

**Bert Satijn** “Living with Water in the delta means being able to enjoy the water some of the time, but it also means learning how to deal with the remaining risks that water embodies”



Moons, member of the Noord-Brabant Executive, agrees: “Much of climate adaptation has to do with regional planning and development, and therefore much of the responsibility for this lies at the provincial level. We have a long tradition of close cooperation with the water boards. Provinces have a good overview of what’s going on and can make sure that no aspects are overlooked.”

Moons agrees that local authorities in the Netherlands could be more internationally oriented. “But we are noticing that there’s a rise in demand for our know-how abroad,” she stresses. “And we are responding to this.” Moons went on a working visit to Indonesia at the start of 2009 and encountered growing interest in local government. “Indonesia is in the process of decentralising government and we now exchange knowledge on how to go about regional development in a vulnerable delta area. This is something the Netherlands is very experienced at.”

#### **Involvement**

Moons advised her Indonesian colleagues to involve as many parties as possible in the early stages of development plans. “This way you increase commitment and gain support for your plans. It requires patience and long-term vision, but the effort you put in will be amply rewarded. In many countries decisions tend to be taken at the highest level, without explanation or discussion. If people don’t understand why a measure

is necessary, they won’t understand how it might benefit them, and you’re unlikely to be able to count on their cooperation. Of course it’s never nice to be forced to move your house because a river needs more room. But if the government explains why it is necessary and takes good care of the people affected – with money and attention – it makes a big difference.

Moons cites the Overdiepse Polder as an example (see box). This is low-lying area in her own province where farms have been affected by landscape interventions that are necessary to mitigate the effects of high river discharges. “The people living there came up with the idea of constructing earthen mounds so that the farms could remain in the area. It won’t be possible for everyone and it will take a long time, but the plan has received widespread support. That’s a real win-win situation.”

Satijn recognises the importance of stakeholder involvement as well. “Communication and participation play an increasing role across our society, including when it comes to dealing with climate change. Living with Water in the delta means being able to enjoy the water some of the time, but it also means learning how to deal with the remaining risks that water embodies – now and especially in the future. You have to do this with everyone who is involved – this is the lesson water managers should learn.”

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