**Improving the quality of public service delivery:
a Roadmap for strengthening administration and governance**

The case of waste management in Myanmar
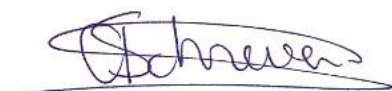
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Foreword

The article "Improving the quality of public service delivery: *a Roadmap for strengthening administration and governance – a case of waste management in Myanmar"* was written within the context of the Municipal Accountability, Governance and Inclusive Communities (MAGIC) project in Chin State and Tanintharyi Region. This project is funded by the European Union and implemented by VNG International and Loka Ahlinn Social Development Network with support of Development Resources International (DRI).

The purpose of this article is to highlight the conceptual framework of the MAGIC Roadmap, *"Improvement of garbage management services, participatory planning, gender responsive budgeting and citizens' engagement"*. The Roadmap is combining both public administration and social accountability expertise areas that complement and reinforce each other to improve garbage management services the DAO/DACs provide. It is being piloted and tested in six towns in Chin State and Tanintharyi Region. Though the pilots are still ongoing, some lessons already learned are worth sharing and may contribute to further shaping strategic interventions for strengthening local governments. The audience for this publication are donors, development agencies and international NGOs.

The authors of this article are the MAGIC Local Governance Expert, the Social Accountability Expert and Gender Expert; thank you for sharing your knowledge, expertise and insights and the Loka Ahlinn project teams for your inputs.

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1 Introduction

The present article aims to provide a panoramic view of the potential of decentralisation reforms for the improvement of essential service delivery and the promotion of democratic, transparent and accountable governance.

The MAGIC project - Municipal Accountability, Governance and Inclusive Communities - in Myanmar, supports an innovative approach to local governance as a vehicle for the improvement of selected public services. This approach can be used to strengthen any decentralised public service such as education, health, social protection, agriculture and the promotion of rural and urban development.

Suggested readers for this article are donors, development agencies and international NGOs who can benefit from this methodology and experience developed and implemented by VNG International and Loka Ahlinn Social Development Network (LASDN).

The MAGIC roadmap is an approach to improve quality of service delivery of local governments. It is developed and piloted in the MAGIC project. It is tested in a particular service to pilot specific cases of how municipalities can – step by step - improve their service delivery, in this case, waste management. The model presents two main dimensions; firstly, it focusses on technical capacities of the municipalities, e.g. planning, finance and income generation regarding waste management, and secondly it develops soft systems capacities for citizens' engagement and related accountability and transparency.

Sections 2, 3 and 4 explain briefly the MAGIC project, its relevance in general and in the context of the COVID-19 health and economic crisis. The second part (sections 5 and 6) explain the MAGIC roadmap and the application of the steps in the context of good governance illustrated with examples. Sections 7 and 8 cover the experience of introducing the MAGIC Roadmap in terms of process facilitation and technical assistance, including training. It concludes with some notes on the potential of the Roadmap and recommendations for donors and INGOs interested in funding and strengthening municipalities.

2 Some details about the MAGIC project

The MAGIC project is a local governance project implemented in six municipalities, three in Chin State and three in Tanintharyi Region. It is a four-year programme funded by the Delegation of the European Union to Myanmar and implemented by VNG International Myanmar and its partner Loka Ahlinn.

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The project supports the improved functioning of township Development Affairs Organisations (DAOs or municipalities[1]) and State / Region Development Affairs Organisations, aiming at municipalities delivering efficient and quality services to their citizens.

The focus in MAGIC is to improve the capacities of municipalities in public management (planning, budgeting and income generation) and to provide quality services to its citizens. Thirdly, it promotes access to information, transparency and accountability of local authorities to residents, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. Finally, MAGIC seeks to improve coordination and collaboration between the different departments (notably GAD) and levels of government, in particular between township and regional or state government. By law[2], the Regions and States devolve functions to municipalities, issue legislation that regulates municipal operations, transfer resources for capital investments, and also support capacity building of the municipalities.

Why does MAGIC work with municipalities? In the context of Myanmar, the characteristics of municipalities resemble democratic local governments around the world. Firstly, **they have their own set of functions** (devolved mandates) that include provision of various public services such as drinking water, management of

> MAGIC
> **Overall objective:**
> Improved municipal governance and service delivery in Myanmar
> **Specific objective:**
> Improved functioning of DAOs at township and state/region level in Chin State and Tanintharyi Region
> **Intermediate outcomes:**
> 1: Strengthened capacities of township DAOs/DACs in planning, budgeting and revenue generation
> 2: Improved ability of township DAOs/DACs to deliver quality services for priority areas
> 3: Enhanced access to information, accountability and transparency of township DAOs/DACs towards CSOs, local businesses and urban residents
> 4: Increased capacity of S/R DAOs to support the functioning of township DAOs, and to share emerging knowledge of good municipal governance countrywide

solid waste and construction of infrastructure in their jurisdictions[3]. Secondly**, they are empowered by law to collect taxes, fees and charges** to finance the services they provide.

These two characteristics, unlike other public entities in Myanmar, put municipalities in a privileged position to establish a very close link with citizens, since citizens act as voters (in Chin State the Development Affairs Committee (DAC) has some directly elected members[4]), as taxpayers and as users of public services. Therefore, citizens have not only the right but also the duty to work alongside their local authorities to improve the provision of essential services and to envision and achieve a better future for the town; this is called active citizenship.

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[1] In Myanmar, the current legislation doesn't mention the term "municipal" or "municipality". However, Myanmar's Township Development Affairs Organizations (TDAOs) and their councils, known as Township Development Affairs Committee (TDAC) — have their origin in the British colonial period when in 1874 the Burma Municipal Act was enacted. Therefore, to make use of a more standardized classification, which may help people not familiar with the Myanmar system, we will use the term municipality. Hence, the Municipality must be understood as a town or city with its own local government.

[2] Since 2011, the DAO's are the only agency under full control of the regions/states.

[3] The Asia Foundation document, 'Municipal Governance in Myanmar' mentions 31 core responsibilities which are funded by local taxes, charges and fees. Among them are the following Key Social Service Duties and Functions of municipalities:
Town planning ; Water supply ; Sanitation ; Sewage disposal ; Disaster preparedness ; Street lighting ; Roads and bridges ; Vagrant persons on streets ; Animal control ; Parks, swimming pools, public baths & recreation centers ; Road rules, street naming & addresses ; Cemeteries and crematoriums ; Removal of cemeteries ; Other development works in the public interest ; Other duties as needed ; Public buildings under the charge of DAOs ; Demolition of squatter buildings ; Construction permission for private buildings

[4] Unlike Tanintharyi where all the members are appointed, in Chin state most of the members of the committee are elected by the population through the traditional way of choosing the ward Administrators (100 heads of households choose the representative, and then they select their representative). Article 4 of the Decentralisation Law, describes the procedure for the election/appointment of the members of the Committee.

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MAGIC encourages municipalities to engage with citizens (i.e. assessment, participation in decision-making, joint implementation and monitoring) for development plans and the annual budget.

MAGIC has chosen to work with the municipalities because it understands that local governance and citizens' satisfaction with public services can be improved through enhanced citizen engagement. Citizens' 'voice' serves as a driver for strengthening selected municipal capacities in executive and oversight functions, which may allow municipalities to evolve towards fully-fledged local governments with legitimacy of their constituencies.

3 Decentralisation, local development and crisis management

It has long been argued that a well-structured and implemented decentralisation reform may help to promote development and also cope with unexpected situations such a natural disaster or a health emergency. The current pandemic caused by COVID-19 has highlighted the necessity to enhance the role of municipalities in their various capacities, as regulators, enforcers, service providers, political leaders and as facilitators of civic action and corporate social responsibility within communities.

However, the developmental potential and the capacity to respond to crisis depend very much on specific local characteristics of the decentralisation reform and the governance of each particular locality, meaning that under the same legal framework and conditions, two municipalities might have divergent patterns of development and ability to deal with unexpected situations.

 Firstly, one should bear in mind that decentralisation reforms are primarily political reforms aiming to achieve well-functioning local democracy. By empowering the regional/state and local levels of government, such reforms intend to bring decision-making closer to the citizens, to empower women and vulnerable groups in communities, and bring more transparency and accountability to local politics. For crisis management, actions customised to diverse local contexts will allow national governments to support the most vulnerable groups and deliver the necessary support in time.   Local governments can be instrumental for targeted national relief programmes, and for the implementation of actions and regulations aiming at protecting the lives and assets of people.

Secondly, decentralisation reforms seek to promote good governance and efficiency in the provision of goods and services.

"4. In order to be able to perform duties and exercise powers of the Development Affairs Organizations, the Minister shall, with the approval of the State Government, form the Township   Development Committee with the following 7 persons.
(a) 4 qualified citizens elected by the public of the township concerned
(b) 1 qualified citizen selected and appointed by the Minister
(c) 1 representative from the Township Administration Department concerned
(d) the Dececutive Officer of the Development Affairs Organization concerned

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Those public policies which are closer to regional/state and local levels, are more likely to address local aspirations and the concerns of the people. Nation-wide policies will be customised to match regional/state and local stakeholder interests and circumstances. This, in turn, will improve public policy formulation and implementation and quality in service delivery (because in a more decentralised system, local and regional/state stakeholders have to bear the financial consequences of their political decisions, at least partially). In case of exceptional situations, decentralisation will create the conditions for citizens, CBOs and CSOs mobilisation, adding social capital, resources and capacities which are not present in the public sector.

Thirdly, decentralisation reforms concern management of diversity in complex societies. Decentralisation provides territory-based solutions for communities with a degree of autonomy to manage their affairs and reflect minority views. Furthermore, they recognise the limits of applying uniform national solutions and allow regional and local variation in policies to emerge. Decentralisation should encourage regions/states and municipalities to become laboratories for policy making and implementation; the trial and error of this regional/state and local variation is expected to reveal good practices. Since natural phenomena and crises strike regions and states differently, territory-based solutions are more practical to respond to emergencies. Local actors can adapt their actions to the peculiarities of socio-economic and physical-environmental conditions of their jurisdictions.

4 Role of municipalities in emergencies and crisis

The COVID-19 health emergency and related economic crisis causes considerable challenges for municipalities across the world. The crisis has multiple implications, ranging from giving an effective and timely response to the urgent needs of citizens (unable to work or get food due to the lockdown), keeping essential services running (without income for the municipality) and adapt national policies to local contexts (the practice of social distancing in public spaces).

Delegation involves arrangements of the Union/Regional/State level with municipalities to deliver services or implement projects that are formally Union/Region/State government responsibilities. Specific arrangements vary (time, conditions for management, funding, reporting, accountabilities), but the municipality always acts on behalf of the delegating authority (Union/Region/State).

'The instrumental value of delegation for empowering people through their Local Authorities (LAs) may also be considerable. To the extent that the terms of the delegation contract between a central agency and an LA (i) empower the latter with discretion to tailor a programme to local conditions, and (ii) enable people's participation in planning and managing delegated responsibilities, delegation arrangements may significantly contribute to empowering people in the local service delivery process.'
Supporting decentralization, local governance and local development through a territorial approach. EC Tools and Methods Series Reference Document N 23

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Nonetheless, to address the crisis situation, the National Governments could improve the role of these entities by using transitory delegation agreements (which do not require any modification of the legal framework) and the activation of temporary financing mechanisms to channel resources to the municipalities, as they are better positioned to run programmes targeting households, for example, identifying individuals and families for food distribution, cash transfers and other emergency programmes.

On the one hand, municipalities, via delegation, can execute functions and enforce laws and decisions that correspond with the national or region / state government. For example, municipalities can apply national policies regarding social distancing, compliance of quarantines, biosafety regulations for the operation of restaurants, markets and public transportation. Municipalities require an express delegation of functions and an adequate budget to fulfil this mandate.

Municipalities can also, by delegation, create local social safety nets to ensure that vulnerable groups such as the elderly, female headed households[5] or disabled people can count on essential services and cover their subsistence needs (COVID-19 tests, transportation, food distribution or cash transfers).

Covid instructions near mobile hand washing near offices and public spaces

On the other hand, municipalities, within their devolved powers, can ensure the operation of essential services during the crisis, such as 'COVID proof' garbage collection and cleaning of towns[6], the operation of markets and the provision of drinking water. They can also, together with other public and private entities such as ward administrators and CSOs emergency response committees and volunteers, manage the crisis and ensure that the essential services for the people in need are provided without disruptions.

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[5] 22.5 % of households in Myanmar are female headed - https://www.ceicdata.com/en/myanmar/population-and-urbanization-statistics/mm-female-headed-households
[6] In the municipalities supported by MAGIC, these actions are being implemented

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Yet, to fulfil the delegated and devolved mandates[7], municipalities need to foster their capacities to face the emergency and to boost the economic recovery after COVID-19 is relatively under control (economic growth and medium-term development).

In the short run it is not possible to generate additional capacities in municipalities without having to resort to a massive process of recruiting new personnel and training existing staff (in addition to adapting processes, procedures and protocols).

The short-term capacities to face the crisis are fundamentally determined by the ability of municipalities to mobilise existing resources outside the municipality[8]. In other words, access state resources and use the creative capacity of civil society, other public sector entities (such as ward administrators) and businesses, to implement the necessary actions to protect the lives of the people and resume economic activities.

To make this possible, the municipality must reach agreements and commitments with these entities and delegate and coordinate actions with local stakeholders. These agreements and obligations are more effective when the municipality has developed trust relationships with citizens and have experiences of working together (government-citizens) to solve problems.

5   MAGIC roadmap and local governance

The MAGIC roadmap describes how municipalities can **evolve a local governance approach tailored to their specific situation**, in this case Myanmar's decentralised municipal governance system.

The message behind the Roadmap is that the municipality alone cannot solve service problems experienced by residents, so it must negotiate and reach collaboration agreements with citizens, civil society organisations, the private sector and other public entities.

Figure 1: MAGIC accountable municipal governance model

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[7] In Myanmar the devolution of powers is an ongoing process: municipalities (TDAO/DAC) have a set of competencies delegated from the region / state government. However, there is a tutelage system for the decisions undertaken at the local level; they must be validated/approved by the region / state government.

[8] In MM, by law, the municipalities must finance their operations from local taxes.

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The toolbox of the Roadmap includes:

- participatory planning and budgeting to develop a social contract, with public communication and consultations at diverse stages;
- mobilising local resources via a thorough revision of service costs and tariffs, and proposition of new fee structures;
- coordinated actions of various stakeholders (public, private, civic) for the realisation of a service;
- citizen feedback and regular accountability to the public (social accountability).

A **matching grant** providing a financial incentive to cover (process, study and innovation) costs for which municipalities may have no provisions. The municipalities' contribution to the matching grant can be financial, in-kind, materials and assets provided by the government (and their development partners), CSOs and companies. There are also intangible contributions such as municipal specific knowledge and social capital that support the success of the Roadmap.

The usefulness of the Roadmap goes beyond the application of the process to improve a particular decentralised public service; it can also be used as a basis for strategic planning and the definition and implementation of integrated territorial development policies and plans.

6 MAGIC Roadmap for public service improvement

Here we outline the main components of the Roadmap, illustrated with the case of waste management.

Which service to improve? Municipalities that wish to build trust and be responsive to the needs of residents, businesses and institutions must first of all understand how the current service is appreciated.

(S)elected representatives or the executive branch of DAOs can organise an independent survey (with CSO's or a research institute) of citizen satisfaction with municipal services. In Falam (Chin State, Myanmar) for instance, the MAGIC project conducted a Citizen Satisfaction Survey, which showed among all municipal services, citizens were least satisfied with waste management. The Falam DAO/DAC subsequently selected waste management for service improvement. A survey on waste management in Falam revealed more specific waste problems, i.e. specific wards were underserved because the waste truck could not reach these areas.

The Roadmap suggests the use of a social mapping tool to identify stakeholders and to study their interests and potential contributions. Special attention is paid to involving women, youth and vulnerable groups in the process. Gender analysis tools assist in understanding how women and men currently benefit from services (or not) and how they can each influence decisions.

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In Falam, these tools clearly showed the traditional dominance of male elders in municipal decision-making processes. As the project involved women and helped highlight their specific interests, stakeholders began to see the limitations of these processes. Women knew much more about waste management problems and had important knowledge to contribute. For instance, women are responsible for the disposal of household waste and could indicate why certain collection points were inconvenient. Previously, the municipality could not benefit from such knowledge as women were never consulted. The project started a women leadership development program to strengthen women's role in municipal decision-making processes.

In MAGIC, such surveys and stakeholder consultations revealed major concerns with garbage collection, which did not meet citizen expectations in terms of efficiency, frequency, reliability and cost. On the other hand, municipalities were struggling to provide the service and make ends meet. The Falam cost study also showed a considerable difference between what users pay and the cost of the service (fees cover 3-6% of the cost).

Table 1 Financial analysis of the solid waste collection and disposal in Falam municipality

Item	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
			(18 months)	(6 months)
1. Expenditure	40,459,000	27,129,000	31,044,000	20,774,000
2. Revenue	1,154,000	1,121,000	1,829,000	615
2.1. Tax	1,154,000	1,121,000	1,829,000	615
2.2. Service fee	0	0	0	0
3. Surplus/Deficit	(39,305,000)	(26,008,000)	(29,215,000)	(20,159,000)
4. Revenue as % of expenditure	3%	4%	6%	3%

Source: DRI Service Improvement Plan Falam Municipality, 2019.

For public services to meet the expectations of citizens and fit within the possibilities of municipalities, a sincere and transparent dialogue between (s)elected representatives, (municipal) service providers and residents is needed.

The role of different stakeholders is vital for decision-making and for operational improvement of the service. In the case of solid waste management for instance, households and institutions can start separation of waste at the source to enable recycling by companies; ward administrators can ensure that all households pay the fees; residents can monitor the work of the drivers, collectors and loaders; CSO's can conduct sensitisation campaigns and enforce via social control (informal institutions that comprise rules and behaviour that members of the society define and abide).

The municipality must communicate (reaching both men and women) about the survey results and the related service improvement choice and ensure all stakeholders are constructively engaged in the process.

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Paying for garbage collection services

In Falam, residents and waste producing businesses agreed with the municipality to use special bags for waste collection. The first bag is free of charge, while additional bags need to be bought. This puts the charge with the larger waste producers and creates more income for the municipality to cover operational costs of the waste management service[9].

What information and consultation are needed? With technical assistance, the municipal government can evaluate the service in its different components: planning (e.g. coverage of households and wards, user categories), organisation of the service delivery (e.g. waste

collection, transfer and transportation, treatment and disposal), human resources (public, private, community managed), citizen requirements of information (rights and responsibilities), asset management (fixed and movable), and financial resources (fees, charges, subsidies, exemptions for vulnerable households).

Once the waste management department has carried out a systematic analysis of the status of its service, the next step is to develop and cost alternative scenarios that can be discussed with stakeholders (residents, waste producing businesses and institutions). What are stakeholders willing to pay or contribute otherwise? Usually a series of meetings is required, because wards, companies and institutions will each have specific needs and contributions to make.

Likewise, both the preparation of the meetings and the deliberations allow municipal governments to consult communities and identify bottlenecks and constraints that prevent the improvement of the service and propose alternatives as part of the service improvement plan.

In Falam, next to introducing bag charges for waste collection, as already explained, the municipality planned to buy a small collection vehicle to provide door-to-door service twice a week to households located in the periphery. It was also agreed that 5 out of 10 dumping sites are putting water sources at risk and dumping there should be stopped. Upon request of many residents, Falam municipality also repaired the truck that can dispose of sewage.

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[9] *National policy recommends working towards full cost-recovery of waste management services.*

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The consultation process can also explore alternative solutions such as Public-Private-Partnerships, privatisation, or community-managed services or a combination of diverse modalities for the production of the service. Each of the solutions/alternatives must be reviewed for feasibility and included in the analysis of the financial implications for communities and municipal governments.[10]

The consultation process concludes with formulation of key decisions in terms of citizens' rights and responsibilities, agreed improvements, and stakeholder actions towards realising the improvements. A final (interface) meeting of residents with municipal representatives and service providers can be organised by experienced facilitators, to ensure that various dimensions such as inclusion and gender equality remain firmly on the agenda. The purpose of this meeting is to see that diverse expectations are fairly balanced and aligned with the possibilities of the municipal government to provide the service. This also enables residents to internalise the financial costs of their political decisions and to seek the price/quality combination of the service that is most convenient for them. Once stakeholders have agreed on the solutions, each actor commits its contribution to the successful execution of the plan.

For instance, the Falam municipality committed to purchase a small collection vehicle to expand the collection to unserved wards along narrow lanes and to increase the frequency of the collection. At the same time, residents ensured that nobody dumps garbage in river flows or streets, and households and businesses commit to paying the waste fee in time and buy an additional bag if the free bag allowance is used up. CSOs agreed to cooperate in undertaking sensitisation and clean up campaigns.

What is a service improvement plan? Now that critical agreements have been reached, the municipality will draft a plan that clearly states service coverage and quality objectives, budget (recurrent and investment), sources of revenue (tariffs and fees; investment grant/loan) and timeframe. In case stakeholders take up responsibilities, they should join the sub-committee that drafts the plan.

How to implement the plan? The municipality must organise quarterly service monitoring meetings in which stakeholders are updated about progress and discuss challenges. These meetings are best organised at ward level, where implementation is happening.

Eventually, updates will be organised via (social) media. Residents are also encouraged to provide direct feedback, using a grievance redress mechanism[11].

In emergency cases, such regular mechanisms for citizen engagement created with the Roadmap, can prove valuable for plan adaptation using local creativity and resources. Grant mechanisms (see chapter 5) are being designed to facilitate flexibility.

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[10] Oates, W. (1972) 'Decentralization Theorem' '…*the provision of local outputs that are differentiated according to local tastes and circumstances results in higher levels of social welfare than centrally deter- mined and more uniform levels of outputs across all jurisdictions.*
[11] MAGIC has planned a study of municipal grievance redress mechanisms in order to enhance functioning of these mechanisms.

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When the service improvements are realised, another independent assessment must be organised to evaluate if the anticipated improvements have been realised to the (earlier agreed) satisfaction of residents. CSO's can be invited to organise such an assessment using social accountability tools like report cards or community score cards[12].

7 How to introduce the MAGIC Roadmap?

'The Roadmap puts the Local Government[13](LG) in the drivers' seat; all activities in the Roadmap should be implemented through, by or with the LG. Business communities, citizens groups, associations and civil society organisations play an important role to ensure that the "voice of the people" is being heard and followed up.'[14]

The Roadmap is a guide intended primarily for municipalities to help them improve their public administration and social accountability. Improvement of public administration focuses on management capacity, developing manuals, processes and procedures that allow officials and public service providers to perform their functions adequately. As for social accountability, it focuses on elected officials to inform the public and seek its feedback and input for decision making.

The Roadmap is **introduced in selected municipalities with process facilitation and technical assistance including on-site training**, to help municipal officials lead while gradually acquiring the knowledge and skills that allow them to use the tools of this approach efficiently and promptly.

In close collaboration with the political leadership, the **process facilitator** ensures that the steps in the Roadmap are understood, followed and, where needed, adapted to the situation. MAGIC uses a series of three stakeholder workshops (1) introduction and service selection, (2) information and consultation, and (3) service improvement planning and monitoring; to gradually deepen the understanding and practice of the Roadmap.

It is also important that the internal work of public administration and the external work of social accountability (including public communication, consultation, partnership building) are well aligned (see figure 2).

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[12] Report cards consist of predetermined criteria for service satisfaction which are rated using a household survey. With Community Score Cards, citizens determine the satisfaction criteria in Focus Groups which each seek to represent various segments of the community. The scores of various focus groups are shared and discussed among Focus Group representatives to come to a joint assessment. The score card method is deemed more inclusive and empowering for marginalized groups.
[13] The roadmap refers to local governments as TDAO/DAC to emphasize the distinction of executive and legislative bodies. However, the term local government is a standard denomination which comprises both branches.
[14] MAGIC, (2019). Roadmap for the participatory service improvement planning and implementation process for garbage management services. Yangon.

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Technical assistance and on-site training are provided to government staff on public administration components such as service assessment and costing, revenue mobilisation, and the development/feasibility of alternative scenarios. This internal capacity building of government staff must be aligned with the external work to engage with the citizens, so that public communication, consultation and partnership building are not delayed.
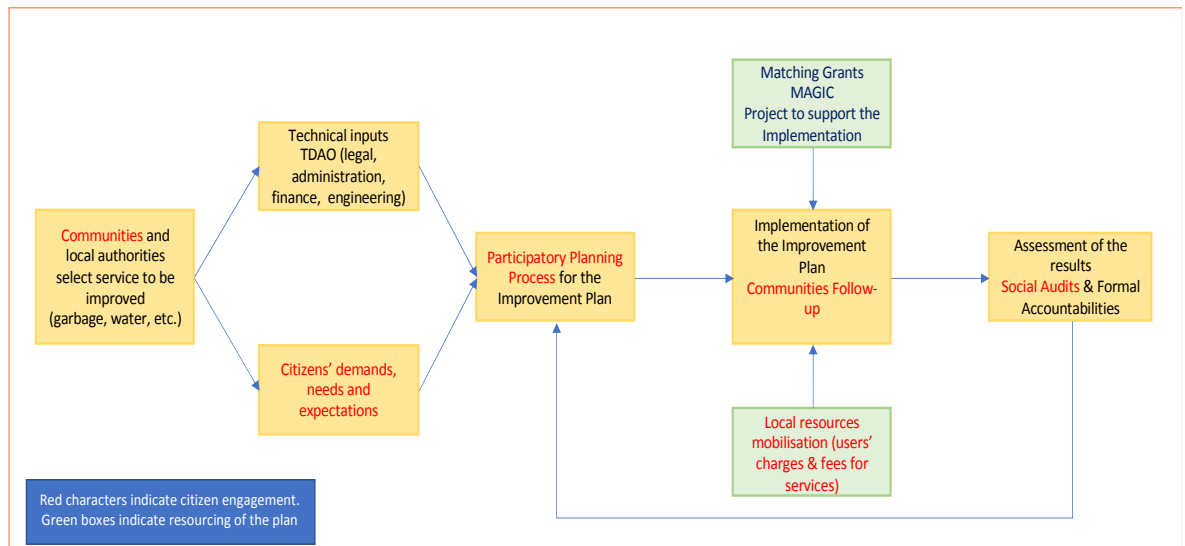

Figure 2 Flow chart of the Roadmap

The service improvement plan must respond to the needs, demands and views of citizens (including women, elderly, youth and minorities), and include their actions to improve the service. The Roadmap emphasises the active participation of citizens who historically have been marginalised from decision making at the local level. For this reason, the process facilitator must train and support (s)elected officials to build relationships with ward administrators, grassroots or civil society organisations and others who can stimulate the active participation of diverse citizen groups (i.e. beyond the traditional 100 household representatives), or represent specific interests of women, youth, elderly and minorities.

Likewise, the process facilitator must encourage involvement of other relevant actors in service development, such as businesses and public entities, in particular the General Administration Department (GAD) which is a member of the DAC. The process facilitator must have some prior experience with stakeholder and power analysis to be able to create more level playing fields in which new collaborations and partnerships can emerge. Trough training and on-the-job coaching, VNG International experts and Loka Ahlinn project teams are building up this capability and experience.

As a result of the Roadmap process, modifications in the legal and regulatory framework may be required. Therefore, the Roadmap introduction also includes offering technical assistance to the region / state governments (DAOs) on the development of concept notes and related advocacy actions for these entities to approve and enact.

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Experience so far shows that where a few municipalities have successfully introduced a service improvement process, others follow through peer exchange and peer learning. The region/state government can facilitate this to speed up dissemination of good practices to all municipalities. Their political buy-in to the Roadmap must be ensured from the start.

Eventually, the Roadmap is a reference for region/ state governments in their decentralisation process, that defines when and how participation of these intermediate levels of government contributes to public service improvement and local development in general. '*Local Governments use Union/State/Region manuals and procedures for the budget execution, procurement and accounting. However, these manuals do not yet foresee disclosure of the budget to the public. Since the resources are public (taxpayers') money, ideally* the legal framework for decentralisation must legislate the obligation of Local Governments *to disclose the information concerning the use of the public funds (transparency and public access to information, in particular about user fees and taxpayer's money)'.*[15]

8 What are the preconditions to introducing the Roadmap?

Public administration at regional / state and municipal levels is at the core of the Roadmap. The regional / state level has the power to modify the legal framework and administrative regulations that standardise the operation of local governments, including citizen engagement.

The leadership of the regional / state level is expressed through the political will and institutional support that allows the implementation of the Roadmap. In one case political will was strong in the legislative, in another case leadership was strong in the executive.

Loka Ahlinn project teams explore and inform political and institutional support for the Roadmap as a means to capacitating local governments.

Regarding the municipal government, the interest of the executive (DAO) and the commitment of its staff to implement the Roadmap are crucial. There is a considerable workload due to the limited number of municipal officials, therefore the activities defined in the Roadmap may seem like an additional burden in the short term. However, if the process is successful, it is an improvement in their relationship with citizens and it makes their daily activities easier through enhanced working conditions and a better distribution of functions.

Likewise, citizen participation in the process moves from self-organisation[16] to developing a social contract: proposing collaboration, innovation and change. Citizens must participate not only in identifying the problem, but also being part of the solution.

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[15] MAGIC, (2019). Roadmap for the participatory service improvement planning and implementation process for garbage management services. Yangon.
[16] Historically urban dwellers in Myanmar have very few if any expectations from their municipal government. They are used to self-organising what is elsewhere know as 'public services' like water, garbage collection and electricity. As towns grow and develop economically, self-oganisation is reaching its limits.

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Improving the quality of public service delivery:
a Roadmap for strengthening administration and governance - The case of waste management in Myanmar

The Roadmap describes the points of contact between citizens and municipal government and also places particular emphasis on mobilising domestic resources and change of attitudes and habits. This is a longer-term process and the outcome cannot be taken for granted.

Citizen engagement will only materialise when municipal services actually improve and municipal governments demonstrate responsiveness and accountability. The Roadmap is an effort to contribute to such results.

9   Strengths and opportunities

The fact that people identify a service that they consider essential to improve, allows the municipal government to **focus on a priority issue**, such as waste management in Falam, and jointly initiate the search for solutions through the process described in the Roadmap.

From the citizens' point of view, the service is important, and its quality can be easily appreciated without the need for specialised knowledge. Likewise, this is a service for which citizens pay (at least partially) and, therefore, they can **relate quality to the service fee**[17].

The users of the service in Falam were not aware of considerable difference between what users pay and the cost of the service (fees cover 3-6% of the cost). Citizens and businesses are willing to pay more, as long as this payment results in a reliable, satisfactory service.

From the municipal government perspective, solid waste management is a highly subsidised service and obliges the local government to use a significant part of its income to finance this service (by law they must allocate at least 50% of their income to capital investments).

However, the relationship between the municipal government and the citizens is based on assumptions, less on facts.

Just having adequate information and using it to guide the participatory planning process of the service improvement plan, forces all stakeholders to seek realistic solutions to service problems. As the Falam waste management case illustrates, the Roadmap helps stakeholders to move from opinions to verifiable facts for decision making and lays the foundation for a healthy relationship between the municipal government and citizens.

The possibility of expanding this experience to other services will mainly depend on successful implementation of the service improvement plan. Success is fundamentally associated with the development of trust among stakeholders (social capital) and the results obtained in executing the plan. In case the relations between the municipal government and the citizens improve as a result of the interaction and the execution of collective actions, the process can be easily applied for the improvement of other public services ('success breeds success').

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[17] Note that Myanmar's national waste management strategy envisions full cost recovery.

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On the contrary, if adequate execution of the improvement plan is not possible, distrust between citizens and the government will remain or increase, and it will be more challenging to carry out a new citizen engagement process for the improvement of other services.

Is it possible to upscale the process described in the Roadmap to other municipalities, regions or states in Myanmar and elsewhere? The categorical answer is YES. The Roadmap is a process that builds trust between citizens and municipal government and makes citizens part of the solution. It also promotes transparency in decision-making and ensures that authorities are held accountable for their actions.

If there is political will and commitment from the regional / state authorities, as is demonstrated in Chin State, the pilot process and experience can be expanded to all municipalities in the state or region.

The fastest way to scale-up is through a combination of 1) the modification of the methods, administrative procedures, manuals and controls, and 2) peer exchange and learning among municipal officials and elected representatives. These actions require a revision/enhancement of the regulatory and operational framework of the municipalities and also training and exchange for the public servants and elected representatives in charge of putting the management and citizen engagement instruments into practice.

However, there is a caveat. The implementation of the Roadmap requires both technical assistance and training in public administration and expertise in negotiation and citizens' mobilisation. To implement the Roadmap in various regions and states, professional support is needed, both for civil servants and elected representatives in municipal governments (at least in the introductory phase). Based on the first experience a positive relationship between local stakeholders for the implementation of the Roadmap from the outset, they can continue to carry out similar actions to improve additional services or define the multi-annual capital investment plan.

10 Recommendations for international organisations

The Roadmap is still in its implementation phase; therefore we cannot yet show the final results. However, some lessons already learned can contribute to the design of future support programmes for countries that are implementing decentralisation reforms or want to consolidate the role of local governments as development agents. Some recommendations are listed below.

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- Finance capacity-building processes in which municipal governments "learn by doing" and put into practice a "full disclosure policy", making their possibilities and limitations known to the population. Openness of the municipal government will allow them to develop mutually beneficial relationships, engage with multiple stakeholders and mobilise resources. This will reverse the distrust of citizens towards the public administration in the medium term and will make citizens more aware, not only of their rights but also of their obligations.

- Provide financial resources[18] directly to municipalities based on agreements with residents and interest groups. These resources can be used to improve services/infrastructure, but above all, they will strengthen local governance and democratic practice as described in the MAGIC roadmap. Likewise, the conditions must ensure that the voices of women, the elderly, youth and vulnerable groups are heard, and their demands are met.

Women' Voices group in Falam

- The interaction between municipal governments and citizens must be based on facts, credible information, direct communication and agreements accepted by the majority and including the needs of minorities. For this reason, it is vital to allocate resources to the analysis and studies of local reality, to allow for (independent) data collection and information to guide the negotiations and to find adequate solutions to the interests and expectations of local stakeholders.

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[18] The EC Reference Document No 23 'Supporting decentralisation, local governance and local development through a territorial approach' warns that the delegations must pay close attention to the aid modalities if what they want is to apply the territorial approach to local development because the "Funds can remain trapped at the central level. Development partners are increasingly concerned that budget support operations lack appropriate dialogue and accountability mechanisms related to the disbursement of funds to sub-national levels. In practice, this means that LAs are further disempowered to fulfil their mandate'. Pag. 72

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- Invest in technical service providers that can continue to bring expertise to municipal governments until the changes are institutionalised through legal instruments and procedures (mid-term). The participation of qualified technicians is crucial, in order, first, to demonstrate with evidence the benefits of changes in management; and, second, to formalise the changes through modifications in the legal and regulatory framework.

- Invest in process facilitators who can continue to support municipalities with complex multi-stakeholder processes. The existence of qualified local facilitators is a long-term investment that allows the consolidation of governance processes beyond the life span of projects. As local governments develop, they will increasingly allocate budgets to hire technical and process facilitation expertise.

Interventions must have sufficient flexibility to adjust their actions and budgets to help in emergency situations beyond the provisions stipulated by the projects for non-expected expenses (e.g. allocate 5% of the budget).

One of the fundamental criteria of planning is flexibility by virtue of a very dynamic political, social and economic context. Therefore, the interventions must have a fast track approval system to cope with crisis situations and remain relevant to their stakeholders.

11 Summary

This article explained the MAGIC roadmap as an approach to improve financing and delivery of a particular municipal service, supported by examples from the pilots implemented in the MAGIC project.

First experiences demonstrate the potential of this approach, which works on strengthening public administration while introducing citizen engagement, aiming at strengthening the functioning of municipal service delivery. A successful pilot can be upscaled to other municipal services, and to other municipalities by the region / state government.

MAGIC aims to support the municipality in enhancing its capacities for service delivery, while, at the same time, creating better local governance by supporting the (s)elected DAC members to engage citizens, CSOs and the business community in the quest and implementation of the most suitable and affordable solution (quality/price) for improved solid waste management.

Concerning governance, the Roadmap encourages transparency and consultation in decision-making for service delivery and also promotes transparency and accountability of local authorities for the results of their actions and omissions.

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Every action of the municipal government is consulted and agreed with the service users who also assume responsibilities and commitments for the improvement of the services. '*The Local Government and the citizens agree on a service improvement plan (social contract) through which the access, quality and financing of the service have been agreed with citizens. Local Government is accountable for the results of the service improvement plan, specifically for proper use of the service fees paid. Local Government facilitates community monitoring for regular feedback from citizens on service improvement and implementation of the plan.'[19]*

[19] Idem

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