



Managing Water Challenges through Local Leadership

Factsheet

VNG International's approach to addressing water challenges

Water Management: Empowering Local Governments for Sustainable Water Solutions

Water scarcity, flooding, and droughts, exacerbated by climate change and population growth, are some of the most pressing challenges faced by governments and citizens around the world today. As a country renowned for its expertise in water management, the Netherlands brings knowledge and experience to address the global challenges on water issues. At the heart of this expertise is the recognition that **local governments, the closest level of government to citizens, play a crucial role in managing water resources and responding to water-related risks**. VNG International's projects on water focus on strengthening local governments' ability to manage water resources, ensure water security and address climate-induced challenges.

Strengthening Capacity for Water Security and Management

Local governments are often at the forefront of addressing water-related challenges - responsible for water supply, sanitation, water safety, and managing the risks that arise from climate-related events. They are uniquely positioned to deliver sustainable, practical solutions. However, many local governments and service providers struggle to fully meet these mandates due to limited capacity. VNG International is dedicated to strengthening local governments' ability to manage these challenges. Through our extensive experience in countries like **Benin, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Mozambique, South Sudan, South Africa, and Uganda**, we offer tailored capacity development solutions that address the unique challenges of each context..

About VNG International

VNG International is the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). Rooted in the Netherlands' rich tradition of local governance, we invest in empowering local governments worldwide to build better futures for all. Established in 2001, we focus on practical and innovative solutions that enhance the capacity and resilience of local governments.

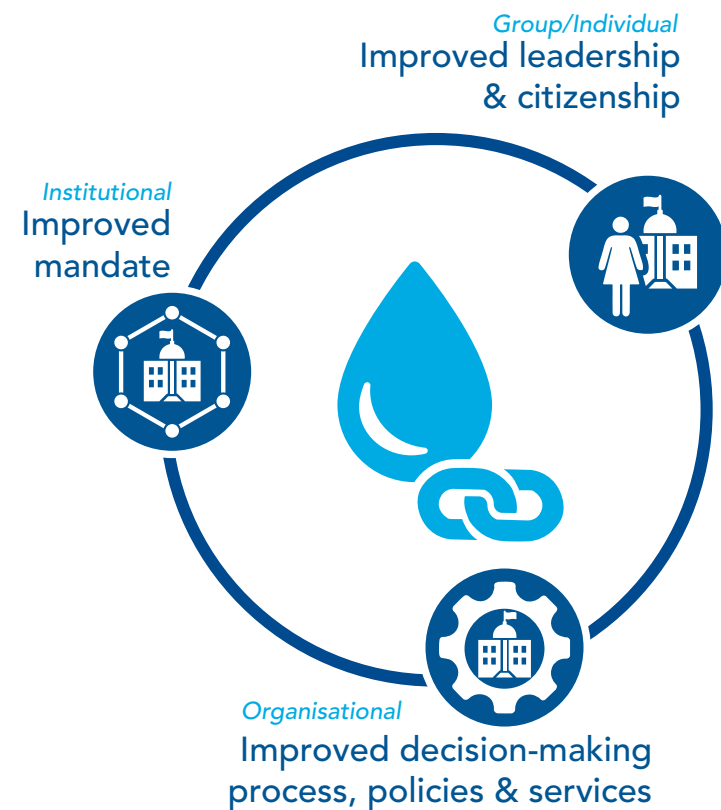
VNG International designs and manages large, complex projects across a variety of sectors, collaborating with a diverse range of donors, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Commission, World Bank, and USAID. We take pride in our ISO-9001 certified quality management system, which underpins our commitment to high standards and client satisfaction. Our success is driven by our ability to combine local expertise with international knowledge, enabling us to implement solutions that are both practical and effective.

Together with local governments and their citizens, we are creating resilient, thriving communities that are equipped to face the future. At VNG International, we are not just building projects, we are building better futures for all.



Our approach to water management

At VNG International, we take a holistic, integrated approach to water management. This approach blends technical expertise with strong governance practices, ensuring that local governments are equipped to make informed decisions based on the needs of their communities. We emphasize **multi-stakeholder collaboration** as roles and responsibilities in water management are often shared across various levels of government, the private sector, and civil society. By engaging key actors - including water and environmental authorities, NGOs, community organizations, engineering firms, and financial institutions - we ensure that decision-making is inclusive, services are effective, and responsibilities are clearly defined..



Our approach is centred around three core intervention areas to enhance governance:

- **Improving Service Delivery:** Strengthening processes, policies, and services to create informed, transparent governance that addresses the needs of citizens.
- **Enhancing Leadership and Citizen Participation:** Building leadership capacities at the local level while ensuring that citizens are involved in water management decisions and planning.
- **Clarifying Mandates and Roles:** Ensuring that roles are well-defined and aligned across stakeholders to promote effective service delivery and accountability.



Key achievements and strengths of VNG International's water projects

Through our integrated approach to capacity-building in water management, we have achieved substantial progress in the field, delivering tangible results that create lasting impact. Our achievements include:

- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) service delivery:** Supporting sustainable and inclusive service delivery to citizens through work with public and private sector actors within the WASH governance structure.
- **Sustainable Water Infrastructure:** Ensuring the long-term maintenance and sustainability of water points and infrastructure by training service providers, local governments and local populations to design, budget for and manage and maintain systems.
- **Disaster Risk Management:** Strengthening the capacity of local governments and water utilities to respond to disasters and manage risks effectively.
- **Strategic and inclusive water management:** Supporting the development of comprehensive local and regional water management plans engaging all stakeholders including the local communities throughout the planning cycle, to ensure sustainable and inclusive use of water resources.
- **Raising Awareness:** Educating communities and local governments about their responsibilities in managing water, importance of sustainable practices, water saving, and sanitation.
- **Sustainable Financial Frameworks:** Developing and implementing water tariff systems that ensure financial sustainability for water services.
- **Multi-level Stakeholder Coordination:** Enhancing governance by reinforcing coordinating efforts across different institutional and non-state actors and strengthening donor coordination.
- **Community Engagement:** Fostering community involvement in service delivery; disaster risk management, preparedness, and response; grievance redress and complaints.

By focusing on capacity development, multi-stakeholder engagement, and sustainable solutions, VNG International is driving meaningful change in water management worldwide. Our integrated approach empowers local governments, enhances citizen participation, and builds the resilience of communities to climate-related water challenges, ensuring that water remains a safe, sustainable resource for generations to come.

Improving sustainability of the WASH sector in Upper Egypt

Where
Egypt
When
2021-2025

This project focuses on sustainability of WASH investments through social sustainability on the one hand (fostering citizen participation for transparency and accountability in WASH governance) and institutional sustainability on the other (technical assistance to water utilities for improved operations and maintenance of infrastructure and peer-to-peer learning nationally). The project collaborates with Dutch water partners Brabantse Delta, Brabant Water, and VEi Dutch Water Operators for institutional knowledge exchange. Actions of the project include:

- Introduction of community score cards to exchange between citizens, utilities, and governorates on quality of services and improvement, and training of trainers locally to implement this independently
- Improvement of complaints mechanisms/grievance redress mechanisms, including unification of various systems together through digital systems
- Technical assistance to regional utilities on, a.o.: energy audits and energy saving, ISO 50001 certification, non-revenue water reduction sustainability and modeling, asset management and GIS system MAXIMO, water quality hazard mapping, and business planning and M&E of utilities.
- A peer-to-peer learning approach (vertical and horizontal) applicable to various levels (i.e : local & national authorities, CSOs) and with various local resources.
- Building on existing knowledge and outcomes of programs to further strengthen the capacity of mandated authorities through knowledge exchange workshops and create sustainable impact



Water pricing for sustainable and inclusive growth

Where
Ethiopia
When
2018-2026

The Water Pricing for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth project, operating in the Awash Basin of Ethiopia, aims to improve access to scarce water resources and increase water-use efficiency through improved water resource management and regulation. The project introduces a permit and tariffing system that ensures equitable water allocation based on water abstraction and availability data. The initiative is carried out through a public-private partnership involving six organizations: Woord en Daad, VNG International, Dutch Water Authorities, the Awash Basin Development Office, the Oromia Regional Water, Mining and Energy Bureau, and Eijkelpark Projects, which provides equipment for measuring water quality and usage. The project also supports Local Economic Development by creating improving agricultural productivity, better access to water as a resource, crucial for smallholder farmers, and in turn the region's economic sustainability.

- TA and training to local authorities enhances the capacity of local institutions to manage water systems and develop fee collection infrastructure, including a charge levying and billing IT system.
- A new IT system allows the Awash Basin Development Office to register and bill 90% of water abstractors, significantly improving resource management.
- Community engagement is emphasized, the project having reached over 18,000 people to raise awareness on the importance of water pricing for equitable access and efficient usage.
- Fostering better regulation of water use, the project supports local economic resilience, boosts local agricultural output, and creates a sustainable foundation for long-term economic growth in the region.

Local ownership and effective collaboration to break the Build-Neglect-Repair Cycle in Beira

Where
Mozambique
When
2023-2027

In Beira, Mozambique's fourth largest city, located where the Pungwe River meets the Indian Ocean, VNG International supports the institutional capacity of the Beira Autonomous Sanitation Unit (SASB) through the SASB PRO programme. This programme, funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Mozambique, was set up to break the so called "Build-Neglect-Repair" cycle, in which drainage infrastructure is unmaintained leading to costly rehabilitation. By strengthening SASB in its institutional capacity, responsibilities and multistakeholder collaboration, the city's drainage system will be improved and better able to protect the residents of Beira from inundations.

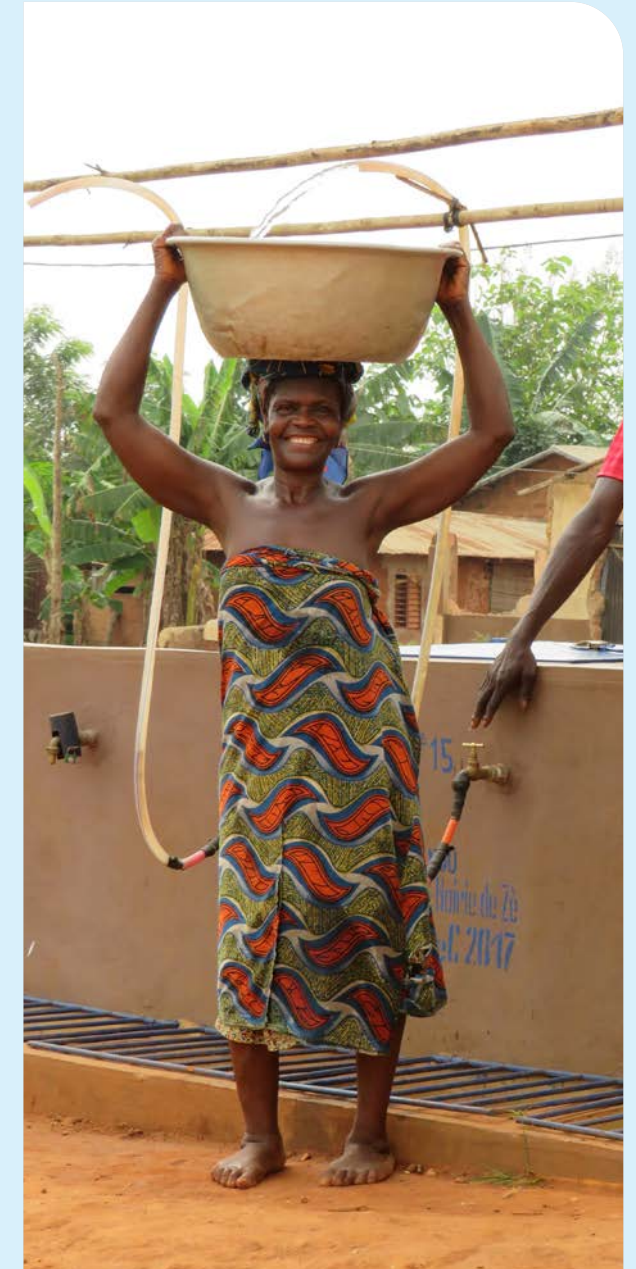
At the organisational level, VNG International is supporting the institutional capacity of SASB. Dedicated working groups have been established inside the organisation, giving the staff ownership to solve operational challenges in a coordinated manner. Furthermore, SASB staff have been trained on various topics such as health and safety and information management, and new tools have been set up to increase effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the organisation. A key achievement is the creation of a comprehensive asset management system, including a GIS-based register of drainage and sanitation infrastructure and a costed operation and maintenance plan. These instruments will be of great benefit to plan, monitor and budget systematically, and in general to inform data driven decision-making by SASB.

At the community level, the programme works towards collective responsibility for tertiary drainage channels. In collaboration with a local

NGO, SASB is contributing to the design and piloting of community approaches for integrated tertiary drainage approaches in identified pilot zones. Through participatory workshops, awareness-raising sessions and support from civil society, communities are gradually taking ownership of the infrastructure, ensuring regular maintenance and feedback, while deliberately ensuring that women and youth are actively engaged.

Finally, at the national level, VNG International facilitates Round Table processes, in which SASB and the Beira Municipality (CMB) are brought together with national authorities and donors. These round table processes service a platform for aligning strategies, sharing responsibilities, and coordinating investments on flood risk management. Key discussions focus on financial sustainability of SASB, including tariff reforms and sanitation tax mechanisms, positioning SASB as a credible actor in the Mozambican water sector

This integrated approach of the SASB PRO programme, based on accountability, active participation and local capacity strengthening, is a replicable model for ensuring the sustainability of urban drainage networks in contexts with high exposure to flood risks and to break the Build-Neglect-Repair cycle in Beira.



Improving Integrated Water Resource Management in Benin from basin to national level

Where

Benin

When

2017-2020

2024-2026

Since 2017, VNG International supports key Beninese actors at national and local level to improve integrated water resource management in Benin in a series of projects (OmiDelta (2017-2021), PSLEau (2019-2022), SDLG Benin (2024-2026), DURAGIRE (2024-2026)). Together, these projects cover a wide range of actors from the basin to the national level, namely local communities, local water committees, municipalities, the Beninese Agency for civil protection (ABPC), and DG Eau. This in itself leads to a very comprehensive and integrated approach in which all actors are strengthened to play their specific role in the cooperation to the fullest to ensure effective and sustainable management of water resources and investments. The projects have achieved the following key results:

- Capacity building of water management bodies at national, local and basin levels, to improve their individual functioning as well as their interinstitutional collaboration
- Benchmarking of 26 municipalities for knowledge development and peer learning
- Support to DG Eau on the implementation of a Delta Plan
- Support the establishment and sustainable functionality of Local Water Committees (CLEs), with a focus on its equitable representation to support inclusive water management
- Design, establishment and sustainable functioning of a community-level flood Early Warning Systems (EWS) combining physical infrastructure, a mobile application and community awareness, and integrating these community EWS into a more professional, sustainable, and accessible system for flood prevention

- Support the development and implementation of community-led actions to improve inclusive flood and water management across the Ouémé basin
- Support the establishment and sustainable functioning of local platforms for risk reduction and climate change (PL/RRC-ACC) in alert communication and first response aid.
- Improve the sustainability of IWRM actions by promoting financial, institutional, environmental, technical, and social (FIETS) resilience, ensuring that both new and existing water-related investments are managed sustainably

Notably attention therein also goes out to efforts to derive economic value from water resources (VERE), e.g. by transforming water hyacinths.



A sample of VNG International's key products on water management:

- Tool on a Community-led approach to Integrated Water Resources Management (2022)
- Manual for the formation and training of Water Management Committees in South Sudan (English, 2023) and in Benin (French, 2021)
- Publication on a community-led Early Warning Systems (EWS) against floods (2021)



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