PRASHANNA PRADHAN: 'We want to strengthen the whole system'

PAGE 20

SABINE BRUSSE: 'We must work together to stop sextortion'

PAGE 18

Climate justice
Locally-led solutions to tackle the water crisis

WATER JUSTICE FUND
Supporting communities ready for action
PAGE 16
Side by side

In mid-2023, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: ‘Climate change is here. It is terrifying. And it is just the beginning.’ The global stocktake taking place at the UN Water Conference in March, the SDG Summit in September and the UN Climate Conference (COP28) confirmed there is no time left for hesitancy, for making excuses or for waiting for others to move first.

As the climate crisis is foremost a water crisis, it is essential to bring the experiences of the women and girls most affected to where decisions are being made and budgets are allocated. And this is exactly what Simavi has done in 2023. Side by side with the women and partners from our programmes we made ourselves heard in New York, in Stockholm, in Dubai, in the Netherlands and in the countries we work in. Putting women and girls at the centre and working on locally-led solutions to tackle the water crisis is Simavi’s unique way of working. A great example of this is the Water Justice Fund that we co-created with our partners in Kenya, Nepal and Bangladesh, and which became fully operational in 2023.

We have been positioning women’s groups at the forefront of climate action. Our goal is to use innovative shared governance and participatory grant making mechanisms to shift power and decision making to the women and girls who are living in remote, underserved and oppressive environments, and are most likely to experience water vulnerability.

We used our campaigns in the Netherlands to strengthen our message and gather support for our programmes. Through our Stop Sex for Water campaign, we collected nearly 30,000 signatures to pressure Dutch politicians to designate climate budget to local water solutions. We organised a multi-day sponsored hiking event on the mudflats in the Netherlands for the Water Justice Fund, and with the online movie festival Best of HER we drew attention to women’s rights.

We also put a lot of effort into our ongoing programmes, the most prominent being Our Lives, Our Health and Our Futures, which closed at the end of 2023, and WASH SDG, which runs till the end of March 2024. Despite very good results these two programmes have not received renewed funding, and the ensuing decrease in our income means that Simavi will enter a period of transition.

In 2024 we bring more focus to our organisation by concentrating on three overarching programmes, of which the Water Justice Fund, the new WASH, Lean & Share programmes and Sarwacha as a project under the Sustainable and Gender Responsive WASH+ System programme, are all part.

We will adapt to our financial situation by adjusting the organisational structure and by working more efficiently, resulting in lower costs. Looking at the great results of our programmes we continue to invest in our fundraising capacity, because we believe in the relevance and potential of our mission.

2024 will no doubt be a challenging year for Simavi. The world in which we operate keeps changing and working side by side is more important than ever.

Together, we confirm there is no time left for hesitancy, for making excuses or for waiting for others to move first.

‘The world keeps changing and working side by side is more important than ever.’

Dieneke van der Wijk

Director

CREDITS
Productions Pragati Bajracharya, Karin van den Belt, Karin Boorge, Esin Erdogan, Jhiaque Faruque, Noa Gortworst, Mohammed Hamme, Jappe Kok, Patrick Mwariza, Juel Seesing, Sabiba Siddique, Dieneke van der Wijk and all colleagues of Simavi.
Design: Hannah Barrow. With special thanks to: All partners of Simavi. All persons depicted on photos in this Report have given their permission for publication of these images.
SIMAVI, MAY 2024

GLOSSARY
CSOs Civil Society Organisations
GBV Gender Based Violence
HRWS Human Rights to Water and Sanitation
NGO Non-governmental organisation
SDG Sustainable Development Goal
SRHR Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
WASH Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

IMPACT REPORT
Preface Dieneke van der Wijk ............................................. 3
Simavi’s 2023 in review .................................................. 4
This is how Simavi strives for system change...................... 6
We are proud of our numbers ........................................... 10
What programmes did we work on? ............................... 12
The first year of the Water Justice Fund ......................... 16
Stop sex for water! ....................................................... 18
Interview Prashanna Pradhan ........................................ 20
Collaborating and influencing at COP28 ....................... 22
Mudflatwalking for water ............................................. 26
Our Lives, Our Health, Our Futures .............................. 28
WASH & Learn in Tanzania .......................................... 30
Simavi and Dopper launch Sarwacha ............................. 32
Our people .................................................................... 34
Where does our money come from? ......................... 36
And how do we spend it .............................................. 39
Safeguarding our operations ....................................... 40
Integrity ....................................................................... 42
Our leadership ............................................................ 44
Newest member of the board: .................................... 45
Olutayo Bankole-Bolawole ........................................... 45
The financial outlook for 2024 .................................... 46

26 The first time ever: a mud walking expedition raised funds for women’s groups in Kenya, Nepal and Bangladesh.

18 Stop sex for water: nearly 30,000 people signed our petition, resulting in political success.

Table of content

Impact is more than counting toilets, but we are proud to present a brief overview of our results.

PHOTO: SHIVISH BAJRACHARYA

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PHOTO BY SANDER STOEPKER

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On World Water Day, we launch our Water Justice Fund at the UN Water Conference in New York.

A challenging two-day trek through the Wadden Sea: The participants of the first edition of Wadlopen voor Water raise almost EUR 40,000 for women and girls in Kenya, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Together with partners from Kenya, Bangladesh and Nepal, we take to the stage at the World Water Week in Stockholm to present our work and successes.

A big thank you to everyone who supported Simavi this year.

A girl uses the Oky Nepal app, an example of contextually designed female-specific period tracker.

Together with over 85,000 people we take to the streets of Amsterdam to demand climate justice during the Climate March.

On behalf of 16,000 signatories, we present the petition Dit is de Druppel (This is the last straw) to Dutch MPs, urging them to make water justice for women and girls a pillar of international climate policy.

Girls Poop Too! Simavi brings a ‘total toilet experience’ to the Bootstock and Kidsstock festivals in Rotterdam to raise awareness for the need for clean toilets.

Simavi, together with UNICEF and NFCC Nepal, launches the Oky Nepal app. A period tracker specifically contextualised with young Nepalese girls in mind.

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Sacha de Boer presents her photo exposition at the first-ever Petition Bar in Utrecht, where we ask visitors to sign our petition against sextortion.

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2023

2023

MARCH

AUGUST

OCTOBER

November

We had an eventful year with many highlights. Not only in our programmes but also beyond. A big thank you to everyone who supported Simavi this year.

MARCH 28

Simavi's 2023

in review

MARCH 21

Sacha de Boer presents her photo exposition at the first-ever Petition Bar in Utrecht, where we ask visitors to sign our petition against sextortion.

MARCH 22-24

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MAY 28

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JUNE 15

Girls Poop Tool Simavi brings a ‘total toilet experience’ to the Bootstock and Kidsstock festivals in Rotterdam to raise awareness for the need for clean toilets.

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AUGUST 30

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OCTOBER 8-15

Celebrating three years of HER Film Festival with Best of HER. We give viewers a selection of our three favourite empowering HER movies.

November

Together with over 85,000 people we take to the streets of Amsterdam to demand climate justice during the Climate March.

November 30-December 20

We attend COP28 in Dubai as one of the Dutch NGO delegates, where we advocate to make gender and water an integral part of the global goal on adaptation.

2023

2023
Women and girls enjoying their rights to water and sanitation:

How Simavi strives for system change

Simavi’s mission is simple and at the same time very ambitious. We fight for equality and climate justice, and for women and girls to overcome barriers and claim their human rights to water and sanitation. Our Theory of Change guides us towards our goal.

At Simavi, we want all our activities to contribute to our ultimate goal: a world in which all women and girls can enjoy their human rights to water and sanitation. We focus on women and girls because they are hit the hardest by climate change and inadequate access to water and sanitation. At the same time, women are often excluded from decision-making processes. We strongly believe that not only women and girls themselves, but society as a whole will benefit if women and girls have equal opportunities.

What role do we want to play?

We believe that states are ultimately responsible to realise the human rights to water and sanitation. At the same time, we see it as the role of civil society to hold states accountable to the people and communities they serve. We believe civil society, women and girls, and their communities understand best what is needed in their country or community. We want all stakeholders – civil society, private sector and governmental organisations – to work together towards system change so long-term sustainability is guaranteed.

That is why Simavi does not see it as its end goal to provide communities with water and sanitation services directly. We see it as our role to support civil society, women and girls, and their communities to claim their rights. For example, by supporting influencing activities or by gathering evidence to support the claims of women and girls and community-based organisations. We work to overcome gender inequality; among others by ensuring women and girls take part in decision making on water and sanitation and by ensuring their needs are being considered.

What is our Theory of Change?

In 2021 Simavi developed a new Theory of Change (ToC). Our ToC helps us to ensure focus and describes how our key strategies contribute to our ultimate goal. Two mutually reinforcing strategies form the core of our work. Strategy 1: influencing. With like-minded organisations we influence local officials, policymakers, funders, civil society actors and private actors to take responsibility for women and girls' rights to water and sanitation. We want them to own their roles and responsibilities. We want to challenge existing power imbalances. And we want to make sure access to water is not merely seen as a technical problem but as a human rights issue that is related to other global problems, such as climate change and gender inequality. Strategy 2: collaboration. We collaborate with civil society organisations, such as community groups and NGOs, to strengthen their efficiency and leadership in achieving human rights to water and sanitation for women and girls. We do this through funding and supporting these organisations, networks, movements and feminist groups. We want to enable them to work and advocate more effectively, strengthening knowledge, skills, data collection and collaboration. And we want them to shift the power towards women and girls and amplify their voices.

In our ToC, we identify four levels of change: short-term outcomes; mid-term outcomes; long-term outcomes and impact. We see it as our role to support civil society, women and girls and community-based organisations to claim their human rights to water and sanitation. At the same time, we see it as the role of civil society to hold states accountable to the people and communities they serve. We believe civil society, women and girls, and their communities understand best what is needed in their country or community. We want all stakeholders – civil society, private sector and governmental organisations – to work together towards system change so long-term sustainability is guaranteed.

How do we measure our progress?

The ToC helps us to stay focused on our work. All our activities should contribute to achieving our ultimate goal. We aim to design our activities such as our advocacy work and the programmes we work on with partner organisations in Africa and Asia, in line with our ToC. To achieve structural impact, Simavi’s approach is to address financial, institutional, environmental, technological and social sustainability (FIETS). We also make use of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) tools to achieve our goals.

We measure and showcase how programmes contribute to our ultimate goal, we developed indicators that are aligned with each of the outcomes in our ToC. Where possible we align these to the human rights framework or the sustainable development goals (SDG) and targets. To inform these indicators we collect all sorts of evidence from our activities and programmes, through surveys, mobile tools, interviews or feedback from stakeholders and other means. Where possible we make use of established tools. For example, when evaluating sanitation services, we follow the human rights’ AAAQ framework which stands for:

- Accountability
- Adequacy
- Appropriateness
- Quality

To achieve structural impact, we use the GESI tools to achieve our goals. We measure and showcase how programmes contribute to our ultimate goal, we developed indicators that are aligned with each of the outcomes in our ToC. Where possible we align these to the human rights framework or the sustainable development goals (SDG) and targets. To inform these indicators we collect all sorts of evidence from our activities and programmes, through surveys, mobile tools, interviews or feedback from stakeholders and other means. Where possible we make use of established tools. For example, when evaluating sanitation services, we follow the human rights’ AAAQ framework which stands for:

- Accountability
- Adequacy
- Appropriateness
- Quality
How do we increase our impact?
We continually work to improve our impact. We make use of a variety of evidence, from our monitoring systems, evaluations and consultations with key stakeholders, to inform programmes and our lobby and advocacy work. And we invest in learning during the programme cycle with stakeholders and partner organisations, within specific areas and between countries. We are open to feedback on our goals and ways of working. Shifting the power is at the core of our strategy: shifting leadership to our partners and the women and girls themselves. For us, feminist leadership is about mutual respect, working and learning together with an open mind.
Long-term outcomes, which ultimately lead to all women and girls being able to enjoy their human rights to water and sanitation, are placed above the accountability ceiling in our ToC. This is because Simavi is only one of many players that contribute to these outcomes. By cooperating with and influencing other stakeholders we try to maximise our impact on this level. Always with our ultimate goal in mind: making sure that all women and girls enjoy their human rights to water and sanitation.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOME
From WASH volunteer to powerholder
In her determination to make a difference in her community in the Nepalese Baharatala rural municipality, Laxmi Pan Magar decided to volunteer at one of Simavi’s partners in the WASH SDG programme. With the training she received from this partner, the Environment and Public Health Organisation (ENPHO), she became an expert in vital issues such as sanitation and drinking water. She then visited households to teach people more about the importance of clean water and sanitation.
‘Often men do not take into account the effects that certain policies have on the women,’ said Laxmi. ‘I saw this during the household visits as well. When women have decision power in the household, you see a huge difference in prosperity compared to households where this was not the case.’ That is why she decided to run for vice-chairperson of her municipality, which led to an impressive result for her: Laxmi received even more votes than the chairman. ‘Now I can ensure that women are not overlooked when we draft new policies’, Laxmi said. And she’s not done yet. For the next election, she is planning on running for chairperson or the local parliament.

MID-TERM OUTCOME
Training CSOs on feminist leadership
As the only woman on the Moktai water committee covering 10 villages in Tanzania, Hellen Mollel is always on the go. The 40-year-old resident of the village Swebi was elected to the committee in 2021 and has since been dedicated to solving water problems of women and girls. ‘Due to poor management and maintenance of water sources, some had dried up’, said Hellen. ‘Women were spending six to seven hours a day to find water.’ The urgency was not felt as much because all decisions were made by men.’ At the initiative of Hellen, the committee now regularly inspects the water tanks from which the water is transported to the water points near the villages. Hellen also visits these water points in the villages to talk to the women there and share information about the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene.
Hellen further grew into this role of advocate after she had completed several training sessions provided by Simavi’s partner E-MAC. E-MAC implemented Simavi’s WASH & Learning programme in Tanzania. As part of this programme, Simavi trained E-MAC on feminist leadership in WASH practices.

SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY
Successful advocacy for menstrual health
In the Our Lives, Our Health, Our Futures (OLHF) programme, Simavi worked with its partners to achieve gender equality in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area of Bangladesh. An aspect of this was to get the local government to finance menstrual health friendly toilets in schools. Such facilities ensure young women and girls can manage their periods safely and hygienically.
To achieve this, Simavi and its partners lobbied, among others, members of the Khagrachari Hill district council. The first aspect of their strategy was advocacy by the girls themselves. They gave presentations to government officials and other stakeholders. In these presentations, they raised their voices about their needs.

The other aspect of the strategy was more traditional: frequent communication with the council members. Simultaneously, lobby and advocacy officers from Simavi and its partners got in touch with different school management as well. ‘We aimed to get them to allocate more from their existing budgets to menstrual health friendly facilities’, said Ishaque Faruque, Simavi’s lobby and advocacy officer in the OLHF programme. The importance of a consistent advocacy strategy was demonstrated when the Khagrachari Hill district council allocated BDT 50 Lakh (EUR 42,000) for the instalment of menstrual health friendly toilets in eight schools, including a pledge for continuous support.

COLLABORATING
Working together on the Oky Nepal app for girls
Under its motto: For girls. By girls. Period., the Oky Nepal app helps young adolescent Nepalese girls learn more about their periods. It is a tracker of their menstruation cycle with a countdown to the end of the current period – or to the beginning of the next one. It is also an information resource with answers about menstruation, puberty, mood and body – including quizzes to test a girl’s knowledge.
‘This app provides young Nepalese girls with age-appropriate content and support’, said Pragati Bajracharya, who is Simavi’s programme and communication officer in Nepal. ‘It addresses the unique needs of young girls during their menstrual journey and empowers them with knowledge and resources to navigate this important phase of their lives with confidence and comfort.’
The launch of the app – on Menstrual Hygiene Day (28 May) – was the result of a collaboration between the Nepal Fertility Care Centre, Simavi and Unicef. Bajracharya said, ‘Together we can make a real difference in the lives of young girls across Nepal. This app contributes to a world where every girl can embrace her menstrual cycle with dignity, knowledge and pride.’ Until now, users have downloaded the Oky app and promotional activities to reach more young adolescent Nepalese girls are ongoing.

Women and girls learn to advocate for themselves in relation to their natural health needs and issues.
PHOTO BY ATHUMANI MATATA

SHifting the power is at the core of our strategy: shifting leadership to our partners and the women and girls themselves.
presented creative projects to their parents and community leaders

174,249 PEOPLE in our programme areas were reached through our campaigns on water and sanitation practices, women’s empowerment and climate issues

15,2 MILLION euros were spent on our objectives

12 PROGRAMMES IN COUNTRIES: Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Nepal and Indonesia. Technical advisory roles in Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, and Liberia

28,569 SUPPORTERS made a financial contribution to our work

27,968 SIGNATURES on our Stop sex for water petition to the Dutch government, resulting in 1 MOTION adopted by the Dutch House of Representatives

>35 GRANTS for a total of €120,000 were distributed directly to 25 WOMEN’S GROUPS to support locally led solutions to water and climate challenges in Bangladesh, Nepal and Kenya

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797,200 PEOPLE in Bangladesh gained access to basic sanitation through our WASH SDG programme

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7,578 GIRLS presented creative projects to their parents and community leaders

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4,773 PEOPLE received training related to our focus: WASH, climate, social inclusion and women’s empowerment

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75% INCREASE in the number of community-based organisation now implementing demand creation strategies in Uganda through our WASH SDG programme

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20 PEOPLE participated in our fundraising activity Wadlopen voor Water and raised €40,000

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67 GIRLS CLUBS presented their creative projects to local government officials during various events

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Local governments in WASH SDG Nepal programme areas have increased their investments in WASH by 87%

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WADLOPEN VOOR WATER

PEOPLE

STUDENTS

PEOPLE

SCHOOLS

GIRLS

PEOPLE

MILLION

PEOPLE

GIRLS

CLUBS

WOMEN’S GROUPS

GRANTS

PEOPLE

WOMEN'S GROUPS

GRANTS

SCHOOLS

GIRLS

CLUBS

We are proud of our numbers

Simavi Impact Report 2023
Simavi works together with women and girls in Africa and Asia on equality and climate justice. On clean drinking water and safe toilets for all. We work in close collaboration with civil society organisations and provide technical support to partners. In our programmes we focus on local solutions to tackle the climate and water crisis.
The water committees in Changuunarayan
Bimala Pariyar, Niru Nepala and Sabita Napali

Perfect Fit
Location: Indonesia
Period: Five years (2019-2023)

In-country partners: Kopennik, PT Putri Faqir Inspirasi (Perfect Fit Indonesia)

Goal: Women and girls in Indonesia have a better menstrual experience through enhanced knowledge of menstrual health management and the provision of alternative, affordable and eco-friendly menstrual products. Women and girls are socially and economically empowered in the community through the Perfect Fit sustainable business model.

MiiM++ Bringing Improved Reproductive Health and Rights to Life in Menstrual Health Management training in Uganda

Location: Uganda
Period: Two years (June 2021-March 2023)
Donor: EU Horizon 2020

Consortium partners: Kisuwho Water and Sanitation Company Limited (mentor partner), Water Service Providers Association (co-mentor) and Simavi (external partner).

Goal: The WOP Water Operator Partnerships programme aims to improve water and sanitation services for approximately 250,000 people living in low-income areas that have been targeted by the five mentee water utilities in Kenya.

Check2Gether (GC-1600)

Location: Ghana
Period: 4.5 years (2020-2024)
Donor: EU Horizon 2020

Consortium partners: Nethuns for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) (Lead), Academic Hospital Leiden (LUMC), Free University Brussel (Belgium), Group Care Global (US), City University of London (UK), University of Cape Town (South Africa), Action for Mothers and Children (Kosovo), Persiru (Suriname), Presbyterian Church of Ghana Health Service (PHS/PCG, Ghana)

Goal: A mixed group of 28 participants will receive training and coaching during the project. The cohort will be involved in developing and implementing the training on menstrual health management (MHH) with integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), as well as in pedagogy and deductive skills.

Gender & WASH
Location: Bangladesh, Nepal, Uganda
Period: Three years (2020-2023)
Donor: Simavi

In-country partners: Nepal, Uganda and Bangladesh

WASH Alliances
Goal: This research aims to explore the connection between the availability of water, sanitation and hygiene and gender-based violence in Bangladesh, Nepal and Uganda.

Water Justice Fund
Location: Bangladesh, Nepal
Period: Eight years (2022-2030)
Donor: Legacy of Peter Dicke, and other donors

Strategic Partner: WomenWin
In-country partners: NDA (Kenya), Uttarjan (Bangladesh), Sahakarm Samaj (Nepal)

Goal: Supporting local women groups in Bangladesh, Kenya and Nepal in order to realise locally-led and women-owned solutions to water and climate challenges. The Water Justice Fund provides access to small grants for water-stressed communities. The fund supports locally led climate actions which tackle water vulnerability and invests in collaborative learning.

Lobbying in the Satkhira district
Goal: Supporting local women groups in Bangladesh, the community received support from Uttaran and five community-based organisations to enhance their advocacy capacity for WASH services. As a result, a successful lobby was conducted which resulted in sanitary latrines as well as 10 tube wells being installed in the district, and a strategy was adapted to harvest rainwater in tanks for 75 individual households. The success of this collaborative action empowered the community, specifically the women, to assert their rights and engage with the government and local NGOs to create a long-lasting strategy to fulfill their needs for water and sanitation.

Her WASH
Location: Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Pakistan
Period: Four years (2019-2023)
Donor: Global Affairs Canada

Consortium partner: WaterAid Canada (lead), Canada World Youth

Goal: Improved comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), with a focus on women and adolescent girls, through menstrual health interventions in Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Pakistan.

Pro-poor WASH
Access in Kenya Reducing Inequalities through Partnerships

Location: Kenya
Period: Two years (2022-2024)
Donor: EU (via UN-HABITAT)

Consortium partner: Kisuwho Water and Sanitation Company Limited (lead mentor partner), Water Service Providers Association (co-mentor) and Simavi (external partner).

Goal: The WOP Water Operator Partnerships Kenya programme aims to improve water and sanitation services for approximately 250,000 people living in low-income areas that have been targeted by the five mentee water utilities in Kenya.

Sarwacha
Location: Nepal
Period: Three years (2023-2026)
Donor: Dopper

In-country partners: ENPHO, Bruna

Goal: Ensure that all people living in Changuunarayan municipality have sustainable and equitable access to water supply and sanitation services. This will lead to an improvement in overall health and well-being, specifically for women and other underrepresented groups.

The perfect lamp of Magreth Augustino
Magreth Augustino lives in Nkoso in Olturoto district, a village in Tanzania. When women were encouraged to become active in local water committees in the Simavi-supported WASH & Learn project, she stood for election in 2019. She won and became the only woman on the committee. Much as Magreth tried to get the interests of women and girls on the agenda, most were ignored. But she did not give up. Instead of running for re-election in 2021, she used her resilience, knowledge and savings to dig a well for women in her community. Thanks to her, two hundred households now have access to water.
The first year of the Water Justice Fund:
Realising locally-led and women-owned solutions

In 2022, a devastating flood inundated the lands and homes of people living in the Mehenatisheel community in Nepal. The flash flood knocked out the existing river embankments and it eroded the fields on which the community relies for their food supply. The Mehenatisheel women’s group stepped in with support from the Water Justice Fund (WJF).

Together with partner organisations in Bangladesh, Kenya and Nepal, Simavi and Women Win launched the WJF at the UN Water Conference, which took place in New York in March 2023 (see text box). The fund supports community-based women’s groups to realise locally-led and women-owned solutions to water and climate challenges. This is necessary because as climate change increases water scarcity around the world, women and girls are responsible for 80% of the water for household activities, and it eroded the fields on which the community relies for their food supply. The Mehenatisheel women’s group stepped in with support from the Water Justice Fund (WJF).

Cheaper water, closer to home
In Kenya, Simavi collaborates with the Kenyan CSO Neighbours Initiatives Alliance (NIA), of which Jane Nyamwamu is the programme manager. She describes some of the work which the WJF made possible in 2023.

‘The women-led Naishorua group in Kajiado County received a grant from the WJF to facilitate a pipeline extension from the water source to a community kiosk. This reduced the distance women must cover to fetch water from four kilometres to one, providing them with more time to get involved in economic activities. Plus, water has become ten times cheaper, from 50 shillings per 20-litre jerry can to five shillings. The pipeline extension also supports a drip irrigation system, which utilises the water to improve the quality and productivity of the growing vegetables, fruit trees and pasture. As a result, it also increases the income of women while households have been able to improve their nutrition. Nyamwamu describes how large the demand for funding is: “Kajiado County is vast, and we are currently only working in three small regions,” she said. “So far, we have received a lot of good proposals but the budget available was limited.

When we get involved, we can protect our villages’
Nirmala Chaudhary

Advocating for government resources
In Bangladesh, where Uttaran is Simavi’s overarching CSO partner, the WJF similarly transferred grants to women’s groups for direct solutions. It also supported CSOs to enhance women’s groups’ advocacy work. The story of Basanti Mandal and her women’s group in Dayarghat village in the Satkhira district exemplifies this.

Supported by the WJF, Shapla, a local CSO, advised Basanti and her group on how to advocate with the local government for a rainwater harvesting tank, which ensures that an additional water supply is available in times of drought. The women and Shapla collaborated in informative weekly yard meetings, which led to the group’s access to government resources to obtain a water tank. The tank was installed in October 2023, providing increased safe access to water for Basanti, the other women in her group and their families.

Mobilising the entire community
And what about the people of the Mehenatisheel community group in Nepal, where Simavi collaborates with Sahakarmi Samaj? The Mehenatisheel women’s group received a grant of EUR 690 from the WJF. The group’s persistent lobbying and advocacy convinced the local government to match this amount. The women subsequently mobilised the entire community, comprising 57 households. Together, they worked tirelessly to build a long new bio-embankment along the river. Using their indigenous knowledge, they planted vetiver grass along the embankment—a strategic choice because of the robust root structure of the grass.

‘These reinforcements last longer than dykes of concrete’, Nirmala Chaudhary, leader of the women’s group, said. ‘It goes to show that when we get involved as a community, we can protect our village.’
Stop sex for water!

Achieving impact through campaigning

Nearly 30,000 signatures on our petition and a motion about gender climate justice passed by the Dutch parliament: the results of Simavi’s campaign Stop Sex for Water speak for themselves.

In 2023, Simavi continued the Water Wake-up Call campaign under a new name: Stop Sex for Water. With the Water Wake-up call we addressed the consequences of the water crisis. The Stop Sex for Water campaign specifically demands action to stop a highly concerning development that we see happening as a result of climate change and water scarcity: some women and girls have no other choice than to trade sex for water, a practice known as sextortion. Others are being bullied, sexually harassed or abused while they are collecting water.

“When we first heard about the practice of sextortion in relation to drinking water, we were deeply shocked. The feelings of anger, frustration and sadness inspired us to conduct global research on this problem and to make an urgent appeal to the Dutch audience: this needs to stop,” said Sabine Brusse, campaign lead at Simavi. “We strongly believe we must work together to end this reality and therefore we decided to campaign on this topic.”

One of the goals is to raise awareness on the issue and to influence policy makers to support actions and invest funds on the softer sides of water and climate investments, adds Simavi director Dieneke van der Wijk. “This is aligned to the human rights to water and sanitation ambition we have to create a safe environment where there is respect for women and where they are treated equally.”

The sisterhood as inspiration

For this campaign, photographer Sacha de Boer travelled to Kenya to capture the effects of the water crisis on women and girls. In Kibera, a neighbourhood in Nairobi, she documented the experiences of many women and girls and the impact of the water crisis on their lives. Many of them had been harassed while collecting water and some were coerced into sex for water. Their stories illustrate how the water crisis impacts women and girls differently due to the unequal power structures and their disadvantaged position in patriarchal societies.

Women also show incredible resilience in combating this silent crisis. Sacha de Boer was inspired by the sisterhood the power of women to form a collective through which they support each other and stand up for their rights together. In Kajiado county, where water has become very scarce, she met with women’s groups who work together to tackle water problems. Their strength and resourcefulness are proof of Simavi’s core belief that women and girls hold the key to solving the climate crisis.

Above and beyond our goal

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Influencing international climate strategy

In March, the petition was not only received by a delegation of members of parliament, but it also led to a motion submitted by the ChristenUnie (Christian Union). The motion called upon the Dutch government to guarantee access to water for women and girls, and to ensure climate financing reaches the women and girls most vulnerable from the effects of climate change. This motion was adopted with broad support by the House of Representatives.

After the success of our campaign in the Netherlands, Simavi will take the Stop sex for water campaign to the United Nations in 2024. With our goal to collect a total of 80,000 signatures and present them to the Special Rapporteur on the universal human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, Mr. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, we want to continue to influence international climate strategy, work together with strategic partners and make sextortion a thing of the past.

Nearly 30,000 signatures on our petition and a motion about gender climate justice passed by the Dutch parliament: the results of Simavi’s campaign Stop Sex for Water speak for themselves.

Sylvia Mwenesi lives in Kibera, Nairobi. She has experienced the pain of the men who controlled the water points. She was able to escape...

PHOTO: SACHA DE BOER

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Prashanna Pradhan (ENPHO)

‘Lasting change in the WASH sector starts with system strengthening’

Prashanna Pradhan, from Simavi’s partner ENPHO in Nepal, works on two important programmes: the WASH SDG sub-programme in Nepal and the Sarwacha programme. While the first one is winding down, the second one is getting started. Both focus on something that Pradhan is passionate about: the strengthening of WASH systems. ‘We are taking it one step further.’

Prashanna Pradhan has experienced first-hand how water supply systems can be built and then collapse after a just few years. ‘In the past I have been involved in several projects that didn’t last,’ Pradhan said. ‘When there is no ownership, investments get lost. And then new projects need to start from scratch.’ That is not what ENPHO envisions. ‘We want to work on programmes that strengthen the whole system. So that when a programme ends, things keep improving and don’t start breaking down.’

Two of the programmes that Pradhan worked on for Simavi in 2023 – the WASH SDG sub-programme in Nepal and the Sarwacha programme with Dopper – are good examples of this systems strengthening approach.

Having all the parts in place

It is about having all the parts of a machine being in place and functioning. According to Pradhan, this means you do not only have to guarantee access to water services, but you also have to make sure there is a proper financing system, the right institutional mechanisms and a good legal framework. ‘Only then you can start talking about the sustainability of a programme,’ said Pradhan.

But what does that mean in practice when trying to reach communities in rural areas where people have no choice but to drink contaminated water? In many areas in Nepal it is a huge problem. People drink seemingly clean water which is in fact not drinkable and causes health problems. ‘Making people aware of this and having them understand their right to drinking water is the first step.’

Training women to set up their own business

Where necessary ENPHO also works on creating a better supply of water services and products. ‘We provide training to women so they can develop their own water filter business. And we also link them to cooperatives that can provide loans so people are capable of actually buying these products.’

Another piece of the puzzle has been to set up mini testing labs. ‘Officially the volunteer water user committees in rural communities have to test the quality of the water twice a year. But when the only testing laboratory is far away in the valley this doesn’t happen. The challenge was to set up mini testing labs close to the communities and making sure they can be profitably operated by the private sector.’

Strengthening the capacity of local government

The final challenge has been to strengthen the capacity of the local government. ‘Nepal has national regulations regarding water resource management and drinking water, but local governments are also allowed to develop their own policies. Making people aware of this and having them understand their right to drinking water is the first step.’

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Strengthening the capacity of local government

The final challenge has been to strengthen the capacity of the local government. ‘Nepal has national regulations regarding water resource management and drinking water, but local governments are also allowed to develop their own policies. Since municipalities often lack the capacity, we have supported them in making these policies and in developing guidelines on how to enforce the rules. Some elements have to be in place in order to make the system work properly,’ says Pradhan. ‘Each municipality needs to have a WASH unit and a dedicated focal person with the right expertise.’

With the end of the five-year WASH SDG sub-programme in Nepal, Pradhan is proud to say that this has been accomplished in the programme areas in Nepal. ‘This means that we are ready to exit. All the elements of the system are set and I expect that in five more years the situation will have improved even more, following the WASH plan that has been developed.’

Learnings of the WASH SDG programme

Some of the learnings of the WASH SDG sub-programme will be directly implemented in other programmes as well. In the WASH SDG sub-programme it was ENPHO who went to the communities to

‘We will make sure the municipality allocates budget to the demands of women’

In the new Sarwacha programme we want to take this one step further and make sure that WASH entrepreneurs and private providers of WASH services go directly to the communities to create this awareness’, explains Pradhan. ‘Because they will be around long after the programme ends, we want to change that entrepreneurs who offer water filters stay in their shops and wait for customers to arrive. And we also want to make sure that the municipality recognises this role of the private sector in their policies.’

‘Another learning has been that in the WASH SDG sub-programme we have worked hard on having women meaningfully participate in the water user committees. But supporting women to understand their rights and helping them voice their needs is not enough. In the Sarwacha programme we will make sure that the municipality will also understand these rights and allocate budget to the demands of women. And we also want to work on developing women-only self-help groups, so there will be a women-led network that can connect directly to the municipality and apply for support.’

‘Having people understand their right to drinking water is the first step’

As an environmentalist he has been working on water and sanitation for more than 20 years. He has been working for more than 13 years for ENPHO, a Nepalese NGO specialised in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and sustainable community development. ENPHO is an important partner of Simavi in Nepal working together in the WASH SDG sub-programme and the new Sarwacha programme.
Simavi’s work in the international arena

Collaborating and influencing at COP28

The United Nations Climate Conference is an annual event where world leaders convene to tackle the climate crisis. In 2023, the conference (COP28) took place in Dubai from 30 November to 13 December. Simavi was there to prompt policies toward universal WASH services, gender equality and climate justice. What did our efforts lead to?

At COP28, Simavi worked with a small delegation on its goals - in plenary and meeting rooms influencing policymakers, at government pavilions networking with officials, always collaborating with other CSOs and private sector allies. Programme and communications officer Hanifah Kasule and coordinator Rashidah Kulanyi were present on invitation from the Ugandan government. Hanifah Kasule and country coordinator Rashidah Kulanyi were present on invitation from the Ugandan government.

Erdogan: ‘As COP itself, you regularly speak with negotiators from your home country. However, the higher up in government the negotiations take place, the less transparent these discussions become. So a considerable part of the influencing process took place before COP28.’

Presentations to the negotiators

‘For example, we gave several presentations to the negotiators of the Dutch government before the EU formalised its priorities for COP28’. Erdogan said. ‘With ‘we’ I refer to the 15 other Dutch CSOs with whom we formed the Dutch International Climate Coalition.’

Together, this coalition collected all its policy recommendations for the entire spectrum of COP subjects into several position papers. These papers were presented to the Dutch delegation. This was present as one of the two programmes. At COP28, Simavi organised an event on the WASH SDG programme in collaboration with Plan International and the Ugandan government.

The goal was to showcase the successes and lessons learned in the programme, which was implemented by a consortium led by Simavi. Attended by CSO and government officials, the event also highlighted the work of the consortium on reducing the impacts of climate change on WASH services in Uganda and increased Simavi’s visibility at COP28.

Showcasing the successes of WASH SDG

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No financial commitments

The negotiations at COP28 led to a closing agreement among 198 governments which Erdogan describes as ‘some progress being made but overall disappointing to say the least’. No financial commitments for the so-called Global Goal on Adaptation plan were agreed upon, and the agreement only encourages countries to take gender transformative approaches into account ‘where possible’. It did include more pressing text related to WASH, ‘but without financial commitments these targets cannot be met’, Erdogan adds.

Simavi’s aims is to make sure that high income countries, such as the Netherlands, who are responsible for the climate crisis make more funds available for climate adaptation strategies that prioritise women and girls in the most climate-vulnerable countries. To achieve this, these strategies should be what is called gender transformative. For example, funding for climate-resilient clean water supplies will reduce time poverty, which women and girls in particular are affected by. Time poverty means that women and girls as caregivers cannot go to work or school because fetching water takes an increasing amount of time.

‘Our main ambition for COP28 was to have clearly defined targets on gender transformative WASH services backed by clear financial commitments’, Erdogan explains. The advocacy work to realise this ambition already started about a year before COP28. ‘At COP itself, you regularly speak with negotiators from your home country. However, the higher up in government the negotiations take place, the less transparent these discussions become. So a considerable part of the influencing process took place before COP28.’

As for the Global Goal on Adaptation, Simavi will continue its fight for better climate policies in 2024. ‘CSOs have been given an opening between March and May to submit input to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change saying what they think the global climate adaptation targets and measurements should be’, Erdogan says.

‘As Simavi, we have a lot to add there, especially in terms of making the link with gender equality. We will work with the Climate Action Network - a global network of over 1,900 CSOs - to make gender an indispensable part of the goal.’

Prioritising local knowledge

‘But there was a lot of attention directed to prioritising local knowledge, with terms such as locally-led adaptation’, she continues. ‘This is something that we at Simavi very much support as part of our Shift the Power ambition. Locally-led climate adaptation means that measures are both initiated and implemented by communities facing climate challenges and that the resources needed are directed to them. This wasn’t written as committed as we would have liked, but it is a baseline which we can work with.’

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Water and sanitation are human rights and the main angle from which we work at Simavi. Last year, Simavi successfully advocated for these rights using the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. ‘Geneva offers a unique opportunity to get nations, such as Bangladesh, to recommend each other on the realisation of these rights’, says Sabiha Siddique.

‘Although Bangladesh is surrounded by water, access to clean and safe water that is free from contamination is still scarce, especially for rural populations, ethnic minorities, and women and girls,’ explains Sabiha Siddique, MEL advisor at Simavi. ‘The government of Bangladesh has made good progress in achieving SDG6, yet more effort and serious attention is required towards the water and sanitation sector with allocation of adequate budget, regular monitoring and implementing the policies effectively while ensuring services are reaching the most in need.’

Holding states accountable

The good news is that there is a way to make governments accountable for their obligation to uphold the human rights to water and sanitation. Human rights are the cornerstone of the United Nations. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which recognised the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights. This recognition means that the rights to water and sanitation are covered by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN member states. Bangladesh was under periodic review four years ago and made a commitment to take actions and fulfil its human rights obligation on water.

UPR = peer review

The UPR is set up as a peer review process. Member states of the UN can make recommendations to the state under review. Other stakeholders, such as NGOs, can submit their own input before the review in the UPR pre-sessions. This offers entry points for lobbying and advocacy work. Historically, the proportion of WASH-related recommendations was low (less than 1%), so it is crucial to make sure these human rights are not forgotten. As part of the WASH SDG sub-programme, Simavi has been working for years on exerting as much influence as possible on the human rights recommendations that Bangladesh will have to answer to. This year, Simavi was the only organisation representing and advocating for the right to water and sanitation at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva to push Bangladesh one step forward in the realisation of human rights to water and sanitation at the global level.

UPR stakeholder report

The work was started in 2022 by Lenka Krucikova from Simavi who led the overall UPR process, and developed the report together with the WASH SDG Bangladesh team and local partners DGRP, Practical Action, Uttaran, Hope for the Poorest (HfP), Tahindong and GRAUS, with concrete recommendations for the UPR stakeholder report. Delegates from other member states were identified as the ones that were most promising to talk to. For example, Algeria, Egypt and Slovenia had made recommendations on water and sanitation to Bangladesh before.

Before the UPR meeting of states in November, NGOs were given the opportunity to present their findings and recommendations in the pre-sessions in Geneva in August 2023. Along with the presentation, Simavi did a series of bilateral discussions with UN member state representatives on the importance of water and sanitation in Bangladesh, especially access to water for all, water quality and the right to sanitation.

Access to high level government officials

The permanent representative of Bangladesh also took time for a conversation. ‘UPR is a great platform to directly interact with high government officials from Bangladesh and from different UN member states, which would be quite challenging to reach in Bangladesh,’ said Sabiha. ‘In Geneva, Simavi led on human rights to water and sanitation and we were able to present our work as an example of the work that needs to be done.’

‘Talking about human rights is often politically sensitive, especially for our partners, but the permanent representative in Geneva appreciated our input. And since we made our recommendations very concrete, for example on improving water quality and installing water labs, and improving sanitation systems through faecal sludge management (FSM) in climate vulnerable areas, the government is more open to respond to them.’

Advising states on recommendations

Between the two meetings, Sabina de Voogd from Simavi contacted delegates that expressed interest in making a recommendation on water and sanitation to Bangladesh. During the official UPR meeting of states, six states made recommendations on the rights to water and sanitation to Bangladesh in line with what we were proposing. As addressed in the report we submitted, one of them made the recommendation to adopt targeted measures aimed at accelerating access to safe drinking water for ethnic minorities, women and girls, older people and coastal populations within water-related national plans, policies and strategies.

After this successful lobbying, the UPR results were discussed with Simavi’s partners in Bangladesh. The recommendations made to Bangladesh will be used by civil society organisations and NGOs in their demands at the national level. In this way, the demands to the Bangladesh governments come from two sides - from (sub)national and international level: Keeping the pressure on is the way forward.

An extreme hike for charity close to home: Mudflat walking for water

Simavi organised a unique event in 2023: Wadlopen voor Water. Twenty participants took on a double challenge: to complete an arduous two-day mudflat expedition in the unique Wadden area and to raise at least €2,000 for women’s groups in Kenya, Nepal and Bangladesh for Simavi’s Water Justice Fund. The event was a huge success. Not only did they complete the expedition, but the participants raised €40,000. New expeditions are planned for 2024.

» There surely is no need to take a plane when you can explore one of the most beautiful areas in the world so close to home.

» The Wadden are full of nature (and good guides). The coastal areas were also explored. During the short breaks the guides shared their knowledge about the unique ecosystem of the Wadden area.

» Exhausted but very happy at the finish line: €40,000 raised for Simavi and a lifetime experience for all participants.

» A good meal and good company in the evenings. Well deserved after walking 20 kilometres through the water and the mud.

» Ready for the challenge! The participants underway, safely led by the main guide, Peter Laagland, on the far right of the picture.

» Simavi director Dieneke van der Wijk talks to the participants about Simavi and the Water Justice Fund during one of the preparatory meetings.

» A Simavi director Dieneke van der Wijk talks to the participants about Simavi and the Water Justice Fund during one of the preparatory meetings.
The year 2023 marked the end of the Our Lives, Our Health, Our Futures (OLHF) programme. OLHF supported 12,000 women and girls between the age of 10 and 25 in their transition into adult womanhood without violence, coercion and discrimination. A relevant question now: how is the sustainability of the programme guaranteed?

Gender equality
In 2023 alone, 7,578 girls in 330 girls’ clubs gave creative presentations on topics discussed during sessions of these girls’ clubs. These presentations were given to the girls’ families and to community leaders. The creative ideas were anything from plays to self-designed posters the girls used to encourage their audience to support gender equality. In collaboration with its main CSO partner, Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS), Simavi has worked to facilitate the sustainability of the programme beyond its closure. Ishaque Faruquee, Simavi’s lobby and advocacy officer in the OLHF programme, said, ‘These creative projects have proven to change the mindsets of community leaders so that they turn supportive to girls and young women in menstrual health management and in combating gender-based violence and child marriage.’

‘At least 119 girls’ clubs will sustain beyond the programme’, Faruquee added. ‘Mentors and girls who have been part of these clubs have formed committees to continue to operate. Karbari, which is the title of the most important community leader in Bangladesh’s culture, and other leaders will support these clubs as advisors. As part of OLHF, we have initiated and supported these structures.’

The sustainability of the programme is also apparent in the commitments community leaders and parents made after these creative presentations. They committed to raising awareness of menstrual hygiene management or to ensuring gender equality, for example. In practice, this meant that they pledged to activities such as organising meetings for discussions to further eliminate taboos and stigma. This will mean that they will continue to hack away at the patriarchal structures.’ A total of 680 community leaders, parents and other family members committed to improving issues identified by the girls themselves as priorities in their lives.

Sanitation
Besides discussions to eliminate stigmas surrounding menstrual hygiene management (MHH), it is crucial that sustainable facilities are available to women and girls to hygienically manage their menstruations. Over the course of the programme, MHH-friendly toilets at schools in the CHT area rose from 46.6% to 61.2%. Faruquee: ‘Together with our 10 in-country partners, we have lobbied government officials and school management committees. For instance, we have given training to head teachers regarding MHH and we have distributed circulars on MHH toilets at schools. The structure for sustainability is in place, because schools can manage the required funding to keep the facilities functional now these have been installed. Plus, all knowledge girls and women have acquired in the OLHF programme, whether it is on MHH, sexual and reproductive health and rights or something else, will remain with them. And they tend to pass it on to other women and girls in their community. This way, the knowledge will be passed on to the next generation as well.’

Strengthening partnerships
As part of its shift the power ambition, Simavi initiated and established the Youth and Adolescent Rights Network (YARN) in 2020, which consists of 10 Bangladeshi CSOs. With YARN, Simavi now closes the OLHF programme knowing that its sustainability is in good hands. ‘We have collaborated a lot with these CSOs to increase the capacity of the network,’ Faruquee says. ‘For example, the CSOs attract their own donors now and take up advocacy work lobbying with the local government. We expect this network to grow to include even more CSOs in the future.’

This advocacy work was demonstrated at the closing conference of OLHF in Dhaka on 11 and 12 September 2023, where BNPS presented a declaration to government officials. This declaration encompassed 17 practical points for the local government to ensure the sustainability of the programme. 347 participants attended the conference including 80 girls who participated in the programme.

The Our Lives, Our Health, Our Futures programme
The OLHF programme promoted gender equality and fostered an environment for girls and women to empower themselves in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area of Bangladesh. This is an area of conflict and patriarchal social structures which not only brought about gender inequality for the female indigenous Jummas but also made them vulnerable to sexual violence and assault. The programme ran from 2019 to 2023 and was funded by the European Union and Simavi.

Community leaders and parents will continue to hack away at the patriarchal structures.’

Ishaque Faruquee, lobby and advocacy officer in the OLHF programme
Simavi believes that states are ultimately responsible to realise the human rights to water and sanitation. And that civil society can play its part by holding them accountable to the people they serve. Making the voices of female WASH heroes heard was an important part of the work that was done in the WASH & Learn programme in Tanzania in 2023.

WASH & Learn in Tanzania

How female WASH heroes can inspire a nation

Fetching water for their families is still an arduous task for many women in the rural areas of Tanzania. Lack of piped water extensions or high water bills are forcing women and girls to walk for hours through dangerous areas to fetch water and face long waiting lines at the water point. This fact is often overlooked by politicians and government officials operating from the capital. One of the reasons for this is that people living in rural areas lack the opportunity to raise their voice in mainstream media. Mohammed Hammie, a Tanzanian journalist and storyteller for social change, worked on capturing the untold stories of women who heroically brought change to their communities by simply not accepting the water situation and taking matters into their own hands. He did this for the WASH & Learn programme in which several women participated, implemented by Simavi in collaboration with the Tanzanian NGOs EMac and CEMDO and supported by Made Blue.

Water as a stepping stone

Hadija Rashid, chairperson of Tangeri in Ikilivu, is a strong, courageous woman and change-maker in her village. She successfully drilled 12 wells in her own area, and another eight in a neighbouring village. Experiencing the hardships of fetching water as a girl made her determined to ensure that one day her community would get safe and clean water. Not only has she kept the promise she made to herself, but she also encouraged women leaders in the village to work with her towards water delivery for everyone. Water can be the starting point for healthy lives and a steppingstone for women to realise their full potential.

Margreth Augustino from the village of Illkeere in Olturuto ward is another WASH hero that Mohammed Hammie captured on video. She was elected as the only woman on the water committee but was not able to convince fellow members to pay more attention to the challenges women and girls face. Instead of giving up, she decided to take matters into her own hands. Thanks to her, 200 households now have access to free water. And she is not done yet. There are many more stories. Mohammed talks of Hellen Moloi from Siwandet, a small village in the Kirinya district. As the only woman on the Moktaiso water committee, which covers 10 villages, she is permanently on the go managing the water sources and encouraging the eight men on the committee to help her.

Inspiring communities

To celebrate these water heroes and inspire other communities, Hammie hosted several events in the region to showcase the videos. People from the villages in the area gathered to watch the videos and interact with the women on stage. More than 1000 people attended the most recent event and community members shared their learnings.

‘Watching this video inspired me. I believe that women can do something great in the community, regardless of their gender. They can lead and bring a huge change’, said Mustafa Lazaro from Kibungo village. The responses on the radio show about the women, reaching more than half a million listeners were also positive. ‘Hadija is a role model to learn from, she has shown that women can do it! Tanzania needs more female leaders in solving water challenges’, texted a male listener from Namwala. Another one asked his fellow men to follow these women’s examples: ‘Women have been at the forefront of solving the water problem in the villages, and we must support and encourage them.’

The goal is to not only inspire other women in these rural and under-serviced communities to take action, but to also get political leaders thinking. ‘If a woman like Hadija, who started with absolutely nothing, manages to have such impact on improving the drinking water situation in her ward, how much more our political leaders could accomplish if they would set their mind to it and use the resources, skills and power available to them,’ texted a male listener from Namwala.

On September 13, 2023, an article about these female WASH heroes was published in the Guardian, the leading newspaper in East Africa. Hammie is convinced that giving a platform to the voices of WASH heroes like Hadija, Margreth and Hellen, will not only empower other women and their communities, but will also get political leaders thinking about the importance of investing in drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in even the most remote areas of Tanzania.
Simavi and Dopper launch Sarwacha

‘We want to see the whole system changed’

A world with clean water for all: the partnership between Simavi and corporate partner Dopper is grounded in this shared ambition. This collaboration dates to the very first Dopper bottle ever sold, and over the years we have worked together to create lasting impact for water-scarce communities in Nepal.

In 2023, Simavi and Dopper launched a new programme together: Sarwacha, meaning the highest. A name that reflects our aspiration to ensure structural systemic change and water justice. Dopper was founded with the aim of getting people to drink tap water and rid the world of all water packaging. But, as the CEO of Dopper Virginia Yanquilevich knows, this is impossible if people do not have access to safe drinking water from the tap. ‘One in four people still don’t have access to safely managed water. But access to water is a human right’, said Yanquilevich. ‘How can we work towards a world with no packaged water if so many of our population do not currently have access to safe drinking water?’

A decade-long partnership

To help realise a world where everybody has access to safe water, Dopper first partnered with Simavi to collaborate on water programmes in Nepal in 2012. More than a decade later, this partnership has provided access to clean drinking water to nearly 70,000 people in Nepal. But only providing safe water is not enough for either Dopper or Simavi - real lasting impact is made through system change. This is why, in 2023, we launched the Sarwacha programme. ‘The Sarwacha programme came from the drive to really create system change at a large scale. For Dopper, it’s not enough to provide water to X number of people, but we really want to see the whole system changed. That people can have water in their homes, schools and hospitals and that it’s managed in the future by the government. This is how the programme idea really started’, explains Yanquilevich.

Safe and accessible water

Together with local partner ENPHO, Simavi and Dopper work in the Changunarayan municipality. The area around Changunarayan is rapidly urbanizing, and the water infrastructure has quickly developed. However, the presence of hardware does not necessarily equate to equal access to safe water for everybody. In the context of Nepal, it is important to focus not only on building water pipelines and taps, but also to ensure the water is safe and accessible. Specifically, the accessibility of water impacts women and girls, who are often responsible for collecting water. Yanquilevich explained, ‘Nepal lays at the base of the Himalayas and has one of the greatest fresh drinking water reserves in the world. Still, 75% of households use water that is contaminated with E. coli and 40% of the population in Nepal spends more than 30 minutes every day to collect drinking water for the household. This is largely done by women and children.’

A best-case model

To develop water systems that are inclusive, climate resilient and regularly tested for bacteria such as E. coli, it is important to enhance the capacity of groups who will still be there after the programme finishes, such as water user committees who will play an important role in ensuring the sustainability and longevity of the programme. The aim is to create a model that can also be applied in more municipalities in Nepal. ‘We want the Sarwacha programme to be a best-case model for clean water access across the country and abroad. When we succeed at creating one water-safe municipality through working together with the government, local people and the private sector, we envision making this scalable across the rest of Nepal,’ said Yanquilevich.

‘How can we work towards a world with no packaged water if so many currently have no access to safe drinking water?’

Virginia Yanquilevich, CEO of Dopper
Our people

Maximising impact with an international team

Every day our international team is committed to maximising the impact of our programmes. Together with in-country partners, we’re working on the fulfilment of the human rights to water and sanitation for women and girls.

Our colleagues work from all over the world; our teams are based in seven countries. The majority of our programmes team (22 consultants in 2023) were located in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Uganda and Tanzania. They play a key role in the implementation and coordination of our programmes. Also, the director of the programmes team is based in Kenya.

Our office in the Netherlands is staffed by a dedicated team of 39 people (December 2023). The staff based in the Netherlands consist of support staff (HR, finance, assistants), and the fundraising and engagement team alongside a small section of the programmes team.

The leadership team is based in the Netherlands and Kenya. In 2023, we hired a new finance and operations director (based in the Netherlands), and a new director of programmes (based in Kenya). As of 2023, every department has its own manager. The private fundraising circle and the communications circle were merged under one cluster led by the director of fundraising and engagement.

Our staff turnover was 20.54% with 12 new employees (10 in the Amsterdam office and two in the country offices). A decrease from 34% in 2022. The staff turnover can be partly explained by the creation of new positions as well as a change in the number of programmes in 2023. The average sickness absence rate at our office in Amsterdam was 13.2%.

How do our employees feel?

Initiatives to promote employee engagement and colleagueship include weekly global catch up on Mondays, workouts, an annual yearly team-outing and lunch/coffee breaks, plus end of year festivities. We also introduced a hybrid work policy. Employees can come into the office for two days (or more) and can work the rest of the week from home. This has improved their work/life balance, according to the results of our Employee Satisfaction Survey.

Simavi’s Employee Representative Body (ERB) consists of four elected employees, three of whom are based in the Netherlands. The ERB flags and discusses issues that are important to Simavi and its employees and shares them with the management on the employees’ behalf. The ERB met six times in 2023. The ERB raised the issue of how to better include Simavi’s colleagues abroad with the team and our work policies, as much as possible under the options available to Simavi. The ERB gave critical and constructive feedback to Simavi’s leadership team on the process and content of the transition Simavi will go through in 2024.

Networked organisation

Simavi uses a cluster/circles-based structure as an agile organisation in a networked model with strategic partnerships and a Shift the Power ambition. This networked way of working means that every employee is expected to work in collaboration with others on issues related to their role, matching their talents and expertise with the needs of the organisation. The ambition is to have decision making across all levels of the organisation. This organisational model empowers our staff and allows for more flexibility and rapid response. For Simavi, Shift the Power means shifting the leadership to women and girls themselves, and towards employees and partner organisations in the countries where we work.

Volunteers and interns

People who work at Simavi on a voluntary basis for at least four days per month are offered a volunteer contract that sets out their rights and obligations. We make verbal agreements with all other volunteers. Interns are given a chance to learn valuable skills for their future employment. For Simavi this is also a part of contributing to qualitative work being conducted in the development sector.

Both interns and volunteers are highly valued and all our circles greatly enjoy working with the volunteers and interns who support us. They help us achieve our ambitions and are an important part of the Simavi team. •
Where does our money come from?

How does Simavi generate the income to successfully implement programmes and other activities? And how much was spent on our objectives? What are our fundraising priorities? How do we build long-term relationships with our donors? And what were the challenges we faced in 2023? An overview.

In 2023 Simavi generated an income of EUR 15.7 million. Income from individual donors amounted to EUR 1.7m. This income was generated through a diverse fundraising programme including revenues from lotteries, companies and non-profit organisations amounted to EUR 1.5m, EUR 0.5m under budget, which is mainly due to a lower income than expected from companies and foundations. Government subsidies, which include grants from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the EU, made up EUR 12.4m of our income, of which EUR 8.9m was received by Simavi as the lead agent of the WASH SDG alliance. This amount was paid directly to the consortium partners. EUR 3.6m was received for Simavi’s own programmes; EUR 1.7m less than budgeted, because the funds were released late. The income generated from lotteries, companies and governments are related to multi-year agreements. The income generated from individual donors is partly related to longer-term commitments.

Fundraising in 2023: a continued challenge

Raising funds to help us realise our impact is a continuous and ever-changing task, and we are always on the lookout for new opportunities and ways to diversify our funding. Our four main fundraising priorities in 2023 were to:

• increase our visibility with potential donors
• increase our visibility with potential donors
• increase revenue from our Dutch constituency by intensifying our relationships with individual donors, the Dutch private sector and Dutch foundations
• explore new ways to raise funds

Our business partners’ continued commitment

In 2023 we received almost EUR 390,000 from corporate and business partners. An amazing contribution and a growing segment for collaboration towards the future. We were once again able to count on the indispensable support of our long-term strategic partners. Two fundamental partners in our network, Dopper and Made Blue, made it possible for us to provide thousands of families and schools in Nepal, Uganda and Tanzania with safe drinking water and decent toilets. Both partners have also given the green light in 2023 for a renewed multi-year collaboration. We launched a new programme with Dopper, named Sarwacha, in June 2023, focusing on water safe communities in the suburbs of Kathmandu. And together with Made Blue we will continue our WASH & Learn programme in Uganda. We are grateful and proud of this, because companies are the key to a sustainable future and they work with us to ensure that water is high on the agenda.

Building on a future-proof business network

To strengthen the role of companies in global water solutions, Simavi launched the Water Business Circle at the beginning of 2023. The ambition is to make more companies enthusiastic about investing in safe water and to contribute to water projects for communities that are hit hard by the water crisis. During the year, Simavi presented the Water Business Circle to a dozen companies, and it was met with broad enthusiasm and interest. This directly paid off in 2023 when we received a wonderful platform during the AquaTech 2023 expo in the RAI Amsterdam. As the social partner of this international water fair, Simavi was able to hold many constructive discussions with companies active in this water world. Furthermore, we received a donation for more than €10,000 from AquaTech. Additionally, Earth-water, a new business relationship of Simavi, made a substantial donation to kickstart our Stop Sex for Water campaign in 2024. Simavi is committed to growing its business network in 2024 and leading the way in terms of collaborating with companies that are open to take steps towards a sustainable water future.

Engaging our supporters

In 2023 we engaged more than 64,000 supporters, of which 28,569 supporters made a financial contribution to our work. Gross turnover from private donors has been almost stable at around 1.7 million euros. Individual donors are of great importance to Simavi. The financial support given by our supporters in the Netherlands funds a large part of our daily work. We are proud and happy to rely on the support of the people that believe in our way of working. But their engagement means more than just that; they also strengthen our visibility and are a powerful voice in spreading the message. In 2023 we saw a decline in our income from direct mail. It was a turbulent year during which many people saw their cost of living rise significantly. Another challenge in 2003 has been that the acceptetry payment method has been discontinued. In order to fill the gap in payment methods left by the acceptetry, a consortium of NGOs in the Netherlands collaborated to develop an alternative payment method. Although the acceptance rate of the new payment method was low at the beginning of the year, this increased over the course of 2023. We are confident that more and more donors will be open to using this new payment method, and we will regain the number of donors we lost due to the discontinuation of the acceptetry.

Growing our structural donor base

In 2023 we welcomed more structural donors to our supporter base, and we will continue to invest in persuading people to make a long-term financial commitment. Our strategic shift should result in growth in our financial and supporter base within the next couple of years. As a result, we will build a healthier and more committed relationship with the people that support our mission with their money, voices and time. By the end of 2023, we reached almost 6,500 structural supporters.

Stop Sex for Water

Throughout the year we provided opportunities for a broad audience to contribute to and engage in our work, by participating in our campaigns. We invested more in attracting a new and younger audience and increasing our supporter base through appealing public campaigns and other engaging activities. In 2023 we started a campaign to raise awareness around the fact that the lack of and unequal distribution of water leads to situations where women worldwide face sexual exploitation and sexual harassment when fetching water for their households. In order to combat this growing problem of sextortion, we launched a petition demanding a stronger gender perspective from the Dutch government in our international WASH and climate policies.

The Stop Sex for Water petition was highly successful. Our petition was signed by almost 30,000 people – and was handed over to the Dutch government in March. Everyone that signed the petition was asked to join our movement by making a financial contribution. This resulted in approximately 500 new structural financial relationships in the long term. The success of this campaign illustrated how important our campaigns are. Many people are...
Zandvoort participate in Simavi in an amazing contribution of more than EUR 40,000. People signed up for this fundraising challenge - resulting in a fantastic event in the Dutch Wadden Sea. A group of 20 different school activities for Walking for Water, resulting in a deepened understanding about water. In 2023, about 10,000 children took part in festivals in 2024.

Walking with the Tide
In August, Simavi organised a three-day mudflat hiking programme. Walking with the Tide is a programme. We set up our booth next to the entrances of Bootstock and Kidstock festivals in Rotterdam. We introduced Simavi through our campaigns, and this often results in new long-term commitments being made by our new supporters.

Girls Poop Too - Festival activation
In the summer of 2023, we piloted a new approach by presenting Simavi at the Boothstock and Kidstock festivals in Rotterdam. We set up our booth next to the mudflats hiking event. We were received with great enthusiasm by the visitors.

Walking for Water
One of our core pillars for engaging with a broader audience – especially children – is our Walking for Water event. For over 20 years, Walking for Water has been a leading event that involves primary school children in an educational programme in which they learn about water. In 2023, about 10,000 children took part in different school activities for Walking for Water, resulting in Simavi receiving over EUR 175,000 for our Wash & Learn programme.

Walking with the Tide
In August, Simavi organised a three-day mudflat hiking fundraising event in the Dutch Wadden Sea. A group of 20 people signed up for this fundraising challenge - resulting in an amazing contribution of more than EUR 40,000. We are proud of every euro invested in our work.

We incur management and administration costs to ensure our sustainability and proper operations. We are committed to strict control of these costs. Simavi uses two cost indicators to monitor its expenditure.

Expenditure not spent on objectives
Simavi needs to invest in generating funds. We incur management and administration costs to ensure our sustainability and proper operations. We are committed to strict control of these costs. Simavi uses two cost indicators to monitor its expenditure.

In 2023, Simavi spent a total of EUR 21.2 million (2022: EUR 21.5 million) on our objectives. This was a result of a higher level of funds generated than budgeted. In monetary terms, the costs are almost 2.5% of our total expenditure.

Expenditure on objectives
In 2023, Simavi spent a total of EUR 21.2 million (2022: EUR 21.5 million) on our objectives. This was a result of a higher level of funds generated than budgeted. In monetary terms, the costs are almost 2.5% of our total expenditure.

Accountability
Simavi’s accounts for the financial year 2023, which form an integral part of this impact report, have been prepared in accordance with the Dutch Accounting Standard for Fundraising Institutions (RL 6/08). They were audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers accountants N.V., who expressed an unqualified audit opinion on Simavi’s financial statements. PricewaterhouseCoopers accountants N.V. does not perform non-auditing tasks for Simavi. Audit reports are discussed by the supervisory board’s audit committee in a meeting with the auditors, which is also attended by Simavi’s managing director and its director of finance and operations. The supervisory board has approved Simavi’s annual report and accounts for 2023.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>EXPENDITURE (X 1,000 EURO)</th>
<th>Actual 2023</th>
<th>Budget 2023</th>
<th>Actual 2022</th>
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<td>Total spent on objectives</td>
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<td>1,272</td>
<td>970</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total management &amp; administration costs</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>413</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expenditure</td>
<td>16,758</td>
<td>15,763</td>
<td>12,752</td>
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<th>EXPENDITURE ON OBJECTIVES (X 1,000 EURO)</th>
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<th>Budget 2023</th>
<th>Actual 2022</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Income</td>
<td>15,681</td>
<td>14,092</td>
<td>12,920</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expenditure</td>
<td>16,758</td>
<td>15,763</td>
<td>12,752</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total spent on objectives</td>
<td>15,196</td>
<td>13,771</td>
<td>11,151</td>
</tr>
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<td>% total spent on objectives/total income</td>
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<td>97.7%</td>
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<th>Budget 2023</th>
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<td>Cost of generating funds</td>
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<td>970</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Income raised</td>
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<td>12,920</td>
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<tr>
<td>% cost of generating funds</td>
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<td>Total management &amp; administration cost</td>
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<td>% total M&amp;A costs/total expenditure</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL EXPENDITURE (X 1,000 EURO) | 16,758 |
| TOTAL INCOME | 15,681 |
| MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION COSTS | 584 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 16,758 |
| COST OF GENERATING FUNDS | 978 |
| SPENT ON OBJECTIVES | 15,196 |
How does Simavi manage risks?

As an organisation that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship and depends on subsidies, donations and partnerships, Simavi encounters risks. Managing these risks is an integral part of our operations.

Simavi uses multiple strategies that shield our mission and objectives from harm. Our risk management framework and guidelines help us to systematically scrutinise risks, optimise our decision making and safeguard our operations.

Programmatic risks
Programme implementation is Simavi’s core activity. This entails several aspects of risk that might jeopardise the execution of programs or the outcomes to be achieved, such as integrity issues, fraudulent partners, substandard partner performance and security, activities that are not rolled out according to plan, or that do not adhere to our quality standards, and safety or health incidents. In doing our work we cannot avoid taking risks. This is acceptable, provided we are aware of these risks and can manage them without jeopardising our continuity and goals. Overall, Simavi’s risk tolerance is moderate. We have put several preventive controls in place to reduce the likelihood of a risk occurring and to mitigate the consequences if it does. Clear internal policies on integrity, compliance and sanctions, the systematic screening of existing and new partners, and a safety and security policy are examples of these controls. We continue to work with our partners to ensure their effectiveness, high performance and good governance.

Organisational risks
Simavi is highly dependent on its employees and systems to achieve its goals and objectives. Inherent organisational risks are associated with data security, the availability of qualified staff and maintaining well-functioning information systems. Simavi’s organisational risk tolerance is low.

Human resources
We are committed to responsible human resource management and have enacted policies to safeguard our employees’ health and safety. Our ISO-certified quality management system is an important means of ensuring the controlled and reliable execution of Simavi’s operations and mitigating the associated risks.

Data security
Data security, both from a cybercrime and privacy point of view, is critical to our operations. Simavi uses the Windows 365 cloud platform which provides flexibility and security. Simavi continuously stresses the importance of data security to its staff, as their alertness and caution is critical.

Financial risks
Fluctuations in income are Simavi’s main financial risk. Our risk management aims at minimising fluctuations, especially downwards, but we are also dependent on external factors. Drastic changes could not only significantly affect individual programme continuity, but also the organisation as a whole.

Funding
Simavi continues to diversify its fundraising strategies to spread income sources and financial risk. To secure funding, we make significant efforts to maintain good relationships with the private sector, institutional partners and governments. Funds from these donors constitute a large part of our income but are mostly earmarked for programmes.

Currency
Simavi’s international operations entail some currency risks. To mitigate these risks Simavi strives to contract and commit only in euros. However, this shifts the risk of exchange rate losses onto our partners. Programme staff works with our implementing partners to ensure potential losses are taken into account in bi-annual budget updates. Some contracts, however, are denominated in US dollars. The resulting risk is sufficiently hedged by keeping liquidity in US dollars that match the US dollar obligations we have under these contracts.

Insurance
Simavi mitigates the financial risks arising from fire, burglary, accidents and liabilities through insurance. Simavi maintains a very strict treasury policy. Excess funds may only be placed in interest-bearing savings and deposit accounts with Dutch banks. The funds are spread over several banks to further minimise our exposure to credit risk.

Reputational risks
For an organisation like Simavi, a good reputation is essential, but at the same time, it is fragile. Any incident may pose a real threat to Simavi’s reputation and affect our ability to achieve our goals and objectives, and even our continuity. Many factors can damage Simavi’s reputation: inconsistent, incomplete, incorrect, low quality, or uncontrolled communication (online and offline); lack of transparency, involvement in controversial issues or debates; bad press; ethics and integrity issues; incidents in the fundraising or civil society sector; and environmental incidents.

Our reputational risk tolerance is low, as these risks may affect people’s trust in Simavi, our partners and the people we work with, and eventually reduce the donations and funding we need to achieve our goals. To mitigate reputational risk, Simavi endeavours to communicate openly and with a positive tone. We seek not to be provocative but focus on constructive, transparent and positive messaging.

Our financial health
Simavi’s financial position is sufficient to ensure continuity, thanks to prudent financial management in previous years, among other things. In 2024 Simavi will have less income than in previous years due to the closure of two large government-funded programmes. New funding is coming in but not yet at the same level as before.

Anticipating this, Simavi has started a restructuring process aimed at strengthening our fundraising capacity and cost-effectiveness, and by leveraging our impact by intensifying strategic collaboration with partners in the global south and east, and in the global north. This creates a basis for continuing our relevant and impactful activities and programs. For further explanation, we refer to the paragraph ‘Financial outlook for 2024’.

Please refer to the explanatory notes for the Annual Accounts for more information on our financial status (to be found at simavi.nl/AR2023-A2).
A key ingredient for impact

Integrity

Integrity is not just a handbook, a guideline or a set of rules – it is also an ongoing debate about morals and ethics. The work we do is very much based on trust. We use donors’ money to get our job done and we are committed to spending their money in a fair and transparent way. At the same time, we work with marginalised groups. We cannot betray trust or harm people. All our stakeholders and colleagues must be able to rely on proper conduct, transparency and accountability.

Integrity and dilemmas

We regularly discuss issues we encounter in our work. These can present serious dilemmas. Simavi works in a variety of countries, including the Netherlands, where local laws and cultural norms may go against what we want to achieve, such as gender equality. Patriarchal systems often exclude women from certain decision-making processes, for example. We discuss such challenges, not only to find a way out of the predicament, but also to equip our staff with the resources and the tools to remain consistent in their day to day work.

In 2023 Simavi joined the international Misconduct Disclosure Scheme. (misconduct-disclosure-scheme.org) New employees are made familiar with Simavi’s code of conduct and relevant policies and procedures. All employees are required to submit a certificate of good conduct (Verklaring Omzien het Gedrag).

Simavi strongly encourages the filing of complaints and reporting of suspected irregularities and is committed to act whenever its core principles are violated or threatened. Our duty is to protect the victims and restore justice, and to learn from and prevent any repetition of such violations. To keep the conversation going integrity issues are discussed in meetings (e.g. within the programmes, in cluster teams and in financial meetings).

Simavi’s integrity system

Simavi’s code of conduct clearly defines appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Our integrity system sets out what procedures are to be followed in the event of inappropriate behaviour and which proportionate sanctions are to be taken in such cases. Simavi has adopted a child safeguarding policy, an anti-fraud, anti-bribery and anti-corruption policy, a whistleblower policy and a complaints policy (available on our website or on request).

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Implementing our values: Shift the Power

As part of our Shift the Power strategy we want to promote equality by featuring it prominently in our programmes. Over the past year, the development of the Water Justice Fund put women’s voice and agency at its heart to ensure they are in the driver’s seat implementing locally-led climate adaptations that address their immediate needs with their own solutions - the ones they consider best.

Patrick Mwanzia, programme manager at Simavi, was involved in the process of developing the Water Justice Fund (WJF), in which Shift the Power runs through all aspects of the programme. The WJF places resources and decision-making power directly in the hands of women and girls. This grassroots grantmaking funding model was formed in the countries the WJF is implemented in. Nepal, Kenya, and Bangladesh. Designing the fund took place in collaboration with local partners, but also the grassroots communities. Mwanzia helped develop this new approach to international development. ‘A lot of patience and understanding is needed for this approach. We have to ask the communities ‘what issues do you want to address, and how do you want to do that?’

The fact that the ambition of localisation is embedded from the beginning makes the WJF unique. In order to work from a grassroots perspective, Shift the Power had to be implemented at every level of the programme, including the outcome harvesting. ‘We changed the conventional way of programme monitoring, because we want to document changes from the grassroots level from the perspective of the local communities. Therefore, we ask the communities about the results they see, in their own local dialects. When we translate their answers into English, they better reflect the perspective of the people on the results,’ said Mwanzia.

Shift the Power is the underlying principle that runs through Simavi’s Theory of Change. Mwanzia knows it is important to change mindsets, not only in donor countries, but also among local communities. ‘Structures in international development have been created from a Western mindset. Now is the time to look at local perspectives. We need to facilitate people’s own knowledge, rather than have an inferiority complex due to existing power dynamics. But patience and understanding is needed to break through this and to come up with sustainable locally-led solutions that are embraced by local communities.’

‘Success stories about Shift the Power principles will aid in influencing mindsets of donors. Hopefully, we can slowly move away from traditional funding models to innovative programming like the WJF that focus on unleashing the power of local communities including women-led initiatives where decision making and funding is bottom-up.’
Who leads Simavi?

Simavi has a two-tier board. The supervisory board oversees the good governance of the organisation. The managing director, Dieneke van der Wijk, is appraised by the supervisory board. In 2023, Simavi welcomed a new board member, Olutayo Bankole-Bolawole.

The supervisory board is the managing director’s employer and supervisor and acts as advisor to the managing director. The managing director is ultimately responsible for Simavi’s strategy and operations, the decisions made and the results achieved. The supervisory board itself has no managerial or operational tasks.

We are proud to have a supervisory board consisting of highly capable people, each with a unique background and set of talents. Their efforts help our organisation to realise its mission.

Olutayo Bankole-Bolawole: ‘I represent the people on the ground’

Why did you decide to join the supervisory board of Simavi last October?

Why did you decide to join the supervisory board of Simavi last October? ‘I have known Simavi for a long time because of the impact it has made in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector. I am passionate about the intersection between WASH, climate, health and gender equality and Simavi focuses on. As a child growing up in Nigeria, I noticed the undue advantages given to boys. The unequal access to education for girls. Fortunately, my dad was more liberal. He treated all his kids equally. This woke up the feminist activist in me to make a difference.’

What will your focus be as supervisory board member?

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How much does the managing director earn?

How much does the managing director earn? ‘Our supervisory board has determined the managing director’s compensation package in line with the guidelines for directors’ salaries at charitable organisations issued by Goede Doelen Nederland. In 2023, managing director Dieneke van der Wijk received a gross salary of EUR 88,800. In accordance with the standards set by Goede Doelen Nederland, Simavi does not pay bonuses to its managing director or any other employee.

What is a unique aspect which you bring to the role?

What is a unique aspect which you bring to the role? ‘I represent the people on the ground. Africa is my home. I have lived in many countries, most of which were in Africa. I will always keep the perspective of the people at the community level in mind. Because I have lived in these communities. This perspective includes the nuances related to Africa which many people tend to miss. African countries are all very different from each other. Kenya is more progressive around women’s rights and has passed laws which support women and girls in radical ways that I had never seen in most sub-Saharan African countries. Another country Simavi works in, Tanzania, is more patriarchal. This makes its government more difficult to work with. I represent the people at the community level in mind.’

Newest member of the supervisory board

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Looking forward

Simavi was founded in 1925 by two Dutch doctors with the aim of bringing medicine to Indonesia. In almost a century a lot has changed. As a development organisation working closely with women and girls and partner organisations in Asia and Africa, we have never been afraid to adjust and innovate. We are constantly adapting our working methods to suit the changing landscape of development and the needs and rights of women and girls.

Financial outlook for 2024

In 2023 we put a lot of effort into our ongoing programmes, the most prominent being Our Lives, Our Health and Our Futures, which closed at the end of 2023, and WASH SDG, which runs till the end of March 2024. Despite very good results these two programmes have not received renewed funding, and the ensuing decrease in our income means that Simavi will enter a period of transition.

Simavi will undergo a transformative change in line with our strategy and ambition to shift power. In 2024 we bring more focus to our organisation by concentrating on three overarching programmes, of which the Water Justice Fund, the new WASH, Learn & Share programme and Sarwacha as a project under the Sustainable and Gender Responsive WASH+ System programme, are all part. By building more strategic partnerships we will shift power and leverage our impact.

Financially, 2024 will also be a year of transition. Income from government grants will be significantly less than previous years, whereas we expect to be able to raise more funds from individual donors, companies and foundations in the Netherlands than in 2023. Total income raised in 2024 is thus expected to be EUR 4.9 million. In 2024 we anticipate spending EUR 4.6m on our objectives, partially funded with new income, partially with our project reserve.

Looking at the great results of our programmes we will invest extra in our fundraising capacity, because we believe in the relevance and potential of our mission. Costs of generating funds will be EUR 1.3 million in 2024. With this, we expect our income to grow again in 2025 and beyond.

Further, we will adapt to our financial situation by adjusting the organisational structure and by working more efficiently, resulting in lower costs. Being determined to invest as much as we can into our programmes and having trust in our fundraising activities, our expenditures will exceed our income in 2024, despite the adjustments. Having trust in the strength of our message and transition plan, Simavis Supervisory Board has approved the budget for 2024 and agreed to use our reserves to cover a projected end result of minus EUR 1.5m. Simavi’s funding, liquidity and financial reserves are sufficient to finance the ending and ongoing programs, the operation and the transition plan (until the end of 2025) for the transformative change.

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Our Impact Report 2023 contains not only the most important facts and figures behind Simavi’s programmes, but also many stories highlighting the impact of our work. The woman in the photo is Rebecah Selian, who lives in Kajiado County in Kenya where she is part of a women’s group that works with the Water Justice Fund (WJF). The WJF works on the basis of participatory grantmaking: decision-making power is held by the communities who are affected by funding decisions. Simavi supports change while it is achieved by the communities themselves. Shift the power.