



The Delta Approach

A dynamic approach
for delta regions

Urban deltas need to become more resilient to water-related threats. The Delta Approach stands for dynamic delta management, using solutions that can be adapted to a constantly changing environment. A sustainable strategy for a variety of social, cultural and economic contexts.



What's the issue?

Delta regions offer excellent conditions for social and economic development. However, large-scale urbanisation and development in land-water transition zones, combined with climate change impacts make such regions increasingly vulnerable. It is therefore essential to create resilient deltas with a long-term vision for a sustainable economy, ecology and liveability.

Dynamic approach

As a delta country, the Netherlands has learnt to live with water for over many centuries. This has produced practical solutions rooted in a strong technological tradition. Since water management is a key driver of spatial and economic development, the delta approach has been institutionalised into the Netherlands' government, policy and investment domains. This approach is continuously refined on the basis of experience. Today, we embrace ongoing environmental change and design solutions in such a way that they can be adapted to changing circumstances as much as possible.



JEFF SCHWALTZ

Every delta is unique, but the parameters governing sustainable delta management are comparable. On the basis of experience gained in the Netherlands and around the world, we and our partners have created the Delta Approach. This approach offers new perspectives for protecting and developing delta regions. It embodies an integrated and adaptive way of thinking, planning and acting, which can be used in various social, economic and cultural contexts. So it is not a universal blueprint.

Features of the Delta Approach

- A long-term perspective is combined with short-term measures.
 - Based on sound knowledge of the physical characteristics of a delta region coupled with future scenarios, a long-term strategy and plan are drawn up for the delta system. The future scenarios define potential trends in ecological, social, demographic and economic development. Deploying such a strategy will ensure that all decisions are as future-proof as possible.
 - To factor in uncertainties, adaptive pathways are mapped out, along which decision points are defined. These stipulate what needs to be decided, when, and on the basis of what monitoring data. This enables short-term action that takes account of the long-term perspective.
- An integrated approach is adopted, in which investment in resilience is integrated with other needs, including sustainable environmental management, improved spatial planning, economic development, food security, energy security, recreation, and social cohesion.
- Long term sustainability is not only a matter of technically smart solutions, but depends especially on the social and cultural embedding of the approach, from national to grass roots level. Cooperation amongst government bodies, enterprises, NGOs and local stakeholders is fostered, since this is recognised as the best route to widely supported solutions. Increased institutional capacity is essential to sustainable long-term development. Successful delta management also depends on mechanisms for directing management processes and giving assurance of the regularity of the financial implications of decisions. To this end the Netherlands has appointed a Delta Commissioner, and has earmarked the financial resources needed to implement its plans for the entire period up to 2050.
- The approach focuses on implementation from the outset. Plans and policies need to take account of the scope for funding the intended measures, based on a transparent process with clear decision-making and deadlines.

The Delta Approach reflects the Netherlands' international ambition. We seek durable partnerships and coalitions with other delta countries working for the sustainable development of delta regions around the world. Our current partners include Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Vietnam and the USA.

From ambition to action

The Delta Approach is being put into practice by:

- the Netherlands' special envoy for international water affairs;
- the Delta Alliance, an international, knowledge-driven network of organisations engaged in delta-related research, with sixteen delta-country members.
- the Delta Coalition, working at government level to promote delta regions on the international agenda, boost the sharing and exchange of knowledge and experience, and foster implementation.
- the Dutch Risk Reduction Team (DRR Team) and Dutch Surge Support (DSS Water). These two instruments facilitate rapid responses to water-related disasters, and support disaster prevention and post-disaster reconstruction.
- the international activities of the Delta Commissioner.



For more information, contact:

The Dutch Water Sector
www.dutchwatersector.com

For more information about Dutch water expertise, projects, knowledge, education, and events around the world

The Delta Alliance
www.delta-alliance.org

The Delta Coalition
www.deltacoalition.net

The Delta Commissioner
english.deltacommissaris.nl
The Dutch authority responsible for partnerships and collaboration at the international level

DRR Team & DSS Water
www.dutchwatersector.com/drr

For other enquiries, please contact the International Water Ambition (IWA) secretariat:
IWA@rvo.nl.