**Pillar 1 - Project Pipeline (04/ 2015)**

Title : Local Governance Strengthening Program (LOGOS)

Start and End date: January 2016 – December 2017

Manager: Christian Hainzl/ Anki Dellnas

Project description

In recent years, Myanmar has gone through historic changes in its political, institutional and social organisation and the country has made important steps in its transition towards democratic governance. A new Constitution was adopted in May 2008 and the first general elections under the new Constitution (2008) were held in November 2010, followed by by-elections in April 2012. After decades of authoritarian rule, the new Constitution provided for a transfer of government authority from the military to elected, civilian structures and enunciates principles of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights. In addition, the Constitution introduced the separation of powers between the executive branch, the legislature and the judiciary, as well as between different tiers of government: the Union tier; the States and Regions tier, with the capital city forming a separate Union territory, and a number of Self-Administered units enjoying local autonomy in certain areas. However, a tier of local government was not introduced by the new Constitution.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Nevertheless, local governance has become one of the key priority areas of reform for the incumbent government, which has been in place since early 2011. In a widely publicised and debated policy speech to the Union Legislature in June 2012, President U Thein Sein emphasised the important role of sub-national levels of governance – States/Regions, districts and townships – in the reform process and the economic development of Myanmar. This message has been reiterated and expanded since then on numerous occasions. In a similar address of the President in December 2013, he highlighted the responsibilities of lower levels of government,[[2]](#footnote-2) and again in January 2014, he urged the various levels of government to work together towards a ‘people-centred’ plan to achieve the country’s development goals.[[3]](#footnote-3) The President holds monthly speeches on national radio to communicate new reform initiatives taken by the government and has frequently highlighted the importance of local governance in this regard.

Worldwide, a great variety of models exist on how to arrange local governance. Countries also differ by whether they use a uniform system for all areas, or allow a degree of diversity within, including varying degrees of local autonomy. Many countries, including Myanmar, practice different systems in rural and urban areas. Many countries protect an autonomous role for local governments through constitutional provisions, or special local government acts and adhere to a concept of subsidiarity, which means that matters should be handled by the lowest possible level of government that can take care of them effectively. Such systems often enshrine lists of responsibilities in the Constitution. Myanmar follows another model where local governance is essentially an extension of superordinate tiers of government, namely the Union and the State or Regional level.

Townships are the only type of government administrative unit that cover the entirety of the national territory and form the basic units for administration, service delivery and, as electoral constituencies, for political organizations. As municipal matters fall under the legislative and executive competency of States and Regions, a distinct legal sphere of municipal governance has emerged, but it remains integrated into the overall state structures which thus function as hybrid institutions at the township level. The system in place is the result of historical legacies and has evolved over time through a patchwork of reforms and arrangements, which often makes it difficult for outsiders, as well as local governance actors and citizens alike to clearly understand responsibilities, duties and accountability lines. For most of the time, a hierarchical and top-down chain of command system inherited from both colonialism and decades of military influence on government prevails, but will increasingly be affected by growing demands for elements of representation, downward accountability and public participation. The local governance structures of Myanmar find themselves in this context that is often enough characterized by a degree of confusion and uncertainty, which any analytical overview must also take into account.

Since the establishment of the State and Region governments under the provisions of the Constitution (2008) and operating under the direction of the Chief Ministers and the election of State and Region legislatures (*hluttaws*), certain legislative and administrative powers have been devolved on the basis of constitutional guarantees to these new tiers of government. In essence, this entails a step towards decentralization to the Region/State levels, even though at the local level the erstwhile basic structure of state administration in the form of districts, townships, village tracts and wards and villages has essentially been retained even after the entry into force of the new Constitution. However, a number of steps have been taken introducing elements of participation and mechanisms for people to interact with local administrations in a more transparent and accessible manner.

UNDP Myanmar has since the inception of its CPAP in 2012 been able to create strong and working partnerships with key players relevant for local governance and decentralization namely the General Administration Department in the Ministry of Home Affairs as well as the President’s Office, Minister #5 and #6 and has supported the government’s policy and reform development through i.a. a nationwide local governance mapping, training and capacity development for senior government officials, initial capacity development for participatory planning and a number of activities for strengthening civil society organizations as well as media.

Against this background and building on the results achieved UNDP will focus its next program cycle on capacity development of township administration to promote local governance reforms in line with emerging government priorities. Key areas of focus will be: prototyping the establishment of a complaint resolution mechanism as well as of a basic performance evaluation system (initially in UNDP's pilot townships Mon, Rakhine and Kachin); support the establishment of one stop shops in selected locations and township planning capacities and effective public service delivery in additional states and regions, enhancing community representation and participation, developing modalities for increasing transparency and information at the township level.

Outputs/ Results

1. Models for effective, efficient and equitable service delivery through local administrations designed and implemented through a one state model approach
2. Capacities of CSOs and Media at local, state/ region level strengthened for network formation and engagement with authorities to improve participation of women and men in peaceful and people centered development

Resources

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2016** | | **2017** | | **TOTAL** |
|  | Regular | non-core | Regular | non-core |  |
| Output 1 | 500,000 | 2,700,000 | 500,000 | 1,300,000 | 5,000,000 |
|
| Output 2 | 300,000 | 1,650,000 | 300,000 | 1,250,000 | 3,500,000 |
|  | 5,150,000.00 | | 3,350,000 | | 8,500,000.00 |

Implementation partner: DIM, Ministry of Home Affairs, Presidents office, Ministry of Information

Donors: Sida, Danida, Finland, Goverment of Japan

1. There are 330 townships, each with one or several towns, approximately 2,781 wards, 13,714 village tracts and 64,910 villages in Myanmar. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Address delivered by President U Thein Sein at the meeting on reform to improve management and administrative capacity of the government. New Light of Myanmar. 26 December 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Union Government to draw people-centred plan to achieve goals: President U Thein Sein. New Light of Myanmar, 6 January 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)