

DevInfo in Action

Timor-Leste: Using CensusInfo for Innovative Census Dissemination and Social Inclusion

Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part series highlighting DevInfo implementation in Timor-Leste.

In the relatively new nation of Timor-Leste, government efforts to promote open information and local participation are crucial to fostering social cohesion and democratic governance. As such, the country's 2010 national census represented more than just an exercise in collecting national statistics: it provided the nation with a vital resource for good governance.

With these objectives in mind, the government of Timor-Leste has embarked upon an ambitious plan to take advantage of the recent census by sharing the key results with community leaders at every village in the country. To help organize and generate the needed reports for such a large-scale undertaking, the government opted to rely on [CensusInfo](#) database technology to meet its extraordinary data dissemination requirements.



Sensus Fo Fila Fali village workshop
Photo courtesy of Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance

CensusInfo: meeting a critical technology need

Census implementation is always a highly complicated process. In Timor-Leste for example, census data collection was handled by more than 4,000 staff members walking from household to household across the country. Government officials realized that they would soon require advanced technology to help organize, interpret, and display this data, in order for it to be of maximum benefit to the general population.

In 2010, representatives from Timor-Leste's National Statistics Directorate (NSD) and UNICEF Timor-Leste first learned about [CensusInfo](#) while attending the Asia-Pacific regional launch of DevInfo 6.0 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Impressed by what they saw, and sensing that this could be a timely solution for its census data dissemination needs, the NSD quickly put CensusInfo implementation into its workplan.



Timor-Leste CensusInfo – beta version

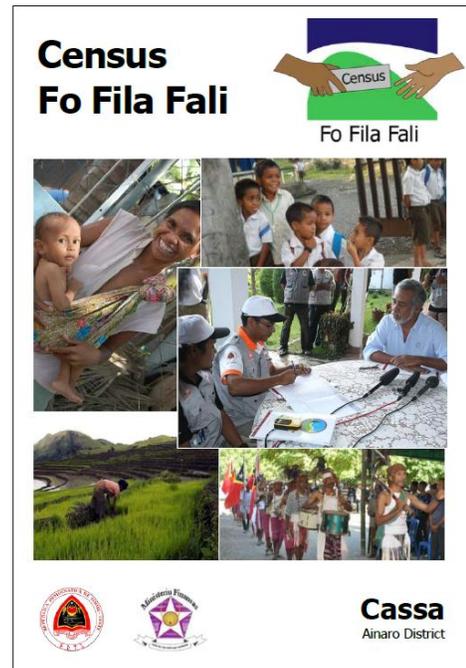
With strong support from UNICEF Timor-Leste, the NSD was able to develop a beta version of Timor-Leste CensusInfo containing basic population indicators

from the 2010 census. Soon thereafter, the database was updated with indicators at the Suco (village) level.

Sensus Fo Fila Fali: Giving back the census

In an ambitious effort to share the key results of the 2010 census with community leaders in every village of the country, the government's Ministry of Finance decided to launch a new project: [Sensus Fo Fila Fali](#), which means "Giving Back the Census." The project marks an historic effort to thank and include the citizens who made the census a success, as well as to engage them in the national development process through building capacity in the use of local socio-economic data.

Launched officially on 4 November 2011, the Sensus Fo Fila Fali project involves traveling to each of the country's 442 Sucos (villages) to present a customized 24-page report displaying key demographic and socio-economic information for that particular suco. Funding for this project was provided by the Government of Timor-Leste, UNFPA, and UNICEF.



Census Fo Fila Fali report for Cassa Suco

At every level of programme implementation, the Sensus Fo Fila Fali project has relied on an inclusive, participatory approach to undergird the wider goal of data dissemination. Seventy community consultations were held across the country in villages and towns, to help prepare local citizenry before the launch of project.

Once the project was under way, a total of 18 dissemination teams fanned out across the country to visit each of the 442 Sucos and conduct dissemination workshops. In so doing, these teams helped to fulfill the government's objective to provide local communities with the "feedback they deserve for having made generous efforts to make the collection of census information successful."¹

A platform for local empowerment and advancement

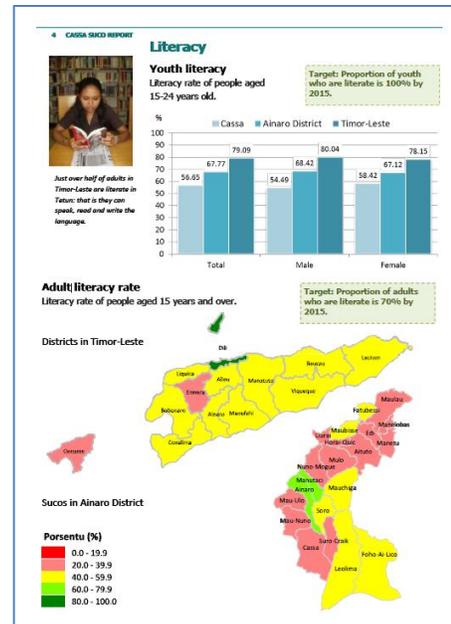
According to the Ministry of Finance, Sensus Fo Fila Fali workshops have provided local communities with an important platform for self-empowerment and self-advancement. Facilitators teach local leaders how to interpret the social indicators presented in the Suco Reports and understand how these

¹Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance website, <http://www.mof.gov.tl/about-the-ministry/statistics-indicators/sensus-fo-fila-fali/>, accessed 10 January 2012.

indicators are related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Understanding these benchmarks helps village leaders learn how to monitor socio-economic progress in their villages.²

Suco Reports typically include tables, maps, and graphs, which provide details on the local demographic, educational, economic, housing, water, and sanitation situation. Local citizens and leaders can view specific health indicators such as the number of births attended by skilled personnel, a relevant benchmark value given the government's pledge to ensure a health post for every 1,000 to 5,000 people by 2020.³

In light of this information, the government hopes that Suco chiefs will be inspired to get local communities involved in the process of improving their own living conditions. The idea is to build capacity in local leadership in the use of indicators to set targets for socio-economic advancement at the village level.



Cassa Suco report, Literacy page

Through the Sensus Fo Fila Fali project, Timor-Leste serves as a global model of innovation in the use of data for development decision-making at the local level, through a combination of visionary government leadership, supportive international partners, and the effective use of database technology.

Data making a difference.

For more information, please contact Min Yuan, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF Timor-Leste, at myuan@unicef.org, Joao Da Costa, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, UNICEF Timor-Leste, at jdacosta@unicef.org, Elias dos Santos Ferreira, National Statistics Directorate, Ministry of Finance, Timor-Leste at edsferreira@mof.gov.tl, or Silvino Lopes, National Statistics Directorate, Ministry of Finance, Timor-Leste, at slopes@mof.gov.tl.

²Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance website, <http://www.mof.gov.tl/about-the-ministry/statistics-indicators/sensus-fo-fila-fali/>, accessed 10 January 2012.

³Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance website, Sensus Fo Fila Cassa: Ainaro District. p. 2, <http://www.mof.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/english-example-census-fo-fila-fali.pdf>, accessed 10 January 2012.