

# TRENDS OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN TIMOR-LESTE: SUCO GOVERNANCE PERFORMANCE SCALE



# **Trends of Local Governance in Timor-Leste:**

*Suco Governance Performance Scale (SGPS)*

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**USAID**  
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**The Asia Foundation**

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>DNAAS</b>	National Directorate for Suco Administration
<b>DNDLOT</b>	National Directorate for Local Development and Territorial Management
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Dialogue
<b>GEC</b>	Support for Governance, Elections and Civil Society
<b>MSATM</b>	Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management
<b>SGPS</b>	Suco Governance Performance Scale
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

## Report Credits

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## Executive Summary

In 2009, The Asia Foundation (the Foundation) commenced implementation of the *Support for Local Governance, Elections, and Civil Society in Timor Leste* (GEC) project funded by USAID. The program aims to: (1) support credible, peaceful, and fair suco council, municipal, and national elections and (2) enhance the capacity of newly elected suco councils to strengthen citizen participation in village governance. To achieve these aims, the GEC project addresses capacity building efforts of 148 suco councils, or village-level government units of Timor-Leste, in the four districts of Oecusse, Bobonaro, Ainaro, and Baucau over a period of three years. The project implemented a uniquely tailored Suco Governance Performance Scale (SGPS) in all participating sucos, as well as across sucos in the control districts of Ermera and Manatuto. The SGPS provides clear performance measures and enables partner councils to track performance improvements year-to-year. The SGPS uses Focus-Group Dialogues (FGDs) to collect data from suco councils to document and assess how well they are currently fulfilling their both new and traditional mandates. The SGPS is a valuable tool for government and non-governmental organizations to assess suco council performance on a regular and ongoing basis. The following report provides an analysis of the project's SGPS data collected during the three-year project while highlighting strengths, weaknesses and suco governance trends. This is complemented by a discussion of the interventions and other factors that may have impacted changes in performance from the baseline and midline assessment conducted one and two years' prior.

### Key Findings:

#### Improved governance performance

- The experience of the SGPS assessment demonstrates that basic orientation of suco council roles, feedback and monitoring yields substantial impact in improving many performance areas and have been key to local governance functioning effectiveness. The participant suco councils have been endowed with improved comprehension of their responsibilities and through such development have demonstrated increased motivation and scope for better governance activities.
- Project sites improved their governance performance by 82 percent as measured by the SGPS from baseline to final with data indicating a trajectory of continued development through future program interventions.
- Certain themes such as administrative activities and consulting with outside organizations showed the strongest benefits from the program. Oecusse suco councils recorded a 228% increase in administrative indicators over the duration of the program despite a low literacy rate amongst suco council members.
- Certain themes such as administrative activities and consulting with outside organizations showed the strongest benefits from the program. Oecusse suco councils recorded a 228 percent increase in administrative indicators over the duration of the program despite a low literacy rate amongst suco council members.
- Seventeen out of the twenty indicators showed improvement of 50 percent or more. Generation of Vital Statistics scored a near perfect 3.94 out 4 in project suco councils, an increase of 87.6 percent. Strong reception to administrative needs implies that traditional systems of governance that are historically oral can adapt and make proficient use of new formal governance activities.

- Review of performance is a very powerful tool for effective suco council development and encouraging resilience at the local governance level where resources and service provision are limited. Reflexivity inherent in review design assists with identifying gaps and challenges as well as strengths. It also encourages local level accountability and transparency to suco village members.
- Orientation of suco councils regarding state expectation of local governance delivery is extremely effective contributing to enhanced suco council performance. Control sites improved their scores 58% in one year after receiving orientation and project sites 56%. This suggests that suco councils do not fully grasp governance roles, presumptions by state law of community management or government expected delivery of local services. The State needs better coordination and bridging of governance gap between centralized institutions and localized village governance units.

#### **Needed improvements in interventions on suco-government relations**

- Some specific functions as well as function themes were more resistant to change, and increased performance in those areas may require more targeted interventions. These include responsibilities related to interacting or collaborating with higher government levels and formal structures, such as the justice system. In some areas, such as those related to peace and social harmony, performance was weaker or more difficult to clearly measure due to a lack of participation amongst some suco councils in certain optional activities or due to a lack of cases to address. This issue is associated to preferences of tackling such challenges through informal systems outside the scope of SGPS indicators.
- Low performance was measured in certain areas pertaining to both traditional and legislated functions. This finding highlights the challenges of integrating existing practices with recently formalized expectations, and informs the design of future interventions to build local government capacity.

#### **Use of SGPS tool**

- Baucau and Oecusse responded best to the SGPS program. These robust districts had the highest performance scale scores and improved their overall scores by 106.4 percent and 96.7 percent. They were also the first districts to move towards the formation of inter-suco associations indicating that these suco councils have strong skill sets of inter-institutional coordination and organization, and are developing into formidable bodies of governance with vision.
- Possibilities exist for future application of the SGPS in its use by line agencies for the intention of integration with review for service provision. Current evidence reveals that sucos are performing state functions but do not possess enough resources for completion of the outputs identified and formulated. Suco councils are currently distanced structurally from the state apparatus and lack state accountability to provide or receive feedback
- The experience of the SGPS assessment demonstrates that basic orientation of suco council roles, feedback and monitoring yields substantial impact on improving many performance areas and has been key to local governance functioning effectiveness. The participant suco councils have been improved comprehension of their responsibilities and central government expectations. Through such development, they have also demonstrated increased motivation and scope for better governance activities.

### **Better incorporation of sucos into the state system**

- Suco councils and their space of political operation are uniquely positioned relative to Timor-Leste's history. They function as the most important and relevant governance unit to local people, having developed from a traditional and more or less autonomous sphere of spiritual and cultural organization. The State's willingness to further incorporate local level institutions through a process of greater bureaucratisation positions the suco as an institution straddling two different political contexts. Large gaps exist between levels of democratic representation at suco levels with minimal resource support and centralized state power creating a tension difficult to resolve. This leaves sucos with less clout to negotiate inside the State dominated political structure.
- Sucos are charged with responsibility for ensuring delivery of certain services but lack adequate support and sufficient resources. However, a demonstrated competency and willingness to develop best practices despite deficiencies of bureaucratic integration and resource provision can be buttressed through greater support of decentralized management and a greater stake for political accountability. If local level representation is to be properly accountable this will be particularly relevant.
- Orientation of suco councils regarding state expectation of local governance delivery is extremely effective contributing to enhanced suco council performance. Control sites improved their scores by 58 percent in one year after receiving orientation while project sites improved by 56 percent. This suggests that suco councils do not fully grasp governance roles, presumptions by state law of community management or government-expected delivery of local services. The State needs better coordination and bridging of the governance gap between centralized institutions and localized village governance units.
- Large gaps exist in suco capacity to conduct governance through formal methods in some areas indicating a strong need for empowered access to processes of accountable reciprocation and exchange. In particular, these include the: Management of Suco Lands, Conflict Resolution at the Aldeia and Suco Level, Referring Cases to the Justice System, Environmental Management and Imposing Fines. This corresponds with a necessity for the state to explore processes for alleviating poor governance performance through conducting needs assessments or in some cases embracing successful customary approaches to governance issues and seeking paths of inclusion within the formalized system.
- Without effective state engagement (particularly across new facets and pathways of governance) and respect of continuing effective and locally legitimized customary management roles, the state risks marginalizing local level governance responses to certain issues. This may provoke movement towards operations solely within the informal traditional field with the possibility for impeded development of robust local governance systems. Such examples include managing suco land and Referring Cases to the Justice Sector.

# Background

## Purpose of the SGPS

The SGPS was designed with the objective of providing a clear performance measure to enable partner councils to track improved performance year-to-year. The purpose of the SGPS is to 1) establish a baseline of suco council performance against the impact of the GEC Project interventions that will be measured; 2) provide suco councils with a basis for identifying their strengths and weaknesses and thus improve on their performance; and 3) develop and test a methodology that can easily measure suco governance performance for possible use by the Timor-Leste government or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The GEC Project interventions were designed to achieve two objectives: 1) to support credible, peaceful and fair suco, municipal and national elections; and 2) to enhance the capacity of newly-elected suco councils to strengthen citizen participation in village and municipal governance. The main GEC interventions included electoral legal framework and implementation; voter education and elections monitoring; and capacity building initiatives at the suco level.

The SGPS represents a unique monitoring tool capable of systematically informing the design of effective capacity building interventions for improving governance at the local level in Timor-Leste. The SGPS results reveal strengths and weaknesses of suco functions and responsibilities, providing an easy and transparent method of identifying capacity building needs and opportunities for coordination. In this way the SGPS provides vehicle through which to negotiate the mandates imposed through formal system and the local governance practices regulated through customary laws.

## Definition of Local Governance

This report will utilize an amalgamation of sources to define as local governance and to assemble a working definition. Sometimes regarded as simply the act of governing, this report would like to highlight governance as a localized functioning of institutions (not necessarily the State) through a physical exercise of management power and policy and their acceptance by the public regarding processes of decision-making and implementation<sup>1</sup>.

## Local Governance in Timor-Leste

Whereas at the start of their rule in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese established administrative relationships with local Timorese kings, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they altered the structure to interact directly with the local population at lower levels. The colonialists divided the administrative districts into sub-districts (posto), villages (suco), and hamlets (aldeias), and appointed suco chiefs and aldeia chiefs to act as conduits to the local population. The suco chiefs reported to the Portuguese at the sub-district level to receive instructions regarding activities in their communities, such as tax collection. In most cases, despite this structural shift, original local power relationships were maintained in the transfer of responsibilities, with the chiefs descending from traditionally politically-endowed families<sup>2</sup>. The boundaries of sucos and districts have expanded and changed over time in many cases, in response to Portuguese and Indonesian forces as well as traditional authorities<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp> and World Bank, *Articulations of Local Governance in Timor-Leste Lessons for Local Development under Decentralization – Justice for the Poor*, David Butterworth and Pamela Dale, Policy Notes Oct 2010,

<sup>2</sup> Tanja Hohe. *The Clash of Paradigms: International Administration and Local Political Legitimacy in East Timor*. Contemporary Southeast Asia: Vol. 24, No. 3, December 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Yoder. *Custom and conflict: The uses and limitations of traditional systems in addressing rural land disputes in East Timor*. Prepared for a GTZ workshop on “Land Policy and Administration for Pro-Poor Rural Growth,” Dili, December 2003.

Today sucos are one of the smallest political units in Timor and is a rather important local government entity to the majority of Timorese citizens regarding relevance to daily livelihood impact. Each suco council can range in population size from 54 (Caicua, District Baucau) to 65 404 (Comoro, District Dili)<sup>4</sup>. The average suco population numbers 2000–3000 people, although urban sucos tend to be more highly populated compared to rural sucos. Traditionally sucos have been formed along traditional customary units such as clans or families (although they are widely interconnected across many other sucos) and may contain a localized ethnic identity differing to nearby sucos.

Generally a suco covers a wide area of differing geographical resources such as forest and communal grazing areas although urban sucos often occupy less area with a greater population density and are less reliant on proximate natural resources. Current suco boundaries are indefinite frontiers despite Indonesian attempts at official mapping and rezoning of localized customary political units. Many are disputed by certain members, overlapping of key areas between differing sucos is common and informally traditional structures often work to support, preserve and mediate land and resource governance across current areas under conflict. Sub-village boundaries are even more fluid and informal than Suco ones.

Most sucos operate on minimal support from centralized Dili government. The suco is not endowed with financial resources; however the elected chefe does receive a small monthly allowance of US\$65 (as well as US\$15 for administration and US\$20 for transportation). Generally each suco also has an office to assist in conducting meetings. Although the suco usually has the mandate to collect fines that can then be directed towards suco needs, the reality of such activity is rare as most Timorese lack the adequate financial resources.<sup>5</sup> Thirty-seven percent of Timorese live below the international poverty line of US\$1.25 per day<sup>6</sup> and two-thirds experience food insecurity<sup>7</sup>.

During Indonesian occupation communities were often moved or displaced from their original land, often weakening traditional governance systems. This also provided opportunities for deeper bureaucratic penetration into local governance. Today, many of the existing traditional local institutions are largely resilient, trusted, and reported by citizens to be the most relevant form of representation and governance in people's lives<sup>8</sup>. Such is the case even; even though they operate somewhat independently given the lack of resource allocation or avenues of accountability to the state. It has been noted elsewhere that Timorese enjoy exercising their democratic abilities at the local level<sup>9</sup>. However, given the recentness of local governance formalization, it is important to query the durability of informal traditional structures. Furthermore, if they are being incorporated into the present quasi-administrative composition, it begs investigation whether activities of local representation and

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<sup>4</sup> Population and Housing Census Timor Leste 2010, volume 4 Suco Report, <http://www.mof.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Publication-4-English-Web.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> An example of such a fine being given is in Hohe and Ospina (2001) Traditional Power Structures and the Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project p.116

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste_statistics.html). A higher value of 50% of the population live below the national poverty line (2007, World Bank) <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC/countries/TL?display=default>.

<sup>7</sup> Coordination Team of the UN System High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF), TIMOR-LESTE Full Country Visit Report – 7 to 14 November 2009, [http://un-foodsecurity.org/sites/default/files/2010\\_TIMOR\\_LESTE\\_Full\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://un-foodsecurity.org/sites/default/files/2010_TIMOR_LESTE_Full_Report_Final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Law and Justice in Timor-Leste (2009) The Asia Foundation

<sup>9</sup> Brown, M. Anne and Gusmao, Alex Freitas (2009) 'Peacebuilding and Political Hybridity in East Timor', *Peace Review*, 21:1, 61 — 69

electoral processes serve as a democratic façade providing validation for long-standing traditional local structures<sup>10</sup>

Currently, Timor-Leste is in the early stages of shifting from a system of highly centralized governance that disproportionately directs public expenditures to the needs of the capital and the non-poor population. The 2003 Constitution increased efforts to address inefficiencies in planning, budgeting and implementation of infrastructure and service delivery by giving greater responsibility to local levels, such as the suco councils. Recognizing the importance of building an authentic, sustainable democracy at the local level, the government of Timor-Leste promulgated a Law on Suco Council Elections in February 2004. This was closely followed by the 2004 Decree Law on Community Authorities, which delineated broad categories for suco council activity. The Law was written to help ensure that development and basic services are achieved within the community. The first elections for the 442 councils were held over several months in 2004 to 2005. In October 2009, the second suco council elections were held for the four-year term beginning in January 2010.

The suco councils have other democratic elements already in place: a diverse representation system that includes youth and women, aldeia chiefs (there are between three and twelve aldeias within a suco), a *lian nain* (or “elder,”)<sup>11</sup> and the suco chief; the authority to settle community disputes; and the use of participatory mechanisms to discover and articulate the concerns of local citizens. These councils, however, lack the legal authority to generate revenue from taxes or other sources, pass local ordinances, procure goods and services or make contracts, or establish formal cooperative mechanisms with other suco councils. Though often dedicated, elected suco officials have little education, particularly related to democratic and administrative practices. In addition, the councils are deficient in funding, office equipment, and human resources.

The suco chefe, elected by list with other members of the suco council from each suco jurisdiction, is perhaps the closest form of democratic representation in the country. In contrast, the Timor-Leste Parliament is elected using the D’Hondt system of seat allocation. This system apportions seats to parties depending on the number of votes they have won resulting in a national instead of local constituency for elected representatives. The executive branch of government then appoints District Administrators who through Sub-District Administrators communicate with the chefe de sucos, thereby creating a multi-tier hierarchy with large accountability gaps between community and state authorities.

The result is that the local governance environment in Timor-Leste is in a state of uncertain transition. Sucos currently lack the necessary support, services or resources from centralized bureaucratic institutions to fully perform according to their mandate. With few incentives to engage in bargaining between state and society, community authorities are cautiously observing how the rules and power structures of the new state are developing. In order to link citizens and their communities more closely to the bureaucracy of the state, a range of interventions are required, chief amongst them is a greater emphasis on monitoring of suco performance by state authorities.

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<sup>10</sup> McWilliam, Andrew. 2009. —Customary Governance in Timor-Leste. In *Democratic Governance in Timor-Leste: Reconciling the Local and the National*, ed. David Mearns. Darwin: CDU Press.  
Hicks, David. 2007. —Community and the Nation State in East Timor: A View from the Periphery. *Anthropology Today* 23 (1): 13–16

<sup>11</sup> Lia Nain are generally elder individuals regarded by the community as possessing authoritative local knowledge to be able to assist on difficult decisions, particularly ones that are cultural in nature, to ensure just outcomes are reached. They are not voted into their position in the suco council, but selected by the chefe.

## Methodology Overview

The GEC program began implementing the SGPS program in the Bobonaro, Baucau, Oecusse, and Ainaro districts with two control districts (Ermera and Manatuto) in 2009. During the mid-year months of 2009, 2010 and 2011 the project completed three rounds of annual SGPS data collection, analysis, and dissemination in two phases: Baseline to Midline, and Midline to Final. Over half of the suco councils in Timor-Leste engaged in the FGDs. The SGPS was conducted in both treatment and control districts, with follow-up activities and interventions implemented in the 148 treatment sucos following the initial 2009 baseline assessment.<sup>12</sup> A full methodology description is discussed in depth later in the report.

### ***Box 1 - Project Summary:***

The SGPS is part of a GEC program that focuses on performance measurement, local governance orientation and training. The SGPS took place to obtain a baseline score of suco performance. The SGPS utilizes a scoring system of 0 – 4 across 20 pertinent indicators identified by the project as integral to good governance. This was used to clarify what programs and training was most needed in participating sucos.

Before this training was delivered, suco elections took place and therefore a program of orientation was implemented, introducing and outlining the roles and expectations of the suco councils by law. The effectiveness of this was then evaluated through the SGPS midline score and the trainings and other programs implemented by GEC were evaluated using the final SGPS.

However, the SGPS also became a learning tool whereby the results and participating in the SGPS became a point of reflexivity for the sucos, resulting in improvement through self-identification of challenges and gaps in suco council performance.

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<sup>12</sup> A total of 226 suco councils were surveyed in 2009: 147 project sucos and 79 control sucos. One suco in Baucau district did not participate in the 2009 baseline. In 2010, all 148 project sucos responded, and 81 control sucos participated. In 2011 all 148 project sucos responded and 80 control sites participated.

## Findings

The data collected during the three sets of FGDs demonstrate compelling improvement in suco council performance across all districts involved in the SGPS, including control sites. Progress was markedly higher in project sites where sucos had experienced a greater range of GEC programs and training.

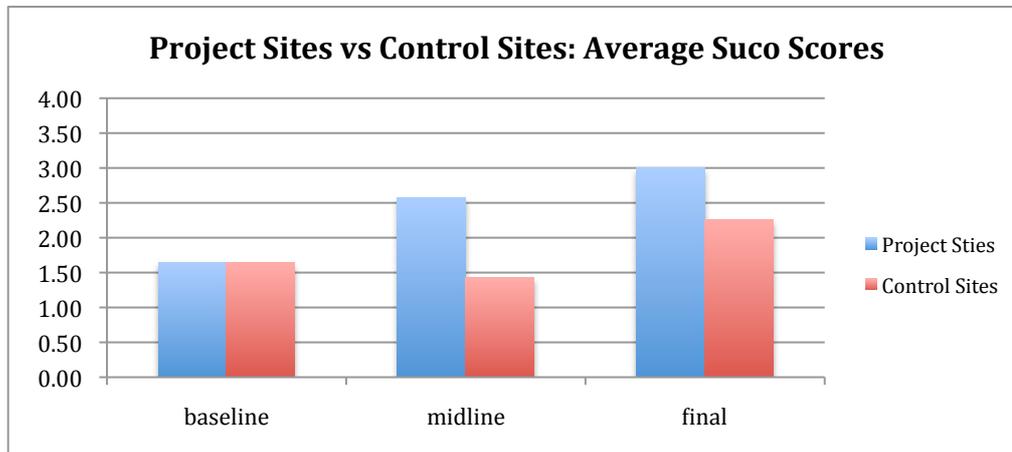


Figure 1 – Project and Control Site Average Suco Scores For Each FGD

The project sites in the final survey displayed superior performance with average scores of 3.00 compared to 2.26 out of 4. Both control and project sites began with roughly similar suco performance score averages of 1.64 and 1.65 respectively. This indicates that the SGPS and GEC programs have affected change resulting in higher performance outcomes across all indicators through an overall increase of 81.9% over the life of the project while the control sites experienced a solid, but still valuable 38.4%.

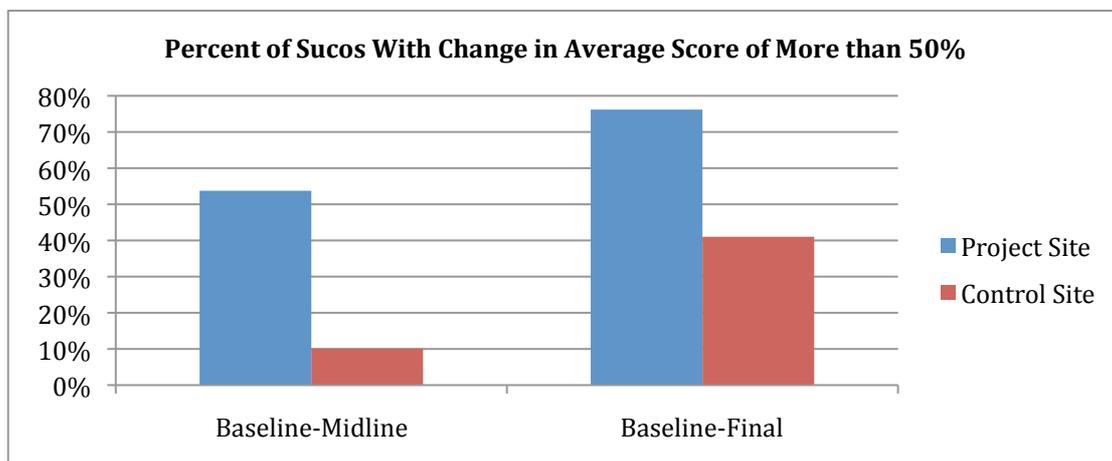


Figure 2 – Percent of Sucos with Change in Average Score of More than 50%

By the time of the final, FGD 76.2% of project sites had increased their scores by 50% or more, increasing from the midline percentage of 53.7%. At the midline FGD, 10.1% of control sites had experienced an improvement of 50% or more. After receiving orientation<sup>13</sup> and a review of baseline data at the midline, this was improved to 41.0% of all control sucos.

<sup>13</sup> See detailed methodology of Orientation under the Methodology section

## Box 2: A Statistical Snapshot of Program Performance

Project Sites experienced a final SGPS of 3.00 with an avg. increase of 1.35 (81.9%)  
Control Sites experienced a final SGPS of 2.26 with an avg. increase of 0.63 (38.4%)

Indicator with the highest avg. score was *Generation of Vital Statistics* with 3.94 [P], (3.71 all sites),  
Indicator with the lowest avg. score was *Referring Cases to the Justice System* with 1.41 [P], (1.05 all sites)

Indicator experiencing the greatest change: *Youth & Woman Representation* with +2.11 [P] (+1.82 all sites),  
Indicator experiencing the least change was *Referring Cases to the Justice System* with +0.01 [P] (-.027 all sites)

Highest Scoring District - Oecusse with 3.31; Baucau experienced the greatest change in score 1.63 (106.4%)  
Lowest Scoring District - Ermera with 2.18; Manatuto experienced the least change in score 0.36 (17%)

The theme that experienced the greatest change was *Administration* with +1.61 (103%) [P], (+1.42 all sites)  
The theme that experienced the least change was *Peace and Harmony* with +0.70 (37.2%) [P], (+0.51 all sites)

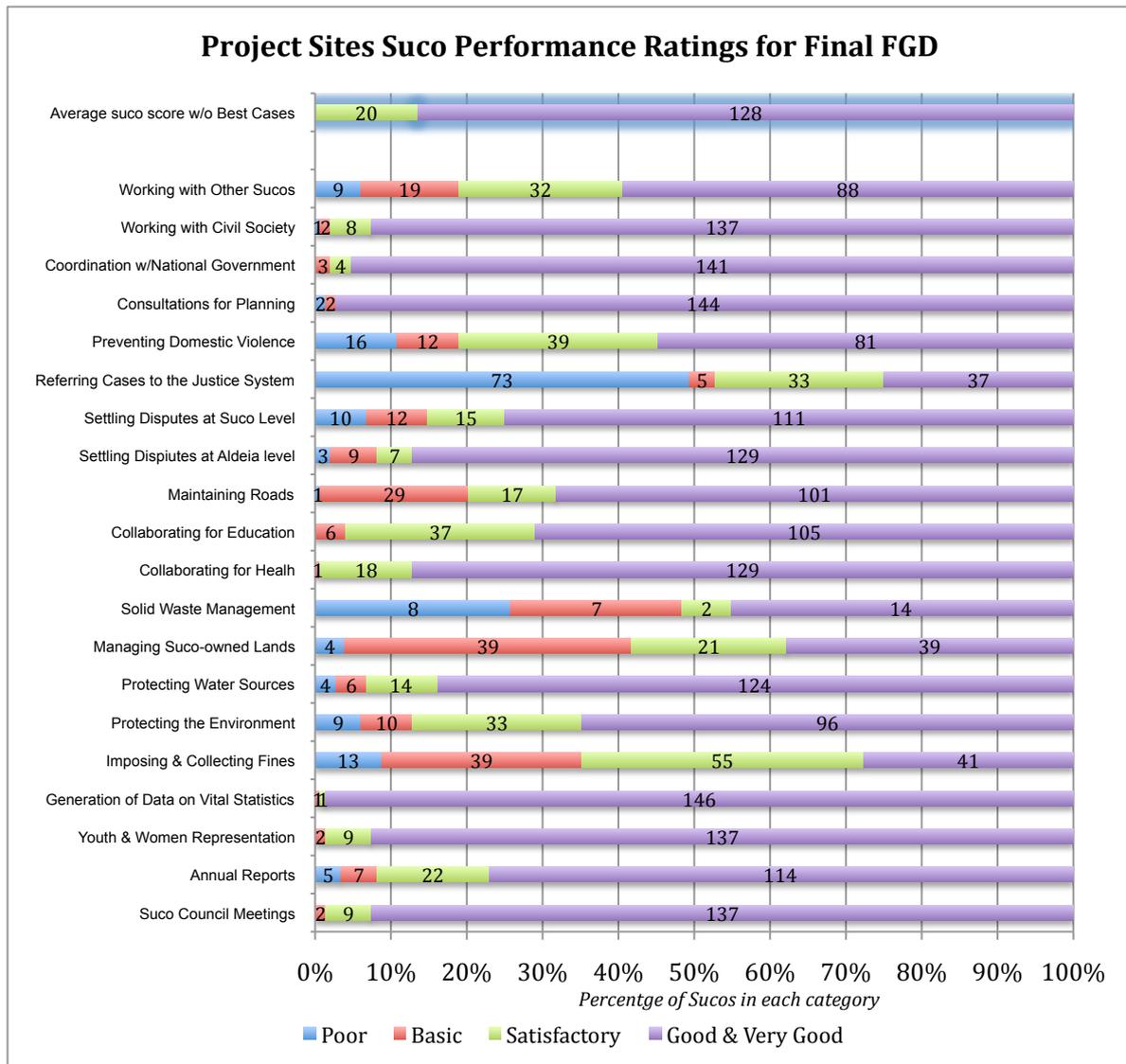
### Variance of Performance Over Time

Although a 38.4% in performance amongst control sucos illustrates positive governance development, it is important to track performance over the complete timeline of the program. During the midline surveys the control sucos experienced an overall decrease of 0.2 points (-13.9%) while the project sites experienced a 56.3% increase. Before the midline survey the orientation of suco council responsibilities was delivered to project sites that articulated the full range of requirements and expectations required by law to new council members. This had a large impact on the project sites as many of the re-elected suco chiefs noted that this was extremely beneficial having not experienced exposure to such an activity previously nor that such a range of responsibilities was the domain of suco council management.

This same orientation was delivered to the control sites in between the midline and final FGDs. This can be seen to have made a significant impact to suco performance, increasing it by 58.4%. During this same period the project sites experienced an increase of 16.4%. It is necessary to note that the project sites at the midline possessed a significantly higher score of 2.58 (compared to 1.43) out of a total possible of 4. A ceiling limit of a total of four points makes it easier to register greater percentage difference at lower score levels. It becomes much more difficult as the score average approaches the maximum despite a similar level of experienced increase in performance score.

### Overall Suco Performance by Indicator

These positive increases in average suco performance demonstrated in the graph above are not uniform across all indicators with different indicators scoring much higher compared to others. The graph below gives a representation of the number of project sucos ranked by a rating of poor, basic, satisfactory and good/very good according to the 20 indicators.



**Figure 3 – Chart Showing the Percentage of Sucos Ranked By Performance In Each Indicator**

Utilizing the performance scale whereby a score of 0 = poor, 1 = Basic, 2 = Satisfactory and 3-4 = Good and Very Good (highest possible score 4), the graph gives a visual representation of the strengths and challenges experienced by project sucos during the final survey. A strong performance by project sucos was registered with the majority of areas scoring satisfactory or good/very good scores. In particular, *Generation of Vital Statistics* and *Consultations for Planning* scores were Good or Very Good in 98.6% and 97.3% of all project sucos. The average performance scores for these indicators were very good with 3.94 and 3.57, respectively compared to scores of 2.1 and 1.92, respectively recorded during the baseline survey.

The indicators that showed further challenges to be overcome included *Referring Cases to the Justice System* (49% of sucos scoring POOR), *Solid Waste Management* (25.8% POOR) and *Managing Suco Owned Lands* (48.4% POOR or BASIC). However, the overall Project suco performance averages were very high with 86% ranking GOOD/VERY GOOD (3-4) compared to 33.8% in control sites as displayed below.

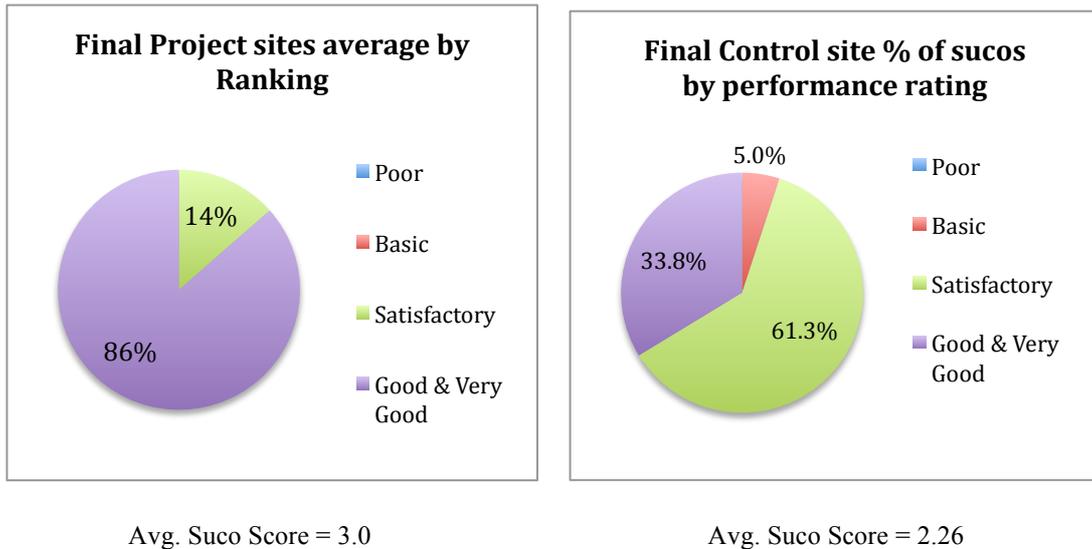


Figure 4: Comparing Project and Control Districts by % of Overall Suco Ratings

### Performance by District

Every district experienced increased scores, however these increases were greater in project districts. Across all districts Oecusse and Baucau showed the strongest change in overall score with an average increase of +1.63 each. This substantial amount represents an increase of 106.4% in Baucau. With regard to overall score, Oecusse averaged the highest with 3.31. The results showed that certain districts experienced different improvements under the program, thus asking for further investigation that will be explored in the discussion.

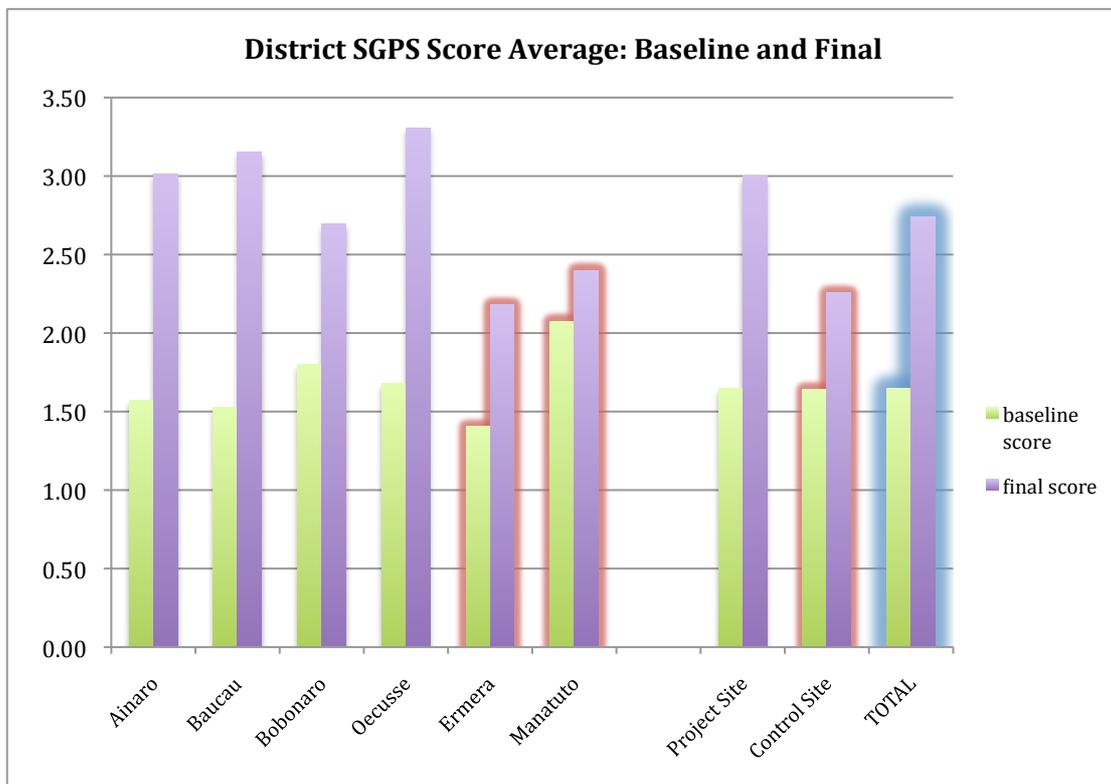


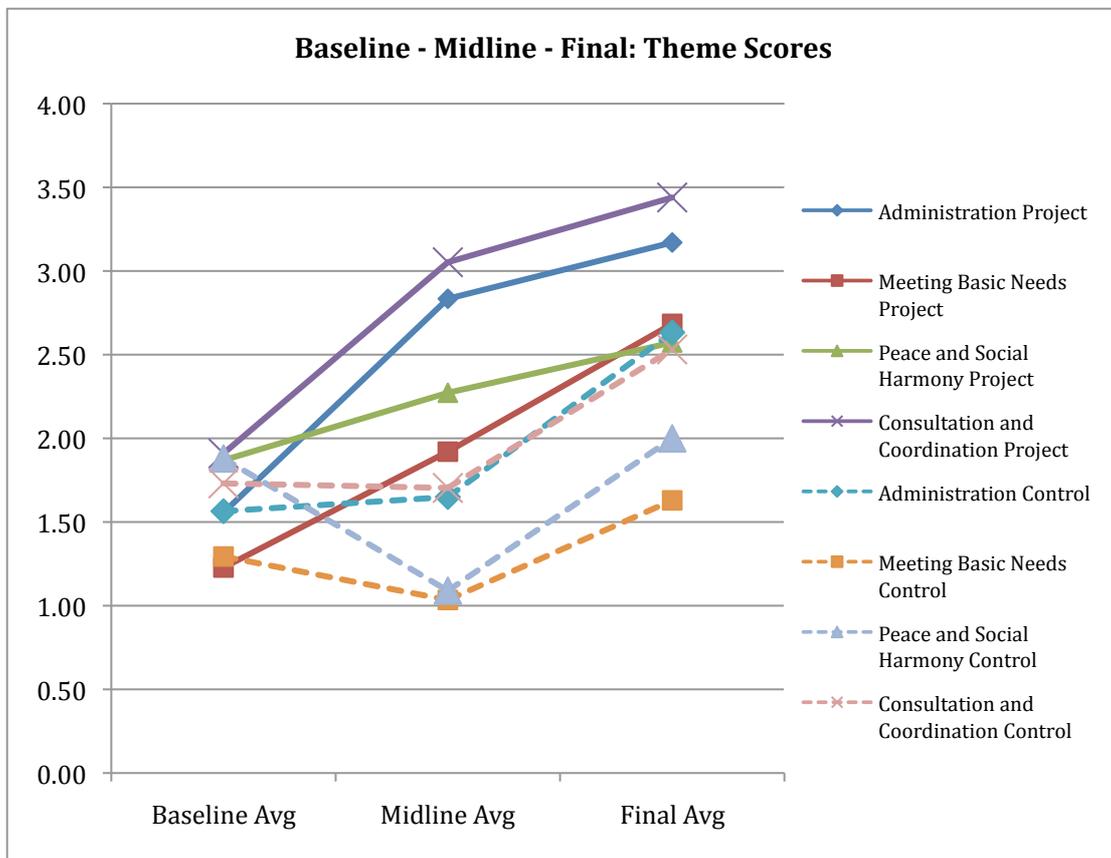
Figure 5 – Overall district scores comparing baseline averages and final averages. Ermera and Manatuto are the Control sites.

## Performance by Theme

Because the indicators were grouped into common themes, it is important that this report gives ample attention to performance by theme. In this section examination of overall performance by theme tracking trends over the life of the project will be undertaken. Attention will then shift to individual themes and the performance of individual indicators while providing context and analysis for possible reasons to these trends.

### Summary Performance by Theme

The indicators used to measure suco performance were collected under four different themes: Administration, Consultation and Coordination, Meeting Basic Needs, Peace and Social Harmony. Of the four different themes, all showed significant progress in project sites over the life of the project, and the averages when grouped all fall into categories of Good (~3). Consultation and Coordination indicators averaged the greatest score at the final SGPS with 3.44 and Peace and Social Harmony scoring the least with 2.57. By contrast, the lowest average score of a control site theme was 1.63 in Meeting Basic Needs.



**Figure 6 – Average Suco Scores In Four Different Themes. The Solid Lines Represent Project Sites While the Dotted Lines Represent Control Sites.**

It is clear from the graph below that those indicators collected under the Administration theme collectively experienced the greatest change in score from Baseline to Final SGPS.

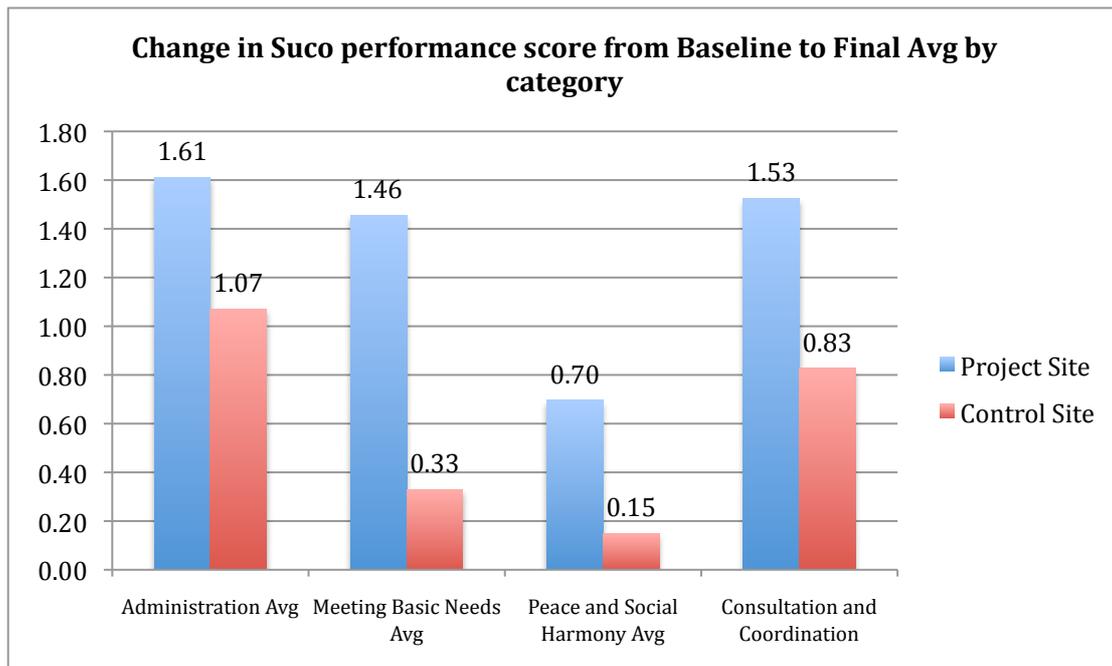


Figure 7 – Chart representing average change in suco score by theme in project and control sites

Performance amongst administration themed indicators in project sites increased by 1.6 (103.6%). The theme that experienced the greatest challenges was Peace and Social Harmony with only a change of 37.2% (+0.7) in project sucos. This was markedly lower in control districts where over the time period of the project the score increased by only 0.15 or 8.0%. This theme in particular contains the indicators of *Domestic Violence* and *Referring Cases to the Justice System* that scored poorly overall. The theme of Meeting Basic Needs possessed the greatest gap between the scores and improvement of the control sucos (+25.5%) compared to project sucos (+118.6%).

Peace and Social Harmony performance scores significantly dropped from baseline to midline in control sites. Although it is difficult to account for this sharp drop precisely it is apparent that once orientation and review of performance score had taken place that scores improved significantly. This is analyzed further in the Discussion section.

#### Administration

The Administration theme is made of five indicators: *Suco Council Meetings*, *Annual reports*, *youth and Women Representation*, *Generation of Data on Vital Statistics* and *Imposing and Collecting Fines*. This theme collects the basic administrative functions of the suco identified as indicators that baseline results showed needed improvement at pre-program commencement. Many of these indicators were targeted through training including the orientation, training on the administrative manual and the training on youth and women’s representatives. The improvement in these indicators reflects a shift in suco governance to more formalized systems and decorous accountability through stronger bureaucratic models of record keeping and communication.

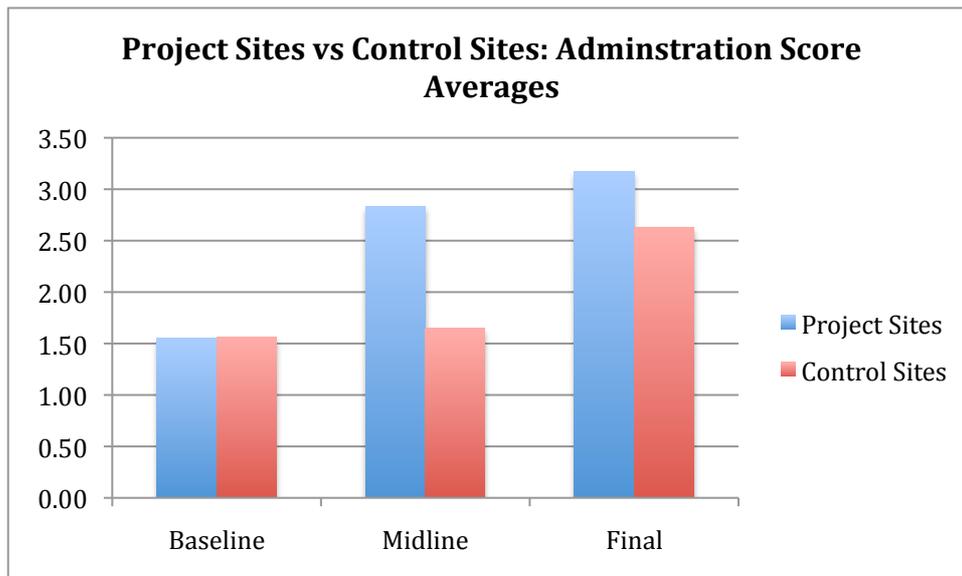


Figure 8 – Averages of Administration Themed Indicators From the 3 FGDs

The data shows that in general, administration indicator scores responded well to the GEC interventions, particularly project sites, which improved steadily at each FGD. The control sucos improved only slightly at the midline FGD. Once they had received orientation and reviewed baseline results they improved their score substantially for the final FGD scoring 2.63, below the project sites' score of 3.17.

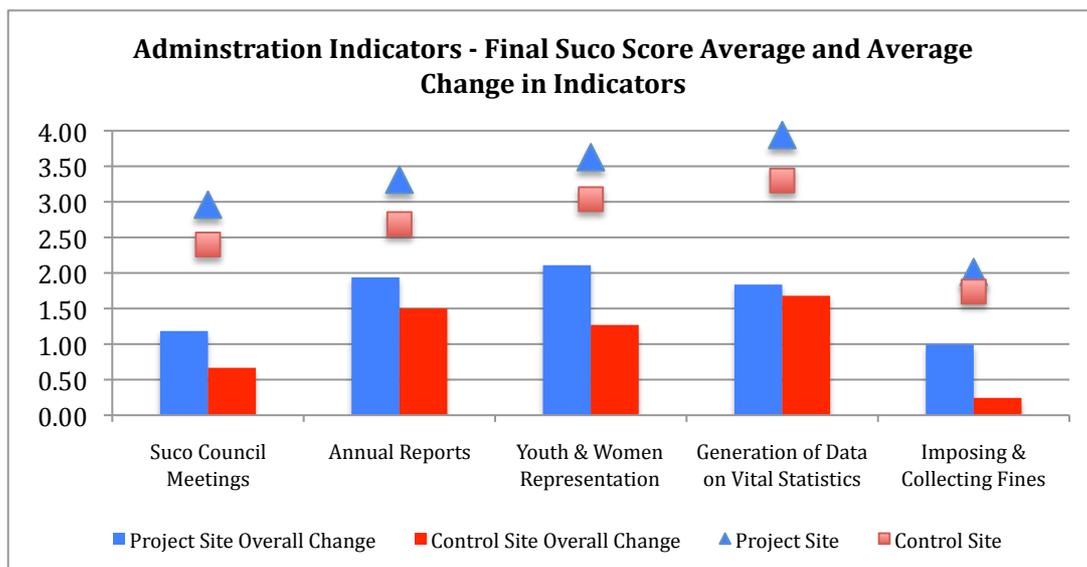


Figure 9 – Average Scores of the Administrative Indicators In Project and Control Sites and average change in scores from Baseline to Final FGD

Of the individual indicators, the *Generation of Data on Vital Statistics* generated the highest SGPS score with project sucos averaging 3.94 at the final survey. *Youth & Women Representation* was also significantly high with a score of 3.63. *Imposing & Collecting Fines* scored significantly lower with 2.01, the lowest average project suco score in the theme of Administration. *Generation of Data on Vital Statistics* may have scored particularly high due to the process of the national census (conducted in 2010 just before the midline). *Imposing & Collecting Fines* may have scored low because of the nature of ambiguity related to suco councils mandates regarding this activity. It may be unclear what activities can be fined or what jurisdiction formal government organizations hold. Often in the past, fines were also the collection of animals or goods used for social feasts to restore traditional order. This lack of

monetary income prohibits widespread collection of monetary fines that can then be used for village projects.

The high average score for *Youth & Women Representation* shows a strong indication of the influence the project had through training, as this particular issue was a focus of training program and outlined in suco Orientation. This is reflected in the graph below that shows an overall change of 2.11 points (the highest change from baseline to final in the Administration theme), compared with a control site change of 1.27.

Although *Imposing and Collecting Fines* experienced only 0.99 SGPS change, it is worth noting a comparison with control site averages which increased only 0.24. This would indicate that project activities experienced by target sites have had a positive effect on this activity and are working at collecting, publishing and utilizing fines in a far greater capacity compared to control sites.

#### Meeting Basic Needs

The indicators grouped under the theme of Meeting Basic Needs include: *Protecting the Environment, Protecting Water Sources, Managing Suco-owned Lands, Solid Waste Management, Collaborating for Health, Collaborating for Education and Maintaining Roads*. These indicators represent the duties of the suco council ensuring simple services related to health, resource access and waste are managed accordingly and coordinated with relevant service provision organizations.

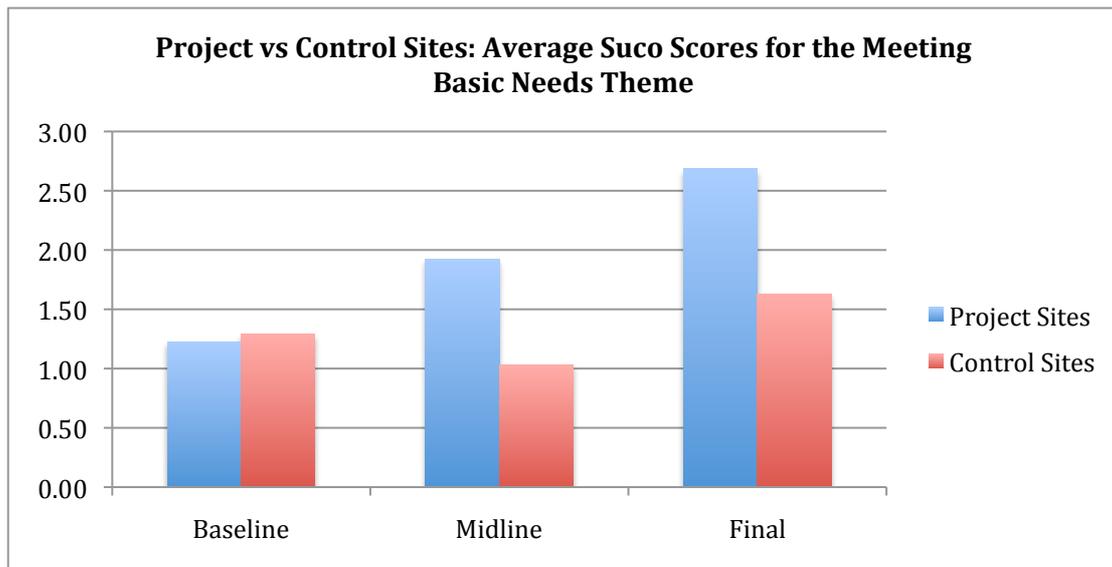


Figure 10 – Average Suco Scores for the Meeting Basic Needs Theme at all FGDs

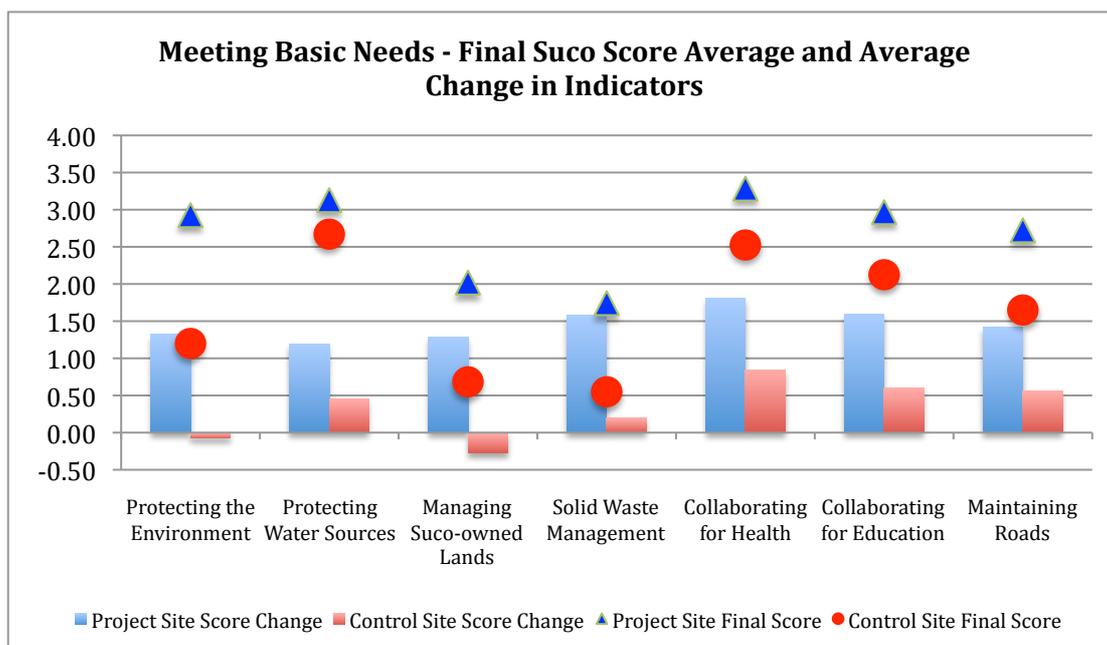


Figure 11 – Average suco scores and overall score change in Meeting Basic Needs indicators

The overall score for the indicators show that the theme performed less successfully than administration but still well overall. In particular the project sites showed a marked difference of change from baseline to final of +1.46 compared to +0.33 in control sites. *Protecting the Environment* and *Managing Suco Owned Lands* dropped in score in the control site while the Project sites made considerable gains. The highest scoring indicator was *Collaborating for Health* in project sites with 3.26 while the lowest was *Solid Waste Management*. This low score (only recorded in urban areas) may reflect a lack of skills (the project did not provide any training in this area) and possible confusion over the role to be taken and a lack of certainty regarding government input with this indicator.

### Snapshot: SGPS in Practice – *The Gift of a Schoolhouse in Suco Purugua*

Suco Purugua is located in Bobonaro District, 11 kms from the sub-district center and has one of the smallest populations in Timor-Leste. The suco houses a total population of ~800 (180 families) and of these more than 250 children are school-going age, but before the baseline FGD only four classrooms existed. This resulted in class sizes of 60, which impacted the quality of education taking place.

- At the time of the baseline FGD the suco averaged a score of 1.58 and had a *Collaborating for Education* score of 2 out of a possible 4.

The suco council, teachers and parents identified the current state of the school as a community issue. Using local materials, contributions of food and labor, the community built additional classrooms and the Ministry of Education contributed desks and other school supplies.

- In the Final SGPS the suco council made substantial improvements in scoring. While increasing its overall score by 93.3% to 3.05 it also increased the indicator *Collaborating for Education* to a final score of 4.

The school council has proposed the construction of a more permanent structure of better quality that better suits the needs of the children in the near future.

*Protecting Water Sources* scored the lowest change with +1.19 but the high 3.13 final score shows that sucos were already managing the protection of water sources satisfactorily. The

indicator experiencing the largest difference was *Protecting The Environment* demonstrating that GEC programs made significant headway in influencing suco council participation in this area.

### Peace and Social Harmony

This theme is associated with suco council activities that relate to maintenance of social cohesion and just practice of dispute resolution at the suco level. In general this theme experienced moderate progress from baseline to final but scored lowest overall by theme average (2.55) and improved performance by only 0.7 (37.2%) in project sucos.

The theme of Peace and Social Harmony is made up of four indicators: *Settling Disputes at Aldeia Level*, *Settling Disputes at Suco Level*, *Referring Cases to the Justice System* and *Preventing Domestic Violence*.

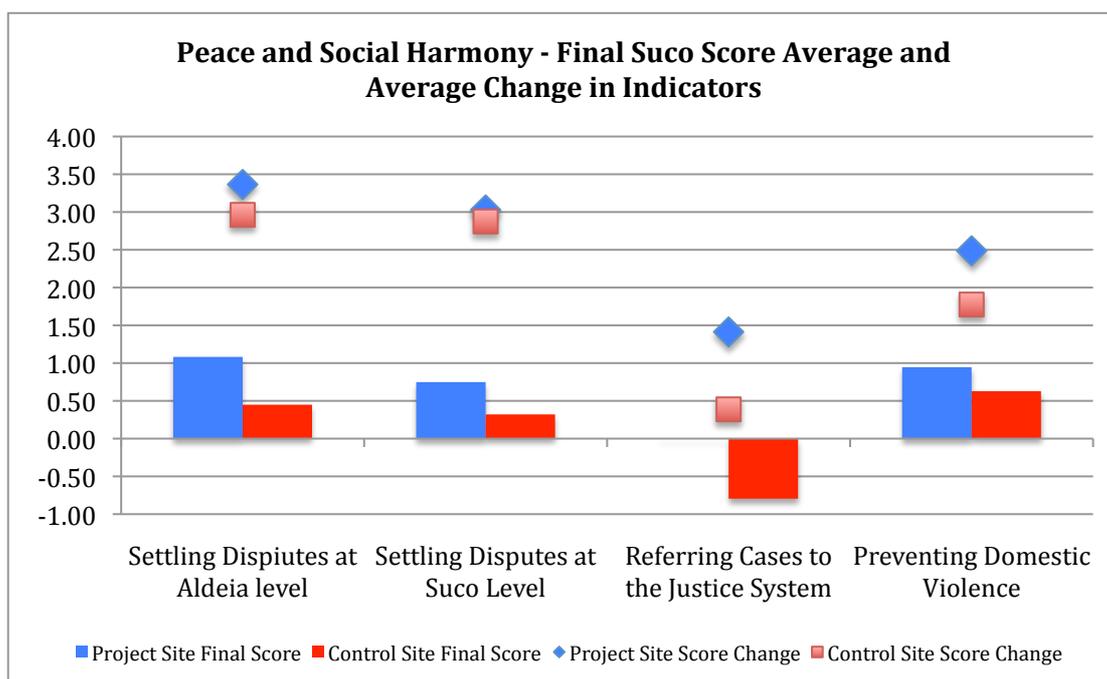


Figure 22 - Average Suco Scores and Overall Score Change in Peace and Social Harmony Indicators

The indicator *Settling Disputes at Aldeia Level* scored quite high in both project and control sites. This may relate to the prevalence of traditional systems of dispute resolution well accepted in the community. The lack of strong bureaucratic institutional penetration out of Dili has to some degree fostered this development.

*Prevention of Domestic Violence* showed adequate gains demonstrating that GEC programs and the domestic violence training given to Women’s Representatives has been beneficial, particularly with the gains in project sites compared with control sites. *Referring Cases to the Justice System* indicator shows that this is an area that requires significant attention at suco level. In both project and control sites the average SGPS score fared badly, particularly in control sites where scores were on average 0.79 (68.3%) lower than at baseline. The inclusion of this as a scoring indicator has had a large influence on average Peace and Social Harmony theme scores and overall suco scores, rating the lowest score by a significant margin.

### Consultation and Coordination

The theme of Consultation and Coordination covers indicators that reflect activities related to working effectively with other organizations and institutions. The four indicators monitored

are *Consultations for Planning*, *Coordination with the National Government*, *Working with Civil Society* and *Working with Other Sucos*.

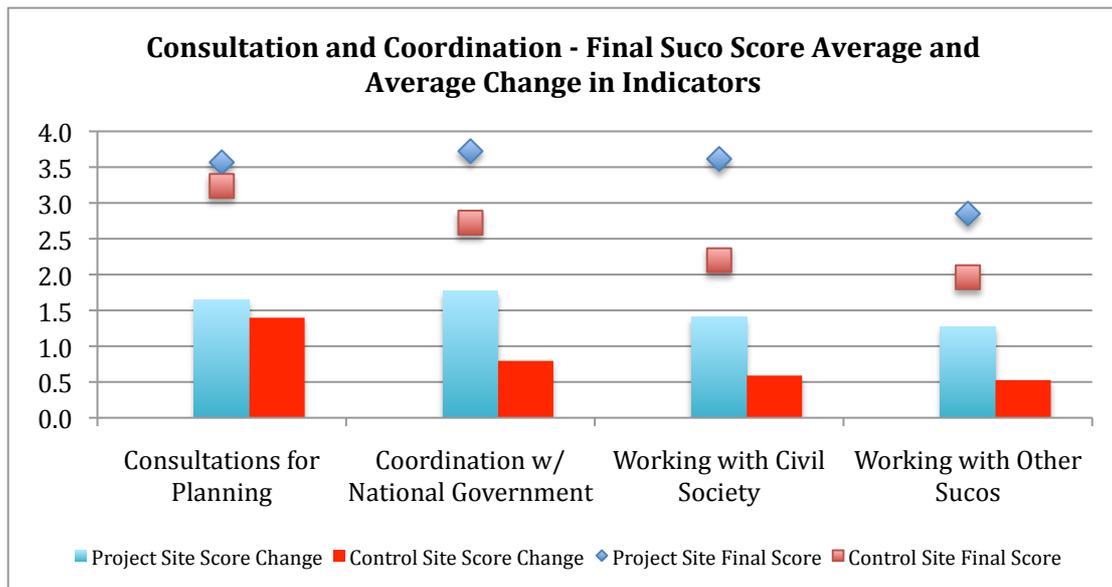


Figure 13 - Average suco scores and overall score change in Consultation and Coordination indicators

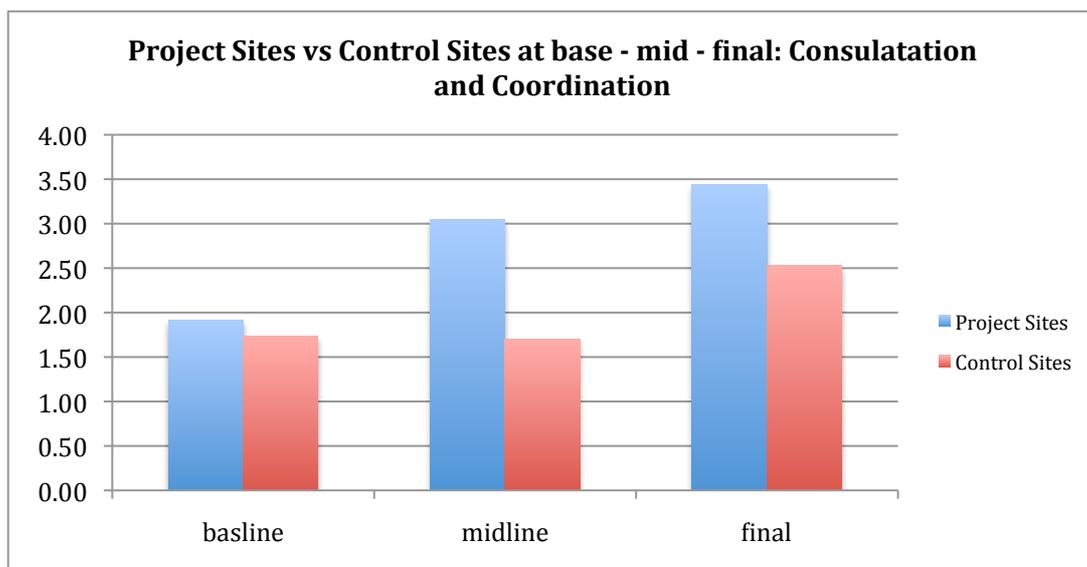


Figure 34 – Average suco scores for the Consultation and Coordination Theme

The final theme of Consultation and Coordination showed improvement in project sites over the course of the program with a particularly strong shift from baseline to midline. This reflects the impact of project orientation in the project sites and the beginning of the monthly inter-suco meetings before the midline FGD took place. The improvement of the control sites from the midline to the final (compared with the little change in score that occurred from the baseline to the midline) indicates that the orientation and SGPS review of scores have had a significant and valuable effect on theme indicators in these sucos.

Of the indicators in this theme *Working with the National Government* scored the highest (3.73) in the FGD project sites with other indicators also performing well except for *Working With Other Sucos*. This indicator performed lower at 2.85 but still showed significant change in performance, particularly when compared to those of the control sites.

### **Box 3 - Important Individual Performers**

- District with the best overall score = Oecusse 3.31
- District with the overall least score = Ermera 2.18
- Best Performing District (by change) = Baucau [P] 106.4% change
- Worst performing district = Manatuto [C] with 19.93% change
- Worst performing district in Project = Bobonaro with 55.8% change
- Highest suco overall: 3.68 Samalari, Uai Oli both in Baucau [P]
- Lowest suco overall: 0.89 Goulolo, Ermera [C]
- Best performing suco (by change) = Batu manu, Ermera [C] 1020%
- Worst performing suco = Lifau, sub district Lelia in Manatuto with -29.6% change
- Worst performing suco in Project sites = Tapo/ Memo in Bobonaro with -23.9% change
- Highest change: 2.79 from baseline to final (Batu Mana, Ermera[C])
- Lowest: -0.94 from baseline to final (Sama Leten, Ermera [C])

### **Indicators Difficult to Assess**

Some indicators received no responses in a number of sucos. During the final FGD 137 sucos said they referred no cases to justice system (*Referring Cases to the Justice System*, score = 0). 42 out of 80 control sucos said no *tara bandu* – a customary or traditional Timorese law to preserve natural resources and to regulate other social daily life matters – is upheld (*Protecting the Environment*, score = 0). These instances reflect the poor overall scoring in these indicators and that the SGPS assumes that offenses or environmental degradation is taking place when actions that score highly may not be necessary. Thus, these indicators were rather difficult to assess under these circumstances.

### **District Scoring Leaders**

This section will briefly review indicator performance leaders by district so as to assist in portraying top district performers in FGDs. Districts ranked relatively similar scores at the baseline FGD although control site Manatuto led scoring in many indicators. However, by the final FGD two years later, Oecusse and Bacau were clearly the most competent across most indicators and the control site Manatuto had dropped into last place based on numerous indicators.

#### Baseline

Because no interventions by the project had been implemented yet, some of the control sites dominated select themes. Manatuto performed the best overall during the baseline survey with 2.07 and achieved the highest rank in eight indicators. Those in Administration and Coordination and Consultation were particularly strong where the district averaged 2.46. Baucau did not attain the highest average rank in any indicator.

**Table 1 – Districts With Highest Averages by Indicator**

<b>Theme</b>	Administration	Meeting Basic Needs	Peace and Social Harmony	Coordination and Consultation
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<b>Baseline FGD</b>	District ranked highest in most indicators	Manatuto highest rank in 3/5 indicators	Oecusse 3, Ainaro 3 highest rank out of 7 indicators	Oecusse highest rank in ¾ indicators	Manatuto highest rank in ¾ indicators
	<i>Highest score</i>	<i>Manatuto 2.02</i>	<i>Oecusse :1.48</i>	<i>Oecusse : 2.58</i>	<i>Manatuto : 2.46</i>
<b>Final FGD</b>	District ranked highest in most indicators	Baucau highest rank in 4/5 indicators	All project districts evenly spread amongst highest rank out of 7 indicators	Oecusse highest rank in 4/4 indicators	Baucau highest rank in 4/4 indicators
	<i>Highest score</i>	<i>Baucau 3.29</i>	<i>Oecusse 3.19</i>	<i>Oecusse : 3.35</i>	<i>Baucau : 3.75</i>
<b>Change in Score: Baseline to Final</b>	District ranked highest in most indicators	Baucau 2, Oecusse 2 highest rank out of indicators	Baucau highest rank in 4/7 indicators	Baucau highest rank in 2/4 indicators	Baucau highest rank in 2/4 indicators
	<i>Highest score</i>	<i>Oecusse 2.26</i>	<i>Baucau : 1.78</i>	<i>Baucau : 0.92</i>	<i>Baucau : 1.85</i>

### Final Performance by District and Indicator

The final performance shows that Baucau and Oecusse are the best performing districts. Oecusse attained the highest average score of all indicators with 3.31 and in the themes of *Meeting Basic Needs* and *Peace and Social Harmony*. Oecusse's high score of 3.35 in *Peace and Social Harmony* (the theme experiencing the lowest overall scores) compared to an average of 2.37 indicates Oecusse is making strong progress towards justice issues at the governance level and is open to new avenues of formalized dispute resolution. Interestingly all sucos averaged a similar score in this theme at the final FGD, but at the baseline the themes' average score was markedly lower in sucos that elected a new chefe. These sucos experienced much greater change compared to re-elected chefes, but finished with similar scores overall. Baucau's strong performance in the theme of Coordination and Consultation is reflected in the strong inter-suco co-operation and efforts towards the creation of an inter-suco association. Bobonaro experienced the lowest average performance scores in the project sites and Ermera in the control sites.

### Change in Average Performance Score from Baseline to Final

Baucau experienced the greatest amount of change in the most indicators. Baucau led districts in changes in indicator score with nine out of the 20 featured. The district that experienced the largest change in average theme score was Oecusse, with a large change of +2.26 in Administration.

## **Variables**

Along with the data collected during the SGPS, a variety of general suco data covering variables such as access to information, literacy rates, distance from district centre, and resource access was also collected by the GEC teams to ensure variable factors were included in data analysis. This section shall review some of the pertinent variables in relation to performance.

Literacy may impact the ability of sucos to perform administrative tasks, liaise with other organizations and indicate a level of basic education. However, literacy rates have little correlation with the performance of a district's average suco score. The two highest scoring districts recorded the highest and lowest levels of literacy rates amongst suco council members. The urban sucos had on average a higher literacy rate (84% vs 79%) yet improved significantly less in Administration scoring (+1.1 vs +1.52). Examining the graphs below shows little correlation between number of literate council members and overall score.

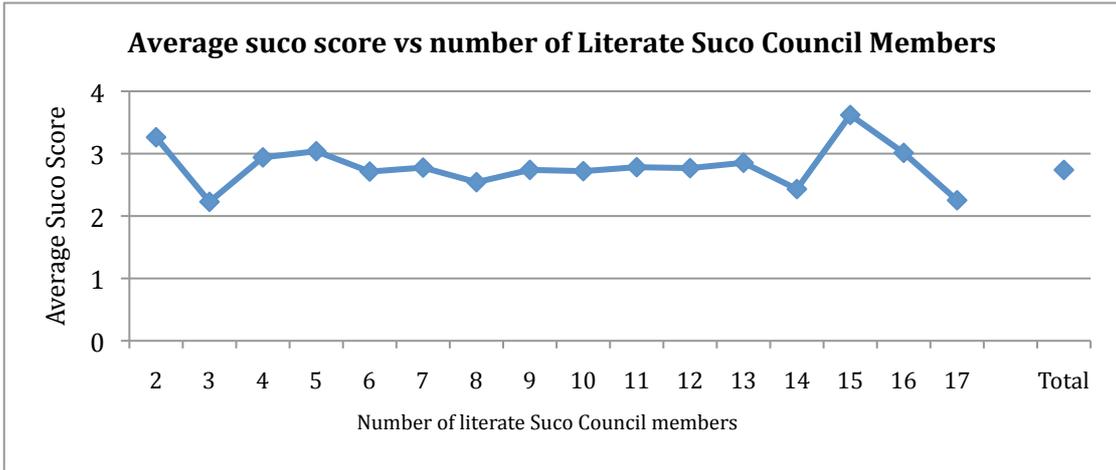


Figure 45 – Examining the relationship between the number of literate suco council members and average suco score. Little correlation exists.

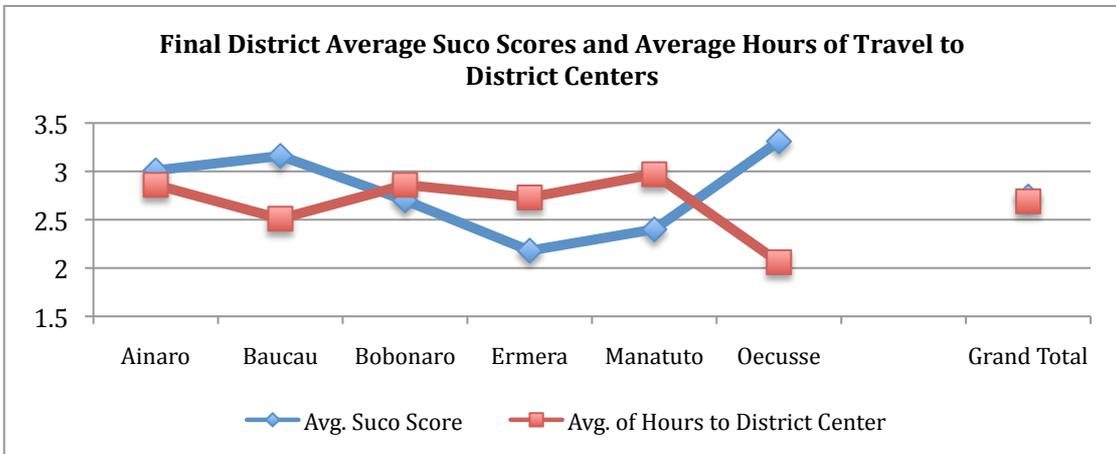


Figure 56 - Examining Final Average District Suco Scores and Average Travel Time in Hours to Each District Center

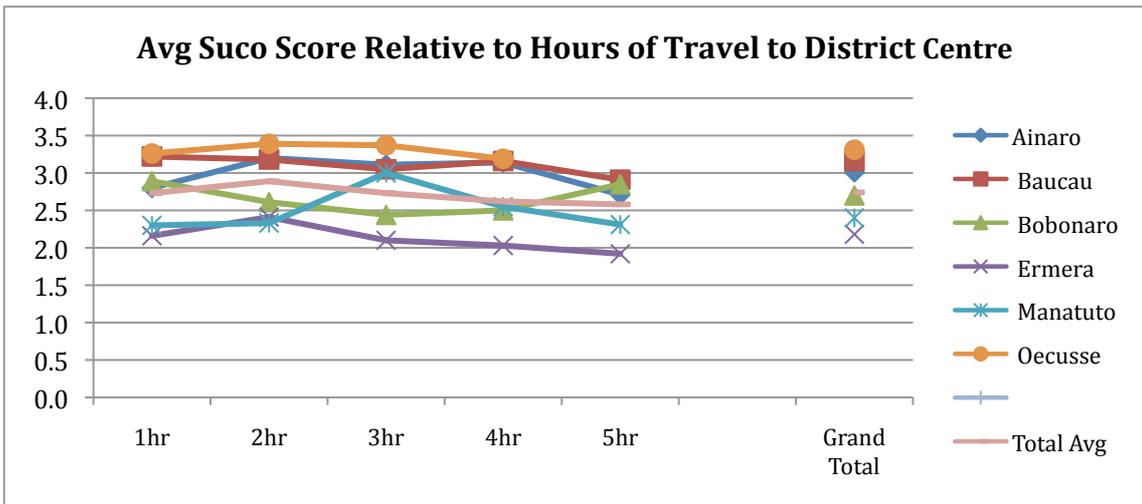


Figure 67 - Changes in suco score within districts using distance to district centre to compare performance

The number of hours to a district centre may impact the ability for suco councils to form relationships with other organizations or other sucos or to fulfil administrative tasks or meet basic needs. Examining the district average suco scores compared with hours of travel to the district, a small correlation emerges showing that less time needed for travel is related to

performance score. However when distance from district centre is compared to *Coordination and Consultation* (the theme that should be effected the most by distance), no strong relationship remains.

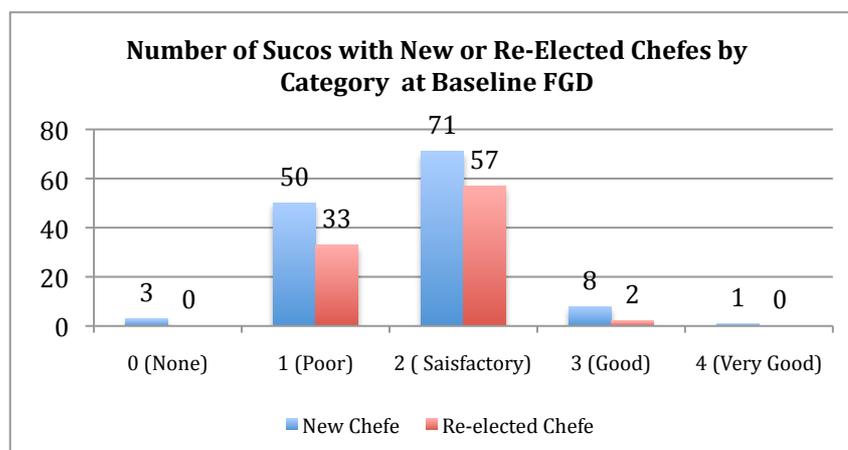
In general rural sucos performed slightly better than urban sucos. It is difficult to draw strong conclusions as to why this may be the case. The low scores related to sanitation of which only occurs in urban sucos may be a factor. It is also possible that distance from bureaucratic centers of power have fostered an atmosphere of independence and self-reliance with regard to the suco council service provision. However, this is not reflected in the scores when examined against distance from district centre.

**Table 2 – District Average Suco Scores Framed By Election Results and Location**

District	Newly Elected Chief		Re-elected Chief		Grand Total
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Ainaro	2.91	2.84	3.10	3.34	<b>3.01</b>
Baucau	3.20	3.06	3.19	3.01	<b>3.15</b>
Bobonaro	2.62	2.68	2.87	2.82	<b>2.70</b>
Ermera	2.20	2.11	2.14	2.82	<b>2.18</b>
Manatuto	2.55	2.20	2.39	2.21	<b>2.41</b>
Oecusse	3.34	2.89	3.33		<b>3.31</b>
Grand Total	2.73	2.52	2.81	2.86	<b>2.74</b>

During the 2010 suco elections, 94 suco chiefs were re-elected and 133 newly re-elected chiefs took office. The data indicates a slight trend that shows sucos with re-elected chiefs scoring higher at the final FGD by comparison to sucos with newly elected chiefs. These results reflect incumbent chiefs’ previous experience with suco governance.

There proved to be no relationship between poor performance at the baseline and election of a new chefe in the elections, although more newly elected chiefs entered the position as head of the suco council in 2010. The spread of high and low performing chiefs across all districts and scores make it difficult to assess whether the re-election of a chefe indicates possible lack of other available leaders or an unwillingness to forego traditionally legitimized incumbents. Generally, rural villages performed better compared to urban ones. However, those sucos in urban areas with re-elected chiefs performed marginally better compared to their rural counterparts.



**Figure 78 – Number of sucos with newly or re elected Chiefs against suco category at the Baseline FGD**

**Variables that could not be mapped**

Baucau and Oecusse scored markedly higher compared to other project districts. GEC members spoke of noticeably higher levels of organization and innovation in these districts that contributed to better performance and the eventual formation of inter-suco councils. Other variables such as perceived social cohesion, perceived importance of local governance, variance of different ethnic groups and other qualitative indicators would undoubtedly been of interest to be mapped against the SGPS data. However, these indicators were not possible to measure as they are time and resource intensive or unquantifiable for comparisons.

## Discussion

### The Capacity of Local Sucos for Governance

The increase in suco performance scores of 81.9% in project sites and 38.4% in control sites indicates that the SGPS program has had marked success across all involved districts and has value with regard to enhancing suco governance. The data collected in the SGPS demonstrates emphatically that local governance structures are a viable institution capable of good performance and worthy of future investment.

Although room remains for scoring improvement, the data indicates strong performance and willingness to improve delivery and organization of services at a village level. In a timeframe of 2.5 years, participating sucos improved their performance by an average of 67%. This figure shows that improved local governance is keenly sought and this can be achieved quickly with a level of autonomy, particularly when systems of transparent review are introduced. It is also apparent that clearer communication from national level government to local levels through activities akin to simple orientation of functions and responsibilities can have a large positive impact. Project sucos experienced a SGPS score change of 82% demonstrating that additional ongoing activities constructed by the project and targeted at local governance indicators provide a greater performance rating.

Despite a lack of strong financial support and little penetration of national governance services, suco councils have been able to develop and learn. This is important, as the suco council is still the most relevant institution to the majority of Timorese people. Particularly, they have become more prominent in the void left by strong-arm local Indonesian administration and the inability of the current state apparatus to effectively bolster bureaucratic local governance.

### TRENDS & CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL PRACTICES INTO A FORMAL FRAMEWORK

Tracking performance of themes with the SGPS is useful for signposting current trends in the state of local governance. The theme of Administration performed best across all sites and experienced the greatest increase in score. This implies that the project's training programs implemented in these areas had a significant effect on suco performance. In particular, an indicator within this field – the *Generation of Vital Statistics* – scored close to perfect and the highest of all indicators. Large improvements in suco reporting, meetings and women and youth representation point toward a readiness to be of traditional local governance to be brought into the formalized arena. Despite low literacy levels, the high scores in this area in Oecusse demonstrate that lacking basic reading and writing skills is not a significant issue towards adoption of good practice. The less robust performance in some of basic needs indicators shows that sucos are still confused about negotiating different spheres of governance in order to obtain their desired outcomes. *Referring Cases to the Justice System* scored the lowest, barely increasing across all sites and actually decreasing in control districts.

#### Referring Cases to the Justice System

Although it is apparent that because of the lengthy time involvement and costs associated with trainings aimed at improving referrals of crime to the justice system (not to mention other programs outside of the GEC that are already working on this issue), it is difficult to explain the sharp drop in this indicator score over the lifespan of the project in control sites.

Even though no training had taken place related specifically to this indicator, it is difficult to discern exactly why control sites experienced this and not project sites.

### **Managing Suco Owned Land & Protecting the Environment**

Both these indicators like the above example also fell in score in the control sites. It is likely that legacies of traditional management practices may conflict with or confuse the suco council's more formalized management in these areas. It is also likely that the large number of complex land disputes difficult in resolution has possibly contributed to a low score. Issues of illegal occupation, confusion over rights and complications arising through Indonesian suco boundary re-arrangements and village translocation continue to hinder wide spread clear management of suco owned land and other resources. Such issues are highly complex. Considering the limitations of resources, time constraints and wide focus of overall increased suco performance, the engagement with this issue was considered outside the realm of this project (but worth tracking nonetheless).

The performances of the above indicators paint a picture of suco councils tentatively acclimatizing to a more formalized arena of operation. However, a lack of bureaucratic penetration into the local governance landscape, distance from Dili, and strong government centralization are helping to foster a suco member focus on local systems that residents understand, trust and feel a desire for inclusiveness.

Governance themes that reflected areas of poor performance are in general ones that were previously managed under traditional systems and may incorporate elements incompatible with a formal bureaucratic system of management. This is in part a legacy of traditional customary practices that are often entwined with spiritual belief systems and/or a desire to operate local village governance outside the scope of Indonesian authoritarian intrusion as much as possible. Such areas that are currently straddling de jure and de facto systems frequently render difficulties with the adoption of certain roles, formalized functioning and/or training. This includes such areas as referral of cases to the justice system, managing suco-owned land and protecting local environs. However, the keen embracing of formal record keeping and administrative tasks in historically oral and traditional cultures (that continue to value inherent informal power structures that do not fit easily into standard bureaucratic modes of operation), demonstrates that such challenges can be overcome. However, they may still require greater intervention to improve functioning capacity to a level of government expectation. It will also require adept analysis of navigational entry points into local governance by government agencies

### **Districts**

It is difficult to map trends related to location and governance performance although there are some correlations that prove pertinent to analysis. Oecusse and Baucau showed the best performance in the program responding significantly better than Ainaro and Bobonaro. Examining outside indicators does little to explain why these districts scored higher performance totals. Examining performance related to literacy, re-election of chiefs, distance from district capital, access to roads or the urbanity of a suco did little to mark specific factors relevant to changes in scores between project districts. The lower scoring in the control sites was expected due to the lack of comparative program support. Ermera [C] scored the lowest district score overall with 2.18 (compared to 3.00 average for project districts) and Manatuto [C] recorded the lowest percentage of change with 17%.

## INTERVENTIONS/ACTIVITIES

### **The Significance of Suco Orientation**

Orientation holds immense value, and as an individual activity showed the most apparent effect on suco score. Both project and control sites experienced strong change of over 50% in performance scores shortly after receiving orientation of suco council responsibilities. This indicates that effective communication of formalized suco governance has not yet taken place from Dili to the suco level despite the propagation of the 2004 Suco Council Law. The orientation provided by the project to the suco councils allowed for dialogue and participatory learning, which resulted in demonstrable value especially when compared to the suco chief orientation conducted by the state. The low midline scoring of control sites after receiving state orientation helps support this assertion. The Facilitators and GEC staff reported that re-elected suco chiefs claimed that they had never received such training before and were unaware of the roles expected of them.

Receiving such information for the first time had a profound effect on many suco chiefs' comprehension and expectations of the roles that they should play in their community. The other trainings and activities conducted in project sucos also are of importance as demonstrated by project suco score increases. This was a more subdued increase compared to that for orientation.

#### **Snapshot: SGPS in Practice – Tara bandu for Environmental Protection in Suco Ainaro Villa**

Suco Ainaro is located in the center of the Ainaro District and comprises seven aldeias with a population of 6,333. Heavily dependent on farming, the suco has encountered environmental problems related to soil erosion that is negatively affecting farm production. The prevalence of domestic violence was also recognized by the suco council as high and in need of attention.

- During the Baseline SGPS the suco council scored an average of 1.42 out of 4. The indicators of *Protecting the Environment* and *Preventing Domestic Violence* scored 1 and 0, respectively.

After discussing the situation with the community, the suco council issued a tara bandu to assist in environmental management and protection and provide greater instruction relating to the prevention of domestic violence.

- In the Final SGPS the suco council made substantial improvements in its scoring. While improving its overall score by 122% to 3.16, it also increased the indicators of *Protecting the Environment* and *Preventing Domestic Violence* to final scores of 4 and 3, respectively.

The suco claims that people have been more cooperative in environmental protection measures and preventing domestic violence, and that overall, great success has taken place in that regard.

### **Performance Review**

The participatory nature of the SGPS measuring system and the relay of scores back to suco councils is one of the strongest parts of methodology design. Given the ability to review past performance data and therefore identify specific gaps and strengths in governance, the councils were able to better plan and improve importance. The large improvements in project suco scores at the midline reflect this, as do the control suco improvements at the final FGD.

Although suco scores improved after review and discussion, the data indicates that a timeframe that incorporates a quicker feedback loop to participants would provide a greater benefit. Project sites received their first review of SGPS data roughly six months after the

FGD had taken place. These project sites improved 56.3% (+0.93). The second review (examining the SGPS data from the midline) did not occur until the Final FGD took place, 16 months after the last review, and sites experienced an increase of 16.4% (+0.42). Although a myriad of other factors could be accounted for, when the differences between the two FGDs are compared, the trends in scoring indicates that this plays a factor. Ideally, rapid feedback that takes place immediately at the time of collection would enable suco councils to begin planning and preparation to repair gaps in delivery quicker.

### **Inter-Suco Cooperation**

During the monthly inter-suco meetings ministry representatives presented their programs and projects before suco chefes or representatives from the council, after which the suco chefes raised questions, issues, concerns and problems. The result was usually a lively discussion on discrepancies noticed by suco councils. While the issues raised were not expected to be resolved in these meetings, the agencies became more aware of how their programs fared in the suco areas, serving as unprecedented and timely venues for direct communication between the service provider and intended beneficiaries. Education and health ministries were identified as being particularly responsive to these meetings.

The implementation of weekly radio programs in three of the four districts<sup>14</sup> was also deemed an important platform for meaningful exchange across district areas. Suco council chiefs spoke of the importance and pride inherent in communicating best cases and practice, implying that publicizing innovative and successful suco council activities represents an incentive for suco councils to improve performance and address functions that were possibly neglected previously.

The regular meetings of suco chefes led to a self-initiated movement for incorporation into an inter-suco association to strengthen individual performance through greater collaboration and support. This occurred in Baucau in early 2011 with support from the GEC program. This was followed by requests for assistance to facilitate the formation of similar associations in other districts.

## **ANALYSIS AND ISSUES**

### **Control Site Midline Dip**

Strong improvement of the project sites during the midline survey after receiving orientation while the control sites decreased implies that orientation plays an important role in suco performance. The marked increase in final FGD performance scores in control sites after receiving the orientation supports this suggestion as well as that orientation has a greater influence compared to GEC trainings. However, the continued improvement in project sites without scores stagnating suggests that training also impacts significantly, contributing to further growth in suco performance.

What commands greater interest is an understanding of why control site performance dipped rather than stagnated between baseline and midline. This might be attributed to new suco chefes and councils elected in the recent elections whom were still adjusting to their roles yet had not received the project orientation on suco roles and responsibilities. It is also likely that climatic impacts were particularly bad in 2010 and may have affected suco council efficacy as discussed further below.

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<sup>14</sup> The Ainaro community radio was not operating at the time of the project and therefore this district was not able to participate in this part of the project.

It may be worthwhile to bear in mind that communities are resourceful and opportunistic relating to attracting development assistance. The delivery agent needs to be wary that sometimes communities communicate worse results than they might be experiencing in relation to NGO programs so as to attract more resources and assistance.

### **Heterogeneity of Councils and Issues of Homogenization**

Although the purpose of this report is not to discuss issues of positive or negative aspects of formalization or homogenization of suco council roles, it is an issue that warrants discussion so that factors available are outlined in relation to current contextual shifts in local governance.

As discussed above, currently Timor local governance is experiencing transition, moving from informal traditional institutions to more formalized bureaucratic structures whose functions are outlined by law. The country showcases a richly varied ethnic localization of areas that have differing past experiences with the role of suco governance and representation as well as the quantity of formalization that has taken place. These differences are magnified when comparisons between displaced or relocated communities under Indonesian occupation are compared to villages that were less interrupted and where traditional structures were more strongly retained. Therefore, some sucos are better suited to respond positively to formal interventions, thereby encouraging bureaucratic reform. This is the case among those dislocated that have competed for legitimacy against traditional owners through formalized means.

Some community powerbrokers housed within traditional institutions may be informal and experiencing an erosion of local political power under suco formalization. Others occupying a political space of formal roles may lack traditional legitimacy of power within the community structure and struggle with implementing activities of suco performance improvement.

### **Other Significant Factors**

Although a significant effort was made to create an environment of control so that the SGPS created outputs that reflected the most transparent effect of the program on sucos, it is difficult (as with every development project), to ascertain that the scores were a reflection of only the program's activities. It is possible that other programs or developments influenced suco council performance over the timeframe of the project directly or indirectly.

The National Directorate for Suco Administration (DNAAS) provided orientation in all districts including project and control sites through the distribution of an administration manual. This was done after suco elections before the Midline FGD. The lack of impact in control sites where it was the only orientation received indicates this was less engaging when compared to the performance change experienced in project sites. The state also likes to use suco councils to introduce new law or disseminate them to wider public such as the Domestic Violence law.

Other related programs implemented include support from Caritas for the suco council forum in Dili; German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)/GIZ support of the suco development plan conducted in all districts; and the National Directorate for Local Development and Territorial Management (DNDLOT) and the Local Governance Support Program through the Local Development Program as a contributor to change in suco governance. Similar FGDs were held and assisted councils in guiding submissions of needs and priorities to the sub-district level and onto the district level, although this did not take place during the implementation of the SGPS.

To better understand outside factors relating to performance within the program a large number of data variables were collected along with SGPS scores. However, it is difficult to discern specific factors or trends that may have had an influence on suco performance or

assist in explaining Oecusse and Baucau's stronger and lucid improvement over the life of the program.

External factors and other challenges would also likely affect suco council performance negatively or affirmatively. During the 2007-2009 seasons, many areas experienced significantly reduced rainfall in varying degrees. This created an environment of increased food insecurity. Compounding this issue, rainfall in 2010 was heavy, unpredictable and detrimental to the planting of harvest crops in many areas due to the effects of La Nina. In an environment of livelihood struggle with little resources available at the suco council's disposal, it is likely that performance was affected as members concentrated efforts on the provision of family needs.

It is also possible that such challenges required a steep learning curve or galvanizing of the suco councils cohesion to react effectively to livelihood challenges. Such indicators are difficult to quantify or require more sophisticated development and implementation, which is not suitable to the rapid assessment approach of the SGPS.

## Methodology

The SGS tool collected data from almost half the population of Timor-Leste. The project sites of Baucau, Bobonaro, Ainaro were selected based on their geographic dispersion, ease of access both internally and externally (including a low level of social conflict), and availability of meeting facilities. Oecusse was pre-selected as a project district by USAID. The control districts of Ermera and Manatuto were selected based on the ease of access from Dili, where the project office is located. Although all districts received the SGPS, the project sites were differentiated from the control sites by the reception of GEC trainings and related activities or interventions that were begun after the suco elections of 2009.

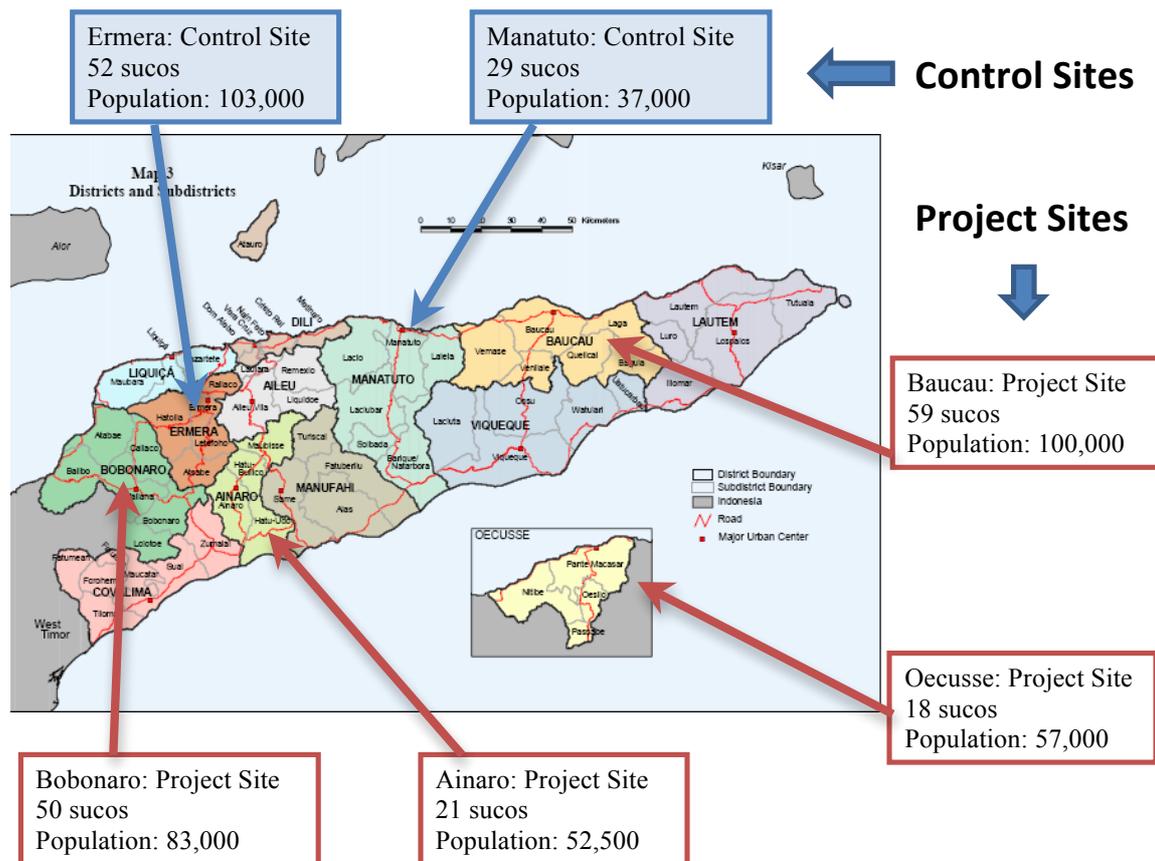


Figure 8: Map of Project and Control Sites

### Development of the SGPS Assessment Tool

The SGPS was modeled after the Local Authority Development Scale, an assessment tool designed and implemented as part of the Foundation's USAID-funded Transparent Accountable Local Governance Project in Sri Lanka. The tool is concrete and practical, taking into account external expectations as well as internal perceptions of suco council responsibilities. Scores are not accrued on the basis of the subjective opinions of "experts" or citizens, but on the presence or absence of specific governance practices. A valuable self-monitoring tool for the suco councils, the SGPS clearly reveals the steps necessary to improve performance, rather than simply assessing performance as "poor" without revealing a clear standard and process for what "satisfactory" or "good" would require. Applicable for comparisons across entities as well as across time periods, the scale aspect of the SGPS makes it inherently flexible, allowing for the tool to be redesigned to "raise the bar" if necessary. As suco councils eventually approach the highest level of achievement in fulfilling

their functions, further standards can be added, such as the extension of advanced health or social services, or the creative use of technology for citizen engagement. The SGPS measures governance performance by determining the level of activity of a suco council in the following areas, using the following 20 indicators:

**Table 3 - SGPS Indicators of Suco Governance**

Governance Area	Indicators
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transparency</li> <li>• annual progress report</li> <li>• representative functions</li> <li>• gathering population data</li> <li>• levying and collecting fines</li> </ul>
Meeting Basic Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protecting the environment through cultural means</li> <li>• protecting water resources</li> <li>• management of suco lands <i>or</i> management of solid waste</li> <li>• collaboration for health services</li> <li>• collaboration for basic education</li> <li>• maintenance of roads</li> </ul>
Peace and Social Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• settling disputes at aldeia level</li> <li>• settling disputes at suco level</li> <li>• referring criminal cases to the justice system</li> <li>• addressing domestic violence in the community</li> </ul>
Consultation and Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consultation and strategy with local citizens</li> <li>• working relations with higher government levels</li> <li>• working relations with civil society</li> <li>• working relations with other suco councils</li> <li>• suco council innovations</li> </ul>

The Foundation is dedicated to approaches that strengthen traditional informal institutions for community support and build capacity for new functions and responsibilities under decentralization. This commitment informed the development of the SGPS indicators and format, which acknowledged and thus promoted existing positive functions as well as accounted for and disseminated the mandates of recent legislation. This approach informs and enables future efforts to strengthen the suco council as a local government institution by upgrading and integrating essential informal practices into modern local government practices.

To develop the SGPS indicators, project staff undertook a rapid assessment of suco governance in Liquica District, interviewing five suco chiefs and several other suco council members, reviewing council documents, and observing instances of suco-level service delivery. As a result, the staff discovered that suco chiefs and other council members routinely play about two dozen separate roles while meeting their traditional and expected responsibilities. Furthermore, the assessment revealed numerous traditional functions, such as the continued validity of *tara bandu* ceremonies—rituals that involve food offerings and animal sacrifices—to reinforce social norms through supernatural sanctions as well as fines. Suco chiefs and aldeia chiefs also revealed that the settling of disputes was their primary and most frequent duty. Documenting these practices and other traditions such as voluntary community contributions of labor and the penalization of community members via the collection of fines enabled the design of a unique and context-appropriate methodology, aided the integration of these existing practices with new responsibilities and future capacity building.

The team of consultants that designed and pre-tested the SGPS in late January 2009 took into account the 2004 Law on Community Authorities, as well as the observed existing roles of

suco councils and suco chiefs. The table below reveals the functions and corresponding indicators specified, or not specified, by the 2004 Law.

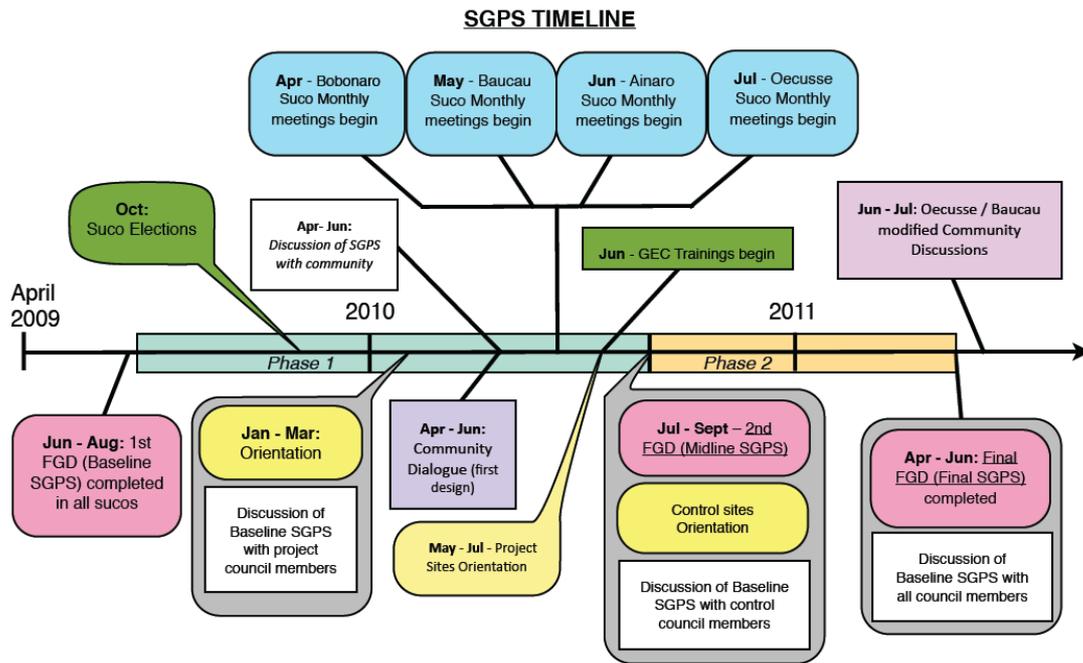
**Table 4: Suco Governance Indicators and the 2004 Law on Community Authorities**

<b>Governance Area</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>The Suco Council/Chief “Shall”</b>	<b>The Suco Council/Chief “May”</b>	<b>Some Suco Councils/Chiefs Do</b>
Administration	Make meetings transparent			✓
	Produce an annual progress report	✓		
	Represent women and youth	✓		
	Gather population data		✓	
	Levy and collect fines			✓
Meeting Basic Needs	Protect the environment		✓	
	Protect water resources		✓	
	Manage suco lands or solid waste			✓
	Maintain health services		✓	
	Maintain education services		✓	
Peace and Social Harmony	Maintain roads		✓	
	Settle disputes at the aldeia level	✓		
	Settle disputes at the suco level	✓		
	Refer criminal cases	✓		
Consultation and Coordination	Address domestic violence	✓		
	Consult with citizens for planning	✓		
	Coordinate with government	✓		
	Work with civil society			✓
	Work with other suco councils			✓
	Undertake innovative activities			✓

The SGPS was finalized following review by a number of selected suco chiefs, known practitioners in suco council development, and experienced resource persons from the Foundation’s offices in Sri-Lanka, the Philippines and San Francisco.

## **FIELD IMPLEMENTATION**

The SGPS results were produced from FGDs in each of the six districts. The FGDs were conducted in coordination with the DNAAS and DNDLOT. The concerned District Administration offices of the Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management jointly supervised all activities. For all the SGPS data collections, 46 Facilitators were divided into 15 teams and conducted the FGDs. The Facilitators applied to and were selected for the positions by the GEC program staff. They were hired and placed based on the districts in which they would work. Many of the Facilitators led FGDs for the baseline, midline and final assessments.

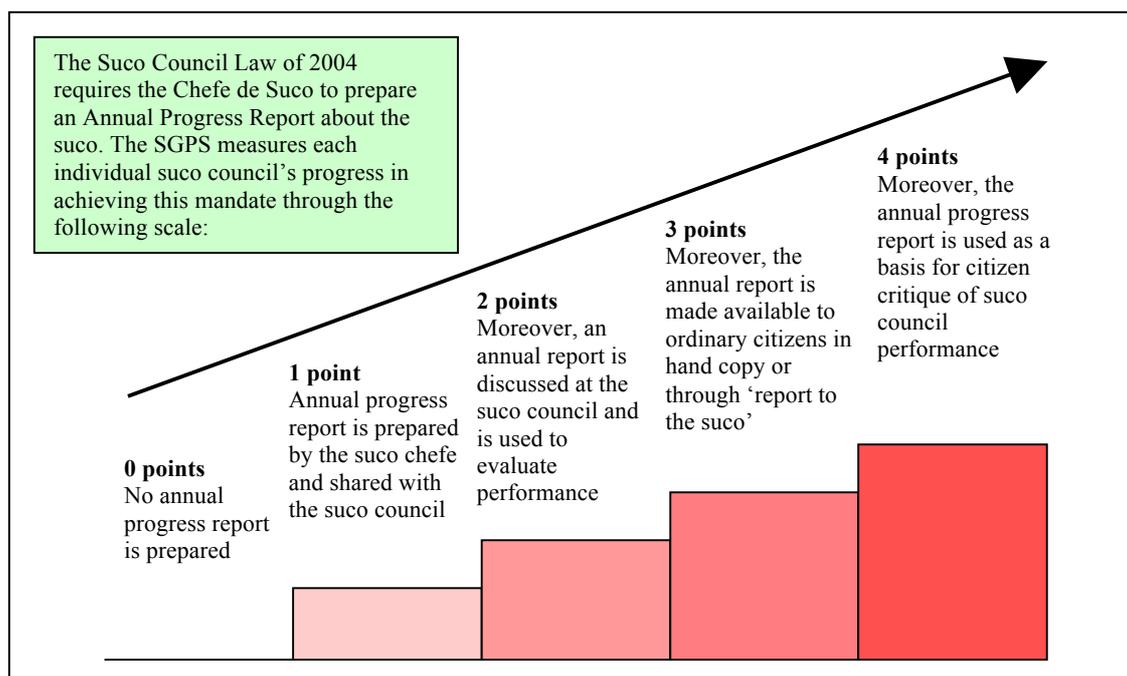


**Figure 20 – Time of other FGDs and other SGPS related activities**

The Facilitators met with each suco council, which included the suco chief, aldeia chief, youth representative, women’s representative and lia nain (a village elder who assists in dispute resolution). The discussion could last as long as 3 hours, and a meal was provided to the suco council participants. The FGD questions focused on the 20 quantified illustrative indicators of the four focus areas, or themes. The Facilitator presented and explained the indicators, and asked the council participants to discuss their roles, mandates, and accomplishments in local suco governance. The Facilitator also requested copies of suco council reports and documents where appropriate. While the questions sought to establish performance, they also invited commentary on challenges or obstacles to achieving these functions. The questions and discussions covered suco council activities from January, when the council term began, through the date the FGD was conducted<sup>15</sup>. In the midline data collection, brief documentation of the physical characteristics of the suco, such as the presence of main roads, schools and health services, was also obtained to provide additional explanatory variables.

Suco council performance in these 20 indicators was measured on a scale of 0 to 4—4 representing complete achievement in the function or mandate and 0 representing no achievement in the function or mandate. An illustrative example of one of these indicators is below:

<sup>15</sup> The 2009 baseline survey was conducted in June-July, while the 2010 midline assessment occurred July-September.



**Figure 9: Illustration of Scale Used in SGPS to Assess Suco Council Performance in Preparation of Annual Progress Reports**

To ensure that the FGDs were conducted properly, monitors consisting of project staff and representatives of the District Administration offices visited sucos with scheduled FGDs. These visits were complemented by field validation of completed FGDs. Some participants referred to the FGDs as training as standards of performance were explained and aspired to.

The results of the baseline SGPS were shared with both the project and control districts. The project districts received the results of the baseline surveys prior to the start of suco council terms in January 2010, to complement and inform the orientation of the newly installed suco councils. The control sites received the results of the baseline SGPS simultaneous with the administration of the FGDs for the midline SGPS, so that the results would not influence the midline performance results. In February through March 2010, the results of the baseline SGPS were discussed again in the project sites, this time in events that included the residents of the sucos. This period from baseline to midline was the first project phase providing an opportunity for project sites to showcase a performance change. The final FGD was carried out in April to June 2011 at which the results of the Midline SGPS were discussed with all sucos. This was the second project phase showcasing performance enhancement in control sucos. This process was much smoother in project sites that had experienced significant performance gains at the midline SGPS compared to control sites where scoring in certain themes had been low or negative.

**Table 5 – Explanation of Activities Measured at Each Baseline**

#FGD	Baseline FGD	Midline FGD	Final FGD
<i>Activities conducted that should be reflected in SGPS</i>	No program intervention: Establishes the baseline scores of the control sites and the project sites	<p><u>Project Sites</u> - The midline data should reflect: received orientation and review / discussion of baseline data, inter-suco monthly meetings commenced already.</p> <p><u>Control Sites</u> - The midline data should reflect: reception of no program intervention</p>	<p><u>Project Sites</u> – The final data should reflect: GEC training impact since midline, Inter-suco organization support.</p> <p><u>Control Sites</u> – The final data should reflect: received orientation and review / discussion of baseline data already.</p>

<i>Activities conducted during the FGD visit.</i>	FGD baseline is conducted	<u>Project Sites:</u> FGD Midline is conducted  <u>Control Sites:</u> FGD Midline, Orientation, Discussion of SGPS baseline	<u>Project Sites:</u> FGD Final, Review SGPS midline  <u>Control Sites:</u> FGD Final, Review SGPS midline
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### Suco Council Orientation

As part of the Foundation’s commitment to promote suco governance performance growth, the organization chose to provide orientation to participating sucos so as to influence better performance through greater understanding of the suco council roles and expectations. A magazine *Knaar Lideransa Kounitaria* was created and facilitators trained that would help guide councils through the administrative manual provided by the MATSM that many council members found difficult to penetrate or comprehend in its entirety. The orientation described suco structure, terms, mandates, expected roles and other related issues under the suco law. Flipcharts and magazines were used to outline key aspects of the law relating to community leaders.

Twenty-eight facilitators from the Forum of NGOs of Timor Leste delivered the orientation first in the project sucos during May – July 2010 before the midline FGD. It was later delivered to control sucos during the midline so as not to affect the scoring recorded in control sites.

### Trainings

The trainings delivered were the largest part of the GEC project. Although technically the orientation was a part of the GEC-delivered trainings, it was conducted in all districts while the other trainings were carried out only in project sites. Training subject matter was guided by data obtained through the baseline FGD, particularly in areas displaying poor performance (>50% scoring 0-1 out of 4) in need of greater capacity building. These included:

- a) Co-ordination with national government ministries/organizations (health, education, water, environmental protection)
- b) Inter-suco cooperation
- c) Representation of women and youth in suco councils
- d) Administration skills
- e) Campaigning against domestic violence

Priority was given to those that were amendable to easy module design and application in a short time frame. *Youth & Female Representation* and *Domestic Violence* were two examples of this. Other low scoring indicators included *Referring Cases to Judiciary*, *Solid Waste Management* and *Managing Suco Lands*. However, tackling these issues required long lead times for delivery and/or a degree of high technical input that the project could not provide.

The project focused training on four modules:

1. *Orientation of Suco Functions*: In-house development with input from DNAS and given in a four to six hour workshop. This was delivered to all participating sucos.
2. *Training Chefs and their Secretary*: In-house development and input from DNAS. The workshop was one week-long and delivered only to those in project districts.
3. *Skills for Youth and Women’s Representatives*: This was tested in Maliana and delivered to two Youth and two Women’s representatives in project districts.
4. *Campaigning Against Domestic Violence*: This was developed in partnership with Forum Tau Matan. Training was given to women’s representatives, plus chefe or the lian nain (if the women’s representative expressed this interest). This was a one-day workshop delivered to project sucos.

The DNAAS gave administrative training themselves in the control site on use of the admin manual for sucos that outlines making reports, minutes to meetings, gathering data and managing meetings. However the training in the project sites was more intensive (five-day developed module) to ensure trainers adequately explain the administrative manual and utilize effective training tools such as role-playing.

The fostering of inter-suco cooperation and initiative in relation to health, road maintenance and education also took place but this was approached through the activities described below rather than through individual modules.

### **Visioning Workshops and Community Dialogues**

The purpose of the community dialogues was to craft a community vision, orient citizens on the functions of suco councils, define what the councils should focus on within those functions to contribute to the attainment of the vision, and identify how the citizens can help improve the performance of their council. The results of the SGPS generated much discussion and motivated the suco councils to do more during their new term. The dialogues engaged an estimated 3,443 invited citizens (of which approximately 862 were women) and another 800 to 900 “active onlookers” (residents of the sucos who were not explicitly invited but participated in the discussions). The most common or popular themes derived from these sessions centered on:

1. Electricity;
2. Water;
3. Roads to markets;
4. Clinics; and,
5. Council offices in the aldeia.

Following community dialogues, many suco chefes pressed for training in creating proposals, which the project supplied. A modified Community Dialogue event was designed to incorporate knowledge about delivery agents within the suco and suco co-ordination of this delivery. A modified version was piloted in Oecusse and later conducted in Baucau in June and July 2011.

### **Inter-Suco Cooperation**

The SGPS revealed that inter-suco or joint suco initiatives to address common problems are rare, and coordination between suco councils and central government is weak. To address these gaps, project activities were aimed at encouraging inter-suco cooperation, coordination and dialogue between suco councils and public service providers (ministries). These activities consisted mainly of regular monthly meetings between suco councils and agencies responsible for service delivery and inventorying and sharing of suco governance best practices. Working with the District Administrators and Sub-district Administrators, the project helped organize a total of 12 meetings beginning in April 2010 at which a different pertinent issue was discussed (e.g. Health, Agriculture, Best practice, Suco law, etc.) and other relevant organizations such as the local PNTL or NGOs were engaged. Another activity, a weekly radio program, also commenced on which common suco governance programs were discussed and best case outcomes or successes were showcased<sup>16</sup>. At the initiative of local suco councils, the project assisted in the formation of district-level associations of suco councils.

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<sup>16</sup> The weekly radio program broadcast on community district radio was begun in 3 out of the 4 districts. At the time of program implementation the radio tower in Ainaro was not working.

## **Methodology Discussion**

The design of the SGPS has largely been successful in the delivery of project outcomes of increasing suco council performance in the designated indicators and collecting the required data in a timely manner. Most importantly, the project showed that one of the most important facets of design was the ability to obtain and provide feedback results to participants so as to reinforce suco council roles and national government desired levels of performance. Many suco councils regarded the FGDs as trainings as they entailed a large participation component. They also outlined expected activities for high performances scores, which councils there after considered as goals or benchmarks to attain.

Although innovative and modelled for rapid assessment, such design does contain certain compromises. The simple designation of prime indicators is intended to be fast and easy for participants to understand so that they might easily also track their own progress regarding suco performance (and likewise for new for facilitators). The drawbacks apparent with the ease of use are a limitation of data indicators and a lack focus on deep qualitative research.

A critically intensive qualitative focus would not only raise project costs and make program feedback difficult to achieve, but it also would require the program to conduct FGDs less frequently or over a much smaller scale of participants. Therefore the annual nature of data collection is intended to allow a wide participant base while keeping project costs lower. These long one-year intervals do however result in tracking suco changes slower with less feedback to suco councils.

### **Timeframe**

Although the data indicates that the project has accomplished good (Average score ~3) results within the three-year lifespan of the project, a number of time constraint issues in the project implementation are worthy of discussion. Considering the strong performance and steady improvement in sucos, it is apparent that continued implementation would have value and would likely result in continued progress.

Given that SGPS took place once a year and there were a number of project parts to gauge through control site comparisons, an additional year would have been beneficial for assessing the outcomes of the differing project parts. The Midline SGPS reflected Phase 1 implementation by comparing orientation and SGPS Baseline review in project sites with no implementation in control sites. The Final SGPS reflected Phase 2 implementation contrasting GEC trainings, inter-suco association support and SGPS review in project sites with orientation and SGPS review in control sites. It would be beneficial to examine the outcomes of orientation and SGPS review isolated from each other to establish their level of effectiveness and better gauge weaknesses.

It would also be advantageous for suco council review of SGPS data to take place in a quicker timeframe than what has been demonstrated so far. After the baseline FGD had taken place, project sites received their SGPS results and participated in facilitated discussion within six months. Recognizing that other activities such as the orientation had taken place, the results at the project midline FGD showed very strong improvements, particularly when compared to gains at the final FGD at which midline results were discussed. Control sites had not participated in a review or received baseline SGPS results and their scores decreased. Thereafter approximately 16 months had elapsed between the last SGPS discussion (which were regarding baseline results), while in control sucos only approximately nine months had passed since receiving SGPS baseline results and these improved stronger by percentage. Therefore, the data indicate that a short time between conducting FGD and reviewing the results produces better suco performance. It would be of even greater benefit to participating

sucos to receive SGPS results at the time of collection so that planning could begin immediately to fix indentified gaps and challenges.

### **Scoring**

Because of the finality of the top score (4), it is difficult to measure the percentage of change experienced in each suco relevant to each other. For example, a suco with a starting score of 2 experiences a performance increase of 50% to reach 3 (good). However a suco with a score of 1 experiences an increase of 100% to reach a score of 2 (basic). The higher the starting score, the more difficult it is to register a percentage score comparable to a low scoring suco that may undertake very basic increases in suco performance to still register in what is perceived to be significant improvement.

The ceiling value of 4 may also limit suco perception of performance and the activities or efficacy the suco council is capable. It would be ideal that upon reaching a high score of 4 in an area that the suco council continues to aspire to improve their deliver of services in this indicator.

The question on the environment is related to *tara bandu* and its implementation. If it is not needed then the suco scores 0. *Tara bandu* is not solely an environmental device to regulate resource use, extraction or destruction. There are strong spiritual elements that may not be suitable for a formal, non-traditional council to regulate. Therefore an absence of *tara bandu* implementation not actually reflect a lack of good environmental protection or management.

### **Indicators Conflicting**

It is possible that a number of indicators may contradict or affect the performance of others. This may severely alter the score of a suco. An example might include the indicator: *Coordination with the National Government*. Trying to perform well in this indicator could easily harm other indicators if government programs challenge good performance in other areas, such as state development that impacts water sources, the degradation of traditional land management or environmental resource management systems.

Managing suco lands is rated medium (2) if it is leased to a business or the government jointly manages. This might indicate ineffectual use, particularly if suco land is not available for member use during times of stress. In addition, a score of 2 does not stipulate sustainable use, which is the criteria for scoring of 1. Therefore, a suco that refuses to lease or jointly manage land with the government because of concern of environmental impact it will score less.

Clashes between traditional mechanisms that are still favored culturally and formal institutional processes may cause performance issues. Traditionally, the village leaders would deal with disputes or crime. Therefore, suco councils may identify referral of cases to the justice system as ineffectual dispute resolution at suco or aledia level (one of the indicators).

# Recommendations

## Program Outcomes and Data

The SGPS data denotes that fostering inter-suco interaction has resulted in better governance outcomes but further encouragement of this may produce even greater results. Evidence present in the data collected from the FGDs the project has value and is capable of making strong increases in suco governance indicators. There is good indication that with ongoing support, sucos could make greater improvements, as there appears to be strong desires for increased development at suco governance levels within the suco councils.

The findings demonstrate that Orientation of suco councils is extremely valuable and had strong returns in terms of performance improvement. Phase 1 showed an improvement of over 50% in project sites in less than one year. Phase 2 showed that this result was repeated in control sites the next year. Intensive training that makes use of role-playing and simple flipchart explanation of the administrative manual produces strong gains in terms of suco council comprehension of state government expectations of suco roles. Likewise, systems of review against performance indicators that take place regularly and are communicated back to participants for discussion have also proved extremely valuable.

The SGPS is capable of identifying strengths and weakness by themes. Certain areas performed well such as Administration. However, Peace and Social Harmony did not show as strong of gains. Further interventions are required if possible, for stronger liaising and communication with sucos from the government when gaps exist in suco performance and knowledge of governance roles, so support may be provided.

This report supports the possibility of greater publication of results district-wide through means such as relevant media that may help foster an understanding among community members on how local suco councils perform relative to others. This newly gained knowledge can help to encourage competition, benchmark performance levels, transparency and accountability to the community and provide a greater exchange of best practice amongst suco councils.

Further research unravelling the complex nature of formalized suco roles and activities within informal traditional systems still existent in Timor -Leste would also prove beneficial. If traditional mechanisms are working, support should be sought to provide adequate paths of strengthening them. Greater comprehension of how informal and formal mechanisms may conflict and lead towards undesired outcomes in terms of good suco governance would be of immense value, particularly among traditional informal institutions seeking to consolidate power or roles that are being lost to formalized functions.

A possible future application of the SGPS is its use by line agencies for the intention of integration with review for service provision. Current evidence reveals that sucos are performing state functions but do not possess enough resources for the outputs that are attempted. They are far removed from the state apparatus without state accountability to feedback.

Greater need is required to incorporate the suco into the formal state system so that local leaders can best direct resources to localized needs. Still needed is sensitivity to possible friction between traditional governance mechanisms currently working effectively and conventional processes of bureaucratic decentralization.

## Methodology

The SGPS would benefit from the introduction of a raised scaling system so that as sucos achieve certain levels of performance in individual indicators, incentives or goals exist to continue to improve performance. Research and trials into the adequate times for this to take place would need to be undertaken.

Certain indicators used in the SGPS may benefit from some review and possible adaptation. Regarding the indicator *Protecting the Environment*, giving opportunity for examination of specific environment problems and management is necessary rather than a focus on tara bandu, which is more than a resource management tool. Programs of reforestation and rubbish prevention may be of use. The *Managing Suco Lands* may also benefit from review, particularly its scoring based upon joint management or leasing of lands to outside agencies.

Other indicators also require review so as to ascertain how successes in one might conflict with another. *Settling Disputes at Aldeia Level* may conflict with *Referring Cases to the Justice System*. Although the provision and management of volunteers for the maintenance of certain community necessities demonstrates strong local governance systems, it also belies a possible suco council difficulty with forming strong relations with government departments or consultations with other outside agencies. Conversely some indicators such as *Working Relationships with Higher Government Levels*, *Working Relations with NGOs* and *Collaborate for Health Services*, may not reflect strong suco efforts at forming strong relationships and liaising with outside agencies if such institutions are unwilling to do so.

Also of benefit would be the introduction of quicker feedback of SGPS results to participating suco councils. If the SGPS tool is to be regarded as a serious model of monitoring and self-review, shorter time periods between collection of data in the FGD and dissemination needs to occur. This could preferably be conducted at the time of collection.



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