Turning Waste into Local Opportunities

Factsheet

VNG International's approach to solid waste management

About VNG International

VNG International is the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). Rooted in the Netherlands' rich tradition of local governance, we invest in empowering local governments worldwide to build better futures for all. Established in 2001, we focus on practical and innovative solutions that enhance the capacity and resilience of local governments.

VNG International designs and manages large, complex projects across a variety of sectors, collaborating with a diverse range of donors, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Commission, World Bank, and USAID. We take pride in our ISO-9001 certified quality management system, which underpins our commitment to high standards and client satisfaction. Our success is driven by our ability to combine local expertise with international knowledge, enabling us to implement solutions that are both practical and effective.

Together with local governments and their citizens, we are creating resilient, thriving communities that are equipped to face the future. At VNG International, we are not just building projects, we are building better futures for all.

Solid Waste Management: Strengthening Local Systems for Cleaner and Greener Communities

Local governments are most often the key responsible for the collection, disposal, and management of waste within their jurisdictions. This responsibility includes the implementation of national waste management policies, enforcement of regulations, and the provision or procurement of waste management services to ensure a.o. public health and environmental sustainability. The mandate also extends to facilitating stakeholder engagement, securing funding, tendering out services, procurement and maintenance of infrastructure and equipment, and promoting awareness for sustainable waste practices among communities.

Challenges faced by local governments in waste management include limited financial and human resources, lack of technical expertise, overlapping mandates with the national government, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to modern waste processing technologies, and insufficient public awareness about sustainable waste practices. These challenges are further compounded by rapid urbanization, population growth, and increasing economic development (and thus waste generation). However, with the right support and improvements, they can be overcome.

Our approach to solid waste management

VNG International ensures a collaborative, inclusive, and context-specific approach, working directly with local governments and communities to enhance their capacity to fulfil their mandates effectively. This approach ensures that waste management systems are not just sustainable, but also resilient and more circular. We are committed to helping municipalities transition toward circular economies and more equitable waste management practices that benefit people, the planet, and future generations.

We have a proven track record in supporting local governments worldwide in developing and implementing effective solid waste management (SWM) strategies. Our work addresses both the technical and governance aspects of waste management, from policy development to the introduction of modern waste processing technologies, with a strong focus on community participation and capacity building.

As the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities and as a peer to local governments, we bring a wealth of experience in:

- **Circular economy:** We support governments & municipalities in transitioning to circular waste management models, promoting waste reduction, recycling, and the reuse of materials from reform, policy and strategy development to practical implementation.
- **Waste collection & recycling:** We help design and implement efficient waste collection systems, including sorting and recycling programs, to maximize resource recovery.
- **Policy and strategy development:** supporting with policies, strategies, and plans that align with international good practices and local needs, strengthening regulatory frameworks.
- **Behaviour change:** We foster public awareness campaigns and community engagement to encourage sustainable waste practices at the household and community level.
- **Inclusivity:** Our projects ensure that marginalized groups, such as informal waste pickers and women and youth, are integrated into waste management frameworks, promoting social inclusion, ensuring inclusive service delivery and creating employment opportunities.

Our expertise extends to diverse contexts, including **fragile and conflict-affected regions**. We have successfully implemented solid waste management projects in countries such as Sint Maarten, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Libya, Uganda, Colombia, and the Philippines. In Sint Maarten, we have played a pivotal role in advancing the island's waste sector reforms.

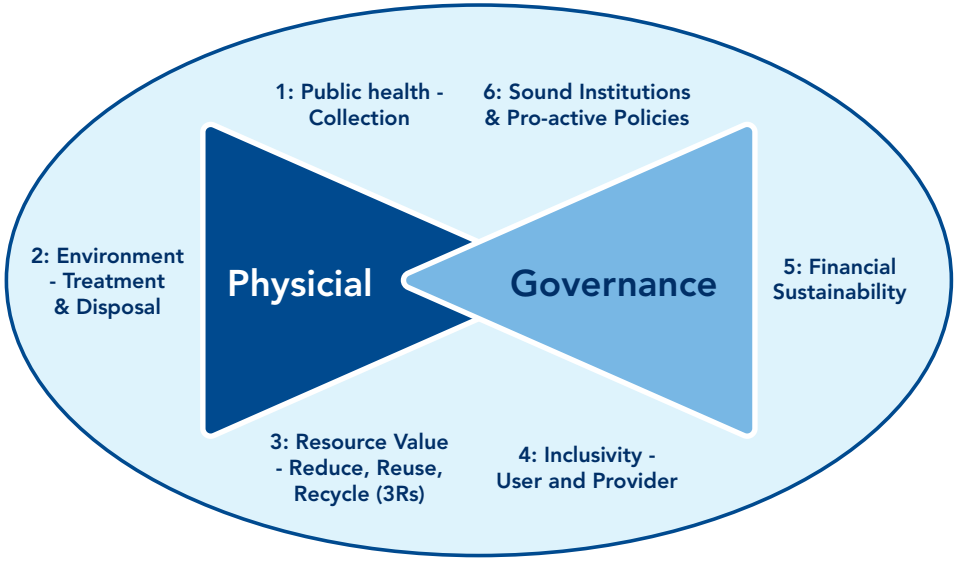
Towards improved waste management governance locally

VNG International supports local governments in improving their **infrastructure, service delivery, and operational and maintenance efficiency**. We do so among others by assisting in raising awareness of reduced solid waste production, supporting improved waste collection operations, and by accelerating community awareness through improved communication.

With an integrated approach to Solid Waste Management, we work through and with the **municipality or appropriate, mandated level of governance** present in the country, and with all levels of governance involved. We prioritize stakeholder engagement, involving **local governments, communities, and private sector partners** from the onset.

Our approach is tailored to the specific needs of each context, beginning with comprehensive assessments to identify gaps and opportunities in the existing waste management system. We then develop strategies that align with local policies and international best practices, focusing on capacity building, regulatory frameworks, and sustainable financing mechanisms. Our projects emphasize long-term sustainability, ensuring local governments can **independently** manage waste systems during and after implementation.

The model **graphic below** illustrates the interconnections between key factors within a waste management system and demonstrates how VNG International addresses these issues through an integrated approach. This example highlights the connection between physical and governance domains, encompassing areas such as public health, environmental sustainability, recycling practices, inclusivity, financial stability, and the roles of institutions and policies.



Examples of projects

Moving to integrated solid waste management

Where
St. Maarten
When
2022-2023

The project tackles the ineffective and fragmented waste management system, including inefficiencies in waste collection, lack of sustainable funding, and issues like illegal dumping. VNG International has been involved in the ongoing recovery and reconstruction efforts in Sint Maarten following the catastrophic impact of Hurricane Irma in 2017, in response to which we provide support and expertise to waste sector reform with community consensus.

The project equips the government of Sint Maarten with the technical expertise and resources necessary to establish a sustainable Waste Authority. This includes targeted technical assistance to the Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure and the government in key areas. Actions include:

- legal and institutional reform to strengthen governance in the sector
- financial reforms to ensure the economic viability of SWM initiatives
- development of a strategic approach to waste collection contracts and enforcement
- communication and public outreach activities
- development of a comprehensive communications strategy aimed at raising awareness among stakeholders and the general public

Local government resilience program for the Middle East and North Africa

Where
Iraq
Lebanon
Jordan
When
2015-2023

The objective was to strengthen resilience at local government level to improve the living conditions of the local population and refugees in host communities and refugee settlements. With focus on enhancing municipal service delivery amidst growing urbanization and resource pressures in critical areas including SWM.

Achievements in SWM under this program (focused on Lebanon and Jordan) include:

- the establishment of volunteer platforms that mobilized hundreds of community members to participate in door-to-door campaigns to promote the sorting of recyclables and compostables at household level
- reduction of unsorted household waste by over 78% in three years
- facilitation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) focused on recycling plastics and paper, further enhancing sustainability.
- including SWM practices into development of broader urban development plans, ensuring that the improvements made are sustainable and capable of meeting the long-term needs of both local and refugee communities.
- Created urban disaster preparedness plans and conducted intensive disaster training programs, including simulations

Governance of inclusive green growth in cities DEALS Program

Where
Colombia
Philippines
When
2017-2022

The wider program focused on supporting six fast-growing cities in the transition to inclusive and sustainable development through new cooperation between local government, companies, social organizations, and knowledge institutions.

An initiative on waste in ***Pereira***, Colombia centered around developing city deals (between business sector and municipalities working together) to promote a circular economy and more citizen inclusive waste management. Adopting an integrated, multi-level, and inclusive governance approach, the project specifically targeted the challenges faced by informal solid waste pickers and recyclers, who are often marginalized in waste management systems. The project recognized that sustainable waste management is about environmental protection, inclusivity, employment creation, governance, regional cooperation, and public-private partnerships.

In the Philippines, the program supported the formulation and implementation phase of the Manila Bay Sustainable development Master Plan. It provided technical assistance to Manila Bay cities and municipalities on interlocal government cooperation to implement the Master Plan's recommendations of:

1. Improve waste reduction and waste segregation
2. Improve waste collection, recycling and reuse
3. Improve the management of residual waste

Results: Interlocal cooperation initiatives started in Manila Bay effectively representing the localities' interests; technical assistance for construction of water and solid waste management infrastructure (incl. composting site); actions aimed at preserving the natural conditions of Manila Bay; business case and feasibility study for a composting side to manage green household waste.

A sample of VNG International's key products on solid waste management:

Video on integrated SWM
Sint Maarten

SWM in a Syrian refugee camp
Jordan

SWM Vision
Sint Maarten

SWM overview document for Pereira
Colombia

SWM Factsheet
Sint Maarten

DEALS Pereira, end of programme video
Colombia

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