



Feeding Communities through Local Governance

Factsheet

VNG International's approach to
food security

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.

Food Security: Local Governance for Resilient and Inclusive Food Systems

The United Nations reports that 9.2% of the global population faces chronic hunger, with 281 million people in 59 countries experiencing acute food insecurity in 2023. Food security is more than just producing enough food: key factors that are equally important are access to (agricultural) land, infrastructure for distribution, facilities for processing, climate resilience, and equal access to food.

A major factor that affects food systems is urbanization, as over half of the population lives in cities, expected to reach 70% by 2050. Urban growth creates challenges for cities in providing healthy, affordable food, with three-quarters of food insecurity concentrated in urban or peri-urban areas, often in low- and middle-income countries, which are vulnerable to climate change effects, such as floods or drought.

Local governments play a crucial role in food security, as they are generally responsible for food markets, local infrastructure, land governance, zoning and waste management. The division of responsibilities between national and local governments varies per country.

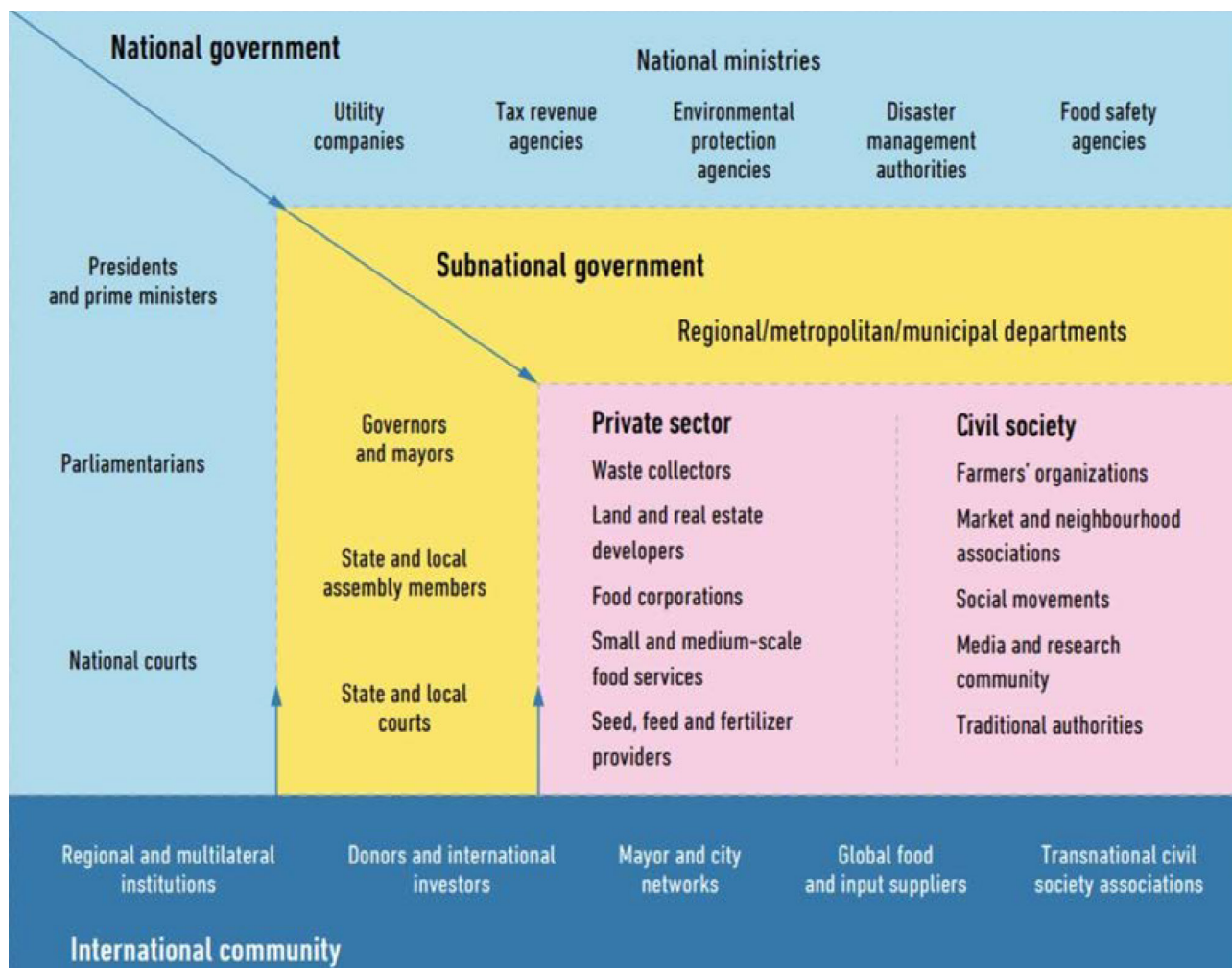


Our approach to food security



VNG International works on food security in a cross-functional way. This is described through the following examples:

- **Climate adaptation:** In Benin, we strengthen local water committees to prevent flooding and build irrigation channels. This protects crops and increases agricultural yields.
- **Inclusive land reforms:** In countries like Burundi and Togo, we support the process of land administration. Security of land ownership increases the possibilities to invest in and to use agricultural land more effectively. In addition, we advocate for land allocation to women and vulnerable groups, enabling them to grow food and achieve economic independence.
- **Conflict prevention:** In the DRC, we support the development of village plans, protecting agricultural land and preventing land-use conflicts. Many micro-conflicts over use, donation, inheritance or management of land can give rise to family and social violence, which need to be mediated. VNG International supports decision-makers in this exercise, with capacity building in legal and social matters. Bigger conflicts can result in armed groups taking livestock to feed their war effort, or can force farmers to abandon their land. VNG International ensures that through local security plans and committees, dialogue between local government, civil society and collective security forces is improved.
- **Support for refugees:** In Uganda, we assist refugees with agricultural projects and promote harmony with host communities.
- **Facilitating food security:** Through various programmes we support local governments to create enabling conditions that ensure food security on their territory, through the facilitation of local food markets, the improvement of infrastructure, the set up of policies or registration of farmers through cooperatives that favour food security.



Source : United Nation's High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN)

PartiCiP : citizen participation to boost local economic development

Where

Benin

When

2021-2026

Local economic development enhances food security by boosting agricultural productivity, creating jobs, increasing income, and improving infrastructure, ensuring stable food supplies, better access to markets, and the ability to afford nutritious food. In Benin, VNG International through The PartiCiP program, supported the target municipalities in this regard with:

1. Updating development planning tools to steer economic development on their territories
2. Identify and enhance economic potential in key sectors, including agriculture, fish farming and tourism. include the identification and enhancement of the economic potential of the territories.
3. design and implementation of pilot initiatives on Local Economic Development (LED), such as setting up irrigation systems for cooperatives to increase production, training young farming entrepreneurs and facilitating their access to farming land.
4. To achieve these goals, the program mobilized municipalities, local actors, and entrepreneurs through the facilitation of a Private Investments in Municipalities Fair to highlight both the legal framework and opportunities of public private partnerships for LED.
5. Connecting small entrepreneurs to the Market Information System to secure better market access for their products and by-products.
6. Learning and knowledge dissemination processes: To leverage LED achievements and best practices, manuals and operational strategies have been developed for municipal use; securing markets for products and by-products.



DURAGIRE

Where

Benin

When

2024-2026

Floods can be devastating and have an extremely negative impact on crop fields, thus directly impacting food production and provisioning. Through its water management program, VNG International is strengthening integrated water resource management (IWRM) at community level, notably by improving the functionality of the Local Water Committees (CLE) in the Ouémé Bassin in Benin. These Local Water Committees, attached to the municipalities, are an essential body to engage with communities to contribute to water management. In this context of recurrent floods, these Local Water Committees are supported to set-up an innovative community-led early warning system to timely alert against catastrophic flooding, as well as to inform and mobilise communities in to take preventive measures like to build dikes and dig drainage channels. These local water committees are present in the 16 municipalities of the Ouémé basin in Benin, home to a total population of around 6 million.

TRIDE programme

Where

DR Congo

When

2020-2026

TRIDE (Transition to Inclusive Development in Eastern DRC) is a project funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which aims to alleviate food insecurity by promoting local economic development through integrated water resource management, the development of agricultural value chains and improved access to land for small-scale farmers in North and South Kivu provinces. This project is implemented by a consortium of organisations comprised of ZOA, AGRITERRA and VNG International. VNG International role is to support five municipalities to enable them to provide quality services to small-scale producers and agricultural cooperatives. With this in mind, the municipalities, in collaboration with technical services (agricultural cadastre), are improving land governance, giving agricultural producers secure access to land guaranteed by legal titles, thereby enabling family farmers to increase their holdings from 0.3 ha to 0.9 ha. This land management system is based on municipal agricultural land use plans. In order to ensure better access to markets and agricultural inputs, through their investment plans and active collaboration with communities (organised in community structures), municipalities are investing in agricultural infrastructure, through the development of roads and bridges, to facilitate access to markets. Beyond the infrastructure framework, VNG International works with municipalities to promote integrated water resource use through watershed management, thereby protecting agricultural production areas from flooding and other adverse effects of climate change. To support the development of agricultural value chains in the project areas, municipalities are incorporating forums for dialogue on taxation that promotes a resilient market system. Small producers organised into cooperatives thus benefit from the support of the National Service for Cooperatives and Peasant Organisations (supported by VNG International) to enable them to be competitive in the regional market.



We Are Able!

Where

Burundi
DR Congo
Ethiopia
South Sudan
Sudan
Uganda

When

2021-2025

We are Able! is a food security and local inclusion program implemented in six African countries (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda). In this program, funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we – a consortium of six partners, including the African Disability Forum, ZOA, SeeYou Foundation, The Leprosy Mission, The Hague Academy for Local Governance, and VNG International - focus on improved inclusion of persons with disabilities. We aim to strengthen their voices and resilience and involve them in legislation and policy, particularly regarding food security.

Government procedures for registration and certification of land ownership can constitute a barrier persons with disabilities. In Burundi for instance, physical presence is required in multiple stages of the registration process. Also, the costs of the registration and the certification itself can be a barrier for persons with disabilities, as they often live in extreme poverty. Additionally, inadequate registration procedures prevent persons with disabilities from inheriting land, as they are not recognized as fully independent individuals. Lastly, lack of information on government procedures when it comes to land rights constitutes a barrier for persons with disabilities to inherit, acquire, buy and own land. While it's already a hurdle for individuals without disabilities, those with disabilities face even greater challenges because people fail to recognize the importance of informing them about these procedures. VNG International's approach introducing the Local Inclusion Agenda (LIA) helped institutionalise the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the municipal planning cycle and ensure Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) now play an active role in policy decisions. In multiple countries, these OPDs received legal recognition. In DRC, the introduction of the LIA helped push for the 2022 disability rights law and advocacy efforts led to land inheritance rights for persons with disabilities. In Uganda, 78% of persons with disabilities can now access development funds. These are all examples that improve food security and economic stability for persons with disabilities as well as the communities as a whole.



*Discover the
achievements of "We
are Able!"*

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A sample of VNG International's key products on food security:

- Food Security Benchmark – A tool developed to help municipalities gain insight into best practices and unused potential to promote food security (2014)
- Tool for Employment and Labour Market Analysis (2019)
- Brochure Achieving inclusive food security through improved local governance





**Vereniging van
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