Executive summary

Introduction

In line with a newly launched strategy, 2022 was a year of new beginnings for The New Humanitarian. We spent the year building new approaches, embedding a decolonisation mindset into our day-to-day journalism; experimenting with new formats in our keystone projects; and imbuing our work with a focus on solutions and maximum impact.

Other new beginnings included producing bespoke products for social media and platforms other than our website; the acquisition of a premium newsletter, marking our first foray into earned revenue; and the launch of an individual giving programme to attract new types of donors to our community of supporters. We also invested in our staff’s well-being, with a revised compensation and benefits framework and a more equitable approach to hiring people around the world.

Our new strategy has been described by peers as “a valuable and thought-provoking resource” and has given the organisation a clear sense of direction and countless new opportunities to increase its impact.

TNH’s reputation as the only newsroom worldwide that specialises in covering humanitarian crises continues to strengthen. Policymakers and practitioners in humanitarian action rely on us to flag emerging crises, highlight those who would otherwise be forgotten, and better understand trends in the aid sector.

In a 2022 survey, a majority of readers confirmed TNH’s value in reporting on issues and countries not covered by others; in holding the aid sector to account through investigative journalism; and in providing analysis and opinions unavailable elsewhere.

The New Humanitarian is one of the only organisations to develop a viable model for internationally-focused, public service journalism. With strengthened editorial, outreach, operational, and fundraising capacities — and the clear direction of our new strategy — we are well-positioned to build on these successes moving forward.

“You’d be hard pressed to find a stronger, clearer case for impact as the currency of mission-driven journalism than this one from the @newhumanitarian’s new strategy overview. Super stuff, congratulations.”

- Tom Rewinnard,
founder of news lab, consultancy & agency Fathm

“Continually in awe of the team at The New Humanitarian. The thoughtful, rigorous and committed way they’ve taken on the really hard (and often painful) work of reimagining what decolonised journalism could look like is a model for how this can be done.”

- Shirish Kulkarni,
community organiser, Bureau for Investigative Journalism
Our new strategy: focus on decolonising our journalism

2022 marked the first year of our new five-year strategy to support our vision of becoming a transformative newsroom. Five strategic priorities underpin the strategy:

1. Decolonising our journalism
2. Centering impact in our work
3. Strengthening our newsroom
4. Building a more sustainable business model
5. Nurturing an organisational culture of excitement, innovation and well-being

The first pillar of our strategy — decolonising our journalism — was a major focus in 2022. Our objective was to produce coverage that empowers communities at the heart of crises and de-centers Western voices and narratives. We worked to achieve this in a number of ways:

We worked more closely with local contributors and voices: 41 percent of our reporting came from nationals of the countries they were reporting on (up from 25 percent in 2021) and 50 percent of the speakers on our podcasts and events were from the Global South.

We distributed our content to local audiences: In places like Haiti, Lebanon and Somalia, we translated local reporting into local languages, and distributed it through local channels to reach local audiences.

We devised and distributed internal guidelines for practising decolonised journalism: We integrated decolonised journalism practices in newsroom planning and through post-mortem documents. For example, we ask reporters to methodically “seek accountability by including context and analysis that explores how global and local governments, organisations, companies, and other power-holders may have deepened and solidified vulnerability for particular communities.”
We focused on constructive/forward-looking angles within stories: This approach recognises the authority, agency and knowledge of those experiencing crises and depicts them as more than simply victims. Examples include our series on peace-building through local dialogue in the Sahel region, and grassroots efforts to maintain education for women in Afghanistan.

We challenged traditional narratives of power and accountability: We identified those responsible for the suffering of communities in countries ranging from Haiti to Argentina, including former colonial powers. Our Rethinking Humanitarianism podcast challenged established narratives in aid policy and practice.

We produced more formats that do not require command of English: These include short-text formats and most importantly video, so that language is less of a barrier for non-English speakers to contribute to our journalism.

We trained our editorial team: Our reporters working in traumatised communities learned to ensure that our sources were not re-traumatised during the course of our work.

We shared our approach to decolonising international journalism: We joined several conferences and took speaking engagements to encourage other news publishers to join us on the journey. A private convening we organised with industry peers allowed for constructive exchanges between specialist and mainstream media about the future of international journalism.
Progress on other strategic priorities

Centering impact in our work

We took a more active approach to planning and distribution of big projects to achieve maximum impact.

We added private convenings to our toolkit of ways to catalyse change: we hosted critical discussions on decolonising aid and philanthropy that provided a safe space for intense but authentic exchanges on this difficult topic, which allowed policy-makers to hear directly from affected people about their visions for change.

We reached new audiences by ramping up content designed for social media; doubled down on podcast and video production; and translated more content into different languages to bring our reporting to more people, including non-English speaking audiences.

We partnered with international and local media to extend our reach.

We expanded our offline activities to showcase our most powerful stories and themes via events, public speaking and media interviews.

To strengthen our ability to drive impact and audience development further, we created a new post: director of audience and revenue development. The role sits at the intersection of the editorial and business sides of our team, and develops partnerships to deliver The New Humanitarian’s content to our target audiences on different platforms.

Building a more sustainable business model

We upgraded our website and content management system, which improved performance and streamlined production tasks.

Despite the current uncertain economic climate, we grew our funding and made positive steps in diversifying our income. We expanded our fund-raising team to ensure we can better create and develop relationships with prospective donors, including high-net-worth individuals. We also launched an individual giving programme.

We acquired a paid newsletter product, Dawns Digest, which is now generating modest amounts of revenue; our new director of audience and revenue development will develop a broader revenue strategy.

We also laid the groundwork for creating a 501c3 charity in the United States, which we aim to launch in late 2023. This will be an important plank of our strategy to grow income from US sources over the coming years.

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We transitioned to the more complex and demanding accounting standards Swiss GAAP FER 21 to provide better accountability and deeper transparency to those who fund us.

We continued to grow our reserves with the aim of having three months of operating expenses saved in case of emergency.

Strengthening the newsroom

We boosted our editorial team with important new additions; Irwin Loy, who was our Asia editor, became our new policy editor and producer of standout coverage on aid policy. We hired a staff editor, Eric Reidy, to lead our coverage of migration and the war in Ukraine; and we recruited a new investigative reporter-editor, Jacob Goldberg, to enhance our investigative capacity.

We streamlined our risk assessment process and subscribed to additional insurances to manage risks and ensure robust care before, during and after staff deployment to dangerous areas. We also secured psychosocial counselling for all staff and freelance contributors who travel to high-risk environments to report for TNH.

Nurturing our culture

We took significant steps across all aspects of staff recruitment, development, engagement and welfare. This included making salaries more competitive, improving benefits and introducing greater equity therein.

We garnered feedback from staff on how to better support them and encouraged and trained middle managers to be more autonomous and to nurture innovation with specific training.

We improved and expanded office facilities in Geneva and London to support more flexible working and better collaboration. And we introduced specialised counselling for people travelling to high-risk environments to report for TNH.
Our journalism in 2022

As journalists, we seek to improve the lives of those living in the midst of crises through coverage that:

- Provides in-depth, field-based perspectives from humanitarian emergencies
- Shines a spotlight on forgotten crises and emerging trends
- Holds the emergency aid sector to account

Our journalism shares a dedication to first-hand, fact-based reporting, a commitment to enabling local communities to tell the stories they deem most important, and the responsibility to speak truth to power by dislodging long-held assumptions and exposing the often hidden roots of crises.

This is what The New Humanitarian’s journalism looked like in 2022:

**First-hand reporting** from Ethiopia, Myanmar, Venezuela, Yemen and many other regions rife with access and security challenges, laying bare the complexities and inconvenient truths that mainstream media often miss — and governments often hide.

**Convenings** that bring aid professionals, donors and communities in crisis together to share views on everything from what sort of assistance people really want to what a decolonised aid sector might look like.

**WhatsApp-based storytelling**, the first of its kind in the world, offering a very personal look at what it takes to keep going when your country is in freefall.

**Reports from communities on the front lines** of climate change, pointing to both real-world impacts and real-time fixes.

**Investigations that hold power to account**, on issues from rising violence against women in Haiti to how European courts are wrongfully prosecuting asylum seekers as smugglers.
Videos that make real the day-to-day indignities of life for so many and connect the dots between suffering on the ground and government aid policies. The videos revealed the impact of the geopolitical tug of war on aid routes to Syria, and how short-term relief efforts may have helped drive seven million Somalis toward hunger.

Playlists spun to stave off despair around Syria and Lebanon, and to hint at brighter paths ahead.

See the full annual report for more details of our coverage.

Over the course of 2022, we produced 344 stories, including four big investigations, 94 videos, 20 Youtube shorts and 17 podcasts (Rethinking Humanitarianism and Fixing Aid).

The charts below shows the countries we reported from and details production by region, theme, and by story format (e.g., feature, podcast, analysis, etc.):
### Production by theme (%)

- **Solutions and Innovations**: 2%
- **Health**: 6%
- **Food**: 6%
- **Environment and Disasters**: 8%
- **Human Rights**: 11%
- **Politics and Economics**: 12%
- **Conflict**: 21%
- **Migration**: 13%
- **Aid and Policy**: 21%

### Production by format (%)

- **News Feature**: 26%
- **Opinion**: 14%
- **Analysis**: 12%
- **Cheat Sheet**: 14%
- **Podcast**: 4%
- **Feature**: 6%
- **Analysis**: 12%
- **News**: 14%
- **Interview**: 2%
- **Photo Feature**: 2%
- **Other**: 3.6%
Our impact

In 2022, our work had a significant impact in multiple ways — prompting UN investigations, empowering local communities, and stimulating critical debate.

We co-produced an investigation with Al Jazeera into allegations of sexual abuse by aid workers in South Sudan, exposing how such abuse had been unchecked since 2015, despite the intervention of a UN task force. Our reporting prompted a UN investigation, pledges from the South Sudanese government to take action, and condemnation from NGOs.

Our story on the failure of aid to deliver benefits to ordinary Haitians (a joint survey with Ground Truth Solutions that was also published in Creole) was used by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) to brief management as they considered a new initiative on accountability. Our opinion piece on how international aid misread Ukraine prompted a staff discussion at a major international NGO on what lessons they can learn from this. An evaluation of their Ukraine response was initiated, with the TNH article cited as recommended reading.

Our series on local dialogue with militants in Burkina Faso and Mali, published in French and English, was described as “invaluable” and made waves amongst Sahel experts. The renowned Sahel/Sahara academic Yvan Guichaoua tweeted: “The whole series on dialogue with jihadists in the #Sahel by @newhumanitarian forms an exceptionally rare and precious body of evidence on civilians/militants relationships in the region. Journalism at its best.”

Our private convening on decolonising aid brought together more than 50 government donors, UN agencies, racial justice activists and local humanitarians. Many participants called it a watershed moment and a rare opportunity to directly speak truth to power. The majority of participants told us the event deepened understanding and prompted internal debate in government aid departments and philanthropic foundations. One example is to examine how to overcome challenges to fund more programs locally.

Our 2022 audience survey quantified the impact of our work: 61 percent of respondents said TNH stimulated further research and/or advocacy; 31 percent said TNH informed organisational and operational priorities, including the deployment of staff or resources; and 26 percent said TNH led them or their organisation to push for internal or external policy change.

“The debate on decolonisation and localisation has enabled me to push the agenda further with my board, who are the usual humanitarian actors who say the right things but are mostly resistant to change.”

— audience survey respondent
Aishatu Kabu quit an international NGO job to start her own women’s empowerment organisation in NorthEast Nigeria. "What we’re battling for here is against child marriages, the need for girls’ education, reproductive health – we haven’t gone beyond that level yet". (Fati Abubakar/TNH)
Our audience

Results from our 2022 reader survey underlined the influential nature of our audience in the humanitarian sector: 52 percent of respondents were senior professionals or executive management/C-suite level, and 57 percent of respondents said their work has a major or moderate impact on humanitarian action and policy.

In 2022, we reached audiences through an increasing range of platforms. On average, 210,000 people visited our website every month, for a total of 2,410,000 page views over the course of the year. Some 67,000 people signed up to our free daily and weekly newsletters; and six major institutions subscribed to our new paid newsletter offering. A new strategy to produce bespoke products for social media led to a 21 percent increase in followers on social media platforms, for a total of more than 227,000.

Audience consumption and interaction with our journalism reflects a growing preference for multimedia, with stellar growth in our podcast audience (downloads were up 45 percent year-on-year to 145,853) and video views (up by 19 percent to 615,000 views).

Like many other news sites, TNH’s website traffic saw a decline due to various factors including changes to Google’s search algorithm, but engagement with our stories (measured by average reading time) remained well above the industry average.

TNH’s presence on the global stage increasingly underlined the multi-dimensionality of our journalism and our audience. We are sought out for our agenda-setting voices on seismic shifts in the aid landscape, as well as important new trends in journalism, such as the inclusion of local voices in storytelling.

In 2022, this was borne out by our involvement in more than 18 speaking engagements targeted at the media industry (International Journalism Festival in Perugia), our core humanitarian audience (European Humanitarian Forum in Brussels), and wider audiences (World Economic Forum in Davos).

Our income and expenditure

In 2022, our income was 3,421,958 CHF, up 15 percent from 2021. Our funding came primarily from 22 governments and foundations (including two new donors), though readers and individuals increasingly provided supplemental sources of income. Our membership income grew by 10 percent to 48,076 CHF.

We acquired a paid newsletter service as a first step in generating our own income. A newly hired director of audience development and revenue will drive our earned revenue moving forward.

Our total capital was 494,024 CHF by year-end.

In 2022, we spent 2,970,597 CHF, up 36 percent from 2021. Two-thirds of our budget is spent on editorial production.

Our organisation and governance

In 2022, our team grew to 23 employees in 11 countries around the world. We invested in systems to be able to hire staff in multiple jurisdictions in equitable and transparent ways.

We welcomed the new executive director of Human Rights Watch, Tirana Hassan, to our Board of Directors.

We transitioned to a full audit of our annual financial accounts, a step toward further strengthening our governance.