

Benin Platform meeting

12 March 2020



| Water Support Programme

Water Support Programme

This platform meeting is part of the Water Support Programme, an initiative of the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The programme is executed by Netherlands Enterprise Agency and Netherlands Water Partnership.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Netherlands Enterprise Agency

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1. Water Support Programme

1.1. Overview

The Water Support Programme (WSP) is an advisory programme established by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and executed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO.nl) and the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP). Through the Programme, the Dutch government supports Dutch Embassies in 11 partner countries to implement water programmes (Bangladesh, Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, South Sudan and Yemen). The Water Support Programme builds long-term relationships between the local water sector and the Dutch water sector. Each Embassy is supported by a Strategic Advisor¹ on Water, knowledgeable about the local context and with the local networks. They are guided by sustainable development principles and act as a go between what is needed in partner countries and the Dutch Embassies, and between the Dutch Embassies and the Dutch water sector. They share information on the policy instruments in the partner countries and on the financial instruments available from the Netherlands.

2. Benin Platform meeting

2.1. Overview

The WSP strives to connect and inform the broader Dutch water sector (private sector, public sector, civil society, knowledge institutes, etc.) on the opportunities for cooperation and business in the WSP partner countries. As such, country platform meetings are organised.

On 12 March 2020 (from 14:00-17:00), a Benin Platform meeting was organised at NWP in the Hague, to give an update on the Benin water sector. Specifically, the platform enabled the discussion on reasons to continue working in Benin after bilateral funds (related to water) from the Embassy of the Netherlands phases out in 2021 and how to do this, and explore the possible partnerships and funding opportunities for activities in Benin.

Pitches were provided by:

- VNG International – Anouk Lodder, Project Manager - Business Unit Sub-Sahara Africa, Latin America and South East Asia (who are already active in Benin)
- IUCN Netherlands – Elke Praagman, Senior Expert Ecosystem Services (who are already active and exploring how to intensify their level of engagement in Benin)
- Aqua for All – Titia Wouters, Regional Manager West Africa (who were in Benin, and a considering maybe continuing their work in Benin)
- IRC WASH – Ingeborg Krukkert, Lead New Initiatives (who are considering working in Benin)

A presentation by RVO.nl (Hanneke van Hoof, Advisor Private Sector Development) on relevant subsidies and financial programmes was provided as part of a two-part discussion on what is needed to support Dutch water sector engagement in Benin; the other discussing the need for a platform connecting Benin and the Netherlands.

The platform meeting ended with a reception to enable networking and further discussions.

¹ Except for South Sudan due to insecurity in the region.

2.2. Key messages

2.2.1. Strategic Advisor's mission to Benin

The Dutch government decided in 2019 to stop its bilateral aid for water to Benin. The mission to Benin was implemented in this context and with the following defined objectives:

- Establish contacts with Beninese organisations active in the water sector after the change of Strategic Advisor and the absence of a mission in 2019
- Make a scan of the interests and opportunities of Dutch actors in Benin
- Advise the Dutch Embassy on the implementation of ongoing activities
- Advise the Dutch Embassy on RVO.nl projects
- Advise the Dutch Embassy on the technical consultation platform (PCT) between the water stakeholders in Benin and the Netherlands

During the presentation, Caroline Figuères, Strategic Advisor on Water for Benin, expressed her views on the situation in Benin, looking at the sub-sectors: water supply, sanitation and IWRM. She made suggestions on how to address some major issues related to content, cooperation and funding. She mentioned the importance of an integrated approach in developing initiatives/projects connecting clusters together, for example water and food security (IWRM & Agriculture, WASH and nutrition, etc.), climate smart water and agriculture, including digitalisation, etc. She shared her concerns regarding the concentration of funding in the Sahel region (even if needs are high in these countries), which will probably not be fully spent due to the security issue in the countries. She added that a regional approach involving Northern Benin could contribute to some stabilisation in the Central Sahel region. She also suggested that the Dutch water sector may lobby and advocate for new programmes with a regional and/or integrated multi-sectoral approach (including water) through central funds from the Dutch Government (DGIS and RVO), building on the experiences and lessons learned in the water sector in Benin during the last years. This was the background for the discussion during the platform meeting (to identify the WHY and address the HOW)².

The mission report can be accessed here:

<http://files.nwp.nl/extranet/BeninPlatformMeeting20200312/>.

2.2.2. Why (continue) working in Benin? Challenges, opportunities...



- Stable environment that favours development and vice versa
- Profound knowledge of the country and extensive network
- Well adapted approach
- Provide continuity to sustain results to date
- Opportunity for new partnerships (to enable continuity and sustainability)

² Reference to Simon Sinek's golden circle: WHY, HOW, WHAT.



- High biodiversity value in West Africa, there is still nature to protect
- Strong partner base
- Political climate is favourable for lobby and advocacy
- Involvement of Dutch government and businesses also requires civil society presence



- Small country with fewer actors and higher visibility potential of the Netherlands
- Little entrepreneurship (still in 'kinderschoenen'), which give more possibilities
- Safe environment
- Strong network which would be a waste to let go
- Strong positive image



- Have the experience and knowledge to strengthen WASH Systems in Benin
- As part of strategy to expand their focus
- Benin is a stable and safe haven (compared to the fragile states where IRC is currently active: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger)

Below are comments from the participants with respect to the above pitches:

- How to keep Benin relevant for the Dutch water sector – Embassy exit strategy should use the good examples from existing programmes to get the World Bank, and other country donors/organisations to continue to invest and engage in Benin.
- Dutch water sector activities in Benin are focused in the south (geographical criteria is usually a condition set by the donors), however the population in the north is poorer. The Embassy is looking for programmes in the north demonstrating a willingness to work in this region of Benin. This is interesting as it could also lead to a regional approach with Burkina Faso and Niger (e.g. a Drylands Development Programme equivalent for Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger could open new doors for engagement).
- Benin's political climate enables those operating in the country the space to express and influence politicians and businesses. There is a global trend in which civil society is branded as activists limiting their options to engage. Benin has a culture very much focussed on dialogue, where even local NGOs invest in relationship building with politicians and business giving, as local organisations, the possibility to lobby.
- Explore Power of Voices as a channel to engage in Benin, despite the Netherlands focusing on green countries (of which Benin is not a part of).
- Bring charity (know-how and show-how) and commerce (the money) together (for example what the Netherlands Food Security Alliance is doing to establish centres of services) and collaboration between partners are other avenues for continued engagement in Benin.
- Focus for Benin is on drinking water, less so on sanitation and hygiene and even less on IWRM. Addressing sanitation and hygiene as well as management of water can provide new opportunities as there are implications on drinking water supply.

You can access the full presentations here:

<http://files.nwp.nl/extranet/BeninPlatformMeeting20200312/>.

2.2.3. What is needed to enable working in Benin

Platform connecting Benin and the Netherlands

The Dutch Embassy in Benin has asked about the need for a platform connecting Benin and the Netherlands. In 2013, 2014 and 2015 a platform was active in Benin connecting people representatives from NGO, knowledge institutes, private sector from Benin and the Netherlands. Should such a platform be reactivated and how or not at all?

- The need for it should be both from Benin and the Netherlands. How it will function, for what purpose and in what format (a digital tool, or a place to physically meet or both) needs to be concretely defined.
- Such a platform previously existed, it would be worthwhile and helpful to analyse why that platform had come to an end. Are those arguments/circumstances still relevant or can we overcome such a situation for the future.
- Who would lead from Benin and the Netherlands would need to be defined; from the Netherlands, NWP is well positioned in the Netherlands for this, PNE in Benin? In Benin there is a lack of trust among actors and more competition. Such a platform could help bring more trust.
- Platform as a tool to help find funds to carry out activities.
- Platform as a tool to map Benin water sector and what each actor does to facilitate matchmaking with Dutch water sector. Where actors compete (such as in Benin) it becomes difficult to acquire the right information.
- Platform to acquire information about what the conditions will be like (e.g. water pricing), this can help with scaling.
- Would a regional approach as opposed to country specific approach be more relevant for the Dutch water sector?
- Explore other networks such as PSO (they summarise the institutional background of a country's water sector, water resources, water distribution for the next 5-10 years, the market opportunities for the sector with references and the experiences of engineering and equipment companies with specific clients) or OIE (more focused on water management) and how they function.
- RVO is supporting a water hub in Myanmar with research on how to establish and find a sustainable business model and see how to start a process of problem analysis, what the hub can be used for, etc. This experience can be applied in Benin to make a platform more concrete.

Tools enabling private sector development in Benin



Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend
Nederland

RVO.nl supports sustainable economic growth in developing countries and emerging markets through various programmes. These programmes focus on:



For information on current development programmes and projects financed by RVO visit: <https://aiddata.rvo.nl/>. For more general information on the subsidies and programmes, visit: <https://english.rvo.nl/subsidies-programmes>.

You can access the full presentation here listing the various programmes available for companies and PPP's and the Dutch Embassy for the Benin context: <http://files.nwp.nl/extranet/BeninPlatformMeeting20200312/>.

2.3. What is coming

In the coming months, a number of activities are planned:

- West Africa Platform meeting – Platform meeting execution will be dependent on how the current corona situation develops.
- Further exploration of a Benin-Netherlands platform based on input from Benin and the platform meeting (question also included in evaluation form to enable for Dutch water sector input: <https://forms.gle/D2nrWj2JWwgUTg3J9>).
- Finalise mission report and share with the sector: <http://files.nwp.nl/extranet/BeninPlatformMeeting20200312/>.
- Preparation of Summer school for local embassy staff – Summer School execution will be dependent on how the current corona situation develops.

Annex 1. Programme

Time	Item
13:45-14:00	Welcome & registration (with coffee & tea)
14:00-14:05	Welcome to the meeting
14:05-14:20	Report by Caroline Figuères – mission to Benin 23-28/2/2020 – Q&A
Session 1: Why (continue) working in Benin? Challenges, opportunities and views from various organisations	
14:20-14:30	<i>VNG International</i> , Anouk Lodder, Project Manager - Business Unit Sub-Sahara Africa, Latin America and South East Asia
14:30-14:40	<i>IUCN Netherlands</i> , Elke Praagman, Senior Expert Ecosystem Services
14:40-14:50	<i>Aqua for All</i> , Titia Wouters, Regional Manager West Africa
14:50-15:00	<i>IRC WASH</i> , Ingeborg Krukkert, Lead New Initiatives
15:00-15:30	Discussion about challenges and opportunities
15:30-15:45	Coffee Break
Session 2: What do you need to support you working in Benin: what are the networks and funds available for Benin? Who can support you (expectations)?	
15:45-16:00	Platform connecting Benin and NL: is there a need for this?
16:00-16:15	RVO-tools: is it useful for you in Benin? Hanneke van Hoof, Advisor Private Sector Development, RVO
15:15-16:55	Discussion
16:55-17:00	Closing
17:00-	Networking at 'Benin corner' (with bites and drinks)

Annex 2. Participant list

First name	Last name	Organisation
Organiser(s)		
Caroline	Figuères	NWP/RVO
Raül	Glotzbach	NWP
Speaker(s)		
Anouk	Lodder	VNG
Elke	Praagman	IUCN NL
Hanneke	van Hoof	RVO
Ingeborg	Krukkert	IRC WASH
Titia	Wouters	Aqua for All
Participant(s)		
Arthur	Mynett	IHE Delft & TUDelft
Audrey	Legat	Deltares
David	Drinkwater	Join the Pipe
Fons	Eijkelkamp	Royal Eijkelkamp & NL-Food Security Alliance
Geerten	Horn	HKV
Immanuel	Freeman	IHE Delft
Ingrid	Flink	RVO
Joop	de Schutter	Water Partner Foundation
Marius	Otte	Woord en Daad
Néné	Barry	Witteveen+Bos
Nouria	Ouibrahim	LinkedInAfrica (Conseil d'Affaires Algéro-Néerlandais)
Peter	Westerhuis	Van Essen Instruments BV
Philippe	Merle	Antea (France)
Piet	IJben	Foundation Emda
Robbert	Blij	Consulaat van Benin in Nederland
Rosemarie	Merz	Ben-in-Connection
Stephen	Teeuwen	Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment
Sven	Driessen	Join the Pipe
Wim	Kloezen	Antea Group