



# Water governance

Effective governance of flood protection, water security and water treatment

Good water governance is essential for increasing the resilience of urban deltas – locations that face major water-related risks. Water governance is about public administration and collaboration between the various stakeholders in the field. The importance of good water governance is increasingly recognised by large organisations, which observe the direct correlation with a healthy economic climate. It has therefore become a prominent item on national and international policy agendas. Collaboration at local, regional, national and international level is vital for the implementation of water governance, and is therefore a primary issue.

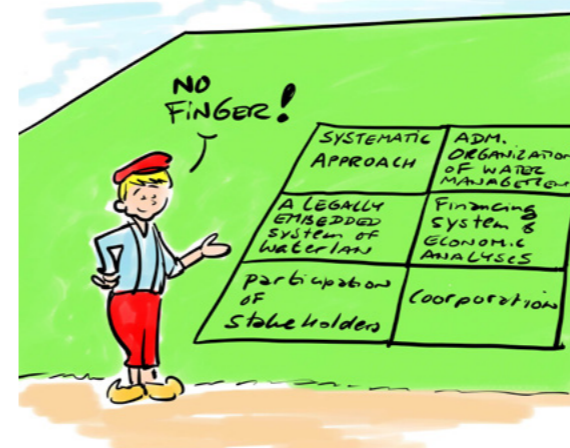




HENRI CORMONT © UNIE VAN WATERSCHAPPEN

Dike wardens get briefing at an dike monitoring exercise at De Vergelt in Baarlo (Province of Limburg).

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR GOOD WATER GOVERNANCE



Turkey has experienced problems with the management and operation of water treatment facilities. Dutch Water Authorities has therefore recommended to set up an umbrella organisation to manage and maintain a number of treatment plants.

**What's the issue?**

Urban delta regions face considerable water-related risks. Increasing the resilience of such regions is part of the International Water Ambition (IWA) of the Netherlands. Water governance –covering flood protection, water security and water treatment – is a key determiner of that resilience. The concept of governance also covers collaboration among the organisations responsible for the political, administrative, social, legal and financial aspects of water management. Good water governance has five defining characteristics:

- a strong administrative organisation
- a sound statutory basis
- an effective finance system
- a methodical approach
- stakeholder involvement.

**Water crisis or governance crisis?**

Global organisations are increasingly recognising water governance as a high priority. The World Bank, for example, observed that good water governance has a clear correlation with a healthy economic climate. Through its Governance Global Practice (GGP), the World Bank is seeking to promote better water governance. Furthermore, the Organisation for European Cooperation and Development (OECD) has described the current water crisis as primarily a governance crisis. The OECD devotes a great deal of time to water management, since shortcomings in that field are an obstacle to economic development. The organisation publishes water governance reports on individual countries, and has identified the Netherlands as a global benchmark. *Water Governance in the Netherlands: Fit for the Future?* highlights the country's robust and flexible institutional, financial and policy framework. The points that the OECD identifies as warranting improvement are currently being addressed.

**Water governance on the international agenda**

The OECD's Principles on Water Governance (2015) sets out twelve principles of good water governance. These have been developed by the OECD's Water Governance Initiative (WGI), which is supported and chaired by the Netherlands. The WGI is a network of more than 120 stakeholders committed to building on the twelve principles in the lead-up to the 8th World Water Forum in 2018.

Other good examples of international collaboration on water governance are the UN's High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP), and the Delta Coalition.

**International Water Ambition**

The Netherlands has considerable knowledge and experience in the field of water governance. Hence, in the context of the IWA, the country is seeking to promote the further development of water governance. The Netherlands is also committed to building up local capacity through long-term collaborative arrangements and one-off missions, and to strengthening the capacity of national and international organisations. Improving national and international water governance is an important aim of the IWA. Better water governance is also a precondition for attaining other objectives in fields such as aid, trade, innovation and water diplomacy.

**Collaboration is vital**

Local, regional, national and international collaboration is vital for the implementation of better water governance. In the Netherlands, for example, provinces, municipalities and water authorities work together in collaborative partnership. Furthermore, collaboration is a criterion for implementation of the IWA. One of the ways that the Netherlands is contributing to the IWA is through projects organised on behalf of the Dutch Water Authorities (*Unie van Waterschappen*). Most of the projects in question relate to water governance. In the Kingfisher Project, for example, the authorities are working with the South African government to establish nine catchment management agencies for regional water management.



### **Contact and further information**

For more information, see the website of Dutch Water Authorities:  
[www.duchtwaterauthorities.com](http://www.duchtwaterauthorities.com)

Enquiries may be addressed to Marcel de Ruijter  
([info@duchtwaterauthorities.com](mailto:info@duchtwaterauthorities.com))  
or Martien Beek ([martien.beek@minienm.nl](mailto:martien.beek@minienm.nl)).