Simavi aims to structurally improve the health of ten million people in low and middle-income countries. Therefore we are working in marginalised communities on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Our programmes focus on getting WASH and SRHR services in place; empowering communities to demand quality services and to practice healthy behaviour; and creating an enabling environment, consisting of groups from government, private sector and NGOs.

Advocacy
Advocacy is an indispensable element in Simavi’s Theory of Change. Together with our partners, we promote the recognition of WASH and SRHR within the new United Nations Development Framework: we participate in global networks such as Sanitation and Water for All and we bring private sector groups and NGOs together to come up with sustainable solutions. More specifically, we advocate with the Dutch government in order to maintain the country’s lead position on WASH and SRHR, and we collaborate with our partner organizations to keep their national governments accountable for adequate policies, laws and investments in WASH and SRHR. But it all starts in the community. This is where knowledge, empowerment and mobilisation lead to greater accountability between communities, service providers and governments - indispensable to improving access to WASH and SRHR services.

Social accountability
Simavi’s advocacy strategy at community level has a specific focus on social accountability. Social accountability is an interactive process that aims to increase citizen influence (voice) and to strengthen the response of the local WASH and SRHR providers and decision-makers. Social accountability breaks social and systemic barriers in contexts where national policies seem to be adequate, but where, in reality, these policies are insufficiently implemented and where inequality prevails. Communities are mobilised and empowered to understand their right to, for example, clean water or a safe and staffed birth facility. Knowing their rights and being aware of effective methods to voice their needs, helps communities to create an environment where governments and service providers implement policies and improve services. This contributes to structural improvements in WASH and SRHR, and less inequality.
In the north of Tanzania, a community of seven villages near Arusha is united in the OLMULO Development Trust to manage their own drinking water supply system. The area has few natural resources and the communities have to deal with frequent droughts, overgrazing and erosion in the dry season. On top of this, local governments lacked capacity and political will to improve people’s access to water, and the community has to share a water source with a commercial enterprise. Simavi used a Community Engagement approach to bring all stakeholders together to work towards a sustainable solution, so that communities have adequate access to water.

Problem
The seven communities in the Trust share a spring with various public organizations (i.e. schools and the army) and a privately owned coffee estate - the largest user of the spring. With so many different interests involved, it is difficult to transparently organize water management and spring conservation. This increasingly led to problems, particularly impacting people’s access to water and therefore the health situation in the area. The water level of the spring decreased and threatens water supply for all stakeholders involved. The spring is located within a privately owned coffee estate and access to the spring is controlled by this company. At times this creates friction when the community representatives need to access the source. The spring itself and its direct surroundings fall under the responsibility of the local governmental water board however they at times are reluctant to act according to their role and responsibility due to the high economic value of the coffee estate.

Community Engagement
To realize sustainable yields of the spring and to ensure access to water for the communities, it is vital that all stakeholders are involved in its preservation, protection and maintenance. Simavi and her local partner used Community Engagement to build a structural relationship between the communities, the coffee estate and the government. Through this approach, communities are organised and mobilised in village water committees. Information is gathered about the spring including water flow, quality and volume, and state of the environment around the spring is assessed. Finally, dialogue is initiated between the relevant stakeholders. By having a practical outcome as a concrete goal, in this case the construction of a water supply scheme with its own financial system, the community was able to strengthen its influence on management of the water source. It became a concerted goal of all stakeholders, under the leadership of local government, to improve the governance of the spring.

Results
Organizing the community and opening up dialogue between all stakeholders proved to be successful for the overall water governance in the area. Better understanding between the three stakeholders ensured that the coffee estate is less reluctant to allow the community to access the spring. Besides the local government now takes the community interests into account. As the sustainable use of the spring is in each of the stakeholder’s interest, bringing them together and clarifying on roles and responsibilities, major improvements were achieved in access to water for communities, schools, clinics and other essential institutions.

Concrete results of this method in Tanzania are:

- The OLMULO Development Trust obtained official water rights over the spring
- A water supply scheme between the spring and the seven villages was constructed
- The system ensured that all water users pay so that costs for repair and maintenance of the spring and the system itself are covered. Thereby the system is financially sustainable
- The stakeholders have constructive dialogues and jointly take responsibility to sustain the spring.