



Hakha Township Hall  
6 June 2019

## **“Strengthening Local Government” Local Governance Seminar organized by Chin State DAO and VNG International**

The Local Governance Seminar on “Strengthening Local Government” was organized by the Chin State Development Affairs Organization (DAO) in collaboration with VNG International under the MAGIC (Municipal Accountability, Governance and Inclusive Communities) project. The event brought together 109 participants (72 male and 37 Female) of which 2/3 was staff of the State / Township DAOs and DAC and 1/3 representatives of CSOs, faith based youth and women Associations and the media. The purpose of the seminar was to better understand the challenges of municipal services, discuss improvement of these services and explore local governance opportunities within and beyond the MAGIC project.

H.E. U Soe Htet, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Electricity and Industry shared in his opening speech the changes made over the past 10 months: the number of municipal staff in Chin State doubled and will increase further, the municipal budget was raised from 6.9 to 8 billion MMK and the first of the 6 monthly coordination meetings of municipal staff of Chin townships was held in May. He mentioned the importance of the MAGIC and other projects for strengthening municipal staff capacities and improving municipal services.

The Country Director of VNG International Myanmar Mrs. Anne-Marie Schreven welcomed the participants and explained the history and mandate of the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) in The Netherlands to strengthen democratic local governments in Myanmar and elsewhere. Mr. Kyaw Swa Swe, Program Director of Loka Ahlinn Social Development Network and MAGIC project partner presented the main details of the MAGIC project.



## Participatory Planning and Budgeting: from opinions to facts and figures

Mr. Kyaw Naing of Development Resources International (DRI) presented some key facts and figures of municipal planning and budgeting at Hakha and Falam related to :

- Participation of stakeholders (households, businesses and institutional entities including technical governmental agencies;
- Social and economic equity and justice including gender responsiveness;
- Cooperation and partnership of people, public (municipal organization) and private sector;
- Integration of municipal development plan and program into township development plan and program.

The figures show limited capacities and resources to respond effectively to the needs of the citizens. Deficiency between the available budget and the costs of services was illustrated using the revenue and expenses of garbage collection and disposal as an example. The expert shared some financial and non-financial options to reduce the deficiency, such as increasing revenue through increased fee rates, broaden the coverage, reduce operational costs, share data with the citizens, set up regular garbage



collection schedules and initiate civic awareness programs for behavioral change of citizens. Within the MAGIC project, experts will work with the DAO / DAC to strengthen the technical capacities for participatory planning, prioritizing and analyzing budgets, mobilizing resources and medium term development planning.

The Director of the State DAO and the Executive Officer of Hakha DAO expressed their appreciation for presenting the facts and figures and the need for sharing the budget with the citizens to better understand the situation and to manage (dis-)satisfaction.

They further explained that only 8 % of the State budget is allocated for 9 municipalities in Chin State; this % has to be increased to provide quality services. Suggested was to share the budget at Union level and demand for an increase for municipal services.





## Gender Responsive Budgeting; addressing the needs of women, youth and vulnerable groups

Ms. Yin Yin Min, Gender Expert presented “Gender Responsive Budgeting” as integral part of the participatory planning and budgeting process. At each step in this process, questions that address the specific needs of women and youth and vulnerable groups are being answered and included in the decisions how to spend the budget. For example, women ask for more accessible disposal sites while men may prefer one central disposal point; women are more interested to sort out and recycle garbage. Youth groups are interested to have their play fields and people with disabilities want to have better access to public buildings and spaces. She explained that community consultations often fail to take the different needs of men and women, youth and other groups into consideration; their views and wishes are often neglected. Making the participatory planning and budgeting process more inclusive and gender responsive, will lead to better services that cover the needs of all.



## Sharing good practices in municipal functioning and local development from elsewhere



After lunch, Mr Alfonso Garcia Salaués, VNG Associate Expert, explained the principles of Local Governance and the roles of Municipal Governments in promoting local development (social inclusion, economic growth and environmental sustainability). Also, in this session, some good practices in municipal functioning and local development were shared, using the example of city of Pereira in Colombia, South America. Pereira is similar to Hakha, a middle-sized town located in a mountainous environment. The case showed how the city of Pereira has defined and implemented policies and programs aiming at improving the mobility in the city; the social inclusion and cohesion and eventually local economic development. In the area of solid waste management, Mr. Garcia explained how the municipality encourages small enterprises to set up their business in waste handling and recycling. The local government supports small enterprises and encourage them to work together with the citizens for the improvement of the service. For instance, homeless people being on the street are collecting waste for which they get paid by the recycling companies and by the municipality through sharing the tariff collected by the public facility.



## Comments and insights from the panelists and the participants:

The last session was a panel discussion facilitated by Mr. Kyaw Swa Swe of Loka Ahlinn Social Development Network with 3 panelists consisting of DAC members from Hakha and Falam and a female entrepreneur from Hakha. Some quotes from the discussions:

- "We are yet at the beginning; we need to change our attitude towards the government. We ask for more budget but we don't have the strategic planning skills in place; we don't know how to do planning systematically."
- "What can we pay and what are we willing to pay? We don't want to pay a small amount for taxes but we easily spend a large amount on our phone bills".
- "(Youth) unemployment and income generations are major challenges in Chin State; we need to balance the link between income and taxes."
- "We are not yet able to deal with segregation of waste; it starts at household level, we need to raise awareness and we also need to address policies at national level"
- "To change the government is not that difficult, to change the system is!" The DAC is not functioning well. It is not implicated in issues that concern citizens (e.g. land management committee) and has less power. DAC needs to be respected and included."
- "The relationship between GAD and municipality is just like husband and wife; we understand each other but we don't really work together for the better."
- "Due to water shortage, we mostly receive water in the night, whilst women working at home need water during the day".
- "We need more women members in the DAC to ensure that our different needs are being considered. Allow space to women; women participation is so-called accepted but not really in practice."
- "For the DAO / DAC it is difficult to enforce rules and regulations due to lack of data and systematic procedures; people don't have land ownership documents; they nevertheless need to have a house and this situation encourages corruption practices".



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