

The Dutch Delta Programme

In partnership with the OECD Studies on Water: Stakeholder Engagement for Inclusive Water Governance

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Organisation: Staff Delta Programme Commissioner

Country: Netherlands

Level of government: Regional/State government

Sector: Environmental protection

Type: Organisational Design

Launched in: 2010

Overall development time: 5 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

The Delta Programme is a joint endeavour between the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment, provinces, municipal councils and regional water authorities, in close co-operation with social organisations and business. It was created in 2010 with two priority goals: i) protect the Netherlands against flooding; ii) ensure freshwater supply over the next 100 years. Stakeholder engagement within this programme has, for example, led to customisation in the strategies and the commitment of several parties at a regional (within the sub-programmes) and national level.

The implementation of the Delta Programme consists of a series of short- and long-term flexible projects to be carried out up to 2015 and beyond. Building on multi-stakeholder dialogue, and technical calculations and assumptions, the Delta Programme is governed by several decisions that instruct what measures should be taken for flood risk management (standards, strategies), freshwater strategy, water levels, protection of the delta and spatial adaptation.

Why the innovation was developed

- An important driver is that we are developing measures to prevent a disaster, instead of developing measures after a disaster. The new approach centres around 'adaptive delta management' - dealing with uncertainties (e.g. regarding climate change and social-economic development) in a sensible manner.
- This is being done by looking at tasking ahead of us, using that insight to put in place cost-effective measures in good time and remaining flexible to be able to act on new opportunities, insights and circumstances. Alternative measures are available should they be necessary in the future. That is also part of the adaptive approach to work: being practical, alert and prepared. Adaptive delta management has been embraced by all of the government authorities, social parties, knowledge institutes and companies as a practical solution for dealing with developments, the direction of which is clear to us, but the rate of which is not.
- Another important driver for the Delta Programme is that there is interconnectivity in the solutions for flood risk management and fresh water supply. The major rivers, the river delta's and the major lakes are all directly linked and are all part of the international catchment areas of the rivers Rhine, Meuse, Ems and Scheldt. The main water system and the regional (ground)water system are also connected in a number of ways. Something that provides a good solution for the tasking in one area may then have disadvantages for a neighboring area and vice versa. Over the past years, further insight has been gained in interconnectivity in the Dutch water system in the Delta Programme.
- The objectives of the Dutch Delta Programme are to protect The Netherlands against flooding and to ensure freshwater supply, now and in the future. These objectives require support and commitment of all governments, the business community and social organizations.
- Therefore, the Delta Programme is a national programme in which the central government, provinces, water boards and municipal counties cooperate, involving social organizations (NGOs) and the business community.
- The Delta Programme Commissioner promotes the creation and implementation of the Delta Programme. Every year the cabinet submits the Delta Programme (as prepared by the Delta Programme Commissioner) to the parliament. The Delta Programme has developed new form of collaboration between the government and regional authorities; the so-called adaptive approach and linking water and spatial planning issues are major plus points.
- Governments (national, regional, local)
- Water institutions at sub-national level (river basin organisations, state agencies, regional water authorities)
- Regulators (economic, environmental)
- Agricultural actors
- Business
- Science, academia and research centres
- Consumer associations
- Advisors (engineering, consulting firms)
- Media
- Parliamentarians

Results

Effectiveness

- Capacity-development: the cooperation between the regional governments in a region has been improved.
 - Broader economic development: there are opportunities for innovations, among others by engaging the business community.
 - Sustainability/resilience: sustainability is one of the shared values in the Delta Programme which has been taken into account in comparing the preferential strategies.
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Service quality

Responsiveness:

- Acceptability/ownership of stakeholders involved: the Delta Programme is widely supported as a result of the stakeholder engagement as described at Q10. Stakeholders feel ownership regarding the strategies and Delta Decisions.

Development

Design

The Delta Programme Commissioner makes a yearly proposal for the Delta Programme together with the politicians/administrators of the provinces, municipal counties and water boards. They together are the promoters.

Since 2010 parties in the regions (governments, social parties and business community) have worked together to seek out solutions for national objectives that tie in with the features of the region in question and that present opportunities for an integrated approach.

This collaboration has, for example, led to customisation in the strategies and the commitment of several parties. Numerous social organisations/NGOs proactively contribute to the development of the Delta Programme and its Delta Decisions. For instance by making their wishes and ideas known at an early stage. This happens both at a regional (within the sub programmes) and national level.

Testing

- No methods were used to test the innovation.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- Platforms: The Delta Programme Commissioner chairs and prepares proposals for the Delta Decisions, advised by the Steering Group and comprised of other governmental representatives and water boards.
- Tools: the evaluation framework VGS is an important tool for preferential strategies, providing politicians/administrators with objective information on the strategies for flood risk management and freshwater an evaluation framework.
- Another tool has been design-driven research, applied with the help of the so-called 'Delta atelier'. Design-driven research helps towards putting joint (factual) studies into practice.

Resources used:

- Combination of funding by national government (main funder), local governments, social parties/NGOs and business community.
 - The Delta Act also established a Delta Fund to finance the implementation of the Delta Programme and related projects and to monitor investments to ensure a proper balance is directed towards flood risk management and freshwater supply.
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Diffusion

- The fifth Delta Programme contains the final proposals for five Delta Decisions for improving flood protection and reducing water shortages. The Delta Decisions lead to a new working method in three areas: flood risk management, the availability of freshwater and water-robust spatial planning.
 - The Delta Act on Flood Risk Management and Freshwater Supplies came into effect in January 2012 as an amendment to the Water Act. It is the backbone of the Delta Programme and mandates a government-appointed Delta Commissioner to lead the Delta Programme.
 - The Commissioner is required to submit a yearly proposal for action to the Cabinet, in consultation with the relevant authorities, social organisations and the business community.
 - An annual report provides an inventory of all measures, facilities, studies and ambitions related to flood risk management and freshwater supplies.
 - The Delta Act also established a Delta Fund to finance the implementation of the Delta Programme and related projects and to monitor investments to ensure a proper balance is directed towards flood risk management and freshwater supply.
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Challenges and solutions

- In general, some stakeholders had difficulty with the pace of the Delta Programme (too high), but in the end the stakeholders support the outcome (Delta Decisions and preferential strategies). Sometimes, there was a lack of capacity.
- Custom-made meetings in the regions have taken place to provide for information, discuss the process and possibilities to contribute to it.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- For stakeholder engagement to be impactful it is essential to be transparent on the objectives, the process to achieve the objectives including the mile stones and when, what is expected from the stakeholders, when it is expected and what's done with the response from the stakeholders.
 - Joint fact finding is crucial, not only for tasking also regarding possible solutions. And take the questions, worries, suggestions and comments from the stakeholder seriously. It also helps to ask independent party to review the outcome.
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Conditions for success

- Following the five Dutch D's: - Delta Programme: clarity on who are the stakeholders and what are their roles - Delta Act: provide for a legal basis - Delta Fund: have financial resources- Delta Commissioner: have an (independent) leader - Delta Decisions: have clear milestones.
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Other information

The Delta Programme uses shared values: solidarity, flexibility and sustainability.

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