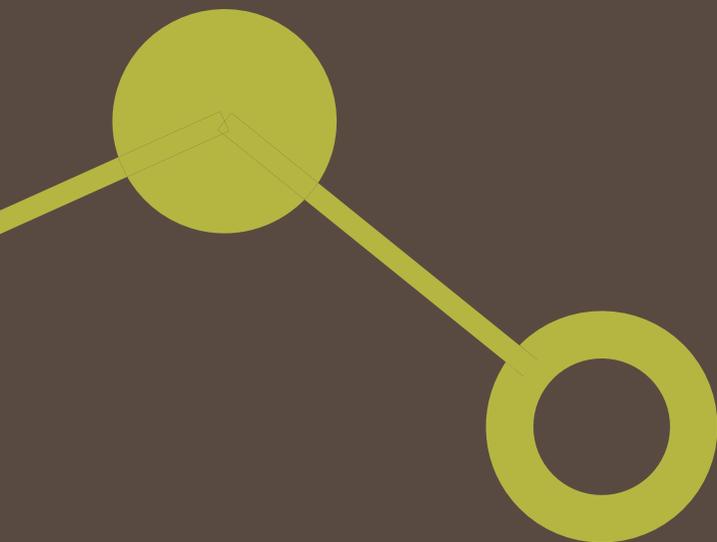


RESILIENT MUNICIPALITIES:
A RESOURCE FOR COUNTRIES
AFFECTED BY THE SYRIA CRISIS

MODULE 2
PARTICIPATORY PROBLEM
IDENTIFICATION AND
PRIORITIZATION





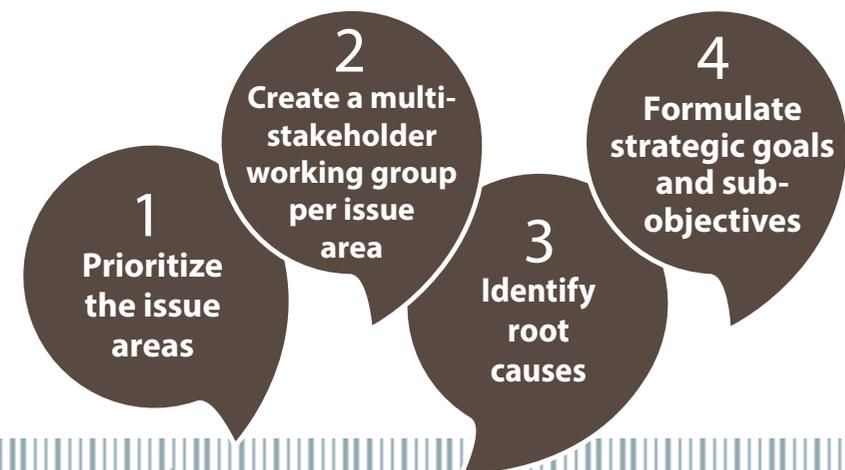
For more information:
Michael Moroz
Policy & Crisis Coordination Specialist
Sub-Regional Response Facility
Regional Bureau for Arab States
United Nations Development Programme

November 2015

This module of the Resource takes the information in the Municipality Needs and Assets Database to formulate strategic goals that will then be addressed through a collective action plan (next module). In this module the Task Force first agrees upon criteria to prioritize issues that were identified in the Municipality Needs and Assets Database. The Task Force will then create working groups with key stakeholders for each priority issue. These are people and organizations with the will, skills and resources to begin to address problems in the municipality.

Each working group looks deeply into the root causes of its assigned priority issue to identify a full complement of factors that contribute to the problem. Addressing a set of factors instead of just one aspect of the problem will create a larger impact and a more sustained improvement. Each working group articulates a forward-looking, positive strategic goal for its assigned priority issue. Each strategic goal will also include several sub-objectives that address the various factors of the problem and their root causes.

The steps presented in this module are:



WHO IS INVOLVED?

The Task Force should be implementing the tools in this module with support from the Secretariat. As the module is about setting a strategic direction for the municipality, it is also important to involve members of the local council in certain stages. Unlike the previous modules, which involve a broad spectrum of people living and working in your municipality, this module relies on the knowledge and input of the Task Force members. However, at particular steps, there will be options noted in the tools' description to obtain broader input from the population.

As discussed in more detail below, the Task Force will organize itself and/or additional members to form working groups of individuals with good knowledge of how the municipality functions either in its entirety or with respect to specific areas. In addition to local council members, this may include teachers, principals, nurses and doctors, civil-society representatives, active citizens, and business representatives, as well as a few staff members of the municipal administration or municipal organizations, such as a water utility.

Look to include the 'connectors' you identified in Module 1 as they will have good information from different sources, and will help in mobilizing the community when you are ready to implement your plans.

Depending on the geographic extent of your municipality, it may be important to include official or unofficial representatives from different districts or villages. Also, it is important that you include newcomers to your municipality in addition to long-term residents. You may want to use brief "well-informed persons interviews" (See Module 4 on Increasing Two-Way Communication) to help identify people who represent important constituencies and who can serve on working groups under this module. Finally, remember to keep a gender balance so that neither men nor women make up more than 60% of the group members. To maintain a collegial atmosphere in which discussion is possible, it is advisable to keep the maximum group number to 25.

CREATING PUBLIC AWARENESS

As a preparatory step for initiating new work, it is always helpful for results of the previous work to be shared with and validated by people beyond the Task Force. As activities and investments will be organized around the proposed strategic goals, it is important that there be broad consensus on these goals, as well as official approval from the local council. You may begin by publicizing some key results from the Municipal Needs and Assets Database, either through local media or a public meeting of the local council. If you consider certain findings possibly sensitive, you may adjust the report accordingly. (A summary report can be prepared for the public, and a fuller report prepared for the local council and the Task Force.) The more people are informed about this initiative, the more likely they will participate in later stages, contributing their time and resources to improving life in the municipality. Also, by publicizing results of the Municipal Needs and Assets Database, you are reinforcing the concept of a connected community in the municipality with common goals.

In addition to working with local media, you may explore some more innovative methods for spreading the word and getting people involved in visualizing results of the Municipal Needs and Assets Database. For example, there can be an art competition for school children to draw posters that depict the major issues that surfaced in the self-assessment. Older children can hold discussion groups and submit photo journalism that reflects positive and negative aspects of the current situation in the municipality that came up in the self-assessment survey. CSOs can hold small group discussions (see Module 4) on the results of the Municipality Needs and Assets Database to provide validation. Activities like these will help the community to digest the results of the self-assessment and move on to the next stages of improving services and economic conditions.

It is also recommended that you hold an open local council meeting in which the general population is invited to share their views on the strategic goals. Members of the Task Force should participate and be ready to respond to inquiries. Local council members who are members of the Task Force should also answer questions. If necessary, some changes can be made to the strategic goals before they are approved by the local council and used for collective action planning.



STEP 1: PRIORITIZE THE ISSUE AREAS



In this step, the Task Force will create a prioritization of issue areas according to agreed-upon criteria. They will use as a starting point the challenges identified by the general population and well-informed persons in the Municipality Needs and Assets Database.

BOX 1 IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

In Jordan, a USAID-funded program has helped communities identify priorities and solve long-standing issues. The program engages civil-society organizations and other volunteers in a daylong canvass of the community, asking them to identify their needs and priorities, as well as to name individuals whom they consider to be particularly reliable and noteworthy citizens. These issues are collated and presented at a public meeting, where people discuss underlying causes and then vote on priorities, as well as to a committee that will carry the project forward. Citizens are energized and empowered; local volunteers and other resources are galvanized, providing a multiplier effect for international aid; and solutions are found. In one municipality, for instance, a community that had long sought a retaining wall to protect students at a local school finally managed to build it.

Deliberation over needs and priorities is an important way to develop solutions for problems ranging from waste collection and roads to education and security. Communities can undertake such actions outside the purview of the municipality, of course, but as elected municipal leaders, you are uniquely placed to mobilize the community to define its needs, develop a shared perspective of the root causes, and establish priorities. You have the trust of a community in need.

PRIORITIZATION METHODS TO CREATE A SHORT LIST OF PRIORITY AREAS

The Task Force should review the report on the Municipality Needs and Assets Database, including the preliminary list of priorities identified by the general population and the well-informed persons. From this longer list of priorities, it is recommended that the Task Force narrow the list to five to seven priorities. The Task Force will agree on a short list of priorities, around which the problems will be studied more carefully, strategic goals will be formulated, assets identified, and investments and activities defined. If a priority does not appear on the short list, this does not mean that the priority will not be addressed, but it is not considered to be a strategic goal. Several priorities may be related and will be combined to create a new priority for the short list.

Creating a short list of priority areas may take place during a half-day meeting. This will be either a meeting for the Task Force or a community meeting, depending on the technique utilized. There are many techniques for narrowing down a long list of priorities, and the Task Force can choose the technique they believe is most effective.

To supplement the prioritization of issue areas, it can also be useful to interview a small number of well-informed people prior to the prioritization selection. These interviews could provide input that will aid in the work of narrowing the long list of prioritizations. For more details, see module 4).

PRIORITIZATION TECHNIQUE 1: MULTI-ROUND VOTING



The multi-round voting technique can work equally well in the context of a task force meeting or a larger community meeting. This technique uses different rounds of voting to gradually narrow the list of priorities. (Unlike the other techniques, multi-round voting does not require the Task Force to come to consensus on criteria used for prioritization.) An example sequence is provided below. Follow the concept, but specifics can change.

1. Round 1. All Task Force members vote anonymously on cards for as many of the priorities as they want.

2. Create a list to include those priorities that received three or more votes in Round 1. These go to the next round.

3. Round 2. All Task Force members are allowed to vote for only 4 priorities.

4. Update the list to reflect those priorities that received three or more votes in Round 2. If the list of priorities is already sufficiently narrowed, then the exercise is finished. If not, then the list is used for the next round.

5. Round 3. All Task Force members are allowed to vote for only two priorities. Those priorities receiving more than three votes are included in the short list of priorities.



Table 1: Example results of a Multi-Voting technique

	Round 1 votes	Round 2 votes	Round 3 votes
Priority 1	XXXXXXXX	Xxx	XXXX
Priority 2	XXXXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Priority 3	Xx		
Priority 4	XXXXX	Xx	
Priority 5	XXXXXXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Priority 6	Xx		
Priority 7	XXXXXXXX	XXXX	X
Priority 8	XXXX	Xx	
Priority 9	Xx		
Priority 10	XXXXXX	Xxx	Xxx
Priority 11	XXXXXXXXXX	XXX	X
Priority 12	XXXXXX	XXX	XXX
Priority 13	Xx		
Priority 14	XXXXX	XXXX	Xx

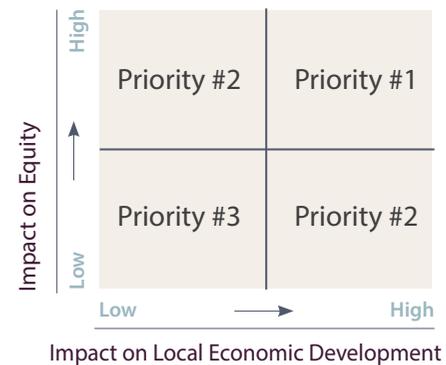
RED – elimination Round 1, BLUE – elimination Round 2, GREEN – elimination in Round 3, BLACK – Shortlisted priorities (Priorities 1, 2, 5, 10 and 12)



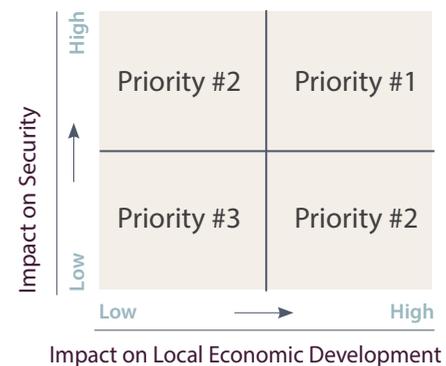
PRIORITIZATION TECHNIQUE 2: PRIORITIZATION GRID

The Task Force can also use a prioritization grid to compare the different issues raised in the information collection for the Municipality Needs and Assets Database. A prioritization grid graphs the issues according to two criteria. Issues can be graphed according to different sets of criteria.

1 SELECT CRITERIA



Choose two criteria to evaluate the issues. If you have information from the municipal situation self-assessment that is disaggregated by different groups of the population (e.g., by permanent residents and newcomers, by women and men, by civil society and business), then the grid can graph issues according to the stated priorities of those population groups. Other criteria to use for the prioritization matrix may include the issue's urgency, impact on security or a particular service, or feasibility to implement (including time, cost, and resources). Strategies will be evaluated against how well these criteria are met. The first example grid uses "Impact on Equity" and "Impact on Local Economic Development (LED)" as the criteria. The second example grid uses "Impact on Security" and "Impact on Local Development" as the criteria.



2 CREATE A GRID

Set up a grid with four quadrants, and assign one broad criteria to each axis. Create arrows on the axes to indicate "high" and "low."

3 LABEL QUADRANTS

Based on the axes, label each quadrant. For example, “High Impact on Security/High Impact on Local Economic Development,” will be the label for the Priority1 quadrant. “High Impact on Security/Low Impact on Local Economic Development,” and “Low Impact on Security/High Impact on Local Economic Development,” will be the labels for Priority 2 quadrants. “Low Impact on Security/Low Impact on Local Economic Development” will be the label for the Priority 3 quadrant.

4 CATEGORIZE AND PRIORITIZE.

Place all issues in the appropriate quadrant based on the quadrant labels. Highest priorities according to both criteria are placed in the Priority #1 quadrant.

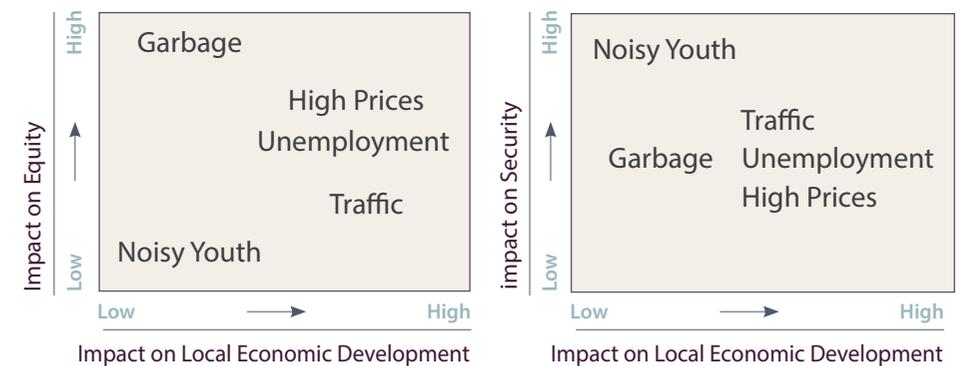
Let’s take a further look at the examples to see how the criteria you choose can affect your priorities. Imagine that your municipality identified the following needs in the initial assessment: garbage in the streets, unemployment, the problem of noisy youth in the evening, traffic congestion and accidents, and high prices. You have found that while high prices, unemployment and traffic are affecting everyone, the problem of garbage collection is much worse in some areas than in others. This is leading not only to frustration with litter, but also to resentment in the community from those who fail to get good garbage collection service.

Your task is to place the issues in the relevant areas on the graph based on how much the problems or needs affect the issues you care about. Focus only on the relationship between the problem and the criteria at this point, leaving aside how much you feel the need is a priority.

In the first example, then, you focus on the extent to which the problems – noisy youth, garbage, traffic congestion, unemployment, and high prices – affect equity and local economic development. You feel that garbage has a strong effect on equity, since it is a visible point of inequality. Unemployment and high prices also have a large impact on equity, while noisy youth and traffic do not. When it comes to local economic development, the problems of

traffic, high prices and unemployment (i.e., bad economic conditions) thwart development, while garbage and noisy youth have less impact. Taken together, the matrix suggests that high prices and unemployment should receive top priority, and that traffic and garbage collection are the next priority items.

When the criteria changes from a focus on equity to one on security, you may decide that noisy youth are a problem, since the disorderly behavior leads to tensions and sometimes violence between the youth and other residents. Garbage collection has a much smaller impact on security. The result is that noisy youth becomes a higher priority problem to be solved than garbage collection.



This is important: while the needs have not changed, the priority changes if you decide that different factors are the most important underlying goals in the area. The point of using a grid is not to claim that security is more important than equity, or vice versa, or that garbage collection or noisy youth are more important problems. Rather, it is to help you take a step back and consider how the problems you face and the values you hold are related. Sometimes, needs that seem like high priorities – perhaps because they are highly visible, such as garbage collection - are less important when they are analyzed more closely.

PRIORITIZATION TECHNIQUE 3: PRIORITIZATION MATRIX

Another technique that the Task Force can use is the prioritization matrix. A prioritization matrix is a visual and arithmetic method for prioritizing issues according to criteria with varying degrees of importance. This technique differs from a prioritization grid in two ways: 1) it can take into account more than two criteria, and 2) it allows you to consider some factors to be more important than others.

1 SELECT CRITERIA

by which the issues will be rated. Determine weights for each criterion according to its relative importance. (In the example in the table below, the criterion “impact on public safety and security in the community” is considered twice as important as “make services or life necessities more affordable.”)

2 CREATE A TABLE

with the issues listed in the first column and the criteria listed in the first row of the other columns. After each criterion, write its weight according to its relative importance. Include an additional column for the cumulative priority score.

3 RATE THE ISSUES

against specified criteria. Fill in cells of the matrix by rating each issue against each criterion. Here is an example of a rating scale:

- 2 = issue will have high impact on this criterion
- 1 = issue will have medium impact on this criterion
- 0 = issue will have no impact on this criterion

4 MULTIPLY THE CRITERION

rating by the criterion weight and put that score in the cell.

5 ADD THE SCORES

for each issue across the entire set of criteria to create a cumulative priority score.

Table 2: Example of a Prioritization Matrix (Criterion Rating X Weight)

CRITERIA	CRITERION 1:	CRITERION 2:	CRITERION 3:	CRITERION 4:	CRITERION 5:	Priority score
Long list of priority issues	Impact on public safety / security in the community	Ease tensions among groups	Improve service quality for sizable part of the population	Increase jobs or job skills/ promote local economic development	Make services or life necessities more affordable	(cumulative across criteria)
(Weight in red)	.5	.3	.4	.3	.25	
Reduce noisy youth	2 (high impact) x Weight .5 = 1.0	1 (medium impact) x Weight .3 = 0.3	0 (no impact) x Weight .4 = 0	1 (medium impact) x Weight .3 = 0.3	0 (no impact) x Weight .25 = 0	1.60
Improve waste management	1 (medium impact) x Weight .5 = 0.5	1 (medium impact) x Weight .3 = 0.3	2 (high impact) x Weight .4 = .8	1 (medium impact) x Weight .3 = 0.3	1 (medium impact) x Weight .25 = 0.25	2.15
Reduce traffic congestion	2 (high impact) x Weight .5 = 1.0	1 (medium impact) x Weight .3 = 0.3	2 (high impact) x Weight .4 = .8	1 (medium impact) x Weight .3 = 0.3	0 (no impact) x Weight .25 = 0	2.40
Decrease unemployment	2 (high impact) x Weight .5 = 1.0	2 (high impact) x Weight .3 = 0.6	0 (no impact) x Weight .4 = 0	2 (high impact) x Weight .3 = 0.6	2 (high impact) x Weight .25 = 0.5	2.70
Slow price rises	1 (medium impact) x Weight .5 = 0.5	2 (high impact) x Weight .3 = 0.6	0 (no impact) x Weight .4 = 0	2 (high impact) x Weight .3 = 0.6	2 (high impact) x Weight .25 = 0.5	2.20



STEP 2: CREATE A MULTI- STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP PER ISSUE AREA



Once there is a short list of priorities, working groups should be formed (or re-formed) around these priority issue areas. There should be as many working groups as there are priority issue areas. The recommended size of a working group is five to ten people. A smaller number is better from the standpoint of efficiency, but some issues may have a broader set of stakeholders and thus should be larger.

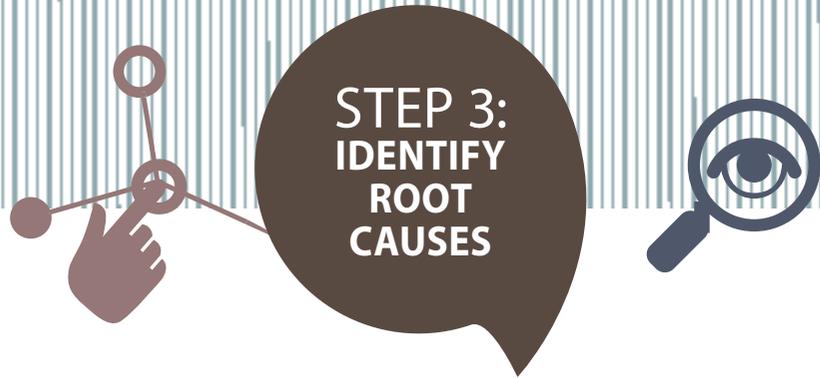
The table below provides examples of possible stakeholders for different areas of municipal activity. It is important to remember that stakeholders include individuals, groups, or organizations involved in designing or providing services; those who can influence the process or result; and those who benefit from (or should benefit from) the municipal activity. Before forming the working groups, it will be useful to map the identified stakeholders according to municipal activities (or priority-issue areas) to ensure that the working groups will include the various relevant perspectives of those with the greatest interest in the particular issue.

When forming the working groups, you should include people who represent the local government, different groups of the population, and if relevant, businesses and entrepreneurs. The member of a particular working group should have expertise and/or interest specific to that priority issue area. For example, the working group member could be a service provider or a consumer of public services. If the latter, the person should have the ability to represent not only his or her own views, but also the views of other consumers.

Table 3: Mapping of stakeholders to major municipal activities

Municipal activity	Stakeholders who participate in (e.g. provide services):	Stakeholders who can influence:	Stakeholders who (should) benefit from:
Primary education	School directors Administrators Teachers	Local council Ministry of education Development partners NGOs	Children of permanent residents Children with special needs Children of newcomers
Health care	Clinic directors Doctors Nurses Pharmacists	Local council Ministry of health Religious leaders Development partners NGOs	Permanent residents Newcomers Women Children Individuals with health challenges
Public safety and security	Police Firemen Ambulance	Religious leaders Civil society organizations Local militia	Youth, women and girls Pedestrians Shop owners
Business and labor market regulation and promotion	Local economic development unit	Chambers of commerce NGOs	Small business owners Large business owners Workers

A working group focused on the priority issue of solid waste management will include individuals representing residents, waste collection companies, local government, business owners, and municipal leaders. A working group focused on the priority issue of education may include principals, teachers, parents, students, municipal leaders, and local elites.



Each working group should analyze the short-listed priority area in preparation for formulating a strategic goal with sub-objectives. This step is important for defining those sub-objectives and ultimately for designing interventions that will address the priority area. As discussed in Box 3, the process of identifying root causes can also have positive benefits for the community.

BOX 3 UNDERSTANDING UNDERLYING CAUSES: THE POWER OF NAMING AND FRAMING

Dialogue and deliberation are most effective when they foster “naming and framing.” That is, they bring communities together to share their perspectives regarding the needs they face, their underlying causes, and the relative importance of competing needs. Communities can find that developing a common understanding of problems (i.e., naming) and vision of the system within which they exist (i.e., framing) can have profound effects on the community.

In one northern municipality, the Lebanese organization, Beyond Research and Development, brought a Lebanese host community and Syrian refugees together to discuss mutual distrust and raising social tensions. Joint discussions revealed that both communities faced significant problems with security, and each blamed the problem on the other. Yet, an underlying cause was the failure of security forces to do their job effectively. Working together, the community found ways to bolster security and mitigate tensions between the two communities.



EXPLORING CAUSE AND EFFECT >
TO IDENTIFY ROOT CAUSES AND
SUPPORTING CAUSES

FISHBONE

PRIMARY EDUCATION



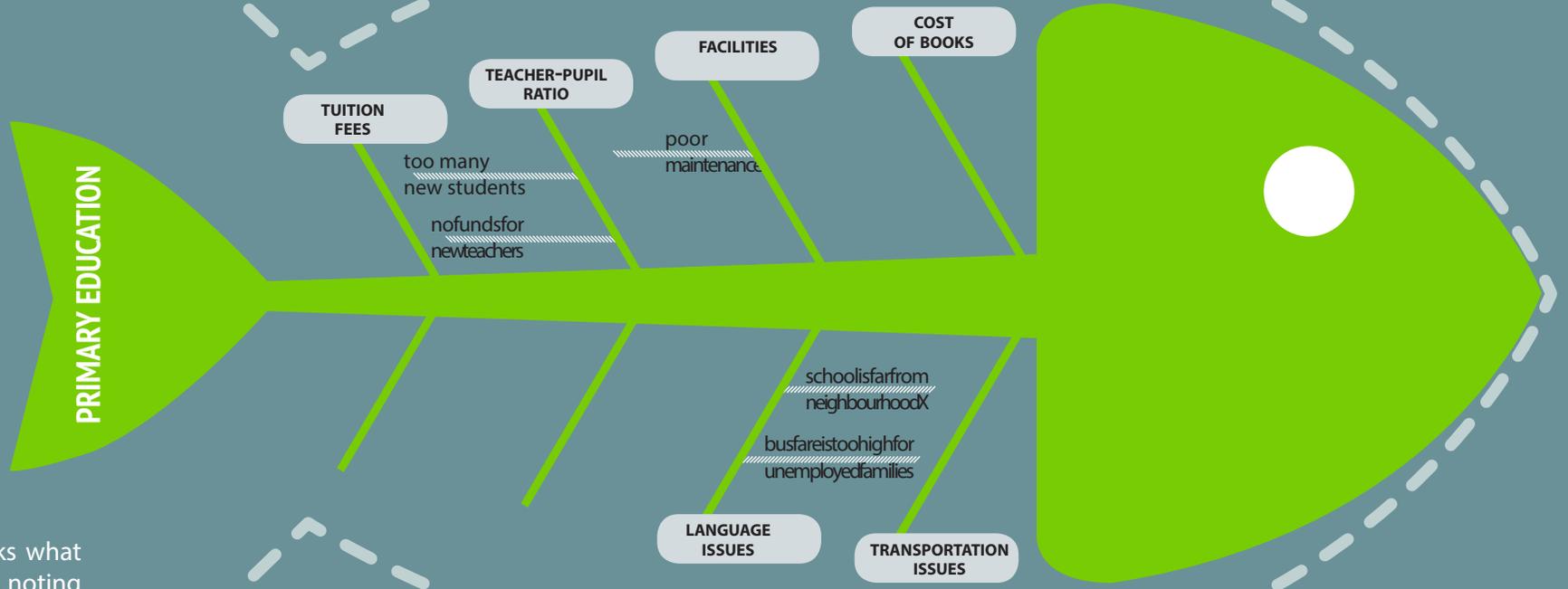
2

Next, the working group creates 'fish bones' by listing the major factors that contribute to this problem, following the example below. These factors may have been raised by well-informed persons surveys or noted by the trained observers.

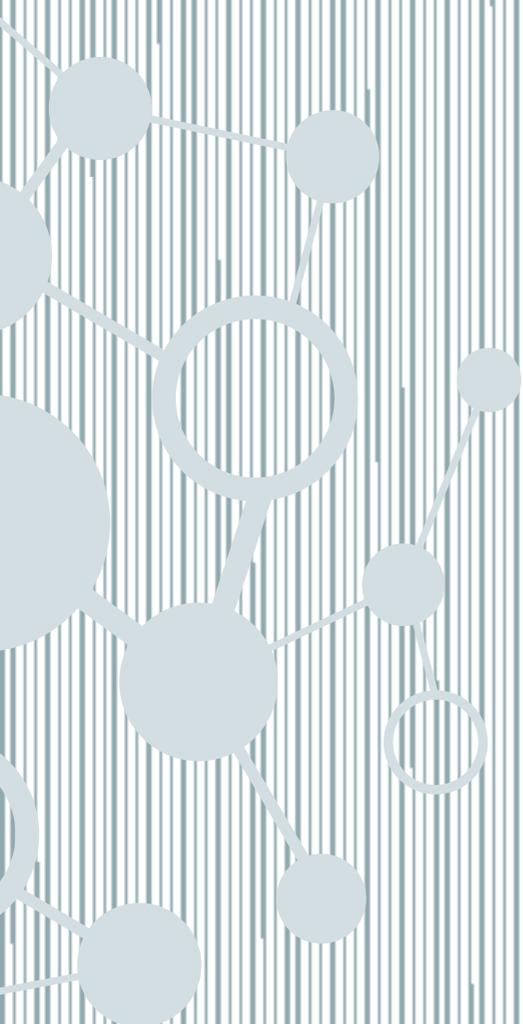
3

At the next stage, the working group asks what are the causes behind the various factors, noting that a particular factor may not be a problem for all individuals involved, but only for a particular sub-group. For example, for some people the tuition fees may not be too high, but they may be too high for others.

The causes should be attached to the factors by adding perpendicular lines to the fishbones.



DIAGRAM



STEP 4: FORMULATE STRATEGIC GOALS AND SUB- OBJECTIVES



Next, each working group will formulate a strategic goal with sub-objectives. The strategic goal should be forward-looking toward a positive achievement that will have a tangible impact on the population (for example, a safer environment, more jobs, more reliable services, harmonious relations among newcomers and permanent residents).

The goal should be written as a positive, future-oriented statement. One goal should be formulated for each priority area in the shortlist. To turn the problem priority area into a positive statement, ask yourself: What is going to be written in the newspapers about your municipality's success in one to three years' time? Imagine the headlines.

When formulating the strategic goals of the municipality, the working group may want to involve members of the community. However, it should be noted that it is optional for the working group to involve the community, as this module relies primarily on the knowledge and input of the Task Force members. If the working group chooses to involve the community, this can be done by inviting community members to participate in small group discussions or involving the community in more informal ways.

1. If choosing to involve the community through inviting community members to participate in small group discussions, draw on the methods and tips in Module 4. To avoid getting a one-sided view of the community's input, do more than one discussion; preferably a minimum of three. The aim of the discussion should be to create a forum where community members can present their opinions and perceptions on the strategic goals in a natural way.
2. There are other, more informal ways to get the community's input to the strategic goals; for example, you could invite children or young people to submit ideas for the strategic goal through art or essay competitions or collections of photos and videos.



The sub-objectives of each strategic goal should correspond to the major factors and causes of the priority issue. The sub-objectives will address not only physical deficiencies or financial obstacles, but also ways in which the municipality needs to be strengthened to cope with shocks. How can the local government work more efficiently or effectively in partnership with civil society or businesses, or other local governments? How can the local government share information more widely?

BUILDING RESILIENCE WHILE ACHIEVING GOALS

The sub-objectives of a strategic goal should try to incorporate ways to increase the municipality's resilience:

- Systems for communicating with and engaging permanent residents and newcomers, businesses and civil society organizations so early action can be taken before problems get out of control;
- Building partnerships to make the most of the talents and resources in the municipality and in neighboring municipalities;
- Creating flexibility in deploying its human and financial resources to ensure the most critical issues are addressed;
- Increasing transparency and accountability so that people living and working in the municipality are aware of how decisions are made and how public resources and benefits are distributed;
- Strengthening the effectiveness of public service delivery so that consumers are satisfied with the reliability, amount and quality of services, and are willing to pay for them;
- Improving equity and inclusion in the municipality so that public programs help families that are struggling to afford basic services and other necessities, and no groups are left out in the decisions made by the local government;
- Creating a broad-based consensus on a long-term vision for the economic and social development of the municipality.

It is typical to confuse a strategic goal with sub-objectives. A strategic goal represents an improved quality of life (e.g. satisfying the needs of individuals and society – physical, spiritual, cultural, intellectual, social, etc.). Sub-objectives define ways towards the full or partial achievement of that goal. (Tip: sub-objectives typically include a verb that describes what the actors will do.)

The municipality is clean of garbage and litter and public spaces are attractive. Possible sub-objectives:

- Households and businesses have reliable municipal waste collection;
- Residents and businesses pay fees in a timely manner;
- Collection fees are set according to cost of service delivery;
- Billing system is efficient and accurate (reflecting newcomers and long-term residents);
- Municipal waste collectors are motivated to work efficiently and have modern and reliable equipment;
- Bins are big enough to accommodate waste between collection times and prevent rodent entry;
- Waste collection is coordinated with neighboring municipalities for cost savings;
- Families too poor to pay fees receive appropriate subsidies;
- Recycling program is established and households and businesses are encouraged to reduce and recycle waste;
- School or public awareness programs discourage littering.

Strategic goal (example):

Now that you have prioritized the different issue areas, created working groups on the prioritized issues, identified the root causes of the problems and formulated positive forward-looking goals for your municipality, you are ready to start planning with your community how you are going to achieve these goals together.



