

## **Session DP UP 2.6: Developing Delta Cities, Strategies for climate change in developing countries**

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### **Short description of the session topic and the objective of the session**

The focus of this session is on mega delta cities in less developed countries. This decade, for the first time in history, the majority of people worldwide are living in towns and cities. By 2050, this is even estimated to be over 6 billion people, two thirds of humanity. 93% of this urban growth is expected to take place in Asia and Africa. The majority of these cities are located at vulnerable locations near the sea and in deltas. The problems are even bigger in the urban areas in Asia, Africa and South America. Especially the poorest part of the population is living in flood prone areas. As such, climate change, sea level rise and flooding rivers are directly linked to the problems of development and the access to affordable housing and urban services in mega cities. In this session, two case studies illustrated the constraints and opportunities. First the city of St Louis in Senegal, which is vulnerable for floods from inland (the Senegal River) and from offshore (high water levels and coastal erosion). And secondly Haiti where the earthquake has led to a number of flood problems, adding to existing problems.

Goal of the discussion is to find answers on the question how to develop strategies for delta cities in the least developed countries. How to cope on a long term, with short term action. The strategies will have to be very cost effective and flexible, and adapted to the local conditions: physical, social and economical.

### **Most exciting insight, moment or outcome**

"Water a threat? No, water is an opportunity. As long as we're building with nature instead of fighting against nature."

### **Main conclusions, theme's, insights or messages**

- Look at nature and copy the solution nature gives you. You'll loose the fight with nature anyway. Further, it's arrogant to assume that you know what's going to happen. So instead of fixed systems, it is preferred to use flexible systems.
- Water is an attractive asset for a city; therefore integrate water in the solution and make it more appealing.
- The scale of a solution is often related to the scale of the problem it addresses. Regional or local problems can be solved on regional or local level. On a higher scale, effective cooperation and coordination is hard to reach. Although there is a strong will among the several parties to act successful, that just isn't enough. The foundation has to be laid by those who experience or feel ownership of the problems.
- At the end of the day, the politicians in charge are responsible for the long term safety of their population. This can conflict with their short term political goals. The lack of acknowledgement for this contrast is a serious threat.