

Big shift in DEALS approach in Pathein

Citizens take over in Myanmar

A shift to citizens led service delivery enables the DEALS programme in Myanmar to continue. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and grassroots groups have taken over the role of governments here. The DEALS programme advisory committee welcomed this shift, but added that this requires a revising of the project.

The taking over of power by the military in Myanmar seriously affected the execution of the DEALS programme. The Dutch government decided to cut all the ties with the new government. This made it impossible to continue DEALS as it was designed: a multi-stakeholder programme in which governments play an active role.

The Centre for Good Governance advised DEALS to shift to two thematic areas in Myanmar: citizens led service delivery and civic space. An example of the first is that urban workers who lost their jobs are invited to dig drainages in exchange for food or money. An example of the second is that youth and women groups are empowered, although this should be carefully framed under the military dictatorship.

Naw Htee Ku Paw, the DEALS city focal person in Pathein, visited several wards in Pathein in order to build trust, which is key for the new approach. She found several CSOs, business and informal groups interested to participate. A problem is that Covid 19 has hit Myanmar hard, reportedly affecting half of the population. Another complication is that prices are high and the dollar exchange rate is bad.

The DEALS programme advisory committee was pleased by the shift of the project in Pathein and advised to revise its objectives and strategy accordingly. 'Only then can you report successes instead of failures in the end', commented Fakri Karim.

Good progress in Sèmè-Podji

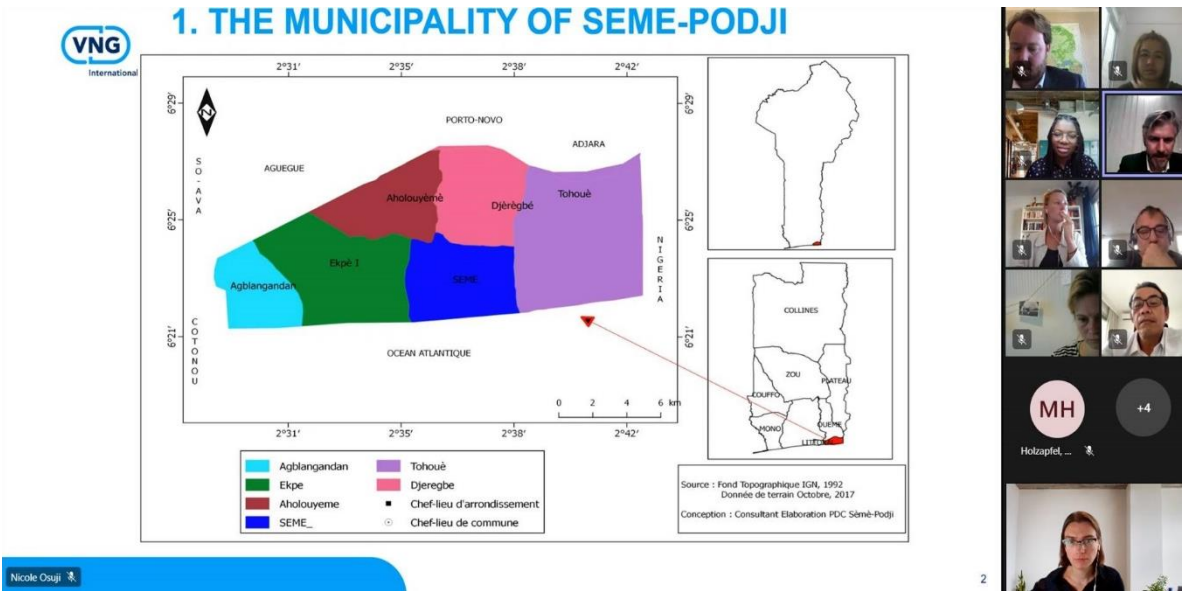
Robert Meerman, at the time of the Teams meeting staying in Addis Ababa, gave [an extensive update on the situation in Sèmè-Podji \(Benin\)](#). The population in this southern town is rapidly growing and so does the waste problem. The city faces several obstacles in tackling this. One of them is the bad infrastructure. The poor state of the roads prevents trucks from arriving at the waste collection points, particularly in the rainy season.

Another problem is that residents refuse to pay for waste collection as the chain - from collection at household level to the processing/recycling on a central level - is not functioning. As a result of this, illegal dumpsites emerged, on which the urban poor build new homes.

The project in Sèmè-Podji is built on four components: multi-stakeholder partnerships, civic engagement, better urban governance, and cooperation. Robert reported several successes: the destruction of illegal dumpsites, citizen awareness on the negative impact of waste and an increase in the environmental budget at the municipal level. A state owned waste management company was created in 2019 and small and medium enterprises were recruited to take care of the pre-collection, collection and transfer. 'The whole market has changed', commented Robert. He judged this a positive change, but noted that there is a lack of synergy between the municipality and the new waste company. A stronger role of the local government is high on the priority list of the project team. The transformation of the DEALS city focal team into a municipal commission could add to long-term sustainability and embedment of the DEALS approach.

Among the hardware improvements in Sèmè-Podji are the creation of temporary waste collection points, which should make the illegal dumpsites obsolete. A software improvement still to be strengthened is a bigger awareness of the waste problem among the population. An idea that came up within the project team is to organize mass aware activities like contests for the cleanest neighbourhood.

Robert saw the creation of the new waste company as an upscaling opportunity for better waste management, provided that there is a clear collaboration between the company and the local government. This collaboration in Sèmè-Podji could serve as an example for other cities in Benin. 'If well executed, this could become an avalanche.' The enormous piles of waste around the lake have already diminished substantially, he said. 'Things have really changed.'



Chair Jeroen Diepemaat still remembered the boat ride the DEALS advisory committee made in heavy rain along the illegal dumpsites. He showed impressed by the progress made in Sèmè-Podji. Answering Marieke Holzapfel, who wondered where the waste goes now, Robert told that part of it is burned, another part is recycled and the leftovers go to landfills. Most of the waste is organic and can be composted. Talks about agricultural use have been set up with NGOs. Reused plastics could be applied in handicraft, road construction and housing.

Julian Baskin commented that slums are the weak point in waste management plans, as trucks have difficulties to get there and quantities are low. Decentralised dump sites and a community based approach could help solving this. Fakri Karim warned that most waste markets are not very competitive and expressed hope that public investments will pave the way for private investments in Sèmè-Podji.

The big challenge in the last part of the project is to make it sustainable and transferable to other municipalities, concluded Robert. The team continues working on that. Jeroen Diepemaat ended by congratulating the Sèmè-Podji team with the progress being made so far.

Less impact of Covid-19

The last point on the agenda was the draft annual plan for 2022, the last year of DEALS. Programme manager [Irene Oostveen told the meeting that the impact of Covid-19 is easing, although it differs locally.](#) Teams have been vaccinated and traveling has become easier. Irene herself recently visited Pereira (Colombia). Especially in Kumasi (Ghana) and Pereira but budget cuts negatively impact the programme. In Manila (the Philippines), a master plan has been approved, but planning and coordination remain difficult. In Beira (Mozambique), the DEALS activities have officially ended but cooperation continues under a new programme. Upcoming elections in Colombia and the Philippines can cause major changes in the final stage as well as the continuation of DEALS.

Programme wide, there is a strong focus on peer learning, Irene Oostveen said. Articles, model agreements and other documents on local projects are made available and distributed for this use. The idea for the DEALS programme emerged on the World Urban Forum of 2016. Irene suggested to bring the DEALS cities together on the World Urban Forum of 2022, which will be held by the end of June in the Polish city of Katowice.

Julian Barkin emphasized that the DEALS programme experienced two cyclones, a pandemic and a coup d'état and that surviving all that proved its strength. According to him, great lessons have been learned about how to cope with changing environments in an unstable world. Chair Jeroen Diepemaat summarized this by saying: 'You want to change the world, which is not easy when you have to change yourself in the meantime.'

“The objectives and strategy of the project in Pathein have to be changed, only then you can report successes”

“The creation of a solid and household waste management company in in Sèmè-Podji signifies a major change for the local waste market”

“It is not easy to change the world when you have to change yourself in the meantime”

What is DEALS?

Inclusive sustainable urban development in developing countries is such a complex matter that it can only be dealt with in close collaboration with all relevant actors. That’s the basic idea behind DEALS. It’s a multi-stakeholder programme: not only does it target local governments, but companies, CSOs, other governments and particularly citizens in the partner countries are also expected to join in. The target cities are Beira in Mozambique, Kumasi in Ghana, Pathein in Myanmar, Pereira in Colombia, Sèmè-Podji in Benin and Manila in the Philippines.

Each city develops a tailored programme, based on local priorities. The interests of people who earn less than US\$1.25 a day come first. VNG International and several Dutch municipalities support the cities. The ultimate deal will be an agreement signed by all stakeholders that aims to solve an urgent problem and achieve an ‘attractive aspiration’. Moreover, the deal is innovative, sets an (inter)national example and will generate tangible results. Solutions must be sustainable, receive broad support and tackle the underlying causes of the deal’s main challenge.

DEALS was launched on 1 September 2017 and will end in August 2022. In September 2018, delegations from Beira, Kumasi, Pathein, Pereira and Sèmè-Podji visited the Netherlands. In the following months, Dutch delegations made trips to the partner cities. In addition to VNG International and Dutch municipalities, the programme is supported by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. It is financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The budget is around € 5 million.

The DEALS programme advisory committee

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