

Dierenartsen
Zonder Grenzen



Annual report

2023

VÉTÉRINAIRES SANS FRONTIÈRES
NETHERLANDS

MEMBER OF VSF INTERNATIONAL





Millions of people in Africa depend on their livestock. Vétérinaires Sans Frontières-Netherlands (VSF-NL) implements projects in Malawi. Through our projects, we improve animal health, which also enables us to improve people's health. We do this in cooperation with local people, to ensure that our projects have a long-term impact.

One of the concepts used is training Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) since 2012 in Malawi. They help farmers to keep their herds healthy. Thanks to animals, training, equipment and animal health care, small-scale farmers can produce sufficient food for themselves and for the market. As a result, these farmers can build a better and more secure life for themselves.

www.dierenartsenzondergrenzen.nl

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healthy people,
healthy planet**
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Foreword

Dear Reader,

The year 2023 marked an intense year for me. This was the first full year without corona measures and it seems like the world is spinning faster than ever before. As if we had something to catch up on. Many records were broken, of which the weather records were perhaps the most tangible and visible. Our backyard turned into a swamp at times. We can think anything about it, but the fact is that for the time being we in our Western society have plenty of opportunities to minimize the effects of changing climate conditions, both physically and financially. Opportunities that many people in African countries have much less or not at all. A drought or flood there can be disastrous because people can lose everything and there is no insurance that pays out.

In addition, in the late summer of 2023, my colleagues and I as veterinarians were faced with a serious outbreak of a (previously yet mainly) tropical animal disease: the Bluetongue virus. In our practice area, this virus killed many sheep, and also cows. As veterinarians, we were powerless. We could not do much more than give painkillers to the animals, end hopeless suffering for animals and give a lot of mental support to animal owners. In some cases, people lost half of their animals. This outbreak made me realize again how vulnerable you can be as a livestock farmer, even in a country like the Netherlands, where we can tightly control a lot of animal diseases with good monitoring systems and other measures. This is more difficult in many countries in Africa. Although in the Netherlands there is (still) little to no financial compensation available for affected livestock farmers and the mental suffering is high, people still have food and can send their children to school. This is different in many countries where people have no savings in the bank and depend directly on the production and yields of their livestock and crops and where zoonoses have a much greater impact on people's health. If animals get sick or die there, it will have a direct effect on people's well-being and health. I think this is what motivates all of us to get involved with VFS-Netherlands. Trying from our expertise to do our bit for the better well-being and health of people, animals and the planet.

This is the report on the activities of Vétérinaires Sans Frontières - Netherlands (VSF-NL) during the year 2023. We are proud of the expansion and continuation of the successful rabies vaccination campaign in Malawi. By now, 41,364 dogs have been vaccinated against this deadly virus, which is also fatal to people, and we will continue these activities in the coming year. Moreover, we are proud of the Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) who have been trained by VSF-NL (and its predecessor DIO) in northern Malawi in recent years. Most CAHWs are still active and contributing substantially to improving animal health.

In addition, we are proud of all the activities undertaken by sympathizers of VSF-NL to raise funds for our projects. From crowdfunding campaigns to a sponsored run, it continues to be extraordinary how many people care about our work!

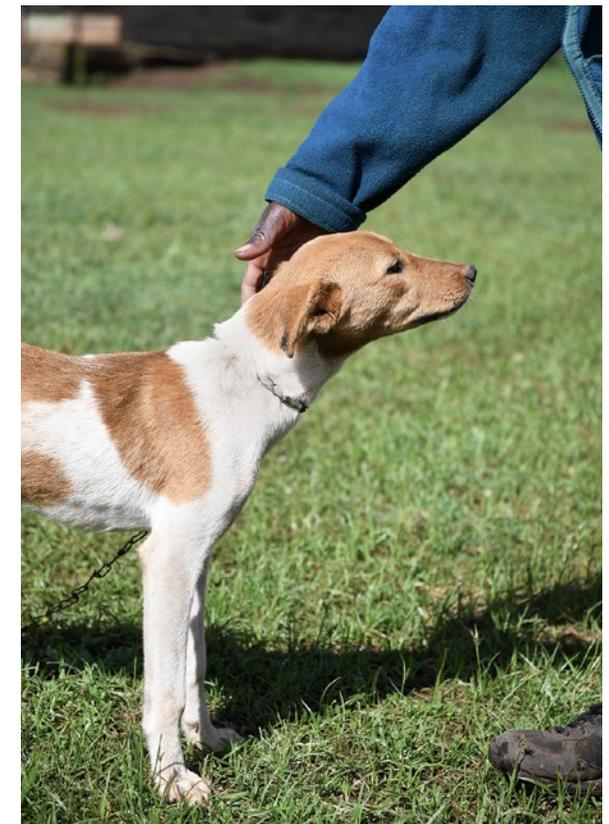
After 5 years of pioneering, Sarah Farrand announced last year that she would be stepping down as coordinator. We are very grateful for all the work Sarah has done in recent years. Without her, VSF-NL would never have seen the light of day and the organization would not be where it is today. Fortunately, we have found a worthy successor for Sarah in Simone Vuijk! Together with Iris Geerts she will now lead the organization, assisted by an enthusiastic board of which Sarah will remain a member.

However, our achievements of last year would not have been possible without the commitment of our partners and the loyal support of our donors. We sincerely thank you for this!

— **David Speksnijder**

*Chairman of VSF- Netherlands Utrecht,
February 2024*

“We are proud of the expansion and continuation of the successful rabies vaccination campaign in Malawi. To date, 41,364 dogs have been vaccinated.”



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Healthy animals, healthy people, healthy planet

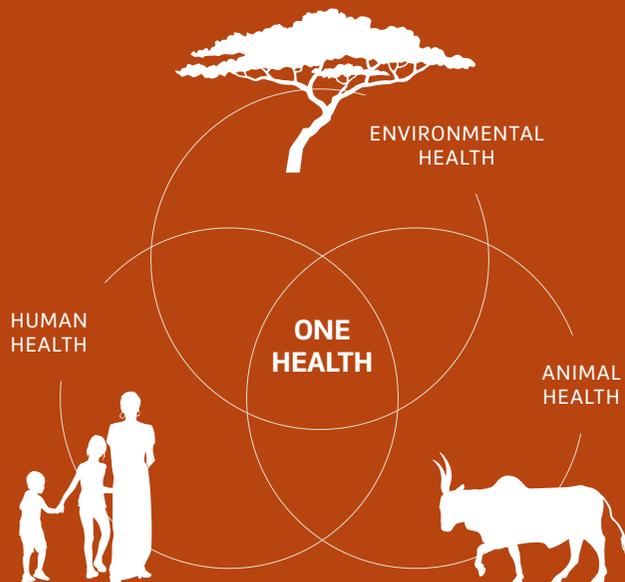
An international network

We are a member of the network **Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International**. This network consists of thirteen different non-profit organizations in Europe, Canada and Australia. Together we are committed to improving the living conditions of small-scale farmers worldwide and strengthening local animal health and welfare initiatives. Within the network we exchange knowledge and combine resources to make the greatest impact. For example, in 2023 we have:

- Continued the collaboration between World Organisation for Animal Health and VSF-International, which has allowed the [Community Animal Health Workers in the Community project](#) to continue. This project includes research on the conditions of CAWHs in the Global South to develop guidelines for competencies and curricula. In March 2023, the report "[A literature review of community animal health workers in Africa and Asia, with recommendations for improved practices](#)" was published. VSF-International coordinated case studies on CAHW programmes. These case studies consisted of field visits, stakeholder interviews and a final validation workshop and took place in Burundi, Cambodia, Niger and South Sudan. The studies have been carried out successfully.
- Prepared a new position for an Advocacy Officer One Health at VSF-International. The rationale for this newly created position is to help developing and implementing an action plan for the advocacy efforts of VSF-Int and support the VSF members' advocacy efforts. The Advocacy Officer will coordinate advocacy and campaigning on

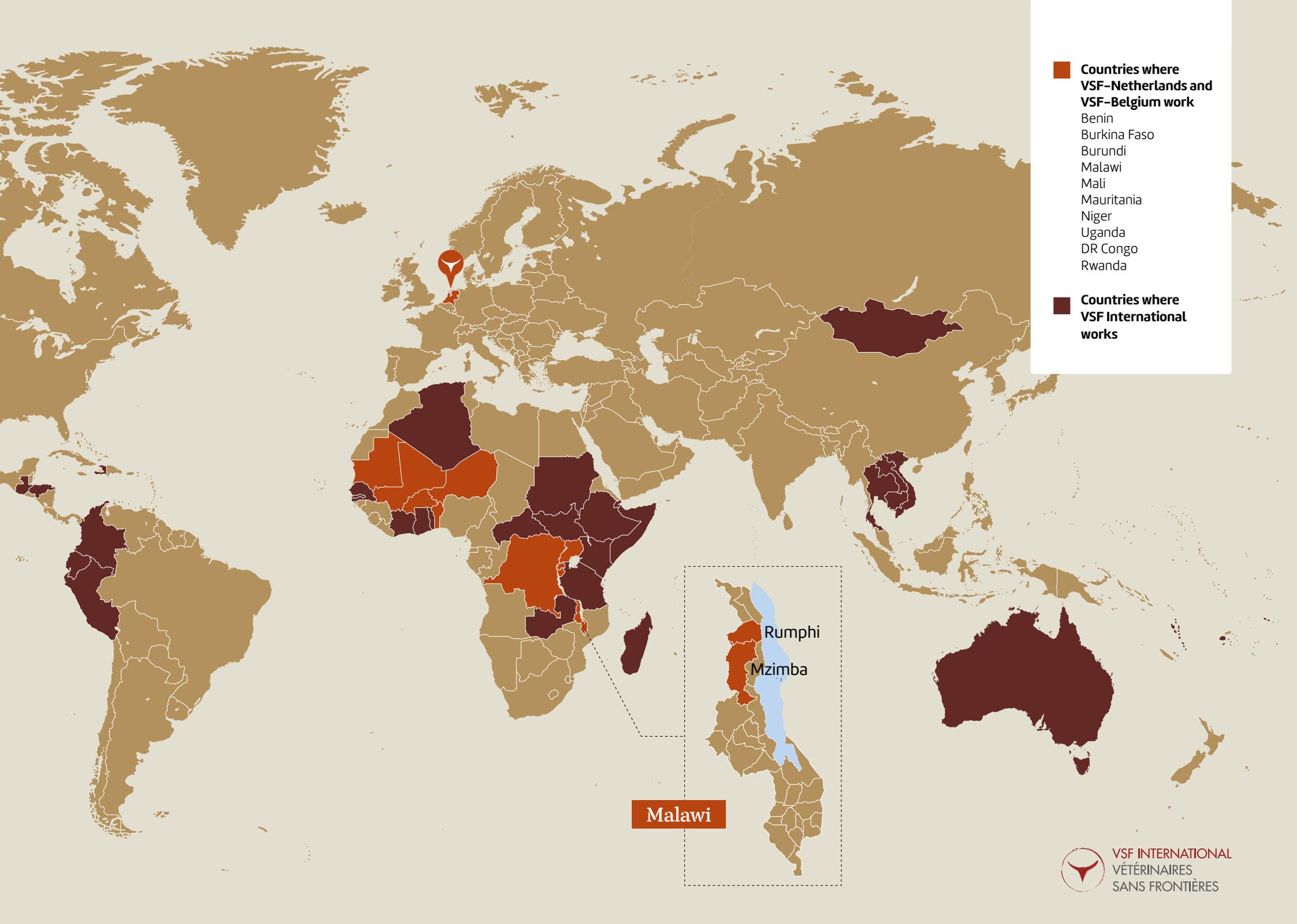
One Health targeting mainly policymakers and donors at the international level and multilateral organisations, and support the VSF members in their advocacy targeting policymakers at national and regional levels.

- Organized a general meeting with VSF-International members in Prague with the aim of updating and learning from each other. Therefore, relevant updates were shared regarding a compiled One Health advocacy strategy and the findings of the Security working group were discussed. These findings relate to staff security during project implementation in the Global South.
- Improved cooperation among VSF network members in several areas:
 - Once every three months, online thematic meetings are held with VSF-International members. VSF-NL participates in the Communications & Fundraising working group and the Rabies working group.
 - Consultations are taking place to strengthen cooperation among VSF members in East Africa and around the Great Lakes in Africa. The aim is to set up joint, regional projects for donors and regional institutions.



‘One Health’ is a cooperative approach focused on a healthy and sustainable relationship between animals, humans and their environment. We believe that this is of utmost importance for establishing optimal conditions for health and wellbeing for everyone.

www.vsf-international.org



Countries where VSF-Netherlands and VSF-Belgium work

- Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Niger
- Uganda
- DR Congo
- Rwanda

Countries where VSF International works

Malawi

Rumphi

Mzimba

01.

Malawi

The experiences of farmers' families and dog owners in Malawi show that improving (access to) animal health services has a huge impact on animals and the entire community. On the following pages you can read a number of experiences and impact figures from 2023.



Training animal health workers



There is a shortage of veterinarians in Malawi. When an animal gets sick, the farmer often does not know what to do. If the animal dies, a source of manure, food and income is lost. That is why we train **Community Animal Health Workers**, or “CAHWs”, who keep animals healthy in their own communities. They provide information to farmers about housing, nutrition, reproduction and health. For example, vaccination and deworming campaigns are also organised in cooperation with the Malawi government. In this way, animal production increases and small-scale farmers can produce enough food for themselves and the market.

The CAHWs are selected from their own community and then trained to ensure that they can take care of the animals themselves. During the training, various theoretical lessons and practicals take place. The CAHWs then accompany an Assistant Veterinary Officer from their own region to put their knowledge into practice. This also contributes to a good relationship between the various veterinary (para) professionals and the government. Every month, animal health workers provide information about animal diseases in their environment, so that it can be used in the government’s monitoring programs.

Sustainable progress

Livestock are of great importance as a source of food and income, helping to reduce poverty and food insecurity. Several studies have shown that households with different livestock species are more resilient to drought, floods and economic shortages than households without livestock. Despite livestock being vulnerable to hazards, it increases the resilience of vulnerable households.

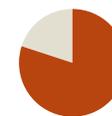
From April 2021, Centre For Community Empowerment Initiatives (CCEI) started the Livestock For Empowerment (L4E) project with the help of VSF-NL and Wilde Ganzen. This project was completed in 2022. 19,875 Farmers have benefited from this project, especially **youth** and **women** in Malawi. They have gained more capacities to increase and improve the productivity of their livestock in a sustainable and responsible way.

As VSF-NL, we want to sustain and continue this kind of improvement. Therefore, in 2023, we conducted research and formulated a new project.

Research results show that there are 101,740 households in Mzimba North district in Malawi. About 72% of these households have at least one type of livestock with limited costs and yields. Therefore, the **Strengthening Capacity In Animal Production and Health For Enhanced Livelihoods** (SCAPH4EL) project focuses on several problems that arise in the chain from production to sale of animal products. For example, we aim to enable more families to meet the WHO’s recommended daily intake of milk and meat. At the same time, we aim to ensure that farmers’ products are used fairly and efficiently for consumption. We aim to start the implementation of this project in 2024.

The main **expected outcomes** are:

- Improved extension services providing cost-effective services for dairy and beef cattle;
- Improved animal health care and reduced livestock mortality and morbidity;
- Improved animal production of meat and milk;
- Encourage farmers to make more valuable dairy products from high-quality raw milk;
- Processors then have the option of paying farmers a higher price;
- Reduce raw milk wastage.



80%

of the population depends on small-scale agriculture and animal husbandry



18.456

animals helped in 2023



73.253

households in Mzimba North district keep at least one type of livestock with insufficient yields. Therefore, our next project, **Strengthening Capacity In Animal Production and Health For Enhanced Livelihoods (SCAPH4EL)**, focuses on multiple problems that arise in the chain from production to sale of animal products.

What is rabies?

Rabies is one of the most life-threatening and infectious diseases on earth. It is **99.9% fatal** and **100% preventable**. Rabies not only occurs in animals, but humans can also be infected with the rabies virus after being bitten by an infected animal. The virus mainly affects **underprivileged populations** and 59,000 people worldwide die from it every year, 60% of whom are children under the age of 15.

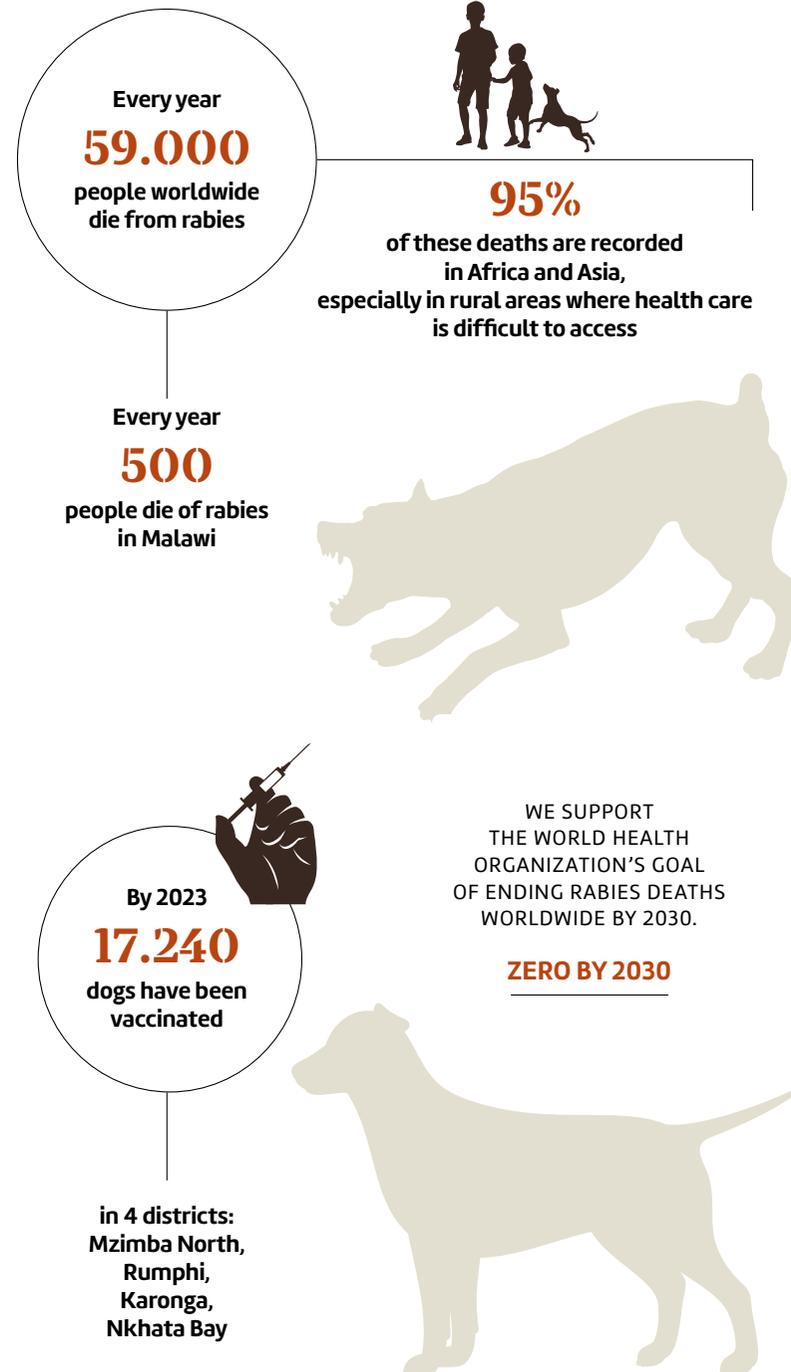
Our rabies project

In Malawi there is poverty and more than 500 people die every year from rabies. This is why we started a new project in Mzuzu, Malawi. By vaccinating dogs against this disease, we want to **stop the transmission of rabies in the entire northern part of Malawi by 2030**. In doing so, we support the World Health Organization's objective of ending human rabies deaths worldwide by 2030.

We have already **vaccinated a total of 41,364 dogs**, including 17,240 dogs in 2023. In Mzimba North 12,511 dogs, in Rumphi 2,716 dogs, in Karonga 1,153 dogs and in Nkhata Bay 860 dogs have been vaccinated! Furthermore, 918 cats were vaccinated against rabies and we raised awareness of rabies among dog owners in Malawi during these vaccination days. In the Netherlands, we worked to combat rabies through fundraising, the Run4Rabies, awareness and knowledge transfer, among other activities.

In 2024, we aim to vaccinate at least **50,000 dogs**. This is 70% of the total number of dogs in that area and thus significantly reduces the risk of death from rabies.

Only together we can stop rabies.



Only together we can stop rabies

The rabies project was able to take place in 2023 thanks to our largest donor, the Edgard & Cooper Foundation. In addition, collaborations are very important during the implementation of the rabies project. In 2023, we worked with our local partner Centre for Community Empowerment Initiatives (CCEI) in Malawi. Thanks to CCEI, we were able to work with the Malawian government, government veterinarians and veterinary officers participated in the rabies vaccination campaign. Furthermore, we cooperated with Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC). GARC is a non-profit organisation with the ambition to eliminate rabies by 2030. They support us with the implementation of the rabies project and provide us with advice. We may also use the Rabies Vaccination Tracker developed by GARC to keep track of all vaccinations. Lastly, we have translated GARC's "Want a friend" booklet into Chichewa. We will distribute these booklets for awareness during our vaccination campaigns in Malawi in 2024.



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02.

What we do in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, we are raising awareness with regard to sustainable livestock-farming and food production.

We also focus on fundraising and networking and our student branch, VSF-Student, organises various campaigns and activities.



In 2023, we deepened our collaboration with VSF-Belgium (VSF-B) by contributing to the project “Operationalization of the One Health approach in south Kivu (DRC) through local veterinary services”. VSF-B is implementing the project together with its local partner and VSF-NL is helping by raising funds.

About the project

In South Kivu, in eastern DR Congo, lies the Kahuzi Biega National Park (KBNP). Near this park, the vast majority of people live on an income below the poverty line of \$1 per day. As a result, they rely heavily on natural resources. There is increasing contact between humans, kept animals and wild animals, making the risk of communicable diseases from animals to humans (and vice versa) high. Human, veterinary and environmental health services do not work well together and lack the capacity and technical knowledge to detect diseases early.

Since 2017, VSF-B has established and supported a local network of veterinarians and animal health workers in South Kivu with funding, equipment and knowledge. Animal keepers pay for the services, making this system self-sustaining after 2-3 years. Building on this veterinary support system, VSF-B aims to use a One Health approach (where all sectors work together: veterinary, humane and ecological) to achieve the best health and welfare outcomes. One Health recognizes the linkages between humans, animals, plants and their shared environment) contribute to the development of inclusive and cross-sectoral strategies for the prevention/control of emerging and recurrent epidemics, reduction of antibiotic resistance, and better management of health risks in KBNP ecosystems and environment. Thus, the direct contribution will be improved sustainable access to quality health services for all and the sustainable conservation of the area's ecosystems.





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In the Netherlands, VSF-NL employs two coordinators. Iris Geerts fulfils the role of general coordinator two days per week and takes care of the daily operations and communication. She also consults with the VSF-NL board and VSF-Student.

Sarah takes care of projects and partnerships and spends one day per week communicating with and fundraising for the projects in Malawi.

In October 2023, Simone Vuijk took over Sarah's role. Sarah does remain with us as treasurer on the VSF-NL board.

The organisation

The board sets the direction of the foundation, defines new strategic plans and supervises and gives guidance and feedback to the coordinators. The coordinators are responsible for the financial administration, internal and external communication and fundraising.

The board members of Vétérinaires Sans Frontières-Netherlands in 2023:

- **David Speksnijder**, chairman.
- **Janke Maat**, secretary.
- **Sarah Farrand**, treasurer.
- **Eveline Mus**, general board member.
- **Iris Geerts**, general board member.



© Luka Botman / VSF

We involve veterinarians and students of Veterinary Medicine in our work through various actions, such as the Vaccinate For Africa campaign, Run4Rabies and Give a Goat.

In 2023 VSF-NL invested in expanding communication and fundraising, among other things, by taking on trainees, Lisanne Slotboom and Alex Almeida. This allowed us to further expand our online visibility. A great deal of attention was also paid to fundraising, including developing communication materials for legacies and continuing to actively raise funds for the realization of our rabies project in Malawi.

VSF Student speaking

VSF-Student has been the student branch of VSF-NL since February 2019. The student board consists of six Veterinary Medicine students and there are five committees: Project Committee, Education Committee, Run4Rabies Committee, Vaccination For Africa Committee and the Activities Committee. These committees are responsible for organising activities and campaigns, maintaining contact with other organisations conducting projects that interface with animal health, and conducting educational classes in schools. In 2023, the lustrum committee was also formed to organise the celebration of the 5-year anniversary of VSF-NL and Student. The student board is based at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Utrecht and their mission is "Healthy animals, healthy people, healthy planet!"

In 2023, VSF-Student was involved in many activities! On 7 March, the **Half-Yearly Donors Meeting** was held, looking back at the past six months and looking ahead to the next six months. Our chairman was also changed then. In addition, March means the end of the Give a Goat campaign, in which initially 58 goats were donated. Nevertheless, after the end of the campaign, 3 more goats were donated, bringing our total to 61 goats meaning €3050,-!

On 24 May, 46 sporty participants took part in the **Run4Rabies**, raising €660, and in the week of 5 to 11 June we had the annual **Vaccinate For Africa campaign**. With this campaign, together with all practices involved, we raised €4157!



© Luka Botman / VSF

After the summer holidays, VSF-Student attended the **freshmen weekend** and the introduction day to get acquainted with the new first-year Veterinary Medicine students in advance. In addition, the VSF-Student board has its own **board jackets**. As a result, we also draw attention to VSF-NL on the streets!

Since October, we have had a **deposit box** at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, raising extra money for charity! At the **General Donor Meeting** on 10 October, we were able to welcome two new board members to the board and the annual **internship lecture** attracted around 60 visitors. Students received information about all kinds of opportunities to gain more experience in veterinary medicine abroad. At the end of the year, six lucky students got to take a look at the projects themselves during the **Malawi trip!**

2023 in a nutshell

Below is an overview of the activities that took place in 2023. These include activities organised by VSF-Student, as well as events where the student board was present to provide information, network and/or raise awareness

14 January

Crate action

20 February

French painting evening

25 February

Parents' Day

27 February

Materials to Ukraine

7 March

Semi-annual Donors' Meeting

Gilbert Banda

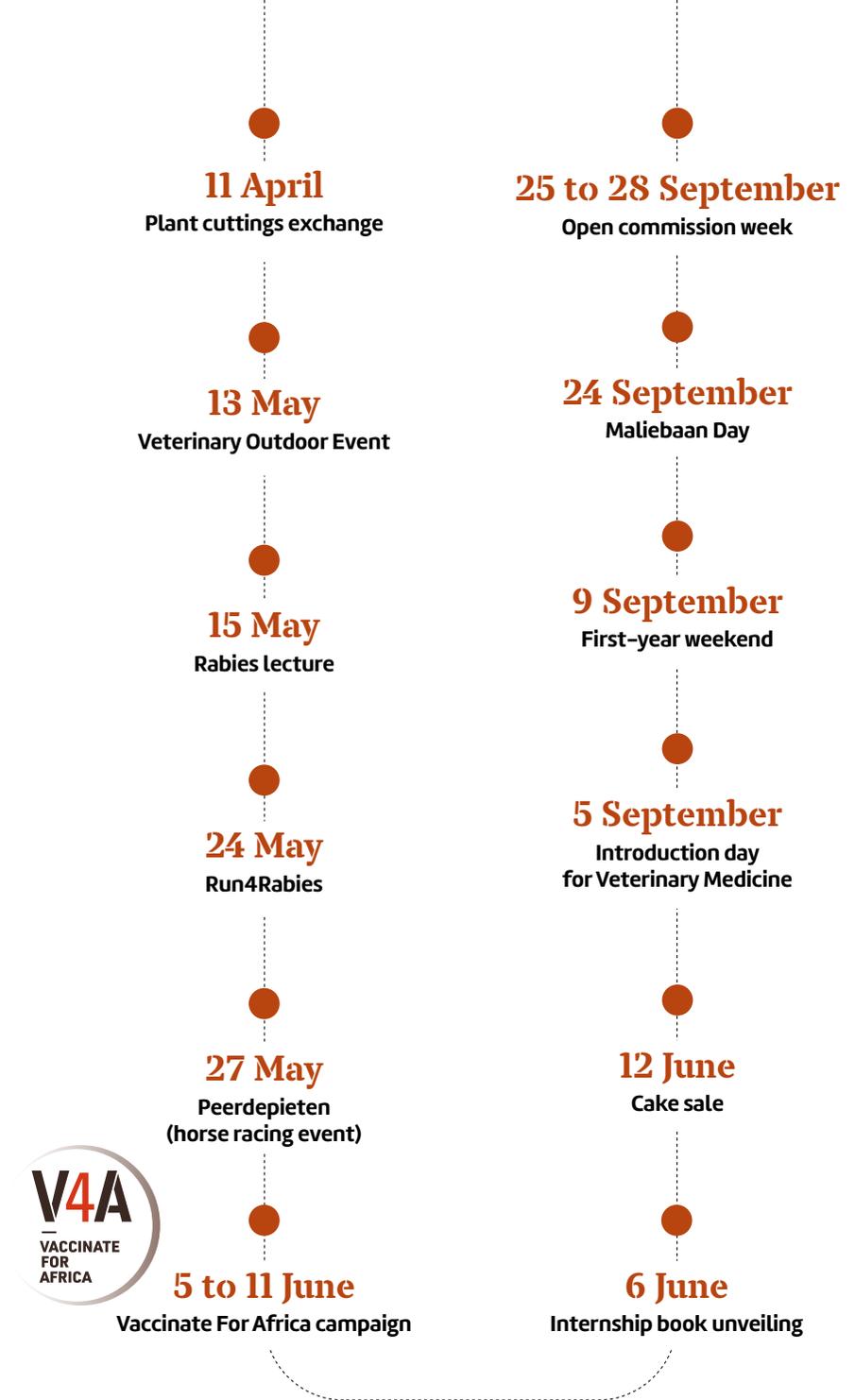


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Since 2018 we have been working together with our programme manager in Malawi: Gilbert Banda. He gained a lot of experience in training community animal health workers in his previous work for Heifer and other NGOs in Malawi. On average, he works 50% for VSF-NL and the other 50% for the nonprofit organization founded by Ziweto, called Centre for Community Empowerment Initiatives. Gilbert is occupied with the design and implementation of new projects, trains community animal health workers and connects them to the existing veterinary infrastructure and finally, he monitors and evaluates the projects.

VSF student 

From left to right, top to bottom, the student board introduces itself: Ilja Nijstad, Saskia ter Beek, Rebecca Roos, Luka Botman, and Siska Hulsman.





Contact

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DONATE

To our bank account
NL67 TRIO 0379 3388 66

or online
www.dierenartsenzondergrenzen.nl

28 September

Wrap break

4 October

Launch Give a Goat campaign

9 October

Lustrum announcement break

10 October

General Donor Meeting

3 to 5 November

Board weekend

10 November

Jubilee St Anna Advice

1 December

Lecture MBO Aeres in Barneveld

27 to 30 November

Christmas card campaign
National Elderly Fund

**26 November
to 24 December**

Students to Malawi

22 November

Spanish wine tasting

14 November

Internship mini-symposium +
internship experiences book unveiling

**7 December
to 7 January**

Sweater design competition

18 December

Christmas campaign

We have represented ourselves on many days, such as at **Parents' Day**, **Peerdepieten** (horse racing event), the **Veterinary Outdoor Event** and **Maliebaan Day**. In addition, the education committee provided 11 lessons to primary school children this year. In these lessons, we explain more about veterinary medicine in developing countries. Finally, VSF-Student can proudly say that since this year we have a beautiful [internship book](#) & [internship experience book](#) available for all students who want to work with animals abroad. In short, we look back on a dynamic and active year for VSF-Student!



Volg ons op



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