



How can you support people in living healthy lives? One way is to ensure that they have access to enough clean water. Another is to support them in building proper sanitary facilities. Or to increase awareness of good hygiene practices. The Dutch WASH Alliance aims to realise and embed these conditions around the world. To ensure that it is done in the most sustainable manner possible, the Dutch WASH Alliance follows a unique strategy called 'FIETS'. This factsheet explains part of the strategy: the focus on environmental sustainability.

**T**he Dutch WASH Alliance aims to utilise a landscape-specific approach. WASH projects require a thorough survey of the area involved. How does the water flow through the area and where does it go? What are the characteristics of the local ecosystem? Which water resources, ecosystem services and waste flows are present in the area? How does the local community relate to these resources, services and flows? And what are the specific problems related to water supply, sanitation and hygiene?

When put together, the answers to these questions result in an integral, landscape-specific plan. The guiding principle is always that water, land and other resources are part of a single ecosystem, and cannot be dealt with separately. The characteristics of the ecosystem determine the WASH options and the development possibilities for the local community. The goal of this approach is to improve the quality of life for the local community without undermining the natural environment.

## The Dutch WASH Alliance

...has a strong local focus. It takes the needs of the local community into consideration and works together with organisations from different sectors in the area.

...abides by a 3R approach to water storage. Restore groundwater levels (to recharge), ensures water locally through storage (to retain) and reutilises it when possible (to re-use).

...abides by a 3R approach to water purification. This reduces contamination, recycles waste and sewage, and re-uses waste and sewage water flows.

...chooses efficient techniques that are as inexpensive, maintenance-free and environmentally friendly as possible.

...keeps ecosystem services intact, restores and stimulates them, as the well-being of the population is directly dependent on these services.

## The Dutch WASH Alliance

... is active in the fields of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), especially in developing countries and always in partnership with local parties: from local community and governments to businesses and civil society organisations. The solutions vary from context-specific awareness creation programmes and training courses to the construction of water systems or sanitary facilities. The work is always focused on achieving sustainable results. In order to realise these goals, the organisation follows the 'FIETS' strategy. 'FIETS' is not only the Dutch word for 'bicycle' (itself a very sustainable way to move!), it also stands for Financial, Institutional, Environmental, Technical and Social sustainability of WASH interventions.

## Landscape-specific approach



## Environmentally sustainable solutions

In its approach, the Dutch WASH Alliance takes the mutual interdependence between the ecosystem and the community into consideration. We therefore look for environmentally sustainable solutions, such as rainwater retention and 'eco-sanitation'. Rainwater retention is a good alternative to the use of ground water, and eco-sanitation consists of sanitary facilities that not only utilise water recycling, but also process sewage for agricultural purposes. These kinds of solutions keep water and nutrients available within the area and keep the environment healthy for its residents.

## Local cooperation

Throughout the development, implementation and administration phases, the Dutch WASH Alliance involves the local society closely in the execution of its projects. In fact, it is their information, knowledge and abilities that form the foundation of the WASH projects, and the intention is that the local society can eventually conduct the management of the projects without the assistance of the Dutch WASH Alliance.



## Cleaner water in Uganda

In the Ugandan village of Kinekamukono, many people suffer from diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid fever and occasionally even cholera. These diseases are caused by contaminated water from the nearby river, but diseases can also occur due to water shortages during the dry seasons. These dry periods force people to use the contaminated river near Kinekamukono. How does the Dutch WASH Alliance deal with these problems?

The Dutch WASH Alliance works together with local organisations to draw up a plan to clean up the river and to keep it clean. Part of this plan involves installing eco-sanitary facilities some distance away from the river. This significantly reduces the amount of human waste that ends up in the water. We also encourage people to use a specific section of the river for different activities. For example, it is better if farmers do not water their livestock in the same place that people draw their drinking water. The project also works to improve water availability. In order to prevent water shortages, the Alliance encourages the villagers to capture water during rainy periods through tanks, water buffers in the ground or 'ecosystem services' such as wetlands and forests, which soak up the water like a sponge. This keeps the water from flowing out of the area too quickly, allowing the villagers to use it during the dry periods.