Key contributions of the Netherlands to UNESCO IHP

TWO UNESCO IHP COUNCIL CHAIRS

The Netherlands had the honour of launching and chairing the International Hydrological Decade, as well as chair the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme.

In 1964, Professor Adriaan Volker chaired the Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts (also known as 'Council Zero') that launched the International Hydrological Decade, as well as implementation of the Decade between 1971- 1973. Professor Volker descended from a family of dredgers and was active in major land reclamation projects in the Netherlands and abroad. He was Professor of Hydrology at Delft University of Technology between 1965 and 1982.

Reinder Feddes was Professor of Landuse and Agrohydrology at Wageningen University between 1990 and 2004. He chaired the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme between 2000 – 2002. During his tenure, Professor Feddes stressed the importance of international knowledge sharing on water for sustainable development.

IHE DELFT INSTITUTE FOR WATER EDUCATION

IHE Delft has trained more than 25,000 water professionals from 190 countries, mostly from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Institute started in 1957 with a course on hydraulic engineering for 45 participants from 21 countries. The Institute was established following a massive flood in the Netherlands in 1953. The flood initiated the construction of large-scale hydraulic works, for which knowledge on hydraulic engineering was needed. This knowledge was subsequently also shared with international water engineers.

From the 1960s, the Institute expanded its curriculum, adopted its name (Institute for Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering) in 1976, and became a UNESCO Category 1 Centre in 2003. Since 2018, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education operates as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

IHE Delft is an active member of the UNESCO Water Family, providing knowledge and capacity development for the international water sector, predominantly to professionals in the Global South. In collaboration with leading universities, the Institute has conferred more than 130 PhD degrees.
More information: www.un-ihe.org

IGRAC

IGRAC (the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre) is the UNESCO and WMO Global Groundwater Centre. UNESCO and the WMO took the initiative to establish the centre in 1999. In 2000, the Government of the Netherlands expressed interest in hosting the centre and IGRAC was launched in March 2003, during the third World Water Forum in Kyoto.

IGRAC's key contribution is on groundwater research and knowledge sharing. The main initiatives conducted in cooperation with UNESCO, for IHP, are the Global Groundwater Information System (GGIS), the transboundary aquifers projects and maps, and the declaration of 2022 as Year on Groundwater by UN Water, culminating in the co-organization, with UNESCO, of the UN-Water Summit on Groundwater in December 2022 in Paris.
More information: www.un-igrac.org

CONTRIBUTIONS TO IHP FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES

GLOBAL NETWORK OF WATER MUSEUMS

In 2017, the Global Network of Water Museums (WAMU-NET) was founded in Venice. After the second Conference in, which took place in the Netherlands, the IHP Council acknowledged WAMU-NET as a Flagship Initiative during its 23rd session in 2018. WAMU-NET currently has about 80 members from around the globe which include museums, centres, institutes, sites and collections linked to ancestral water history. Through the network, a broad and also non-professional audiences is reached.
More information: www.watermuseums.net

CRIDA

The CRIDA methodology is a participatory and bottom-to-up approach to help water professionals and other stakeholders to integrate climate change into water resources planning. During the 26th IHP Council session in 2024, CRIDA (Climate Risk Informed Decision Analysis) was acknowledged as an IHP Flagship Initiative. Since 2018 CRIDA has been jointly developed and supported by UNESCO IHP, ICIWaRM (USA), Deltares (the Netherlands) and the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation.
More information: link

FRIEND-WATER

The Netherlands is involved in the oldest IHP Flagship Initiative; the Flow Regimes From International Experimental and Network Data (FRIEND-Water) since its inception in 1985. The initiative promotes collaborative research agendas across borders on shared river and aquifer basins, contributing to research on hydrological extremes (drought, floods) and data sharing. Wageningen University and Research coordinated various FRIEND committees, groups and publications.
More information: link

SDG 6 MONITORING

Together with the national IHP committees of Germany and Belgium, in 2015 the Netherlands hosted the workshop "Exploring new data for SMART monitoring of water SDG targets" in Maastricht. The workshop brought together more than 40 scientists, policy-makers and practitioners to discuss challenges of SDG monitoring in their countries: targets, indicators and status; innovative data collection and monitoring techniques. This paved the way to develop methodological approaches towards measuring SDG 6 related progress, including a Water Education Indicator.

WATER-RELATED CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNESCO

- **UNESCO Global Geopark:** In 2024, Geopark Schelde Delta was designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark, as a joint collaboration with Belgium. The region has a rich and fascinating geological history, with complex contemporary challenges for hydrology and ecology.
- **World Heritage List:** Many of the Dutch registrations to the UNESCO World Heritage List have a link with water: the Water Defence Lines, pumping stations, windmills and land reclamation ('polders') sites, as well as the Amsterdam Canals.
- **Memory of the World:** the Delta Archives were declared part of the national Memory of the World register. The Archives document the history of the southwest delta from the North Sea Flood in 1953 to the construction of the Delta Works: large-scale flood protection works.
- **Ecohydrology Demonstration site:** in 2025, the Speulderbos was declared the first Ecohydrology site in the Netherlands. It serves as a practical study site on the intersection of hydrology and ecology for students at Twente University – ITC.

THE NETHERLANDS HAS BEEN

Chair of the IHP Council for 4 years

Member of the IHP Bureau for 8 years

Member of the IHP Council for 32 years

NETHERLANDS
UNESCO WMO
WATER COMMITTEE

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Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE IHP
60 YEARS OF UNESCO WATER SCIENCES