Quantitative or qualitative indicators...What about both?

Palen Ata, Malampa Provincial Government
Rex Thomas, Sanma Provincial Government
Mihaela Balan, GRM International

GRM

Quantitative or Qualitative indicators

- What would you prefer?

- How do you measure "Increased Participation in Local Government"?

Choosing Indicators: Quantitative Indicators

- "Preference" for quantitative indicators
  - Simple quantitative indicators or "counts" are used
  - Noted for their "Objectivity"
  - Data could be interpreted in the same way by different people
- However...
  - capture only a "slice" of something larger and more complex
  - Less effective in understanding process

Choosing Indicators: Quantitative Indicators – Is it enough?

- Objective: "Increased Participation in Local Government"
- Indicator: # of citizens attending town meetings" is a straightforward count but....

- ? type or character of the interaction between citizens and government officials
- These are "process issues" – crucial to understanding impact as opposed to simply measuring it.

- Qualitative indicators which delve into issues of process

Qualitative indicators

- Collecting Qualitative data ... a 'narrative' (difficult to analyse)

But

- Measures of qualitative aspects can take a variety of forms, and do not always require a narrative; three such approaches are:
    - Quality/rating Scales
    - (Multi-component) Indexes
    - Scorecards and Checklists

- These tools (1) are used to develop indicators that help in quantifying complex issues; (2) ensure quantitative analysis of answers that derive initially from ratings or assessments by people; (3) **Obtain quantitative scores derived from qualitative data**

- Are often based on the "subjectivity" of individual judgments, but strategies are available for enhancing their reliability

Qualitative methods

- *A Scale* is a rating device that presents a range of responses

    _____

    1   2   3   4   5

    Low   High
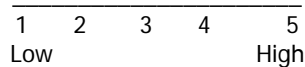
- A scale enables the transformation of the complex human judgments on whatever dimension is being rated into numbers

- Scales for individual ratings can be combined into a multi-item *index* containing multiple bits of information about the thing being measured.

- Scorecards/checklists- (Yes/No)

Governance Reform and Sustainable Partnership

- GRASP - Five-year demand driven technical assistance program (2002-2007)
- USAID funded
- "Improve Democratic Governance at the Local level" (SO)

Local Governments:
- Become more capable to borrow and leverage other donor funds
- Improve quality of existing public services
- Improve financial management and budgeting capacity
- Expand citizen outreach mechanisms
- Make decision making more transparent

Civil Society Organizations and LG Associations:
- Participate effectively in strategic planning, implementation, and oversight
- Strengthen institutional capacity and network to promote best practices
- Partner with local government to create new community services

---

Local Government Capacity Index (LGCI)

- **Linked to GRASP Results framework**
- **Captured "soft" dimensions of "governance"**
- **Transformed human judgments into numbers**

LGCI: An innovative tool in Program Management

- **LGCI covered 79 local governments and 4 control LGUs**
- **WHAT:** A tool to measure the performance of participating local governments in certain functional areas of GRASP
- **HOW: Quantitative scores derived from qualitative data**
- **WHEN:** Aug – Sept 2003 baseline collection; Sept – Oct 2004 follow up measurement
- **WHO:** Independent Expert Survey Company to ensure validity and impartiality
- **WHY - PURPOSES:**
  - Measures program impact
  - Evaluation tool for measuring government capacity
  - Internal management tool

LGCI - An innovative tool in Program Management

| 75 point total for each LGU | 15 ordinal indices, 0-5 point range each |
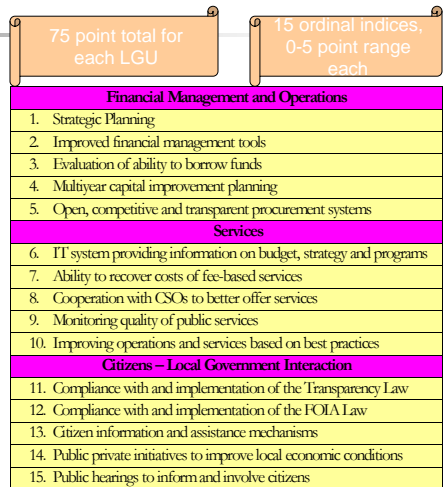
How the LGCI works?

- 15 questions scored from 0 to 5
- Maximum score 5 points
- grouped into 3 thematic areas
  1. Financial management and operations
  2. Services
  3. Citizens- local government interaction

| Financial Management and Operations |
| --- |
| 1. Strategic Planning |
| 2. Improved financial management tools |
| 3. Evaluation of ability to borrow funds |
| 4. Multiyear capital improvement planning |
| 5. Open, competitive and transparent procurement systems |
| **Services** |
| 6. IT system providing information on budget, strategy and programs |
| 7. Ability to recover costs of fee-based services |
| 8. Cooperation with CSOs to better offer services |
| 9. Monitoring quality of public services |
| 10. Improving operations and services based on best practices |
| **Citizens – Local Government Interaction** |
| 11. Compliance with and implementation of the Transparency Law |
| 12. Compliance with and implementation of the FOIA Law |
| 13. Citizen information and assistance mechanisms |
| 14. Public private initiatives to improve local economic conditions |
| 15. Public hearings to inform and involve citizens |

LGCI - Measuring Success

- **"0 point municipality"** does not comply with the law or any GRASP program goals
- **"75 point municipality"** all 15 questions receive 5 points:

1) Has a strategic plan
2) Uses modern financial management tools
3) Is eligible to borrow funds
4) Has a capital improvement plan
5) Uses open, competitive and transparent procurement system
6) Improves social services delivery
7) Recovers the cost of fee based services
8) Cooperates with CSOs to offer better services
9) Involves citizens in monitoring the quality of public services
10) Improves operations and services based on best practices
11) Complies with the Transparency Law
12) Complies with the FOIA Law
13) Uses citizen information and assistance mechanisms
14) Establishes public-private initiatives to improve local economic conditions
15) Organizes public hearings to inform and involve citizens

Indicator CP2 – measured by LGCI Question #15
Local government has conducted public meetings, hearings or other events to inform and involve citizens in developing the budget and other public decisions

Indicator CP 2
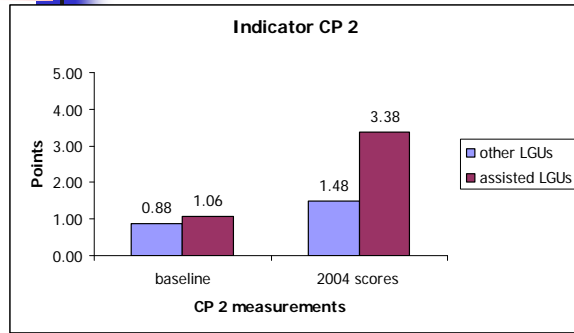
The Scale:
0 - no meetings
1 - citizens have been informed about the draft
2- meetings prepared based on a public campaign
3 - LGU and citizens conferred on the budget
4 - budget modified, as per the requests of the citizens
5 - hearings after the budget adoption

- **LGUs receiving direct technical assistance in holding public hearings increased scores 218% from the baseline- with 28 public hearings held on the budget and capital plans creating 19 new services, while other LGUs increased only 68%**

Indicator SFS1.2 – measured by LGCI Question #8
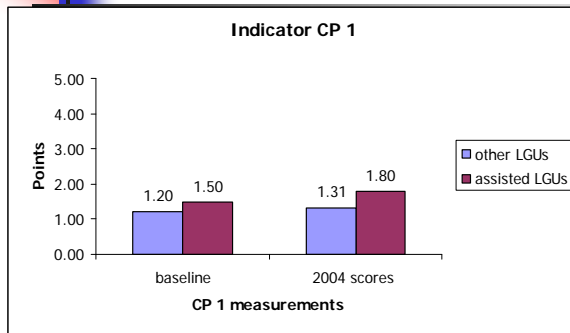*Local government cooperates with CSOs in order to offer better services to citizens*

Indicator SFS 1.2
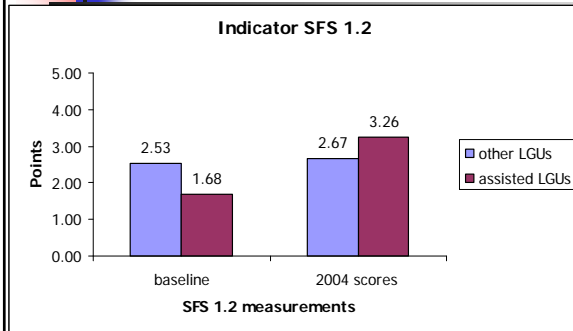
The Scale:
0 - no partnerships with CSOs
1 - initiated partnership with CSOs
2 - institutionalized partnership
3 –implemented at least one project in cooperation with a CSO
4 - the LGU has subcontracted at least one services to CSOs
5 - at least one strategy created together with a CSO to implement a project

- **LGUs receiving direct technical assistance in cooperating with CSOs increased scores 94%, while other LGUs increased only 6%**
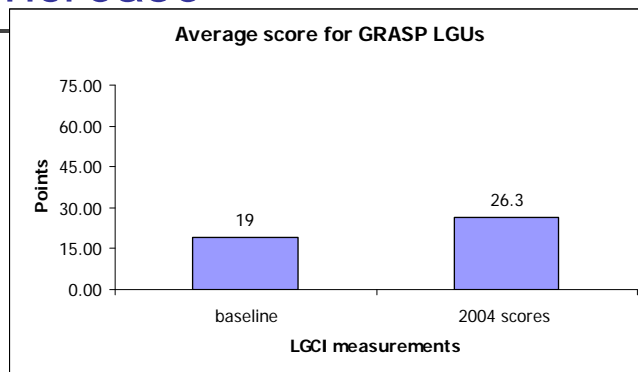
Indicator CP1 – measured by LGCI Question #13
*Local government has a citizen information mechanism
to help make services more accessible and convenient*

Indicator CP 1

Points

5.00		
4.00		
3.00		☐ other LGUs
	1.80	☐ assisted LGUs
2.00	1.20 1.50	1.31
1.00		
0.00		

baseline   2004 scores

CP 1 measurements

0 – no citizen information
    mechanism
1 –only information for the public
2 - receives applications from
    citizens
3 - hands on assistance to citizens
4 - designed based on citizens input
5 - solve citizens problems

- **LGUs receiving direct technical assistance in improving citizen information centers increased 20% from the baseline, while other LGUs increased only 9%**

Results: LGCI Average Score Increase

Average score for GRASP LGUs

Points

75.00	
60.00	
45.00	
30.00	26.3
	19
15.00	
0.00	

baseline   2004 scores

LGCI measurements

- **All 79 LGUs working with GRASP increased their average scores by 38%**

Results to inform program management

- Big cities increased their scores more than communes
- GRASP assisted LGUs that received direct technical assistance saw significantly increased scores
- Higher score increase in low developed areas (South, South West), and lower score increase in developed areas (Center, West)
- Time consuming activities (capital investment plans, improving social services delivery, policy reform) need more time from inception to capture results, compared to budget hearings or monitoring services where GRASP saw tremendous impact relatively quickly

Lessons learnt from LGCI/MCI process

- Train raters:
  - even with well-defined scales that are to be combined into an index, raters must be trained;
- Use comparative judgments among the items in one index
- Use the same team of raters each time the indicator data are collected

- Examples of other indices: CSO Advocacy Index
- Used in other programs: TVET Sector Strengthening program (Vanuatu): TVET CI

Conclusion: Quantitative or Qualitative?

- No perfect indicators
- simple *quantitative indicators* can be misleading because they do not tell the whole story;
- *indicators about quality* can be complex and are more subjective; involves interpretative judgements
- Complex indicators would cost more.

- The trick is ...to find the best indicator or mix of indicators for the purpose of better program management.

Final....Conclusion

- Principle of "parsimony"

  " do not search for a complex tool or explanation if a simpler tool is available to do the job"