

Webinar: Urbanisation and flood risks: understanding the fabric and governance of delta cities (9 May 2017)

Over 30 people participated in a webinar organised by Delta Alliance in partnership with PBL-Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, Water Environment and Climate (IWM), Water Channel on the May 9, 2017. The theme of the webinar focused on urbanisation and flood risks: understanding the fabric and governance of delta cities. Presentations for more insights on this issues were given by Like Bijlsma and Ton Dassen, both of PBL-Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency and S.M. Mahbubur Rahman of Institute of Water Modelling, Bangladesh. The session was moderated by Lenneke Knoop of Water Channel.

Key issues

The overarching questions for deliberations concentrated on the linkage between formal (planned) and informal (unplanned) urbanisation processes at valuable yet vulnerable delta zones and how these processes further influence the natural and urban systems.

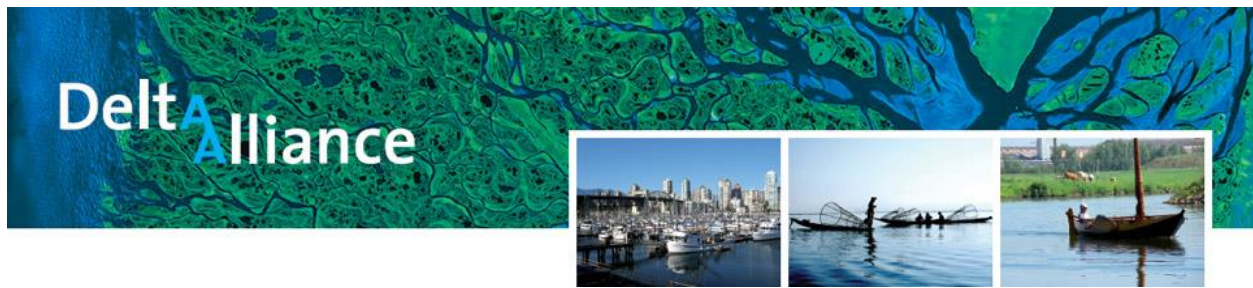
Presentations

- **Presentation of Like Bijlsma and Ton Dassen, PBL-Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency**

In addressing this through a series of presentations, Ton Dassen started with a presentation on a new alternative approach of exploring challenges of delta cities (Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), Beira (Mozambique), Barranquilla(Columbia)), in the context of what a city is, where urbanisation emerges and what urban governance is capable of. The approach is inspired by the new Urban Agenda signed in Quito and moreover aligned to Dutch networks, experiences, knowledge and deltas. Based on Ton's presentation, delta cities in attempts of tackling and developing plausible solutions to threats from natural hazards should be innovative and engage all relevant stakeholders, in and outside the cities, in collaborations. This calls for an in-depth analysis of the relationship between urbanisation and water systems in these three cities under study and how they have managed associated threats over the years.

In a link up presentation, Like Bijlsma delved into an analysis of the three case studies (cities) to assess the significance of challenges in governance capacities in the cities regarding urbanisation tactics of local communities and enterprises. To help examine how the delta cities have dealt with threats, urban expansion in the vulnerable areas over a period of 15 years was the focus of study. The presentation highlighted of the negative trade-offs and synergies that exist for formal and informal urbanisation processes of delta cities. Like Bijlsma emphasized that smart plans and measures which adapts to local ways of building cities and integrate informal developments are therefore required to induce resilience and inclusivity in local projects.

Ton Dassen took over to elaborate on the section of the approach that captured the constitution of new partnerships. Ton pointed out of the dependency of all the three cities, like many delta cities on financial resources from foreign or private organisations and national governments for infrastructure. Contextual knowledge in the cities' mechanisms and processes that propelled better local urbanisation varied. In effect, collaboration and participation among stakeholders was mentioned by Ton as an essential means to address the gap of defining a rational integral approach based on risk assessment and its feasibility. Collaboration stimulates the transfer of contextual knowledge and improves social learning amongst stakeholders. Additionally, he revealed that the hexagon model was employed to ascertain the most relevant relationships and key local actor organisational processes. It further facilitated in assembling academic system knowledge about deltas and wetlands, expert knowledge within local projects and neighbourhoods along three distinct lines of natural risk, urbanisation



processes and governance capacities. The hexagon model can be broadly applied in two scenarios. Firstly, within the local context, it can be applied in short term tactics in combination with long term city and water strategies. Second, through its application, inter-urban learning is strengthened to create specific learning groups based on similarities of local projects to identify stakeholders to establish new partnerships.

- **Presentation from S.M. Mahbubur Rahman, Institute of Water Modelling, Bangladesh**

S.M. Mahbubur Rahman ended the presentations for the session with an assessment of the present and future state of Dhaka city, with much emphasis on Eastern Dhaka. He mentioned of the rapid rate of urban and economic development that have occurred around rivers and wetlands in Dhaka city over years and their negative impacts on ecosystem services, drainage and sewage systems among others. Against this background, the western part of Dhaka city although protected still needs more pumping capacities, large drains (infrastructure), regular maintenance, amendments to make it more resilient to the changing conditions of urbanisation and climate. On the other hand, the eastern part of Dhaka city remains highly vulnerable to emerging urban development and natural hazards due to its unprotected nature. He concluded that it is imperative constrained urban development constituting no flood embankment and land filling and the establishment of settlements outside wetland zones are instituted to effectively deal with known (occurrences at the western part) and unforeseen threats.

Discussion

Some issues were raised for discussion during the session.

Regarding the discussions on the questions of: "1) What are in your case positive and negative interdependencies between planned/formal and unplanned/informal urbanisation? 2) Do you have examples of local projects who strive for a more inclusive green approach?", Saiful Alam indicated that 'the only project called purbachal new city in the east of Dhaka will have some inclusive green. Otherwise, there is no space available in the main Dhaka. However, there is some opportunities in the east of newly extended city corporation area where such project can be undertaken.'

Like Bijlsma further commented on this point as she highlighted of the apparent mismatch or lack of coordination between formal and informal urbanisation patterns although they related to each other. She mentioned this as a major reason that stimulated their research for wise means to enhance integration and coordination between formal and informal city growth in local planning procedures or projects.

The webinar was organised under the auspices of Delta Alliance in association with the PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.