



Scalabrini
Centre of Cape Town



ANNUAL REPORT

2025

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OUR VISION

A **welcoming**
South Africa
where the **rights** of
people on the move
are **realised**.

OUR MISSION

To **welcome**,
to **protect**,
to **promote**
and to **integrate**,
people on the move
into local communities

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR: A YEAR OF REFLECTION



We started 2025 with the confidence that we would continue delivering established programmes that address the holistic needs of people on the move, alongside a dedicated focus on our key advocacy goal: restoring full access to the asylum system. However, before even the first month of the year had passed, we, together with our civil society partners in South Africa and humanitarian actors across the world, were confronted with the announcement of a funding freeze by the US State Department. Within a month, this became the final termination of all funding agreements.

As Scalabrini Centre, we lost approximately 40% of our regular programme and salary budget and were initially forced to suspend many of our services while redefining our programming. The US funding cuts predominantly affected our direct service delivery programmes, including training and business development sponsorships, personal development courses, experiential learning opportunities and welfare support for vulnerable groups. We were forced to significantly scale down our Wellbeing and Development programme and suspend certain activities within our Integration Pathways programme. With a heavy heart, we also had to close our UNITE programme, which served as a civic education initiative that had been running in various high schools for many years. We retrenched colleagues and began the difficult process of rebuilding our work with fewer resources and reduced administrative capacity, while prioritising the continuation of as many essential service delivery activities as possible.

To make matters worse, this shift in the funding landscape was accompanied by an intensified campaign against refugees and forced migrants, increased conflict, persistent and protracted refugee situations, and a growing shift in language from humanitarian protection towards terms such as the externalisation of asylum applications, increased border pushbacks, detention and deportation, and an overall anti-migration rhetoric. We shouldn't forget that migration crises, as politicians like to call them, are not a human mobility issue, but rather an issue of failed state governance; migration doesn't equal crises. Rather, crises emerge when governments fail to regulate border crossing and access to immigration documentation through lawful, efficient and transparent procedures.

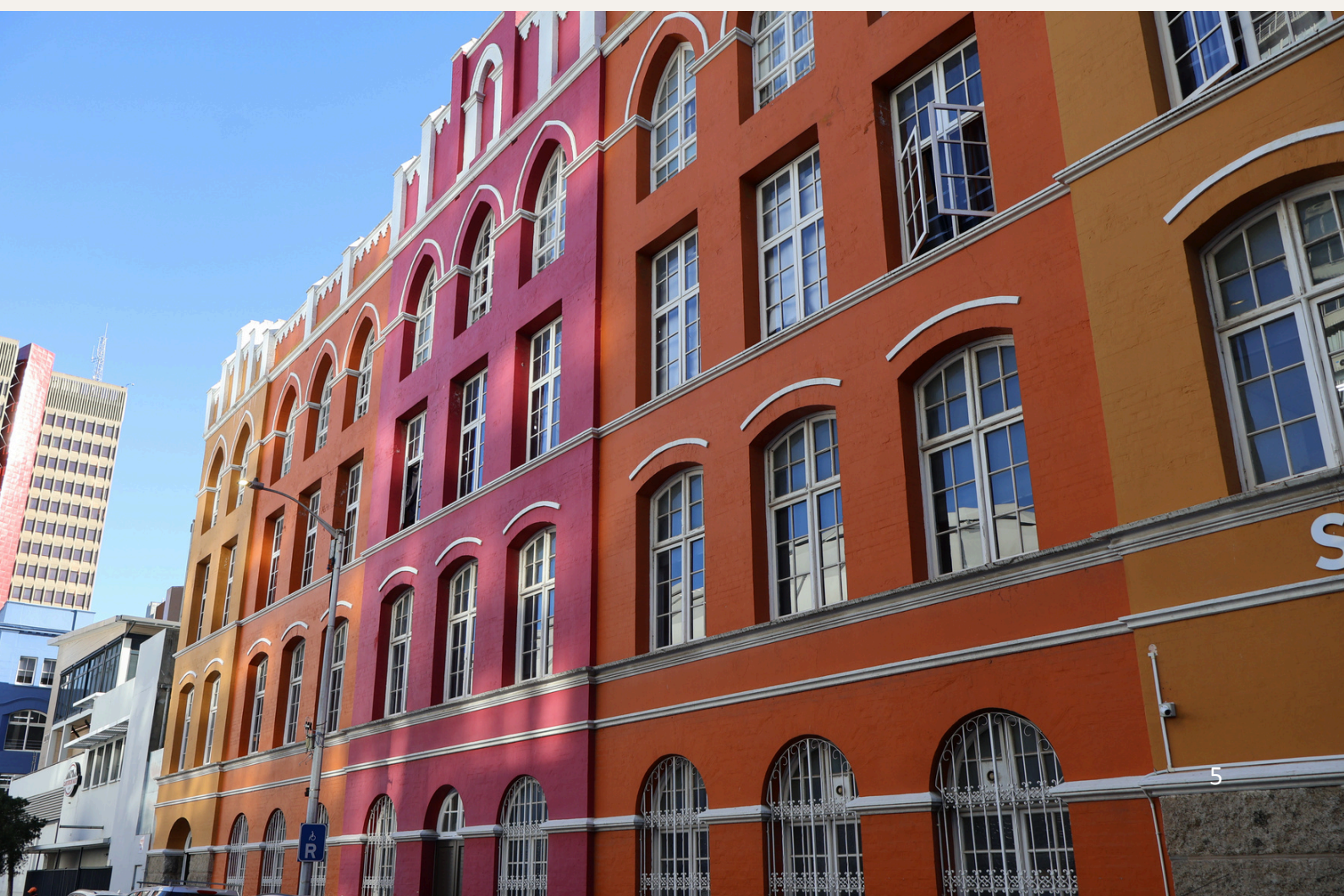
In South Africa in particular, we witnessed an intentional diminishing of human rights-based approaches, with detrimental consequences for the asylum system and further restrictions on the dignity and rights of people on the move, as envisaged in the White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection.

While the resources available to advocate with and for people on the move, and to provide integration support services, continue to dwindle, human mobility remains a permanent aspect of human development. The new normal of the humanitarian funding landscape therefore presents a deeply concerning picture: one in which growing national interests risk overshadowing the reality that migration is neither an isolated event nor something that can simply be confined or controlled. The lack of political will to acknowledge and respond to this reality is deeply concerning, particularly when it is a reality that St John Baptist Scalabrini himself recognised more than a century ago, as he reflected from the emptying countryside of Northern Italy in the late 1880s:

“Seeds migrate on the wings of the wind. Plants migrate from continent to continent on the waves of the seas and rivers. Birds and other animals move from place to place. But even more do human beings migrate...”

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Scalabrini Board, our staff team, the Scalabrini International Migration Network, our donors, sponsors and partners for their collective support during these challenging times. As we look ahead, I encourage us to remain steadfast in our commitment to advocating alongside people on the move. It is through the combination of hope, solidarity and purposeful action that we can continue to defend dignity, uphold rights and work towards a more just and inclusive society.

Giulia Treves
Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town Director



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



Looking back on what we have achieved this year at the Scalabrini Center brings back a mixture of contrasting emotions.

On one hand, there were the difficult and unexpected challenges that forced us to deal with cuts in international funding and a changed general situation, where migration of people is increasingly hindered and branded as undesirable, and organizations fighting to guarantee human rights are ignored or relegated to the status of troublemakers.

Unfortunately, all this has generated further hardship for the many migrant sisters and brothers seeking welcome, protection, promotion, and integration. More concretely, it has forced us to review our organization in terms of human and financial resources and the services we offer.

On the other hand, precisely in this difficult context, SCCT has been able to put its best resources to continuing to serve with passion all those who find in our center a home where they are listened to and a sanctuary of protection.

One of the expressions circulating on the web (with a large number of supporters and just as many detractors who deny its authenticity) is that the Chinese ideogram for “crisis” also means ‘opportunity’ or “new beginning.” Whether it's true or not, for us, this has come true over the last year, pushing us to “shifting landscapes,” reviewing our strategies and priorities, and committing ourselves to the titanic effort of coping with the new situation without reducing the support we provide to the people who come to us.

It has been a collective exercise in awareness of our mission, embracing our vision, upgrading and reorganizing the services we offer, maintaining a professional and efficient approach without compromising on the quality of our work and, even more so, on our Scalabrinian spirit and ethos, where everybody is valued and matters.

I invite then you to browse through this report, not before expressing, on behalf of the SCCT Board, our full and sincere gratitude to all our staff, donors and supporters, numerous volunteers, various partners and stakeholders, and last but not least, all the migrants who are fully part of our family and the reason for our work.

Fr Filippo Ferraro
Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town Chairperson

OUR WORK



The Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town offers specialised services to people who are refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and South Africans. Scalabrini's services focus in four key areas including para-legal advice, advocacy and research, development and integration and well-being and welfare. Scalabrini's mandate is to advocate for human rights and achieves this through a holistic approach that considers all basic needs. This is attained through the work within these core services:



PARALEGAL AND ADVOCACY/RESEARCH

Protecting, promoting and advancing the rights and freedoms of people on the move

The Advocacy Team works on two mutually informing levels. Firstly, paralegal advice and practical assistance are provided to individual clients on a walk-in basis. Pertinent issues here include: access to documentation and the Department of Home Affairs' immigration and asylum systems; access to public services such as education and healthcare; access to justice for victims of xenophobic violence, hate crimes, and other protection-related issues; assistance to unaccompanied and separated foreign minors; and advice and assistance with cases of detention and deportation. Secondly, the Advocacy Team works to drive deeper systemic change in South African society and in the immigration and asylum systems. The work is informed by and responsive to direct engagement with individuals and the particular problems that they experience. This work includes: commenting on draft legislation, policies and implementation, to government and international bodies; raising awareness through online communications, newsprint, and documentary making, among other things; providing trainings to government officials, civil society, citizens, and members of refugee and migrant communities; conducting and publishing research; engaging in strategic litigation; and finding durable solutions to specific issues, like the cessation of refugee status.

**IMPACT
REPORT**

[Click here to download advocacy's impact report](#)



WELL-BEING AND DEVELOPMENT

Accessing services for people who are migrants and refugees, in need

Wellbeing and Development aims to create a network that provides a safe space for people on the move, helping them build self-reliance and resilience. The team offers psychosocial support programmes, including mentorship, case management services, support groups, crisis help, and various soft skills activities. Their goal is to increase access to services and information for people who are refugees, asylum seekers and migrants - promoting their integration into South African society.

**IMPACT
REPORT**

[Click here to download well-being and development's report](#)



INTEGRATION PATHWAYS

Employment Access | Skills Hub | UpLearn

Integration Pathways aims to develop and skill people on the move towards self-sufficiency and independence. We achieve this through unlocking agency and leadership potential. The programme provides a combination of skills training, professional development and resources needed for success in the job market.

**IMPACT
REPORT**

Click here to download advocacy's impact report



**LAWRENCE
HOUSE**

(CHILD AND YOUTH
CARE CENTRE)



***Caring and protecting the needs of vulnerable
refugee and migrant children and youth.***

Lawrence House is a child and youth care centre registered with the Department of Social Development. The residential facility caters to the particular care and protection needs of vulnerable children and youth who are of refugee and migrant backgrounds. Lawrence House offers these children a therapeutic environment where their holistic development is promoted through the dedicated work of a multi-disciplinary care team.

**IMPACT
REPORT**

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OUR STORIES





STRENGTHENING PROTECTION, PARTNERSHIPS AND REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Migration continues to shape communities across Africa, presenting both opportunities and complex humanitarian challenges. People on the move including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, stateless persons and internally displaced people often face significant barriers to accessing protection, documentation, healthcare, education, livelihoods and justice. These challenges are frequently compounded by discrimination, xenophobia, social exclusion and evolving migration policies. Within this context, the Enhancing Protection and Asylum project has played a vital role in strengthening coordinated, rights-based responses that uphold the dignity and wellbeing of people on the move in both South Africa and Uganda.

Supported by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the project has brought together a diverse network of partner organisations committed to improving protection systems, strengthening institutional capacity and promoting sustainable, collaborative responses to migration. Recognising that migration is a regional issue requiring regional solutions, the project fostered meaningful partnerships between organisations working in different national contexts while pursuing a common vision of safe, inclusive and rights-based migration governance.

STRENGTH OF COLLABORATION

One of the defining achievements of the project has been the strengthening of collaboration among partner organisations in South Africa such as The **Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa(CoRMSA)** and the **Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa(SIHMA)** and partners in Uganda in the **Jesuit Refugee Service(JRS)** as well as the **Catholic Centre for Legal Aid Services(CCLAS)**. Through regular engagement, knowledge exchange and joint learning opportunities, partners have shared experiences, identified common challenges and developed practical approaches to improving services for people on the move. These relationships have enhanced coordination across sectors and encouraged organisations to draw on one another's expertise, creating stronger referral pathways and more holistic support for individuals and families navigating complex migration journeys.

The project has also contributed significantly to institutional learning and capacity strengthening. By facilitating dialogue between practitioners, legal experts, government representatives and civil society organisations, partners have been better equipped to respond to changing migration dynamics while promoting approaches that place human rights, dignity and inclusion at the centre of service delivery. The exchange of experiences between South Africa and Uganda has provided valuable insights into different migration contexts, allowing organisations to adapt successful practices and strengthen their own programming.

CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

While the project has benefited all people on the move, a significant focus has been placed on addressing the unique vulnerabilities experienced by children on the move. Children who migrate whether alone or with their families often face heightened risks of exploitation, interrupted education, family separation and limited access to protection services. By strengthening child protection systems within broader migration responses, the project has supported partner organisations in ensuring that children's rights and best interests are consistently considered alongside the needs of families and communities.

Importantly, the project has extended beyond direct service provision by contributing to stronger advocacy and policy engagement. Through collective action, partner organisations have amplified evidence-based advocacy, promoted rights-based migration policies and encouraged greater cooperation between civil society and government institutions. This collaborative approach has enabled partners to address systemic barriers while contributing to more responsive and inclusive migration governance at both national and regional levels.

PROJECT IMPACT

The impact of the project is reflected not only in the activities delivered, but in the strengthened relationships that now exist between organisations across South Africa and Uganda. These partnerships have created lasting networks of trust, learning and mutual support that will continue to benefit people on the move well beyond the lifespan of the project. By working together, partner organisations have been able to respond more effectively to emerging challenges, improve referral mechanisms and ensure that individuals receive more comprehensive and coordinated support.

Ultimately, the project demonstrates that protecting people on the move requires more than individual interventions, it requires sustained collaboration, shared expertise and a collective commitment to human rights. Through regional partnership, capacity strengthening and coordinated advocacy, the project has laid a strong foundation for continued cooperation between organisations working across migration and protection sectors.

As the project concludes in 2026, its legacy lies in stronger institutions, deeper partnerships and a renewed commitment to ensuring that every person on the move, regardless of nationality, legal status, age or circumstance and is treated with dignity, protected from harm and afforded meaningful opportunities to rebuild their lives. The lessons, relationships and collaborative spirit developed throughout the project will continue to shape future responses to migration, reinforcing the shared responsibility of governments, civil society and communities to build systems that are inclusive, resilient and responsive to the needs of all people on the move.



WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2025: SOLIDARITY WITH REFUGEES & COMMUNITY AS A SUPERPOWER



Every year on 20 June, World Refugee Day offers an opportunity to recognise the strength, courage and resilience of people forced to leave their homes. In 2025, the theme of “Solidarity with Refugees” invited us to reflect not only on the challenges people on the move face, but also on the power of standing together.

At Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, we marked the occasion on 19 June with a celebration shaped by the people at the heart of our work. Under the theme “Community as a Superpower,” the day was an opportunity to celebrate connection, creativity and the strength that comes from community.

Importantly, the event was not simply organised for our clients. It was organised with and by them. From planning the activities to bringing the celebration to life, clients played a leading role in shaping the day. Scalabrini provided support and space, while the ideas, energy and ownership came from the community itself. This approach reflects a core part of our work: recognising people on the move not only as people who need support, but as individuals with agency, talents, ideas and the ability to shape their own communities.

One of the most memorable activities was the creation of a symbolic tower of unity. Together, participants assembled pieces of cardboard to build a structure representing what can be achieved when people come together. Banners carrying the words “Community as a Superpower” and “Solidarity” reinforced the message. Piece by piece, the tower took shape which served as a simple but powerful reminder that collective strength is built through individual contributions.

The celebration also welcomed our keynote speaker, Director and Founder of Timely Interactions, Shingi West, whose words reflected on the resilience within our communities and the importance of recognising and harnessing collective power. Her message encouraged participants to continue creating communities where people can support one another, find belonging and draw strength from their shared experiences.

Throughout the day, poetry, storytelling, music and dance filled the space. A shared meal brought people together around the same table. In these moments of joy and connection, the significance of the celebration became clear: community is not only about surviving difficult circumstances. It is also about creating spaces where people can laugh, express themselves, celebrate their identities and experience hope.

This was captured beautifully in a message shared by one of our clients following the event. Reflecting on the dancing and celebrations, she wrote:

"Watching everyone dance filled my soul with so much joy, and for a moment, all my stress, worries, and heavy thoughts disappeared."

She described the day as a moment when she could laugh again and briefly put aside the challenges she was carrying. She ended her message by describing Scalabrini as "a place of hope, love, and healing."

Her words remind us that the impact of our work is not always captured in numbers. Sometimes, it can be found in a moment of laughter, a new connection, the confidence to take part, or the feeling of belonging to a community. World Refugee Day 2025 demonstrated what can happen when people are given the space, trust and opportunity to lead. The celebration belonged to the community, and its success came from the many individual contributions that came together to create something greater.

The tower we built that day was more than cardboard. It represented a principle at the heart of Scalabrini's work: when people stand together, they can build something stronger than they could build alone.

In 2025, our community reminded us once again that solidarity is not simply something we offer to refugees and migrants. It is something we build together and in turn make community, a superpower.



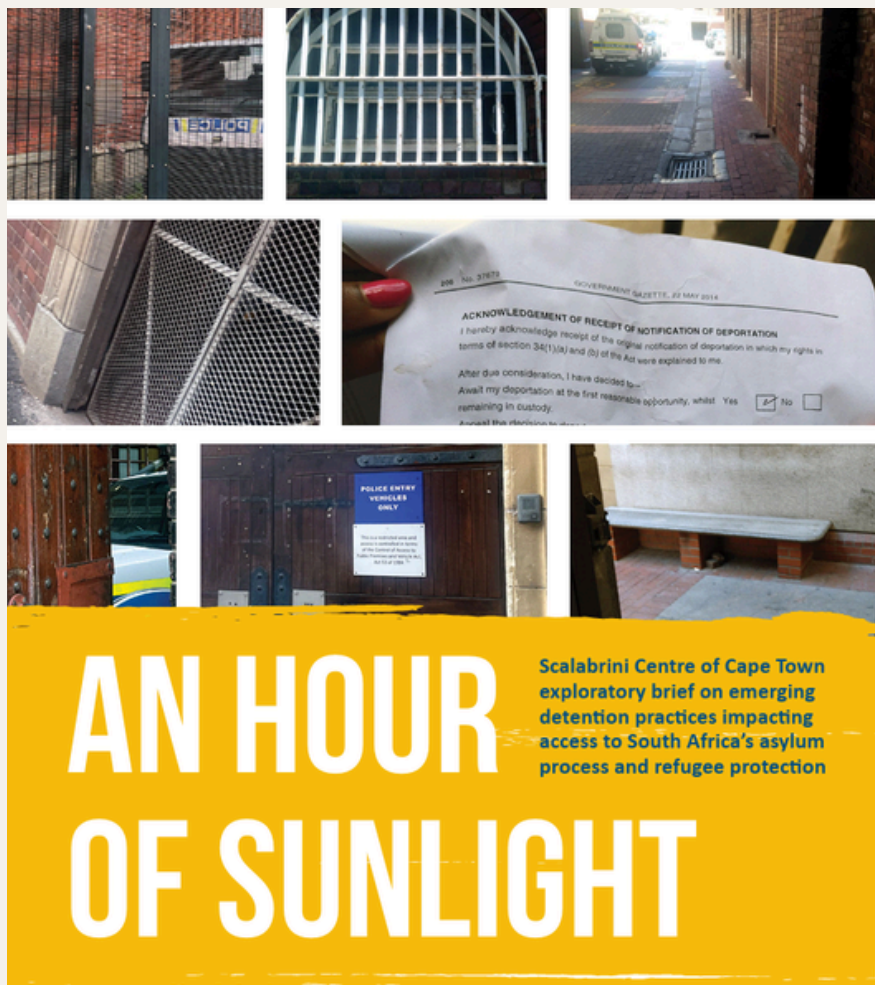
Publication: An Hour of Sunlight

An Hour of Sunlight is an advocacy brief produced by the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town that explores the realities of immigration detention in South Africa. Drawing on legal analysis, practical experience and international human rights standards, the publication examines how detention practices affect people on the move, particularly asylum seekers and refugees. The brief identifies gaps in the current system, highlights the human impact of detention, and presents practical recommendations for a more humane, lawful and effective immigration management framework.

The publication serves as an important advocacy tool by bringing greater attention to the lived experiences of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who are detained under immigration laws. Rather than focusing solely on legal compliance, it demonstrates how detention can interrupt access to protection, separate families, negatively affect mental wellbeing and create additional barriers to integration. By promoting alternatives to detention, the brief encourages approaches that respect human dignity while allowing individuals to continue accessing legal assistance, documentation processes and essential services. This is particularly important for vulnerable groups, including children, survivors of trauma and people with ongoing protection needs.

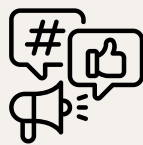
The publication also supports broader systemic change by equipping policymakers, legal practitioners, civil society organisations and the public with evidence-based recommendations. In doing so, it contributes to more informed policy discussions and strengthens efforts to ensure that immigration governance aligns with South Africa's constitutional values and international obligations.

Click on the image to download the publication





IN THE MEDIA



843, 799

Content viewed on our social media,
across three platforms, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn



47, 910

Website users viewing over 100 000 pages and spending
an average 3 minutes and 18 seconds on pages.

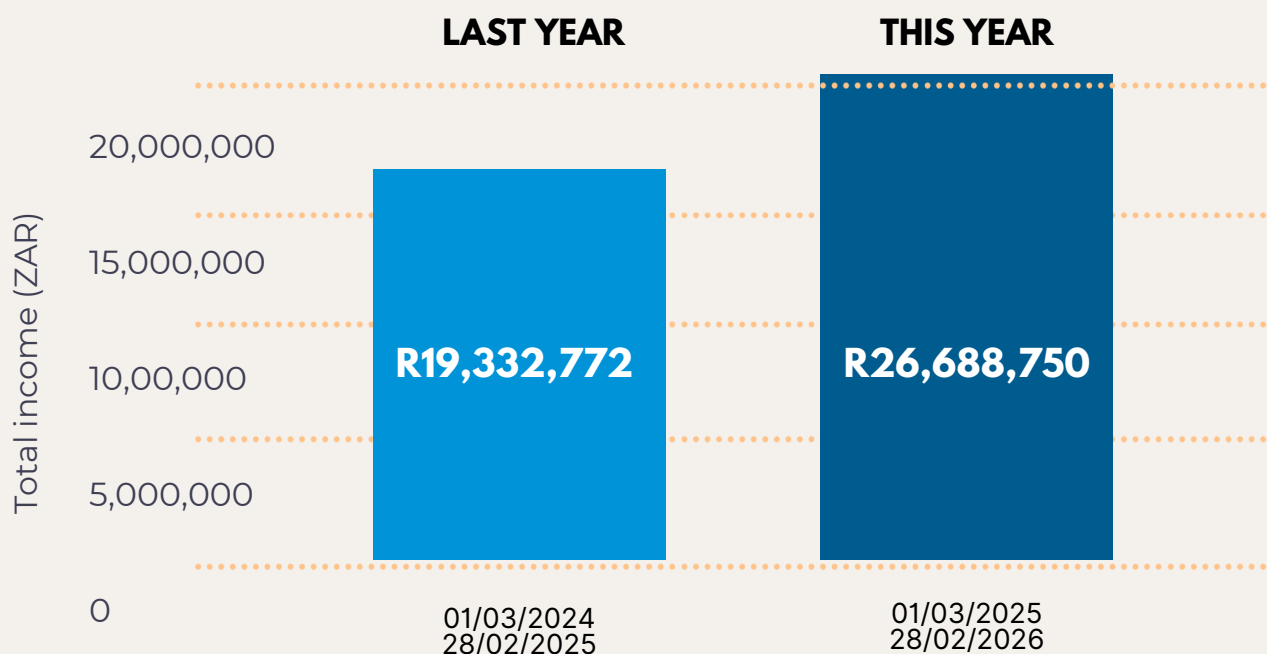


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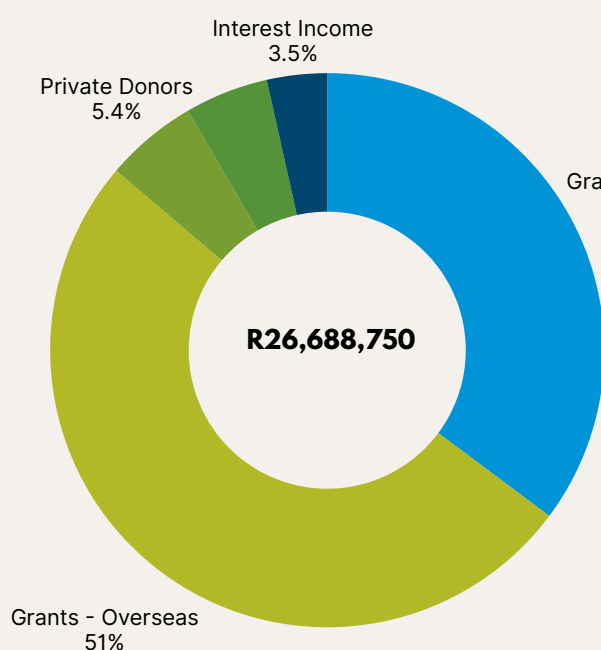
Content downloads

OUR FINANCES

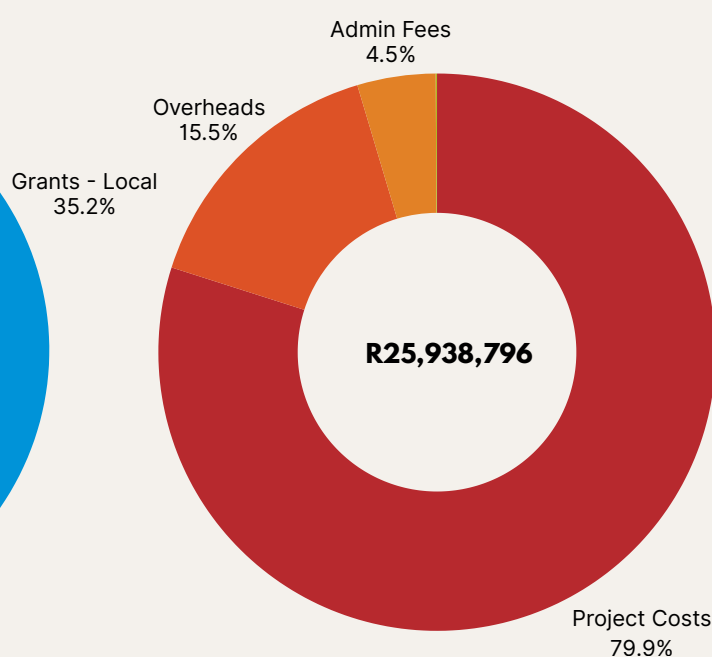
FUNDING INCOME (PER ANNUM)



INCOME



EXPENDITURE



Note: Any potential or existing funders are most welcome to request a full set of our audited financials

THANK YOU

The work at The Scalabrini Centre would not be possible without the support and dedication of our board of trustees, the donors and volunteers.

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The European Union; International Centre for Migration Policy Development; Porticus; Department of Social Development; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); HCI Foundation; Millennium Trust; ELMA Philanthropies; Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU); Archdiocese of Cape Town; LSEG (London Stock Exchange) Foundation

