

# The SDGs: Global Commitment, International Cooperation, Local Action

An Aid for Local Governments





# Introduction

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs or Global Goals), are the very expression of the challenges of today: global in character, and at the same time as local as can be. Local governments play an important role in achieving the 17 SDGs, which together define the social, the physical and the economic elements of the integrated sustainability agenda.



Everywhere in the world, day in day out, local governments are working hard to address these challenges. Sometimes the focus is so much on the local circumstances and local solutions that we tend

to forget the wider context: the fact that developments elsewhere strongly influence our own lives, and the other way round, that much of what we do, has impact on people we have never met. The SDGs or Global Goals are built on the recognition of this global interdependence.

This brochure is an aid to local government politicians and staff who want to include this international dimension of the SDGs in their policies and practices. It describes different options for doing so. It starts with various forms of international partnerships between local governments, as Global Goal 17

explicitly defines the relevance of global partnerships for the achievement of the other 16 goals. It then moves to possibilities that municipalities have to link the SDGs to their international economic relations. And it concludes with several examples of how local governments can promote global education and awareness raising about the SDGs.

Each municipality chooses what suits best its policy objectives and reality. I hope this brochure is a source of inspiration for your continued or even increased contribution to the global sustainability agenda. Because the challenges are enormous and urgent. Action is needed everywhere, including in The Netherlands and Europe, and by all, including local governments.

VNG International, the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, is looking forward to a continuation of our partnership with local governments and other stakeholders. In The Netherlands with our members, in Europe and worldwide as an active member of CEMR/Platforma and of UCLG, and through our local government capacity-building projects for a range of donors.

Peter Knip  
*Director of VNG International*

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# City Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange

SDG 17 is about the need for global partnership to achieve the sustainable development agenda. Public-public, public-private, and private-private partnerships, at international, national and sub-national levels. Local governments in the Netherlands alone, still maintain hundreds of international partnerships.

The traditional one-to-one partnerships are more and more replaced by participation in broader knowledge networks or thematic networks. The explicit connection with the SDGs is still not very common, but this chapter gives some examples of Dutch municipalities who did make the choice to do so.

# Multi-stakeholder Partnership: Utrecht | Kajjansi (Uganda)

The city of Utrecht is very active in promoting the SDGs through strategic and constructive partnerships at the local and national levels. But in addition to this, Utrecht has also been actively seeking to partner with European and other international entities to further promote and achieve the SDGs, building on a long history of international sustainable development partnerships. Utrecht aims to develop partnerships that redefine the dynamics of investing in developing countries. Late 2016, this aim became practical with the Kajjansi Junction programme (Uganda).

## Background

With the ending of Utrecht's 33 years partnership with León (Nicaragua), the city started looking for new opportunities. At the same time Kajjansi, a fast growing township near Kampala, in Uganda, was looking for expertise on local economic development. The aim was to develop the local market area situated in a fast-growing urban area, in such a way that it would create value for the local businesses and communities, while at the same time reducing the area's environmental footprint. The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) partly funded the program as the project aligns with the national policy to combine public and private investment to create sustainable business opportunities. The real strength of the programme lies in its multi-stakeholder approach including among others Utrecht University, and Utrecht based companies in the field of waste management, IT start-ups, and investors. In Kajjansi a 'learning living lab' was established which is a gazetted area where innovative (business) solutions are cocreated, tested and show-cased.

## Global Goals

Utrecht builds its attention for the Global Goals on three pillars: 'together with the city' (people, businesses, and other institutions);

within the municipal structures, focusing on healthy urban living for everyone; and international cooperation. By creating business and investment opportunities, and building and sharing experience, knowledge and expertise, Utrecht sees partnering with developing countries as a mutually-beneficial means of contributing to SDGs 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) and 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities), as well as others depending on the specifics of the project. The challenges addressed in Kajjansi are meant to boost the local economy, create opportunities for young entrepreneurship and impact the environment in a positive way. Policy development and concrete improvements are supported in the planning of urban infrastructure and basic services.

### Added value and perspective

The Dutch and Ugandan public and private partners co-created a business ecosystem addressing the area's unique urban challenges which methodology could be used as a guideline for other municipalities as well. Such a multi-stakeholder approach can be quite a challenge and comes with discussions, but in the end leads to the best result. Furthermore, also concrete products were developed. One of them is a responsible and fair system of waste collection, through which waste is recycled into new products of value

**Kajjansi junction**

UTRECHT 4 GLOBAL GOALS 17 doelen om wereldwijd bij te dragen aan duurzame ontwikkeling

Utrecht rukt zich op doel 11: duurzame cities and communities

**Waar ligt Kajjansi en wat zijn de belangrijkste opgaven in dit gebied?**

Uganda: 40 miljoen inwoners in 2016  
Gemiddelde leeftijd: 15,7 jaar

Hoofdstad Kampala: 3,2-4 miljoen inwoners in 2015

Kajjansi Town: 100.000 inwoners

Kajjansi maakt deel van de snelle stedelijke uitbreiding van de hoofdstad Kampala. Het is belangrijk dat er een strategie wordt ontwikkeld om deze uitbreiding goed te laten verlopen met het oog op economische ontwikkeling in het gebied.

In Kajjansi ligt een grote lokale markt, waar veel mensen liggen op verboten terrein. De meeste goederen worden verkocht op straat. Het is belangrijk om deze markt te organiseren, zoals huisvesting, schone en veilig drinkwater, wegen, afvalinzameling, elektriciteit en sanitaire voorzieningen.

De Uganda overheid kan de bestaande bestaande problemen in het gebied niet alleen oplossen. De tijd op zoek naar samenwerking om een nieuwe strategie te ontwikkelen waarbij economische vitaliteit kan worden gecombineerd met een duurzame groei van het gebied.

for the Uganda market. Next to that, a Dutch IT-company is currently developing an app through which new services such as delivery for the local 'boda boda' drivers becomes more efficient.

A potential worth-while future phase of the project would be that continuity is guaranteed and that it becomes a natural process that companies and the other involved organisations know how to find and hire each other. Besides this, there is hope that the junction programme example inspires other municipalities in the country. That is also why the Uganda Local Government Association (ULGA) is involved.

**'The SDGs have proven a very good basis for cooperation, because they provide a universal language that helps to bridge cultural differences when discussing a particular problem and the approach to solve it. In doing so, we find out that local governments working in different environments, basically share to a large extent the same challenges.'**

*Etienne de Jager, Municipality of Utrecht.*

# Working in a network: Schiedam | Eurotowns

There are numerous thematic European and international networks, in which also many Dutch municipalities participate. The SDGs offer a common language for the exchange of experience on challenges that various or all European municipalities face. The Eurotowns network of medium-sized cities has therefore created a Global Goals working group, based on the vision that cities and local communities are key to the successful implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

## Background

Eurotowns was established in 1991 as the Europe-wide network for towns and cities with populations between 50.000 and 250.000. The Dutch cities of Schiedam and Haarlem are members of the network, together with 16 other towns and cities in 7 European countries. The Eurotowns website states: 'City networking is an important practice for reinforcing European Cohesion. (...) Eurotowns supports medium-sized cities in Europe to strengthen their role as attractive, inclusive and sustainable places. Furthermore, Eurotowns provides a valuable mechanism for building reliable partnerships, developing innovative and sustainable projects, and effective collaboration on European Union funding applications. (...) The network works with thematic Task Teams, including amongst others on culture; innovation; mobility; social inclusion; strategic policy; and the Global Goals.



## Global Goals and Eurotowns

In October 2018, Eurotowns held its annual meeting in Schiedam, a Dutch city near Rotterdam, and one of the now almost 90 Dutch Municipalities4GlobalGoals. Part of the programme was an international seminar on 'The Global Goals in medium-sized cities'. Experiences from Solingen, Sabadell and Oss were shared about how towns and cities





incorporate the Global Goals in their daily work. There was broad recognition that sustainability, with its social, environmental and economic dimensions, is an increasingly relevant concept. The Global Goals are the expression of urgent, global challenges, which need to be addressed by local governments alongside with all other actors. The seminar has put the Global Goals on the Eurotowns 2019 agenda; this resulted in the creation of the Eurotowns Task Team Global Goals. The German city of Solingen became the Task Team Leader.

**In Eurotowns we say about our position as medium-sized cities: 'Big enough to cope, small enough to care.'**

*Leonie Hulshof, Director European Affairs, Municipality of Schiedam.*

The first meeting of the Task Team was used to make an inventory of the level of knowledge and the needs among the participating cities. This appeared to be quite varied and the network served to share knowledge. The second meeting focused on 'awareness-raising', or how to involve the local community in the broad sustainability agenda. Here too, a wide range of experiences and approaches exist between the members, which is a rich basis for exchange of experience.

A question that remains, is whether the Global Goals should be and remain the



subject of a separate Task Team or become a transversal theme in all the other Task Teams. For now, it is good to have a separate Task Team, but Schiedam in its quality of Task Team Leader for the Task Team Culture, is already making the connection between the two.

**Added value and perspective**

The added value of working in the Eurotowns network, according to Leonie Hulshof, is that the size of the member towns and cities serves as a binding factor. That provides a good basis for mutual learning and for setting up projects together. The shared perspective of being a medium-sized city is stronger than the differences, for instance in political orientation, that also exist. She is also convinced that networks like Eurotowns are an important partner for the EU, because the EU and its member states alike cannot implement the Global Goals agenda without towns and cities.

The Eurotowns network is open to new members: <https://www.eurotowns.org/>

# Cross-Border Cooperation

A particular form of partnerships is formed by Cross-Border Cooperation between neighbouring local governments across national borders. More than in other international partnerships, there are many everyday connections between the communities, through employment, shopping, road traffic, etc. Yet, legal and institutional provisions often differ and sometimes pose a serious challenge for cooperation.

## Rheden | North Rhine Westphalia (Germany)

The municipality of Rheden is one of the most active Municipalities4GlobalGoals in The Netherlands. Situated not far from the Netherlands-German border, Rheden has been actively involved in sharing their experience and sustainability approaches with German municipalities. The vehicle for this is LAG 21 (LAG for: Local And Global), which is a sustainability knowledge network in the German 'land' of North Rhine Westphalia. One of their projects is to support 30 municipalities in North Rhine Westphalia with the development of their global sustainability strategies, building on the UN SDGs, and the federal as well as North Rhine Westphalia sustainability agendas.

Rheden and LAG21 shared information on the monitoring and visualisation of the results of SDG implementation. LAG21 will also be a partner in the SDG week for local entrepreneurs, which Rheden will organise in June 2020.



Ziele brauchen Taten  
RENN.west

## Baarle-Nassau | Baarle Hertog (Belgium)

The municipality of Baarle-Nassau, in the South of The Netherlands, near the border with Belgium faces a rather exceptional situation: it has 22 Belgian enclaves in the municipality. Furthermore, it borders with only one Dutch and with five Belgian Municipalities. This raises particular sustainability issues. Take for example the fact that in The Netherlands the policy is to end the use of natural gas for heating homes, whereas in Belgium the use of natural gas is being promoted. Also, waste is inevitably transported across the border all the time. That's why Baarle-Nassau, together with its Belgian neighbour Baarle-Hertog is working on joint waste solutions. This, and other measures, a.o. aiming at climate resilience, are part of their sustainability policy, that explicitly links to the SDGs and more specifically Goals 7, 12, 13, 15, and 17.

**'Sustainability challenges do not stop at the border. Our unique geographic position asks for cross-border cooperation in addressing the SDGs. We want to be an international area for experiments, which the whole border zone can profit from.'**

*Nico Sommen, Vice-Mayor of  
Baarle-Nassau*



# Community Initiative: Haarlem | Mutare (Zimbabwe)

Although cities might be of different scale and face totally different challenges, a partnership might still be mutually beneficial. The foundation behind the partnership of the Dutch city of Haarlem and the city of Mutare (Zimbabwe) has strengthened social and cultural relations between the cities for many years now.



## Background

In recent years, the trend in Dutch municipalities has been to end their city twinnings. Also the Haarlem-Mutare foundation saw all municipal subsidies cut in 2016, but it decided to sail against the wind and to continue the cooperation. Today, funding comes from donations and subsidies of the European Commission and national institutions. The municipality of Haarlem still covers the foundation's accommodation costs, but the foundation heavily relies on volunteers. Over the years there have been dozens of local projects in both cities, varying from creating sports facilities and the provision of sustainable 'WakaWaka lights', to a local Haarlem beer brewer exchanging ideas with a local Mutare beer brewer, and many more.

## Global Goals

The Haarlem-Mutare foundation has been inspired by the 17 SDGs and put effort in making the municipality of Haarlem enthusiastic to join the VNG campaign Municipalities-4GlobalGoals, which they officially did in 2018. Also in other ways, the foundation provides input for the municipal policies relating to sustainability, a.o. by discussing with councilors. And a vice-mayor was panellist in debates that the Foundation organised on climate change. All activities organised in Haarlem-Mutare could be linked to the

Global Goals. The project 'sustainable Haarlem from a world-wide perspective', subsidised by the European co-funded programme 'Frame, Voice, Report'<sup>1</sup>, aims to increase awareness and engagement for the SDGs.

### Added value and perspective

New projects in the pipeline are especially related to the social domain: education and culture. Focusing on these specific themes makes the projects mutually-beneficial. A good example to build on, is the project in which a Haarlem artist cooperated with Zimbabwean sculptors in the framework of neighbourhood renewal in Haarlem. After good consultation with citizens, housing corporations and the culture department of the city of Haarlem, sculptures by the Zimbabwean artists were integrated in the neighbourhood. Citizens feel ownership for these sculptures, which, several years later, are still there. Another example dates back to 2010, when a sports student from Haarlem introduced a programme in Mutare to promote health and inclusion among elderly people through forms of sports. Mutare volunteers took over and the project is still running. Sports in neighbourhoods, in Haarlem and Mutare, is also connected to HIV prevention. An ongoing activity are exchanges between both elementary schools and higher education institutions in Haarlem and in Mutare,



financed by Erasmus+. Furthermore, part of the aforementioned project 'sustainable Haarlem from a world-wide perspective' is a series of exhibitions where artists from Haarlem and Mutare expressed their views on waste and recycling. The large network which has been built over the years makes it easy nowadays to connect the people from the different cities.

The foundation is planning a workshop with Haarlem councillors to exchange on how the SDGs can further inspire the municipal policy-making. And in fact the question is broader: how can we assure that the SDG agenda is owned by the city, not just the council, but all citizens. That is basically what the Foundation Haarlem-Mutare wants to achieve: citizenship, also through Global Goal 17 on partnership; citizenship within Haarlem, European citizenship and global citizenship.

1 Co-funded under the Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) grant scheme.

**'More than 25 years ago we planted the seeds of a long-standing, successful cooperation. As a result we see that even small-scale interventions implemented years ago still have a visible impact.'**

**Dik Bol, coordinator,  
Foundation Haarlem-Mutare.**

# The Global Goals in Partnership Agreements

For a successful partnership it is important to exchange on the mutual expectations and to have shared objectives. The SDGs can provide a good framework in this respect, because of their global character and common language. Some municipal partnerships express their shared commitment to the SDGs in their Letter of Intent (LoI) or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

## Waalwijk | Unna (Germany)

The Dutch municipality of Waalwijk and its German partner Unna did so when they renewed their LoI in December 2018. The partnership also focuses on youth, innovation and entrepreneurship. And they are looking for a third partner.

## Utrecht | Taipei (Taiwan)

Utrecht, the fourth largest city in The Netherlands, renewed its MoU with the City of Taipei (Taiwan) in March 2019. Based on the mutually beneficial interest in the field of localizing the SDGs, and on the desire to foster collaboration in balancing quality of life, economic prosperity and competitiveness, the entire MoU aims at exchange of experience and cooperation around the SDGs, involving various partners on both sides.





## Oss | Taizhou (China)

In October 2019, the Dutch municipality of Oss and its Chinese partner Taizhou (Jiangsu Province) made explicit reference to the SDGs when they renewed their Lol. In 2018, the city of Oss won the title 'Most Inspiring Global Goals Municipality of the Netherlands'. They integrate the attention for the SDGs in all their work, so also in their international cooperation. In a mission to Taizhou, the seeds were planted to broaden the existing partnership focused on economic cooperation, to new areas such as exchanges between schools, and the preservation of architectural heritage.

**Mr. He Jun, Director of the Taizhou Foreign Affairs Office: 'Taizhou is an 'Environmental Model City'. A team of experts came to the city for a full month to assess our environmental performance on a wide range of issues, such as air quality, transport, energy production and consumption, water pollution, waste management and recycling of natural resources. Altogether more than 100 indicators have been used. Taizhou wants to strengthen its friendship with Oss, because in a globalising world it is important to have a global network if you want to be influential.'**



**Mayor Wobine Buijs of the city of Oss about the reference to the SDGs in the Lol: 'It is very clear that economic growth has to be responsible growth and sustainable. Basically, the quality of the living environment for our citizens and future generations has to be the starting point for everything we do as local governments.'**

## Rheden | Langeberg (South Africa) | Rubavu (Rwanda)

Rheden, Langeberg and Rubavu have a tri-partite partnership, focussing on sustainable economic development, based on the SDGs. Concrete projects include a.o. the development of a 4 km long boulevard along Lake Kivu, eco mountain tourism, the development of ten different day-trips with culture, history and nature, and the development of a branding strategy for Rubavu in line with the SDGs. Together with the three partner municipalities a variety of stakeholders is involved, like local entrepreneurs, Heineken brewery, the higher education institute Van Hall Larenstein.

The capacity-building activities are part of the VNG International programme 'Inclusive Decisions at Local Level (IDEAL)'

# Awards, Prizes and Best Practices

If you have good results with your SDG related activities, why not share them more widely?

Participation in international calls for best practices, awards, etc. is then an attractive option. The benefits go in two directions: others can profit from the good practices shared, and for successful applicants an award, prize, or publication, is motivating for the people directly involved, it raises the profile of their work and leads to new contacts, and it broadens the interest in the work they do, also in their own city.



There are competitions, prizes, etc. in various fields relating to about each of the SDGs, and at national, European and world level. Just to mention a few:

## European Sustainability Award

A prestigious recognition for all who incorporate the principle of sustainability into their daily activities, operations and practices. The Award is immaterial and brings high visibility in the form of renewed public interest and increased media coverage. The specific objectives of the Award are:

- to recognize initiatives in the European Union with a transformative contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- to promote further development of initiatives in the European Union focusing on sustainable development, including an increasing awareness and involvement of citizens and stakeholders in the European Union;
- to identify initiatives able to act as 'sustainability ambassadors' for the European Union, in order to encourage others to progress towards better sustainable development outcomes.

See: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs/european-sustainability-award\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs/european-sustainability-award_en)





## PLATFORMAWARDS

An award for towns, cities, municipalities, provinces and regions in the EU, that cooperate with at least one local or regional government in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe or the Middle East. The partnership must contribute to the mutual development of the parties and specifically contribute to the implementation of one or several of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). See <http://platformawards.eu/>

## The UCLG Peace Prize

The prize celebrates successful initiatives undertaken by local governments and stimulates others to follow suit. Moreover, it aims at generating international public attention for the role local governments play in ensuring sustainable and peaceful development. It is more specifically connected to SDG 16. See <https://peaceprize.uclg.org/>

## Voluntary Local Review

Not a prize or competition, doing a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) of how your municipality performs on the SDG agenda, provides a great opportunity for international exchange of experience and good practice. UN member state governments do Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and each year a

number of them present the VNR in a UN meeting in New York. But in the VNRs presented in 2019, only 40 % mentioned local and regional governments, whereas a large share of all the action to achieve the SDGs is done at the local level. Local Governments have therefore initiated VLRs to show their commitment to the SDGs and the concrete results of their actions.

Several forms of support have been or are being developed:

- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) have a training handbook for local leaders on preparing VLRs. See: <https://www.learning.uclg.org/module-3>
- An EU handbook to support the VLR process for cities in EU member States is forthcoming.

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### Example: Utrecht | Guangzhou Award

The city of Utrecht was nominated for the Guangzhou Award for Urban Innovation 2018, organised in cooperation with UCLG and Metropolis ([http://www.guangzhouaward.org/c/e\\_2016](http://www.guangzhouaward.org/c/e_2016)). Utrecht ended 7th from 300 applications. See: <https://use.metropolis.org/case-studies/utrecht--a-global-goals-city>. The recognition expressed through the nomination was stimulating for all involved in the SDG activities in Utrecht. But it does not stop with the nomination in 2018. In December 2019, the Guangzhou Award organisers sent a CNN reporter to

Utrecht. She made a report on the way Utrecht works on localising the SDGs. The report was presented at the Review of Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation, and will also be presented at the World Urban Forum in Dubai in February 2020.

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### Example: Rheden | SEE Conference

The municipality of Rheden in the East of The Netherlands was an early adopter of the SDGs. They took the SDGs as the guiding principle for both the policies and the organisational structure of the municipality. In

2019, Rheden won the title 'Most Inspiring Global Goals Municipality' of The Netherlands. This tasted like more and the municipality made an overview of the added value the SDGs have had so far for the municipality, including lessons learned. The document was submitted to the Sustainability, Ethics and Entrepreneurship (SEE) Conference, an annual conference for top scholars, in 2020 to be held in Puerto Rico. The contribution was selected as a case-study for the 'World Scientific Encyclopedia of Business Sustainability, Ethics & Entrepreneurship'. See: <https://www.seeconf.org/>

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# Economic Relations and the SDGs

**SDG 12 is about Sustainable Production and Consumption. Local governments can play a positive role in this area too. Some local governments are actively involved in the promotion of local companies through trade missions and in attracting foreign investors. That can be linked to ensuring Responsible Business Conduct (RBC). And all local governments, in their capacity as consumers, can choose to include sustainability criteria for the products and services they purchase, or even be a launching customer.**

# Responsible Business Conduct and the SDGs

In recent years, the promotion of local and regional economic development has become an objective of municipal international cooperation, especially in larger cities. Support to or participation in international trade missions is one form to reach that objective. How can municipalities connect this with their support for the SDGs? What is the relation between the SDGs and Responsible Business Conduct (RBC)?

In September 2019, the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) published a report about it: 'Kansen pakken en risico's beheersen', or 'Seizing opportunities and managing risks'. This chapter is based on that report.

## Background

The Dutch economy is highly internationalised. The import of natural resources and semi-manufactured goods, and the export of products, technology and knowledge, form a large share of the GNP. Many Dutch companies are part of international value chains. The role of municipalities in this context should not be exaggerated, but not underestimated either. The next chapter is about the role of local governments as consumer and as 'launching customer.' But municipalities also facilitate and participate in trade missions, and they are actively involved in attracting investors. That is all the more true for municipalities in countries where public authorities play an important role in the economy, like in China.

With the increasing interest in sustainability, enterprises see the SDG-agenda more and more as a business opportunity. However, as stated in the SER report, 'there are other actors in society who are concerned that the SDGs might possibly distract the attention from earlier made international agreements about RBC.' RBC rests upon the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and on the OECD Guidelines (on Responsible Business Conduct) for Multinational Enterprises. These principles and guidelines are applicable to all companies, and together they form the compass for companies in the field of supply chain



management and due diligence, including issues like child labour, human rights, environment and corruption.

The SER report states that ‘Some companies only pay attention to RBC, others only to the SDGs and yet others to both or none of these two. Also in the policies of central and local governments, both RBC and SDGs are addressed, whereas how they relate is not always clearly elaborated.’

### Added value and perspective

In the SER's vision, ‘RBC and the SDGs complement and enhance each other. The SDGs express the ‘why’ and ‘what’ of RBC, and they increase the urgency by adding a time-frame to the concrete goals. And RBC, on the other hand, offers a step-by-step approach for companies to contribute in a relevant and systematic manner to sustainable development and the SDGs (the ‘how’).’

In the SER's analysis, the policies on RBC, both at central and decentralised government level, are still not coherent. The SER advises that more coherent policies would lead to serious improvements. Central and local governments must formulate a strong and inspiring vision on the SDGs as an attractive aim, and consequently promote that vision in their existing and future policies. That will then provide a firm basis for

dialogue with the private sector. Governments can create space for learning and introduce financial instruments, and support companies that do business with or in countries with a high risk profile. At the same time, the government should talk with governments in those countries about the steps that need to be taken to achieve the common, international SDG ambitions. The vision on the connection between RBC-SDGs should become leading in trade missions, as part of the ‘economic diplomacy’.

The SER report also mentions the ‘governance gap’ in countries that do not respect international human right standards, and argues for cooperation by Dutch companies with local trade unions, NGOs, and reliable government institutions. For the sake of coherence and synergy, support should be given to strengthening civil society and public institutions like kadaster and the taxation authority. This can also be done through the so-called ‘colleague-to-colleague’ approach in international cooperation.

**‘If we really want to achieve these important goals, then it is of utmost importance that RBC and the SDGs in an integral approach get higher priority in policy and its implementation.’**

*Ms. Mariëtte Hamer, President of the Social and Economic Council (SER), in the Preface*

# The SDGs in Purchase and Procurement

In The Netherlands alone, local and regional governments spend 40-50 billion euros annually on the purchase of products and services. That represents an enormous purchase power. **SDG target 12.7** expresses that public procurement practices should be sustainable in accordance with national policies and priorities. This means taking in to account the social, ecological and economic impact. Again, local governments have various ways of doing so.

## Municipal Purchasing and Procurement Policy

One of the services VNG provides to its members, is the availability of 'models' for local policies that municipalities can adapt to local priorities or circumstances as needed. In 2019, VNG brought its Model for a Municipal Purchasing and Procurement Policy up to date. The model now contains a revised chapter on ethical principles. It refers to SDG 12 about sustainable production and consumption and more in particular to SDG target 12.7 about sustainable procurement by public entities. But it also makes the connection with SDG 7 (on sustainable energy), SDG 13 (on Climate change), and SDG 8 (on decent work and equal payment).

Municipalities which use the model, express that through their procurement, they want to take into account the social, economic and ecological impact of the products and services they buy. By setting certain standards, regarding the use of materials, reuse or recycling possibilities, the labour conditions in the production chain (e.g. excluding child labour and respecting trade union rights), etc., local governments set an example. When more innovative techniques or approaches become available, local governments can even act as 'launching customers' paving the way for others to follow.

The VNG model describes how such choices need to be part of every step in the process, from the market analysis till the monitoring and evaluation of the purchase agreement, and the sharing of experiences.

The model defines a number of specific elements of sustainable procurement:

- Integrity
- Impact on the climate
- Biobased products
- Circularity
- International social standards, including the ILO standards
- Social return

The model is available only in Dutch: <https://vng.nl/brieven/geactualiseerd-vng-model-inkoop-en-aanbestedingsbeleid>

**ISO 20400** provides guidance to organisations on integrating sustainability within procurement.



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### Example: the Province of Overijssel

In 2018, the Dutch province of Overijssel explicitly referred to the SDGs when it tendered the provision of hot and cold drinks for the provincial organisation. The tendering procedure was done via the Rapid Impact Contracting (RIC) method. This method is based on the principle of contracting a cooperation partner with whom the contracting agency wants to find the best possible ways to achieve its ambitions, rather than buying a ready-made solution. In this case the supplier was selected on the basis of quality, being future proof, and impact on a.o. SDG 3 (health and well-being), SDG 9 (innovation and sustainable infrastructure) and SDG 15 (ecosystems and biodiversity).

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### Fair Trade Towns

Started in the UK in 2000, the Fair Trade Towns campaign has now spread to over 2000 towns in 30 countries worldwide. The campaign strives to increase the offer and demand of fair trade products, thereby increasing employment and improving the living and labour conditions of farmers and producers in developing countries. The essence of the campaign is that a group of volunteers mobilise the local institutions like hospitals and schools, companies, shops and the municipality itself to serve, sell or use fair trade

products and make this visible and known. Once this has reached a certain level, the municipality qualifies to call itself 'Fair Trade Town'. In The Netherlands there are 90 Fair Trade Towns now.

See: <http://www.fairtradetowns.org/>

### FSC certified tropical wood

Local governments use significant volumes of tropical wood for the construction of bridges, waterways bank protection, and other infrastructure. When this is non-certified wood, the impact on rainforests and their (indigenous) population is disastrous. Buying (or



including in the tender specifications the use of certified wood, avoids this negative impact. The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certificate is one of the oldest and still a good example. Not sure about the extra costs of certified wood? The FSC-impact calculator helps to assess the real costs (risks) for society of buying non-certified tropical wood. This relates to a.o. climate change and loss of biodiversity.

See: <https://www.fsc.org/en>



# Education and Awareness Raising

The SDG agenda requires action everywhere in the world, by governments at all levels, enterprises, civil society organisations and individual citizens. Local governments must not only take action themselves, they can also facilitate or encourage action by others. Supporting global education and awareness raising activities is one way of doing so. This chapter provides a number of examples based on the experiences of various Dutch municipalities.

# Education and Awareness Raising

Some local governments prefer to address global issues through education and awareness raising activities in their own city or municipality. There are numerous ways to do this, and many logical occasions to use. The role of local governments varies: some implement themselves, others fund and support activities by local civil society organisations, and yet others facilitate in again different ways, as is shown hereafter.

## The Global Goals flag on dozens of Dutch town halls

In 2019 for the first time, VNG organised a coordinated action among Dutch municipalities to hang out a flag with the 17 SDGs on 25 September, the day of the UN General Assembly discussing the progress of the SDG implementation. In many municipalities this was combined with local activities, varying from lectures and workshops to larger scale public events. In some municipalities the flag now circulates among local NGOs, all connected to one or more of the SDGs, and each of them hanging out the flag for one month and then passing it on to the next organisation, till next year on 25 September the municipality will hang out the flag again.



## Using another specific 'Day of ...'

In the same way as VNG chose the 25th of September as a natural moment to hang out the SDG flag, there are many other days throughout the year that are particularly well-suited for activities related to a specific SDG. Just to mention a few:

*January 24 • International Day of Education*

*February 20 • World Day of Social Justice*

*March 8 • International Women's Day*

*April 7 • World Health Day*

*May 3 • World Press Freedom Day*

*May 9 • Europe Day*

*June 5 • World Environment Day*

*June 20 • World Refugee Day*

*July 11 • World Population Day*

*August 23 • International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition*

*September 8 • International Literacy Day*

*September 21 • International Day of Peace*

*October 16 • World Food Day*

*October 31 • World Cities Day*

*November 16 • International Day of Tolerance*

*December 10 • Human Rights Day*

For a more extensive list see amongst others:

- <https://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/international-days/>
- <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/international-and-european-days>

## Connecting the SDGs with existing events

Apart from making the connection with the 'International or European Day of ...' you can also link to existing local annual events. LBSNN, the network of Dutch cities with partnerships in Nicaragua, offers a number of SDG-related fun games, that can easily be integrated in local public events like funfairs. On the famous funfair in the city of Tilburg, its 'bird race' was a big hit. Children guide their Nicaraguan wood bird to a specific goal (one of the SDGs), while trained volunteers of the LBSNN network provide comments giving information on the SDGs in an informal and pleasant way. In the same way, LBSNN has a football goal, where children can 'score' on the SDGs, and variations on other well-known games, all with an SDG twist. LBSNN is happy to come to for instance big sports or other public events (in the Netherlands), and discuss how to build in a link with the SDGs. Contact: <http://lbsnn.nl>, or [lbsnn@amsterdam.nl](mailto:lbsnn@amsterdam.nl)

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**Example:** The Netherlands commemorate the end of World War II, 75 years ago. In that context, the municipality of Oss invited a group of Canadian secondary school students. Together with students from the local Maaslandcollege, they had a presentation in the town hall on the SDGs and specifically on SDG 16 on Peace and

# EUROPEAN DAYS OF LOCAL SOLIDARITY

[www.localsolidaritydays.eu](http://www.localsolidaritydays.eu)  
#LocalSolidarityDays

Justice. In the following days, the students together gave lessons in primary schools. They also had a role in the official commemoration, visited war graves and worked together on projects.

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## European Days of Local Solidarity (EDLS)

The EDLS is an annual 2-week campaign in November, run by European cities and regions committed to inform and mobilise their citizens on global solidarity and sustainable development issues. Grounded on the European values of democracy, diversity and solidarity, the EDLS promotes decentralised cooperation and city-to-city cooperation as a successful instrument for global sustainable development. In 2018, over 120 cities and regions took part in the EDLS!

A 'Charter of the European Days of Local Solidarity' was launched by PLATFORMA in 2016. It is a political document, presenting the principles and values sustaining cities' and regions' engagement in decentralised cooperation. This Charter encourages local and regional governments to make a public commitment to solidarity. This Charter also calls on cities and regions to inform their citizens about decentralised cooperation and their cities' or regions' commitments for a more sustainable and equal world. Elected

representatives at local and regional level across Europe can commit to the EDLS Charter by signing it online. The EDLS Charter is now available in 8 languages, including Dutch. It can be found and signed on: <http://localsolidaritydays.eu/edls-charter/>

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**Example:** in 2019, the city of Zoetermeer in The Netherlands organised an event for 88 primary education students and 75 secondary education students. In the Town Hall, debates were held between school classes on statements that were linked with various of the SDGs. The jury consisted of members of the municipal council. The students were also asked to choose which SDG they considered the most crucial one, and they could have their picture taken in the photo kiosk with the icon of their favourite SDG.

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## A local grant scheme

Some municipalities choose to facilitate initiatives taken by their community. **The city of Tilburg**, in the South of the Netherlands, is one of them. Tilburg wants to promote global awareness and citizenship among its citizens and local companies and organisations. The SDGs have been taken as the reference for the creation of a Tilburg platform for global awareness. The platform is a meeting space for



people and organisations in Tilburg who are committed to awareness raising about global issues, in Tilburg or abroad. There is also a grant scheme, with two application rounds per year, from which a selection of applicants receive a contribution for their activities.

**The municipality of Culemborg** has had an international sustainable development grant scheme since 2015, focusing on the SDGs. Local volunteer groups could apply for co-funding from the scheme for projects they support abroad. On the basis of an evaluation, the grant scheme was recently renewed for the period till 2022 but applications now need to include awareness-raising activities. The existing co-funding requirements have been softened for applications up to 1000 euro. Priority is given to applications in which several organisations cooperate, or in which youth or migrant communities are involved.

**'Culemborg has a long tradition in supporting projects abroad. We assure the continuity by putting 1 euro for every M2 of land sold in a fund for international cooperation. With the new grant scheme, we not only support projects abroad, but also awareness raising among our own citizens. In the end we are all global citizens!'**

*Joost Reus, Vice-Mayor*



Gemeenten4GlobalGoals



Samen aan EEN DUURZAME WERELD

Gemeenten4GlobalGoals



Samen aan EEN DUURZAME WERELD

Committed to  
Strengthening  
Democratic  
Local Government  
Worldwide



DOEL 11 DUURZAME GEMEENTEN

3 GOEDE GEZONDHEID EN WELZIJN



SCHOON WATER EN SANITAIR



11 DUURZAME STEDEN EN GEMEENSCHAPPEN



10 ONGELIJKHEID VERMINDEREN



IK STA ACHTER DE GLOBAL GOALS

IK OMARM DE GLOBAL GOALS



# Municipalities4GlobalGoals

With its campaign Municipalities4GlobalGoals, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), together with its members, wants to embrace the SDGs or Global Goals as the international policy framework for a sustainable future for all. So far, almost 90 municipalities have joined and the number is growing. VNG International provides services to help Dutch municipalities implement the Goals at the local level. We provide a platform for exchange of experience, we encourage initiatives and make them more widely known. From 2020, the building in which VNG's office is located, is called 'SDG 11 House'.

## Building Better Futures by strengthening democratic local government

VNG International are experts in strengthening democratic local government in developing and transitional countries. Local governments play a key role in the provision of basic services such as water, waste management, health care and housing. They have profound impact on areas like safety, food security, rule of law, and women's rights. Our projects contribute sustainably to better futures for people, communities and countries.



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