



Safeguarding Local Communities from a Changing Climate

Factsheet

VNG International's approach to
climate resilience

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.

Climate Resilience: Strengthening Local Governments to Withstand Shocks and Adapt to Change

Climate change amplifies the frequency and intensity of natural disasters like floods and droughts, making effective preparedness, response, and management vital. In essence, making resilience to climate change and its impacts vital, and the creating higher need for capacity of governments, local governments especially, to be able to effectively respond to, and prepare for such.

Climate resilience in face of potential disasters involves pre-emptive risk assessment, establishment of early warning systems and local units, consideration of adaptive methods like nature-based solutions, and construction of resilient infrastructure, among others. Engaging communities herein through education and capacity enhancement ensures local participation in risk reduction. Post-disaster recovery and reconstruction focuses on rebuilding stronger and more sustainable local structures, and integrating lessons learned to enhance future resilience.

Climate-resilient development further integrates strategies to adapt to and mitigate climate change within national/local sustainable growth plans. Aligning these efforts with Sustainable Development Goals ensures that disaster resilience also advances broader objectives like poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

Local governments are crucial in climate-resilient development and disaster risk resilience, as they adopt broader policies to fit specific local and geographical contexts, they also design and deliver hands-on emergency evacuation plans, they conduct urban and spatial planning for their communities and are often (at least partially) responsible for water and waste management services. They assess regional risks and tailor disaster management plans to address the unique vulnerabilities of their areas. By managing infrastructure and land use, they can ensure development aligns with local climate realities. They engage and educate communities, empowering them to reduce risks in ways that suit their particular circumstances. During disasters, local governments lead emergency responses and focus on recovery efforts that enhance long-term resilience, always adapting national policies to meet the specific needs of their communities.



Our approach to climate resilience

VNG International has a vast experience in supporting the climate resilience of local governments through both short- and long-term disaster risk resilience strategies. We have developed expertise across various sectors, including:

- crisis and/or disaster risk management and resilience (Sint Maarten, Iraq, Turkey)
- flood and water management in urban and rural contexts (Mozambique, South Sudan, Iraq, Benin, Egypt)
- improving green and climate resilient infrastructure (Dominican Republic, Iraq, Jordan)
- sustainable urban and spatial planning in response to climate-related disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods (Turkey, Morocco)
- supporting access to and management of funds for climate-related projects (Czech Republic and Dominican Republic)

VNG International's approach is based on supporting local governments to be able to independently prepare for, respond to, and manage disasters, as well as plan for climate resilience in their long-term development. Our approach is needs-based and we work together with the mandated authorities as well as communities for scenario planning and practices to ensure sustainable solutions.

Our approach includes various tools:

- preparing and implementing crisis management plans
- creating and supporting with implementation of legal frameworks, ensuring these are well-prepared for emergencies
- fostering collaboration among stakeholders through disaster prevention strategies and plans
- supporting creation of local response units
- providing training, simulations, and scenario-planning for local response units
- improving policy-making and planning locally
- strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration
- developing early warning systems
- flood risk mitigation through a.o. pilot projects and nature-based solutions

Additionally, VNG International supports the development of green, climate-resilient infrastructure by enhancing spatial planning and integrating climate adaptation into municipal projects, while also increasing access to climate-resilient housing for vulnerable communities and boosting local tax revenues for urban development.

Examples of projects



Reconstruction support

Where
St. Maarten, St
Eustatius and
Saba
When
2017-2022

The project aimed to support the recovery of St. Maarten and surrounding islands following the 2017 hurricane, focusing on both immediate response and future climate disaster preparedness. It had two main objectives: to strengthen government institutions in disaster preparedness and to ensure that St. Maarten's institutions would build back better for increased resilience against future threats. Specific results include:

- Development of an upgraded disaster management structure and corresponding legislation;
- Training for politicians, civil servants, and community representatives on disaster management;
- Enhanced access to information for improved disaster-related policymaking and planning;
- More effective recovery program execution on Saba;
- Establishment of a disaster-proof and sustainable building code with community consensus.

Maintaining strength and resilience for local governments (MASAR)

Where

Iraq
Lebanon

When

2018-2022

The MASAR project aimed to strengthen the long-term resilience of subnational governments and the communities they serve, including host populations, refugees, and internally displaced persons. The specific objectives included enhancing the capacity of subnational governments to engage in broad, area-based planning, improving essential service delivery, and empowering local governments to stimulate regional economic development. Our services in this program included:

- Established the Duhok Governorate crisis management unit and plan, effectively responding to floods and other extreme events;
- Coordinated crisis prevention protocols among local and national stakeholders, developing emergency scenarios and a long-term urban vision;
- Installed early warning systems, upgraded Duhok dam equipment, and improved earth dam designs;
- Created Duhok Governorate's GIS Centre with equipment procurement and training in open-source software;
- Implemented a Memorandum of Understanding for data consistency and governance, enhancing urban planning, for example through stakeholder focus groups and advisory committees;
- Enhanced irrigation infrastructure and developed rehabilitation plans to address extreme heat challenges and established a forest fire prevention plan and management protocol;
- Created urban disaster preparedness plans and conducted intensive disaster training programs, including simulations

Project management and capacity building technical assistance for the post-disaster and climate change resilience

Where

Dominican
Republic

When

2019-2025

The overall objective of the project is to restore livelihoods, reduce vulnerability, and increase resilience to climate disaster risk in four provinces of the DR. Due to the location of the island it is exposed to recurring meteorological natural disasters causing economic losses, material damage, river overflows, and floods among others. The initiative focuses on climate/earthquake resilient infrastructure, water and sanitation, access roads, bridges, and support to development of sustainable livelihoods. Specific outputs and technical assistance include:

- Contribution to improved spatial development planning and incorporating climate change adaptation and resilience in municipal infrastructure;
- Increased access to climate-resilient housing for vulnerable communities;
- In-depth climate risk vulnerability assessments;
- Indicative infrastructure investment plan eligible for EIB financing, including advice on procurement processes;
- Advice on technical, social and environment due diligence required under national legislation and EIB environmental and social standards;
- Enhanced capacity in spatial development planning and road safety.



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