



DEALS ●
GOVERNANCE OF INCLUSIVE
GREEN GROWTH IN CITIES

**Report on the Governance of
Inclusive Green Growth in Cities
(DEALS) programme advisory
committee meeting**

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Sémé-Podji, Bénin, October 2019

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Visit to Sémé Podji

The VNG International DEALS programme advisory committee mission to Sémé-Podji on 3-4 October 2019 provided an opportunity for project partners to share experiences and make a detailed assessment, at several levels, of the My Trash, My Treasure project. The visit was part of a programme organised by the advisory committee and followed on from a visit to Kumasi, Ghana, another participant in the DEALS programme. Representatives of the Sémé-Podji project team participated in that visit and representatives of the Kumasi team joined the mission to Sémé-Podji to share their experience.

Mr Jeroen Diepemaat said the mission's aim was to become more acquainted with and learn more about the project, discuss problems encountered and throw a fresh pair of eyes on the issues in question in a systemic approach involving an examination of the project in the light of the experience of other cities where sustainable urban development issues are of crucial importance.

The trip began on 3 October 2019 with a meeting at which partners familiarised themselves with the project and its activities. The meeting held a discussion on the environmental and public health problems caused by the deficiencies of the waste management system in Sémé-Podji. A field visit on day two allowed the VNG International mission to observe the bottlenecks in the system and highlighted other socio-economic issues that have a bearing on project implementation. A frank, open and constructive discussion ensured a detailed exploration of the issues raised by the different actors and the development of a well-designed project that encourages beneficiaries to take ownership of the project and promote optimum implementation. M. Charlemagne Honfo, Mayor of Sémé-Podji, expressed his enthusiasm for the project, which he said was timely and constituted a win-win partnership that would help the municipality achieve its aims.

Living conditions: crucial for a sustainable city

Sémé-Podji's strategic position on the border with Nigeria (Africa's biggest economy) and between Benin's economic and political capitals, respectively Cotonou and Porto-Novo, and its geomorphological location between the ocean and Lake Nokoué, which provides a picturesque natural framework, give it many advantages and make it one of Benin's most dynamic municipalities. Its population has doubled in less than ten years.

However, this dynamic growth could threaten sustainable urban development if governance is inefficient. The Mayor of Sémé-Podji has reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring urban services are accessible and improving living conditions so as to ensure sustainable urban amenities. Analysis of urban development issues in the project start-up phase identified waste management and flood control as the major challenges facing Sémé-Podji. In collaboration with the different actors, it was decided to develop a project on integrated domestic waste management in the district of Agblangandan. The aim of the My Trash My Treasure project is **to improve the quality of life of all Agblangandan residents by improving its waste management system**. The project began in May 2018. The issue of effective waste management is related to the government's tourism policy, which aims to improve living conditions in areas that have tourism potential.

An evaluation of the sector raised several problems, namely the proliferation of illegal waste dumps, non-operational collection points, public reluctance to subscribe to the household waste collection service on the grounds that the system was badly managed and the lack of a formal discussion forum or multi-stakeholder dialogue.



Illegal waste dump in Agblangandan

The project has four components:

- **The development of multi-stakeholder partnerships**
- **Public participation**
- **Urban planning guided by sustainable urban governance**
- **Cooperation and an anti-silo stance**

The project has organised several activities including a project team study visit to the Netherlands; a zero waste week to raise awareness and change behaviour; municipal orders prohibiting illegal waste dumps and making subscription to the household waste collection service compulsory; and an increase in the budget allocated to the environment.

However, the project needs to identify strategic practical measures to ensure implementation and achieve its objective.

The need for a multi-faceted approach

In response, the project team has focused discussion on a series of strategic issues, two of them operational and one transversal. The advisory committee provides an opinion on the basis of data provided by the project and the field visit and with reference to the experience of other cities.



Presentation of the project by Gilles Faucas BESSAN, Local Project Manager

- **Operational issues : Make waste collection points accessible, create other temporary collection points and build the capacity of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)**

The weak link in the household waste management system in Agblangandan is the inaccessibility of the collection points used by SMEs to deposit the waste they collect from households, especially in the rainy season. The mission saw this for itself: it was unable to visit the collection points because roads were unpassable despite several possible routes. The result is that this waste is deposited at illegal dumps or sold to individuals who use it to fill marshy and lake flood plain areas so they can build on them. The mission had the opportunity to see the extent of the use of waste for this purpose during a field trip on a motorboat on Cotonou lagoon and Lake Nokoué.

The collection points were created by the PUGEMU project, which identified reception sites and proposed a number of infrastructure projects to ensure efficient waste management. However, the project only built six of the planned 18 collection points and did not build access roads. The result is there is now a bottleneck in the waste management system. The project team proposed the construction of access roads to the collection points or the conversion of the illegal dumps into temporary collection points because of their accessibility. The sites will need cleaning up and then skips can be put in. SMEs can dump household waste in the skips and lorries will transport the skips to the transfer centre. It will also be necessary to improve the management skills of the waste collection SMEs to make sure they are able to continue in business and maintain the waste management system.

However, this proposal remains subject to changes in the government's waste management plan for the five municipalities in Greater Nokoué: Cotonou, Ouidah, Abomey-Calavi, Sémé-Podji and Porto-Novo. The government plan, which began with the creation of the Greater Nokoué Waste Management and Urban Health Company (SGDS-GN), aims for a sustainable reduction in the harmful impact of waste on the environment and improvements in public health and public welfare. In Sémé-Podji, it specifically concerns the route from the Sémé-Béliér crossroads to the Sémé-crossroad (ACVDT, February 2019). The fact that the government project' logical framework has yet to be defined casts a shadow over implementation of the City Deal solution in Sémé-Podji.

The third strategic issue applies to the whole project.

- **transversal issue: collaboration between actors in the municipality and promotion of a participatory dialogue**

The several projects under way in Sémé-Podji have some overlapping components while, at the same time, they could benefit enormously, have a greater impact and raise their profile by collaborating. But the lack of a framework that could promote synergy between the projects means they are implemented in isolation across the municipality and are not subject to an overall plan. Moreover, several large companies operating in the city are in a position to help improve urban management. They would be able to improve the waste management initiatives in this project through a partnership on terms to be discussed. The creation of a multi-stakeholder entity would respond to the City-DEALS anti-silo principles.

More data and Impact of the project

The committee welcomes the inter-municipal approach to waste management as it is almost impossible for a municipality to provide integrated waste management alone. The government's approach and creation of the SGDS-GN is therefore positive. However, the city needs several complementary operational models and a clear legal framework to ensure an efficient service. For example, the management system needed in the dry season is different to what is required in the rainy season, which poses greater problems. Given also the difficulties encountered in project implementation in Agblangandan, it would be useful to identify an area in which the operational phases would be simpler with a view to drawing lessons from implementation in that area and assessing the ease of replication in other parts of the city. Moreover, data on the various categories and quantities of waste products is needed to facilitate planning of the sorting-recycling-reuse component.

This project component is designed to include income-generating activities for vulnerable sectors, including women, persons with reduced mobility and early school-leavers. It aims to create opportunities for them to enter the local economy and gain independence and go some way to reducing urban poverty. So far, the mission has noted a lack of precise data on vulnerable sectors, which includes people displaced from marshy areas and Lake Nokoué's flood plain whose main economic activity is fishing. The displacement of these population groups and corresponding changes of economic activity, namely, the production of compost and market gardening, are not very clear. It is therefore necessary to conduct a more detailed socio-economic assessment of the project's impact so as to anticipate possible bottlenecks and identify risks of non-appropriation that could end in failure. The presence of water should be seen as an opportunity to develop the blue economy.

The other aspect under discussion is the tariffs for the household waste collection service. The mission has highlighted the need to factor social justice and equity into this process and take account of the amount of waste collected and the standard of living of households. It is also necessary to estimate the percentage of households ready to pay for this service: this was 30% in 2015.

"The more we work together, the stronger we will become"

Charlemagne HONFO, Mayor of Sémé-Podji

The committee was delighted at the project group's dynamic approach and reiterated the importance of speeding up the process with a view to achieving convincing results. The project team reaffirmed its commitment and willingness to take the measures necessary to bring the project to a successful conclusion. It would like to see the creation of a forum to share experiences with other cities involved in the DEALS programme.



A friendly moment between the Mayor of Sémé-Podji and Mr Jeroen Diepemaat, President of the Advisory Council