



Annual Report

2024

Table of Contents ↘

2024

Introduction	01
Organisational overview	02
Programme highlights	03
Financial overview	04
Partnerships and collaboration	05
Looking ahead	06
Acknowledgements	07



Foreword

On behalf of the Mission Circle, I am honoured to present the 2024 Annual Report of the Institute for Community Based Sociotherapy, a testament to your continued trust and partnership in advancing peace, social cohesion, and mental health as integral pillars of resilience building across the world.

This past year has been one of purposeful engagement and steadfast commitment. With the support from different partners, ICBS has deepened its presence within communities across the project target sites fostering dialogue, rebuilding relationships, and nurturing collective healing. These efforts have strengthened local capacities to cope with adversity, transform conflict, and restore hope in ways that honour lived experiences and cultural wisdom of the people themselves.

In a time marked by uncertainty and complexity, your investment has enabled us to accompany communities as they build peace from within and out while recognising that mental health and psychosocial wellbeing are inseparable from the broader pursuit of sustainable peace and human

dignity. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the ICBS team and our partners, whose dedication and professionalism have been noteworthy. Despite the worrying global trend towards polarisation, division politics, and exclusion, the team has remained steadfast in upholding the project's values of empathy, inclusion, and local leadership. Their resilience and integrity have ensured that ICBS' activities continue to serve as a beacon of connection and hope amid uncertainty.

Over the past year, ICBS has expanded its reach, strengthened partnerships, and fostered meaningful collaboration between consortium members, communities, donors, non-profit organisations and governmental institutions. The project's continued emphasis on locally led approaches and inclusive participation reflects its core belief that lasting peace grows from within communities themselves.

As we look ahead, the Mission Circle reaffirms its commitment to supporting the mission of ICBS: to nurture peace, healing, and social cohesion through connection, collaboration, and collective action. We thank all those who have contributed to this shared journey, especially the communities whose strength and trust continue to inspire and sustain this work.

On behalf of the ICBS Mission Circle,

Moses Mukasa



1. Introduction

It is with great appreciation that we share with you the annual narrative report for ICBS, covering the year 2024. As we reflect on the past twelve months, we are mindful of the dedication, trust, and collaboration that have continued to drive our mission forward and bringing community-based sociotherapy (CBS) to more people.

In many ways, 2024 was a year marked by steady commitment, but also of learning and adapting to challenging circumstances. Both within our organisation as well as in the context we are working. Our partnership in the Great Lakes region continued to grow, anchored by the regional CBS program launched the previous years. We also broadened our reach, preparing for new initiatives in countries like Burundi, the Netherlands and Syria, while continuing to support CBS implementation in Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda through close collaboration with partners and stakeholders on the ground.

Organisationally, 2024 marked the ongoing development of our sociocracy structure. Now in its second year, this way of working increasingly shapes how we organise ourselves emphasising transparency, collective ownership, and adaptability. With our expanding team of staff, we remain committed to continuous learning and reflection, adjusting as needed to ensure our organisational model grows alongside our mission.





2. ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW

Last year, the ICBS team has taken time to reflect on its mission and objectives. Strategic objectives were formulated in the multi-annual strategic plan 2024-2028. The strategic objectives are broken down in annual objectives and specified in the annual operational plan 2024.

Vision

We envision a world where people whose lives have been disrupted by war, violence or natural disasters can live their lives in peace and enjoy meaningful social relationships.

Mission

We contribute to peaceful communities and improving the psychosocial well-being of people living in areas disrupted by crises, by facilitating access to community-based sociotherapy.

Purpose

We work to develop a community of experts and a knowledge institute for community-based sociotherapy based on core principles of the approach and defined quality standards.

Strategic objectives 2024 - 2028

- **FOSTERING A VIBRANT COMMUNITY OF EXPERTISE**
- **ACCREDITATION OF CBS PROFESSIONALS**
- **BUILDING A BODY OF KNOWLEDGE ON CBS**
- **INCREASE ACCESS TO CBS**
- **SUSTAINABLE CBS-INSPIRED ORGANISATION**

FOSTERING A VIBRANT COMMUNITY OF EXPERTISE

In 2024 we have worked on the concept note for the establishment of the community of expertise. Due to re-prioritising our objectives, the implementation of the community of expertise will start in 2025.

The primary focus of the establishment of a vibrant community of expertise on CBS is to share knowledge, experience and expertise. Key areas of focus include 1) connecting CBS practitioners with one another for a variety of collaborative efforts, 2) co-organising learning events on CBS-related topics, 3) connecting organisations that plan to implement CBS with CBS practitioners, and 4) facilitating organisational support for community members, including access to funding.

Meetings will mainly take place on-line, as we are working in different countries and want this community to be an inclusive initiative, connecting people beyond borders. We are excited to get this community started in 2025.

ACCREDITATION OF CBS PROFESSIONALS

ICBS and its partners have been providing training in community-based sociotherapy for more than 20 years. Meanwhile the methodology has been further developed, adjusted to different contexts and documented in the Implementation Guidance for community-based sociotherapy (CBS). The purpose of the ICBS accreditation programme is to ensure that community-based sociotherapy trainers and organisations implementing these programmes are competent, credible and capable of delivering quality services. The accreditation programme encourages continuous improvement among implementing organisations and professionals, while offering valuable recognition from governments, donors and other stakeholders in the field of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and peacebuilding, enhancing both credibility, impact of the CBS methodology and whether the methodology is being applied in an ethical and safe manner.

As a knowledge institute and network organisation, ICBS became the certification body for the community-based sociotherapy methodology in close collaboration with partners who have co-developed the methodology or have been working with the CBS approach for many years. The first selection of CBS trainers will be done in 2025, and the trainers will start the accreditation journey which will end mid-2026.

BUILDING A BODY OF KNOWLEDGE ON CBS

In 2024 the knowledge development team of ICBS and its partners worked on shaping and expanding its body of knowledge in relation to community-based sociotherapy. With the research strategy now finalised, we have a clear and shared direction for deepening understanding on what makes CBS effective in different contexts. Our growing research network is bringing members and partners together to learn from each other, co-create studies, and strengthen locally-led research initiatives.

ICBS has advanced on its multiple research tracks that are part of its programming. These efforts aim to deepen scientific understanding of the CBS approach but also focus on maintaining the quality of the intervention through monitoring, studying the contextual relevance, and assessing the sustainability across the areas where CBS is being implemented. In 2024, we focused on three key research domains: 1) Societal issues studies, 2) Implementation research 3) Digitalisation of the Monitoring and Evaluation system.

Societal issues studies

ICBS coordinated the design phase of the national studies on societal issues. Partner organisations had identified the key issues affecting individual, family and community relationships, which were often raised in the CBS groups in Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi. In all three countries, conflicts between partners were seen as one of the major issues that were often brought up in the sessions.

The studies employ a qualitative research design, combining in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory observation within CBS groups. In Rwanda, preliminary pilot data have been collected to refine research instruments. Early findings suggest that couple and family conflicts are not isolated phenomena, but part of broader relational trauma patterns linked to historical violence and structural inequalities. We learned that this theme operates at the critical intersection of MHPSS and Peacebuilding, exploring how psychosocial distress, gender norms, and social power dynamics manifest in intimate and family relationships. The data so far showed that these relational tensions often serve as both outcomes and drivers of wider community conflict.

The research will inform policymakers about the societal issue, but also about the necessity to therefore focus on integrated MHPSS and Peacebuilding approaches, considering the family as an important target group. In addition, it will further inform the CBS intervention to address this theme more explicitly, helping CBS facilitators to navigate discussions on relational tensions and violence within a safe group environment. Ultimately, the study aims to produce a cross-country comparative analysis, identifying shared mechanisms of change and context-specific challenges in transforming partner relationships as part of the healing and peacebuilding process.



Monitoring and evaluation digitalisation

One of the key-ambitions of ICBS is the digitalisation of the monitoring and evaluation system for CBS. In partnership with CBS Rwanda, ICBS has configured the ActivityInfo platform as its central data management tool, replacing fragmented paper-based and Excel-based reporting systems. All data collection forms, aligned with CBS monitoring strategies, indicators, and quality standards, have been designed and configured.

The system allows for real-time data aggregation and analysis across multiple countries where CBS is being implemented, providing access to data for learning and accountability. Features include geo-referenced data entry, participant tracking, fidelity, offering both quantitative summaries and qualitative narratives. The roll-out phase will take place in 2025, accompanied by training of staff of the partners organisations and CBS facilitators.

This digital system is designed to serve as a shared monitoring infrastructure for all future CBS initiatives worldwide.

Implementation research

ICBS has initiated the implementation research focusing on understanding how and under what conditions CBS achieves change, and how its quality and sustainability can be maintained during scale-up. This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, exploring both effectiveness and implementation dynamics.

For the implementation research four thematic areas have identified for study:

1. Adoption: Understanding what drives communities, institutions, and practitioners to adopt CBS, and how CBS facilitators and local leaders internalise its philosophy and values.

2. Appropriateness and contextualisation: Assessing how CBS principles and practices are adapted to different cultural, social, and political environments while retaining fidelity to its core methodology.

Fidelity refers to the degree to which CBS is implemented as intended. We use the Fidelity Assessment Tool (FAT) to systematically assess adherence to CBS principles, facilitation standards, and group processes. The FAT captures information on group dynamics, facilitator behaviour, adherence to session structure, and participants' engagement. In 2025, the FAT was fully integrated into the ActivityInfo digital monitoring platform, enabling District Officers and other staff to record, analyse, and visualise fidelity data in real time.

3. Scale-up and sustainability: Identifying enablers and risks in maintaining quality during scale-up, including supervision systems, accreditation processes, and institutional partnerships that ensure continuity beyond project funding cycles.

4. Correlation between socio-economic wellbeing and psychosocial healing: The study examines correlations between participation in CBS and indicators of socio-economic wellbeing, such as income generation, savings group participation, family-decision making, and perceived self-efficacy. This component aims to provide evidence for the often observed but under-documented link between psychosocial recovery and livelihood improvement.

Together, these four areas for knowledge development reflect ICBS's commitment to a continuous learning process that connects the voices of the community members, scientific inquiry, and practical implementation.

Increase access To CBS

ICBS continued to train more CBS facilitators in countries of operation. We started with CBS in Burundi and developed pilot projects for the Netherlands and Syria. The pilots are intended to verify if the CBS approach will add value to the existing range of methods used by the partners in the respective countries. While in Burundi the partner already had experience with CBS, they expressed the need for more training, to deepen their understanding of the CBS approach, train new facilitators and reinforce the existing knowledge. For the Netherlands, sociotherapy has been implemented in clinical base and In Syria, CBS is a new approach, hoping that it will improve social cohesion and psychosocial healing in the target communities.

Sustainable CBS-inspired organisation

ICBS applies a governance system inspired by the CBS principles. This includes an organisational structure that is not based on hierarchy, but on a strong peer accountability mechanism. One of the means to operationalise this structure is the annual peer review meetings where the performance review is based on 360-degree feedback and not on hierarchical. Another element of creating a sustainable CBS-inspired organisation is to strengthen our internal control systems appropriate for our organisational structure. In 2024 we have increased our focus on improving our financial systems, including adaptation of accounting software.

Finally, in line with the policies of ICBS, we have adjusted the organisational structure. ICBS started with a board structure with 5 persons registered as management board. This was not in line with the suggested management structure as described in our Manual of Procedures and had practical challenges. We have aligned our articles of incorporation with our Manual of Procedures and principles of our organisational structure inspired by sociocracy. As a result, we have installed a supervisory board, consisting of the five experienced members (previously the management board). The Management Board consists of two members of the General Circle, covering the positions of chair, treasurer and secretary. This way the daily management is in hands of the General Circle. The Supervisory Board is the controlling body of ICBS.



2.2 Human resources (HR)

The year 2024 was marked by aiming at stability. Stability in terms of projects as well as composition of our team. All positions of the General Circle (management team) and supporting consultants were filled as planned. At the same time, the organisation faced some cases of long-term sick leave, exposing the vulnerability of working with a small team. As an organisation, this was a steep learning curve fostering ongoing reflections on HR policies and practices.



3.PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS



In the year 2024, ICBS received an increasing number of requests to provide training in the CBS methodology and provide support in research methodologies related to (psycho)social wellbeing, social dignity and other related topics. ICBS has been implementing several projects in the Great Lakes Region. This chapter provides an overview of some of ICBS' programmatic highlights.

3.1 Regional CONNECT project in the Great Lakes Region

With the funds from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, ICBS is implementing the CONNECT Project in collaboration with various local partners across the Great Lakes Region. These include CBS Rwanda and the Anglican Church–Byumba Diocese in Rwanda, the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) in Uganda, and Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services (THARS) in Burundi. In addition to these CBS-implementing organisations, ICBS has also partnered with academic institutions in each country to support the project's research component. Beginning in 2025, ICBS will collaborate with the University of Rwanda, Gulu University (Uganda), and the University of Burundi on a Clustered Randomised Controlled Trial (c-RCT). This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Community-Based Sociotherapy (CBS) methodology across the region.

In 2024, ICBS worked closely with its implementation partners to contextualise the CBS training guidelines, which were then used to train 415 CBS facilitators. ICBS also supported the capacity-building of CBS trainers by organising training-of-trainers (ToT) sessions. Additionally, ICBS team members participated in some CBS facilitators trainings, offering valuable opportunities to learn from various local contexts.

By the end of 2024, nearly 7,000 individuals had been reached through CBS activities across the region, including community members, university students, refugees, and people in prisons.

Together with research institutions and local implementing partners, ICBS has designed a comprehensive research plan that includes both qualitative and quantitative components. The study will be conducted throughout 2025 and 2026.



3.2 Integration of Peacebuilding and MHPSS in the Great Lakes Region

ICBS was commissioned to conduct research on the current state of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Peacebuilding (PB) activities in the Member States of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). As part of this research, ICBS recruited a team of experts in the field of MHPSS and Peacebuilding who assessed the impact of conflict on MHPSS and Peacebuilding in the 12 member states of the Great Lakes Region: Angola, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, the Republic of Congo, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. Through a desk review, an online questionnaire, interviews and training, the team examined the existing training approaches in MHPSS and Peacebuilding in the region, and the extent to which these activities are integrated and explored opportunities for greater synergy. A unified theoretical framework is introduced to support practitioners from each field to understand how their programs align with MHPSS and/or PB approaches, while also identifying ways to benefit from insights across disciplines. The final product will be regional guidelines on the integration of MHPSS into conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Great Lakes Region, expected to be finalised in 2026.



3.3 CBS training

ICBS has supported the training of staff and community facilitators across various countries, typically in response to requests from donor agencies or implementing NGOs seeking effective approaches to strengthen psychosocial wellbeing and promote community-based peacebuilding.

While each training is adapted to the local context to ensure cultural relevance and practical applicability, the recommended training pathway generally follows a consistent sequence: starting with a 15-day basic training, followed by a 5-day intermediate training, and then a 5-day advanced training. When appropriate, refresher sessions may be offered as well.

Where possible, a Training of Trainers (ToT) is facilitated to prepare a selected group of CBS facilitators to become trainers. Ideally this takes place after participants have completed the advanced training. This timing ensures that facilitators have gained sufficient hands-on experience in leading CBS groups, and it also provides trainers with a clearer view of each participant's competencies and readiness to step into a trainer role.

South Sudan

As part a project of ZOA Dorcas in South Sudan ICBS was hired to support with training in CBS for their partner organisation. In the first year, the CBS methodology was contextualised to the South Sudan context and 24 facilitators were selected and recruited to undergo a basic training and the first cycle of training of CBS participants started. The following year, three more cycles were completed, and facilitators benefitted from intermediate and advanced training provided by ICBS. Over the course of these two years, the program has created significant impact and yielded positive result. A total of 572 people have been supported with basic sociotherapy and facilitators reported social change in their community including good relationships among participants and communities, and reduction in domestic violence and hatred. As a result, community members and chiefs now actively reaching out to the facilitators asking to join the CBS groups in the next cycle.

Ethiopia

ICBS supported ZOA in implementing the project “Promoting stability and strengthening basic service delivery for host communities, refugees and other displaced population in Gambella Regional State (GRS) of Ethiopia”. In past, ICBS supported ZOA in facilitating the basic training for the CBS facilitators in Ethiopia, and the 2024 consultancy focused on strengthening the CBS program through intermediate and advanced trainings. This was combined with a Training of Trainers for staff members and two eligible facilitators who supported in the training of a new batch of facilitators using their newly acquired skills and knowledge.

Despite repeated delays caused by increased insecurity and financial constraints, all trainings were successfully completed. The training process helped facilitators to identify challenges and strengthen their skills through peer learning.



4. PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION





Connect Summit 2024

In 2024, ICBS aimed at strengthening collaboration with our long-standing partners. All partners started implementing their CBS activities, training was conducted in Uganda and Rwanda and connections were made in Burundi to prepare to expand the CONNECT programme there.

This year also highlighted the vital role of the consortium facilitator in navigating the complexities of multi-partner collaboration. Serving as a neutral intermediary, the facilitator ensured open, consistent communication, alignment of goals, and a spirit of trust and cooperation across the consortium. Through coordination meetings, proactive conflict prevention, and inclusive engagement, the facilitator contributed significantly to streamlining joint efforts and strengthening the overall effectiveness and cohesion of the consortium.

The most significant event of 2024 connecting all partners was the Summit organised in Kigali, followed by a teambuilding initiative working under the CONNECT project. The Summit took place on 25 and 26 November 2024 and was attended by stakeholders across various sectors in the Great Lakes Region including researchers, policy makers, (I)NGOs, representatives from government authorities, law makers and others who identify as stakeholders in the field of MHPSS and/or Peacebuilding. The Summit aimed to exchange knowledge, highlight project impacts, and foster future collaborations.

Unlike conventional conferences, the Summit prioritised co-creation over lectures, using interactive group work, appreciative inquiry, and design-thinking formats to foster meaningful dialogue, shared learning, and actionable collaboration.

The atmosphere was one of shared purpose and collective wisdom, a reminder that healing and peace are possible when communities and institutions work in harmony. As we move into the next phase of CONNECT, the momentum generated at the Summit and the bonds strengthened during the retreat continue to fuel our vision: flourishing individuals, resilient communities, and sustainable peace in the Great Lakes Region.





The Summit was followed by a staff retreat for the CONNECT project team and partners, fostering team bonding and deeper collaboration. During the retreat, participants joined the community service day in Rubavu District, known as "Umuganda," where they contributed by planting trees. Following this, CONNECT partners came together to offer cows to survivors of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rubavu District, symbolising solidarity and support for healing and restoration.

This impactful Summit and retreat emphasised the CONNECT project's commitment not only to advancing peacebuilding and mental health through Community-Based Sociotherapy but also to strengthening community ties and practical support for vulnerable populations. These efforts exemplify the holistic approach that drives sustainable healing and flourishing in the Great Lakes Region.



5. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



In 2024, the Institute for Community Based Sociotherapy (ICBS) recorded revenues increase of 455.6% compared to 2023. The total revenue increased to EUR 2,169,451 in 2024 from EUR 390,467 in 2023. This growth was mainly driven by the first-year funding for the three-year CONNECT for Peace project financed by EKN. Project expenses rose to EUR 1,599,482, up from EUR 74,794 in 2023, reflecting the scale-up of program implementation. Personnel and operational costs also grew in line with the increase in project activities, with wages and salaries increasing by 203.2% to EUR 158,888. Despite these increases, ICBS achieved a positive surplus of EUR 39,794 and a net annual surplus of EUR 37,818, nearly 100% higher than the prior year.

The financial position at year-end remained strong, with cash and cash equivalents increased to EUR 1,555,206 in 2024 from EUR 541,275 in 2023, mainly due to unspent project funds carried forward under the July–June CONNECT for Peace project cycle. Current liabilities increased by 206% to EUR 1,386,272, driven by deferred revenues, while working capital improved by 28%, reaching EUR 173,948. These results highlight ICBS's strengthened financial capacity and sound stewardship of donor resources to advance our mission.



6. LOOKING AHEAD



As we look ahead, 2025 brings an exciting new chapter for ICBS. Building on the foundational changes initiated in 2023 and solidified over the past year, we are now entering a phase of consolidation, learning, and intentional growth.

This year has been dedicated to refining our processes, responding to our team's evolving needs, and strengthening our collective alignment. These efforts have already enhanced internal cohesion and deepened our shared sense of purpose. In 2025, we will continue embedding these practices more fully into our daily operations, focusing on building our team's capacity for autonomous, informed decision-making.

A significant milestone has been the formal constitution and registration of our new supervisory board. The roles of the supervisory board and executive board have been clarified and put into practice, fostering greater transparency and accountability throughout the organisation. The coming year we like to look ahead with our supervisory board on how to strengthen our internal systems and financial sustainability.

Financial sustainability will be a central priority in 2025. As we expand and mature as an organisation, we are committed to securing a resilient and diversified funding base. This includes exploring new partnerships, strengthening existing collaborations, and aligning our internal capacity with strategic opportunities for long-term growth.

Furthermore, we are excited to begin the practical implementation of our Community of Expertise, to connecting our growing, international network of professionals dedicated to the quality and accessibility of community-based sociotherapy. One of our key focus areas in the coming year will be the development and accreditation of CBS trainers, an important step toward professionalising the field and ensuring the sustainability of CBS in diverse contexts.

The new year will also be a year of expansion to new regions. We are starting a pilot in the Netherlands, as part of a larger initiative in a neighbourhood in Rotterdam. Besides, we are starting a pilot in Aleppo, Syria, training a national NGO in the CBS methodology to expand their tools for fostering social cohesion.

Finally, we will continue to develop our communication strategy, increasing our visibility, to re-enforce our engagement with practitioners, facilitators, donors, and allies at the intersection of MHPSS and peacebuilding. By strengthening our voice and broadening our reach, we aim to cultivate a vibrant, collaborative network that supports the global application and advancement of CBS.

2025 promises to be a year of continued learning, strategic implementation, and connection. With our structures in place, our mission clear, and our community growing, we look forward to stepping into this next phase together.



6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This year has once again been marked by the growing recognition of community-based sociotherapy as a valuable and evidence-based methodology within the fields of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Peacebuilding. The demand for CBS training and expertise has continued to rise, reflecting a deepening understanding of its relevance and effectiveness. Our efforts to cultivate new partnerships and strengthen existing ones have led to promising collaborations.

At the organisational level, the Institute for Community-Based Sociotherapy (ICBS) continued its journey of transformation. Our dedicated team, inspired by the values and principles of CBS, has worked with great commitment to further shape ICBS' future. This past year marked important steps in our governance transition, with tasks and responsibilities being gradually re-divided between the acting board (General Circle) and our independent supervisory board (Mission Circle).

Amidst these developments, we are especially grateful for the support and presence of the Mission Circle. Their steady guidance was of great value, particularly as we navigated challenges within our team, due to personal circumstances and changes in team composition. Their encouragement and trust helped us stay grounded and forward-looking through periods of uncertainty.

We are also deeply thankful for the continuous support of our donor partners. Their flexibility, commitment, and willingness to think alongside us have been vital in allowing us to remain responsive, adaptive, and focused on the communities we serve.

In addition, we thank the volunteers and consultants who generously contributed their legal, financial, and strategic expertise, and we acknowledge our partners and CBS practitioners around the world whose daily efforts to apply and share CBS have continued to expand its reach and impact.

As we look ahead, we do so with hope and determination. The year 2025 holds new opportunities to deepen the global exchange of CBS experience and contribute to healthier, more connected communities through mental health support and peacebuilding.

Thank you for standing with us.

Partners



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Impacting Hearts-Heads-Hands



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Sustaining Peace
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