

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Platform Meeting Bangladesh

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Why we work with Bangladesh?

- Bangladesh is a big **upcoming market.** A very young population of about 180 million people. BBP growth 4.8% per year. Bangladesh has a strong and growing production capacity and a growing internal market.

- **Trade is very imbalanced.** Imports from Bangladesh: EUR 1780 million (84% textile). Export to Bangladesh: EUR 207 million (machinery, chemicals and pharmaceutical products.

- Bangladesh is an **upcoming middle power.** Maintains good relationships with different global powers but tries to keep autonomy. India is the big neighbor. EU and China are important for trade, the USA for security. But also good relationships with Turkey and the Gulf states. The EU tries to strengthen political and trade relations.

- Bangladesh is a partner to cooperate in the **multilateral system** on subjects like climate, water, food security, migration and human rights. Our long term cooperation on these subjects has created trust.

- Bangladesh is in **three transitions**: 1) political transition to more democracy, 2) economic transition with the graduation out of the group of least developed countries and 3) a change in a relationship based upon development cooperation to a broad economic and political partnership.

Policy developments in the Netherlands.

- New government with new minister for foreign trade and development: Sjoerd Sjoerdsma.
- Beleidsbrief Buitenlandbeleid (24 April) en Speerpuntenbrief (7 September): Integrated foreign policy for 1) Prosperity, 2) Security and 3) Protection of freedom.
- Water and food security still important, but also more attention for climate, gender, civil society and European union.
- Minister wants to strengthen the relationship with countries which share democratic values. Names of the countries still under discussion. Bangladesh is possibly one of the candidates.
- Minister Sjoerdsma visited Bangladesh on 13th of October. Water Envoy (Meike van Ginneken) and Head water team IGG (Eva Schreuder will visit in the week of 25th November.
- Advice Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken (AIV) (26 October): 9 recommendations. Most important ones: 1) country ownership, 2) increase budgets, 3) cooperate more with EU and UN, 4) attention for policy coherence and 5) less projects. This advice will be used to review our policy.

Actual cooperation water in Bangladesh

- Bilateral water program of the Netherlands Embassy in Dhaka: about 11.7 million Euro in 2026, phasing out gradually till 2032.
- Basis is the MoU on delta management (2023-2032).
- Portfolio of about 15 projects on delta management, WASH, PPP development and transboundary water.
- Projects funded by IGG water: e.g. IHE Delft, ADB (Water Resilience Trustfund), Fonds Duurzaam Water, Aqua For All, etc. Estimated 4 million Euro in 2026.
- Partners for water (I&W funded): PPP development and asset management. 500.000 euro in 2026.
- Activities from other partners: RVO, Invest International, FMO, DFCD, etc. Expenditures not known.

Future of the program: general observations

- **Water is a very good entry point** to work with Bangladesh, also on other more difficult subjects..
- We would like to work towards a **more equal relationship**: less ODA and more investment and trade.
- More attention for **knowledge exchange**. E.g: what can we learn from Bangladesh on delta management?
- Bangladesh has special interest in **private sector involvement and PPP modalities**. MoU for cooperation on PPP’s signed in 2026.
- **Commercial opportunities not only in the watersector**, but more in textile, agriculture/ horticulture, ports and ship building.
- **ODA will not phase out**. The ODA via bilateral program will phase out, but ODA via e.g. RVO, Invest International, FMO will continue. But no fixed budget for Bangladesh. More competition for resources.
- **Reduction of staff at the embassy**.

Future of the program: some details.

- The water program of the Embassy in Dhaka will **focus on four subjects**:
  1. Delta and Water Management;
  2. Urban and Industrial Water;
  3. Transboundary Water Management;
  4. Nexus water: agri, textile, port & maritime.

- Within the portfolio, the Embassy will give special emphasis on:
  1. **Importance of political leverage** (e.g. new knowledge facility with Deltares; expertise & training on transboundary issues) and
  2. **Opportunities for Dutch business** in the water sector (goal: to present 1-3 projects before the PPP-authority/ 'Bangladesh Invest').
  3. **Connection to other funding sources** like Invest International, RVO and FMO. But also the IFI's en Green Climate Fund.

- The transition towards more trade and investment driven cooperation will be accelerated, through a.o.:
  1. the launch of the **third combi-track** (port and maritime);
  2. launch of **new impact clusters** and
  3. the organization of **trade missions** (e.g. trade mission water technology and circular textiles end Nov).