# Language for a Just World



Justicia
Equality
সংহতি

**Translators without Borders**

> ❝ He didn't ask any questions. He just wrote down the medicine and explained which one to take and when, but I didn't understand as he was not speaking in Rohingya and was wearing a mask.
>
> *– Rohingya woman*

# Language for a Just World

## Opening message

In 2020, we were all met with unprecedented global crises. At the beginning of 2020, the scope of the COVID-19 crisis became apparent, intersecting with myriad other climate and human rights struggles. The need for global, credible, and multilingual information truly became a matter of life, death, and dignity. And our work expanded to meet that need—

As humanitarians struggled to work directly with people, phone-based multilingual chatbot and voice technology became a way to communicate when face-to-face interaction was unsafe.

We saw language change and evolve, including new terms for "social distancing," "fask mask," and "contact tracing." A multilingual glossary was essential to ensure everyone had credible, consistent information, in their language.

Events like COVID-19, a global re-commitment to the *Black Lives Matter* movement, climate crises, and political and social upheaval prompted us to examine how language and communication intersects with human rights and equality—how language can help create a more just and equitable world for everyone.

Our community of linguists, supporters, sponsors, partners and advocates empowered us to meet these needs and move in these bold new directions. Thank you.

Our work and vision was embraced like never before. People who had never felt desperate to find health information now urgently combed through articles about how to keep themselves and their families safe. Online communication tools became a comfort and a lifeline, connecting people not only between countries, but with people who lived just down the street. Misinformation was rampant. And global communication and information imbalances were exposed. What previously may have felt important, but distant, now had an urgency and personal relevance, connecting people with our mission in a new way.

The events of 2020 prompted us to evolve, so we can better address the complex need for global communication and information equality. As we write this, we're now CLEAR Global, an evolved organization that includes Translators without Borders, CLEAR Insights, and CLEAR Tech. We're hoping that through our new structure, we will be better able to create scalable, cutting-edge language research and technology resources that give speakers of marginalized languages the resources they need to access information, communicate digitally, and share their ideas—in their own language.

We could not have met these challenges without you. You helped us evolve over the last ten years, and grow into an organization ready to use our expertise to create radical change using language, technology, research, and communication. We're ready to help bring the next four billion people into global conversations about health, climate change, social justice, and human rights.

Thank you,
**Aimee Ansari, CEO and Andrew Bredenkamp, CEO**

**2020**

# Global reach and impact

"As fears mount over the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on low-income countries, health agencies have been ramping up communications to warn people of the virus and how to stay safe... A critical aspect of this is translating potentially lifesaving health information into languages around the world."

*- William Worley, Devex,*
*How do you say 'social distancing' in Swahili?*

**We help people give and receive information, in their own language, all over the world.**

We do this in myriad ways—through translation, technology, research, training, partnerships, and much more.

In 2020, we had a global reach and impact:
- We translated information in over 1000 language pairs.
- We established 5 new strategic global partnerships, and supported 120 partner organizations worldwide, including partnerships and collaborations with the World Food Programme (WFP), Social Development Direct, Last Mile Health, TechChange, UN Verified, Digital Kinshasa, Viamo, Praekelt, Climate Cardinals, Nature Now, CISCO, Humanitarian Grand Challenge, Paul Allen, and UNICEF.
- We continued work in our three country programs in Bangladesh, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, supporting people in-country through translations, glossaries, research, training, and much more;
- We supported a consortium to develop the COVID-19 digital classroom, an initiative to help community health workers access COVID-focused training and classes;
- We trained 3,025 people in four countries on how best to incorporate language considerations into their humanitarian and development programs.
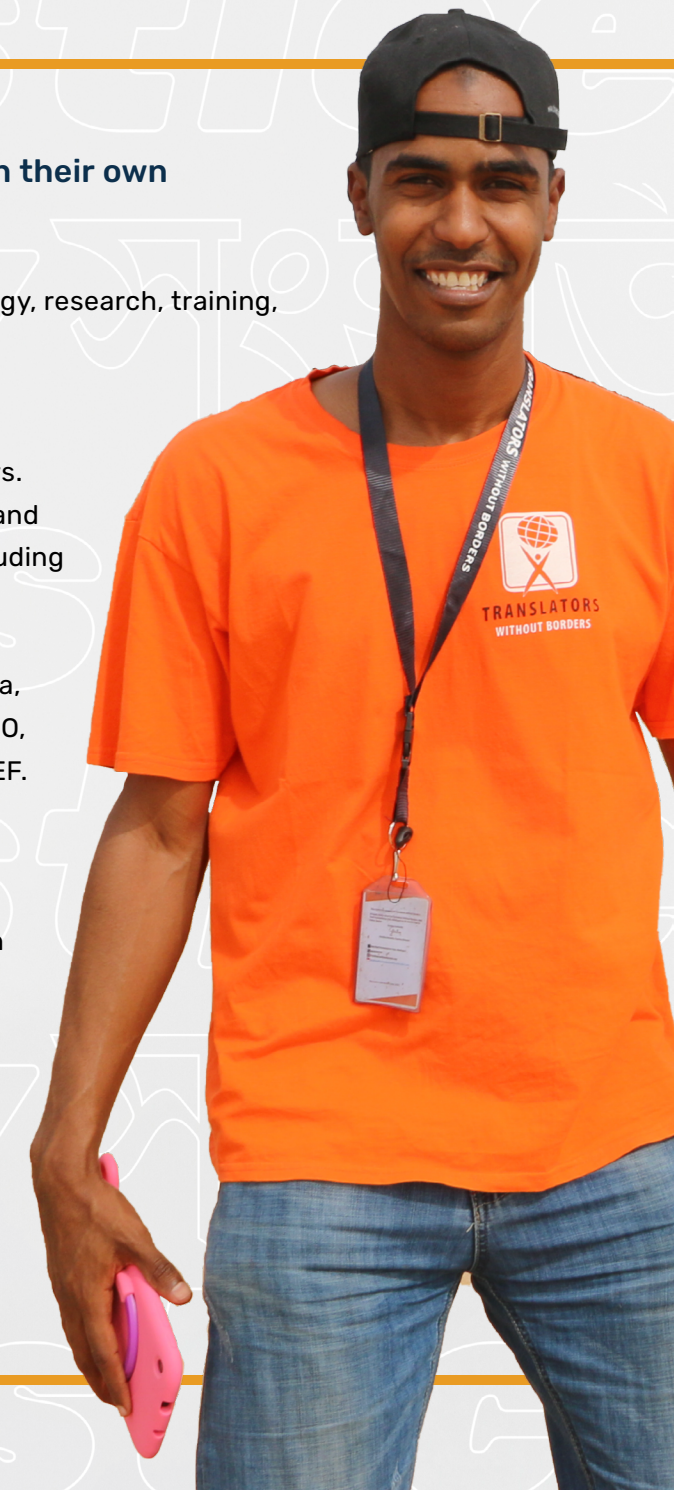
# Research and technology

"Experts believe the most effective work results from collaborations between translators and scientists, creating glossaries to ensure consistency – and actually listening to the communities that ultimately have to use and understand the information."

*- Bhavya Dore, The New Humanitarian,*
*How do you translate a pandemic?*

We believe it is critically important to listen to people, and to develop scalable solutions to meet their needs. This process is fueled by research and technology, often working in tandem.

Our multilingual chatbot in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, was developed in response to research we conducted about language and communication needs in the region. Language technology then fueled the bot. Insights gathered anonymously through the chatbot helped humanitarians understand what kinds of questions people have. These insights then, in turn, can make language technology more effective and tailored to people's needs.

We believe that through language research and technology, we can help everyone get vital information, and be heard, whatever language they speak. We're excited to continue this approach through CLEAR Insights and CLEAR Tech, building on what we learned in 2020.

Our 2020 research focused on COVID-19, mapping the languages of the world, and working with NGO partners to conduct multilingual research:

- We mapped the languages and communication preferences of 18 countries, publishing openly-available datasets and resources to improve global communication and understanding;
- We conducted research remotely and creatively in our three country programs in Nigeria, Bangladesh, and the Democratic Republic of Congo;

- We partnered with Internews to research and monitor social media to identify COVID-19 misinformation in 6 languages—Urdu, Simplified Chinese, Hausa, Vietnamese, Bahasa Indonesian, and Tagalog.
- We partnered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to conduct research on awareness of the principles on sexual exploitation and abuse among humanitarian contractors.

Our 2020 tech projects focused on building scalable technology and processes to help reach more people, in more languages, against the backdrop of a global pandemic:

- We partnered with global technology and academic leaders (Carnegie Mellon University, George Mason University, Johns Hopkins University, Amazon, Appen, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Translated) to developed COVID-19-focused language datasets for nearly 90 marginalized languages;
- We built *Uji*, our first chatbot, in the DRC. Uji could hold conversations in French, Congolese Swahili, and Lingala, and allowed users to ask questions using conversational language;
- We built a multilingual, plain-language glossary of key COVID-19 terminology to support clear, consistent public information. The glossary is now available in over 60 languages;
- We partnered with KoBo, a humanitarian-focused data collection tool, to develop automatic speech recognition and SMS technology to help aid workers collect data from speakers of marginalized languages in low-literacy contexts;
- We developed basic machine translation kits in Coastal Swahili, Congolese Swahili, Nande, Hausa, Kanuri and Rohingya.
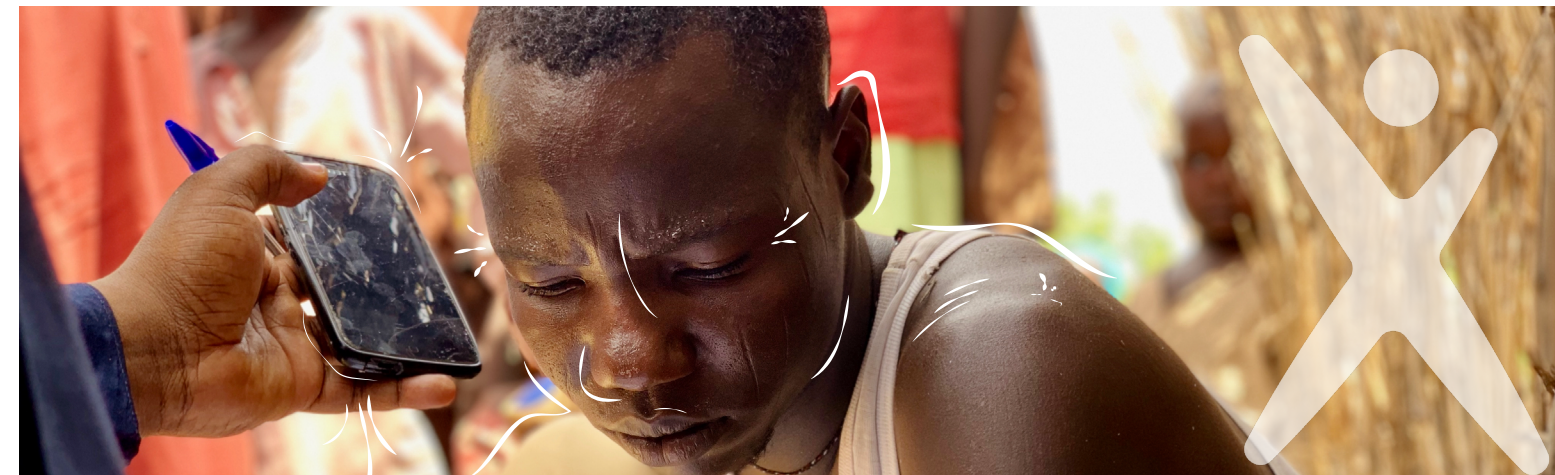
# Telling the story: advocacy and media

"Progress on 4.2 ('Using appropriate languages and formats') is encouraging, and Translators without Borders deserve a great deal of credit for this. They have raised both the level of competence and achievement across the sector and beyond over the past few years, particularly with coverage in publications such as the Economist and the Guardian."

*- From the Humanitarian Accountability Report, quoting Gareth Price-Jones, Executive Secretary of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response*

Our advocacy and media work creates the case for language among policy makers, leadership at global NGOs, donors, and public opinion. We hope that through our evidence, stories, and reach, we can make the case for considering language at all levels.

In 2020, we saw a renewed interest in our work, and how language is a critical factor when it comes to a public health crisis. Countless media outlets cited our work, expertise, and the dedication of our community. And humanitarian leaders recognized the importance of considering language like never before—funding scalable technology projects that will lay the groundwork for future technology development.

Storytelling, media, and advocacy can help build a more just world, by encouraging everyone to consider language.

Through our dedicated advocacy work, we made incredible progress:

- The USAID Department of Humanitarian Affairs now requires all applicants to consider language, a stunning win;
- TWB and language were also highlighted in some key documents, including UNHCR's Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) strategy, the COVID RCCE report, and the Humanitarian Accountability Report;
- We advocated for REACH to include language questions in their 2021 Multi Sector Needs Analysis (MSNA), which we achieved across 8 countries. This will help humanitarians gather critical language data needed to plan effective multilingual communication strategies;
- We advised on the Global Protection Cluster's Strategic Framework 2020-2024, which led to the recommendation "Promoting research and the use of minority languages in protection activities, including translation and interpretation."

And in media and communications, our story resonated across outlets:

- Investigative pieces like WIRED's "Covid-19 Is History's Biggest Translation Challenge" and The New Humanitarian's "How do you translate a pandemic?" dove deep into why language, translators, and language technology are desperately needed to tackle a pandemic and address information inequality;
- Media publications such as Good Morning America, Seventeen Magazine, and BBC featured us as a unique way to volunteer remotely during the pandemic;
- Our work was mentioned in many other places, including BBC, BBC Sound, Reuters, CNN, Good Morning America, NBC (US), Forbes, Wired, DW Akademie, The New Humanitarian, The Big Issue, Borgen Magazine, Medium, Slator, Multilingual, and more.

# Community

Our incredible community of language specialists responded to the crises of 2020 with dedication and strength. The work of every single linguist helped ensure information about health, rights, and global movements was available to everyone who needed it. We are grateful for these professionals who drive our innovative work.

Our community grew tremendously:

- Our community nearly doubled in 2020, with 58,096 linguists donating their time and skills;
- In 2020, our community worked in over 1000 language pairs, from Amharic to Zulu, enabling us to reach vulnerable people;
- Our community translated over 19 million life-changing words in 2020.

We engaged with our community of linguists in new ways:

- We established a new community recognition program for six languages to better address the challenges faced by translators working in hard-to-source languages;
- We redesigned our sign-up process, to make it easier for new linguists to join our community and contribute;
- We grew our "Language Associate" community, onboarding ten language associates for speakers of Arabic, Dari, Spanish, French,,Somali, Kurdish Sorani, Amharic, Kurdish Kurmanji, Tigrinya. These associates represent the translator community of the language they speak, and help with community engagement and recruitment.

**Language for a Just World**

**"I think the TWB team has done an amazing job around COVID-19. The community translation work is brilliant and absolutely needed."**

*- Evidence Aid*

# Our people and capacity

# Financials

"TWB are one of our most important partners… we can't promote learning on public health unless we are communicating in the languages of our audience."

*– WHO*

2020 was a difficult year for all of us, but it also inspired new ways of working across countries, across programs, and across teams. We shared knowledge and skills—from graphic design, tech, our community, and more—and were stronger for it.

We are especially proud of how we:
- Built a well-being hub to better support our team members and health;
- Grew to over 125 staff members;
- Got to know and support each other through a remote all team meeting;
- Developed a bespoke team feedback and review platform to help listen to team members, give and receive feedback with our managers, and help us play to our strengths and grow in our roles;  And we want to be transparent about what we are offering – both financial and non-financial compensation.
- Updated our employee handbook to reflect new commitments to transparency and team support;
- Revamped our finance systems to make our budgeting and reporting processes much smoother, and build a solid foundation for further progress next year;
- Expanded our diverse global team. In 2020, TWB staff lived in approximately 40 countries, and were 53% women.
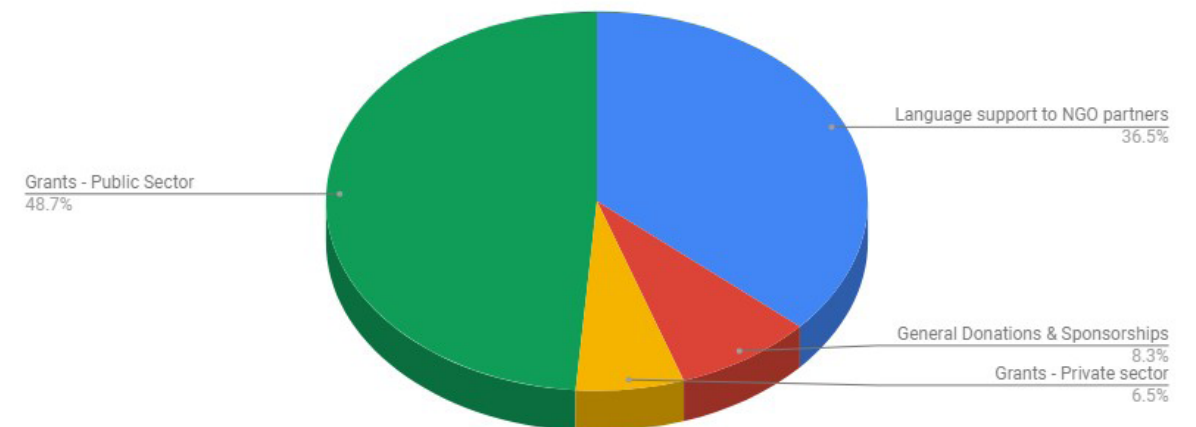
In 2020, TWB increased core reserves and expanded our income sources. We grew our financial stability through new global strategic partnerships, earned income from nonprofit partners, new sponsors, and through the generosity of individual and in-kind donors.

- 2020 was a year of growth for TWB. We expanded our language technology services and grew our programs.
- Earned income from NGO partnerships more than doubled. It now represents 29% of our overall income (without in-kind donations).
- Grant revenue remained steady, as planned, income from individual donors and sponsorships doubled, largely as a result of our generous sponsors for our COVID-19 response.
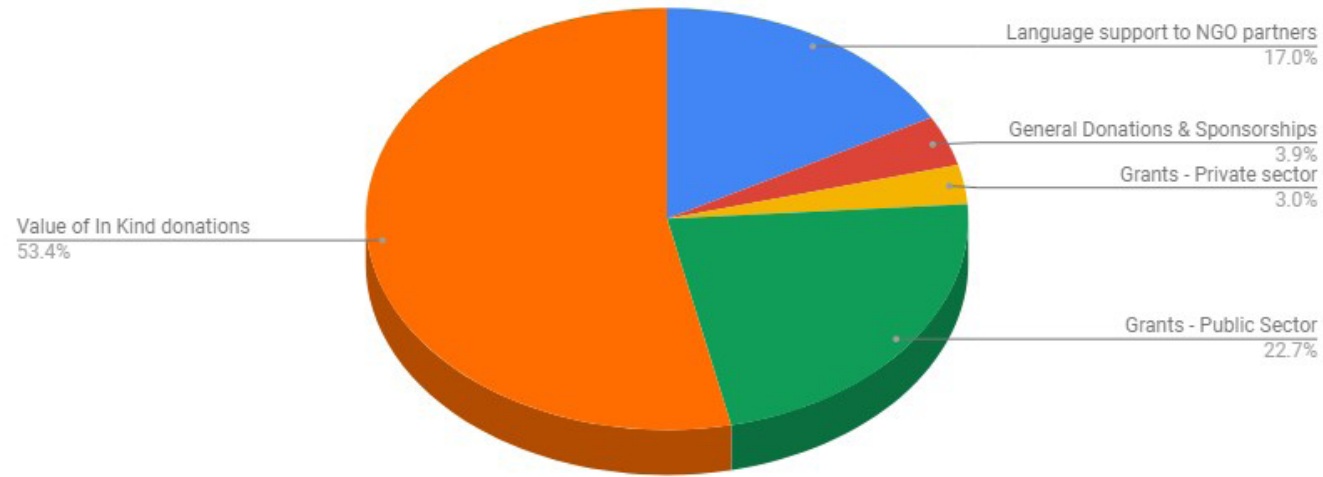
Your ongoing support makes a difference:
- Please support us personally or through your company at translatorswithoutborders.org/donate
- Many of our donors use their wills or living trusts to make their most generous gifts. Please remember TWB when you create yours.
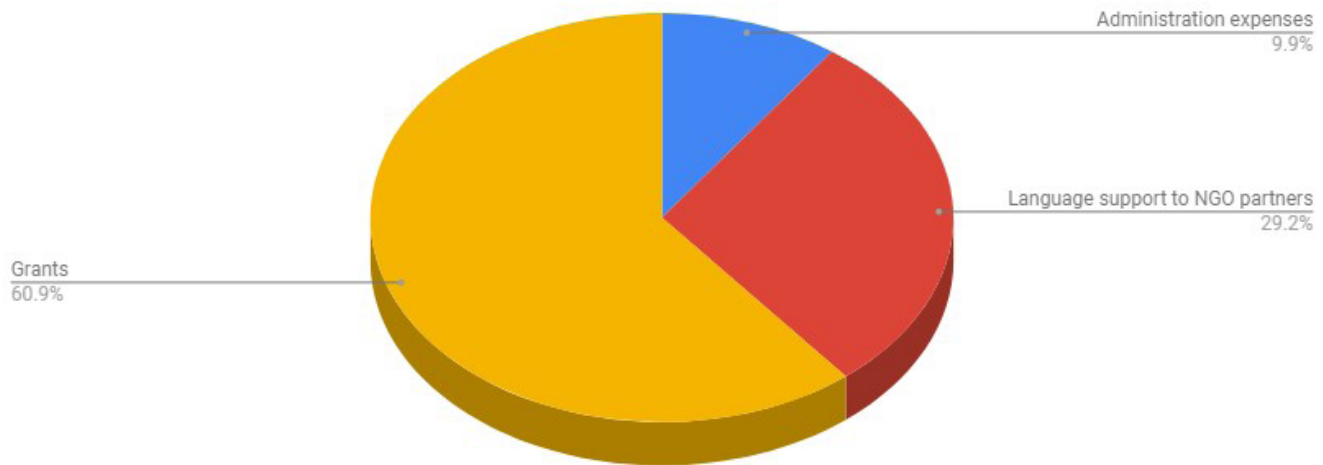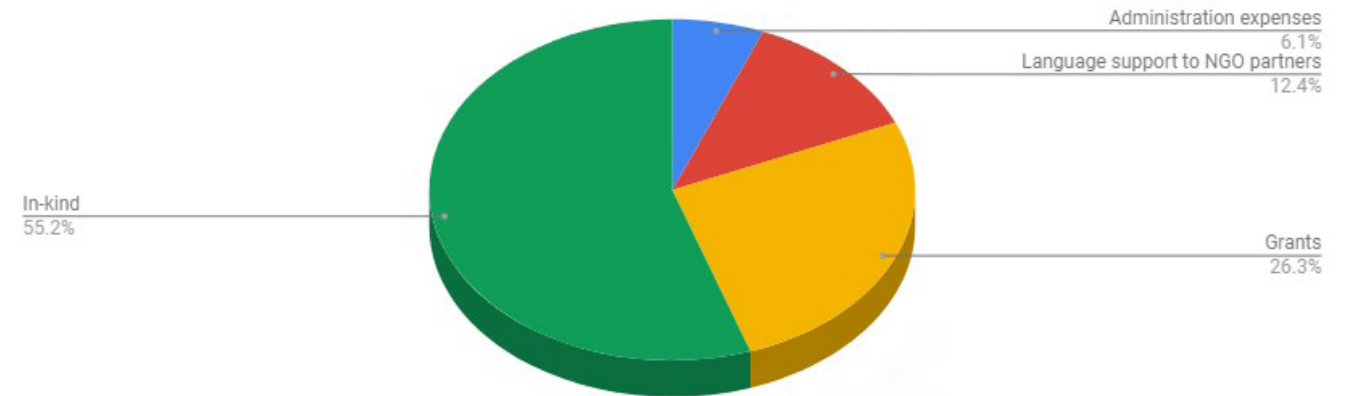
FY20 Income without in-kind donations $4,632,630



Grants - Public Sector 48.7%

Language support to NGO partners 36.5%

General Donations & Sponsorships 8.3%

Grants - Private sector 6.5%

# FY20 Income with in-kind donations $9,945,230



- Language support to NGO partners — 17.0%
- General Donations & Sponsorships — 3.9%
- Grants - Private sector — 3.0%
- Value of In Kind donations — 53.4%
- Grants - Public Sector — 22.7%

# FY20 Expenditure with In-kind donations $ 9,622,533



- Administration expenses — 6.1%
- Language support to NGO partners — 12.4%
- In-kind — 55.2%
- Grants — 26.3%

# FY20 Expenditure without in-kind donations $4,309,933



- Administration expenses — 9.9%
- Language support to NGO partners — 29.2%
- Grants — 60.9%

**Your ongoing support makes a difference:**
**Please support us personally or through your company at** translatorswithoutborders.org/donate.

**Many of our donors use their wills or living trusts to make their most generous gifts.**
**Please remember TWB when you create yours.**

# Translators without Borders

Is committed to adhering to relevant codes and standards of good practice, including:

- UN Global Compact
- Principles of Digital Development
- TAUS Dynamic Quality Framework
- Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief
- Common Humanitarian Standard
- DFID Supply Partner Code of Conduct

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