

New year reflections: A year past, a year ahead

6 January | by Dr. Tim Reed

I can hardly believe that it's time for a "start of the year" blog with reflections on the last 12 months and a look ahead to the year to come. The months have flown by since the lockdowns of COVID-19 began lifting, including in March at our base in the Netherlands. For many people, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a time for a reassessment of their lives and at HAI we were no different, with some of the team moving house, others moving country, and some changed career and left HAI completely. So, we reconvened in March looking a little different (and I don't mean just the COVID kilos!) but up to strength with a team of seventeen colleagues.

What also emerged were new working practices. HAI has always nurtured and respected its employees, with a degree of flexibility and working from home. It's not only the right thing to do, but it makes good business sense. Because we were already partially working remotely, we were well equipped for the permanence of two years from home. But the months of lockdown showed us, like so many others, that it is possible to achieve a better work/home balance than we enjoyed even before. So now we work fifty per cent of our time in the office and fifty per cent from home.

On the content of our work, things have also moved very quickly. As you will know if you follow us on the various channels, we embarked on new projects centred around [sexual and reproductive health \(SRH\) and family planning commodities in Burundi](#) (funded by the Dutch Embassy in Bujumbura) and [adolescent SRH in six countries in the African Great Lakes region](#) (funded by the European Union). Meanwhile, our projects on access to medicines and vaccines in Europe, access to insulin, and snakebite programmes continue unabated, as does the newest of our projects on the dangers to public health of unchecked artificial intelligence in medicine, which is fascinating and important, if we are going to live up to our values of health for all, not just the few.

So, what can we expect in 2023? Firstly, we need to continue the policy of diversification of our offer, not least because so many donors have pulled back from access to medicines. The HAI team have a proven track record of working in so many fields of health policy, and with project management expertise and implementing partners all over the world, we need to intensify our ability to attract donors. Secondly, although I have waxed lyrical about my personal highlight of the last year being the 'post-COVID' re-emergence, the pandemic is not over! Far from it! Only about a quarter of Africa's population are [fully vaccinated](#). Many observers conclude that the COVAX facility, which was set up to ensure vaccine availability in Africa, has stalled. Again. We, along with our partners in the Global South must keep the pressure on the manufacturers to share know-how with local manufacturers, and on governments in both the North and South, to do the right thing and facilitate tech transfer.

In 2023, we will also roll out a new programme of work on antibiotic resistance, mainly concerned with the availability and use of diagnostics, which have not received enough attention. Until now.

Keep an eye on our various social media channels for updates and news as the year progresses!

Finally, I am sure I speak on behalf of the entire HAI team, when I wish you a happy and prosperous 2023.