

2023 Annual Report

charting new
horizons

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in this report

In this report, we take you on a journey through our accomplishments and endeavours in 2023. Within these pages, we delve into our extensive research initiatives, the impact of our training and events, our development and media ventures, and our pivotal role in fortifying the data ecosystem across the African continent. Our mission spans across four core areas of work, each contributing to our overarching goal:

- a) Strengthening the Data Ecosystem in Africa**
- b) Feminist Movement Building**
- c) Digital Rights and Research**
- d) Arts and Culture**

We've had the privilege of engaging with our dedicated team and valued partners, who graciously share their insights on the remarkable work accomplished in 2023. We invite you to immerse yourself in the stories and achievements that lie ahead in these pages. We trust you'll find inspiration and pride in our collective journey.

executive summary

A Year of Transformation and Renewed Purpose

In 2023, Pollicy experienced a transformative journey marked by significant achievements and pivotal moments. We bid farewell to our visionary Founder and Executive Director, Neema Iyer, embracing her departure as an opportunity for new beginnings. Embarking on designing our new strategic plan for 2024-2027 was a defining milestone, reaffirming our commitment to responsible data use, feminist methodologies, and empowerment across Africa.

Resuming our beloved Data Ladies program sessions fostered a vibrant community of data enthusiasts, while the inaugural DataFest Africa in a new location- Nairobi ignited conversations and connections across the continent.

Amidst transition and continuity, we celebrated colleagues embarking on new journeys while expressing deep gratitude to those who remained unwavering in their commitment to our mission. This summary captures the vibrancy, resilience, and shared vision that defined Pollicy's 2023 journey, inspiring us to shape an inclusive, equitable digital future.

foreword from the board

As the Chairperson of Pollicy's Board, it is with immense pleasure and a deep sense of responsibility that I introduce this Annual Report for the year 2023. Pollicy has always held a special place in my heart, and it is a privilege to witness the organisation's continued growth and evolution.

The past year marked a significant transition in Pollicy's journey. We bid farewell to our Founder and long-serving Executive Director, Neema Iyer, as she embarked on new ventures, leaving behind a legacy that has laid the foundation for our current and future endeavours. I extend our heartfelt gratitude to Neema for her unwavering dedication and vision.

With Irene Mwendwa, our new Executive Director, at the helm, we are now charting a course into a new era. The year 2023 was transformative for Pollicy as we forged ahead with rethinking and designing a fresh strategic plan, setting our sights on even greater impact in the realms of data policy, feminist movement building, digital rights, and the fusion of arts and culture with technology.

Our commitment to nurturing inclusive and equitable data policies by African governments remains resolute. We strive to create a safe and empowering internet space for women and girls, and we are dedicated to empowering marginalised communities through data and digital technology.

This report offers a comprehensive glimpse into our tireless efforts, achievements, and the remarkable individuals who have made it all possible – our staff, donors, partners, and fellows. Together, we are working towards a more just and inclusive future.

As the Board Chairperson, I want to express my profound appreciation for the collective spirit and dedication of everyone involved with Pollicy. Your unwavering commitment to our mission has been the driving force behind our accomplishments.

We invite you to explore the pages of this report and join us in celebrating the journey, the milestones, and the vision that continues to define Pollicy. We are excited about the path ahead and the impact we will collectively make in the years to come.

Thank you for your unwavering support.

Sincerely,

Chairperson, Pollicy Board

Message from our

executive director

It is with great excitement and a profound sense of honour that I present to you the very first annual report as the Executive Director of Pollicy. As I step into this role, I am reminded of the incredible journey that has led us here, and I want to express my deep gratitude to Neema Iyer, our esteemed Founder, Neema's vision and leadership have been instrumental in shaping Pollicy into the remarkable organisation it is today.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our partners, whose unwavering support has been instrumental in our growth and achievements. To our dedicated staff, fellows, and the entire Pollicy team, your passion, creativity, and commitment have been the driving force behind our success. I am immensely proud of the work we have accomplished together thus far.

2023 marked a turning point in Pollicy's journey, with significant shifts and transformative moments. It is a year that has seen us embark on co-creating a new strategic plan that will define the next phase of our organization. Our strategic direction is centered around three overarching goals: advancing data-driven decision-making in African governments, ensuring women and girls have safe and empowering access to the digital world, and empowering women, girls, and minority groups through technology. These goals are at the heart of our vision for the future.

As we look ahead, we are filled with excitement and anticipation for the path that lies before us. We are eager to continue our journey of making a positive impact in the tech and data space, driven by our core values of Afro-feminism, collectivism, creativity, intellectual rigor, and collaboration. We are committed to deepening our engagement with communities, amplifying their voices, and fostering a caring and high-performing environment within our organization.

The spirit of curiosity and the pursuit of excellence that have defined Pollicy will remain at the core of our work, as we strive to create tangible benefits for African communities in the tech and data arena. I invite you to join us in this exciting journey, where the possibilities are boundless, and together, we can shape a future filled with innovation, equality, and empowerment.

Thank you for your continued support, and here's to an extraordinary future for Pollicy.

Warm regards,
Irene Mwendwa
Executive Director, Pollicy

our new strategic plan

In 2023, we embarked on our 2024-2026 Strategic Plan. Pollicy's three-year Strategic Plan signifies a pivotal moment in our organizational journey. We have transitioned to new leadership while continuing our legacy of impactful research and thought-feminist leadership in the data and technology ecosystem. Pollicy, known for its intellectual rigor, creative principles, and community development focus, has grown into a trusted entity that reflects the priorities of everyday people to governments and institutions.

Our evolution extends beyond defending against digital and data challenges. We now envision a future where we not only confront issues but also harness the potential of technology to empower Africans, especially women and minorities. Our collective power will shape narratives of joy and collaboration.

As a team together with our board and partners, we agreed the next phase focuses on three interconnected goals:

1

Data Governance & African Governments: Advancing data-driven decision-making and equitable data governance policies in Sub-Saharan African governments.

2

A Safe & Joyful Internet: Advancing data-driven decision-making and equitable data governance policies in Sub-Saharan African governments.

3

Women & Technology: Empowering women, girls, and minority groups through technology by promoting inclusive access, fostering innovation, and advocating for their rights.

These goals steer our strategy, guiding project priorities, resource allocation, and growth.

Our core values—Afro-feminism, collectivism, creativity, intellectual rigor, and collaboration—remain at the heart of our work. Preserving these values while fostering a high-trust, caring, and high-performing environment is essential.

Deepening community engagement, aligning projects and partnerships, and periodic goal pathway reviews are crucial for success. Our commitment to these goals guides funding, business development, and expansion efforts.

To realise our impact goals, we'll focus on building relationships with the governments officials, increasing our media footprint, enhancing advocacy skills, supporting tech entrepreneurship, facilitating visioning processes, maintaining best practices in engagement, and storytelling through creative visualisation.

Pollicy is poised to raise its voice, supported by a well-run, values-driven, and collaborative organisation, as we secure tangible benefits for African communities in the tech and data space. Together, we shape narratives of empowerment, innovation, and progress.

our 2023 key highlights

DataFest Africa 2023 went to Nairobi!

In 2023, Pollicy achieved a significant milestone with the successful organisation of Datafest Africa 2023 in Nairobi. The event drew an impressive crowd, with over 215 participants attending in person, and an astonishing 747 individuals joining virtually. The culmination of Datafest was celebrated with a memorable staff retreat in Naivasha, fostering deeper connections within the team.



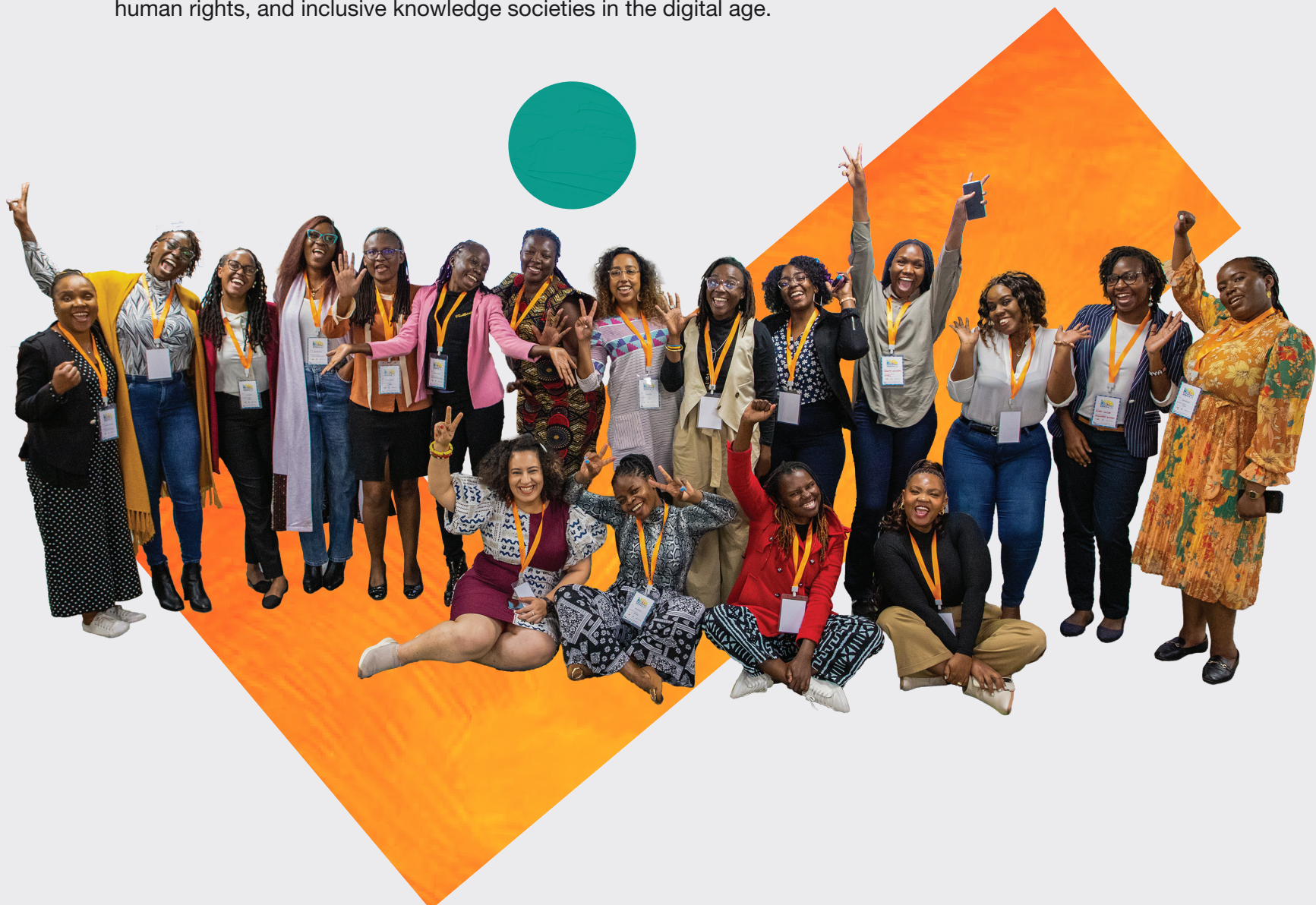
Datafest VizQuest Competition

The DataFest Africa 2023 Pre-event, held at the National ICT Innovation Hub in Kampala, Uganda on June 29, 2023, convened 69 participants from diverse backgrounds, including data enthusiasts, researchers, academics, government representatives, and industry experts. The event featured the VizQuest competition, which focused on harnessing creative data visualization techniques for social impact. Participants utilised dynamic charts, word clouds, interactive dashboards, infographics, and geographic mapping to address topics like gender-based violence, education, and air quality. Supported by mentors from partner organisations such as Africa Data Hub, National ICT Innovation Hub, Evidence and Methods Lab, and AirQo, eight competing teams and one individual presented their data visualisation projects to a panel of judges. The winning team, SafeBangle, effectively tackled intimate partner violence, earning the grand prize of \$1,000. The Tech Innovators Students Association (TISA) secured second place for their work on empowering survivors of violence against women, receiving \$500, while the Equity Visualisers claimed third place and \$300 for their efforts to address the gender pay gap.



Spotlight: Afro Feminist Data Futures Manifesto

In a groundbreaking moment during the 2023 edition of DataFest Africa, Pollicy, alongside a collective of feminist technologists, data scientists, and key partners from women's and community-based organizations, unveiled the Afro Feminist Data Futures Manifesto. Under the theme "Turning the Data Tables: No Gender Equality in Tech AI without Data Equality," this manifesto represents a powerful declaration of principles and a call to action. It addresses the pervasive gender biases, violence, and harassment perpetuated by data and technologies, especially impacting women, girls, and gender-nonconforming individuals. The manifesto advocates for inclusive and empowering internet spaces, data sovereignty, feminist-focused data collection tools, equitable access to data, accountability for online abusers, and a culture of joy and healing. It underscores the importance of collective synergies, feminist funding modalities, the preservation of narratives, and locally rooted solutions. The Afro Feminist Data Futures Manifesto is a testament to Pollicy's commitment to advancing gender equality, human rights, and inclusive knowledge societies in the digital age.



Afro-feminist Data Governance Project

Another standout highlight of 2023 was Pollicy's active involvement in the Afro-feminist data governance project. This initiative aimed to support Advancing Civic Space, Data Governance, and Economic and Labor Justice in Uganda. We had the privilege of taking part in a research study dedicated to understanding data governance policies and practices among various public and private stakeholders operating within the economic and labor sector. Our collective efforts translated into impactful data governance training sessions that engaged a diverse array of stakeholders, fostering a deeper understanding and collaboration.



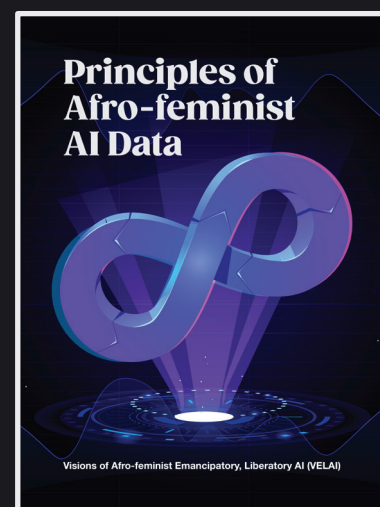
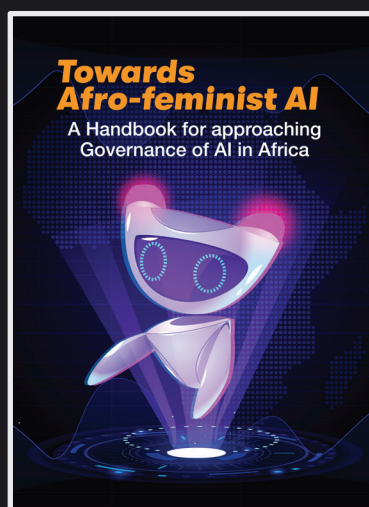
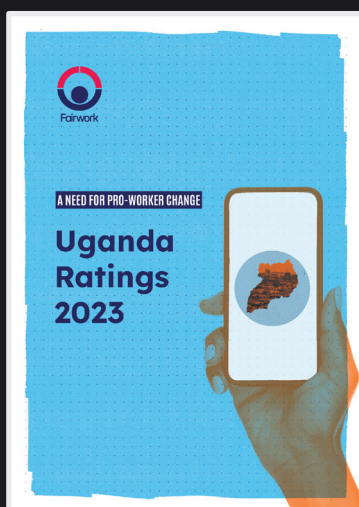
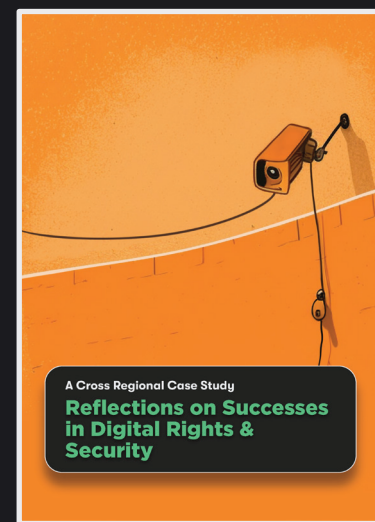
Fairwork Project for Equitable Gig Economy

Additionally, in 2023, Pollicy embarked on the Fairwork project, marking a significant stride towards promoting fair working conditions within Uganda's gig economy. This ambitious initiative brought together a diverse coalition of stakeholders, including industry leaders, experts, platform workers, trade union representatives, and government officials. Through collaborative efforts, the Fairwork project aimed to address challenges and advocate for fairness in working conditions, ultimately contributing to positive changes in the gig economy landscape.



our research in 2023

In 2023, Pollicy embarked on a diverse range of research initiatives, delving into critical topics that spanned various domains. Our publications included "**10 Demands by Women Ride-hailing and Food Delivery Workers**," shedding light on the challenges faced by women working in the gig economy. We also released "**Towards Afro-feminist AI: A Handbook for approaching Governance of AI in Africa**," providing insights into AI governance on the continent. Additionally, our "**Principles of Afro-feminist AI Data**" publication laid the foundation for ethical AI data practices. Exploring the intersection of technology and politics, "**Byte Bullies**" highlighted violence against women in politics during the 2022 Kenyan General elections. Our report "**Behind the Work of Digital Justice**" navigated the complex landscape of digital justice initiatives, while "**Reflections on Successes in Digital Rights & Security**" celebrated our achievements in the digital rights and security arena. These research efforts collectively exemplify Pollicy's dedication to addressing diverse challenges and advancing solutions that promote equity, justice, and empowerment across Africa and beyond.



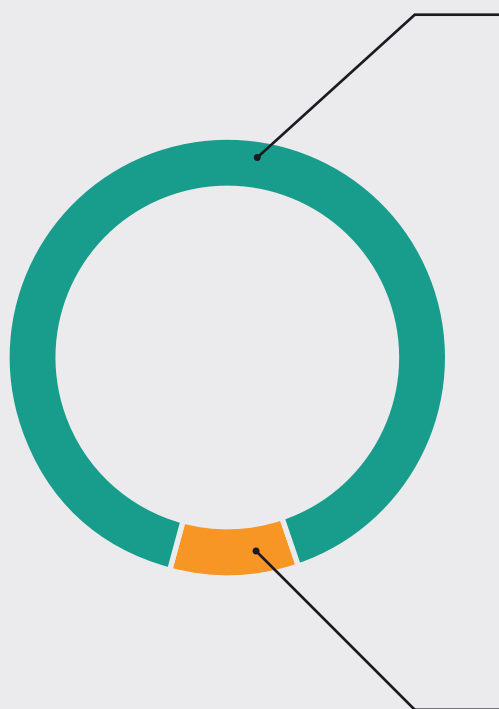
DataLadies returned!

In 2023, we revived Data Ladies, a monthly community engagement initiative inspired by the success of DataFest Africa and supported by our valued partners in the data ecosystem. Our primary goal is to foster a vibrant community in Uganda and the broader East African region for data enthusiasts and organizations, with a strong emphasis on empowering women to take a lead role in the data industry. Data Ladies provides a platform for networking, knowledge sharing, and collaboration, with a focus on accelerating data-driven innovation and its impact across sectors in the region. These sessions cover a wide array of data science topics, equipping women data scientists with the skills and resources they need to excel in the data-driven world. By promoting diversity and inclusivity, we aim to harness the full potential of data to drive innovation and create positive societal change.



financial overview

Income Analysis



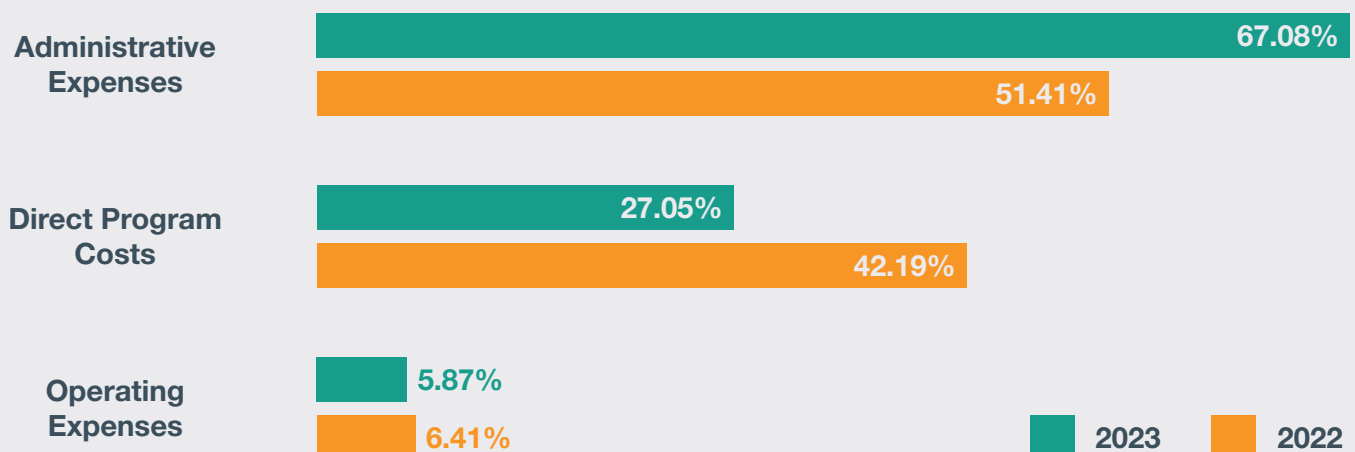
Programs

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| HIVOS Voice | 318,807,908 |
| National Democratic Institute | 248,816,085 |
| National Endowment for Democracy | 150,047,784 |
| Association for Progressive communication | 329,389,421 |
| Open Society Foundation | 78,517,903 |
| Internet Society Foundation | 405,034,272 |
| Foundation Open society Institute | 451,618,980 |
| Civil Rights Defenders | 732,066,368 |
| Internews Femtech | 36,645,741 |
| International Development Reseach Center | 4,621,956 |
| Numun Fund | 152,602,997 |
| Fairwork Oxford GIZ | 99,805,023 |
| FORD Foundation | 57,826,312 |
| Hewlett Foundation | 152,717,466 |
| Sub-Total | 3,218,518,216 |

Consultancy & other sources

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Other donors & Internal sources | 22,379,960 |
| Exchange gain | 31,121,640 |
| Disposal | 63,399,881 |
| Interest Income | 1,301,000 |
| Other sources | 789,079 |
| Sub-Total | 118,991,560 |
| Total | 3,544,197,585 |

Expenditure Analysis



learning & reflections

As we look back on the transformative year that was 2023, Pollicy acknowledges the invaluable lessons and reflections that have shaped our journey. Here, we share some key takeaways that have emerged from our experiences:

The Power of Transition: The transition from our Founder and long-serving Executive Director, Neema Iyer, was a defining moment for Pollicy. It taught us the importance of leadership succession planning and the need to carry forward the organization's core values and mission even as we embrace change. Neema's continued presence as an Advisor on our Board serves as a testament to the enduring impact of visionary leadership.

Strategic Planning as a North Star: Embarking on our new strategic plan helped us set a clear direction for Pollicy's future. We have learned that a well-defined strategy not only guides our actions but also helps us make informed decisions, allocate resources effectively, and prioritize impactful projects. It is our compass in navigating the complex landscape of data policy, feminist movement building, digital rights, and arts and culture.



The Strength of Collaboration: Collaboration remains at the heart of our work. Our partnerships with diverse stakeholders, including governments, civil society, tech industry leaders, and community-based organizations, have reinforced the idea that collective efforts yield the most significant impact. We have learned that inclusive collaboration fosters creativity, shared learning, and the ability to tackle complex challenges.

The Resilience of Our Team: Pollicy's dedicated staff and fellows have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of evolving circumstances. The commitment, adaptability, and creativity of our team members have been critical in achieving our goals. We have learned that investing in the growth and well-being of our team is central to our success.

The Joy of Collective Visioning: The Afro Data Futures Manifesto, launched during DataFest Africa, exemplifies the power of collective visioning. It emphasizes the significance of centering joy, fostering a culture of care, and challenging patriarchal structures. We have learned that building movements for change requires a commitment to inclusivity, joy, and solidarity.

Advocacy for Sustainable Funding: Pollicy's commitment to feminist funding principles has led us to advocate for abundant, flexible, and sustainable funding modalities. We have learned that funding should support our work and recognize the value of feminist activism and provide the resources needed to create lasting impact.

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people & places

A Year of Personal Connections and Global Engagement

In the spirit of our remote working organization, Pollicy continued to embrace and celebrate the personal journeys and diverse experiences of our team members in 2023. Our global presence allowed us to connect with partners and participate in events in over 15 countries, spanning from Colombia to Ethiopia, Kenya to the United Kingdom. These journeys enriched our understanding of different cultures and contexts, fostering meaningful relationships with individuals and organizations across the globe.

Amidst our professional commitments, we also acknowledged and celebrated personal milestones and achievements within our team. From the joys and challenges of parenthood to the jubilation of weddings and the arrival of new family members, our team members navigated the intricate balance between their work responsibilities and cherished personal moments. Some even embarked on exciting personal adventures, whether it was relocating to new places or exploring breathtaking destinations worldwide.

In addition to our individual experiences, Pollicy embraced new initiatives in 2023 that expanded our global impact. The launch of the Digital Ambassadors Program empowered university students to become advocates for digital rights and responsible data use. This endeavor created valuable connections and provided opportunities to engage with prestigious institutions and venues. These experiences have shaped us as individuals and as a collective, deepening our appreciation for diverse perspectives and reinforcing our commitment to promoting equity and justice.

As a remote working organization, we remain steadfast in recognizing and honoring our team members' diverse backgrounds and personal stories. Our professional and personal shared journeys have nurtured a supportive and inclusive community within Pollicy. We treasure the connections we have forged, the places we have explored, and the personal growth we have undergone together. In unity, we continue to weave a tapestry of global perspectives and shared aspirations, driven by our unwavering mission to champion responsible data use and digital rights advocacy for positive change worldwide.

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our 2023 partners

