



Uganda, the Worias play the Mpan'game, a board game to map the situation around the Mpanga River and come up with a plan.

© Joseph Muhumuza

Annual report 2023

Bringing water close to the people,
where they need it most. Burundi

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Connected

Bringing people and water together is our mission at Join For Water, every day. We bring water closer to where people desperately need it, we bring people together around water to manage it sustainably. Our commitment is grounded in international solidarity and also reaches out to Belgian citizens to inspire them to treat water with respect. That way we can continue to draw from this precious resource tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

In this annual report, you will find a sample of the results we achieved together with our many local partners in 2023.

- The right to water remains an essential part of our operation. With it, we provide a solid foundation for more stable household incomes, better health and higher educational attainment. In 2023, 13,000 people gained improved access to drinking water and 4,000 farmers could irrigate their fields in a better way.
- To ensure sustainable access to water, we protect freshwater resources and surrounding nature from the impact of climate change. Thanks to these efforts, 23,000 hectares of water-related ecosystems are now better protected.
- Together with local communities, we guarantee better management of nature and infrastructure. To strengthen the resilience of water-related ecosystems, 36 conservation plans have been prepared by 2023 that will allow those ecosystems to continue generating water for people.

Bringing people together and working with communities is in Join For Water's connecting DNA. Through smartphones, the wider world is entering everywhere. Physical and social mobility are also increasing. This creates innovative angles for what water can do for development. Just think of the importance of water-related ecosystems to guarantee the right to water, and the need for a systemic approach to make it a reality. Together with many other actors, we continue to fight for other choices to be made, both locally and globally. Choices that ensure adequate resources for the protection of ecosystems and for the development of water infrastructure and sanitation.

This requires us to strengthen the communities we work with so that they are able to meet these new challenges, both in our partner countries and in Belgium. Thus, through participation at local level, we ensure sound organisation around water infrastructure and water and nature management. Women have a clear voice in this. Via targeted advocacy campaigns we involve governments at the appropriate levels. Inclusion and equality are important guidelines for what we say and do.

Join For Water also exists thanks to its varied network and the many organisations and donors who continue to help us with their financial support. This enabled the non-profit organisation to once again achieve an extraordinary amount in 2023, and still end with healthy annual accounts. Thank you for helping to make this possible!



Krista Decat
President



Bart Dewaele
Managing director

Key figures 2023

Join For Water is working with its **39** partners on 4 major objectives:

- Make human access to water a reality
- Protect water-related ecosystems
- Increase knowledge of our approach
- Increase political support for the right to water and protection of freshwater resources

For 2023, we can present concrete figures.

13 000 people gained access to drinking water



13.000 people have clean drinking water closer to their homes.

2 100 people gained access to sanitation



2.100 people can use an improved latrine

4 000 farmers gained access to irrigation water



4 000 farmers see their crops grow through better irrigation

3 920 people received training



3 920 people in partner countries received specific training so that they could better understand the functioning of water ecosystems, climate change, the impact of human activities on the environment....

34 000

citizens reached with campaigns in Belgium



With our public awareness and action campaigns in Belgium, we reached 34,000 citizens, young and older.

36 conservation plans



conservation plans came about in consultation with communities

23 000 protected hectares



23 000 hectares were given protection and have been preserved

5 commitments



Through the policy work of our partners and Join For Water itself, governments made 5 commitments in favour of better protected aquatic ecosystems.

FINANCIAL KEY FIGURES

Revenue of the non-profit organisation

7,022,706 €



Expenditures for the objectives of the non-profit association

7,011,894 €

Together towards sustainability

How do we create public support for sustainable use and protection of water resources? How do we ensure that our interventions match what people and nature need?

These questions are at the core of our work. Connecting people around a shared vision, responsibility and action for sustainable protection of water resources and fair access to water. **Full participation and local ownership** are key to this.

Participation? We allow all stakeholders, ranging from individual water users and local organisations to (sub-)national governments, to participate in the design and implementation of solutions tailored to their context. We support communities in their advocacy efforts, for example to realise their rights or get more budget freed up for water services. By pooling our expertise and experience, we can best meet the needs of both the ecosystem and its inhabitants.

In 2023, we have better identified the specific challenges around water for women. We continued to develop and support consultation structures with our partners. Through these consultation structures, different population groups are given a clear voice. This is the case in Uganda, Ecuador and Peru, where women ambassadors embraced their strengthened position in their communities and in higher-level consultative bodies.

Our approach strengthens support and local ownership, essential for the sustainability of our interventions. Knowledge sharing and sensitisation within communities also contribute to this. In the absence of existing structures, we form committees with fair representation from the communities. These committees should ensure the long-term management of the ecosystem and its improved services.

In 2023, this included setting up and testing financing mechanisms for maintaining water services. In the Andes, we created a private-public water fund; in Uganda and Mali, we sought alternative sources of income, such as beekeeping and mushroom farms. We tested reinvestment models, such as remitting part of the profits after improved harvests, to maintain canals in Benin.

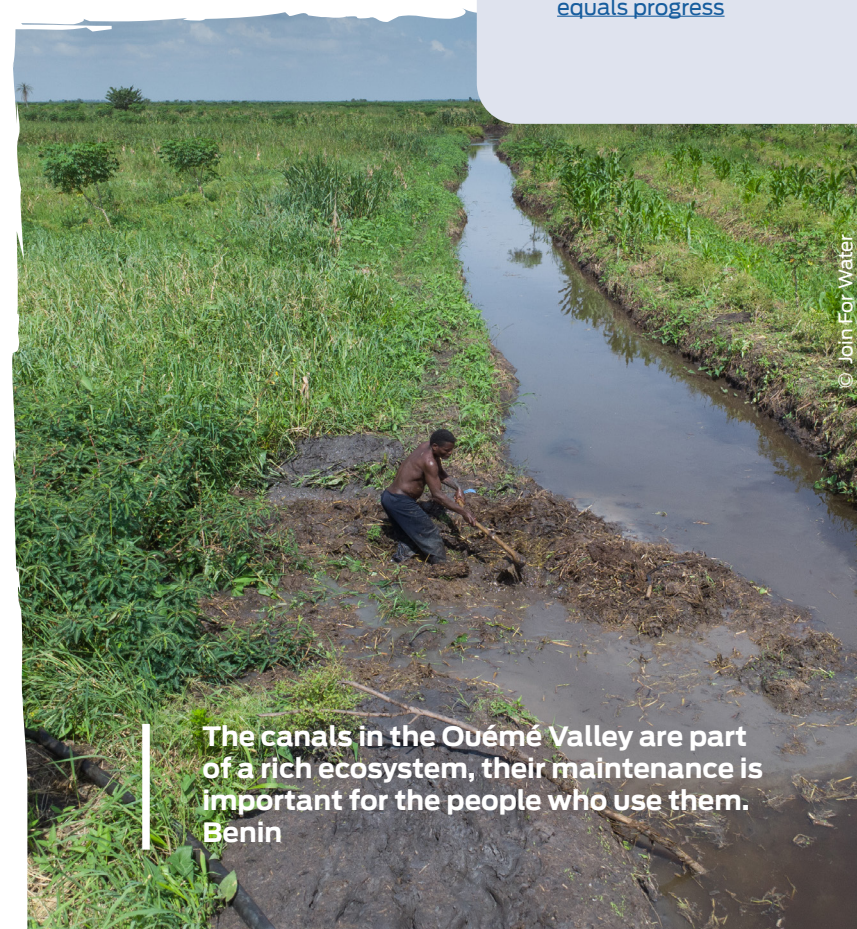
Communities, local authorities and/or partner organisations also concluded important formal agreements for conservation and protection. In RD Congo, for example, management plans for 82,000 ha of rainforest in 2023 were drawn up and approved by the communities living there. These forests are crucial for the rain cycle in large parts of Africa. We expect these management plans to be approved soon by the relevant government so that the forest can be much better protected.

 **Read more ?**

[A water fund for equitable water management](#)

[River cleanup, also a fact in Uganda](#)

[Protecting forest and resources equals progress](#)



The canals in the Ouémé Valley are part of a rich ecosystem, their maintenance is important for the people who use them. Benin

© Join For Water

Wetlands are indispensable, they deserve protection

In western Benin, on the Mono River, the Athiéme wetland provides important benefits to local communities. It provides water for irrigation, it offers flood protection and it replenishes groundwater. However, the area is under pressure due to human activities and climate change. The wetlands are drying up due to overexploitation of water for agricultural purposes and droughts caused by climate

change. This affects agriculture and water supply for people in the area. To protect the wetlands while providing water for agriculture, Join For Water is drilling for water for irrigation.



Join For Water drills boreholes for irrigation to protect wetlands by providing water for agriculture.

Join For Water encourages local farmers to get involved in protecting the wetland. Farmers

from the community have formed a committee called AGEMAPI. Its members are responsible for protecting the wetlands and informing local authorities of their importance. The committee also monitors water resources by keeping track of rainwater and measuring groundwater levels. These actions encourage farmers to care more about the wetlands and use water wisely.



MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR WETLAND PROTECTION.



Alexandre Comlan Kokou, president of Agemapi, is motivated to protect the wetlands his fields depend on.

© Brent De Smedt

Water sources get local ambassadors (m/f)

“Agua es vida, no la contamines”. It is a phrase written on many signs along the Mayo-Chinchipe River in Ecuador and Peru. As Join For Water, we can only agree with this; water is life, and you should not pollute it. But water does not only mean life in the most literal sense of the word. Water connects people. And that is exactly what we and our partners have in mind for our programme in the Andes.

How do we do it? Since 2022, our partner Protos Andes has been supporting citizens, farmer organisations, water managers and local governments to better understand water challenges they face in their neighbourhood as well as to address them. We do this by organising Water Schools. So far, we have already organised 3 Water Schools for more than 200 people, creating a network of informed and engaged citizens. Furthermore, at least 3 times a year, we support a meeting of Water Schools participants and other actors within the Mayo-Chinchipe river basin. One such meeting specifically addresses women who have united as ‘Guardians of the Mayo-Chinchipe River’. During these meetings, common outlines are drawn for sustainable management of the river basin and the role of various actors in it, for which they can advocate as one voice to their governments.

”
 “NONE OF US IS AS GOOD AS ALL OF US TOGETHER.”
 ~ SANDRA NEYRA, CUIDAR PROJECT COORDINATOR

The first results are already becoming visible today. Platform members have become true ambassadors for water resource protection in their own communities, leading to conservation agreements driven from within the community. As part of the agreement, our partner NCI supports these communities in improving their access to water and food production.

Local governments are also more actively involved in shaping policies for the river basin, such as developing investment plans for drinking water and sanitation.



© Protos Andes



© Camilla Vasquez Rojas

Read more

[Leidi and Cindy comment on the Waterschool](#)



WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN THE BINATIONAL WATER SCHOOL ARE NOW “GUARDIANS OF THE MAYO-CHINCHIPE”.

Wiser with water

In the previous programme, from 2017 to 2021, Join For Water was successful with the 'Project W, Wise with Water'. At that time, we worked with schools in six municipalities and cities. In our new programme, we aim to extend our knowledge and experience to the whole of Flanders. This is proving to be a fruitful strategy. Since 2022, more than 10 schools have already participated in the programme 'Become a Water wise class or school'. This programme supports schools in integrating sustainable water use into their curriculum and reducing their water footprint.

We also share our extensive experience at policy level. We advise education umbrella organisations such as GO!, the Flemish Education Council and teacher training colleges on sustainable water management and behavioural change. These collaborations increase our impact and enable us to reach more schools with our sustainability message.

In 2023, we launched several public campaigns, including World Water Day@school and Water Challenge@home, reaching over 34,000 citizens in Flanders. Given the growing interest in water themes, we initiated the Water Challenge@work specifically for companies and their employees. After successful try-outs at Reckitt (Finish) and the city of Eeklo, we are rolling this out further in 2024. Companies taking part will be offered tailor-made programmes, including advice and coaching to raise employees' awareness of the sustainable use of water. They can choose from various modules such as a water walk, workshops, the 'Water House' exhibition, an online campaign, the water calculator, in Dutch or English, and lots of educational materials.



At the Water House, you get information on how to reduce your water footprint in different places in your home.



© Sarah De Raedt



AT THE ATHENEUM ERASMUS DE PINTÉ, PUPILS MAPPED OUR WATER FOOTPRINT WHERE IS A LOT OF WATER USED TO MAKE OUR CLOTHES OR OUR FOOD? THEY ALSO USED THIS INFORMATION TO 'RAISE THEIR VOICE'.



© Greening Burundi



STUDENTS IN BURUNDI ALSO MADE THEIR VOICES HEARD ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD WATER DAY

Young people raise their voices

A dozen schools will successfully complete the two-year 'WaterWise class or school' programme in the 2023-2024 school year. They took action with their pupils to become water-conscious global citizens. Three of these schools also participated in the pilot project 'Young people raise their voices for water' i.c.w. Equator, an international learning platform for children. Young people portrayed water challenges in their environment using self-made videos and shaped their message to politicians. Both projects resulted in a lot of actions.



In the project 'Young people raise their voices for water', young people talk to politicians.

In a school in Bruges, for example, pupils applied creative thinking to develop sustainable practices within their specialisation. For example, the 'catering' students came up with a daily vegetarian menu in the school restaurant. These initiatives will be further developed next school year to form the sustainable heart of the school.

In the 'Raise your voice' project, young people engage in conversation with politicians and showed the compilation film of the images and

messages in the exchange. In Belgium, young people from the atheneum Erasmus De Pinte asked some well-prepared questions at the Great Water Debate in the Flemish Parliament in Brussels. In Burundi, young people from Ecofo Bubanza II and Giko, in collaboration with our partner Greening Burundi, brought their message to politicians through slogans, a rap, poems...

The programme expands from September 2024 with new classes and schools.



Read more

[And what about us?](#)



The women's savings group in Baguineda meets weekly. Members can borrow small amounts of money.

Notes to the financial statements 2023

Control and audit

Join For Water has integrated financial statements that are the sum of the figures of the head office and six country offices. These financial statements are the end product of a process of internal and external controls.

Clybouw Bedrijfsrevisoren audits the audit reports of the country offices and audits the integrated financial statements. It is approved by the General Assembly on 22 June 2024.

The auditor has provided the financial statements with an unqualified audit report.

Results (in €)	2023	2022
Operating income	7,022,706	7,799,608
Fundraising and subsidies	6,836,357	7,614,266
• Fundraising	1,132,614	1,238,219
• Subsidies	5,703,744	6,376,046
Other operating income	123,645	88,832
Financial income	45,723	93,684
Extraordinary income	16,980	2,826
Operating charges	7,011,894	7,707,558
Services & other, goods	717,562	822,190
Remuneration	2,604,810	2,693,324
Depreciations	4,395	17,531
Provisions	-40,607	-30,120
Other, operating charges	3,671,029	4,090,309
Financial charges	54,545	112,882
Extraordinary charges	159	1,442
RESULT	10,813	92,050
Withdrawal from allocated funds	15,000	-
Addition to allocated funds	19,185	84,704
Positive result carried forward	6,628	7,346

Income statement

The 2023 result to be carried forward is EUR +6,628.

Total operating expenses of 2023 amounted to EUR 7,011,894 and were spent as follows:

- 86.7% for direct achievement of programme objectives;
- 10.2% for general management by headquarters;
- 3.1% for fundraising.

Collecte de fonds

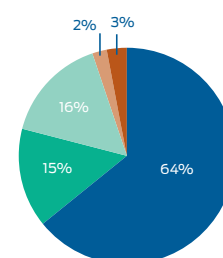
In addition to the grants received, Join For Water used its own funds for EUR 1,132,614 in 2023 for:

- own contributions for subsidised programmes;
- financing projects that ran separately from traditional public funding;
- funding of non-eligible costs of the programmes;
- funding of part of the general management costs by the head office.

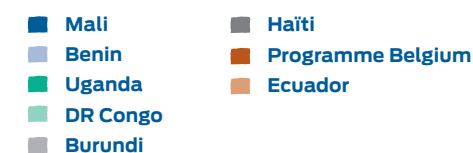
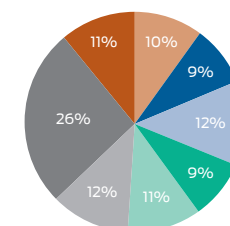
Join For Water transparently extracts part of the required NGO contribution for programmes from institutional co-financing.

More detailed explanations on the annual accounts can be obtained from Tom Mestdagh, tel. +32(9)235.25.10. More info on our organisation and the sector can also be found on the site www.ngo-openboek.be.

Origin of financing 2023



The regional distribution of the expenditure for our programme activities





Nursery in Bafwaboli, Tshopo province, growing perennial crops such as cocoa or coffee. RD Congo

Integrity policy

In June 2018, all Belgian players in the development cooperation sector, including Join For Water, signed an integrity charter. Through this charter, the sector endorses integrity and respect as fundamental values that guide its actions. The charter consists of 10 points that Join For Water has already operationalised in previous years. In 2023, work was done on the overall overarching policy document that brings together the different points of the integrity policy at Join For Water.

No potential integrity violations were reported in 2023. Integrity violations involve a violation of the code of ethics by any of our employees, volunteers or partners. The finding reported in 2021 still needs to be dealt with by the competent court. The financial risk amounts to EUR 4,573.

0 Potential integrity violations were reported in 2023

1 Unprocessed finding dating from 2021





A warm thank you to all those who have shown their confidence in us this year !

Join For Water was only able to realise its wetland ecosystem protection and conservation programmes thanks to the contributions and commitment of many. Many thanks to all donors, volunteers, supporters and fans! Many thanks also to all the local and provincial governments, companies, foundations and authorities that supported our activities financially.

**You'll find the list on our website :
[All partners | Join For Water](#)**



More information ?

In this annual report, you will find an overview of our activities in 2023. If you would like to know more about a specific theme, country or project, please visit our website or send an email to communicatie@joinforwater.ngo.



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