CRACKING THE CODE:
IDENTIFYING THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF SERVICE DELIVERY PROBLEMS

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Begin with the end users:
Use evidence from service recipients to pinpoint service delivery problems.

In one municipality, informal settlement residents told us that:
- Some areas receive no refuse collection service.
- In other areas, refuse is not collected regularly.
- The municipality only collects refuse placed in bags that they issue, but they often issue no bags or too few bags.

Work backwards:
Ask how different parts of the system should work to ensure adequate service delivery.

In this case, the problem could be solved if the municipality:
- Provides 2 bags per week.
- Collects refuse once a week.
- Collects from dwellings where access roads permit. Collects from designated collection points where they don’t.

Don’t get distracted:
Some sub-systems are more important than others.

- Regular collection is important.
- Designating collection points is also important.
- But neither of these matter if the municipality does not issue residents with the type of bags it is willing to collect.

Public Financial Management is not the first cause:
But it will come up later.

The bag problem can have multiple causes:
- No benchmarks for the number of bags that should be issued.
- Deeper still is the complete absence of any policy for solid waste management in informal settlements.
- Once a policy and benchmarks are in place, the City will still need to pay for bags.
- Take care that the costing is not kicked upstairs (to, for example, the finance department). Sometimes funding is available from trade-offs between existing budget allocations.
- Patiently following the crumbs in this way will help you identify what needs to be bought, what it will cost and in which budget line item it should be included.

Unpack the Solution:
Who needs to do what and when?

In our example:
- Waste removal inspectors and residents should do a needs assessment to determine how many bags are needed.
- Based on the needs assessment, the municipality should set and include targets for bag distribution in their policy and performance documents.
- The municipality should cost these targets and include them in the right part of the budget.