



**NALA**

NTD Advocacy, Learning, Action

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2022



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# FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear friends,

**It is our pleasure to share NALA's 2022 Annual Report with you; a year of challenges, achievements, and expansion.**

Presented in this report are highlights from the past year, focusing on the continuation and expansion of NALA's efforts to eliminate neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) in Ethiopia and around the world. As we approach the end of several multi-year projects we have been thrilled to see the direct impact of NALA's model, for sustainable change in disease prevalence, repeated in a variety of contexts.

In line with our values, 2022 saw the launch of projects that provide a holistic and complementary approach to the elimination of these devastating diseases. The WASH on Wheels Project launched in partnership with the Gates Foundation and Shalom Corps, highlights this, with the innovative project restoring water access to over 170,000 children through fixing broken infrastructure on school grounds this year alone.

Furthermore, in accordance with our strategy NALA has taken significant steps in expanding our work beyond Ethiopia, with scoping assessments to India and Zambia carried out this past year. Whilst operating internationally will require significant changes to our manner of operation, we believe that NALA's approach is both relevant and necessary in the effort to reduce NTD prevalence globally.

The past year has seen the growth of NALA and the strengthening of core concepts, as well as our presence in the professional arena - supporting the centrality of NALA's methodology. However, more importantly, 2022 also presented that we are closer to the elimination of NTDs than ever before, but it is only through close collaboration, partnerships and innovation that we will reach this goal.

While the challenges are many, we hope that this report will shed an optimistic light on the progress of NTD elimination, and the impact that NALA's projects are making.

Thank you to our wonderful global team, directors, partners, and communities, for making NALA the organisation we are today.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Zvi Bentwich'.

**Professor Zvi Bentwich**  
President and Founder



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Reut B.W.'.

**Dr. Reut Barak Weekes**  
Chair of Board

# Preventing Disease, Transforming Communities

## The Challenge

Over 1 billion people globally suffer from debilitating diseases, associated with a lack of access to safe water, adequate sanitation, and proper hygiene. Termed neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), or otherwise known as diseases of poverty, they cause blindness, malnutrition, and anaemia in millions, with women and children most at risk. But these diseases **are** preventable, and we are **closer** to their elimination than ever before.

## The Solution

Recognised as a leader of change, NALA has worked for over a decade with schools, communities, and governments to develop novel and cost-effective interventions that target the root causes of these diseases. Mobilizing the community to be the architects of their own health, NALA's projects have proven impactful and sustainable across communities in Ethiopia, with average 90% reductions in the prevalence of intestinal parasites.



## Our Approach

Making strides in the field of preventable diseases, NALA uses a unique approach to ensuring sustainable change amongst the world's most vulnerable populations. Based first and foremost on local ownership, we believe that in order to have a successful and sustainable program, the community itself must lead the way, which is why we work together to identify blocks to good health and develop tools in response to that.

Complementing our work in the community, since 2016 NALA has worked with the government to improve the utilisation of resources across different sectors for NTD elimination.

## Innovative Strategies

- **Teaching Healthy Habits:** Using playful and engaging methods, we promote hygiene and healthy habits among school children.
- **Mobilising the Community:** Community members are engaged in all program areas, from exploring the root causes of disease to leading their own Initiatives.
- **Strengthening Coordination Across Sectors:** NALA works with government partners across sectors to increase opportunities for joint planning, greater impact, and sharing of resources.
- **Ensuring Safe Water Access:** NALA uses low-tech, cost-effective and sustainable solutions to ensure that communities have access to safe water, adequate sanitation, and proper hygiene.



# ANALYSIS 2022 SNAPSHOT

January

## **NALA went pastoralist, launching in Somali**

January 2022 saw the expansion of NALA's multisectoral coordination project with its launch in Somali, a pastoralist Region of Ethiopia. Working to improve joint planning and resource management for the elimination of NTDs, this is NALA's largest and farthest reaching project.

February

## **A short month but we did a lot!**

February saw the launch of our game-based health education program in schools across Southern Ethiopia with the aim of promoting hygiene in a fun and engaging way. With awareness raised in the school communities, many improved WASH facilities on their own accord!

March

## **Accelerate project review meeting**

The annual review meeting for the Accelerate project was held in the newly established South West Ethiopia Peoples Region of Ethiopia, leading to a request from the local government for NALA to support the development of their new health curriculum.

April

## **Schistosomiasis was given the limelight**

In 2018 Marcus Perkins, a Merck photographer, travelled to our project site to capture the work we do. The exhibit, entitled "Snail Fever", followed the project and the story of a community living at risk of the disease. The photographs were shown across the country at public and private events – raising awareness for this devastating disease.

May

## **We turned the first tap on with WASH on Wheels**

After months of preparation, our WASH on Wheels project supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Pears Family Foundation, and Shalom Corps, hit the ground running and began restoring water access in schools. Since then, together with the community and local government, taps have been turned on in over 200 schools, providing 170,000 children with safe water access.

June

## **For the second time, an online course was launched by NALA**

Our first online course, launched in response to the coronavirus lockdown and inability for in-person training, was so successful that the Ethiopian Ministry of Health requested we develop a second one! The "Data for Decision-Making" course, providing training on how to use the Ministry's digital health management system, was launched in June.

July

### **NALA went to India with Gabriel Project Mumbai**

Gabriel Project Mumbai (GPM), an Israeli organisation working in the Mokhada subdistrict of India, invited NALA to carry out a field visit in order to assess the potential for a joint Intervention. Supported by MASHAV and the Israeli consulate in Mumbai, the visit identified the need for a health program complementing GPM's holistic community-based intervention.

August

### **Our annual team meeting saw the team come in from far and wide**

Each year, the entire NALA team (almost 50 people!) comes together to reflect on the previous year and plan for the year ahead. We were lucky enough this year to be joined by guests from the Ethiopia Ministry of Health and New York University, who delivered professional updates to the organisation.

September

### **A five-year follow up study of NALA's work was published!**

In 2014 after seeing a reduction of over 90% in intestinal parasites, NALA handed its deworming project in Mekelle over to the local government and community. In 2019, five years post intervention, the team went back to Mekelle to determine the sustainability of its model. The outstanding results were published this year in a well recognised journal.

October

### **We looked BEYOND drug campaigns and shared our findings**

In partnership with The END Fund, the NALA team carried out an Intensive review focused on drug uptake in women of reproductive age during deworming campaigns. With the aim of providing tools for improved social mobilisation, the review will support the Ethiopian Ministry of Health in their scale-up to community-based drug campaigns.

November

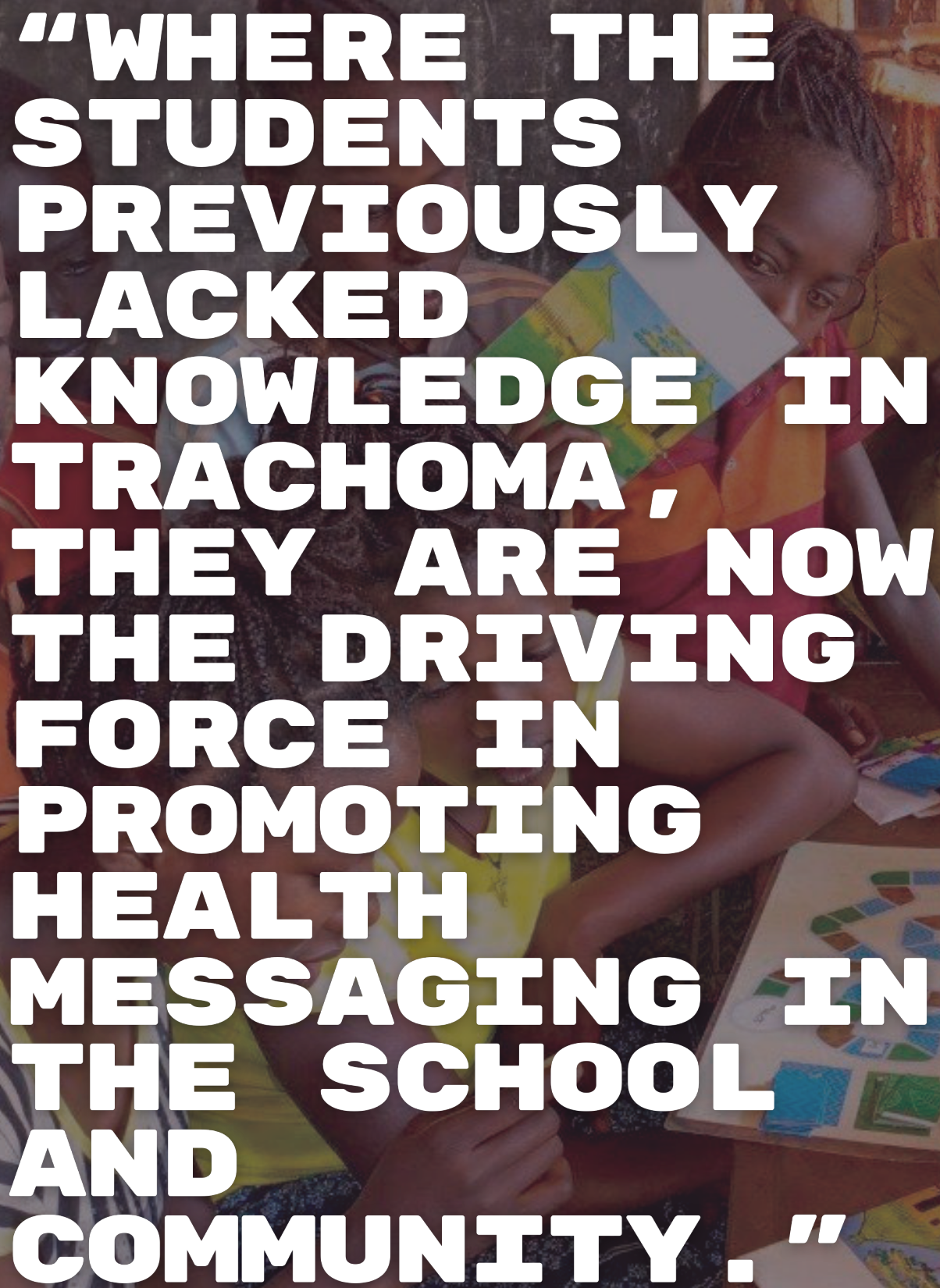
### **Away again! NALA was invited to Zambia**

For the second time in a year, NALA went abroad to determine the gaps and challenges of NTD programs and determine whether they aligned with NALA's expertise. The Zambian Ministry of Health invited NALA to the field with support from MASHAV and facilitation by Sightsavers Zambia.

December

### **Conferences abroad: Morocco & Ethiopia**

December saw no slowing down for NALA. The team in Ethiopia was joined by The END Fund and representatives from Rwanda, Kenya, and Zimbabwe to discuss the success of multisectoral coordination in Ethiopia. Switching places, the NALA team travelled to Morocco, and took part in the Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) conference, where they discussed innovative strategies to improve health behaviors.

A group of students, primarily young women, are gathered around a table in what appears to be a classroom or community center. They are focused on various educational materials, including maps and colorful diagrams. One student in the foreground is wearing a yellow shirt with 'adidas' written on it. The background shows a rustic interior with wooden walls and windows. The overall atmosphere is one of active learning and engagement.

**“WHERE THE STUDENTS PREVIOUSLY LACKED KNOWLEDGE IN TRACHOMA, THEY ARE NOW THE DRIVING FORCE IN PROMOTING HEALTH MESSAGING IN THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY.”**

Yohannes Meshesha  
Accelerate Champion  
North Bench District  
SNNP Region, Ethiopia



**Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)**, otherwise termed diseases of poverty, are a group of 20 diseases and conditions categorised by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which disproportionately impact the world's most marginalised and vulnerable populations, with women and children the most at risk.

Several of these diseases are associated with a lack of adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) access, and can lead to long-term physical and cognitive disabilities, having an enormous impact on the opportunities and lives of individuals, communities and countries as a whole.

## Trachoma

Trachoma is the world's **leading infectious cause of blindness**, responsible for the visual impairment or blindness of approximately 1.9 million people worldwide.

With 125 million people at risk of contracting the disease globally, Ethiopia carries the majority (52%) of the global burden, with 65 million people throughout the country at risk of the disease in 2022.

Women are 4 times more likely to be blinded by trachoma, and preschool aged children carry 60-90% of the cases in endemic areas, making these two groups the most vulnerable to the disease.

## Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH)

Otherwise called intestinal worms, these include several types of worm species that enter the body through contact with contaminated soil, causing diarrheal disease, malnutrition, anaemia, and long-term cognitive impacts when left untreated.

Impacting 24% of the global population, 32.3 million children between the ages of 1-15 years are at risk of STH infection in Ethiopia alone.

## Schistosomiasis

Often termed Bilharzia or snail fever, schistosomiasis is the second most parasitic disease in tropical countries, and the leading cause of death from NTDs.

Spread through contact with contaminated water sources, the parasite harboured in snails penetrates directly through the skin, travelling to different organs to replicate, causing tissue and organ damage.

Mostly widely seen as one of two main types, NALA has focused most of its work on intestinal schistosomiasis, the cause of abdominal pain, diarrhoea, malnutrition, fatigue, and in the most severe cases death.

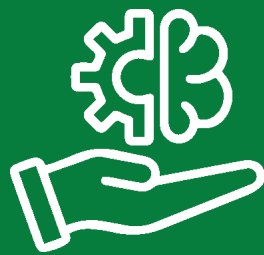
Treated with a single dose of praziquantel, a safe and effective treatment, combined with behavioural change interventions, schistosomiasis elimination is possible.



# A YEAR IN NUMBERS

**311,524**

Children received health education by NALA, promoting the prevention of NTDs



**10,839**

Community health Workers and volunteers were trained through NALA's projects

**215 Schools**

Had their handwashing stations fixed by NALA, reaching over 170,000 school children



**9 Regions**

Received support from NALA on improving the collaboration and coordination of different sectors for NTD elimination

# NALA WAS ALL OVER THE WORLD THIS YEAR!

## Morocco

NALA took part in the Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) conference in Morocco for the first time, where we discussed innovative strategies for improved health behaviors.

## Nepal

NALA travelled to the annual NGO NTD Network (NNN) conference in Nepal to present our work on multisectoral coordination and hear from other experts in the field!

## Ethiopia

NALA was joined in Ethiopia by representatives from The END Fund and MoH representatives from Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Kenya for an immersive learning exchange trip on multisectoral coordination, with Ethiopia as the case study.

## India

GPM invited NALA to carry out an in-depth analysis of the local population's health and NTD status

## Zambia

Following an invitation from the Zambian Ministry of Health, NALA carried out a scoping visit to determine challenges in the sector in coordination with SSI Zambia.

Evidence is key to both guiding our projects and supporting them, constantly enabling us to assess our impact and strategize its expansion. Data collected also assists the creation of a strong evidence base for holistic interventions, providing best practices for national and international partners to scale up.

The year 2022 was a data-driven year for our projects, culminating in presentations at international conferences and the publication of our work in renowned journals.

## Mekelle, 5-year follow-up

Published in September 2022, NALA's paper entitled '**Sustainable Elimination of Schistosomiasis in Ethiopia - A Five-Year Follow-Up Study**' reviewed the long-term impact of NALA's holistic intervention on the prevalence of schistosomiasis in the capital of the Tigray Region, Mekelle.

The intervention in Mekelle aimed to address the limitations of using drug campaigns as the sole strategy for eliminating schistosomiasis by also targeting hygiene behaviors to prevent reinfections. Five years following the end of the project, disease prevalence remained the same or further decreased in the majority of schools, demonstrating the success of NALA's comprehensive model for the elimination of schistosomiasis in school children.

The paper can be found in the *Journal of Tropical of Medicine and Infectious Diseases*, Volume 7, issue 9.



Photo by Marcus Perkins, Merck in conjunction with the joint project

## Bench Maji

As part of NALA's joint project with Merck in the Bench Maji zone of Ethiopia, snail mapping was explored as a means of determining the viability and impact of vector control as a method of schistosomiasis control. The data collected was analyzed to determine the association between several snail-related factors and the prevalence of schistosomiasis in surrounding communities, with results published the *Journal of Tropical Medicine and Infectious Diseases Special Issue: Schistosomiasis in Endemic Countries and In Travelers - Two Sides of the Same Coin*.

The paper entitled '**Schistosomiasis Control in Ethiopia: The Role of Snail Mapping in Endemic Communities**' found associations between snail presence and disease prevalence, supporting the continuous need for mapping of snails and introduction of vector control as an element of disease control in endemic communities. This paper is one of the first in recent years to address vector control as a means of elimination in Ethiopia.



## Beyond MDA

In accordance with the plan of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health to scale up the national deworming program to the entire community in highly endemic areas, NALA carried out an intensive review and consultative process to examine and assess social mobilization strategies and their impact, with a focus on women of reproductive age, in partnership with The END Fund.

The process included a literature review on previous campaigns in Ethiopia and globally, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with community members and health workers, and a consultative workshop with key stakeholders, including government and NGO partners. The review presented several recommendations for expanding the deworming campaigns to the community level, improving social mobilization strategies, and utilizing resources more effectively. Suggested tools were also presented.

Continuing into 2023, the project will see the development and testing of these tools by NALA in partnership with the Ministry of Health and The END Fund.

The biggest changes often come from the highest level, and the same is for the health of countries. NALA works with governments across the globe, providing technical support for improved coordination, better resource utilization, and incorporation of our materials into national programs.

## Multisectoral Coordination

Given the importance of water, sanitation, and hygiene access for sustained reductions in disease prevalence, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ethiopian government have placed a strong emphasis on multisectoral coordination over the last decade. Supporting the government to provide a tangible and adaptable intervention for national implementation is NALA, who since 2016 has supported the Ethiopian Ministry of Health in designing and implementing a framework for joint sector planning.

The WASH-NTD district-level toolkit designed by NALA, supports the establishment of coordination platforms across the country, enabling theoretical concepts to become practical and usable tools for professionals in the field. Modifiable at the district level, leadership roles and financial responsibilities are included, with recommendations appropriate for the unique circumstances applied.

Since its launch, NALA has implemented the project directly in 20 zones and 233 districts, and an additional 194 districts in 20 zones have used NALA's tools to implement the project themselves. In addition, two online courses on multi-sectoral coordination have been launched, with more than 120 participants completing the courses and receiving certificates endorsed by the Ethiopian Ministry of Health.

# SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY



## ARISE

Despite notable achievements in the treatment of NTDs in Ethiopia through large-scale mass drug administration (MDA) campaigns, it has become increasingly clear that medicine alone is insufficient to eliminating these diseases, and a comprehensive approach is necessary for reaching this goal.

At the request of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, NALA is developing a best practices packet for behavior change projects, to be used by government actors and NGO partners. With minimum, standardized elements, the packet will support the planning and implementation of behavior change interventions, and will be 1) adaptable to all regions, 2) relevant to multiple NTDs, 3) feasible, and 4) include minimum WASH hardware requirements.

This packet will provide process steps and nationally-endorsed guidelines to all implementing partners, with the aim of ensuring that comprehensive, holistic, and sustainable models of intervention are used to accelerate the elimination of NTDs.

Photo by Marcus Perkins, Merck in conjunction with the joint project



# SPOTLIGHT ON INNOVATION

Recognised as a leader of innovation in the NTD sector, NALA piloted several novel interventions in 2022, providing proof of concepts for scale-up at the national and international level.

## WASH on Wheels

The WASH on Wheels project was launched in response to the high incidence of existing but broken water infrastructure in schools. This program provides an innovative and feasible solution to improving WASH access as a preventable measure of disease transmission for school children living in endemic regions.

Consisting of a team of local expert technicians operating vehicles equipped with necessary tools, the project reached 215 schools in 2022, directly impacting over 170,000 school children, and approximately 723,267 people in the surrounding community. In addition, the NALA team trained 10 local 'WASH Fellows' from government water offices, improving local capacity, in addition to engaging the community for increased ownership of their infrastructure.

**£496** Cost Per School

**£0.62** Cost Per Child



## Accelerate

The Accelerate program, led by Sightsavers, targeted reductions in trachoma through improved facial cleanliness and environmental sanitation across endemic populations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Consisting of four action areas, the project was implemented by local partners, requiring community-specific adaptations to ensure desired project impact.

Selected as the implementing partner in Southern Ethiopia, NALA used its model of community engagement to determine the most context-appropriate interventions. Given the resource limitations available and the large geographic scope of the project, NALA introduced a novel framework which included Accelerate Champions, district level education and health sector government officials, who cascaded and monitored the interventions to school teachers and health workers.

This innovative framework gave the project a greater reach, exposing more students and community members to health interventions for more impactful outcomes.



## Online Training

Online training was made available during the 2020 coronavirus imposed lockdown, with the aim of ensuring continued and enhanced coordination work between sectors for disease control, despite the inability to meet in person.

So successful is the online course that it continues to remain available for government officials and partners, and has been complemented with a second online training at the request of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health. The second course provides training on how to use WASH data in DHIS2 - the government's health management system, encouraging joint planning for more effective impact.

By the end of 2022, the project saw 128 people across 9 regions successfully complete the courses and receive a certificate endorsed by the Ministry of Health. In the feedback survey, 96% of participants said they would recommend the course to others. Both courses are available at [washtnd.org](http://washtnd.org).



# SPOTLIGHT ON EXPANSION

Following a decade of implementing evidence-based and impactful interventions, NALA has set its sights on international expansion with the aim of promoting the adoption of complementary models to drug campaigns as standards of practice by governments and NGOs. This year saw the invitation of NALA to India and Zambia for collaborative visits to determine whether their challenges align with NALA's expertise.



NALA was invited to India by Gabriel Project Mumbai (GPM), an NGO working in the Mokhada subdistrict of India, on community-based programs that increase access to healthcare, nutrition, education, and livelihoods. Accounting for one quarter of the world's children infected with intestinal worms, parasitic worms are a major cause of diarrheal disease, which accounts for 26% of deaths in under-14 year olds in Palghar, the district where Mokhada is located.

In August, NALA travelled to Mokhada alongside GPM, to carry out a background assessment and ascertain a holistic overview of the health system. The results from this assessment presented an overall strong need for a health intervention focused on WASH-related diseases in the subdistrict.

NALA and Gabriel Project Mumbai are currently working together on a joint proposal for a community-led health project.

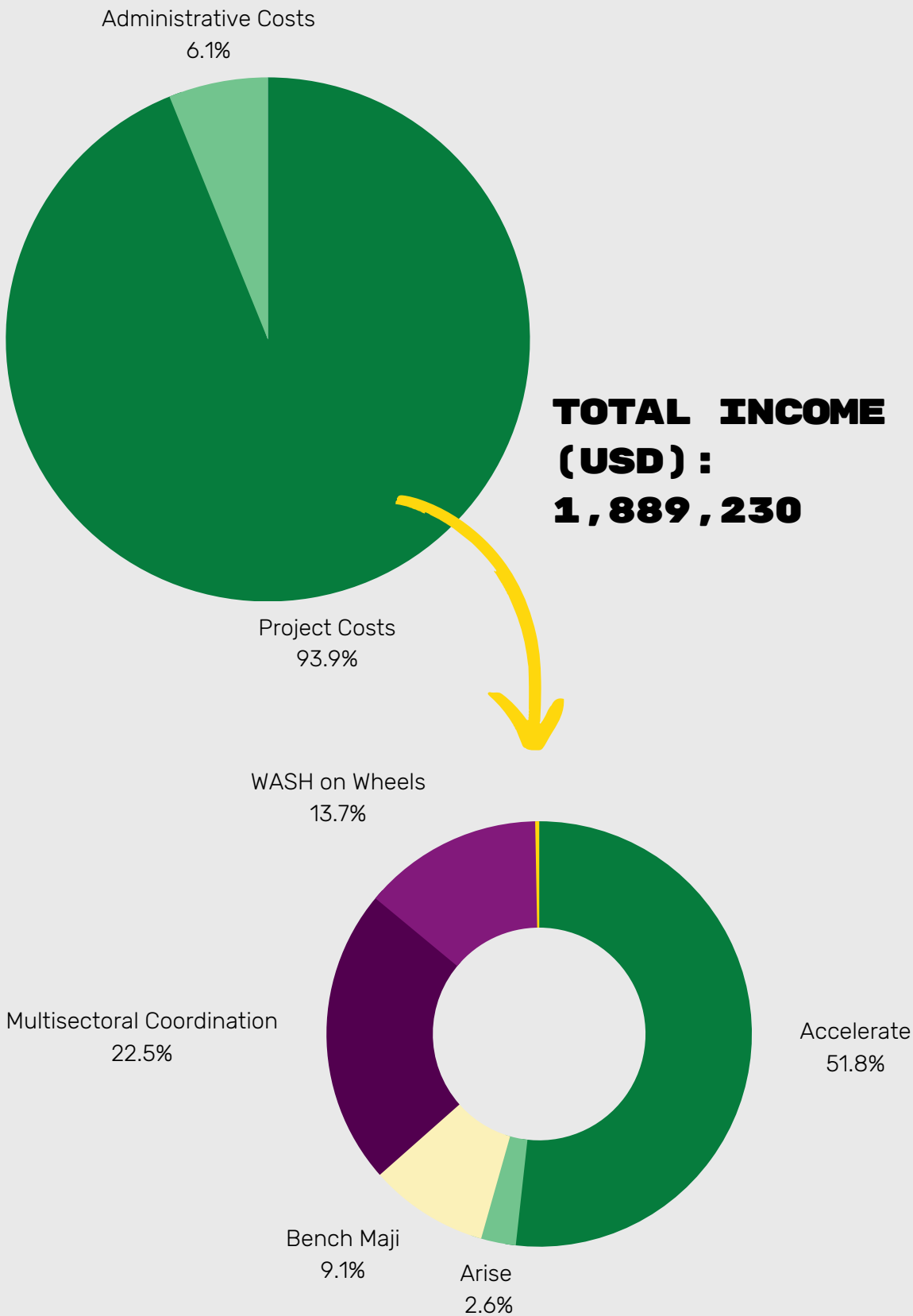


The NALA team travelled again to Zambia in November 2022, at the invitation of the Zambian Ministry of Health to examine NTD-related challenges in the country. The trip was facilitated by the Sightsavers Zambia team, a branch of NALA's long-term partner, Sightsavers International, and consisted of interviews, discussions, and observations with government officials, community members, and local partners.

The trip identified gaps in multisectoral coordination and behaviour change materials for disease prevention, complementing NALA's expertise in the sector. Supported by the dedication of the Ministry of Health NTD team and NGO partners working in-country, Zambia offers the opportunity for an impactful intervention in collaborations with local partners.

The year 2022 saw the continued growth of NALA, reflected in the number of projects and total income.

However, despite this growth, administrative expenses were below our average, at 6.1% for the year.



# IT WOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT

NALA is grateful for the support of all our partners, without whom our work and its impact would not be possible. We would like to highlight some of the exceptional partnerships of 2022, including both long-standing and newly established relationships.



The Pears Foundation is NALA's longest standing partner, having supported our work since NALA's inception. Providing NALA with core funding, the flexibility of the foundation has enabled us to implement innovative pilots and collect data for building a strong evidence base supporting our model of intervention. We would like to specifically extend our gratitude to Sir Trevor Pears and Dina Gidron, and look forward to many more years of strong partnership with the Pears Foundation.



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MINISTRY OF HEALTH-ETHIOPIA  
የዜጎች ጤና ለሃገር ብልጽግና!  
HEALTHIER CITIZENS FOR PROSPEROUS NATION

NALA will only ever begin working in a country at the request of the local Ministry of Health, and it is with the support and encouragement of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health that our work in Ethiopia has been able to flourish. From guiding the selection of high priority districts for work, to working together on the creation of a scalable multi sectoral coordination mechanism, and requesting NALA to create tools for national use, we are incredibly grateful for the strong partnership that we have, and look forward to many more years of creating a scalable impact in Ethiopia.



Despite being one of NALA's newest partners, The End Fund established three new projects with NALA in 2022. The projects align with NALA's expertise in strengthening the reach and scale-up of our model of implementation, including curriculum integration in the newly established South West Ethiopia Peoples' Region, the provision of a minimum package for behavioral change NTD projects at the national level, and tools for community-level social mobilization for MDA campaigns. We are looking forward to a fruitful partnership with The End Fund into 2023 and beyond, including their support in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia, which recently declared peace after two years of conflict.



Merck Science and Technology company, a leader in the pharmaceutical sector and a donor of drugs to developing countries, including over 1.5 billion praziquantel pills for the treatment of schistosomiasis, has been NALA's partner since 2016 providing us with support and expertise for the past 6 years. This year saw the continuation of the Merck-NALA joint project in Southern Ethiopia, with a focus on expanding impact, including a jointly published paper and several exhibitions of our work throughout Israel.



Sightsavers

Sightsavers International has been a partner of NALA's since 2017, with the continuation of one of NALA's largest projects, Accelerate, in Southern Ethiopia in 2022. This year also saw international travel with Sightsavers, through the facilitation of NALA's trip to Zambia for a scoping visit with the Ministry of Health and sector partners, facilitated by Sightsavers Zambia.



The Organization for Social Service, Health and Development (OSSHD) has been NALA's local implementing partner in Tigray since the initiation of NALA's work there in 2010. Together with the OSSHD team and community partners, many of NALA's most innovative ideas were developed and implemented, leading to the elimination of intestinal parasites (schistosomiasis and STH) in both Mekelle and Adwa - two districts in the Region. With the outbreak of conflict in 2020 the OSSHD-NALA team pivoted quickly and efficiently, mobilizing available resources to serve the community, and with the declaration of peace in late 2022 we are looking forward to supporting our partner communities to reestablish disease prevention projects.



Shalom Corps, an Israeli organization with a focus on volunteering, is one of NALA's newest partners, supporting the innovative and impactful WASH on Wheels project alongside the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Since then our partnership has continued to strengthen, with opportunities for organizational growth, reflection, training, and networking encouraged and enabled by Shalom Corps!

**THANK YOU**

**"NALA IS A  
SMALL  
ORGANIZATION  
WITH A BIG  
HEART AND  
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TO MAKE  
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CHANGES THAT  
REALLY  
MATTER"**

Susanna Råman,  
NALA supporter,  
Following a visit to projects in Ethiopia.

