



Local Governance Monthly Bulletin

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Local Government as the Key to Development

Evaluation of the Minimum Conditions for Local Development Programme Pilot Districts

From 12-24 January 2009, the Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management (MSATM) held its annual evaluation of assemblies in the eight districts involved in the decentralization pilot. A team from MSATM traveled to each district to evaluate minimum conditions, the basic standards the Ministry sets for Assemblies to ensure that they are functioning properly and will therefore benefit the community. Each Assembly must pass this evaluation to get access to 2009 funds.

Mr. Jose Vicente, Department Head for Planning and Implementation and also the coordinator for the evaluation team, said, "This evaluation's objective is to observe the pilot districts in the Local Development Programme (LDP), and check if they have followed the minimum conditions stated by Ministry decree or not, and if they are eligible for funds in 2009." Mr. Vicente added that if the evaluation team finds small errors in the work of the Assemblies, the evaluation team can help the Assemblies correct the mistakes.



The evaluation team from MSATM reviews documents on LDP work in the Aileu District on 12 January 2009.

Mr. Eliseu Lopes, the Sub-District Administrator of Maliana, Bobonaro, said, "This evaluation uses criteria from the ministry to observe the work he have done this year. If we have done anything that doesn't follow regulations, we can fix these errors and improve our work next year." Mr. Lopes spoke after completing the evaluation process in the Sub-District of Maliana, and he added that because of LDP,

Bobonaro District has been able to respond to many community problems, including water sources, schools and clinic posts.



Evaluation of the minimum conditions for the Sub-District Assembly of Lalo, Manatuto District, was held on 12 January 2009

The evaluation team was divided into two groups: one group was evaluating the Aileu, Ainaro, Bobonaro and Covalima districts, and the other held evaluations in Manatuto, Baucau, Lautem and Manufahi. The criteria used by the team during the evaluation looked at transparency and accountability indicators in the LDP implementation process. The evaluation was done through interviews with assembly members and project beneficiaries, reviewing planning and implementation documents, and directly observing project implementation sites.

Minimum conditions are defined by ministerial regulations, which districts participating in the pilot program must follow in order to get access to funds. These conditions include procedures such as establishing of the assembly based on the regulations, approving of the investment plan based on the annual budget, following finance procedures, and submitting implementation reports to the assembly. Assemblies also must be transparent about their investment plan for the annual budget by displaying these documents as well as meeting minutes on public information boards, giving all people access to this information.



Government Consults with NGOs about Decentralization

The Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management (MSATM) through the National Directorate of Local Development and Territorial Management (DNDLOT) has consulted with members of the NGO Forum about the draft laws on local government, administrative and territorial division and the municipal elections at the NGO Forum Office on January 14, 2009.

The consultation aims to involve all interested parties, said DNDLOT Director Miguel Pereira de Carvalho. "The Government is holding this consultation to involve everyone, including NGOs and civil society, so they can submit their thoughts and suggestions about these draft laws before they are presented to the Council of Ministers and the National Parliament," said the Director during his remarks.

advantages and disadvantages of these laws," said Director Granadeiro during her opening remarks of the consultation. "When local government is implemented, in the future they will have the power to make plans for development based on the needs of the people," Mrs. Granadeiro added before the end of the meeting.

Participants discuss the draft laws during the consultation at NGO Forum



"I believe this method of consultation from the government is effective," said Mr. Jose Amaral, Advocacy Coordinator at NGO Forum, "With this [meeting] everyone can submit their ideas, which will be included in the laws that the government is preparing."

During the meeting, some NGOs brought up some worries about the decentralization process, asking how the sucos (villages) would relate to municipalities, whether municipalities would be able to independently manage revenue from local natural resources, the organization of women's candidate lists, how municipalities and central government will relate to tax collection and the general relationship between local and central government.

If these three draft laws are approved by National Parliament, this will be the legal basis for the process of establishing local government, and the central government transfer of responsibility to local government, which will begin working for their communities.



Mr. Miguel Pereira de Carvalho, Director of DNDLOT, discusses the law proposals during at NGO Forum

During the consultation, Executive Director of the NGO Forum Dinorah Granadeiro discussed why she thought the consultation was important. "Consulting with NGO members is very important because they can submit their thoughts and suggestions about the

In Brief

- 2-11 February: Announcement of the 2009 Local Development Funds
- 3-12 February: District Assemblies in 8 Districts hold their First Meeting for the 2009 Fiscal Year

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In Summary:

2009 is the Year to Begin Decentralization in Timor-Leste

Many people have already heard of decentralization. National Parliament, the central government, and civil society are all interested in how decentralization will move some government services from the central level to a local level. The Government developed a plan based on experience from the Local Development Programme (LDP), which started in 2005 and has continued until today. In 2009, the Government plans to begin reforms that will establish a new system of governance in Timor-Leste.

The Government's plan in 2009 is to begin the establishment of four Municipalities in the current districts of Oecusse, Dili, Bobonaro and Baucau. Based on the existing proposal from the Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management (MSATM), municipalities will be established based on the current district boundaries. The government has already prepared three law proposals on local government, administrative and territorial division and municipal elections.

If the National Parliament approves these three laws, MSATM can begin the process of establishing municipalities. Preparations for this establishment

include organizing elections for municipal representatives, building sufficient infrastructure for local administration, and preparing human resources with enough capacity. These preparations will ensure that, when established, local governments can effectively serve their communities.

The Government has gained much experience about how to delegate work to the local level through the LDP process. In LDP, local assemblies manage their own funds allocated to the local level, including planning, decision-making, implementation, finance, procurement and monitoring of projects. This experience has already informed the government's discussion about how to establish local government, and also shown officials possible problems they may encounter.

The process of transferring power to local government may begin in 2009, but will last many years, with the hope that local level work can strengthen community participation in democracy and local development. Therefore, in 2009, the Government asks all people to begin participating actively and work with their local representatives to strengthen this nation.