Insights into Open Local Governance

A product of the Open LGU Research Project (http://www.lguopendata.ph)

ASSESSING OPEN GOVERNANCE DATA IN BOHOL

Bohol, in the heart of Central Visayas, is the 10th largest island in the Philippines. It is comprised of 48 municipalities and one city with 15, 14, and 19 municipalities composing the first, second and third congressional districts, respectively. The productive force of Bohol is almost 58% of the total population, of which around 89% are engaged in farming and fishing. Agriculture remains the biggest sector in the province in terms working population and land use.

Bohol is at the forefront of participatory local governance in the country. The Provincial Government of Bohol (hereafter, Bohol) is one of the most awarded provinces in terms of excellence in local governance. In 2011, using the Local Governance Performance Measurement System scorecard of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Bohol ranked as the best governed province in the Philippines.

The Open LGU Research Project wants to assess Bohol's initiatives in making the local government more transparent, or open, to the public. With funding support from the International Development Research Center through the World Wide Web Foundation, a research was conducted in the second half of 2013 to gauge the province's initiatives on open governance and how these initiatives impacted on citizen groups as well as the local government bureaucracy.

The study found out the following:

1. Bohol fully complies with the Full Disclosure Policy (FDP) of DILG by posting required governmental information in its website. These documents, usually financial in nature, are made available in portable document format (PDF), and are regularly updated on a quarterly basis.

2. Bohol provides more information in its website about local governance affairs than what is required. For example, the province posts its Provincial Atlas, a collection of maps and other relevant information that is useful for decision-making processes not only for governments but also for investors in its website. It also posts several plans and reports that gives information on the plans and accomplishments of the provincial government. There are several information in the website of Bohol that can be published as useful data sets.

3. Bohol achieves five of the ten criteria for open data. (see table on the right) Relevant governance data exists. The data is available in digital form. The data is available free of charge and is up-to-date and it is easy to find information on the data set. However, data can not be reused as it is not machine readable. The budget files, for example, are in PDF and needs to be converted into other forms (e.g. Excel spreadsheets) to allow a user to analyse the data.

4. While local governance documents are accessible through websites, citizen groups access government information through traditional media. Most of the civil society groups are not yet aware of the existence of the FDP. Thus, the different organisations did not look for documents in the provincial government's website. Most of the groups access government documents included in the FDP by requesting copies from government offices in the provincial government.

5. Information provided by Bohol in its website is hardly used by citizen groups. There are at least three reasons for this. First, they are not aware that the data exists in the website. Second, they are not interested with the information provided. Third, even when the information is provided, they do not have the technical knowledge to understand and use the documents for their benefit.

The impact of providing information to citizens through the government website is still very low at this stage. The FDP only began in 2011 and thus the low awareness of citizen groups regarding the initiative. Open governance data can only generate impact when the citizens know, take interest, understand, and use the data to advance the common good.

	Criteria	Bohol
1	**Does the data exist?**	
2	**Is it available online in digital form?**	
3	**Is the data machine readable?**	
4	Is the data available in bulk?	
5	**Is the dataset available free of charge?**	
6	**Is the data openly licensed?**	
7	Is the dataset up-to-date?	
8	Is the publication of the dataset sustainable?	
9	Was it easy to find information on the dataset?	
10	**Are linked data URIs provided?**	

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