

Staff Spotlight: Evelien Colenberg

The old saying that “money makes the world go round” is especially true for non-governmental organisations, like ours. Without it, HAI wouldn’t be able to realise our access to medicines goals all over the world. But with every funding success of the project and funding teams, we owe it to our donors, the public and, of course, the law, to manage our income with the greatest care and be accountable for how we spend it. And here at HAI, we rely on the expertise and professionalism of Evelien Colenberg, our Financial Controller, for this task.

In this edition of our Staff Spotlight series, we’d like to introduce you to Evelien. She’s a vital part of the HAI team—not only because she’s in charge of paying our salaries, but also because she ensures that our financials are fully transparent and that our partners and funders get reliable financial information about the projects they’re supporting.

Read the interview below to find out more about Evelien’s work at HAI and why one of her favourite things about working here is the exchange with her co-workers—not only around the lunch table.

What is your role at Health Action International?

I’m the Financial Controller at HAI. All things to do with our income and expenditure are my responsibility: Budgeting, financial monitoring and donor reporting, payroll, annual accounts and payments.

What are three words to describe HAI?

Expertise, dedication and connecting people.

“Finances are important, especially for NGOs, because funds are always limited.”

What’s the most interesting aspect of your field of expertise?

Finances are important, especially for NGOs, because funds are always limited. We must be accountable for efficient and appropriate expenditures, and my role is to make the figures as accessible and transparent as possible.

How do you make people interested in your topic?

That’s difficult since finances are not really an attractive subject to most people. Most of my colleagues are more interested in the content of our work, and rightly so, but they also feel accountable to donors. However, they are happy to have someone else take care of it! And all of us appreciate getting our salaries on time! As for our Management Team and Foundation Board, the information I can provide is vital to them to be able to guide the organisation, so I’m sure they see the importance of my work. And, of course, reliable

financial information on our projects is vital for our partners and funders...

“The information I can provide is vital to guide the organisation.”

What do you wish people would be more aware of?

The impact that inequalities have on the health of people, not only in low- and middle-income countries, but also in high-income countries where some people don't have access to medicines.

What do you like most about working at Health Action International, and what have you gained from working here?

It's very nice to work with colleagues from all over the world. Our discussions at the lunch table are always fun and give insight into the different cultures that are represented in our office. Although I've been working in the health and development sector for more than 20 years, the specific medicines topic is new to me. I find it very interesting to learn more about that from my co-workers.

“We all have a lot to gain if medicines pricing becomes more transparent.”

If you could choose one policy recommendation to be accepted and turned into undisputed policy tomorrow, what would it be?

Medicines policies are not my field of expertise, but I think we all have a lot to gain if medicines pricing becomes more transparent. So that's something I would like to see realised soon.

Want to find out more about Evelien? Take a look at her [staff page](#)!