



**WORLD OF WATER**

*Partnerships and collaboration for water justice  
and community-led water management*

**Both ENDS**  
Connecting people for change

## **BANGLADESH**

Free-flowing rivers and fertile fields

## **WE WOMEN ARE WATER**

A call for gender just water & climate solutions

## **KENYA**

Campaign for a clean Athi River

## **MANILA**

Environmental destruction and loss of livelihoods  
for an airport





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#### COLOFON

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The World of Water magazine highlights the work of Both ENDS on water related issues with partner organisations around the world.

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*We trust that this  
will inspire new ways  
of working*

# DANIELLE HIRSCH

Image: Sander van Velze

In 1991, when Both ENDS was founded, water was a major rallying point. At that point in time, the development of large-scale dams, pushed by the World Bank and others in the financial sector, was one of the biggest concerns of people all over the world. Civil society in India and Brazil, Uganda and Laos, had been looking at the impacts on people and nature of existing dams, and organising all sorts of resistance to stop new dams – from blocking roads to influencing parliament and politicians, from large demonstrations and marches to debates and sit-ins at the headquarters of banks and construction companies.

In those years, Both ENDS was a linchpin between these different movements all around the globe. At the same time, we assured that representatives of different organisations gained access to decision-making processes within relevant development banks. In addition, we were able to generate small amounts of funding from foundations and governments in the Netherlands, Europe and the United States.

The collective was able to stop several dam developments and we generated a rapid increase in awareness of the social and environmental impact of large dams. Banks started to take impact analyses way more seriously. Today, while large dams are still threatening people and nature in several regions, any financier will think twice, or even three times, before embarking on a new dam project.

Alongside of resistance to dams, civil society has always looked at solutions, oftentimes inspired by the people living alongside rivers or coasts – exactly those people who have always been excluded from decision-making processes. Together, we started compiling ‘the Encyclopedia of Sustainability’, in which we presented a hopeful palette of ongoing initiatives of sustainable land and water management. As a next step, we sat down with 10+ organisations to define our ‘Negotiated Approach’ to water management, in which we drafted the process of inclusive water management, based on people’s lived experiences.

Now, we’re in the next phase of sharing our experience-based approach to water management. At the UN Water Conference, we will launch the Transformative Water Pact. This set of clear and simple guidelines, initiated by Both ENDS and IHE-Delft, reflects the local and indigenous expertise and knowledge of women and men, and of civil society groups worldwide. We trust that this will inspire new ways of working by those who cherish water and people as much as we do.

*Danielle Hirsch*





# CAROLINA DE MOURA CAMPOS

Brazil

Image: Carolina de Moura

**Carolina de Moura Campos (39)** lives in Jangada, Brazil, a community close to the spot where the enormous mining disaster took place in Brumadinho in 2019, which cost 272 people their lives. She has been involved in protecting the environment ever since she was a child and has now made it her work. Besides many other activities, she is chairperson of the Community Association of Jangada.

#### What role does water play in your daily life?

Like everyone else, I need water every day for drinking and washing. And I use water daily to water my garden and food forest. I also often make 'flower water', water in which I can steep herbs and flowers. I use it as perfume or sprinkle it through my house. The herbs and flowers have a healing energy that help to care for our bodies and our environment.

#### Do you have a favourite river or lake in your life?

Yes, the Paraopeba River. Even though it is polluted with toxic waste from the Vale dam that collapsed in Brumadinho, it is still my river and I will continue to fight to save it.

#### Could you tell me something about your work in your region. At this moment, what is your main concern, your main project?

Mining has already irreparably destroyed a significant part of the groundwater sources in Minas Gerais, the state where Brumadinho is situated. It destroys recharge areas, uses high volumes of water, depletes water tables, causing springs to disappear, and reduces waterflow in streams and rivers, as well as contaminating them. We want to protect the waterways, mountains and people against the expansion of mining in Minas Gerais. Among the things we are doing to achieve that are capacity building and strengthening of women nature defenders in areas affected by mining and we also try to influence policy. We are also fighting for justice and full compensation after the tragic collapse of the dam in Brumadinho.

#### Do you have a success in your work to share?

I am proud of the work that we do in the Jangada community for the protection and self-management of water. Before there were mining companies in the region, the local people collected and distributed water themselves, but our water sources are now seriously under threat from the expansion of mining. In 2007, the people of the community organised themselves by setting up the Community Association of Jangada. We have constructed our own water distribution network and conduct our own water quality checks. This self management means that our community has autonomy over what we need to survive: water.

After the disaster in 2019, while still dealing with an intense trauma, we were forced to expand our activities, and we are now also working for truth, justice, reparation and the guarantee that such a disaster will not happen again. We are aware that the expansion of mining and water security are not compatible. We have to defend our lives and our water and we are doing that together. We meet, debate, blow off steam, support each other, strengthen the bond between us and go on with the fight.

*Como um rio, aceitar  
essas súbitas ondas  
feitas de água impuras  
que afloram a escondida  
verdade nas funduras.*

*Like a river, accept  
these sudden waves  
made of muddy water  
that let emerge its secret  
truth from its depths.*

[listen to this song](#)







*"Uttaran has placed indigenous knowledge back on the agenda and ensured that it is taken seriously by the national government. In our eyes, Both ENDS does the same: it makes sure that the ideas of local grassroots organisations are heard and brought to the attention of the global public."*

Jahin Shams Sakkhar, Uttaran

# BANGLADESH



Images: Uttaran





## *free - flowing rivers and fertile fields*

*"The people of southwest Bangladesh do not want to leave, but will have to because of the severe threat of flooding. We can still solve this. But if we do not start now, the region will be uninhabitable within fifteen years."*

Jahin Shams Sakkhar, Uttaran

**Bangladesh is one of the countries in the world that is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Cyclones, floods – many climate-related disasters threaten its coastal areas, and especially the rural communities in the southwest of the country. The river basins in the region are no longer well-managed and that makes the people who live there even more vulnerable to rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions. The rivers have silted up as a result of land reclamation in the 1960s and the rainwater that falls during the monsoon can no longer be pumped away from the polders and transported to the sea. People with the least financial resources are usually the most vulnerable, because they often have fewer opportunities to migrate or to raise or strengthen their homes.**

**Their reality, rights and interests are often not taken sufficiently into account, and there is a lack of inclusive decision-making processes in public bodies. Combined with climate change and rising sea levels, their situation is getting worse by the day. Uttaran, a partner organisation of Both ENDS, is working to change both policy and practice. Their work is based on the indigenous and traditional knowledge of inhabitants of the coastal area and aims to achieve sustainable management of the rivers, which reflects the reality, rights and interests of the people. The goal is to ensure that millions of people and following generations, like the generations before them, can continue to live in this fertile delta.**



### Densely populated tropical delta

Bangladesh, in South Asia, is a tropical delta with dry, mild winters and hot, humid summers; it is an area where the rivers from the Himalayas find their way to the Indian Ocean. And – as we see in many deltas around the world – it is densely populated. There are more than 1,100 people per square kilometre. The region is an expansive polder landscape, similar to the Netherlands, created in the 1960s to protect the people from flooding and increase food production. Unfortunately, many of the polders in the southwestern coastal region have more or less lost their original function; they are even often counterproductive because the polder infrastructure is in many places vulnerable and no longer able to drain off excess water. And the cause of that lies in the rivers themselves.

### Reclamation didn't work here

Ironically enough, the annual floods that this part of Bangladesh has to deal with are the direct consequence of the polders that were created here in the 1960s. For a short time, the polders offered protection against floods and harvest increased. But it proved to be a short-term solution. Because the inhabitants of the area were insufficiently or not at all involved in the design and implementation of the plan, their knowledge of the rivers was not taken into account. Now, it has become clear that this knowledge – for example, knowledge of the large quantities of fertile sediment that the rivers normally deposited on floodplains – was crucial. Many tidal rivers soon became silted up with mud. Within a few decades, they were higher than the polders. As a result, the polders became like bathtubs that filled with rainwater that could not be drained away. And the sea made it even worse: strong waves flowed inland during spring tides, breaking through vulnerable dykes and filling the polders with sea water. No pump can deal with such volumes of water. Consequently, many of the polders can be filled with stagnant salt or brackish water for up to eight months of the year. That results in unhygienic situations and makes agriculture almost impossible.

### Forced to leave

UN reports now predict that rising sea levels will lead to 13 to 17% of the land in Bangladesh being permanently under water. According to estimates, almost 20 million people may be forced to leave their homes within one generation. Floods from the sea make the farmland salty, which makes it much more difficult to find drinking water. Clean drinking water is too expensive for many people, who are forced to drink bad quality water from shallow wells. In some coastal areas, women in particular spend 20 to 30% of their lives looking for drinking water. In the rain season (June to September) there is not enough work on the land. Men especially leave for the cities in search of work. Old people and mothers with children often stay behind in a vulnerable and unhygienic situation. And even whole families with more financial resources increasingly migrate in search of a better living environment.

### An ingenious indigenous solution

Uttaran is calling for ecological recovery of the tidal rivers through Tidal River Management, an approach that is based on the natural environment and indigenous customs. Before the polders were created, the local people regularly allowed their fields to be flooded in a controlled manner with muddy river water. The fertile mud was then deposited on the fields, the rivers continued to flow and the ecosystem had a diversity of flora and fauna. By passing this knowledge down from generation to generation, the river dwellers know better than anyone how they can use this smart management system to

*UN study: 20 million people in Bangladesh may have to leave their homes because of rising sea levels*

reap the fruits of what nature has to offer, now and in the future. Now that it has become abundantly clear that the polders, imposed from above, were a bad idea, it is time for the local inhabitants to have a real say in how their living environment is managed. Uttaran supports the communities in achieving this, working with them to enable representatives of the communities can demand the right to participate and influence policy.

### Political success

In 2018, the Bangladesh Delta Plan (BDP 2100) was approved by parliament. The people and civil society organisations in the southwestern coastal region were insufficiently involved in the development of the Delta Plan, but the plan does recognise Tidal River Management as a solution to the flooding and an effective measure in adapting to climate change. It is a positive development that the plan already designates seven of the 39 polders for implementation of Tidal River Management. The plan comprises an inclusive approach to the management of the tidal rivers, in which communities have the right to participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of the intervention. This success is undoubtedly the consequence of the persistent lobbying activities led by Uttaran, together with the Paani (water) Committees, civil society organisations and local political leaders.

### Inclusiveness at the negotiating tables

The fact that Tidal River Management is mentioned in the Bangladesh Delta Plan is a good basis for discussions on the recovery of ecosystems and how to tackle the flooding together with the local people. For Uttaran, it is essential that the Delta Plan is implemented on the basis of the activities of the communities themselves. That means together with the local people. Both ENDS is helping Uttaran to achieve this, for example by opening doors to the negotiating table. The negotiations on the implementation of Tidal River Management must now be carefully facilitated at the right levels. Women, the landless and other minority groups in particular should be included in the dialogue and negotiating processes. Uttaran is indispensable in this respect, as a civil society organisation that ensures that these processes are inclusive and that the ultimate decisions benefit everyone.

### Fighting to stay in their homes

Both ENDS and Uttaran are working to achieve an inclusive approach to Tidal River Management. That should lead to improved living conditions for the around 20 million people living in the region, so that they do not have to leave their homes. The rivers must again flow naturally so that the living conditions of the local people and the biodiversity can recover.

[read more about our work with Uttaran](#)







*Through cooperation, the knowledge  
and strategic power of both parties increase*

# AGUA ES VIDA

**Water is literally life**, the lifeblood of ecosystems, of nature, of humans. However, in many places the distribution and use of water is unjust and unsustainable. Water management is generally focused on short-term economic interests, on maximising the profit of a well-connected few at the expense of people and nature. This dominant view of water and water management has its origins in the European industrial revolution, which became the global norm through colonialism and globalisation. But according to [Melvin van der Veen](#) and [Murtah Shannon](#), water experts at Both ENDS, this view will have to give way to equitable, sustainable and inclusive water management. Both ENDS cooperates with and supports communities and organisations worldwide who are working to this end.



## *The cultural, contextual, ecological and human aspects of water management are not taken into consideration*

intrinsic value. The cultural, context-specific, ecological and human aspects of water management are not considered.

### **The politics of water**

Murtah: “Water management is often presented as value-free, as a world of engineers and hydrologists guided by the latest scientific knowledge. The outcomes of decision-making processes around water are presented as necessary, self-evident and incontrovertible. For example, a new dam will be presented in terms of meeting increasing energy demand; a new dyke will be presented as the only way to protect neighbourhoods from flooding. But these interventions are anything but value-free; there are always certain interests and views behind them. The necessity of a dam, for example, rests on the assumption that disrupting river systems and the communities that depend on them is permissible to generate more energy. It all boils down to which interests are the most powerful.”

Melvin: “The key question of water management is not what should be done with the water, but who decides what happens to the water? Whose interests are served and whose interests are undermined? And with that, what are the consequences for people and nature? That is the essence of a political perspective on water. Whoever has control over water – governments, businesses – makes the decisions regarding who can or cannot use it. Both in the Netherlands and in other countries, policymakers dealing with water issues must become aware of this.”

### **Supporting local visions on water management**

Both ENDS puts this political perspective on water management into practice by working intensively with partner organisations from around the world. Some organisations have a scientific focus, others are more activist. Others arise out of sheer necessity – for example, to support fisherfolk in standing up for their rights when they are suddenly denied access to their fishing grounds or to support communities in developing their own vision for sustainable water management. Both ENDS collaborates with water experts to foster mutual learning and strengthen each other’s work. Melvin: “We call this ‘mutual capacity development’: cooperation increases the knowledge and strategic clout of both parties.”

The organisations that Both ENDS works with are advocating – toward governments and businesses – for water management that has as its starting point the interests and knowledge of residents. They advocate for social, cultural, historical and ecological aspects to be considered when looking for the best solution to water issues. The emphasis is on empowering people who are usually excluded from decision-making processes, such as women and indigenous groups.

**Water management** – in Both ENDS’s view – goes far beyond the availability of clean drinking water and sanitation alone. It is also about the use and management of rivers, marines areas and coastal zones, and the right to fish for subsistence. It is about preventing pollution from entering streams, rivers from being closed by dams, or lakes from becoming virtually dry due to excessive industrial water extraction. It is about involving people in decision-making around water resources on which they depend for their livelihoods.

Many of the global injustices in water management result from the huge political and economic interests behind them. Water management is seen primarily through economic, technical and anthropocentric lenses. Market interests and economic growth determine how water is managed. Water management is reduced to a technological issue. Water and nature are seen primarily as resources for people, with no recognition of their



*After all, you always want to seek a solution, in dialogue, that works for everyone and which is really sustainable in the long term*

Melvin: “There is no blueprint. What works in Mozambique may work completely differently in Bangladesh. You have to be embedded in the local context and know how the institutions work. That is why local expertise is essential. Local experts know the situation on the ground and know what works. In Bangladesh, for example, very clever solutions for regulating and distributing scarce or excess water existed in the past. The trick is to bring those back to the surface.”

#### **Future-proof water management**

Just, inclusive and sustainable water management requires a different approach and ultimately provides more efficient, future-proof water management. It is tempting for the water sector to take a one-size-fits all approach. Murtah: “Yet practice shows that this approach is often the least future-proof. For example, the Netherlands has funded a series of master plans in various countries, all of which insufficiently understood the role of local communities and institutions. As a result, these plans did not even turn out to be feasible. It pays to invest heavily in dialogue with local residents and utilise their knowledge and experience.” Governments have a key role to play in this: public agencies are in a position to create space for dialogue, for civic space. Both ENDS is committed to ensuring that government plays its proper role.

Both ENDS supports its partner organisations in advocacy for truly sustainable water management and does so itself in the Netherlands and internationally. Both ENDS brings the local realities of specific communities to the fore. The organisation also acts, where necessary, as a ‘watchdog’. Murtah: “That is part of our role. Sometimes you also have to dare to put your finger on the sore spot. At Both ENDS, we always do so with clear objectives and in a constructive manner. After all, you ultimately want to engage in dialogue to find the solution that works for everyone and is truly sustainable in the long run.”



Murtah Shannon

#### **The role of the Dutch government**

Both ENDS focuses its advocacy efforts on the Netherlands’ sphere of influence, including Dutch government policies, investments and the Dutch role in international institutions. For example, the Netherlands – through export credit insurer Atradius Dutch State Business (DSB) – provides guarantees to high-risk projects, including in the water sector, often worth hundreds of millions of euros. Murtah: “These are Dutch public funds that are deployed. Therefore, we think we should have a say in how those funds are used. We have raised the issue with the Dutch Ministry of Finance, as well as Atradius DSB in the Netherlands.”

For years, Both ENDS has opposed the way export credit insurance policies are granted. Decisions on whether or not to grant export credit insurance to a project are driven almost entirely by economic or political interests. Moreover, little or no information is made public about the projects, which include land reclamation and port development. Murtah: “As a result, the people affected have no idea where they stand or what to expect. They could suddenly be evicted from their land, their home bulldozed, or they could be prohibited from fishing in places where they and their ancestors have long fished for their livelihoods. And these things can happen without it being



Melvin van der Veen

*It is clear that the global water crisis cannot be solved with the current approach*

clear if they will ever receive any kind of compensation. It is no coincidence that wealthy neighbourhoods never have to give way to this kind of destructive project.”

#### **Beyond technology**

The Dutch water sector has a lot of knowledge and expertise, especially in a technical sense. It is rich in data, models and engineers. However, there is much less room for anthropological, geographical and social science expertise. Such knowledge is not taken into account in projects and often not in policy. Local communities, residents and farmers who use the water have that knowledge, but are not given the opportunity to influence decisions. Murtah: “We believe that the water sector, which is ruled by engineers, must realise that its knowledge is incomplete to achieve sustainable water management. Equal knowledge sharing and collaboration is essential. That is where the real opportunity lies!”

The term inclusiveness is increasingly being used in the water sector. Critical academics and organisations such as Both ENDS have contributed to this turnaround, including through interaction among NGOs, policymakers, water experts and scientists on several controversial cases. The bottom line

in most cases was that the overly technical focus and top-down approach – conceived on the sidelines without proper knowledge of the local context – often led to unfeasible projects. Melvin: “There really wasn’t enough awareness in the water sector that sometimes, against all good intentions, things go wrong. So we are positive about this development. At the same time, huge challenges remain. It is not easy to break an existing system that is built on the top-down approach. For example, the water sector has to deal with restrictions imposed by funders, such as the World Bank.”

#### **Pathway to change: a water pact**

The UN Water Conference in March 2023 reflects growing international attention and momentum around water. The whole (water) world is watching. For Both ENDS, it is an important moment to once again call for a shift in thinking and action in water management. Murtah: “It is clear that the global water crisis cannot be solved with the current approach. It is necessary to formulate a progressive and alternative vision of water management based on the knowledge and expertise of groups that are usually excluded. That is why we, together with our partners, have developed the Transformative Water Pact– a concrete agenda that people can commit to during and after the conference.”

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The Transformative Water Pact (see page 20), a joint initiative of IHE-Delft and Both ENDS, aims to move all stakeholders in the water sector toward inclusive and sustainable water management.





Brazil

# VANDA AND SALOMÃO

Image: Fé e Vida

Isidoro Salomão and Vanda Aparecida dos Santos live in Cáceres, Brazil, in the heart of one of the world's largest wetlands, the Pantanal. They work as social-cultural and environmental educators and are the founders of the Sociedade Fé e Vida organisation.

## How important is water in your daily lives?

Water is of vital importance for us! Here in the Pantanal, one of the hottest regions in the country, we are dependent on water. For us, water is spiritual, it is alive, and it is sacred. And although for many people the Pantanal is synonymous with 'very much water', it is in reality an increasingly scarce and fragile good. That is a cause of great concern for the future.

## Do you have a favourite body of water in your lives, perhaps a river or lake?

For us, all water is sacred but we can not hide our favouritism for the Paraguay River. It feeds the huge wetlands which is the Pantanal. We consider ourselves children of the river and are fighting every day to preserve it. We have a long history of resistance against the Hidrovia Paraguay Paraná (a massive 'water highway' infrastructure plan which threatens ecosystems in the Pantanal and elsewhere, ed.), but also against hydroelectric power stations, contamination by pesticide and mining. Recently we have been focusing on the health of small tributary rivers as a way of taking care of our king, the Paraguay River.

## Is there a local song, saying or poem about water you would like to share with us?

Yes, we have written a song called 'Água dos Igarapés'. The song was created on the Dia do Río Paraguai (Day of the Paraguay River), which we celebrate every year, and has become an ode to our river.

## Can you tell us something about your work on water projects in the Pantanal? Is there a success you would like to share with the world?

Since the year 2000, we have been celebrating the Dia do Río Paraguai on 14 November in Cáceres. We celebrate this day

to raise awareness among the local community, promote their engagement and mobilise them to protect our water resources and forests. About 1,500 people take part in the celebration every year! When we first started with the Paraguay Popular River Committee, we realised that it is the small creeks, streams and springs that feed the big Paraguay River and keep it healthy. The people living along these streams are now at the core of the struggle to save the Paraguay River, and we have set up 13 Popular Committees for the tributary rivers and streams too, each managed by the local communities and each with their own celebration of their rivers.

## How do you work together with Both ENDS? How have they supported you and how have you supported Both ENDS?

Both ENDS and Fé e Vida work together in the 'Wetlands without Borders' network. The support of Both ENDS was crucial in setting up the 13 River Committees and in strengthening them through training and joint activities. With Both ENDS's support, the committees have also been able to set up agro-ecological projects, such as the creation of medicinal herb gardens or the production of honey, which enable the families involved to supplement their incomes. Both ENDS also provides financial support for the annual celebration of the Dia do Río Paraguai, so that we can pay for transport, boats and food.

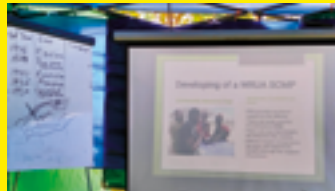
*Na cheia os Rios tomam  
Águas milagres das fontes  
Das serras a jorrar  
Um dia foi mar dos Xaraés  
Hoje é meu Pantanal.*

*In the flood the Rivers take  
miracle Waters from their spring  
From the mountains to gush  
Once it was Mar dos Xaraés  
Today it's my Pantanal.*

→ Scan the QR code to hear the song







# KENYA

Images: MCDI





# KENYA

*local farmers and water users campaign for a clean Athi River*

Kenya is an agricultural country. Some 75% of Kenyans earn at least part of their income from agriculture and it accounts for 33% of the country's gross domestic product. But the sector is under pressure, mainly from climate change, unsustainable use of land (depleting nutrients in the soil) and the use of chemical agents. This has polluted the water and there is no longer a constant supply of food for the country's people. The privatisation of water resources is one of the major problems. Kenya is officially a water-poor country, with around 80% of its land classified as arid or semi-arid. That leads to many conflicts about water. Moreover, as a country with a colonial past, there are still governance and management structures that provide little scope for citizen participation. Both ENDS is working closely with local movements that are calling for more inclusive projects and a liveable environment.

*"One day when we were visiting the dam, we saw a local woman who wanted to fill some jerry cans with water from the reservoir, but she was chased away by government employees in a speedboat. After we had spoken to them, they let her fill the cans, but when we are not there they make the lives of the local communities very difficult."*

Violet Matiru, MCDI

How is the UN giving effective help to mothers who still face serious problems in fetching clean drinking water and cooking on wood stoves? This question led Violet Matiru and her colleagues to set up Millennium Community Development Initiatives (MCDI) to help local communities. Violet lobbied for many years, as far as the UN, for good environmental policy, but what does that do for local communities? It often begins with information. That is why, shortly after it was set up, MCDI developed a guide for communities on the Kenyan Water Act. The guide contained all kinds of stories about both successes and challenges in local water management. But they soon realised that more was needed: communities needed practical help in standing up for their right to water.

### Water is a political problem

Power relations within water management are also very unequal. Water is a political problem at all levels. In Kenya there is a national Water Resource Authority which supports the setting up of users' associations around water resources. The country has more than 1,200 sub-basins, each with its own Water Resource Users Association (WRUA). Through the associations, local water users determine together how the water in their sub-basin is to be allocated and used. MCDI supports communities in setting up these associations or joining an existing WRUA in their region. It is a challenging task. Local governments often have insufficient capacity to work together with the WRUAs and large-scale water users often have too much power within the associations.

*They are often forced to use polluted water from shallow wells*

### A colonial dam

The colonial past can still be felt in Kenya. In the colonial era, governments were restructured, legislation was changed and infrastructure – such as dams – constructed, often after being conceived from the top down. Existing, often locally organised water management agreements, disappeared. Together with the WRUAs, MCDI is fighting against the disastrous consequences of one of these dams. The Ruiru I Dam was built in the Athi River in the colonial era, upstream from Nairobi, to provide water for the Europeans living in the city. Communities living upstream from Nairobi continue to experience difficulties to the present day. They have no direct access to the drinking water reservoir that was created when the dam was built, although it lies literally on their doorsteps. They are often forced to use polluted water from shallow wells. Government employees maintain the situation, for example by removing the water pipes that local people have laid to extract water from the river upstream from the dam.

### Second dam under construction

When residents went to their local government to complain, it emerged that the dam was not managed by the district of Kiambu, but by a private company, the Nairobi Water Company. Now, a state-run company, Athi River Works, is building a second dam (Ruiru 2), partly financed by Deutsche Bank, again with the aim of supplying water for Nairobi. The water supplies were privatised in the interests of the rich and powerful people in the city. As a result, the local government has lost control of local water and natural resources.

Both ENDS is working with local partners in involving communities, so that local water management is structured more effectively and inclusively in practice, and the water rights of villages in the river basin are respected. Communities should be able to participate in discussions on how the water flows, who may use it and for what.

### Looking for local solutions

MCDI has called on the national Water Resource Authority to help. They hope to obtain information on what happened in the past and seek ways for the local water users to regain access to the water. Some communities are, for example, successfully extracting water from forests at higher altitudes, where there are many natural water sources. Women often play leading roles in these projects. MCDI seeks out these projects so that they can serve as examples to other communities.

Both ENDS helped MCDI establish contacts, for example with various WRUAs in the Athi basin to set up the Athi River Community Network. In this way, they can inspire and learn from each other. "And yet we are aware that everywhere, a different solution is needed for each location," says Violet Matiru. "If you don't take account of the local situation and context, you increase the risk of a water conflict. That's why it is best to work directly with local communities."

### From the short to the long term

MCDI started working with farmers after realising that they were using very dangerous chemicals on their farms; hence the very high rates of cancers, strokes, and birth defects among farming communities. These chemicals were being applied next to water bodies, such as the Mbagathi River, right after it flows out of Thogoto Forest, thereby affecting many communities downstream. That's why MCDI started working together with the Kenya Organic Agriculture Network to inform them about the dangers of the farm chemicals and train them in the use of organic and safer alternatives.

Violet says that "farmers find it easier in the short term to use chemicals, partly because if they change over to biological production, their income will probably fall at first. But this project focuses on the long term and is intended to support farmers in changing over to environmentally friendly production methods." The organisations involved also help the farmers to set up biological farmers' markets and shops. Violet went from door to door and organised a lot of information sessions to promote this initiative.

The production methods that Violet describes are also known as agro-ecology. Agro-ecological methods are nature-inclusive and offer a sustainable, future-proof solution for farmers' families. Agro-ecology is unique because it's based on a transformative vision, which focuses on the importance of inclusiveness, equality and independence. Because everyone works on a solution, the project also breaks through old, deeply ingrained patterns and power structures, thus addressing the unequal power relations in our current food supply system. Both ENDS's partners in Kenya, such as Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE), Millennium Community Development Initiatives (MCDI) and Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM), are working together to help local communities move towards genuinely sustainable and fair management of their land and water, for example by using agro-ecological methods.

[read more about our Kenyan partner MCDI](#)











WE  
**WOMEN**  
ARE WATER!





# WE WOMEN ARE WATER!

From 2017 onward, the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action's (GAGGA\*) partners in Latin America have organised the annual #WeWomenAreWater campaign from International Women's Day (March 8) to World Water Day (March 22). In 2021, the campaign went global, involving various partners across Africa and Asia. The campaign has two main goals. First it aims to highlight the leadership and crucial role of women and girls from local and indigenous communities in the sustainable use and protection of water resources, and ensuring water security for all. Second, it calls on governments, investors and international development banks to refrain from investments in fossil fuel, monoculture or large infrastructure projects which lead to water scarcity, pollution or human rights violations, and instead direct their support to gender just water and climate solutions.

The campaign brings together diverse partner organisations within GAGGA to build a strong advocacy platform related to women's rights, climate and water. Both ENDS is one of the alliance members of GAGGA, together with Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM) and Mama Cash, and actively takes part in the campaign.

In 2023, the #WeWomenAreWater campaign highlights several stories, including:

## Nigeria

The Yaataah community in Nigeria's Niger Delta has been impacted by fossil fuel extraction by companies like Shell and the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation. The community's women, with the help of gender and environmental rights organisation Lokiaka Community Development Center, trained 250 women and girls in mangrove restoration and biodiversity management. They aim to restore 500,000 mangroves a year and 5 million mangroves within the next decade.

[see the video:](#)



## Guatemala

The women from the Mayan Chor'ti community in Guatemala are facing displacement and loss of access to water due to the expansion of jatropha monocultures for biodiesel production. They are using their ancestral knowledge to conserve and protect water resources, taking legal actions to secure land rights and holding companies accountable for environmental damage. They have built reservoirs, diversified crops, and planted native species to adapt to the droughts caused by climate change.

[see the video:](#)



[see the whole #WeWomenAreWater campaign here:](#)

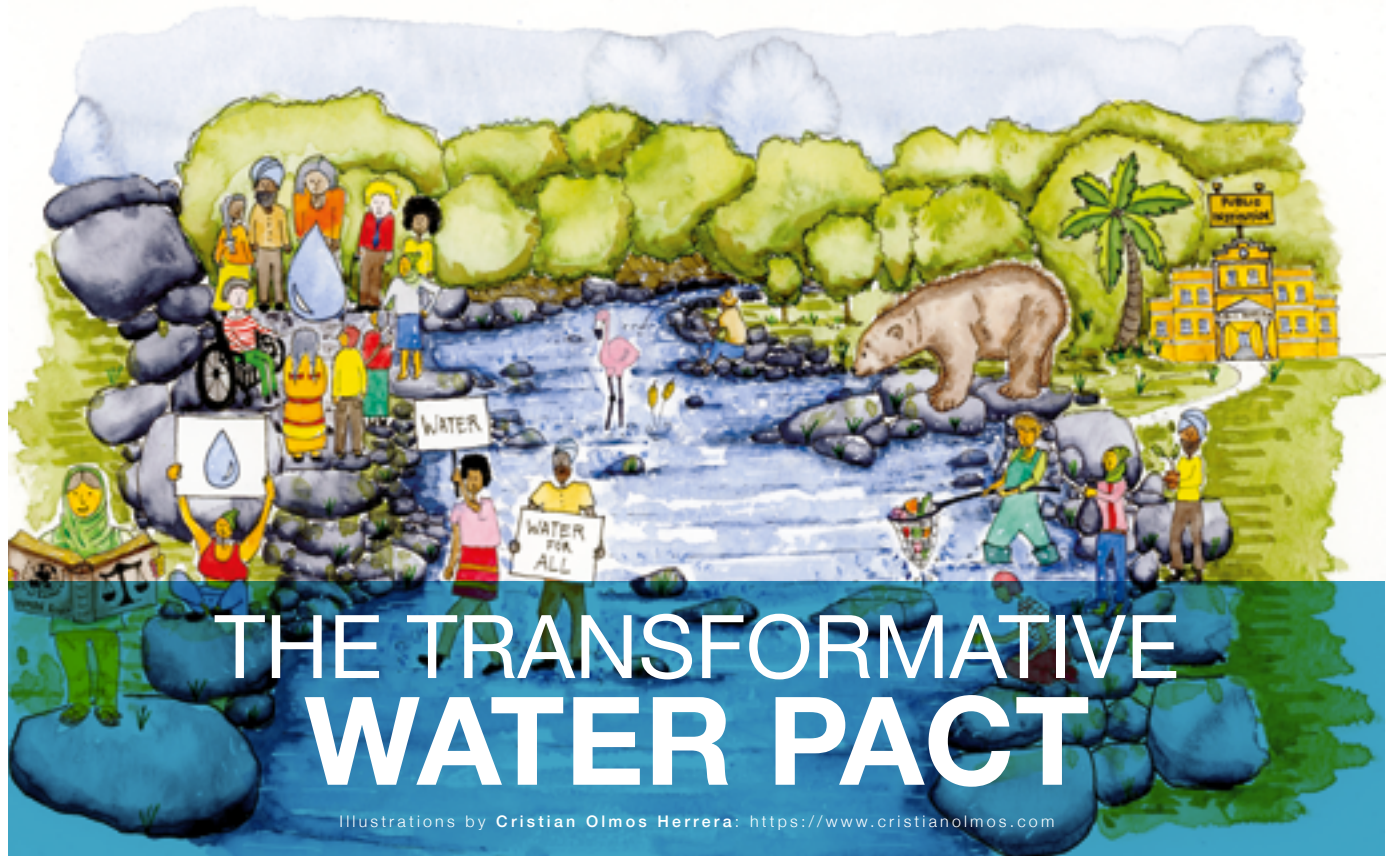


\* The Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) rallies the collective power of women's rights and gender, climate and environmental justice movements around the world. GAGGA's work is based on the conviction that inclusive and sustainable climate solutions that foster gender equality and centre women's leadership offer a vital pathway to address the root causes of the global climate crisis. Central America-based Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM) leads the alliance, in collaboration with Both ENDS and Mama Cash. For more information, visit [www.gaggaalliance.org](http://www.gaggaalliance.org)



Images and photo's in the #WWAW campaign provided by GAGGA and partners





# THE TRANSFORMATIVE WATER PACT

Illustrations by Cristian Olmos Herrera: <https://www.cristianolmos.com>

In March 2023, world leaders and stakeholders across sectors gathered in New York for the UN Water Conference, dedicated to addressing the global water crisis. From countless experiences of people around the globe, and supported by substantial scientific evidence, it is obvious that major changes are needed in the way we share and care for water. In the decades since the last UN Water Conference in 1977, water sources have been further exploited and polluted for the economic gains of a few. As a result, ecosystems have deteriorated and the majority of the world's people have been left with too little and unsafe water to rely on.

## What is the Transformative Water Pact?

The Transformative Water Pact (TWP) has been developed in response to the continued exploitation of nature, neglect of human rights and the extreme power imbalances that characterise contemporary water governance throughout the world. It details an alternative vision of water governance based on the tenets of environmental justice, equality and care. The TWP spans two sections of key principles and a framework for action that provides anchor-points and strategic priorities to guide decision-making for transformative change in water governance.

## What is transformative water governance?

Water governance is defined here as the decision-making processes and associated (formal and informal) institutions and power relations that influence the flows, quality, use, availability and distribution of water, whether it be fresh or salt, surface or subsurface. Transformative water governance refers, in turn, to the decision-making processes, institutions and power-relations that are needed to foreground environmental justice, equity and care in relation to water.

## How was the Transformative Water Pact developed?

The TWP was initiated by the Dutch environmental justice organisation Both ENDS and the international water knowledge institute IHE-Delft. It was developed and authored by a diverse group of 30+ environmental justice advocates from civil society and academia, notably from the Global South, who work extensively on water-related issues throughout the world. Its content was defined through a process of online round-

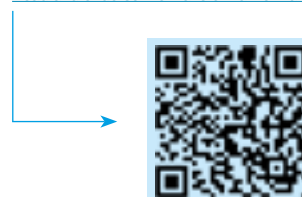
tables and writing from December 2022 to February 2023. The TWP is a living document that can serve as a basis for further discussion and refinement.

## For whom is the Transformative Water Pact intended?

The TWP can be endorsed by any actor that supports the transformative principals and is committed to implementing the framework of action within their own area of expertise and sphere of influence, including Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), policymakers, academics, private sector actors, community groups and governmental organisations.

On the next page, you will find the 10 principles of the Transformative Water Pact. Along with these is a framework for action that is based on the principles to achieve Transformative Water Governance. We commit to actively implement and support the Transformative Water Pact and call upon others to do so too. The framework for action that can be used to this end, is to be found in various languages on the website of the Transformative Water Pact.

[Read and endorse the Transformative Water Pact](#)



# KEY PRINCIPLES OF TRANSFORMATIVE WATER GOVERNANCE



1. Transformative Water Governance recognises that water is an essential element for sustaining all life on earth, and that the flourishing of water bodies and surrounding ecosystems must be prioritized as an end in itself.



2. Transformative Water Governance recognises that water has diverse cultural, indigenous, social, spiritual and natural values, giving priority to value systems that nurture common well-being and environmental care.



3. Transformative Water Governance recognises water and water bodies as common goods, and that communities play key roles as custodians of knowledge for their effective, affective and equitable care.



4. Transformative Water Governance protects and enforces human rights and human rights declarations as confirmed by the UN general assembly, including but not limited to: the Human Right to Water and Sanitation, the Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants; and the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.



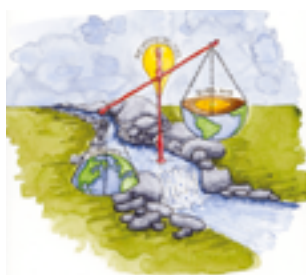
5. Transformative Water Governance acknowledges that, the current crises of water quality, safety, access and distribution are deeply related to unsustainable human activity, including but not limited to: extractivism, agricultural intensification, deforestation, large-scale river damming, impacts on biodiversity (biodiversity loss and introduction of invasive species), industrial groundwater extraction, large-scale land reclamation, land grabbing, corruption and climate change.



6. Transformative Water Governance acknowledges that contemporary water crises are shaped by unequal power relations and injustices that result in an unequal distribution of risks and benefits associated with water to the detriment of marginalised groups including women, indigenous people, peasants, ethnic minorities, subsistence farmers, fisherfolk and people in conditions of poverty.



7. Transformative Water Governance recognises that present-day inequities in water governance have their roots in historical systems, such as capitalism and uneven development, manifested in climate change and the logic of privatisation and unlimited growth; neocolonialism, manifested in the hegemonic knowledge and interests of former colonisers and industrialised countries; and patriarchy, manifested in gender discrimination and the exploitation of women's (unpaid) labor.



8. Transformative Water Governance recognises the differentiated responsibilities associated with contemporary water and climate crises, and that the responsibility for change lies notably with industrialised countries, political and economic elites, (multinational) corporations and other groups and actors that have benefited from unjust and unsustainable water use.



9. Transformative Water Governance recognises that responsive public institutions are a precondition for the sustainable and just governance of water through progressive policies, regulation, funding, trans- and interdisciplinary collaborations and civic engagement.



10. Transformative Water Governance underscores the need for safe civic space, which allows citizens to freely and safely speak out and mobilise, thus serving as a precondition for responsive, inclusive and socially just decision-making in relation to water.





# EKANE NKWELLE

*Cameroon*

Image: IFI Synergy Cameroon

**Ekane Nkwelle** works as a community development worker for IFI Synergy, in Cameroon. He works with local and indigenous people in order to support them in the sustainable management of their forests resources and to improve their livelihoods. He is from Nyasoso, in the Kupe-Muanenguba Division of the South West Region.

#### **Does water play an important role in your daily life?**

Water is used on a daily basis for household chores, drinking, fishing, sand mining, and for healing (spirituality).

#### **What does your work on water entail?**

The building of dams has tripled within the past few years and it has an important place in the Cameroon National Development Strategy. Unfortunately, the major social and environmental impacts are not taken into account. IFI Synergy is a civil society platform coordinated by Green Development Advocates to support and raise the voices of impacted local communities. We are especially concerned about the Nachtigal, Kikot and Grand Eweng hydroelectric dams.

#### **What is it about these water projects that worries you?**

Since 2019, we have been following up on the implementation of the Nachtigal Hydro Power dam over the Sanaga River, about 62km from Yaounde. Communities used the river for fishing, sand mining, drinking, household chores, etc. The Nachtigal Hydro Power Company and the entity implementing the project, have completely stopped communities from accessing the river since 2017. They even used the military and a private security company to do so. The Kikot (550MW) and Grand Eweng (1800MW) hydropower stations are being planned over the Sanaga River. The projects plan to displace riverside communities that depend on the Sanaga river for their livelihoods.



#### **Do you have a success in water projects to share?**

Awareness-raising has been carried out around the project area. The impacted communities have strengthened their voices, which permitted them to demand accountability from the project's funders. Our complaints to the dispute resolution mechanisms of the African Development Bank and World Bank consequently led to payments of at least some compensation to impacted persons.

#### **How do you work together with Both ENDS?**

We have partnered with Both ENDS for some years now. They have provided technical and financial support and have extensively linked us to other international organisations and platforms.



# MANILA BAY

*“What used to be a peaceful and bountiful life for us is now gone due to the construction of the airport. And because the dredging operations take place right on our fishing grounds, our fish and crab catch has declined”*

Shirley Masurca, spokeswoman for a local fishers' group

photography: \* Basilio Sepe (Global Witness) | \*\* Global Witness |  
\*\*\* Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment | \*\*\*\* Both ENDS





# MANILA BAY

## *Environmental destruction and loss of livelihoods for a new airport*

In Manila Bay, a vulnerable coastal region near the Philippine capital, an airport is under construction, in the middle of a unique wetlands, rich in biodiversity and essential for the livelihoods of many thousands of people. Local civil society organisations have expressed their concerns about the airport because of its enormous impact on the lives of local people and the ecosystem. Both the Dutch government and Dutch businesses are playing a crucial role in the project.

Image: Basilio Sepe (Global Witness)

An enormous quantity of sand is being dredged to create the land upon which the airport will be built. Dutch dredging company Boskalis has been contracted to perform this task, with the support of the Dutch state. The Dutch government is helping Boskalis in its contacts with the Philippine government and is providing export support insurance worth a vast amount of money. Local fisherfolk are looking for alternatives that will not disrupt their fishing grounds. They have plans and ideas for an alternative sustainable vision for the bay, but these are hardly taken seriously or are actively undermined by the powerful interests of project developers and dredging companies.

### **The plan**

In 2021, Boskalis announced that it had been awarded its most lucrative contract ever: an order worth €1.5 billion for the construction of an airport in Manila Bay. The project entailed creating 2,565 hectares of new land by sand spraying. The enormous New Manila International Airport (NMIA) project was the idea of the government of Rodrigo Duterte.

The arrival of the airport will speed up land subsidence in the region, which will increase the incidence of flooding in a much larger area. In addition, the sand extraction elsewhere in the bay, which has already begun, is having a disastrous impact on marine life and the fishing industry.

### **Unique wetlands with a fishing tradition**

Manila Bay is a unique habitat for fish and birds. It is an area of irreplaceable wetlands, consisting of mangrove forests and tidal flats that are crucial for the storage of CO<sub>2</sub>. It is also an important breeding ground for many fish, including sardines, and a crucial refuge for protected migratory birds on the East Asia-Australia migration route, one of the world's busiest bird

migration routes. At the same time, the bay is at great risk from flooding and is very vulnerable to climate change, the effects of which include soil subsidence, rising sea levels, storm surges and hurricanes.

### **Everything will be lost without help**

The land reclamation and the infrastructure for the airport are causing damage to, and the loss of, natural habitats and ecosystems in the province of Bulacan. People living where the project is to be located were forced to move. Some left voluntarily and demolished their own houses in exchange for compensation, but others were locked out of their homes. Moreover, thousands of fisherfolk were denied access to the fishing grounds that they depend on for their livelihoods.

There are no clear plans to help local people relocate or find alternative ways of making a living. Civil society organisations are also concerned about the safety of people living in informal settlements in the area. Although the airport and the accompanying infrastructure will provide jobs, it is unclear if these will be available to local people. Their futures remain uncertain.

### **Murky water and disappearing fish**

The sand extraction makes the sea murky. Fish are disappearing and, with them, the incomes of more than 300,000 families in the bay. The people of Manila Bay have depended on fishing for their livelihoods for centuries. The local fisherfolk and villagers would like to develop an alternative plan, one that offers better protection for their fishing grounds and the natural environment, but they are not welcome to discuss their proposals. According to Boskalis, the fishing grounds fall outside the project area, an administrative trick to evade responsibility.

### **Inadequate information**





Images: Basilio Sepe (Global Witness)

The communities affected by the project have difficulties in coming into contact with the companies involved and do not receive enough information about what is going on. Both ENDS's local partner organisations are trying to do something about this, but it is very challenging because they too have problems establishing contact with the authorities. Human rights defenders rapidly feel unsafe in this region. Both ENDS represents the voices of these local partners in the Netherlands and supports them by bringing human rights and environmental protection to the attention of relevant parties. Here, too, existing legislation provides insufficient frameworks to ensure that projects like these respect human rights and environmental sustainability.

**The Netherlands is providing insurance worth 1.5 billion euros**  
Because the project is so enormous and carries such a high risk, Boskalis applied for export credit insurance from the Dutch state, through export credit agency Atradius Dutch State Business (DSB). In 2022, Boskalis was awarded €1.5 billion in insurance coverage. Atradius DSB appears to have ignored internationally agreed human rights and environmental standards. Atradius DSB has refused to make public the agreements it made with Boskalis and the client, San Miguel Corporation. Atradius DSB appears to have ignored International CSR agreements in assessing this project, but we cannot check that because Atradius refused to make public the agreements it had made with Boskalis and the client, San Miguel Corporation. That means that it is impossible for third parties, like Both ENDS, to assess the content of, and compliance with, the agreements, including those related to compensation for affected communities.

**Complex ecosystems do not recover quickly**  
The location of the airport, in the middle of a vulnerable area of wetlands, falls into the category of 'highest natural protection' because of its high level of biodiversity. Complex ecosystems that do not recover quickly from massive changes. The land reclamation operations of this project also run counter to recent recommendations made by Dutch engineers in the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan. The plan, financed by the Netherlands and developed together with the Philippine government, makes concrete suggestions for the protection and sustainable development of the bay. It states that the north of the bay, where the airport is to be built, must be protected against large-scale developments because of the enormous biodiversity and to protect the coast against flooding.

*Thousands of fisherfolk were denied access to the fishing grounds that they depend on for their livelihoods*

**Alternative vision**  
In recent years, the Netherlands has profiled itself as a world leader on climate adaptation. The Dutch water sector, of which Boskalis is a part, plays a key role in achieving that. Climate adaptation means that communities and ecosystems have to be made resilient against the effects of climate change. That is why Both ENDS has been working together with Filipino and Dutch partners since 2020 to resist this project, including sending urgent letters to the government and the media. Concerns have also been expressed in the Dutch parliament, with questions being asked about the Netherlands' involvement on several occasions. So far, the government has insisted that the correct procedures have been followed. Both ENDS continues to call attention to the humanitarian and ecological disaster in Manila Bay, and is forming a united front with fisherfolk and local people, who have developed an alternative vision for the bay, that respects the crucial ecosystem and everyone who depends on it.

→ [Global Witness report](#)



→ [Documentary](#)







The water sector is driving infrastructure projects, which have an enormous impact on people and the environment. Such projects include large-scale land reclamation for luxury apartment complexes and airports, or port construction and expansion. In Brazil, for example, ports built for export of soy and offshore oil processing are causing vulnerable coastal areas to disappear. In Mozambique, the construction of an LNG terminal, along with offshore gas platforms and pipelines, is destroying mangroves and contributing to conflict.

#### **Reality differs**

Large infrastructure projects often sound very good on paper. They are pitched as important for economic development and employment. Unfortunately, the reality is different. Through its network of environmental organisations worldwide, Both ENDS has heard countless stories of people who – sometimes without advance warning – see developers appear in their backyards and are told they need to leave their homes. Testimonies of

evictions, threats and destruction of land and fishing grounds are legion.

#### **Public money**

The Dutch government actively supports and encourages the dredging industry in its projects abroad. Among other things, the government organises trade missions with ministers and members of the royal family, opening doors for Dutch dredgers. For high-risk projects, export credit insurer Atradius Dutch State Business (DSB) acts as a guarantor on behalf of the Dutch state. This involves investments in the millions, sometimes even billions, of public money.

The Netherlands says it is committed to international sustainable development. So Both ENDS, along with those who are affected by dredging projects, say: 'Put your money where your mouth is'. Both ENDS urges the government to lead the way and use public money to support projects and business activities that





# The dark side of the Dutch dredging industry

Dutch dredgers are among the largest in the world. From Indonesia to Mozambique to Brazil, their mighty machines raise islands out of the sea, keep shipping channels open and reclaim land. The Dutch government actively supports its dredging industry, but dredging projects have a dark side, with huge social and environmental impacts. The people who live in the areas where dredgers operate often lose out. It's time to turn the tide.

Image: Global Witness

serve the public good and benefit people and nature.

### Doors open and information public

Both ENDS works to put local organisations and people affected by dredging projects in touch with Dutch actors – Ministers, Members of Parliament, Atradius DSB, embassies, even dredgers themselves – so they can speak for themselves, tell their stories and communicate directly their needs and priorities. Sometimes Both ENDS provides knowledge and advice to communities, sometimes it simply opens a door to communication.

Like others in the global environmental justice movement, Both ENDS constantly stresses the importance of transparency. Project documentation, including preliminary studies, impact assessments, compensation plans, relocation agreements and nature restoration agreements, should be made public. Unfortunately, most of this documentation is not made public,

*Put your money where your mouth is*

even by the government, under the guise of confidentiality. Without transparency, it is impossible to know if affected people have been properly consulted and their rights respected.

### Responsible business conduct

The Netherlands has made a commitment to implement international standards for responsible business conduct, known as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Companies are expected to undertake a process called 'due diligence' to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for adverse impacts to human rights and the environment. But implementation and enforcement of the Guidelines has been largely left to the voluntary efforts of companies, which have proved insufficient to protect people and nature.

A recent report by Global Witness on land reclamation by Dutch company Boskalis in Manila Bay in the Philippines (see page 29 and the link below) shows how the current system of business self-regulation has failed to protect the bay's precious coastal ecosystem and the people who live there. Drawing a similar conclusion, the UN, in a 2022 report on global sand mining, a key activity of the dredging industry, recommended development of international guidelines so that sand mining becomes truly sustainable. These studies confirm what other research and practice has shown for years: binding national and EU legislation is needed to ensure responsible business conduct.

The Dutch government regards itself as a front-runner in the field of business and human rights. It is only logical that the government should do everything it can – including enacting robust legislation – to prevent abuses by Dutch companies in their activities abroad. After all, we expect companies to act responsibly on Dutch soil.



[Global Witness report](#)





Image: Basilio Sepe (Global Witness)



Image: Basilio Sepe (Global Witness)



Image: Both ENDS

### PHILIPPINES

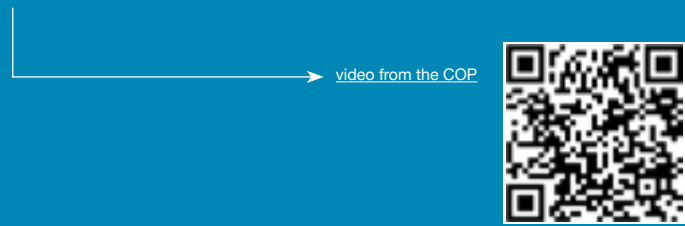
A new airport is under construction in Manila Bay, in the middle of key wetlands. It is Boskalis' largest project ever, with the highest guarantee from the Dutch government. Atradius DSB guarantees any payment risks for Boskalis on behalf of the Dutch state, with export credit insurance worth €1.5 billion. Boskalis's assignment is to dredge sand in one part of the bay, and dump into another part of the bay until a peninsula forms on which to build the airport. Special wetlands and fishing grounds are disappearing, hundreds of people have already been evicted from their homes and thousands of fishing families can no longer make a living. Fisherfolk, farmers and villagers have been protesting the project en masse, and, so far, in vain. The vast majority of information about the project has not been made public. This mainly involves information about project impacts, restoration or compensation thereafter. Issues that affect residents.

### MALDIVES

A new port is being built in the middle of the sea between tropical atolls and coral reefs. Again, Boskalis received export credit insurance from the Dutch state for the project. Building the port requires sand, which is extracted from the sea, making the water murky and diving impossible, repelling fish, and damaging a marine protective area with coral reefs. Concerned citizens and local dive schools, guesthouses and other tourism businesses have banded together to make their voices heard, but their input was limited to online consultation and it is unclear what was done in response to it. Atradius DSB experts were not permitted to visit the area in person. The project continues unabated.

### MOZAMBIQUE

Gas has been found off the coast of Mozambique. The Dutch company Van Oord, a dredging contractor, has been tasked with helping to build an offshore platform to extract the gas, with pipelines cutting through wetlands, mangroves and fragile coral. Again, the Dutch state is a guarantor for nearly a billion euros. Northern Mozambique has long been the site of a violent conflict, with a million people being displaced as a result. Needless to say, under such conditions, people can't participate in a safe and open consultation process around this huge energy project. The local population is losing out in every possible way. And yet the project continues. Meanwhile, Atradius DSB employees only dared to conduct an inspection from the air, in a helicopter with bulletproof vests.



### INDONESIA

A new peninsula is being built on Sulawesi – full of luxury villas close to the beach. With support from the Dutch state, export credit insurance from Atradius DSB, Boskalis is pumping the sand. Sand mining clouded the water and caused fish to disappear. Fisherfolk lost income, received no compensation and protested vehemently. Locals have been brutally evicted from their homes. They were not compensated because, according to the developers, houses are outside the project's responsibility.



# Dutch construction project in the Philippines shows that voluntary corporate social responsibility doesn't work

Abuses committed during the construction of an airport in the Philippines show the urgent need for legislation on corporate social responsibility here in the Netherlands, say environmental protectors Murta Shannon and Maartje Hiltermann on behalf of a coalition of Dutch and Filipino organisations.\*

*Murta Shannon and Maartje Hiltermann*

The construction of a new airport in Manila Bay is resulting in severe abuses and environmental damage, according to a new report by human rights organisation Global Witness. The project, in which the Netherlands is playing a prominent role, is controversial and with good reason. Through Atradius Dutch State Business (DSB) the Dutch government has awarded dredging company Boskalis, which is implementing the project, the most extensive export credit insurance ever. With the approval of the Ministry of Finance, the Netherlands has provided security of 1.5 billion euros, for the event that the project runs into problems.

As a coalition of Dutch and Filipino environment and human rights organisations, we have regularly expressed our resistance to the project, and especially against the role played by the Netherlands. The issue has been raised in Dutch parliament on several occasions, but the Dutch stakeholders have continued to insist that it is because of Dutch involvement that the project complies with the highest standards for international corporate social responsibility (ICSR).

The Global Witness report, however thoroughly debunks these claims. Everyone on the spot can see how international standards are being sidestepped. The airport is being built on a site where wetlands and mangrove forests are crucial to the survival of migratory birds that are under threat worldwide. Boskalis is currently

levelling an area of 2,600 hectares of land to make way for the New Manila International Airport. Seven hundred families have been forced to leave their homes on the coast, according to the report under pressure from the army. Dredging operations by Boskalis and the closure of a large part of the bay have had an enormous impact on fishing. Thousands of fisherfolk and their families depend on fish for their food security, which local organisations say is now under serious threat.

**Claims do not need to be substantiated**  
This shows that the current system, in which the responsibility of companies and governments to act in a way that protects people and the environment is voluntary, does not work. International corporate social responsibility legislation is urgently needed. The CEO of Boskalis himself recently expressed strong criticism of a proposed bill to ensure responsible and sustainable international business, which was recently debated in parliament.

How is it possible that the Dutch government and the companies involved can get away with a story that is so far removed from reality in Manila? The supply of information, and thereby the image-building around such a project, is controlled by those who have a stake in it going ahead. In this case, it is the

financiers, the export credit agency, the implementing companies and the project owners. They determine what information is and is not released and they do not have to substantiate their claims of compliance with international agreements on environment and human rights.

Atradius DSB has, for example, refused to release most of the documents relating to the project, in the interests of 'confidentiality'. They include studies on human rights, and plans for relocating and compensating local people impacted by the project. The insurance company also refused to allow its environmental impact assessments to be examined by an independent party. That makes it almost impossible for civil society organisations to determine to what extent the companies involved in the project actually do what they claim to do. And for the people affected it is completely impossible.

This lack of transparency is fully in conflict with international standards, but these are only voluntary. That is the main problem. Companies can apply the guidelines as loosely as they see fit. Voluntary compliance is not enough, which is why the proposed legislation on ICSR has been drawn up.

This report must be followed up: there must at least be an independent enquiry into the decision-making and impact of the project. Boskalis must suspend its operations in Manila until the results have been made known. And the Netherlands must implement robust ICSR legislation as soon as possible.

\*The following organisations are members of the coalition: Both ENDS, Care Nederland, IUCN NL, SOMO. From the Philippines: Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, AGHAM Advocates for Science and Technology for the People, AKAP KA Manila Bay, Center for Environmental Concerns - Philippines, Center for People's Development and Governance, PAMALAKAYA Pilipinas, Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP).



# WATER GOVERNANCE IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

## A short introduction to the **Negotiated Approach**

The world is facing multiple water crises. Billions of people are being affected by water scarcity, pollution and floods. Solutions tend to only focus on technical and managerial aspects. However, fundamental governance gaps remain. Power dynamics at all levels, from local to global, that created these problems are rarely addressed. To address these issues, Both ENDS advocates for the Negotiated Approach to Inclusive Water Governance.

The approach encourages and supports communities to become involved in all aspects of managing water resources in a meaningful way and on a long-term basis. Experiences in many countries have demonstrated that local people are able to manage or co-manage their water resources once they acquire the capacity to understand and the acumen to take decisions and discuss the challenges they face with policymakers and other stakeholders.

Both ENDS and civil society partners support and promote initiatives towards sustainable and just governance of water resources, while also challenging conventional approaches that tend to exclude marginalised groups in society. Sustainable solutions in the long run can only be achieved if unequal power relations are adequately addressed. A Negotiated Approach envisages the meaningful and long-term participation of communities in all aspects of managing the water and other natural resources on which their lives depend. It seeks to achieve healthy ecosystems and equitable sharing of benefits among all stakeholders within a river basin. This inclusive way of working is an essential precondition for the transformative practices that are promoted by Both ENDS and partners.

Decision-making processes that concern the management of water resources have to ensure the meaningful participation of all stakeholders. Special attention should be given to the involvement of local communities, whose needs, aspirations, and concerns should always be put front and centre. A Negotiated Approach to Inclusive Water Governance creates the opportunity for equitable and effective governance of our shared water resources.

Water is a human right, a social good and a shared resource. As water is a vital source of life that speaks to every member of society, it is crucial to ensure that water related decision-making processes are transparent, inclusive and gender-responsive. The Negotiated Approach works towards creating and maintaining a level playing field for a collective planning process that seeks to achieve environmental sustainability and equitable sharing of benefits.

The three distinguishing features that guide a Negotiated Approach are:

### 1. Building on self-motivated local action

By building on existing local initiatives, the knowledge and ideas of local water users can contribute to more effective long-term and context-specific solutions. This, in turn, enables communities to fulfil their right to act as (co-)managers of their own water systems. Experience also shows that by building on

local action, people are committed to the long-term sustainable management of water resources.

### 2. Empowering communities to assert their rights

Community empowerment is essential to ensure that communities can safeguard their Right to Water, and to ensure they can effectively engage in negotiations as equal players, creating a level playing field. It is particularly crucial to support women who are strengthening their decision-making power in the governance of water resources.

### 3. Meaningful negotiations at appropriate levels

All stakeholders should be able to meaningfully contribute to the design and implementation of policies and plans related to the water resources that they depend upon. This means that negotiation processes are set up in a transparent, open, gender-responsive and inclusive manner, and that decisions are made by consensus at the lowest appropriate level.

### Principles available to everyone

Both ENDS maintains a long track record of partnerships for inclusive water governance all over the world, dating back to the late 1990s. A Negotiated Approach to Inclusive Water Governance was developed in the field through the efforts of community-based organisations and NGOs in various parts of the world. Their location-specific approaches to inclusive water governance have been a response to top-down approaches and the lack of attention to local communities' needs, knowledge, and environmental realities. Together with partners, Both ENDS promotes and defends communities' right to meaningfully participate in the governance of their river basin, as the management of water and other natural resources has a direct effect on their livelihoods and well-being. Everyone is free to use these principles; there is no single blueprint to the negotiated approach for every situation, every project is different.

[the full guide to the Negotiated Approach](#)



[short movie about the history of the Negotiated Approach](#)







# Philippines DEVRALIN TALASTAS LAGOS

Image: Devralin Talastas Lagos

Devralin Talastas Lagos lives in Los Baños, Laguna, more than 60 kilometers south of Metropolitan Manila. She is an Assistant Professor of Community Development from the College of Social Work and Community Development at the University of the Philippines-Diliman. And she prefers to be called Baleng.

**Is there a local song about water?**

I especially like the Filipino song, 'Ilog' (translated as River) by Joey Ayala. The song goes:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Ang buhay ko ay isang ilog...<br/>Ang buhay mo ay isang ilog...<br/>Sa pagdaloy, tayo'y nagkatapo...<br/>Iilikha tayo ng bagong daan,<br/>uukitin sa bato ang kasaysayan...</i></p> | <p><i>My life is a river...<br/>Your life is a river...<br/>As we flowed, we came<br/>across each other...<br/>We will create a new path,<br/>we'll carve history in stone...</i></p> |
|---|---|

[listen to the song](#)



I used to sing and teach this song to young people and community members during education activities in coastal and delta localities I work with. One such community is the Taliptip village, Bulakan, Bulacan, along Manila Bay. I work with fisherfolk and coastal community members as they fight against the San Miguel Corporation's New Manila International Airport, a project contracted to the Dutch company Boskalis. The project aims to reclaim 2,500 hectares of traditional fishing grounds, mangrove areas and rich marine habitats, consequently displacing thousands of small-scale fisherfolks' homes, livelihoods and culture.

**What is your main concern, your main project at this moment?**

I assist in building local capacities for advocacy through community education, participatory research and community organising. At present, we undertake the process we call 'Manila Bay People's Plan', a participatory process of knowledge production and community organising. It is a collaboration between academy-based community development workers, and coastal communities (or Bataan) affected by the airport project. We open up spaces for conversation about the impacts of reclamation on lives, livelihoods and culture. Then, we link these to the discussion about human rights and the critical analyses of inequities in power and resources. Through these conversations, we affirm local people's short-term and long-term aspirations and capacities for action.

**How do you work together with Both ENDS? How have they helped you, or how have you helped them?**

I am a collaborator and volunteer of Both ENDS's local partner, an environmental justice NGO called Kalikasan, supporting community-based mass organisation and part of an anti-reclamation coalition in Manila Bay. Both ENDS supports local initiatives such as the People's Planning process. Moreover, Both ENDS facilitates our engagement with Dutch actors and decision-makers through dialogues, letters of concern and press releases, among other things, to demand accountability for the environmental destruction and human rights violations caused by the dredging and reclamation, and to call for the refusal of support for the airport project. In partnership with Both ENDS, we are challenging environmental injustice, not just locally but internationally. In our cooperation, we mutually inspire, affirm, as well as share ideas, solutions and hope with one another.





 **Both ENDS**  
Connecting people for change

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