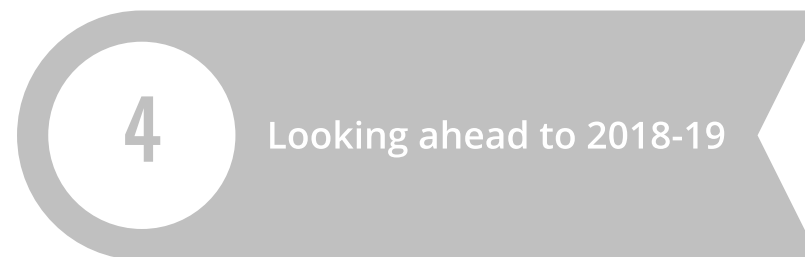
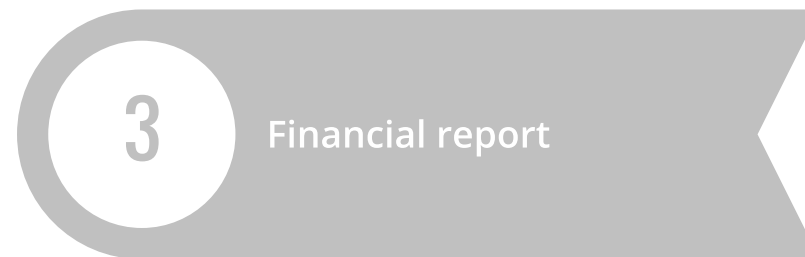
**Activities:** Intelligence requests; research and report writing; open source intelligence training; publications.

An incredibly valuable week. The Open Briefing team were extremely skilled at tailoring the training to our needs.

An eye-opening, thought-provoking and heart-pounding course!

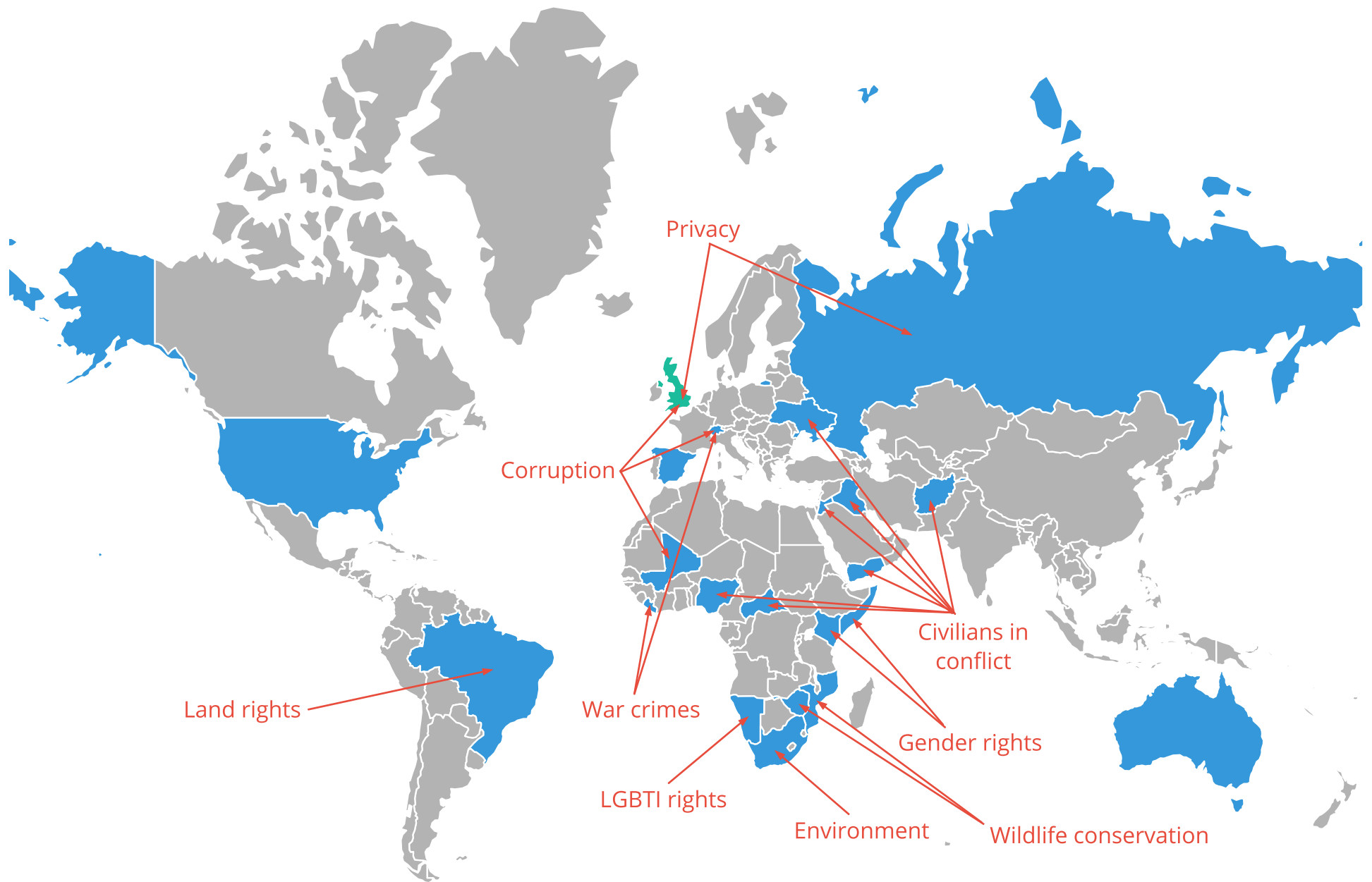
**Homer Venters, Director of Programmes, Physicians for Human Rights**



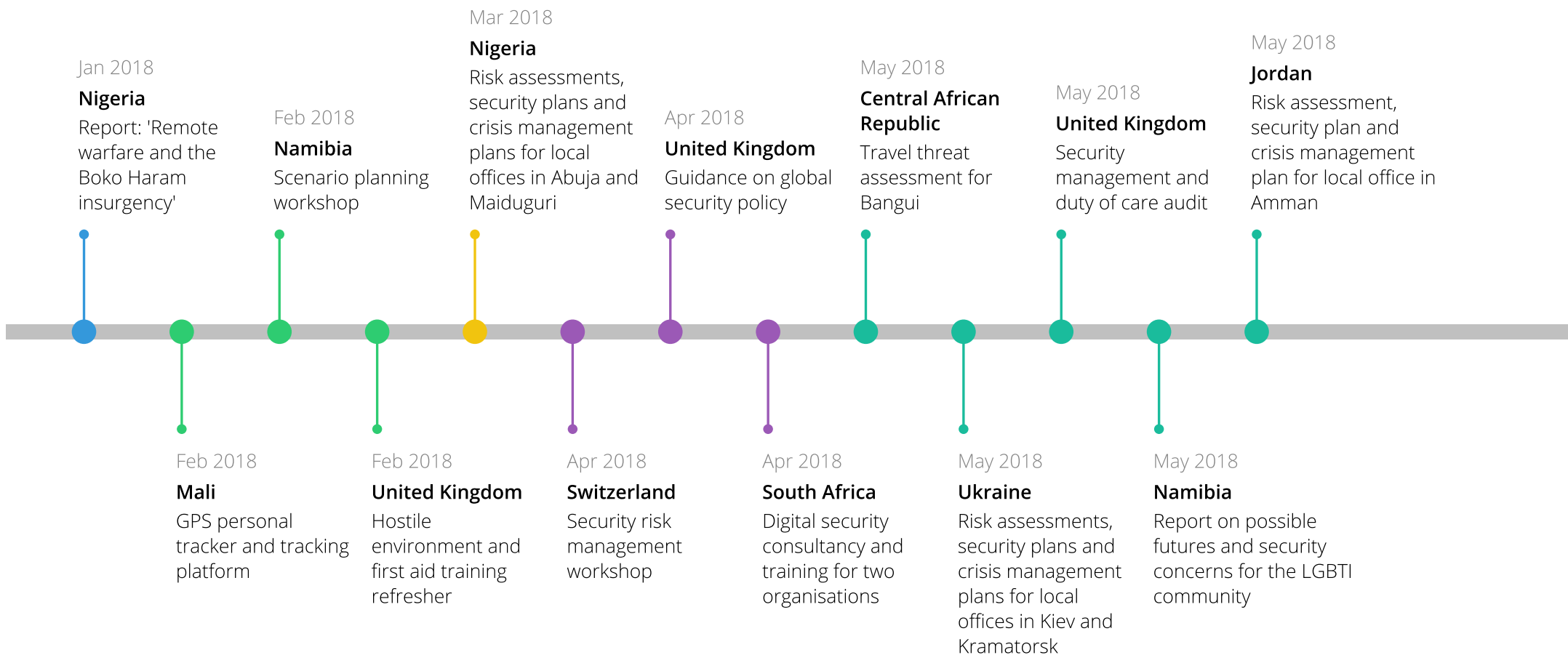














# New team members

**Karen Abbs** is the **safeguarding consultant** and **staff wellbeing consultant** at Open Briefing. Karen has been a practising therapist specialising in trauma for 20 years, and has worked in the humanitarian sector for the last decade. She was previously the mental health adviser to Médecins Sans Frontières and the Centre for Victims of Torture and the global training manager for InterHealth. Karen has two decades of safeguarding experience spanning Canada, the UK, Kashmir, CAR, Darfur, Swaziland, Iraq, Jordan, South Sudan and Kenya.

**Rory Byrne** is the **digital security consultant** at Open Briefing. Rory is a Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH) and Certified Information Privacy Professional (CIPP). He is the co-founder of Security First, which develops technological solutions to human rights problems. In 2015, Rory launched Umbrella, an open-source app that provides advice on digital and physical security for people at risk. He was previously the head of security and research at the human rights organisation Videre Est Credere. Rory is also a non-commissioned officer in the Irish Defence Forces Army Reserve.

**Michel Gonzalez Brun** is a **security risk management consultant** at Open Briefing. He has a strong learning and development background, and has worked on education projects in Vietnam, Chile, Syria, Venezuela and Tanzania. Until recently, Michel was the security training coordinator for RedR UK, where he wrote and delivered security management courses, crisis management exercises and travel safety briefings. He has a master's degree in international development and education from the UCL Institute of Education.

**Andy Marshall** is a **security risk management consultant** at Open Briefing. Andy has over 23 years' experience in the humanitarian sector, including 13 years with Médecins Sans Frontières in South Sudan, Kosovo, Pakistan, Chechnya, Iraq, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. Among many other senior roles, Andy was the Mines Advisory Group's first global security adviser. He is a member of the UN World Food Programme's Security Assessment Mission (SAM) cadre and has served as a WFP security officer in South Sudan and Iraq.

**Paul Owens** is a **security risk management consultant** at Open Briefing. He retired from the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) in 2013 after a 30-year career in the police as a senior investigating officer and international liaison officer, which included three years working in Afghanistan and Central Asia. He has extensive experience in intelligence collection, covert investigation, kidnap/extortion and establishing, deploying and managing assets in hostile environments.

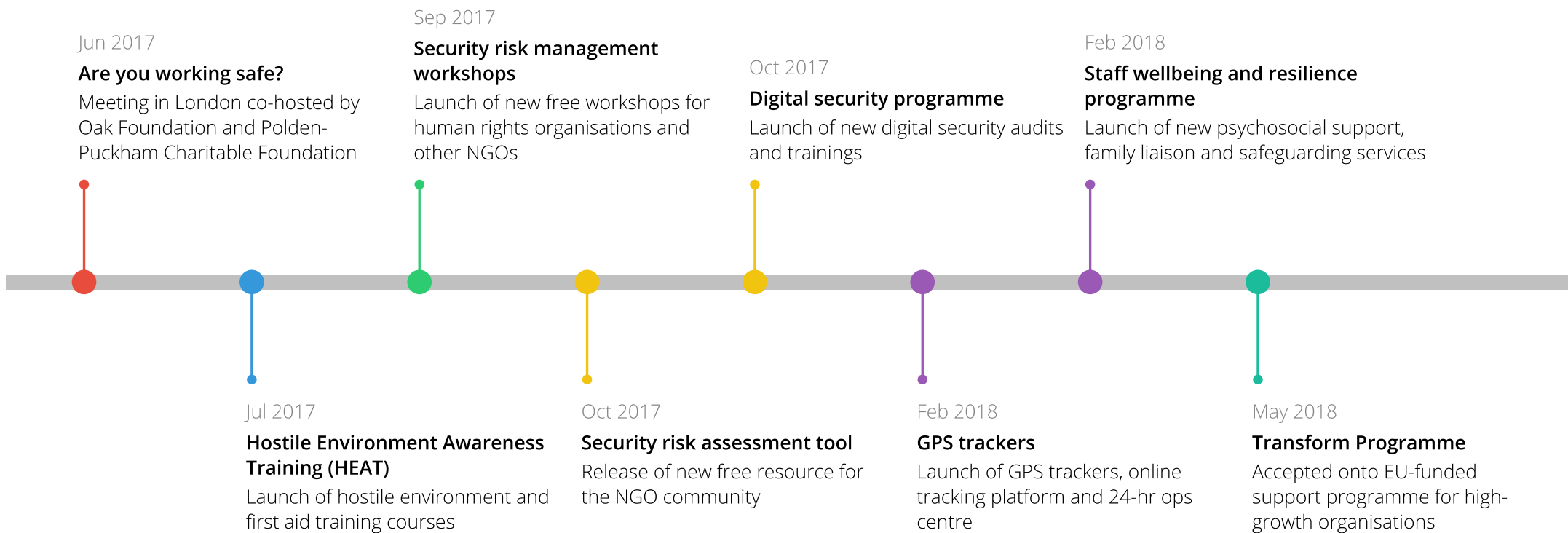
**Helen Tanner** is a **psychosocial consultant** at Open Briefing. Helen has provided psychosocial support training and consultancy in conflict and post-conflict environments in Libya, South Sudan, Myanmar and Kosovo. In the United Kingdom, she works as a coach, trainer and creative psychotherapist and previously founded and directed a national charity supporting adults recovering from addiction. She was honoured as a Rotary Peace Fellow in 2012 and a Global Peace Index Ambassador in 2015. Helen holds a master's in conflict resolution and a degree in law.

**Advisers:** Chris Cushing (Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation), Neil Elliot (CARE International), Dr Nick Mabey (E3G), Professor Paul Rogers (Oxford Research Group) and Dr John Sloboda (Every Casualty Worldwide).

**Dan Williamson** is a **security risk management consultant** at Open Briefing. Until 2016, he was the global security manager for Marie Stopes International, where he previously served as the South Sudan country director. Dan has also worked as a logistician, project coordinator and operations manager in Zimbabwe, Darfur and Iraq for Médecins Sans Frontières and as a project manager in Swaziland for Populations Services International. He has a master's in development and humanitarian practice from Oxford Brookes University.

They join our executive director, Chris Abbott, and the rest of the team at Open Briefing.

**Chris Abbott** is the founder and **executive director** of Open Briefing. Chris has spent his career protecting others. He worked with frontline environmental defenders in the late 1990s, then spent a decade working at the policy level to protect civilians in conflict during the 'war on terror', and now helps NGOs understand and manage their security risks. He was previously the deputy director of the Oxford Research Group and an honorary research fellow in the Centre for Governance and International Affairs at the University of Bristol and in the School of Social and International Studies at the University of Bradford.

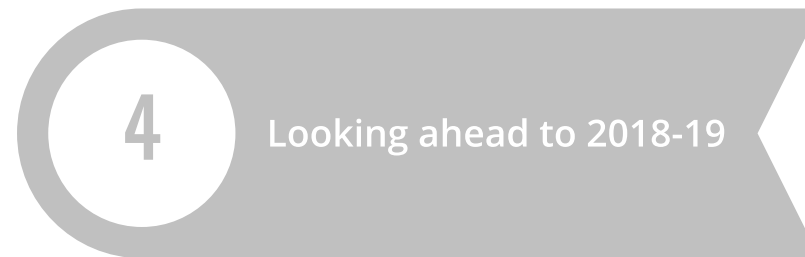
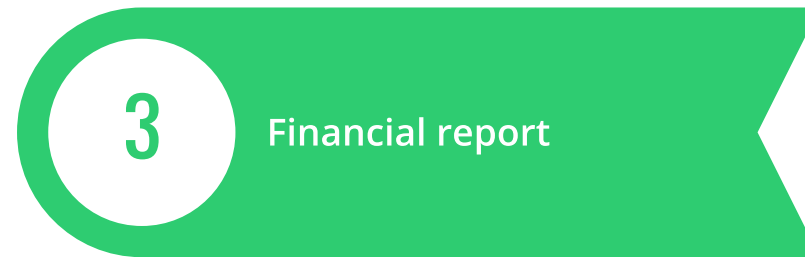


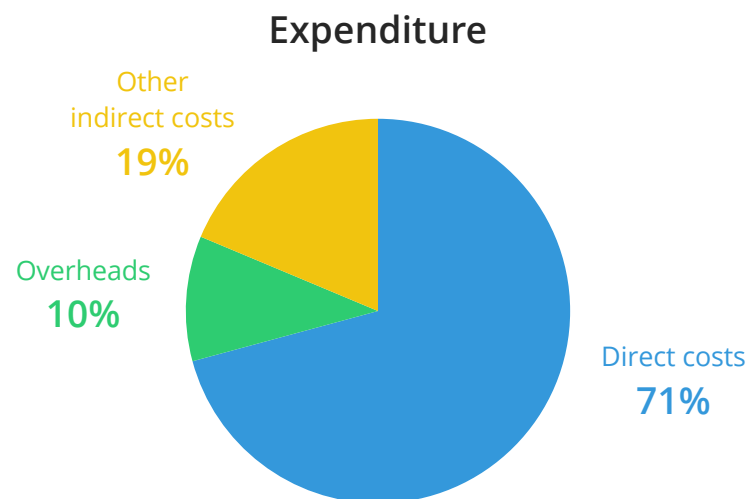
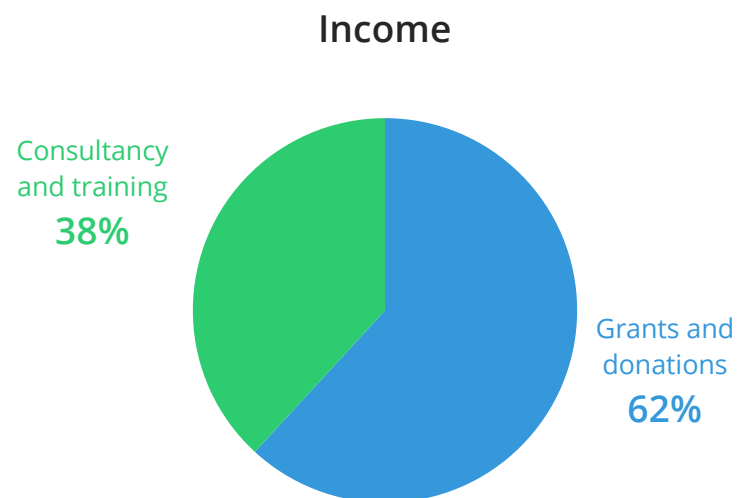
The workshop was a real eye-opener and extremely informative.  
The highly practical session enabled us to move forward in addressing  
our security needs

**Victoria Barnes, Legal Director, Human Dignity Trust**









2017-18	
<b>INCOME</b>	
Consultancy and training	
Safety and security	£39,540
Digital security	£8,350
Subsidy	(£7,420)
Discounts given	(£1,320)
Total consultancy and training	£39,145
Publications	£325
<b>Total earned income</b>	<b>£39,475</b>
Grants	
Core grants	£51,410
Project grants	£4,620
Grants carried forward	£7,685
Total grants	£63,715
Donations	£235
<b>Total unearned income</b>	<b>£63,950</b>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£103,425</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Direct costs	
Assignments for NGOs/HRDs	
Safety and security	£32,660
Digital security	£7,810
Intelligence and research	£3,185
Total cost of assignments for NGOs	£43,655
Other direct support to NGOs/HRDs	£29,535
<b>Total direct costs</b>	<b>£73,190</b>
Overheads	£10,880
Other indirect costs	£19,320
<b>Total indirect costs</b>	<b>£30,200</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£103,390</b>
<b>Net income</b>	<b>£35</b>
<b>Total capital and reserves</b>	<b>£17,710</b>

Our accounts have been subjected to an independent examination by a qualified accountant in line with the guidance set out by the Charity Commission.

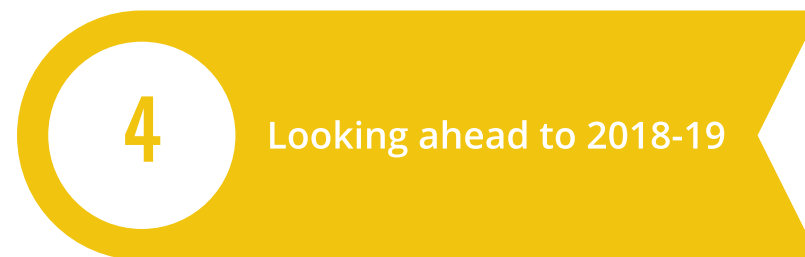
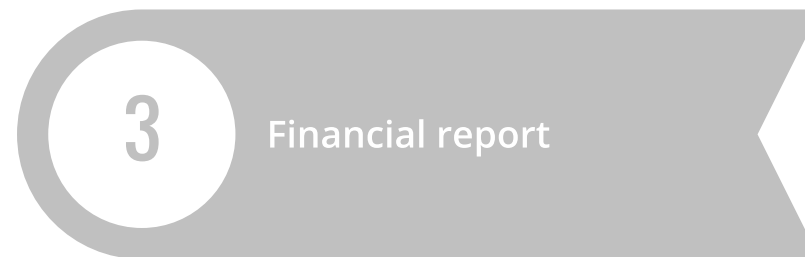
Open Briefing's review of the security plan for our at-risk local partner was of the highest quality and very helpful.

**Lisa-Marie Rudi, Programme Officer, Civitas Maxima**









# Plans for 2018-19

Open Briefing has two key programme priorities for the next 12 months:

**Build new tools to ensure the safety of the most-vulnerable human rights defenders and humanitarians.**

and

**Act on requests for support from at-risk and threatened organisations around the world.**

With regards the first priority, we are partnering with three international organisations on a major project to create an **Environmental Defender Security Framework** for individuals being targeted for defending land rights in the most-dangerous states in South America.

Building on our work in southern Africa, Open Briefing is also exploring options for creating a **Holistic Security Toolkit** for LGBTI activists as another group of human rights defenders who are particularly vulnerable to attack.







Finally, we will seek funding to create a **Roadmap to Security** to take smaller humanitarian agencies and human rights organisations from a standing start to employing an effective security management system. The toolkit will include an audit framework and templates for policies, procedures and resources.

In relation to the second priority, we will **continue and expand our work with at-risk organisations that have requested our support**. We already have nine such assignments scheduled for the second half of 2018.

In order to meet our programme priorities, Open Briefing has two key organisational priorities for the next 12 months:

**Double our income from grants and donations.**

and

**Increase our earned income by at least 50%.**

The extra resources will enable us to expand our permanent staff team and scale up the support and protection that we can provide to the international humanitarian and human rights communities.

Open Briefing has proved hugely useful to Crisis Action and our partners time and again.

Their high-quality analysis helps us focus our energies on where we can have the greatest impact for the protection of civilians in conflict.

The value of that contribution cannot be over-estimated.

**Nick Martlew, UK director, Crisis Action**



The Workbox, Unit 1, Wharf Road, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 4FG, United Kingdom

Tel. +44 (0)1736 800 767 | [info@openbriefing.org](mailto:info@openbriefing.org) | [www.openbriefing.org](http://www.openbriefing.org)

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