



**PARTNERS  
VOOR WATER**



**December 2021**

## **Foreword**

Dear members of the India network,

We hereby present the 2021 country update for India. This year has again been an unusual one for the world with the COVID-19 pandemic constantly changing how we live and work. For a large part, both private and work-related interactions still had to take place virtually which is convenient, but we also look forward to going back to live interaction. In addition to the public health crisis caused by COVID-19, India, the Netherlands and the rest of the world still have to deal with food and water security, climate change and changes in economic flows.

In this edition, we would like to inform you about the current affairs in India of interest to the Dutch water sector, in particular Covid-19, the economy and political developments. Additionally, we will highlight some of the many projects under the Partners for Water programme that is being implemented in India, including the Live with Water programme and a hotspot analysis on combining the Namami Gange and Water as Leverage (WaL) project.

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## 1. Current events in India

### **Covid-19**

India, like the rest of the world, continues to be affected by COVID-19 this year. Thus far, India has 24,640.11 confirmed cases and 330 deaths per 1 million inhabitants (as of 04 November 2021). The number of cases peaked in April and the beginning of May this year and a large decline in cases was observed in the second half of May. The states of Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh now contribute 56% to the total amount of total cases and India's test positivity rate is currently 1.17% (as of 04 November 2021). This year, however, COVID-19 vaccines have become available and are widely implemented in many countries, including India and The Netherlands. The share of people in India with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine is now (04 November 2021) 53.06% and the share of those who are fully vaccinated is 24.24%. India reopened its borders to overseas travellers in November 2021, making it possible for foreign tourists to come into the country for the first time in 19 months. However, the Netherlands, amongst other countries, is classified as an 'at risk' country requiring additional testing at Indian airports, a negative RT-PCR report and India's self-declaration form amongst other regulations. You can find more information on travelling to India on the [website](#) of the Indian Embassy in the Netherlands, the [website](#) of the Government of the Netherlands and the Netherlands and You [website](#).

### **Economy**

India has shown remarkable progress in the fight against poverty since the early 2000s. Between 2011 and 2015, approximately 90 million citizens were lifted out of extreme poverty. COVID-19 has, unfortunately, put a stop to this in the past two years. In the fiscal year 2021, India's economy shrank by 7.3 percent. This decrease in economic prosperity has especially had a negative effect on the most vulnerable and poor households. It is assumed that poverty rates reverted to those of 2016. In general, however, India is still one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and its economy is expected to grow by 7.5 to 12.5 percent in the fiscal year 2022; most probably on the lower end of this scale. Both the Reserve Bank of India and the Indian government took monetary and fiscal policy measures in order to support households and vulnerable firms as well as expand service delivery. These measures include an increase in expenses related to social and health protection, to reduce the economic crisis. It is partly because of these measures that the economy is expected to increase again in the fiscal year 2022.

A rebound in India's expected economic growth will be further determined by the effect of COVID-19. Economic prospects in India, and other parts of the world, will be partly dependent on the vaccination rates. In India, these rates are steadily rising this year and, therefore, economic growth can be expected. As India needs to continue focusing on reducing inequality to build back better, the Indian government and the World Bank are working together to strengthen policies, institutions, and investments to make sure that India will become more resilient to unforeseen events. This is done, amongst others, by inducing green, resilient and inclusive development strategies.

### **Political**

India has become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in January 2021 and will continue to be so until December 2022. India's permanent representative to the UNSC is Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti. He stated, "As the largest democracy, we [India] will be promoting very fundamental values like democracy, human rights and development." In August 2021, India was the President of the Council, and it will



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resume this position in December 2022. The primary responsibility of the UNSC is to maintain international peace and security and it is a large step forward for India to be a strong voice for the Global South. India has made clear that it would like to have a permanent seat at the table of the UNSC and has so far found the support of four out of five permanent members.

Another important topic is the new water policy in India. India enforced new laws regarding water management and calls for a multidisciplinary, multistakeholder approach to managing water in the country. In November 2019, the Ministry of Jal Shakti (Ministry of Water Management) set up an independent committee of experts to draft the new National Water Policy of India. Academics, practitioners and state and central governments submitted information on important aspects that should be included in the National Water Policy. From the 124 submissions, there was a striking consensus on the most important aspects that made up the new National Water Policy. The National Water Policy focuses on demand-side management of water and ensures that the development of water supply reflects considerations regarding the environment and water resource management. This includes, but is not limited to, the prevention of pollution and equitable distribution of water resources. The policy has not yet been released to the public.

These events and recent developments as well as others, such as the farmer's protests<sup>1</sup>, have determined the social, economic, and political situation in India over 2021 and currently. With rising vaccination rates, expected economic growth and strategies for inclusive and green development, prospects for 2022 are positive.

In the Netherlands, the Partners for Water 4 programme which took place over the period 2016-2021 will come to an end on 31 December 2021. India was a focus country under this programme with growing importance. The new Partners for Water 5 programme will begin in January 2022 and continue until 2027. Cooperation with India will continue during this programme.

## 2. Projects and activities

### ***Live with Water: Educational activities as part of LOTUSHR project***

As an addition to the Indo-Dutch project on Local Treatment of Urban Sewage for Healthy Reuse, LOTUSHR, (<https://lotushr.org/>), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), one of the partners, is developing socially acceptable wastewater treatment technologies to implement holistic wastewater management. The testing of the technologies is being done in a facility that is located at The Sun Dial Park, next to the Barahpullah drain. Through this project, they also aim to raise awareness on wastewater treatment and reuse amongst various stakeholders including households, farmers, entrepreneurs, and children. The LOTUSHR team has already conducted a household perception survey, Key Person Interviews (KPIs), and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) as part of this project.

As children are usually seen as agents of change for tackling environmental issues now and in the future, TERI is creating awareness amongst middle school children in select schools in Delhi NCR through the 'Live with Water' programme. TERI has designed an educational program, for school-level interventions that will build the capacity of students on various wastewater related issues, which helps them reduce water consumption and minimize

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<sup>1</sup> Following large protests and social unrest related to financial cuts in the agricultural sector, tranquillity has returned with the decision of the government to repeal these new laws.



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wastage, both at school and household levels. This programme was implemented over 6 months and has creatively engaged students from classes 6-8 by promoting environmental stewardship through both classroom and outdoor activities to improve their critical, interdisciplinary, and holistic thinking. As a result, an interesting and detailed e-book has been made. If you would like to read the e-book, please contact Drs. Fernanda van der Velde ([fernanda.vandervelde@RVO.nl](mailto:fernanda.vandervelde@RVO.nl)).

At the Closing Ceremony of the 'Live with Water' programme organized by TERI, H.E. Mr Marten van den Berg, Ambassador to The Netherlands in New Delhi, said, "Water is key in the Indo-Dutch collaboration. India has a rich history of water conservation which we need to learn from. We have to change our behaviour towards water and it can only happen if we learn about the issues around it". Furthermore, the embassy supported the project by distributing copies of the book.

### **Webinar series on Kerala**

Kerala is located on the southwest coast of India and is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, the occurrence of which is being exacerbated due to climate change. In the summer of 2018, Kerala experienced some of the worst floods in its history. Since the hazards happening in one part of the world can no longer be dealt with in isolation, the Netherlands, amongst other countries, assisted in the Disaster Risk Reduction efforts. Additionally, Kerala is working on developing a systemic approach to assess and address its systemic vulnerabilities and build long-term resilience concerning hydro-meteorological hazards. The Netherlands stepped forward to support Kerala in this endeavour.

A series of three webinars were organized by the Government of Kerala and the Government of the Netherlands in order to further discuss the cooperation on flood management in Kerala. Two content-based webinars took place on 26 and 27 November 2021 with a concluding webinar taking place on 1 December 2021. The first webinar covered the theme of risk-informed spatial planning including the data and analytical gaps, capacity building needs and presentations by Dutch experts on how they address these issues. The second webinar focused on integrated water resource management with a focus on the impact of natural hazards in Kerala and the constraints in management and capacity requirements. The webinar included presentations by Dutch experts on best practices and solutions to address the issues Kerala faces. The concluding webinar focused on the recommendations from the previous webinars and future collaboration. The webinar series has provided a good base for further cooperation between the two governments in 2022.

### **Combining Namami Gange and Water as Leverage: A hotspot analysis**

Following discussion during the 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Netherlands Joint Working Group (JWG), it was concluded that combining the Namami Gange programme and Water as Leverage (WaL) approach would be an interesting concept to address the water challenges the River Ganga faces. As a first step, a system analysis of the river basin was conducted by Deltares and Ooze Architects.

The system analyses of the Ganga Basin aims to get a better understanding of risks, vulnerabilities, interdependencies of urban areas in the basin for climate change, urban development trends that aggravate climate risks, extreme weather events (river floods, coastal floods, cyclones and landslides) and long-term effects (drought stress, salination, salt intrusion, sea-level rise, land subsidence, heat stress and water pollution). This is part of the technical assistance aspect of the analysis. The second aspect, the upscaling processes, investigates existing capacities of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) to implement the programme in the Ganga Basin and identify urban typologies to scale up to the 100 cities along the Ganga. A selection of 10 cities in the Ganga Basin suitable for a Namami Gange-WaL technical pilot was made. Three cities were pre-selected based on the recommendation of the NMCG. Additionally, an analysis of the governance structure was also conducted in order to better understand the flow of information, finance and decision-making structure. The analysis is based on readily available existing. The initial findings have been



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compiled as a draft report and dashboard in December 2021. A draft report will be shared with the Indian government counterparts in the first quarter of 2022 for their feedback and in order to continue the cooperation.

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*The country update is the last one as part of the Partners for Water Programme 4 and is published by NWP. The new Partners for Water Programme will run from 2022-2027 under which cooperation with India will continue.*