



Local Governance Monthly Bulletin

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Local Government as the Key to Development

Ministry Finalizes Draft Law Proposal for Local Government

After five meetings, the Council of Directors in the Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management (MSATM) has finalized a White Paper for the law proposal on Local Government. The Council of Directors, chaired by Minister of State Administration and Territorial Management Arcângelo Leite, debated and discussed the many options for the formation of local government, including: structure, function, relationship to central government, relationship

to sucos, financial arrangements and elections.

"The draft law on local government is ready today," said National Director for Local Development and Territorial Management Miguel de Carvalho on August 29. "On Monday, the Council of Directors will do the final revisions on this draft law, and then together with the two laws that have been prepared already on Territorial and Administrative Divisions and Municipal Elections, be submitted next week to the Council of Ministers," said the Director.

The result of these discussions is the agreement on the basic principles and definitions of the formation of local government. A draft of the law, based on these principles, is expected to be sent to the Council of Ministers in September. The Council of Ministers will then debate this draft proposal and return it for revision or endorse it to be submitted to the National Parliament for the plenary session.

This law proposal on local government is the culmination of five years of work by MSATM. The law proposal takes into consideration the experience of the local governance pilot, the Local Development Programme, recommendations from the ten Ministerial Technical Working Groups, and the discussions held with local and national officials during the National Workshop: The Road to Decentralization, which took place on 31 July.

The law proposal drafting process was supported by the Local Government Support Programme (LGSP) through a mission of five technical experts on local government who assisted MSATM in drafting the white paper.



Officials at the Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management discuss the White Paper on Local Development on 5 August 2008

Name and Quotation

Mr. Roger Shotton on
Drafting a Law on Local Government in Timor-Leste

"Even a relatively small country such as Timor-Leste still needs to be able to create institutions closer to the people than central government or the national parliament, to allow local people in the districts and sub-districts to express democratic preferences, debate issues and be involved in public affairs. As a democracy, Timor-Leste needs local assemblies or councils, and these bodies can also make decisions on public expenditure and budget allocations, which a national parliament finds hard to do for local activities. For reasons of promoting democracy and improving the way public funds are managed and spent, these local governments will be critical in developing a stable, harmonious and prosperous Timor-Leste.

"Having come in quite early in the process, in 2002, it is quite gratifying to see a fairly steady march towards the emerging policy and legal framework that we have now. A number of countries make the mistake of jumping into trying to draft local government legislation, without having consulted with different stakeholders or thought through policy options as to the different ways to establish local government. What has been remarkable about the process in Timor-Leste is a very deliberate attempt by the Government, both the past Government and the current Government, to methodically solicit a range of opinions about the way local government should be established. They resisted the temptation to rush into one particular way of doing it. I think the more lengthy approach will bear fruit; it will yield a policy framework that is more acceptable and easier to implement, and ultimately more successful."



Mr. Roger Shotton is the UNCDF Senior Regional Technical Advisor



Local Governance Support Programme Undergoes Evaluation

As decentralization reforms are being discussed by the central government, the program supporting the Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management is being evaluated in order to plan new activities after the decentralization reforms take place. Dr. Richard Slater came on a two week mission, 17- 29 August, to evaluate the work of the Local Governance Support Programme (LGSP) and its various components.

2006 and now, in 2008, has expanded to a total of 8 districts by beginning in the districts of Ainaro, Baucau, Covalima and Manufahi. To evaluate the work LDP has done so far, Dr. Slater has visited the districts of Bobonaro and Manufahi and held interviews with district and sub-district administration officials, local authorities, representatives from sector departments and local contractors in order to assess the impact of the LDP work. During his interviews, Dr. Slater covered the various aspects of the local governance pilot, including how the funds are spent at the local level, the efficacy of local procurement processes and the resulting quality and impact of the projects funded by local assemblies.

"The finance system is going well already," said the District Financial Officer of Bobonaro Mr. Julio Carvalho Caero during an interview held on 21 August, "We are just asking to receive more training in order to increase our comprehension about our work and to increase discipline in the administration."

The results from this evaluation will be considered by the Ministry for State Administration and Territorial Management as LGSP begins to consider how best to support local government reforms after a law on Local Government and Territorial Division has been approved by the National Parliament.



Sub-District Administrators in the Bobonaro District discuss the LDP and recommend improvements

The evaluation included the work of the Local Development Programme (LDP), which is a pilot program that is part of LGSP and has been testing models of local governance. LDP began in the districts of Bobonaro and Lautem in 2005, expanded to Aileu and Manatuto in

In Brief

- September: Planning and Investment Committees (PICs) begin verifying proposals submitted from each Sub-District Development Committee (SDDC)
- September and October: Local Assemblies approve draft investment plan and budget for 2009

Mayor of Torres Novas Visits Timor-Leste from Portugal

In the latter part of a reciprocal visit, the Mayor of Torres Novas, Dr. António Rodrigues, visited Timor-Leste from 31 July to 13 August in order to consult with the Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management (MSATM) on the impending local government reforms.

The Mayor of Torres Novas was accompanied by the Director for Local Government and Territorial Management, Mr. Miguel de Carvalho, the Director of the Technical Secretariat for Elections Administration, Mr. Tomás Cabral, the Director of Local Administration, Mr. Abilio Caetano, and the Director for Support to Sucos, Mr. Celestino Marques. Meetings were held in seven districts: Manatuto, Lautem, Baucau, Manufahi, Covalima, Bobonaro and Ermera. At each district capital, he addressed members of the current local administration and local authorities to share his experience in local government in Portugal and give advice about how Timor-Leste should establish a local governance system in the future.

"Local authorities were enthusiastic and received his visit well. Most people feel that with decentralization we can increase our

development," said the DNAL Director from his office after the visit. "The Mayor also recommended we form a Preparation Committee from the Central Government to help districts which are becoming Municipalities with logistics such as proper infrastructure and elections," said Mr. Caetano.

Dr. Rodrigues had emphasized during his visit that he believed local government should follow the reality of the Timorese people. Local power, he said, meant that local people could make decisions themselves, and create solutions to local problems without going to the national level. He urged the people during the election to vote for competent people who would work with diligence for their local communities. The result of his visit will be a report that he will submit to the Office of the Prime Minister.



Dr. António Rodrigues of Portugal in Manatuto District on 1 August 2008

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