

Polder model in Myanmar

“The Ward Support and Cleaning Group in Ward 7 has been taking more initiative, and that is good. It took a while before they started to, but now it has improved. That is good because we can share the responsibility,” according to U Kyaw Soe, Deputy Director of Patheingyi municipality.

It is day two of the multi-stakeholder workshop organised by VNG International from 27 until 29 July. It is the second multi-stakeholder workshop on inclusive governance, and participants joined from all over Patheingyi to address the pressing issue of waste management.

Participants of the Multi-Stakeholder module 2



The Regional Environmental Conservation Department came from Shwe Bon Thar township, north of the city. "There is a garbage dump site next to our office, but citizens dump waste in the ditches instead," says Assistant Director Daw Ohn Mar Hlaing. All recognised that problem.

There was also a shared understanding of some of the causes of the trash problem. "Sipin covers about 60% of townships in the city and does not cover the surrounding villages. We don't have the budget to increase the route or collect garbage more than once a week," U Kyaw Soe admitted.

The VNG International workshops were the first time, all participants discussed the waste issues collectively. They included the Department of Social Welfare, and civil society organisations like Clean Pathein and ATAA (Ayeyarwady Transparency and Accountability Association). All participants experimented together on using multi-stakeholder tools like organising focus group discussions and conducting citizen surveys. Because of Covid-19 restrictions, citizens could not join the workshop.

Some of the participants already organise regular multi-stakeholder meetings. The Ward Support and Cleaning Group and Ward Administrator of Ward 12 have bi-monthly meetings with the municipality to discuss the implementation of the waste management project. In addition, the senior engineer of Pathein municipality creates the budget and, together with the Ward Support and Cleaning Group and the Ward Administrator in Ward 12, writes the annual proposal as part of the DEALS programme. Ward 12 is one of the locations of the pilot projects together with Ward 7.

The cooperation in Ward 12 is promising, but there are still areas of improvement. Participants from the Ward Support and Cleaning Group mentioned during the workshop, the desire for more involvement from the General Administration Department on resolving the waste issue. GAD Deputy Director U Yaw Min Htun expressed the need for more explicit requests from the ward.

Nonetheless, the multi-stakeholder group discussions were engaged, and everyone contributed regardless of their position or status, which is a feat in itself in Myanmar. For example, when it was time to set the priority for Ward 7, the Ward Support and Cleaning Group preferred addressing waste generated by the market. At the same time, the government officials from the municipality wanted to clean the stream. To compromise, they decided to focus their efforts on the market and the stream next to the market in a clear collaborative fashion.

