



Shaping Resilient Cities through Local Governance

Factsheet

VNG International's approach to urban development

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.

Urban Development: Supporting Local Authorities to Build Inclusive and Future-Proof Cities

Already, more 50% of the world's population lives in urban areas, with urban population expected to double by 2050. Cities and other types of human settlements are the places where challenges and solutions intersect in the realms of health, safety, social security, economic development, innovation, and environmental sustainability. According to estimates, cities are responsible for 75% of global carbon dioxide emissions, with transportation and buildings among the largest contributors.

On account of the fact that urban environments are essential to modern life, but are also a primary source of climate change related challenges, it is vital to focus on **sustainable urban planning and development, including sustainable urban mobility**. Traditionally, local governments and cities are prone to work in silos, whereas an integral approach is needed to tackle the multi-faceted challenges they encounter. Local governments are crucial in driving sustainable urban development, responsible for implementing policies that ensure comprehensive spatial and policy planning.

The Netherlands showcases worldwide best practices when it comes to integrated urban planning, development, and mobility. VNG International draws from experiences in Dutch local governments, and other countries it works in, to strengthen peers worldwide to enable cities and human settlements to be **inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable**. Achieving this goal requires robust local governance (horizontal) accompanied by good multi-level governance (vertical) that can effectively address the multifaceted challenges of urban development, with a particular focus on **enhancing public spaces, mobility, and infrastructure**.



Our approach to urban development

Sustainable urban development requires an integral approach. **We address urban challenges through a horizontal lens to balance social, economic, and environmental factors. We highlight social inclusivity and community participation, sustainability, and climate adaptation** measures through which local governments can ensure urban development projects and efforts benefit all residents, making urban areas inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The basis for this approach are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a core of our work, we focus on ensuring an optimal **enabling environment** for local governments to enrich action within their mandates and support the improvement of this enabling environment through **multi-stakeholder and community-engagement** practices among others.

We support local governments through strengthening of governance and institutional capacity related to:



- **Integrated urban and spatial planning, resilient urban design, public space** enhancement (Türkiye, Palestine, Libya, Tunisia);
- Sustainable **urban mobility** on regional level (Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Ghana)
- Improving **green infrastructure** (Costa Rica, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Dominican Republic);
- Urban planning for future-proof urban spaces to mitigate impact of **natural, and climate-related disasters** and crises (Benin, Iraq, Türkiye, Sint Maarten, Somalia);
- Integrating **citizen engagement** in urban planning (Lebanon, Türkiye Libya, Tunisia);
- **Supporting access to funding** and management of local government funds for climate-related projects (Czech Republic and Dominican Republic).



Our role in urban development interventions consists of:

- spatial scenario planning in an inclusive and participatory manner, leading up to spatial/masterplans and strategies;
- development and implementation of resilience strategies and guidelines;
- project and contract management, including support in project development and procurement of infrastructural works;
- delivery of emergency grants, and urban planning interventions;
- drafting and/or supporting implementation of legislation and regulations at the national and local level;
- capacity building and training for representatives of local government (elected and appointed) and civil society;
- improvement of (multi-level) governance and stakeholder mechanisms;
- introducing innovative methodologies, such as the DEALS approach.

Support to local governments response, recovery, and reconstruction following the earthquakes

Where
Türkiye
When
2023-2025

The wider objective of the project is to support and strengthen the capacities of Adana Seyhan, Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan, and Osmaniye municipalities in Türkiye to effectively lead and facilitate the recovery and reconstruction efforts to meet the needs of the citizens affected by the earthquakes. The project:

1. supports the municipalities to develop a Participatory Local Recovery Plan through scenario planning, focusing on:

- strengthening municipal institutions' capacities to adapt, and respond in the immediate aftermath of the crisis and in the longer-term recovery to their communities,
- increasing resilience to prevent and mitigate future disaster threats

2. supports establishing a participatory task force comprised of elected municipal councillors, appointed municipal officials, and civil society representatives in each one of the pilot municipalities, to:

- achieve better urban planning by initiating a multistakeholder dialogue
- enhance intra-institutional co-operation and collaboration
- improve the decision-making and service delivery processes at the local level





Sustainable mobility, urban planning, equipment and assessment of public space

Where

Costa Rica

When

2020-2025

The mUEve project, in partnership with the Costa Rican National Union of Local Governments (UNGL), and the Spanish municipality of San Sebastian supports transit-oriented development initiatives of the 15 municipalities connected by the Metropolitan Train in the greater Metropolitan Area. The area is currently mostly car-based and there are few good connections for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transportation, with high amount of traffic jams.

The project promotes mobility planning through the lens of the SDGs, making factors such as safety for women (SDG 5), physical accessibility for people with disabilities and the elderly (SDG 10), biodiversity promotion and resilience to weather extremes (SDG 13) integral parts of the plans. VNG International provides technical assistance to local governments to support:

- regional development plans
- municipal action plans
- community engagement
- space for tangible action through intermunicipal living labs and pilot infrastructural interventions in the public space

Through mentioned interventions the project works towards a safe, accessible, future-proof region where people can move freely, safely and pleasantly.

A sample of VNG International's key products on urban development:



The LogoRep How-to Manual for long-term, multi-scenario planning with a broader vision
Lebanon and Iraq



Webpage on smart cities for Ministry of Regional Development with promotional video and project booklet
Czech Republic



Urban planning in a Syrian Refugee Camp,
Jordan



Final Report interactive webpage DEALS
Global



Procedural Participation Toolkit: A practical guide for UMT trainers
Türkiye



VR-Game SDG 11: Sustainable Development Goals: a virtual urban sustainability test
The Netherlands

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september 2025