



Annual report 2020

Improving access to clean, sufficient and safe
water worldwide for 20 million people



Ministry of Infrastructure
and Water Management



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Blue Deal in 2020:

- **Adapting to the Covid-19 pandemic**
- **Transition to working online**
- **Scaling up local representation**

On to 2030!



Annual Report 2020

2020 ADAPTING TO COVID

SAFE, CLEAN AND
SUFFICIENT WATER FOR
20 MILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE
in 2030





PREFACE

Over the past three years, a great deal of effort has been put into forming partnerships for the Blue Deal, determining the ambitions, setting up the monitoring and establishing a baseline. 2020 was the first full implementation year of the Blue Deal programme. Instead, it became the year of the coronavirus crisis, causing an overall delay of 60 percent of the Blue Deal activities and results. Everyone needed to adapt to a new reality and way of working together.

Most partnerships couldn't fully execute their activities as planned, but nonetheless the travel restrictions brought about a positive change because the partners discovered more opportunities for online support and contact.

It was (and still is) a process of trial and error, but the partnerships are developing their online skills at an impressive pace. Another positive development was the deployment of more local representatives to support the implementation of Blue Deal activities. Among others, fourteen young professionals started as local representatives within the programme. So although 2020 was not the year we hoped for, it did provide a lot of valuable lessons for the future of the programme which have been incorporated into the annual plan for 2021.

“The Blue Deal approach is demand-driven and focuses on good governance.”



WHAT IS THE BLUE DEAL?

The Blue Deal programme is an international water development programme between the Dutch Water Authorities (DWA) and the Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Infrastructure and Water Management. The programme's ambition is to contribute to clean, safe and sufficient water for 20 million people by 2030. The Blue Deal meets the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (SDG 6.3-6.6), the goals of the Dutch International Water Ambition (NIWA) and the joint goals of Dutch Water Authorities itself. The long-term commitment of twelve years between local partners and DWA, and the focus on strengthening water governance make the programme unique.

HOW DO WE WORK?

The Blue Deal approach is demand-driven. Dutch Water Authorities is partnered with river basin, catchment or water treatment organisations abroad. These partnerships work on strengthening the three crucial elements of good water management:

1. Sufficient knowledge and expertise of water management
2. A well-functioning organisation with a clear mandate
3. Cooperating with key stakeholders

Cross-cutting themes

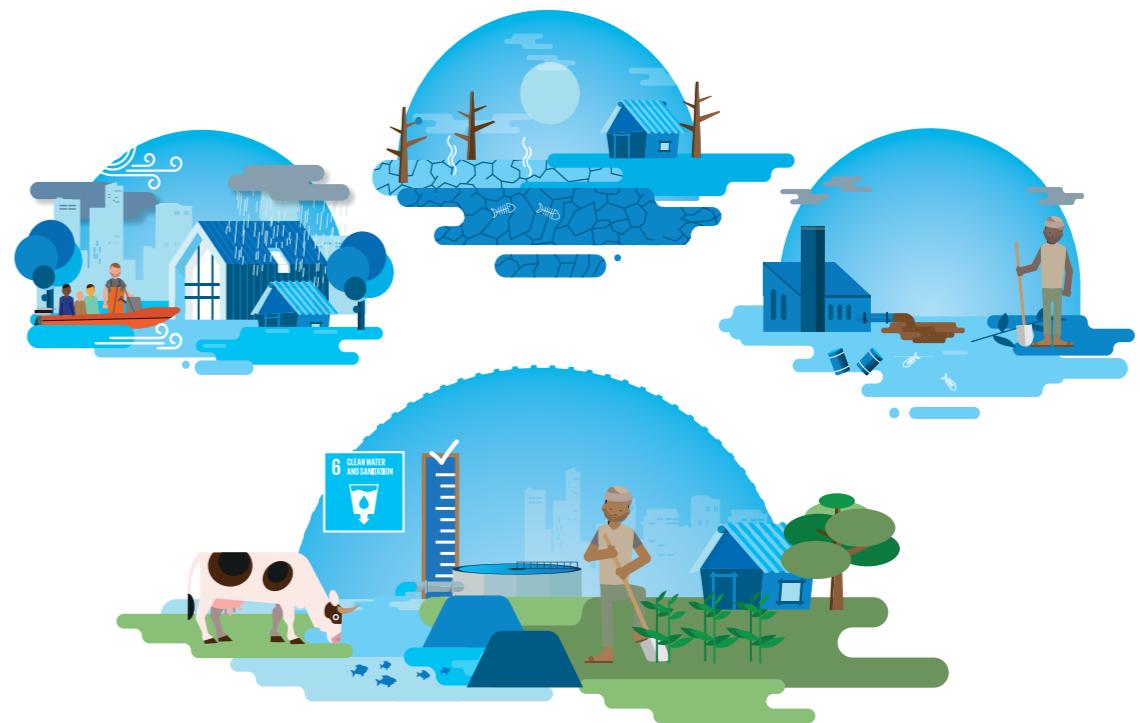
The partnerships pay special attention to cross-cutting themes in the planning and programming of their activities. The cross-cutting themes are climate, gender, innovation, sustainability and poverty reduction, which will boost the impact of the Blue Deal programme. For example, Blue Deal partners are working on water models showing future scenarios of floods and droughts. For poverty reduction, partnerships are raising awareness of the effects that water interventions have on most vulnerable groups in society. Others are active in supporting their local partners to raise funds for water/WASH infrastructure and in that way they contribute indirectly to poverty reduction.

Unlike gender and poverty reduction, innovation and sustainability are much more related to the core work of the Dutch Water Authorities. For instance, drones are used to improve knowledge of water quantity and the partnerships always take climate resilience into account while developing water allocation plans.

This demand-driven capacity building is done via one-on-one coaching, webinars and on-site training, with the aim of achieving visible progress. However, 2020 changed our way of working immensely. All partnerships had to shift their work method from physical missions to online meetings combined with local representation. Missions, training courses, webinars, congresses and inspections of waste water treatment plants all took place digitally and a pilot for e-learning was started in Mozambique. It worked out for most of the partnerships, but not all of them had access to adequate internet connection. Still, most partnerships recognise the advantages of online activities and want to keep on using them within the partnership after the travel limitations of the coronavirus crisis have been lifted. To find the right balance, more knowledge of effective online methods is needed within the whole programme. This will be a focus of the Blue Deal programme in 2021.

LEARNING FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Through the Blue Deal, water authorities are also learning from abroad to further improve water management in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands we can still learn a lot about responding flexibly to (climate) changes. This asks for a different approach and mindset from Dutch water experts. Over 500 attendees at the 2020 Delta Conference learnt how the Dutch water authorities put lessons learnt abroad into practise in the Netherlands.



One example of learning from abroad is that foreign partners were able to switch to a new way of working much faster at the start of the coronavirus pandemic. In the Netherlands this also helped to adopt faster digital working methods and to adapt to the new reality. Another example is Corpocaldas (a partner in Colombia), which helped Water Authority Limburg to improve their risk model for torrential rainfall by adding flow rates. Cars drifting off and children being dragged away were not only a risk of floods and dike breaches, but also of torrential summer rainfall in the Dutch hills.

South Africa halved its water usage by gaining the support of the local community. Because of this, 'point zero' (no water) was never reached. During a study trip to South Africa, experts learnt valuable lessons about civic participation. Dealing adaptively with droughts and ad hoc problems occurs more often abroad than in the Netherlands. The Blue Deal pays increasing attention to learning from abroad and to learning among partners themselves.



SOUTH AFRICA: LET THE WORLD BENEFIT, ALL TO- GETHER

The Blue Deal partnership in South Africa is as warm as the temperatures in Pretoria. Two South African Blue Deal partners tell us the reasons for this and how the Blue Deal affects (global) policy in many more ways than previously imagined.

"Partnership is about mutual understanding and accommodating each other's views. The outcome should satisfy both partners," says Ms Nchedi Moripe. As the chief director of global corporation and strategic partnerships in the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), Ms Moripe has high aims for what the Blue Deal programme can achieve. "I suppose the Blue Deal programme is a model that can be shared with the world. It is an excellent international partnership model that can be put out there for the world to be seen."

Ms Nchedi Moripe

"I suppose the Blue Deal programme is a model that can be shared with the world."

Dr. Konanani Khorommbi, also known as Dr. KK, agrees. "The partnership is working very well. The Dutch bring their own skills, but they do not undermine the South Africans' local expertise. We own the process and we are responsible for managing the resources." As the director for Institutional Management in the Gauteng Provincial Office, Dr. KK's responsibilities lie with water resources in the Upper Vaal catchment area. This is where the Blue Deal continues with the former Kingfisher projects in the Vredefort Dome and the Blesbokspruit.

"We are using the Blue Deal to achieve more and higher objectives than water quality only. It's also about integrated water resources management and integrated land use management. The Blue Deal partnership has contributed to the maintenance of the international status of the Blesbokspruit Ramsar Site (with the aid of the Ramsar Convention) and the Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site (WHS) (with the aid of UNESCO). The project has already promoted the status of the conservation report of the Vredefort Dome WHS due to the improved water quality of the Vaal River. By improving the ecological integrity of the Blesbokspruit Ramsar Site, it will also advance its removal from the Montreux Record. If we continue like this, the country is going to benefit a lot economically, environmentally and socially."

Examples of how the partnership contributes to the (local) economy, environment and community are plenty. Both projects in the Vredefort Dome and the Blesbokspruit are run by two female project managers, empowering them to become future leaders. Another example of the advantages of the partnership is how local women are removing the water hyacinth, a plant that spreads quickly in polluted water, thus destroying everything in its way. Dr. KK is impressed: "The women came up with an innovation through which they can harvest the water hyacinth. They take the product and manufacture it into goods like ashtrays and artifacts for ornaments. So it's a women-led project which is good for the economy, social development and creating jobs." Therefore the project also ensures sustainability and poverty alleviation.

Ms Moripe is excited about how local initiatives are empowering women. "The Blue Deal programme shows how the South African people are the beneficiaries. We want to see gender equality and women's participation in all programmes. This is a serious priority in our country."

Dr. Konanani Khorommbi

"If we continue like this the country is going to benefit a lot: economically, environmentally and socially."

Working in a partnership also means sharing experiences. South Africa exposes itself so that the Dutch and others can learn from them. Exchanging skills and innovation is the cornerstone of the Blue Deal programme according to Ms Moripe. She has noticed the appreciation for the work that South Africa and the Netherlands have been doing together. "Working with the Dutch enables South Africa to participate in multilateral platforms, up to United Nations level, and grants us an opportunity to influence the Global Water Agenda as well." By representing the African continent on many platforms, the voice of South Africa needs to accommodate the voice of Africa. "This is why the Blue Deal partnership and working with the Dutch goes far beyond mere projects and programmes. It has become a relationship that is very inclusive in everything that the two governments want to achieve in the water sector."

In Ms Moripe's view, other programmes in which the two governments interact, such as the Orange Knowledge Programme, actually laid the foundation for the Blue Deal concept. "It is on this basis that I think future programmes will be created out of the lessons that we have learnt from the Blue Deal programme. This seems to be a relationship that will never end and will continue to benefit our people in a very positive way."





2020

WORKING ON-SITE & ONLINE



13 partnerships working on clean water



10 partnerships working on safe water

16 PARTNERSHIPS IN 14 COUNTRIES
WORKING TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO
CLEAN, SAFE & SUFFICIENT WATER



14 partnerships working on sufficient water

The core work of the Blue Deal contributes to SDG 6.3-6.6, 6.A and 6.B

14 YOUNG EXPERTS ABROAD

11 from partner countries
3 from NL



TOTAL AMOUNT OF DAYS WORKED ON BLUE DEAL

Country partnerships: 3057

TOTAL EXPENSES
€4.4 mln

Dutch Water Authorities: 3138

DAY IN LOCKDOWN

Average of 16 partnerships



133 days

The Netherlands: 32 days

Source: Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

FLIGHT DECREASE IN COVID-19 SITUATION





COLOMBIA: LONG-TERM IS KEY

"The long-term cooperation until 2030 is extremely important," notes Barbara Swart, Delta Coordinator in Colombia, from her home in the Netherlands. She is eager to be able to travel to the country in Latin America again. Being in the country itself and getting to know the partners is essential. Especially in Latin America. "We can build on existing relationships, but there is nothing like physical contact. It shouldn't go on like this much longer."

Barbara coordinates the Colombian Delta team on behalf of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, with the aim of increasing water safety and water security in Colombia. The Delta team consists of water experts from RVO, NWP, the embassy, Rijkswaterstaat (the government water agency) and the Blue Deal. Louis Bijlmakers and Ellen Bollen, project managers of the Colombian Blue Deal partnership InspirAgua, are active members of this team. By frequently exchanging knowledge, all partners are looking for ways to strengthen one another without doing any double work. "I see it as a constant interaction among different parties. This does not only mean that the ministry helps the Blue Deal partnership, but it also works vice versa."

A good example is HERMANA, a digital water tool that is used to develop sustainable water management. The tool, which was developed by the Partners for Water programme, was implemented successfully by one of the Colombian Blue Deal partners. Louis Bijlmakers and Ellen Bollen are investigating whether up-scaling is possible.

The demand for up-scaling came from the ministry. "It is one of our goals to see whether instruments developed with subsidies can also be used elsewhere. But it is obvious that you start in the country where you are active, since that works best for everyone."

The strength of the cooperation between the water authorities and the ministry also lies in making use of their contacts. Barbara tells us: "Our contacts in Colombia at the national level with the different ministries sometimes help us achieve things that otherwise present an obstacle in legislation or in licensing. I have also pleaded for extra capacity from Rijkswaterstaat (the Dutch government's water agency) for the cooperation with Cormagdalena river authority." The cooperation between the ministry and Cormagdalena for integrated river management had been on the agenda for quite some time, but with the Blue Deal we finally managed to make actual progress.

Barbara hopes that this will be a long-term collaboration. "Joining forces with Blue Deal partners is valuable. The experts are active in the field, frequently visit the country, act together with the other players and are thus able to get closer to the problem. For both the ministry and other Delta team members, it is important to know how things work in practice."



DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BLUE DEAL PROGRAMME

ADAPTING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

While most of the partnerships were able to visit their counterparts in the first two months of 2020, from 13 March no more flight transportation was undertaken by the Blue Deal to prevent the spreading of the coronavirus. Besides the fact that everybody had to adapt their personal life to the new measures, the Blue Deal project leaders and programme office also needed to adjust to the new situation. The partnerships shifted their work to digital forms within a month and the programme office organised peer-coaching sessions to increase knowledge of digital tools needed for this transformation.

The programme office increased the number of meetings with the Steering Committee and project leaders to monitor the progress closely. A bi-weekly check on postponed visits as well as costs was held to monitor the effect of the pandemic on the Blue Deal programme. Scenarios were also set up to improve decision-making in this situation. In most of the countries where the Blue Deal operates, lockdown measures were introduced. In some countries the health situation deteriorated and in other countries the internet was either hardly available or not available at all. A small part of the budget for 2020 was used to improve local partners' access to the internet and to safety measures. A larger part of the budget was used to increase local representation.

TRANSITION TO WORKING ONLINE

The switch to working from home and meeting online happened quite rapidly in the Netherlands. This gave the project leaders the opportunity to meet one another and their local partners on a more frequent basis than before. Regular peer-coaching meetings were held on how to continue with the implementation of activities online. Not all international partners were familiar with the different available online programmes, such as ZOOM, TEAMS or MIRO. In some countries, slow internet connections led to difficulties with staying connected.

A small part of the budget was used to improve this. By the start of the summer, most partnerships were able to have regular online meetings. Moreover, webinars were held in different partnerships and even virtual missions were undertaken. Besides virtual project implementation, the different training courses within the Blue Deal context also needed to be made available online.

One good example is the KIWI programme, the international training and introduction programme which enhances the capacity of the Dutch Water Authorities. Initially, the 19 participants of this two-year training programme were supposed to take part in four field visits to partner organisations and in the meantime they would have six training days. This programme was redesigned, providing monthly online sessions for all participants on different topics.

SCALING UP LOCAL REPRESENTATION

Fortunately, in most of the partnerships local representation and support have been arranged to support the continuation of the partnerships. Many partnerships employed residential managers. Furthermore, fourteen Young Experts started at the Young Expert Programme. This means that in nearly all partnerships additional capacities were locally present throughout the unexpected coronavirus pandemic.





ESWATINI: LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

Marga Oosterveld, secretary of the eSwatini partnership, ends all of her informal emails with a good-hearted wink. This really characterises her positive and lively spirit. As project leader of the eSwatini partnership, these two characteristics are especially useful to her with regard to the past (coronavirus) year. "Always look at the silver lining and keep your spirits high," she says energetically.

"Always look at the silver lining."

The partnership met with many setbacks because of COVID-19. This already happened in March 2020, when an important working visit to the Netherlands was cancelled at which the eSwatini Minister of Natural Resources and Energy would be present. However, it was still possible to adjust the approach to the new reality. Contact with the partners was maintained because of the early acquisition of digital tools. We also succeeded in reaching a crucial institutional breakthrough: the official foundation of the new water management organisation with appointed board members and headed by a female CEO.

As project leader, Marga contributes to the working method of the partnership. "Working internationally is a top-level sport," says Marga. "Non-verbal communication and relationship management are just as important as your professional knowledge and expertise." She believes being flexible, making the most of opportunities and dealing creatively with certain developments are important for good cooperation. Connecting the partnership in eSwatini with the ones in Mozambique and South Africa is an example of this. These neighbouring countries share a lot of similarities when it comes to water management. The three partnerships are joining forces by learning from one another and supporting one another.

Collaborating with the partner in eSwatini gives Marga a lot of energy. "The eSwatini CEO is a strong woman and our female Young Expert Professional (YEP) is well on her way to becoming a skilled water professional." The partnership's extra drive may be attributed to the fact that eSwatini doesn't belong to the focus countries of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Because of this, the partnership does not have access to the use of every Dutch fund, but they do have access to the Blue Deal and they want to make use of this opportunity.

By working together on clean, safe and sufficient water, all team members contribute to poverty reduction and social inclusiveness in eSwatini. Marga is therefore hardly able to wait to travel to eSwatini after the coronavirus crisis and to work on good water management. "To Blue Dealers all over the world, take heart! In no time we will be working on good water management again and in the evenings we will be enjoying our meals, hoping they won't be too spicy."



CLEAN, SUFFICIENT AND SAFE WATER IN 2020

The Blue Deal is essentially a programme that works on capacity building through long-term partnerships. It's a programme for the long haul: it takes time to achieve impact, but at least the impact will be sustainable.

Despite the coronavirus crisis, there are many visible interim results for 2020. An example is the partnership in the Palestinian territories, which raised funds for a small-scale waste water treatment pilot and acquired three small waste water treatment plants for the West Bank. These kinds of pragmatic and practical solutions look promising when it comes to ensuring **CLEAN** water in the short term. Another example can be found in Kenya, where the demand for water is high. The partnership came closer to a fair distribution of water in 2020 through the modelling of the water system, which is important for the development of a water allocation plan. We have also come one step closer to providing **SUFFICIENT** water for everyone in Kenya after the start of a spin-off project about water usage in agriculture. The partnership in Peru worked jointly on flood prevention measures, as floods caused by torrential rainfall are happening more and more frequently because of climate change. These measures ensure that residents can live **SAFELY** in river areas.

In the following summaries you can find the results of the Blue Deal partnerships in 2020.



RESULTS OF PARTNERSHIPS IN 2020

LATIN AMERICA

Argentina

Overdue maintenance of the water management system and irregular precipitation patterns are a disastrous combination. Farmers suffer a lot of damage as a consequence of several large floods that have occurred in the province of Buenos Aires since 2010. The Argentinian national water authority (ADA) and Dutch Water Authorities want to put a stop to this situation.

In 2019, farmers, municipalities and province started collaborating on water management for the first time. Together, they identified flooding areas in the General Lavalle pilot area and five municipalities upstream. The city of General Lavalle also founded a water commission. The partnership acted as a catalyst: ultimately, the trust in the government and the cooperation among organisations grew.

At the end of 2019, however, a new president was elected in Argentina and a new water authority team was introduced. Because of this, the Blue Deal had to work with new contacts and had to build the relationship from scratch. Moreover, the coronavirus crisis interfered with the planned activities of working on the Blue Deal with the new team, but thankfully the cooperation with the

embassy ensured continuity.

As the lockdown continues, the partnership is making a film for water experts about the participatory approach in General Lavalle. In 2021, farmers, municipalities and province hope to be working together again.

Colombia

In Colombia, the Blue Deal is working on improving the waste water treatment, sewers and the licensing and enforcement systems for industrial discharges. In February and March 2020 the Dutch Water Authorities were still able to pay working visits to the Colombian partners in Santander, Cormagdalena and Huila. Afterwards, the planning had to be altered drastically because of the pandemic. The Dutch and Colombian partners rapidly put together a series of 9 webinars and switched to online cooperation, which led to a collaborative digital conference in December. As a result, the relationships, even those with new local partners, were well-maintained during 2020.

In 2020, the partnership in Cormagdalena laid a good foundation for better environmental management in the Río Magdalena catchment area. The roles and tasks of the organisations in the catchment area were clarified and mutual trust was enlarged by increasing knowledge of the area and by exploring shared problems.

The Huila partnership looked into the information requirements for good water management and in Santander the partnership investigated the setting up of participatory monitoring and a water information system. The partnership in Valle del Cauca already makes use of such a water information system and is expanding it for broader decision-making in water management. Three of the nine webinars concerned this theme.

Themes for which 'learning on the job' is necessary, achieved fewer results. Physical working visits remain essential, although in

2020 we did find that we can achieve much more through online cooperation than was previously expected.

Peru

The Blue Deal partnership in Peru focuses on improving the technology and management of two regional Water Resources Committees (WRCs) in the two catchment areas of Tumbes and Chira-Piura. These are regional networks in which the affiliated organisations carry out water management activities. Despite the coronavirus, the Dutch and Peruvian partners still maintain good contact with each other. Frequent contact with the project managers in the two WRC catchment areas occurs through video calls. Moreover, two local Young Experts (YEPs) started supervising activities in Peru for the Blue Deal.

Peru was impacted greatly by the coronavirus and the Peruvian government declared a state of emergency. The Ministry of Agriculture has asked the national water authority and

the WRCs to carry out other tasks during the pandemic as well, such as maintaining the coronavirus measures and cleaning the canals for national food security.

Despite the difficult situation, the partnership has worked substantively on studies of flood protection measures in online training courses over the past year. Moreover, the partners began improving the water management plans of both catchment areas. Working online still brings challenges, such as the lack of a good internet connection for all organisations and the regular changes in the top-level management of the national water authority. Good contact is necessary to maintain sufficient support.

WEST AFRICA

Burkina Faso

Because of its strong local team, the partnership in Burkina Faso was not affected as much by coronavirus delays as other partnerships in 2020. Because of this, the training courses in the field of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM¹) and the Plan Do Check Act-cycle could still largely continue. Consequently, the local experts are better able to devise and carry out good water

plans. Most training courses were digital, but since the summer of 2020 the local team has also provided live courses. The partnership facilitated 4G internet and personal protective equipment so that the local partner could still keep in touch despite the coronavirus and pursue their activities safely.

In 2020, the partnership contributed to reducing the negative impact of the artisanal mining industry on water supplies. The partnership wrote a manual for the construction of water reservoirs at gold mining sites. Representatives of NGOs, the Ministry of Water and the Ministry of Mines in Burkina Faso were present at the training courses about the manual. Because of this the relationship between the Ministry of Water and the Ministry of Mines has improved. The partnership also contributed to the preparation for and the launch of new water projects such as the Eau, Clé du Développement Durable programme which is aimed at sanitation and IWRM, as well as the preparation for a Develop-to-Build-project for the construction of eight reservoirs.



¹ Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is a process which promotes the co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems. (Source: United Nations)



Ghana

The Ghanaian partners and the Dutch Water Authorities are combining their expertise and knowledge to establish a sustainable regional water management organisation. The aim of this organisation is to implement integrated water management in the White Volta and the Lower Volta Delta basins. Building solid relationships did not go smoothly in 2020 because of the outbreak of the coronavirus. The partnership achieved an estimated third of the intended results for 2020.

One of the activities with which the partnership achieved results in 2020 was compiling a list of priority measures for the improvement of the sub catchment area within the White Volta basin. The partnership looked at integrated water management by not only taking into account the erosion of riverbanks and their reforestation, but also the development of measures for dam stability, more efficient water use in agricultural activities, dredging and small-scale solutions for domestic waste water facilities.

In the Lower Volta Delta the partnership also focused on reinforcing the administrative organisation for regional water management. Together with the organisations that are responsible for regional water management, the partnership has taken the first steps in creating an Integrated Water Resources Management plan (IWRM plan). Each organisation prioritised its own actions. The partnership is also working on improved

information provision on floods to increase safety during flooding.

Mali

The name 'Dji Don' in Bambara (the local language in Bamako) captures the essence of the Blue Deal partnership. Translated directly it means water knowledge. The Dji Don partnership provides technical advice and hands-on assistance to the Malian public waste water treatment organisation: ANGESEM². The project focuses on improving the operations, maintenance and management of six waste water treatment plants (WWTP) in Bamako, which work towards improving the quality of the surrounding environment and the Niger River. The first mission in February 2020 included a training course on the safe use of HydroSense II³ meters for WWTP operators, the development of to-do lists for WWTP maintenance, the launch of a newsletter and recommendations for relocating and equipping the laboratory to the ANGESEM head office at Sotuba.

However, following the cancellation of all missions from March 2020, the planned activities and development of two pilot projects monitoring the quantity and quality of the influent of industrial waste water to the Sotuba site were delayed. The activities only resumed after the return of the residential manager of the Dutch Water Authorities to Bamako in August. Furthermore, the partnership started with setting up a basic

² Angesem: Agence Nationale de Gestion des Stations d'Épuration du Mali

³ HydroSense II meter: a portable and handheld device to obtain soil measurements.

video training to improve the management and maintenance of the six waste water treatment plants. The video training aims to be flexible with regard to domestic travel restrictions and can be adapted accordingly to best serve local partners.

EAST AFRICA

Ethiopia Abbay

The Ethiopia Abbay partnership works together with the water authority Basin Development Authority (BDA) and the water authority Abbay Basin Development Office (ABDO). Together they are strengthening the water management of the catchment area of the Abbay River, also known as the 'Blue Nile'. By strengthening the organisations, the partnership creates fair, balanced and efficient water distribution in two critical sub catchment areas.

At the beginning of March 2020, the last working visits between Ethiopian and Dutch team members took place. The working visits provided many insights into the best ways of exchanging knowledge and experience within the partnership. Almost immediately afterwards, the Netherlands, and later Ethiopia as well, went into lockdown because of the coronavirus pandemic. At the beginning of June, unrest about the elections ensued in Ethiopia and communication with

Ethiopia became practically impossible. In September, communication was luckily restored, partly because of the acquisition of communication tools from the Blue Deal budget.

Collaborating remotely and keeping in touch via Skype became the best solution for keeping up the activities. The partnership was thus still able to execute a number of plans. However, training water managers remotely in Ethiopia turned out to be difficult. In order to gain support for the water quantity model and the water allocation plan in the two sub catchment areas, face-to-face-contact and training-on-the-job are absolutely necessary. The joint discussion and establishment of the improved basin plan and the new water allocation plan has therefore been postponed until 2021.

Ethiopia Awash

The Ethiopia Awash partnership aims at improving the water data among Ethiopian partners. These data help the partners improve the policy and plans for water safety, water quality and water quantity. One of the greatest difficulties in the water management of the Awash catchment area is the limited collaboration between authorised water organisations. In order to facilitate cooperation, the partnership drew up a water agreement (Water Cooperation Framework



Agreement) in 2020. All parties signed this agreement. The partners will present the water agreement at the beginning of 2021 during a digital mini-symposium. Together with VNG International, the partnership also developed an app to map out industrial discharges. This eventually will result in the polluting industries now actually paying for their waste water. Another result of 2020 is the evaluation of the water allocation plan. Dutch experts from Dutch Water Authorities evaluated the process and contents of the current plan and made recommendations. With the aid of these recommendations, the Ethiopian partners will carry out their own assessment in 2021, after which they will implement the improvements together with their stakeholders.

Ethiopia WWTP

The impact of the coronavirus on the Ethiopia WWTP⁴ partnership is large. In April 2020, the partnership was just working on the role that the Water Development Commission of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Ethiopia could play when the coronavirus broke out. At that point, good contact with the hired Ethiopian consultant, who supervised the Blue Deal partnership, hadn't been established yet. Because of this it was difficult to develop the (online) supporting role of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation. In spite of these challenges, the partnership began supporting asset management in 2020 and explained the procurement rules for the waste water treatment plants (WWTPs). An

exchange of knowledge about faecal sludge management also took place. Participating interactively in online meetings is, however, somewhat difficult because of the slow internet connection in Ethiopia.

Kenya

The coronavirus crisis impacted the Kenya partnership greatly in 2020, but it still managed to achieve a lot. The partnership cancelled almost all missions, but still carried out around 70% of its annual plan. The most important results were made with regard to the water management plan for the two catchment areas. The partners especially made great progress in improved insights in the water balance by modelling the water system. Moreover, online trainings were given and support was provided in the rehabilitation of monitoring stations.

The partnership made progress by designing a process for the water allocation plan (WAP) and by compiling an inventory of which stakeholders are most important for this. Freeing up local budgets for research into extraction activities in both catchment areas turned out to be difficult and was not achieved in 2020. Since this is an important part of the new water management plans, this will be done in 2021. The partners still managed to conclude several activities for the entire WAP process.

⁴ WWTP: waste water treatment plant: purifies waste water, for instance of households, industries and rainwater which is discharged via the sewage system.



The intensive communications with the partners through digital tools also led to another positive effect: the involvement and collaboration received an extra boost. The commitment of the two Kenyan YEPs and the Dutch YEP also ensured extra continuity and involvement. Other important results of 2020 were, apart from further collaboration with Waterworx, the collaboration with the Dutch Embassy and the other Dutch parties and programmes in Kenya. An important spin-off was the commencement of a Nuffic project with the Water Resources Authority (WRA), the local partner of the Blue Deal, which is aimed at providing training about water usage in agriculture.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

eSwatini

In 2020 the eSwatini partnership suffered from many delays because of the coronavirus. The partnership still managed to achieve a crucial institutional breakthrough: the official founding of the new water management organisation in eSwatini with appointed board members under the leadership of a female Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The impact of cancelling almost all missions, meetings and trainings was considerable. Achieving results turned out to be difficult and expenses in time and money were low because of this. The communication between partners in the Netherlands and eSwatini grew because of digital tools, which led to an increased sense of trust and a strong team spirit within the partnership. The start of a local Young Expert (YEP) and the formal appointment of the CEO for the new water management organisation in eSwatini led to additional positive boosts.

In 2020, the partners also gained results in fundraising and better coordination with the Blue Deal partnerships in Mozambique and South Africa and with the embassies in Maputo and Pretoria. By collaborating with the eSwatini Development Agency, there is more attention for poverty reduction among small farmers who are dependent on clean and sufficient water. In 2021, the development and growth of organisational capacities and the training of new employees of the water management organisation will be important as well. Moreover, the partnership will also take up activities concerning social inclusivity and poverty reduction.

Mozambique

Mozambique often suffers from natural disasters. Cyclones cause floods, the water quality is under pressure and climate change exacerbates periods of drought. Along with the growing demand for clean water, this requires effective water management. The collaboration between Dutch Water Authorities, three Mozambican water authorities (ARAs⁵) and the municipality of Beira in the Blue Deal partnership is aimed at accelerating complex processes such as a fair distribution of water. The partnership invests in the long term: they attracted 10 young professionals, who support the water experts.

2020 started out smoothly and positively for Mozambique with a constructive evaluation of 2019 and a meaningful partnership meeting about dealing with dike management. On 15 March, Mozambique went into lockdown because of the coronavirus pandemic, but because of the strong team there, about 60% of the joint activities could still be carried out. This was possible because of the presence

of a residential manager, a productive collaboration with local NGOs and a fast switch to working digitally. The partnership improved, among other things, the process for licensing and taxation and mapped out unknown water users.

The taxation contributes to a continuous influx of revenues for the water authority in Mozambique, which is crucial for the organisation to function properly.

South Africa

The switch to online collaboration with the South African partners went smoothly in 2020. It even led to two virtual one-week missions to compensate for the lack of physical visits. The delays remained limited because of frequent online communication. Moreover, more interaction and participation ensued because people from other organisations could participate more easily. This led to more coherence and better cooperation within the partnership.

The most important results in 2020 were made with regard to water quality. The various partners investigated how the waste water facilities could be managed more safely and efficiently, addressed the water hyacinth problems and exchanged data for improved monitoring. By including the local population in dealing with the water hyacinth and providing a small compensation for their help, the Blue Deal delivers a modest contribution to poverty reduction. A group of young volunteers - the Envirochamps - helped protect the environment by removing encroaching water hyacinths and turning them into products.

The partnership will take its experience in online collaboration (with which other departments are easier to involve) to 2021. The collaboration with the industry and the NGOs will also be given extra attention in that year.

EURASIA

Palestinian Territories

Despite the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, around 80% of planned activities in 2020 could still be implemented. In fact, more impact was generated due to multiple spin-off projects. This can be attributed to good and frequent online cooperation and the start of a local young expert (YEP) as project leader for both the Blue Deal and WaterWorX programmes as from April 2020.

In 2020, significant impact was generated by training projects with Nuffic, The Hague Academy and World Waternet. The partnership also developed funding proposals for Dutch and international innovation funds and developed a small-scale waste water treatment pilot through a public private partnership. Last but not least, three small waste water treatment units could be purchased for placement and utilisation in the West Bank.

The enlarged trust, commitment and cooperation among partnership stakeholders have resulted in multiple additional support and information requests by the Palestinian Water Authority and other authorities in the Palestinian territories, including the implementation of coronavirus surveillance in waste water.

⁵ ARA: regional water authority (Agua)

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: INVEST TO ATTRACT OTHER INVESTORS



Romania

The Dutch Water Authorities is cooperating with the National Administration Romanian Waters water authority (NARW) in the partnership to come up with structural solutions for flood prevention, water scarcity and finance.

The NARW is using several catchment areas of regional water basins administrations (WBAs⁶) as pilots to demonstrate improvements in implementation as a result of these solutions. The aim is to start applying the improvements at national NARW level and in other regional water authorities.

The coronavirus restrictions impeded the development of the partnership in 2020. The partners lacked the energy, enthusiasm and inspiration that usually spring up during physical meetings.

Nonetheless, the partnership did achieve results. For example, they introduced software for a decision support system for regional integrated water management with input from Deltares and HKV⁷. The Blue Deal also helped draw up a water management plan for the Jiu basin. With input from Acacia Water and the Foundation for Applied Water Research (STOWA⁸), the partnership developed long-term strategies for water scarcity.

In 2020, the partnership entered into a cooperation agreement with the World Bank which is aimed at the infrastructure of flood defences. The World Bank is enthusiastic about the Blue Deal's institutional and financial strengthening of the water management in Romania. This strengthening is necessary for the support of infrastructure projects of the World Bank.

In 2020, the NARW focused on the improvement of stakeholder management. However, involving local stakeholders has proved to be challenging because of the coronavirus travel restrictions.

Vietnam

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the partnership in Vietnam suffered many delays in 2020. Joint training and educational programmes for three neighbouring provinces in the Mekong Delta had to be postponed until 2021. Luckily, tendering and designing the local Blue Deal website was still possible. In

2021, the partners will launch a website that plays an important part in further sharing the acquired knowledge and experience with other provinces. Moreover, the coronavirus pandemic provides extra time to prepare the training programmes for the pools even better and more completely.

This resulted in, among other things, the first translation of the ISO standard⁹ for asset management into Vietnamese.

The local Blue Deal representative visited three provinces in 2020, coordinated local cases in Vietnam and maintained good contact with all involved partners. By also giving the partners at WaterWorX (the international water programme of drinking water companies) access to training programmes on asset management, the partnership contributes to better management and maintenance of the entire water chain.

The switch to online cooperation with the Vietnamese partners went smoothly in 2020. It even led to two virtual one-week missions to compensate for the lack of physical visits. Delays were limited because of frequent online communication. Moreover, more interaction and participation ensued because people from other organisations could participate more easily. This led to more coherent and comprehensive cooperation within the partnership.

The most important results in 2020 were made with regard to water quality. The various partners investigated how the waste water facilities could be managed more safely and efficiently, addressed the water hyacinth problems and exchanged data for improved monitoring. By including the local population in dealing with the water hyacinth and providing a small compensation for their help, the Blue Deal delivers a modest contribution to poverty reduction. Such is also the case with the Envirochamps. They are a group of young volunteers who help protect the environment by removing encroaching water hyacinths and turning them into products.

"I'm growing day by day in this team," states Loay Alattrash, a Blue Deal Young Expert (YEP) and local project leader in the Palestinian territories. He started in April 2020 with a Master's Degree in Water and Environment Engineering and a thesis written in Algeria. While he is giving this interview, his 2.5-year-old daughter is singing in the background. "I'm sorry," Loay sighs. "I'm working from home." Just like everywhere else in the world, the coronavirus is hitting hard in the Palestinian territories. And with a kid and a baby boy on the way, Loay is busy being a dad, husband to his wife and YEP all at the same time.

He tells us that ever since he started at the Blue Deal, he has already learnt much more than in the previous six years of his career. In the Blue Deal programme, he is learning how to manage projects and their finances as well as human resource management and data analysis. He is able to grow this fast because of the Blue Deal training courses and the YEP programme. But he is also enthusiastic about the team spirit. "In our project I know everything, since it's very transparent and the Dutch are very direct. I don't have to worry about making mistakes. If I do, my team members will tell me where I went wrong and guide me into the right direction. I love that."

Make no mistake, there are also things the Blue Deal team members can learn from Loay. To him, creating and maintaining informal relationships are key to the success of this Blue Deal partnership. This is why he invests a lot in expanding the Blue Deal network and keeping up good relationships with all partners.

"The Blue Deal is an amazing experience, it's an adventure."

Despite all his warm words about the Blue Deal programme and its team members, there is only one thing he is missing. "If you want success, you need to invest in innovative projects on the ground." The young expert gives the advice to start small pilots and show how successful strategies and technologies accelerate confidence, acceptance and the implementation of innovations. For instance, to improve the GIS system, it would be helpful if the Blue Deal funds laboratory equipment or online monitoring for pumps and reservoirs. Loay believes that small investments will attract other investors, which will help achieve up-scaling.

⁶ WBAs: Water Basins Administrations

⁷ HKV: Sustainable knowledge organisation for water and safety

⁸ STOWA: Knowledge Centre of Dutch water authorities and provinces

⁹ ISO: International Organization for Standardization

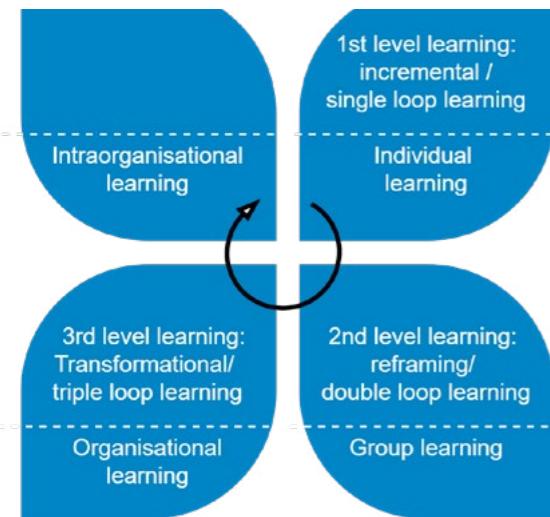
2020: LEARNING, RETHINKING AND ADAPTING

Since the start of the Blue Deal, all participating organisations have expressed a strong wish to learn from one other. In 2020 it became clear that all parties have the right mindset for this: ideas were discussed, old patterns were replaced and unknown networks were explored. All in all these are important building blocks for a true learning culture. The Blue Deal stimulates the development of learning at four levels, going from individual learning to intra-organisational learning.

LEARNT LESSONS FROM THE PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborating from a distance

Connecting digitally helped the work of the partnerships and will enable further communication in between physical team meetings in the future. The majority of the Dutch Water Authorities teams met online regularly with their partners in 2020. However, for some partnerships this was difficult due to slow internet connections or other technical problems in the partner country. Working in different time zones also poses a difficulty for some partnerships.



The fact that some partnerships were able to meet online with their partners regularly certainly has added value. Nevertheless, it's important to note that this does not replace the necessity of seeing one another in real life, working together in labs and meeting stakeholders face-to-face. This is even more evident when the partnership is relatively new and relationships still have to be built. Going forward, the Blue Deal aims to carefully look into which activities are effective digitally and which ones are not. In doing so, a hybrid model can be developed that is both efficient and effective.

5 key points for collaborating from a distance

1. People "on the ground" are invaluable: they can be a strongly involved local NGO, a Young Expert or a residential manager.
2. Regular exchanges via digital platforms such as Whatsapp, TEAMS or Zoom can result in more trust and better collaboration within the partnerships.
3. An annual plan can be made more robust to external circumstances (such as epidemics, natural disasters and safety issues) by creating blocks of activities that do not have a set timeline and do not require travelling. These types of activities can still be executed when there are no travel opportunities.
4. Activities such as trainings, for instance, can often be continued digitally as webinars, one-on-one coaching or learning sessions. But a stable digital infrastructure is crucial for this.
5. Working on innovative initiatives, sensitive or difficult institutional processes or involving local communities is much more challenging and less efficient digitally.

"The corona lock down proved to be a blessing in disguise, because the digital exchange of data was an easy target during the digital partner meetings."

Partnership South Africa

Staying op track with planned goals

Working in complex systems with many changing external factors is far from easy. How do you simultaneously navigate the external environment and stay on track with planned goals? The partnerships list three key points.

3 key points for staying on track with planned goals

1. During an (inter)national crisis, the realignment of priorities and budgets can have a large impact on the planning of activities, the availability of partners and/or budgets. This can greatly influence the annual plan and possibly result in a realignment of the partnership. It may also create the necessity to involve new partners, such as the involvement of the National Treasury, to secure certain budgets for international cooperation. Organisational changes (reorganisation) are a common external factor that can influence the progress of outcomes. Try to spot timely signals of upcoming changes in the organisation and discuss the consequences of these changes for the planned results.
2. Policy support from the local authorities and at national ministry level contributes positively to the partnership. If possible, arrange annual structural meetings to emphasise the importance of the partnership.
3. Peer-to-peer review of plans is an effective and efficient method for capacity building, as work is being accomplished in the same time that knowledge is being gained. Additionally, working together in this way can build significant trust with partners and/or stakeholders.

Effective and sustainable Capacity

The Blue Deal peer-to-peer model enables experts in similar fields to connect with one another, making it possible to exchange ideas on solutions for water-related problems. It is crucial in a capacity building programme that the capacity building is effective and sustainable. Effectivity and sustainability are important OECD criteria¹⁰ to reflect on and are also embedded in the Mid-term Review (results will be ready in 2021). This requires regular checks to find out whether coaching, training sessions and meetings are helpful in reaching the set goals.

3 key points for effective and sustainable capacity building

1. Obtain a clear indication of training needs, objectives and participants' levels of knowledge before learning events. Keep track of varying knowledge levels within training groups, and if needed, organise more specialised follow-up trainings.
2. Show midterm training results (such as visible improvements in groundwater flow management) as these can yield a positive feedback cycle. A visible positive result gives more confidence in the learning process, which creates more enthusiasm and commitment, thus resulting in even more effective knowledge transfer.
3. Peer-to-peer review of plans is an effective and efficient method for capacity building, as work is being accomplished in the same time that knowledge is being gained. Additionally, working together in this way can build significant trust with partners and/or stakeholders.

MOZAMBIQUE: IT'S A MATTER OF PERSEVERANCE

"It is with a heavy heart that I will be leaving Mozambique soon. It's a beautiful country to work in," says Michiel van der Pompe a little wistfully. Being the head of development cooperation and deputy ambassador at the embassy in Maputo, Van der Pompe is responsible for the water programme of the embassy together with Willem Timmerman (first secretary for water).



Water is the most important and largest budgetary programme of the embassy. In the multi-annual country strategy for development cooperation in Mozambique (2019-2022), the embassy emphasises the water and food security sectors with, among other things, a water management fund of 22 million euros. It's a large programme in which cooperation with the water authorities ARA-Norte and ARA-Centro and the Directorates-General of the Ministry of Water in Mozambique takes place. By also supporting the Mozambican water platform PLAMA¹¹, the embassy acts as broker between private and public parties. Water management and the collaboration with the Blue Deal are an important part of this.

Water management is a significant problem in Mozambique. "The risk of floods and droughts is high and distributing water in times of scarcity is difficult," says Van der Pompe. "In addition, the water is often polluted. This means that the Blue Deal activities are often related to the priorities of the embassy." Like the Netherlands, Mozambique is a delta country. There is a great deal of knowledge to share with each other. With over 40 years of experience in Mozambique, the Dutch have built a good name for themselves in capacity building. This concerns sharing knowledge in training water experts and knowledge in water management and water governance. "Capacity building is therefore a matter of perseverance," according to Van der Pompe. "The long-term nature of the Blue Deal programme supports this."

By making and focusing on strategic choices, the embassy is maximising its impact. "Stand-alone short-term projects are less sustainable. Consequently, the Blue Deal's regional long-term support for the ARAs is a good addition to the water programme of the embassy." The minister and the embassy communicate regularly, which gives the Blue Deal the opportunity to address certain issues. "We can make good use of your regional experience and will gladly help you in return whenever you run into any bottlenecks," says the deputy ambassador. It is also possible for the Blue Deal to make use of 'seed money' from the water fund. In this way, relatively small investments can be made to achieve profound effects that support the Blue Deal.

In a society in which over half of the population is under the age of 18 and women have a subordinate position, attention for social inclusivity and climate adaptation is imperative. That's why the embassy strives for an effective public-private partnership. The Blue Deal, with its attention for cooperation among public organisations, is a good addition to the water programme. Accordingly, Van der Pompe expects that an even closer collaboration with the Blue Deal will lead to more synergy for Mozambique.

¹¹ PLAMA's goal is to strengthen the Mozambican water sector by stimulating the dialogue between the public and private sectors and to build on the capacity within the private organisations. (source: Netherlands Water Partnership)



"The Blue Deal activities are related to the priorities of the embassy."

FINANCES

The realisation of all sixteen partner projects comes down to € 3,621k. This realisation is a bit low compared to the 2019 results, but in comparison to the annual budget, the realisation is extremely low this year. The reason for this is that the coronavirus has had the world in a tight grip since the first quarter of 2020. It follows that this has led to lower travel and accommodation costs: the partners travelled less often, which influenced earlier budget estimations. Only in the first quarter of 2020 expenses were incurred because almost all of the partnerships executed missions.

The number of hours spent decreased less sharply because much of the work could be carried out digitally. Particularly on the Dutch side, setting up all digital activities cost a lot of time in the beginning of the crisis because everything still had to be devised and developed. The time spent on this can be seen as an investment in a new digital way of working which can also be implemented in the future. Project expenses also continued, partly because certain contracts had already been awarded to third parties or because they were necessary for the continuation of the partnership.

Cost partners	Actual 2019	Budget 2020	Actual 2020
Total *1000			
Hours Dutch Water Authorities	2,308	2,918	2,039
Hours local partners	415	998	403
Travel and accommodation	622	1,268	284
Contractors (content experts)	262	483	230
Project expenses	489	1,329	666
Contingency		92	
Total project expenses	4,096	7,088	3,621

Table 1: Budget vs. realisatie 2020 Partners

The NWB fund financed the learning programme and the UvW bore a part of the expenses of the programme bureau. The water authorities and local partners contributed to the partnerships in kind. In total, the water authorities, local partners, Dutch Water Authorities and the NWB Fund financed 53% of all expenses in 2020. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water bore the vast majority of the Blue Deal out-of-pocket expenses. The contribution of the ministries consisted of 47% of all expenses in 2020.



In 1,000 euro	Actual 2018	Actual 2019	Actual 2020	%
Project cost partners		4,096	3,621	82%
Inception and Reconnaissance	1,884	206	-	0%
Programme office (exc. learning prog and communication)		510	707	16%
Learning programme and communication		63	95	2%
Total programme costs	1,884	4,875	4,422	100%
In-kind Dutch Water Authorities and local partners	586	2,591	2,125	48%
Contribution NWB fund (for learning prog and comm.)	30	63	95	2%
Contribution association of Dutch Water Authorities	158	80	120	3%
Contribution ministries	1,110	2,141	2,082	47%
Total Contributions	1,884	4,875	4,422	100%

Table 2: Costs vs. contribuition 2020

The aforementioned realisation of € 3,621k on project expenses concerns the summation of sixteen subprojects in fourteen countries - in Ethiopia there are three separate projects. The table below gives an indication of the expenses per country project. In 2020 the Volta project was cancelled. The unspending in 2020 will be transferred to 2021 corresponding to the decision of the Blue Deal steering committee.

Project expenses (in 1,000 euro)	Actual 2019	Budget 2020	Actual 2020
Argentina	54	129	30
Burkina Faso	222	221	244
Colombia	725	916	546
eSwatini	70	587	133
Ethiopia Abbay	165	307	126
Ethiopia Awash	340	576	388
Ethiopia WWTP	116	250	112
Ghana	222	288	122
Kenya Tana	119	268	183
Mali	141	214	181
Mozambique	690	1,229	659
Palestinian Territories	66	236	214
Peru	213	576	121
Romania	287	366	60
South Africa	557	464	395
Vietnam	7	459	108
Volta	101	-	-
Total	4,096	7,088	3,621

Table 3: Expenses bij Blue Deal Project



Helping 20 million people worldwide to gain access to clean, sufficient and safe water.



**BLUE
DEAL**

May 2021

For more information about the Blue Deal or to apply for the monthly news letter please send an email to info@bluedeal.nl or visit www.dutchwaterauthorities.com

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Koningskade 40
2596 AA The Hague
070-351 97 51

info@bluedeal.nl
www.dutchwaterauthorities.com

