

Dynamics of Local Governance of Sto. Domingo, Albay

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the dynamics of local governance in Sto. Domingo, Albay, focusing on performance across key government areas such as development planning, fiscal administration, local legislation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) based on the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) indicators. It also aimed to determine the municipality's best practices, the challenges encountered in implementing good governance, the measures to address these challenges, and to propose an agenda for progress. A mixed-methods research design was employed, utilizing quantitative and qualitative approaches. A structured questionnaire, interviews, and document analysis were used to gather data. Findings revealed

that the LGU demonstrated moderate to strong performance in development planning, specifically on disaster preparedness and social programs, high citizen satisfaction in most governance areas, and an active legislative body with significant output. However, key challenges involved mismanagement risks, limited transparency, and political and administrative constraints. The study concluded that strengthening governance requires comprehensive reforms in financial management, participatory mechanisms, and accountability frameworks. The study recommended the adoption of an integrated governance focused on financial management, participatory mechanisms, and a strengthened monitoring and evaluation system to enhance transparency, citizen engagement, digital governance, and data-driven decision-making to improve LGU performance and development outcomes

Keywords: *performance, local governance, good governance*

INTRODUCTION

Local government plays a crucial role in the governance and administration of communities worldwide. Though its structure, function, and authority vary based on national contexts, cultural norms, historical backgrounds, and legal frameworks, it commonly aims to enhance autonomy, improve the delivery of services, and encourage citizens' participation. To achieve these goals, the national government transfers power, authority, and resources to the local level. This is commonly known as decentralization, wherein more than 80% of the 75 developing countries implement this trend by the beginning of the millennium (Garman et al., 2001), or in the data of Hooghe et al. (2010), 70 % of 42 democratic and semi-democratic countries have decentralized since 1950, empowering local communities. Decentralization is fundamental in many countries, aiming to bring governance closer to the people. It allows local governments to have a degree of autonomy and the authority to make decisions regarding local issues. Countries like Canada (Ferland & Turgeon, 2023), Germany (Benz & Sonnicksen, 2022), and Australia (Joyce, 2020) have embraced decentralization, enabling local governments to respond more effectively to the needs of their communities. Bolivia (Rice, 2020; Tockman, 2015) institutionalized indigenous

community representation, while Rwanda (National Decentralization Policy, 2021) aligns local priorities with national goals. The benefits of decentralization include increased responsiveness, improved local governance, and the empowerment of citizens. Local governance in the Philippines is a multi-faceted system that plays a crucial role in achieving national development goals and addressing local needs. It is a vital aspect of the country's political landscape, influencing its socio-economic development, public service delivery, and community participation. The structure, functions, and dynamics of local governance in the Philippines can be understood through several key points, such as the 1991 Local Government Code (RA No. 7160), which grants local government units (LGUs) additional autonomy and responsibilities. The key features of local governance include autonomy and decentralization, local revenue generation, devolved powers and functions, and community participation.

Local governments are often seen as the most accessible level of government for citizens, offering opportunities for direct participation in decision-making processes. Participatory governance enhances democratic practices, allowing communities to voice their concerns and priorities. Mechanisms such as public consultations, community boards, and participatory budgeting have been adopted in various LGUs, where participatory budgeting has become a model for citizen engagement. Local governments are also tasked with providing essential services such as education, healthcare, transportation, and public safety. The effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery are often linked to the capacity of local governments. However, the effectiveness of local governance can be hampered by challenges. The research conducted by Atienza and Go (2023) identified several challenges, including financial and administrative dependence on the national government, inconsistent service delivery, political patronage, and corruption, among others. Though significant moves have been made in empowering LGUs, it also takes concerted efforts from stakeholders to promote sustainable development and improve the quality of life for their citizens. Given these situations in local governance, this study focused on the chosen locale, the LGU of Sto. Domingo, Albay, which emphasizes its core functions of governance such as development planning, fiscal administration, local legislation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Santo Domingo, formerly known as Libog, is a coastal municipality in the province of Albay. Comprising 23 barangays, the municipality has a land area of 51.22 square kilometers (19.78 square miles), which constitutes 1.99% of Albay's total area. Its population, as determined by the 2020 Census, was 37,765. This represented 2.75% of the total population of Albay province, or 0.62% of the overall population of the Bicol Region. Based on these figures, the population density is computed at 737 inhabitants per square kilometer or 1,909 inhabitants per square mile. (PhilAtlas, n.d.) From 2014-2024, Santo Domingo is categorized as a Fourth-Class Municipality (CMCI, 2024) compared to other municipalities in the 1st District of Albay. As reflected in the 2024 ranking in the Philippines, some areas need attention to improve their competitive index. The need to respond to development challenges, encourage active participation of civil society, and revisit the system of governance is deemed relevant and is addressed in this study.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution addresses decentralization primarily in Article X (Local Government). The provisions that discuss decentralization include: "The Congress shall enact a local government code which shall provide for a more responsive and accountable local government structure instituted through a system of decentralization..." (Section 3); and "The national government shall ensure that decentralization shall take into account the particular characteristics and needs of local government units." (Section 25) These provisions emphasize the importance of transferring certain powers and responsibilities from the national government to local government units (LGUs) to promote autonomy, development, and local accountability. Recently, the two laws were passed, pushing for the country's decentralization. The Mandanas Ruling of 2019 increased the tax base for intergovernmental fiscal transfers to support local government's autonomy and revenue-raising capacity, and in 2021, Executive Order No. 138 (EO 138) laid the guidelines for the effective transition of functions and responsibilities from the national to the local governments. (Juco, et al., 2023) The shift towards decentralization presents a challenge

for local government units (LGUs) to ensure a well-planned and smooth implementation of a devolved transition plan across political, fiscal, and administrative functions and services.

In 2014, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) established the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) to promote and sustain good governance practices among local government units (LGUs), encouraging transparency, accountability, and performance excellence in local administration. (DILG, 2022). The SGLG originated from the Seal of Good Housekeeping (SGH) program, launched in 2010. SGH aimed to recognize LGUs that upheld sound fiscal management and transparency in governance. It was focused primarily on financial accountability and compliance with the Full Disclosure Policy. On April 12, 2019, Republic Act No. 11292, also known as the Seal of Good Local Governance Act of 2019, was signed into law. The law institutionalized the SGLG as an annual recognition and awards program, ensuring its continuity and alignment with national development goals. (Republic Act No. 11292, The Seal of Good Local Governance Act of 2019, 2019). The SGLG criteria have evolved over the years, but as per the latest guidelines, LGUs must excel in the following core governance areas: Financial Administration and Sustainability; Disaster Preparedness; Social Protection and Sensitivity; Health Compliance and Responsiveness; Sustainable Education; Business-Friendliness and Competitiveness; Safety, Peace, and Order Environmental Management; and Tourism, Heritage Development, Culture, and Arts. LGUs must pass ALL governance areas to qualify for the SGLG award. The SGLG serves as a performance benchmark for LGUs. Recipients receive an SGLG marker and are eligible for incentives, such as access to the Performance Challenge Fund (PCF), which can finance local development projects. The SGLG program is recognized as a catalyst for improved public service delivery and effective local governance in the Philippines. (Department of the Interior and Local Government, 2020)

This study is also anchored on the four Sustainable Development Goals (UN-EMG, n.d.), namely: Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG#11), Good Health and Well-Being (SDG#16), Quality Education (SDG#4), and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG#13). These SDGs are especially relevant because they address the global challenges we are facing and addressing them on the community level would provide improvement of conditions for growth and development. Sustainable cities and communities reflect the need to secure safe and resilient settlements for the residents of the municipality. Good health and well-being and quality education support human capital development and long-term social progress. Moreso, peace, justice and strong institutions are crucial in the promotion of a peaceful society, provide access to justice, and accountability for good governance and community development. Together, these five SDGs complement local governance reforms by reinforcing the social foundations of sustainable and equitable community development. Local government units (LGUs) play a vital role in ensuring effective governance, public service delivery, and sustainable community development. Its responsibility encompasses key governance issues, namely: disaster resilience, economic development, public participation, and efficient resource management. Given the municipality's exposure to natural hazards, such as typhoons and volcanic activities, effective governance is crucial in disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and sustainable development. Despite existing governance structures, challenges such as transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement remain areas of concern. This study assessed the LGUs' practices by identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. By analyzing its performance through its development planning, fiscal management, local legislation, and monitoring and evaluation, insights as to how local governance can be enhanced to better serve the community were addressed. The findings of this study were deemed valuable for local policymakers, administrators, and community stakeholders. It may contribute to improving governance strategies, fostering inclusive participation, and ensuring that the LGU effectively responds to the needs of the people. Ultimately, this research aimed to support the continuous development of Sto. Domingo, Albay, by promoting good governance principles that enhance public trust and community welfare.

In the implementation of the Mandanas Ruling in the Philippines, local government units will receive a 55% increase in the internal revenue allotment (IRA) from the national tax revenue, addressing

the inequality in financial resources among LGUs, improving their capacity, and enhancing transparency and accountability. Ultimately, it serves as a crucial step in improving decentralization in the country (World Bank Group, 2021). Decentralization allows local governments to respond promptly to citizens' needs and provide more inclusive governance. Effective citizen feedback channels enhanced accountability. Local governance focuses on the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of government actions. Public administrators make decisions to help improve their cities or municipalities and make them more comfortable places to live. They are responsible for budgeting, hiring, and training government employees, as well as overseeing government programs and services. Public administrators manage the day-to-day operations of the government, including handling the finances, providing public services, and maintaining the municipality's infrastructure. (Arthur, 2022)

As local governance is evolving, the current demands in global governance require strong leadership, management, analytical, and collaboration skills. It translates theory into practice and enacts policies that create measurable results. Public administrators focus on new ways to make public services more efficient, including the use of technology and public-private partnerships. They must also work to diversify the public workforce so it reflects the population it serves. Some studies identified challenges facing public administration, which include declining public trust, deficiencies in human resource utilization, difficulty in making the case for government performance, identifying innovations to enhance services (Holzer, 2022), and adapting to the changing roles of public administrators concerning the broader public. (Meier, 2020). In line with this trend, this study embarked on the performance of an LGU, focusing on its basic functions, challenges in governance, and offering solutions for an enhanced public service delivery.

Local government units play a crucial role in governance, service delivery, and socio-economic development. Their performance is often measured by efficiency in development planning, fiscal administration, local legislation, and monitoring and evaluation. This section reviews existing literature on local governance focused on the aforementioned areas and, at the same time, identifies best practices, challenges, and recommendations.

Local Governance Paradigms

The concern about depleting common resources has led to the concept of global governance as a way to understand complex relationships and propose policies for addressing global challenges. Central to this concept is the idea of good governance.

The article written by Lay et al. (2023), outlined three important things in realizing good local governance, first, the realization of good governance is a common vision of bureaucratic reform; second, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of the problems faced; and third, the use of conventional management approach, where employees are considered as one of the factors of production so their preferences and behavior are assumed to be the same. Government apparatus resources are a vital and strategic element in the administration of government, so the performance needs to be continuously improved in the realization of good local governance. Bureaucratic reforms for good governance also mean transformations of the LGUs in terms of their vision, LGU leadership, and citizen engagement (Calleja et al. 2016). The article further emphasized the transformation of local governments, which is focused on several areas of reform, including improving structure and systems, changing the culture, developing human resources, and creating policies and programs. This comprehensive approach led to the transformation of bureaucratic and unprofessional government services into transparent, professional, and efficient public services that fostered pride, transparency, and social equity.

Development planning

Development planning refers to the deliberate government-led process of setting economic and social goals, allocating resources, and implementing policies to achieve sustainable growth, poverty

reduction, and improved living standards (Todaro & Smith, 2020). Development planning is the backbone of effective local governance, ensuring resources align with community needs. LGU development planning in the Philippines faces systematic challenges, but has seen innovative approaches to improve integration, resource management, and sustainability. It is therefore imperative to determine how LGUs formulate, implement, and evaluate local development plans and programs while highlighting their successes, challenges, and innovations.

Planning processes. The planning process generally refers to the systematic procedure used by local government units (LGUs) to prepare and implement development plans that guide policymaking, resource allocation, and service delivery. One of its key features is ensuring multi-stakeholder participation and consultation, making the planning process inclusive and transparent by involving sectoral committees, local special bodies, advisory councils, and the general public (DILG, n.d.). Participative planning was a key highlight in the study by Moreno (2024), which examined the administration of Local Economic Development (LED) in the Zamboanga Peninsula region of the Philippines. The study analyzed the roles of local government units (LGUs), private sector involvement, and community participation in fostering sustainable economic growth. The findings revealed both successes and challenges in local governance, highlighting the importance of inclusive planning, capacity-building, and addressing socio-economic disparities. Key obstacles include weak institutional coordination, limited resources, and insufficient infrastructure investment. The study offered policy recommendations to strengthen governance frameworks, enhance private sector engagement, and promote community-driven development.

The provincial government of Bulacan (2021), as a leader in participatory development planning, integrates grassroots consultations, digital governance, and sectoral collaborations to ensure that its policies align with the real needs of its communities. The strategies used include: a) participatory budgeting, which enables community members to directly propose and vote on local projects this approach reduces political bias in fund allocation; b) regularly holds public consultations and town hall meetings, allowing citizens to express concerns and provide feedback on ongoing projects; c) leveraged on e-governance to promote transparency and accessibility; ex. Online portals for business registration, tax payments, and citizen inquiries have improved service efficiency while minimizing opportunities for corruption; d) collaborated with universities and research institutions to integrate evidence-based policymaking into its planning process. Studies conducted by academic institutions have provided valuable insights that inform the provincial government's long-term strategies; and e) partnered with NGOs to implement livelihood training programs, ensuring economic opportunities reach marginalized communities.

The study by Lorenzo et al. (2021) examined the local planning and budget process of a highly urbanized local government unit (LGU) in Central Luzon, Philippines. It involves all department concerns and civil society organizations (CSOs) that use the City's local governance performance management system (LGPMS). Result indicated that the local government unit on their respective department follows the process of budget allocation system according to budget preparation issued by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) under Local Budget Circular (LBC), which emphasized the participatory budgeting, specifically on the emerging roles and engagement of the civil society organizations (CSOs), strengthening policy-based budgeting by harmonizing development plans, investment programs, and policies, and linking the budget about the provisions of the Local Government Code. Generally, the budgetary processes were not being completely implemented because of the delay in the data needed to project resources and the concrete establishment of expected output. Moreover, the emerging roles and engagement of Civil Society Organizations in planning and each phase of the Local Budget Process in LGU-Olongapo City were not being imposed, as stated, given the emphasis on the Updated Budget Operations Manual (2016 edition). One of its recommendations is that the LGU-Olongapo City employees, particularly the Department Managers, shall continuously be educated and shall learn to enforce the law

and the rules and regulations of COA, DBM, BLGF, DILG, and other oversight agencies in terms of the planning and budgeting process, emphasizing the participative governance mechanism.

Fragmented planning and integration challenges. Challenges in urban development, infrastructure projects, and policy implementation frequently result in inefficiencies, delays, and suboptimal outcomes. This condition was reflected in the study of Adams et al. (2025), who explored the profound implications of the Mandanas-Garcia Ruling on local governance in the Philippines, focusing on both the opportunities and challenges it presents. Some LGUs, especially those with strong leadership and institutional capacity, have effectively leveraged their newfound resources to implement impactful projects, such as the expansion of healthcare infrastructure, improvement of local schools, and upgrading of public utilities. Other LGUs face difficulties in managing their expanded responsibilities due to factors like inadequate technical expertise, political instability, and lack of transparency in resource allocation.

Manalo (2019) identified unique challenges in terms of policy implementation, such as limited financial and technical capacities, inter-agency coordination issues, and the need for improved data gathering and monitoring in LGUs. On the other hand, Magno et al. (2022) analyzed that disaster risk exposure hampers governmental operations and good governance requirements put up roadblocks for LGU spending and delivery.

Best practices. Some LGUs excelled in development planning that needs to be showcased for broader application. Legazpi City's case study on the path to climate resiliency (UN Habitat Philippines, 2020) integrates climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies into its local development plans, community-based disaster risk reduction and management, participatory planning and implementation, and collaboration with various stakeholders. The city has established a strong partnership with its communities, involving them in planning, implementation, and monitoring of its climate resilience initiatives.

Fiscal management

In the Philippine context, fiscal management refers to the planning, allocation, execution, monitoring, and control of public funds to ensure efficient, transparent, accountable, and prudent use of government resources in delivering public services (DBM, 2024; World Bank, 2021). For Bahl (2018), it encompasses revenue generation (including taxes, fees, and grants), budget execution, financial reporting, and intergovernmental fiscal coordination.

Revenue generation. Local government units generate revenue through taxes, fees, and other sources to fund public services. Several studies delved into how LGUs can improve revenue, considering it is a critical aspect for financial health, ensuring sustainability and growth. Challenges, however, are inevitable, especially when local governments rely too much on national funds, coupled with weak enforcement, or even when there is a low tax collection efficiency.

In Quezon City, the problem of poor collection and an unrealistic budgetary system for its expenditures was resolved by a prompt payment with a "carrot and stick" approach. The LGU has a 3 billion debt from suppliers and commercial banks, struggling with basic and social services, and rampant corruption. With this reform, real property tax laws were strictly imposed, while regulatory fees were changed to reflect market rates. Strict penalties were charged for those who delayed or avoided paying for real properties. Incentives were offered to lure voluntary tax payment (The Daily Tribune, 2024). To achieve sound fiscal management in LGU-Camiling, recommendations to achieve sound fiscal management include expanding the municipality's tax base and enhancing collection efficiency. Additionally, improving record management and building the capacity of personnel responsible for revenue administration are essential. This should be pursued while maintaining expenditure at a minimum level, ensuring that the quality of public service is not compromised (Camiling CDP 2017-2023). To enhance revenue collection in the LGU

of Bato, Catanduanes, the Annual Revenue Generation Plan has been developed with the assistance of a dedicated planning committee. Other initiatives include a massive tax campaign, the Ugnayan sa Barangay program, attendance at barangay assemblies, and the enhancement of tax records management (Bato, Catanduanes CPD 2020-2025). For Iligan City, revenue enhancement measures include the systematization of its tax records, intensification of tax mapping, a one-stop shop for easier tax payments, updating of property assessment, and other innovative financing strategies such as reconstruction of public market, and bus-jeepney terminal (Regional Best Practices, n.d.)

In San Jose Buenavista, a build, lease, and transfer scheme was in place to attract private investors to develop much-needed infrastructure. A private company builds the facility using its own money. The government or businesses lease and operate it for a set period, generating revenue, and after that period, ownership of that facility transfers to the local government. In effect, the LGU helped create more businesses and jobs, improve public services such as commercial and transportation, and attract more investors (San Jose Buenavista BLT Schemes, n.d.).

Budgeting and expenditure management. LGUs must demonstrate strong financial discipline, accountability in managing budgets and expenditures, and maintain up-to-date financial statements to attract investors and improve their financial standing. Sound fiscal practices, including controlling debt, managing liabilities, and creating long-term financial plans, are crucial for maintaining creditworthiness. By improving creditworthiness, LGUs can secure better financing terms, invest in key infrastructure projects, and ultimately benefit their communities (World Bank, 2022). Davao City's public financial management system underwent a restructuring in 2022, with the establishment of a reformed Public Financial Management Team, which optimized financial systems and improved public service delivery. This was combined with the active pursuit of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure projects and emphasis on financial literacy and capacity building for employees (EO No.61, S. of 2022).

For Aklan, the local government adopted Boracay's development as a priority program, focusing on transportation infrastructure and world-class facilities to enhance its tourism potential. The development strategies relied on marketing the project, securing financing, such as bond flotation or loans from financial institutions, under the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) schemes (Regional Best Practices, n.d.). The timely submission of financial reports to COA, efficient tax collection, and the use of the Government Accounting System for proper auditing of public expenditures are some of the best practices in Lapu-Lapu City concerning fiscal administration. This was coupled with adherence to procedures such as procurement, strategic budget planning, and expenditures based on the annual procurement plan (Malitao, 2020).

Local government units must efficiently manage their budgeting and expenditures to ensure sustainable development, public service delivery, and compliance with national laws. Common LGU expenditures include personnel services, office supplies and utilities, infrastructure, vehicles, and equipment. Challenges, however, are common in budgeting and spending, like a lack of local revenue, delays in implementation, underutilization of funds, corruption, and mismanagement. Budgeting, therefore, must be participatory (Caparas & Agrawal, 2016), transparent (Gabriel & Ong, 2018), and aligned with development goals (UNDP Guidebook, 2020).

Challenges of devolution. The Philippine devolution agenda, while emphasizing local autonomy, faces challenges. Thirty years after implementation, devolved functions remain partially dependent on national funding and accountability. This mismatch, coupled with structural and political constraints, leads to inconsistencies in service delivery across local government units. The study highlights this issue across three sectors- health, agriculture, and infrastructure – where concurrent provision of services by national and local governments persists, even for functions nominally devolved. The principle of subsidiarity, while intended to empower LGUs, is hampered by these ongoing dependencies. (Juco et al., 2023). Many LGUs lack the technical expertise to manage devolved services like healthcare and infrastructure, risking

“underspending” despite higher budgets. (Cordero, 2023) Sorsogon Gov. Escudero warned that devolution costs could exceed IRA windfalls, leaving LGUs with “insufficient funding.” Those attaching permanent functions and services to unstable sources of funds could be detrimental and counterproductive in the long run (Escudero, 2022). The importance of citizen participation in local governance is crucial for social accountability and improved LGU performance, driven by financial incentives and local interactions. To be effective, citizen participation needs clear expectations from the government and should address structural, operational, and legal conflicts caused by leadership issues. Identifying target citizens for mobilization and representation is a strategic step in the post-Mandanas scenario to achieve realistic and achievable outcomes in public financial management. (Medina-Guce, 2019)

Local legislation

Local legislations in the Philippines refer to the process by which local government units —such as provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays —enact ordinances, resolutions, and regulations within their territorial jurisdiction. These laws must align with the 1987 Philippine Constitution, national statutes, and judicial precedents while addressing local concerns (Atienza & Go, 2023). The primary legal framework for local legislation in the Philippines is Republic Act No. 7160, also known as the Local Government Code of 1991. This Code is the cornerstone of local autonomy, granting significant powers and responsibilities to Local Government Units (LGUs). It details the powers of provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays to create and enforce ordinances within their respective jurisdictions. The Code specifies the procedures for enacting, amending, and repealing local legislation, including public consultations and compliance with higher-level laws (Republic Act 7160, 1991). Local legislation in the Philippines operates within a complex framework, balancing the autonomy granted by RA 7160 with the constraints imposed by the Constitution, national laws, and judicial interpretations. The interplay of these legal instruments ensures a system of checks and balances while enabling LGUs to address their unique local needs (Legislative Process-Senate of the Philippines, n.d.) Recent studies and initiatives on legislative practices in local government units in the Philippines emphasize participatory governance, inclusivity, and improving legislative efficiency aligned with national development goals. The Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representation (IPMR) program seeks to enhance indigenous peoples' participation in local legislative councils, aiming to increase compliance with representation policies. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) works with LGUs to institutionalize this and enhance inclusive stakeholder engagement despite challenges in full implementation (Indigenous Representation in Local Legislative Councils, n.d.)

The Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 highlights efforts by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to improve the functionality of local legislative bodies, broadening participatory spaces, enhancing transparency, and expanding the role of civil society organizations in local decision-making. It also stresses improving bureaucratic efficiency in LGUs through rightsizing, digital transformation, and strengthening capacity, which directly affects legislative processes (Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028). The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) actively promotes excellence and innovation in local governance, including legislative functions, through programs like the 2025 Local Legislative Award that recognize exemplary local ordinances and legislative practices (2025 Local Legislative Award, DILG).

A few case studies highlighting successful ordinances include Mandaluyong City’s local legislative council’s best practice, which was awarded by DILG during the 2023 Local Legislative Awards. It was given the award because of its advocacy in protecting LGBT rights through enacting Anti-Discrimination Ordinance (ADO) 689, S-2018, which seeks to uphold the rights of all Filipinos, especially those discriminated against based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE). The ordinance was signed and enacted on May 17, 2018, by Mandaluyong City Mayor Carmencita A. Abalos. The ADO was also implemented in Quezon City, thereby creating a landmark victory for the protection of

human rights of the LGBTQ+ community that is worth emulating by other local government units (Capacillo, 2018). The Naga City's iGovernance Program is a participatory governance initiative focused on transparency and accountability. The Naga City Transparency Ordinance mandates the publication of government transactions and the establishment of an open data system. The program integrates local legislation with digital platforms like the Naga City Citizen's Charter and e-Governance initiatives. It provides residents with easy access to information regarding government services, processes, and expenditures. The program fosters direct engagement between the government and citizens and has been recognized nationally and internationally as a best practice in promoting good governance and civic participation (Naga City Government, n.d.).

Quezon City's Plastic Bag Ordinance (City Ordinance No. SP-2140, S-2012) aims to promote environmental sustainability by regulating plastic bags through a "Plastic Recovery System Fee" charged to consumers, discouraging excessive use and allocating revenue from these fees to ecological programs like reforestation and waste management, promoting alternative packaging solutions, such as reusable bags. Mandating compliance monitoring by the city's Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department. This legislation has contributed to a significant reduction in plastic waste and has been referenced by other LGUs seeking to adopt similar environmental policies (Quezon City Government, n.d.).

Monitoring and evaluation

In the context of local governance, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) refers to the processes of monitoring, assessing, and evaluating the performance of LGUs in implementing programs, projects, and services to ensure efficiency, transparency, and accountability (Buenaflor, 2024).

Monitoring refers to the regular tracking of LGU activities, resource utilization, and progress toward achieving targets. Evaluation, on the other hand, is the systematic assessment of LGU programs and projects to determine their effectiveness, impact, and compliance with legal and policy frameworks (Department of the Interior and Local Government, 2024).

Literature on monitoring and evaluation includes several academic studies, government frameworks, and project reports that together provide a comprehensive understanding of M&E systems, challenges, and best practices. Buenaflor (2024) delved into assessing M&E systems in the Philippine LGUs, where it analyzes the implementation of M&E within LGUs using the Good Governance Theory, focusing on how M&E aligns with governance principles like transparency, accountability, and efficiency. It highlights that many LGUs underprioritize M&E and identifies barriers to effective practice, proposing policy recommendations for enhancing evidence-based decision-making.

The paper of Faustino & Madela (2018) created an M&E model to guide the LGUs and to strengthen their initiatives on Coastal Resource Management's M&E in adjacent municipalities in Camarines Sur. Two different management tools are closely related, interactive, and mutually supportive through routine tracking of project progress; monitoring can provide quantitative and qualitative data useful for designing and implementing project evaluation exercises, which can refine strategies and can be further developed or improved.

The PIDS (Philippine Institute for Development Studies) often notes a low prioritization of M&E by LGUs, identifying institutional and capacity challenges. They provide critical insights into policy and governance gaps affecting M&E implementation in the local government context. Specifically, many LGUs give low priority to M&E, with responsibility mainly resting on local planning offices and executives (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2022).

Various frameworks exist that outline structured approaches for tracking LGU governance and service delivery, including integration with productivity and development support tools. One key example is the Local Government Performance Monitoring System (LGPMS) by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) in the Philippines. The LGPMS is an online self-assessment and data-gathering system that enables LGUs to monitor their performance across multiple service and governance areas. It

integrates tools like the Local Productivity and Performance Measurement System and the Local Development Watch, and it is designed as a management and development support tool to influence local and national decisions that improve service delivery and accountability. This integration exemplifies how monitoring frameworks combine governance tracking with productivity and development support mechanisms to enhance LGU operations and transparency (Department of the Interior and Local Government, n.d.).

Another comprehensive framework detailed in a monitoring and evaluation framework document by the Ombudsman discusses governance tracking using input, output, outcome, and impact measures, incorporating these monitoring tools in a broader performance management continuum (Ombudsman of the Philippines, n.d.).

Best practices in local governance

This section highlights the best practices of local government units (LGUs) across the country. It aims to provide a valuable reference for the current study by showcasing innovative strategies and initiatives implemented by these LGUs, illustrating how effective governance, community engagement, and resource management have contributed to local development. These examples will serve as benchmarks to guide the analysis and presentation of innovative practices adopted by the LGU of Sto. Domingo, Albay, offering insights into possible approaches for addressing local challenges and enhancing public service delivery.

Under the leadership of Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, the City of Muntinlupa has been reaping recognition for the implementation of its best practices. Its best practices include the strengthening of the JRFP Tulong Negosyo financing program for new entrepreneurs, which provides assistance by way of zero-interest loans and is now a home to at least 15,400 registered businesses. Serving more than 6,500 business owners, the LGU was hailed as the most business-friendly LGU in 2017 and 2018. This is the result of promoting streamlined business-application processes, that is, to settle their dues early in the month to avoid penalties and skip rush days of registration. The LGU is also considered debt-free as it settled a P2-billion loan contract from DBP and LBP in the year 2019, which is yet to be due in September 2021. Lastly, is the expansion of their educational assistance program to its local students through the Muntinlupa Scholarship Program (MSP), which caters to 60,000 scholars. (BusinessMirror, 2019)

Other significant awards and recognition previously given to Muntinlupa City include the following: Top 3 Most Competitive Highly Urbanized Cities in Government Efficiency" by the National Competitive Council; Most Child-Friendly City in the National Capital Region" by the Regional Council for the Welfare of Children; Most Innovative LGU; Best in Program Effectiveness; Most Improved Nutrition Program Management; Jose Rizal Award for Bloodletting Program; and Best in Health Emergency Management in Metro Manila. (Bunye, 2018)

In Davao region, the increase in IRA share would enable LGUs to embark on various activities and interventions to draw in more investments to their areas. The LGUs will support investments and economic activities in agriculture and tourism. Three major developments that would boost investments in the region will be in place. These include the declaration of the Davao region as a tourism and investment-ready destination by the Regional Development Council, increased assistance to the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) which play an important role in job creation and poverty reduction, and the modernization of the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (AFF) sector as another growth driver. These sectors would all benefit from the reopening and adding of direct and international flights at the Davao International Airport. (Quiros, 2023).

Emphasizing the importance of sustainable and effective health promotion across the country beyond the current pandemic, the Department of Health (DOH) celebrated the best healthcare practices among local government units (LGUs) through the Healthy Pilipinas Awards for Healthy Communities. Baguio City was awarded for its mental health program and its COVID-19 prevention and response, while

Borbon, Cebu, was commended for their Borbon Mental Health Warriors, Healthy Nanay and Bulilit, and Borbon Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Health Emergency Services programs. Tacloban, Leyte's Immunization program, and Substance Abuse program "New Beginnings" were also given recognition, while Imelda, Zamboanga Sibugay's Age-appropriate Immunization program was given an accolade (Journal Online, 2022).

Challenges to local governance

Based on the article released by the Asia Foundation and Galing Pook Foundation (2022), the issuance of Executive Order 138 was met with mixed reactions. Devolving functions to LGUs may lead to downsizing, merging, or abolishing programs of national government agencies, causing concerns among employees. This is due to insufficient funds to cover the costs of devolved functions and services. While most LGUs submitted Devolution Transition Plans (DTP), there were constraints such as limited information on the Mandanas-Garcia Ruling and insufficient data for evidence-based planning. Sub-provincial LGUs could not also prepare and implement quality DTPs (The Asia Foundation, 2022).

The case is different on the part of Digos City, there are two identified challenges in their local governance, which are spaces for participation and risk management. It's important to create inclusive opportunities for community members, stakeholders, and civil society organizations to participate in programs and projects. This involves actively identifying and removing barriers for vulnerable and marginalized groups. Moreso, risk management is crucial for recovering from threats, emergencies, and hazards. It ensures organizational flexibility and resilience in the face of disruptions. Contingencies for financial and human resources are necessary to resume operations and services at an acceptable pace in the event of unexpected events, including emergencies, disasters, and data loss (Cagas & Balacy, 2022).

Given the increased allotted funds as mandated by the Supreme Court, Quezon City Mayor Belmonte believed that the said increase may not be enough if too many functions are devolved to the local government (Salaverria, 2021).

However, the multilateral lender's Philippine economist, Kevin Cruz believed otherwise. He stated that LGUs are struggling to implement large budgets, particularly for complex capital investments. He emphasized the crucial role of provinces, cities, and municipalities in the COVID-19 response. However, he cautioned that LGUs face challenges in spending their budgets due to procurement bottlenecks, lack of competency, and insufficient human resources. Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III also expressed concerns about the ability of LGUs to manage increased budgets, highlighting the national government's greater efficiency (PDI, 2022).

The prospects of local governance

The issuance of Executive Order No. 138 on June 1, 2021, indicates that the functions, services, and facilities shall be fully devolved from the national government to the LGUs no later than the end of FY 2024 (lawphil.net). Dumlao (2021) highlighted that the Local Government Code requires the establishment of local development councils to support the Sangguniang in steering economic and social development. Non-governmental organizations within the LGU area should comprise at least one-fourth of the fully organized council. This fosters transparency, accountability, and responsiveness through participatory decision-making. The involvement of non-government representatives in fully functional LDCs aids in reaching consensus-based decisions and upholding effective checks and balances.

The idea of the involvement of non-government representatives was further strengthened in the article of Capistrano & Cases (2022) that LGUs, based on the World Bank Study, have not been able to mobilize funds for urgent and priority initiatives, and the gap between revenues and expenditures will likely widen further due to the Mandanas-Garcia ruling. In other words, about 20% to 30% of the LGU's budget is not spent. A new way of managing local finances is participatory governance dubbed the "AAA Recovery

Project,” which stands for anticipatory, adaptive, and agile. Enabling collaboration and collective action with civil society will solve multiple challenges, even those that may not have been imagined yet.

From the literature cited, the main problem in the field is the expectations from local government units to perform more but many do not have the capacity, resources, and systematic mechanisms to deliver them effectively. The recurring issues in the literature are concentrated on the weak implementation of programs, projects, and activities (PPAs), fragmented coordination, insufficient technical capability, limited citizen participation, and underutilized budgets. This field is struggling between decentralized functions and responsibilities cascaded by the national government and the actual capacity of the LGU to perform them well. Specifically, problems with development planning are hindered by weak coordination, poor data, and limited integration of plans and budgets. Fiscal administration is challenged by mismanagement, resulting in low tax collections, minimal budget, and transparency issues. Citizen participation is also less emphasized in local legislation, and inconsistencies in the implementation of ordinances are evident which shows a low prioritization of monitoring and evaluation among LGUs.

Local autonomy still needs to be strengthened since its implementation among LGUs is not yet fully realized. The issues limit the ability of the local governments to deliver good governance therefore, the need to empower LGUs should be given priority for effective fulfillment of their roles to the community.

Research Gap

The literature on local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines, as represented by the provided studies and journals, presents extensive insights into development planning, fiscal management, local legislation, and governance practices. However, several gaps are evident from the synthesis of these studies:

Capacity and Technical Expertise Deficit. Multiple studies point out that many LGUs struggle with insufficient technical expertise to manage devolved services effectively, especially in health care and infrastructure sectors, leading to underspending despite increased budgets. This gap suggests a need for deeper investigation into capacity-building frameworks and sustainable technical support mechanisms tailored to varied LGU contexts.

Fragmented Data and Monitoring Systems. Challenges related to data fragmentation and limited citizen participation in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes are highlighted. There remains a gap in integrated, accessible, and real-time data systems that meaningfully involve citizens and allow for comprehensive performance assessments of LGUs.

Budget Implementation and Resource Allocation Issues. While participatory budgeting and enhanced revenue collection initiatives are documented, many LGUs face delays in budget implementation due to procedural inefficiencies, inadequate revenue streams, and misalignment between local needs and budget allocations. There is a research gap in identifying scalable best practices for timely, transparent, and needs-driven budget execution.

Citizen Participation in Post-Mandanas Governance. Although citizen engagement is recognized as critical for governance and public financial management under the Mandanas-Garcia ruling, there is limited focus on strategies to overcome structural, legal, and operational barriers to meaningful citizen participation in the changing devolved governance landscape.

Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms. Even in the presence of best practices on transparency in public governance, like through digital platforms and public disclosure ordinances, there is still a lack of accountability, particularly in financial reporting and expenditure tracking. This is partially due to practices such as "cross-charging," in which the idea of how funds are used is difficult to understand.

Long-term Fiscal Sustainability. Some LGUs face the risk of financial instability as permanent devolution costs may outpace internal revenue allotments. There is insufficient research on long-term fiscal sustainability models that account for dynamic economic and political factors affecting LGU budgets.

In summary, while the literature provides valuable case studies and identifies broad challenges and recommendations, gaps remain in comprehensive capacity-building, integrated data use, financial

frameworks or strategies, and operationalizing deep citizen involvement to support more effective and sustainable local governance. Addressing these gaps would require targeted empirical research and policy innovations focused on these critical but underexplored dimensions.

Objectives of the Study

This study determined the dynamics of local governance of Sto. Domingo. Specifically, it sought answers to the following objectives:

1. To determine the performance of LGU in accordance with the Seal of Good Local Governance along:

- a. Development planning
- b. Fiscal management
- c. Local Legislation
- d. Monitoring and evaluation;

2. To identify the best practices of LGU Sto. Domingo;

3. To determine the challenges encountered by the LGU in the implementation of good governance;

4. To identify the measures in addressing the challenges in the implementation of good governance;

and

5. To propose an agenda for progress in enhancing the local governance of LGU Sto. Domingo.

In the context of public governance, dynamics pertain to the interactions and patterns that shape society in terms of how it is managed and how decisions are made. It focuses on the processes, adaptations, and interactions of the local government with its societal institutions (Mahajan, 2024). Dynamism in the local level of governance, as applied in this study, is centered on the performance of the local government following the basic functions for its operation. It includes development planning, fiscal management, local legislation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Development planning in local governance is a process by which an LGU identifies the needs of the community, then identifies the development priorities, and prepares comprehensive plans for local development and service delivery (Republic Act No. 7160, 1991; PIDS, 2019). It refers to local development planning that is focused on the needs and aspirations of the community. It includes assessment of the area, identifies its local problems, and is considered highly participatory, as the plan reflects the voice of the people, making the governance more responsive. Generally, it is an actionable roadmap that helps produce tangible improvements in the daily lives of people. As applied in this study, it presents the plans of the local government along the SGLG areas vis-à-vis the interventions for their realization.

The development plan is supported by strategic control of financial resources to ensure that it operates within its budget. The process of planning, directing, controlling and monitoring local government's financial resources to achieve organizational goals efficiently is called fiscal management (Simplicable, 2023). The LGU's performance was determined based on its actual execution under the guidelines of national agencies.

Local legislation consists of laws and regulations enacted by a local government authority known as the Sangguniang Bayan. This study analyzed the ordinances and resolutions passed over a six-year period to identify which areas received significant attention and which were neglected. The last area in which the performance of the local government was measured is through monitoring and evaluation. According to the World Bank (n.d.), it is an integrated set of practices used to measure and manage for results. It helps track implementation while understanding the value and effects of their work. In this study, the performance on monitoring and evaluation was reflected based on the reported status of the program, projects, and activities of the local government, as well as the initiatives, such as validation and monitoring.

The best practices were determined based on the perceptions of the residents, which cover the four basic functions as identified in the first objective of the study. A best practice is a procedure that has been

shown by research and experience to produce optimal results, and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasizes that it must demonstrate proven success, have potential for replication, and show sustainable outcomes.

Guided by the four areas of local governance, the study determined the challenges and recommendations, which then served as a guide in generating the agenda for progress tailored for the LGU of Sto. Domingo, Albay.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study focused on the three major theories namely, decentralization theory, good governance theory, and participatory theory.

Decentralization theory explains the transfer of authority, responsibility and resources from central government to local government units (Faguet, 2014). Decentralization enhances governance by bringing decision-making closer to the people, thereby improving responsiveness and accountability. This is anchored in the principle of subsidiarity which posits that governance should be performed at the lowest level capable of addressing them effectively (Rondinelli, 1981).

Empirical studies suggested that decentralization improves service delivery and governance outcomes. Qin (2023) emphasized that decentralization governance system promotes grassroots development and strengthens accountability mechanisms by increasing citizen engagement. Similarly, Faguet (2014) argued that decentralization fosters innovations and efficiency due to localized decision-making and competition among local government units.

However, decentralization is not without limitations. It may lead to disparities in resource allocation and can increase the risk of elite capture at the local level, where political actors may prioritize personal interests over public welfare (Faguet, 2014). Despite these challenges, decentralization remains a fundamental framework for understanding the structured dynamics of local governance.

Good governance theory focuses on the quality and effectiveness of governance processes. It emphasizes that governance should adhere to principles such as transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, effectiveness and equity. These principles are widely recognized as essential indicators of sound governance systems (Qin, 2023).

The theory emerged from global development discourse, where governance quality was identified as a key factor influencing socio-economic development (Qin, 2023). Effective governance contributes to sustainable development by ensuring efficient allocation of resources and strengthening institutional performance. Furthermore, governance that is transparent and accountable enhances public trust and legitimacy.

Participatory governance theory on the active involvement of citizens in governance processes. It goes beyond traditional representative democracy by encouraging direct engagement of citizens in decision-making, policy formulation, and implementation. Chavez Baker (2024) noted that participatory governance fosters political reform by increasing civic engagement and strengthening democratic institutions. It also enhances policy effectiveness by incorporating local knowledge and perspectives into decision-making processes. However, challenges remain in implementing participatory governance. Participation may be limited by socio-economic inequalities, lack of awareness, or institutional barriers. In some cases, participation processes may be dominated by influential groups, reducing inclusivity.

The conceptual framework provided the application of these theories to the present study, as shown in Figure 1. The conceptual framework consists of three distinct interconnected theories that break down into the LGUs' performance focused on the four specific areas of governance. Development planning outlines the LGUs' long-term and short-term plans and is closely tied to participatory governance. Fiscal management focuses on the handling of revenue generation, budgeting, and expenditures. Local legislation

pertains to the ordinances and resolutions that are established, while monitoring and evaluation involve tracking the progress and impact of LGU programs.

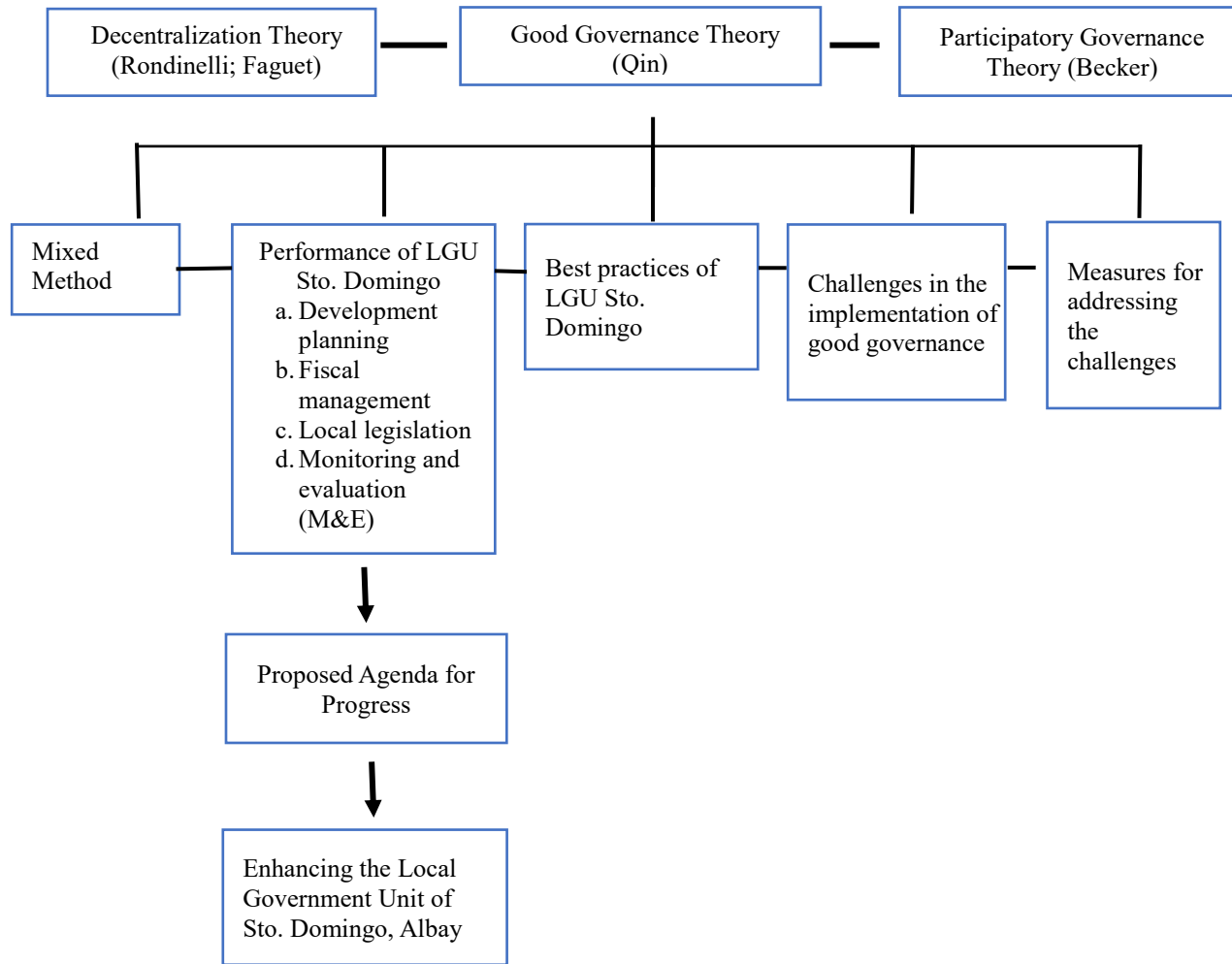


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework Model*

The research identified the successful strategies and methods within the four areas considered as the best practices. On the other hand, the LGU faces obstacles in implementing good governance, which may be political, financial, or administrative. To solve the problem, the study identified current coping mechanisms, solutions, and interventions to address the challenges. Based on the analysis of practices, challenges, and current measures, this final step proposes recommendations and future actions required to achieve full good governance by formulating the agenda for progress, which serves as a feedback mechanism to improve the overall performance of the LGU.

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches for a comprehensive understanding of the data. Specifically, the convergent parallel design was employed, wherein the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, analyzes them separately, and then compares the results to check if the findings confirm or contradict each other. The descriptive component aims to describe the performance of the local government through the existing documents and practices as perceived by the respondents. This design is appropriate because the study seeks to measure existing conditions without manipulating the variables. It provides an objective assessment of institutional performance over a specified period of time.

Research Methodology

The study looked into the dynamics of governance of LGU Sto. Domingo. To understand this main problem, a mixed-methods design was used, with different methodologies employed based on its specific objectives.

The first objective determined the performance of the local governance under the four areas of concern namely: development planning, fiscal management, local legislation, and monitoring and implementation (M&E). The data presented were obtained from the documents of the concerned government agencies, wherein data analysis was employed in the presentation of data. Moreover, the surveys conducted signified whether the data from the documents are aligned with the residents' understanding of the administration of the incumbent local chief executive. In addition, the interviews with the key informants served as an attestation of the actual compliance of the municipality.

Data on the second objective was collected through the use of a structured survey questionnaire. The best practices came from the residents' perceptions as they identified from the list of programs and projects that directly benefit the residents of the municipality. An interview with key informants was also conducted on the areas of local legislation and recorded video interviews with the mayor on Facebook. The same methodology was applied to the challenges and measures for promoting good governance. Moreover, the data obtained from these objectives served as the basis for developing an agenda for progress, which outlined specific targets to improve the LGU's

Population of the Study

The study employed two sets of respondents. The first set comprised the key informants, including the development planning officer, department head of the Municipal Disaster Risk and Reduction Management Office (MDRRMO), two Municipal Councilors, and the local chief executive. The second set comprised 160 selected respondents from the 23 barangays using a purposive sampling technique in identifying the residents. This method ensured that specific individuals who could provide valuable insights were selected, enhancing the quality and relevance of the responses gathered for the study. The respondents chosen were the barangay captains or punong barangay, BHWs or barangay health workers, Sangguniang Kabataan officers, leaders and members of civic society organizations, professionals, heads of household, and other barangay officials. The breakdown of these selected respondents is shown in Table A.

Table A. *Population of the Study*

Barangay	Population	Sample Size
1. Alimsog	1,171	51
2. Bagong San Roque	1,566	7
3. Buhatan	1,476	7
4. Calayucay	1,782	5
5. Del Rosario	675	7

6.	Fidel Surtida	2,648	8
7.	Lidong	3,246	8
8.	Market Site	255	7
9.	Nagsiya	1,053	7
10.	Pandayan	499	8
11.	Salvacion	1,584	8
12.	San Andres	4,461	3
13.	San Fernando	2,195	7
14.	San Francisco	778	8
15.	San Isidro	3,150	5
16.	San Juan	977	7
17.	San Pedro	599	8
18.	San Rafael	552	7
19.	San Roque	1,793	9
20.	San Vicente	1,352	7
21.	Sta. Misericordia	3,245	7
22.	Sto. Domingo	780	8
23.	Sto. Niño	1,928	7
Total		37,765	160

Source: Barangay Information Portal, Lalawigan ng Pilipinas. <https://brgv.to> (as of 2020 census data)

Philippine Statistics Authority (2025) conducted a census on July 1, 2024 with official regional results released in late 2025 and the population in Sto. Domingo, Albay is 37,586 however, figures for individual barangays are not yet publicly detailed by PSA.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument used in this study is a structured survey questionnaire. The instrument was designed to look into the local governance of the municipality from 2019 to 2024 administration.

The instrument is composed of three main parts: 1. The performance of the LGU in development planning, financial management, local legislation, and monitoring and evaluation; 2. Best practices; and 3. The challenges and measures in the Implementation of good governance. The respondent's profile gathered specific information such as barangay designation and locale, which served as the basis of analysis without compromising confidentiality, since the name is optional.

The measurement of the LGUs' performance consisted of indicators across the domains required in the SGLG. Respondents are required to encircle the number corresponding to their perception. Each indicator is evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale. This scaling method facilitated the statistical treatment of data such as the weighted mean and its equivalent verbal interpretation. This rating system was used as follows:

Scale points	Scale range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.50-5.00	Outstanding
4	3.50-4.49	Very satisfactory
3	2.50-3.49	Satisfactory
2	1.50-2.49	Unsatisfactory
1	1.00-1.49	Poor

The second part of the instrument is a checklist of the perceived best practices of the LGU. Respondents are instructed to identify the practices of the LGU from 2019 to 2024 that they believe have contributed to the best results for the community and shown sustainable outcomes. The third part is the enumerated challenges and measures encountered by the administration in the implementation of good governance. A checklist of identified challenges in relation to the measures was designed to facilitate the respondents in identifying their perceptions.

The enumerated items which served as the perceptions of the respondents as reflected in the questionnaire, were drawn from national government guidelines, COA audit reports, performance indicators from the SGLG, the development plan of the municipality, and relevant published journals and articles.

The study employed simple statistical methods, such as frequency to assess how often specific categories appeared, ranking to prioritize these categories based on their significance, and weighted mean to evaluate the overall performance level. These methods were employed to create a comprehensive overview of the data for a deeper understanding of the study's findings.

The research instrument was also subjected to validation. A content validation was conducted by aligning the indicators with the existing guidelines from the Department of Interior and Local Government and summary reports from the Commission on Audit. This alignment guaranteed that the instrument effectively covered the areas relevant to the LGUs' performance. A pilot test was also conducted involving ten individuals who were not involved in the research. This was important to determine the clarity of instructions and comprehensibility of the items in the instrument. Feedback from the pilot participants provided further refinement, particularly in simplifying complex terms and ensuring consistency in response scales. Through these validation procedures, the instrument was deemed appropriate for data collection.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from the structured questionnaire, documents, and interviews were organized, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools, including percentage count, ranking, and weighted mean. The analysis focused on the performance of the local government of Sto. Domingo, its best practices, challenges encountered, and the measures to address the identified challenges.

For the survey instrument, results were tabulated based on the responses where the participants rated their agreement on a scale from 1 to 5. This numerical coding facilitated the analysis of each response, organized from the most commonly held perception down to the least favorable reactions. Lastly, the organized data from the documents and participants provided for the identification of patterns and trends, allowing for a multi-level analysis for each objective of the study. The analysis serves as a guide for identifying the recommendations on areas for further study.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher followed the ethical guidelines in the conduct of this study, particularly in the data collection process. A letter was sent addressed to the Office of the Mayor requesting permission to conduct the study and reassuring them that the data would be used strictly for academic purposes and the participants' information would be kept confidential. A letter was also sent to the Sangguniang Bayan for the request of a copy of the ordinances and resolutions to ensure access to these data has their authorization.

Before the dissemination of survey questionnaires and the conduct of interviews, informed consent forms were provided to the participants to help them understand the nature of the interview and procedures before they agreed to take part in the study. Another consent form was provided to secure their permission for any recordings and documentation before the conduct of the interview. Throughout the process, the researcher emphasized the importance of maintaining the participants' anonymity and ensuring their information remained confidential to protect their privacy and security.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is a presentation of data from the documents, survey questionnaires, and interviews with the selected respondents of this study. The results are structured based on the five objectives enumerated as follows: (1) determining the performance of the Local Government Unit of Sto. Domingo, Albay along development planning, fiscal management, local legislation, and monitoring and implementation (M&E); (2) identifying the best practices of the municipality based on the parameters mentioned in the first objective; (3) challenges encountered in the implementation of good governance; (4) recommendations to the challenges identified; and (4) the formulation of agenda for progress in enhancing local governance for LGU Sto. Domingo.

The data are shown in both quantitative and qualitative presentations. For quantitative data, results are shown in tables using frequency count, weighted mean, and ranking. Qualitative data are derived from documents on government websites, local municipal archives, and narratives collected through interviews using an interview guide.

Performance of LGU Sto. Domingo

A. Performance of LGU Sto. Domingo in development planning

Determining the performance of LGU Sto. Domingo in terms of development planning, is manifested in the context of its Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) for 2019-2024. Development planning refers to the LGU's systematic process of formulating and implementing a comprehensive development plan anchored on national goals and local priorities, while ensuring fiscal discipline, transparency, and accountability in resource allocation and utilization (RA No. 11292).

The main components of the CDP of Sto. Domingo includes the vision, sectoral goals, objectives, development strategies, and policies. It contains the ecological profile, sectoral development plan, and implementing instruments.

The vision statement of the municipality was crafted in July 2019 by the CDP multi-sectoral committees, aiming for the present administration to respond to a dream of immediate action to address challenges and issues. The acronym AKSYON AGAD is the embodiment of this dream, which prioritizes the following development thrusts: A-agriculture and fisheries; K-knowledge enhancement, education, and culture; S-social welfare, security, peace, and order; Y-youth development; O-opportunities for livelihood, manpower deployment, employment, and business, industrial promotion, and tourism; N-nutrition and health; A-accountability, good governance; G-gender and development; A-adaptive and resilient infrastructure; D-disaster risk reduction and management, protection of the environment. (Municipality of Sto. Domingo, Albay Comprehensive Development Plan 2019-2024)

This vision manifested alignment from that of the Philippines by 2040 matatag, maginhawa, at panatag na buhay, wherein the life of the Filipinos by 2040 reveals a middle-class society where no one is poor, people live long and healthy lives, and are smart and innovative; and live in a high-trust society. The Ambisyon 2040 served as the Bicol region's guide for its Development Plan 2017-2022, which is focused on the three pillars: "Malasakit" by enhancing social fabric to regain people's trust, "Pagbabago" by reducing inequality, and "Patuloy na pag-unlad" by increasing potential growth of the economy. (Bicol Regional Development Plan 2017-2022)

Republic Act (RA) 11292, known as the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) of 2019 mandated an "all-in" approach requiring local government units to pass the ten (10) governance areas to qualify in the award-based program (The LawPhil Project, 2026). The table below shows the identified plans with reference to the areas indicated in the SGLG.

Table 1. *The performance of LGU Sto. Domingo in development planning*

Performance Areas	Plans/Desired State
Disaster Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster resiliency • Relocate and provide housing to households residing in disaster areas annually • Improved condition of the environmentally constrained areas
Social Protection and Sensitivity Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and protect the rights of the deprived and vulnerable groups • Promote women’s empowerment and gender equality
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved health conditions of the community residents • Provide quality, affordable, and accessible health services
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved quality of education through the promotion of equitable, affordable, and accessible learning opportunities • Ascertain the functionality of the Local School Board and the appropriation and disbursement of the Special Education Fund • Construct and rehabilitate school buildings • Establish an education office in the municipality that will perform the coordination function with education officials and stakeholders, and will take the lead role in the implementation of the LGU-funded education program
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressive economy through opportunities for livelihood enterprise, manpower development, employment, and industry promotion • Increased income and employment • Growth of local micro and small-scale enterprises
Safety, Peace and Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a safe and secure community • Increased LGU support to the police and fire stations • Budget institutionalization
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a clean, livable environment that adapts to climate change • Conservation, protection, maintenance, rehabilitation, and development of existing and newly established marine protected areas • Improved waste disposal system
Tourism, Heritage Development, Culture and Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and promote the existing cultures • Implement activities for the promotion and conservation of the various customs and traditions • Formulated and secured approval of a Comprehensive Municipal Tourism Master Plan • Promoted the municipality as an eco-tourism and religious/pilgrimage site • Improved tourism destinations
Youth Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a protective system for children and youth and develop their full potential • Implement meaningful sports and recreational activities • Establish, maintain, and rehabilitate parks, plazas, gymnasiums, and covered courts as venues for various sports and recreational activities

Source: Local Government of Sto. Domingo- Comprehensive Development Plan (2019-2024)

One aspect of measuring the performance of the municipality in development planning is through government programs, projects, and activities (PPAs) with allotted budgetary requirements. As shown in Table 1, the ten areas have corresponding plans, and according to the financial and compliance audit of COA, the financial statements and operations of the Municipality of Sto. Domingo, Albay was focused on different thrusts.

According to COA Annual Audit Reports (2019-2014) some of the reported completed projects of the Municipality are as follows: improvement of the evacuation center (1.M); construction of flood and erosion control structure (1.5M); slope erosion control and stabilization project (1.3M); and purchase of

Monitoring and Rescue vehicle (1.8M); recognition of civil society organizations and PWDs; improvement of waterworks system (1.5-5M); purchase of ambulance (1.8M); purchase of lot for Municipal Infirmary (2M); establishment of a community college; establishment of a tourism unit or office with a designated tourism officer; construction and rehabilitation of tourism destinations through the support of various local and national tourism; and improvement of Youth and Sports development facilities (1M).

The municipality manifested strategic planning with a high allocation to infrastructure and human resources. A higher budget was also distributed for education and agricultural improvements. This addresses the needs of the community for resilience, social equity, and sustainability while contributing to national goals, including poverty reduction and job creation.

While the information is presented based on audit reports, this study however, conducted surveys to determine the perceptions of a few selected residents usually barangay and SK officials, health workers, and residents from each of the 23 barangays of Sto. Domingo. The table presents their perceptions, measured according to the degree of their satisfaction with the LGU's performance along development planning.

Table 2. *Perception of the selected respondents on the performance of LGU Sto. Domingo along the SGLG areas*

Areas (SGLG)	1	2	3	4	5	WM	VI
Financial administration and sustainability	12.2%	28.8%	26.3%	21.8%	10.9%	2.91	VS
Disaster preparedness	1.9%	8.9%	22.2%	29.1%	38%	3.92	VS
Social protection and sensitivity	4.4%	15.2%	26.3%	32.9%	22.8%	3.51	VS
Business-friendliness and competitiveness	3.8%	14.6%	22.2%	39.9%	17.7%	3.55	VS
Safety, peace and order	2.5%	7.5%	24.7%	35.2%	26.4%	3.79	VS
Environmental management	7.6%	14.6%	24.1%	34.4%	13.4%	3.37	S
Tourism promotion	3.8%	7.5%	28.3%	36.5%	27.7%	3.73	VS
Health compliance and responsiveness	5.0%	11.9%	29.9%	32.1%	22.6%	3.54	VS
Sustainable education	4.4%	8.8%	28.3%	28.3%	25.8%	3.67	VS
Youth development	4.4%	9.4%	32.7%	30.2%	23.3%	3.59	VS
Overall WM						3.56	VS

Note: VI=verbal interpretation; VS=very satisfactory; S=satisfactory

Based on the data extracted from the table, the overall weighted mean for the LGU's performance across all ten governance areas is 3.56, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "very satisfactory." While most areas are strong, the lower scores in financial administration (2.91) and environmental management (3.37) are the primary priority areas for attention to reach an outstanding performance.

B. Performance of the LGU Sto. Domingo in fiscal management

One of the core areas of the SGLG is fiscal management. By definition, it is the strategic process by which a government plans, directs, and controls its financial resources, primarily through taxation and spending, to achieve economic stability, growth, and public welfare (Mikesell, 2018). To pass this area, an LGU must meet all minimum indicators as reflected in Table 3, which presents the performance of LGU Sto. Domingo in fiscal management.

Table 3. *The performance of LGU Sto. Domingo in fiscal Management*

Indicators	Performance Result
1. COA Audit Opinion (most recent audit opinion is unmodified or qualified, plus 30% of recommendations fully complied with)	CY 2019-2021: Qualified opinion Compliance with the recommendations: CY 2019- 38.30% CY 2020- 51% CY 2021- 47.56% CY 2022-2024: Disclaimer of opinion Compliance with the recommendations: CY 2022- 19.78% CY 2023- 30% CY 2024- 26.40%
2. Compliance with the Full Disclosure Policy (posting budgets, finances, bids, etc. publicly)	Donations received during the pandemic were not properly recorded, and full transparency was not achieved. The GAD plan lacks sufficient data and its implementation cannot be verified through client feedback. Infrastructure projects lacked a Construction and Safety Health Program requirement from BAC for contractors, and its cost was not included in the total construction cost. Public bidding on infrastructure lacked transparency measures. In observance of proper reporting and liquidation of funds, SEF reports were not uploaded to the DILG Website, official FB account “Aksyon Agad”, and web page; LGU Sto. Domingo has no official website.
3. At least 7% increase in average local revenue growth for three consecutive years (CY 2020-2022)	CY 2019-2020: 16.23% ↑ CY 2020-2021: -2.94% ↓ CY 2021-2022: 36.84% ↑ CY 2022-2023: -10.43% ↓ CY 2023-2024: 5.89% ↑
4. Full utilization of the 20% component of the Development Fund	CY 2019: Full implementation (20M) CY 2020: 46% utilization rate (10.23M out of 22.6M) CY 2021: 75% utilization rate (21.6M out of 28.8M) CY 2022: 21% utilization rate (8.9M out of 42M) CY 2023: 61% utilization rate (35.9M out of 59M) CY 2024: 37.8% utilization rate (20.9M out of 55.5M)

Source: COA Annual Audit Reports (2019-2014)

The table presents the performance of the municipality in fiscal management following the four governance indicators from the SGLG framework. The indicators are identified as the COA audit opinion, compliance with the full disclosure policy, local revenue trends, and the full utilization of the 20% development fund.

For the COA audit opinion, the LGU received Qualified Opinions from 2019 to 2021, given that the municipality gained a boost in revenue from real property tax, improved GAD compliance manifesting its commitment to pursuing gender-responsive governance, and full utilization of the 20% development fund. Issues were identified from the audit report such as unreconciled cash balances, long outstanding payables, and receivables or payables inconsistencies. For 2022-2024, it was aggravated to a Disclaimer of Opinion due to low compliance alongside unliquidated cash advances, unreliable cash-in-bank records, and 232 unaccounted checks. On the other hand, the full disclosure policy compliance had shortcomings such

as unrecorded pandemic donations, GAD plans without dates and locations for client feedback verification, and infrastructure projects with missing DOLE-approved safety health programs. There is also an unreported SEF to DILG, physical postings were outdated, and no official website exists for the municipality.

The local revenue growth fluctuated over three consecutive years following the target of at least 7% average. This fluctuation was due to issues with unadjusted tax rates, questionable real property taxes, and non-submission by the treasurer of the certified list of taxpayers, tax due, and collectible per year. The last indicator, the 20% development fund had a varied utilization from 100% to its lowest rate of 21%. According to the interview with the Municipal Planning and Development Office, the unimplemented projects such as project for the construction and improvement of Multi-Purpose Hall with appropriation of P2,000,000.00, will be implemented during the first half of CY 2022, while the Rehabilitation of Municipal and Barangay Road with appropriation of ₱2,200,000.00 was realigned to Rehabilitation of Lidong Water Sources and Pipeline Systems during the first quarter of CY 2022 (COA Audit Report, 2022).

C. Performance of the LGU Sto. Domingo in local legislation

Local legislation refers to the authority of local government units to enact laws, known as ordinances, and to adopt resolutions that address the needs of the local community within the framework of national law. It can be understood as a power and as a process. As a power, it is the authority of a local legislative body to make rules in the form of ordinances and resolutions while, as a process, it is the interaction of the local legislative body with the executive branch, civil society, NGOs, and the private sector (RA No. 7160).

To determine the performance of the municipality, the data is presented quantitatively in Table 3, reflecting the number of ordinances and resolutions passed by the Sangguniang Bayan. Additionally, the qualitative aspect is represented through narratives from selected respondents, including some key informants such as the municipal councilors.

Table 4. *Number of Ordinances and Resolutions passed from CY 2019-2024*

Category	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024		Total
	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	
Disaster Preparedness	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	4	-	1	-	7	18
Social Protection and Sensitivity Program	3	26	1	-	1	22	1	33	3	10	2	12	114
Health	1	1	-	-	-	3	-	10	1	5	-	8	29
Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	6	-	1	13
Business & commerce	2	14	3	2	4	20	2	21	-	21	1	25	115
Financial administration and sustainability	-	81	-	5	-	52	-	52	-	64	-	50	304
Safety, Peace, and Order	1	6	3	2	3	2	-	20	1	3	1	1	43
Environment	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	3
Tourism, Heritage Development, Culture & Arts	2	2	1	1	1	-	-	3	-	2	1	11	24
Youth Development	-	1	-	-	1	8	-	3	-	-	-	29	42
Sub-total	9	131	8	10	10	113	4	151	7	112	5	145	
Total	140		18		123		155		119		150		705

Notes: O=ordinances; R=resolutions

The table shows the number of passed ordinances and resolutions from CY 2019-2024. As reflected in the table, the Sanguniang Bayan passed a total of 705 legislative measures over six years, and evidently, resolutions outnumbered the ordinances across almost all categories.

The highest legislative output occurred in 2022 (155 ordinances and resolutions), while the lowest occurred in 2020, with 18 total measures. The data shows a heavy focus on administrative and economic matters, with a total of 304 legislative measures under financial administration and sustainability. The next category is under business and commerce (115 total), while the low-priority areas include environment (3 total) and education (13 total).

As a process, there is a strong opposition in the legislative branch however, its members are outnumbered by the pro-administration party which is why they find it difficult to pass or reject a proposed ordinance or resolution. This makes it difficult for them to pass or reject proposed ordinances or resolutions that do not align with the thrusts of the executive branch, as stated by one of the municipal councilors during an interview. Regarding implementation, the councilor expressed that they no longer perform the monitoring as it is now the responsibility of the local chief executive's office.

From the residents' level, their perception of the quality of laws passed by the Sangguniang Bayan is satisfactory, as they believe that the quality of laws is relevant to the needs of the community, it solves local problems, and ensures compliance with the national laws. Nearly half of the respondents also agreed that there is a public consultation before an ordinance is passed, especially those who are members of civil society organizations.

There is also a positive response from the residents when asked about the effective enforcement of the municipal ordinances and resolutions in their locality, especially when they are asked to evaluate whether the implemented laws have improved community welfare. Additionally, they expressed satisfaction with the lawmaking performance of the Sangguniang Bayan.

Performance of the LGU Sto. Domingo in monitoring & evaluation (M&E)

The performance of the municipality in terms of monitoring and evaluation was based on the physical accomplishments and financial status of the LGU in the required areas such as social, economic, and environmental development. Another way of determining the performance is by identifying the initiatives along with the issues and challenges accompanying them.

The performance of the municipality based on monitoring and evaluation is shown in Table 5. It looked into the financial status of the various development projects of LGU Sto. Domingo where it tracks the progress and performance of its programs, projects, and activities to ensure accountability, efficiency, and alignment with the regional and national development goals. The data presented are obtained from the annual audit report of the Commission on Audit.

Table 5. *Status of Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs)*

PPA	Appropriation	Utilizations	Balance	Status
Social Development : Construction/Rehabilitation of Water Supply Systems	₱1,500,000.00	₱1,479,406.00	₱ 20,594.00	Partially Implemented
Installation of Power Supply System	2,000,000.00	1,998,447.50	1,552.50	Fully Implemented
Construction/Rehabilitations of Buildings	2,000,000.00	1,496,426.00	503,574.00	Partially Implemented
Economic Development: Other Land Improvements	3,451,000.00	0.00	3,451,000.00	Not Implemented
Construction/Rehabilitation of Road Networks	2,500,000.00	0.00	2,500,000.00	Not Implemented

PPA	Appropriation	Utilizations	Balance	Status
Purchase of Other Property Plants and Equipment	2,500,000.00	2,462,974.00	37,026.00	Fully Implemented
Environmental Development: Purchase of Land for Sanitary Landfill	3,000,000.00	0.00	3,000,000.00	Not Implemented
Other Land Improvements	1,000,000.00	999,705.00	295.00	Fully Implemented
Flood Control Projects	1,300,000.00	0.00	1,300,000.00	Not Implemented
Erosion Control Projects	1,200,000.00	0.00	1,200,000.00	Not Implemented
Reforestation and Urban Greening Projects	1,804,727.00	1,795,904.00	8,823.00	Fully Implemented
Grand Total	₱22,255,727.00	₱10,232,862.50	₱12,022,864.50	
	100%	46%	54%	

Source: Commission on Audit Annual Report for Sto. Domingo, Albay (2019-2024)

The table outlines the municipalities’ PPAs under the mandated development areas with the corresponding approved budget allocation and the actual expenditures. Generally, there is a full appropriation per PPA but only 46% of the budget was spent. A significant portion of the budget was utilized towards vital initiatives particularly in the areas of water and power supply systems, construction or rehabilitation of buildings, purchase of property, plants, and equipment (PPE), land improvements, and green projects. Other than that, there was zero utilization mostly on PPAs under economic and environmental development, such as flood control projects, purchase of sanitary landfills, and rehabilitation of road networks.

Given the data on the status of the PPAs, most projects under environmental and economic development are not implemented, while social development projects are partially implemented. This, in particular, highlights a broader issue regarding the performance of the LGU in monitoring and evaluation and the necessity to shift our focus to analyze the underlying reasons for these implementation failures. Full project implementation was concentrated on power supply system, purchase of plants and equipment, land improvements, and environmental protection activities.

To further illustrate these challenges, the following table provides an overview of the specific M&E initiatives, along with the associated issues and challenges that have been encountered. This may help identify areas requiring immediate attention to improve the municipality’s performance.

Table 6. *Monitoring & Evaluation initiatives, issues and challenges*

M&E Initiatives	Issues and Challenges
Validation activities for infrastructure projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inventory committee was unable to prepare and submit to the audit team a copy of the report of Physical Count of the Local Road Network for the past 5 years
Monitoring of Special Education Fund (SEF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SEF Utilization Report was not in the prescribed format and was not signed by the Local Chief Executive. The LGU was unable to furnish the Regional Offices of the DBM and DILG with a copy of the report and prevented the oversight bodies from conducting monitoring of the utilization of the SEF fund, resulting in the lack of transparency and accountability on SEF transactions.

Municipality’s validation of solid waste management activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibitions stated in RA 9003 are still being committed, such as littering, throwing, and dumping of waste matters in public places. Open burning of solid waste was still observed, and proper segregation of waste was not fully carried out by component barangays. • The municipality was unable to fully monitor the proper implementation of the segregation of wastes due to budget constraints and lack of manpower. • The municipality commented that they are continuously monitoring all barangays to ensure they are compliant with the provisions of RA No. 9003.
Monitoring and evaluation of the functionality of the Local Council for the Protection of Children LCPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to create or absence of an Inter-Agency Monitoring Task Force (IMTF); thus, issues, support, assistance, advocacy and concerns regarding the realization of children’s rights cannot be properly discussed, clarified, deliberated, monitored, and evaluated.

Source: Commission on Audit Annual Report for Sto. Domingo, Albay (2019-2024)

The table covers M&E initiatives along with the specific issues and challenges observed. Typical in SGLG validations, M&E emphasizes compliance, transparency, and accountability for public funds and services.

As reflected in the table, the validation of infrastructure projects focuses on road networks, which lack historical physical count reports. The SEF reports are incomplete, unsigned, and unreported to oversight agencies, hindering transparency. There are ongoing violations like open burning and poor segregation due to limited monitoring capacity from the budget and budget shortages. Furthermore, there is no Inter-Agency Monitoring Task Force (IMTF) stalling child rights advocacy and issue resolution.

Linking to the prior table’s low utilization rate (46%), these entries reveal common M&E gaps like poor documentation, which explains unspent infrastructure balances. The recommendations drive improvements through timely reporting, task forces, and enforcement for better governance and fund efficiency.

Given the identified issues and challenges in the M&E initiatives of the municipality, the audit reports have indicated several recommendations. Under validation of activities for infrastructure projects, there is a need to continuously monitor the condition of all infrastructure projects under their control and jurisdiction (COA Circular No. 2015-008). Also, the LGU was recommended to submit quarterly and annual reports using the prescribed form to DepEd CO, through appropriate channels. To enhance solid waste management, there is a need to engage barangays through extensive information campaigns on SWM programs, focusing on proper disposal of waste. Strict monitoring of areas with indiscriminate dumping of waste should be prioritized, including imposition of penalties for non-compliance by the residents. Finally, the need for the LGU to establish an IMTF for proper monitoring and evaluation of the LCPC and submit the required report to the concerned agencies.

While the information is presented based on audit reports, the researcher consulted the head of the Municipal Planning and Development Office (MPDO) to determine the implementation of the projects through monitoring and evaluation. According to the head of MPDO, “*implementation of projects is already part in our conduct of monitoring and evaluation in the LGU*”, agreeing to the idea that they conduct M&E as part of their duties and responsibilities. However, this was denied by another key informant from the Municipal Disaster Risk and Reduction and Management Office (MDRRMO). The officer-in-charge of MDRRMO stated that, “*...may committee ang LGU pag abot sa monitoring and evaluation, in fact, gabos na department heads kan munisipyo member kaan, pero and totoo kaan madam dai man yan nangyayari. Dai man po kami pigpapa apodan para sa monitoring and evaluation para sa mga programa kan munisipyo...*”. (“...the LGU has a committee for monitoring and evaluation, in fact, all department heads are members. However, the truth is that it is not functioning. We are not being assigned to conduct monitoring and evaluation by the LGU...”). These are two opposing statements from the key informants while the other department heads are unwilling to be interviewed.

Best Practices of LGU Sto. Domingo as perceived by its residents

As previously defined in this study, best practice is a method proven by research and experience to produce the best results, and it is recommended for widespread implementation (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary). The enumerated best practices in the table were derived from the comprehensive development plan of Sto. Domingo, implemented projects identified in the COA audit reports, related literature of the study, and Facebook posts from the account of Aksyon Agad. The survey was conducted among 23 barangays of Sto. Domingo, and generally covered the areas of development planning, fiscal management, local legislation, and M&E.

Table 7. *Best practices of LGU Sto. Domingo as perceived by the respondents*

Best Practices	f	Rank
• Mapping of Mayon Volcano danger zones for resilient zoning.	111	1
• Uses traffic flow data to plan road expansions.	68	2
• Simulate impacts of new infrastructure, e.g., (Lidong River EcoPark) before construction.	58	5
• Use of the Facebook app to let residents report potholes and propose projects.	59	4
• Integrates People’s Organizations or NGO’s in planning committees.	55	6
• Use mangroves for coastal defense.	43	11
• Label projects in the Annual Investment Plan as “climate-adaptive”.	54	7
• Partner with telcos (e.g., Smart/Globe/PLDT) for free public Wi-Fi.	44	10
• Partners with universities for technical studies.	30	13
• Reserve 10% of funds for mid-year adjustments (e.g., disaster response)	40	12
• Publish bids and contracts of DILG’s Full Disclosure Portal.	45	9
• Restore old buildings as tourism hubs.	65	3
• Link farms to tourist spots	46	8
• Others, please specify	-	-

Note: N=160; retrieval rating is 87% (146 responses)

The table presents the frequency and ranking of best practices implemented by the LGU of Sto. Domingo as perceived by the survey respondents. Based on the data, the most recognized best practice is “mapping of Mayon Volcano danger zones for resilient zoning,” cited by 111 respondents, indicating that the community strongly perceives the LGU’s disaster risk reduction and land-use planning efforts as a key strength. The practice of using “traffic flow data to plan road expansions” follows, with 68 respondents acknowledging it. The restoration of “old buildings as tourism hubs” is the third most cited practice, identified by 65 respondents. The practice with the lowest recognition among respondents includes “reserve 10% of funds for mid-year adjustments,” which is ranked 12th, and “partners with universities for technical studies,” ranked 13th with only 30 responses.

Overall, the municipality is more recognized for its disaster risk reduction activities and strategic planning. However, improvements can be further enhanced in terms of financial flexibility and external partnerships.

Challenges in the implementation of good governance

Good governance requires transparency, accountability, and the rule of law to ensure public trust and sustainable development. However, achieving this standard is challenging due to factors such as inefficient bureaucracy, weak civic participation, and inadequate public service delivery, which can erode public trust and hinder economic development. The table below outlines the challenges to implementing good governance in LGU Sto. Domingo as perceived by the residents.

Table 8. *Challenges in implementing good governance in the LGU Sto. Domingo*

Areas	f	Rank
Development planning		
Limited financial resources	90	2
Weak technical capacity	66	5
Political and governance issues	102	1
Environmental and disaster risks	75	4
Infrastructures and service delivery gaps	63	6
Lack of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	86	3
Fiscal management		
Heavy dependence on Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA)	68	6
Weak financial planning and budget execution	88	2
Low revenue collection efficiency	79	5
Mismanagement and corruption risks	87	3
Poor debt management	71	4
Lack of financial accountability and transparency	94	1
Local legislation		
Weak technical capacity of legislators	55	5
Political Interference and Partisan Conflicts	90	2
Slow legislative process	71	4
Lack of public participation	96	1
Poor monitoring & enforcement of ordinances	82	3
Monitoring and Evaluation		
Lack of dedicated M&E personnel & systems	54	5
Limited citizen participation and transparency	81	1
Political interference in M&E	79	2
No link between M&E and budget/policy decisions	69	3
Poor follow-through on recommendations	60	4

Note: N=146 response

Based on the data, the primary challenge is “political and governance issues”, highlighting interference or instability in the planning processes. For fiscal management, the top concern is “lack of financial accountability and transparency”, pointing to weaknesses in oversight and public trust. In local legislation, the “lack of public participation” ranks highest, suggesting limited community involvement in lawmaking. There is a “limited citizen participation and transparency” in monitoring and evaluation, reflecting gaps in inclusive oversight. These findings underscore that challenges are dominated by political, transparency, and participation deficits across all areas.

The challenges in implementing good governance as encountered by the Mayor, are of different aspects. Based on the interview, one of the challenges he encountered was from the opposition party, which kept on releasing statements that would destroy his reputation. These false accusations include claims of control over decisions of punong barangays particularly on the project proposals. Another is his claim on municipal projects under his personal capacity and not from the budget of the local government. Further, he was accused of forcing the punong barangays to support him in exchange for personal favors (Aksyon Agad Facebook page, May 7, 2022).

Another issue that he considered a challenge in governance is the establishment of the Sto. Domingo Community College. An allegation by some municipal councilors that the Mayor is not following proper protocol and that he is putting the municipality in a difficult situation. Moreso on the issue of sanitary landfill and infirmary, a 24-hour super health center, which he believed that some municipal councilors are releasing statements that these projects will only result in loans, as the LGU has no allocated funds (Aksyon Agad Facebook page, March 15, 2023).

Measures in addressing the challenges in implementing good governance

To address the identified challenges in governance, targeted measures must focus on strengthening political will, enforcing transparency, and enhancing the political participation of civil society. To ensure long-term success and resilience of good governance practice in LGU Sto. Domingo, Table 9 identifies the measures for the challenges identified in the previous discussion.

Table 9. *Measures for addressing the challenges in implementing good governance*

Areas	f	Rank
Development planning		
Enhance LGU revenue generation	67	8
Capacity-building programs for LGU staff on modern planning techniques.	74	5
Stronger anti-corruption measures and transparency in project implementation.	98	1
Stronger citizen participation.	84	2
Waste management and pollution control	77	4
Community-based DRRM and capacity building	50	10
Enhance project planning and implementation	64	9
Improve service delivery in key sectors (i.e., water, health, education, transport, and mobility)	70	7
Strengthen data collection and reporting	72	6
Improve transparency and accountability	84	2
Fiscal management		
Strengthen local revenue generation (e.g., improve real property tax collection, business permits)	47	11
Develop public-private partnerships (PPPs) for income-generating projects.	57	8
Adopt performance-based budgeting (link funds to measurable outputs)	63	5
Use e-procurement systems (PhilGEPS) to speed up bidding	49	10
Digitize tax collection	54	9
Conduct tax mapping and updating of property assessments	60	6
Strengthen anti-corruption measures (e.g., citizen audits, whistleblower protection)	68	2
Implement DILG's full disclosure policy (post budgets, bids, and expenses online)	70	1
Enforce LGU debt caps and require feasibility studies before loans.	68	2
Deploy LGU Scorecards (e.g., Seal of Good Local Governance)	60	6
Use Barangay Budget Monitoring Apps for real-time tracking	66	4
Local legislation		
Mandatory training on the legislative process.	59	6
Hire legislative staff or consultants for research and drafting support.	48	8
Strengthen checks and balances	63	4
Encourage multi-sectoral representation (e.g., NGOs observers in sessions)	70	2
Impose attendance incentives/penalties for Sangguniang members	63	4
Streamline legislative workflows (e.g., digital filing of proposed ordinances)	45	9
Public consultations before major ordinances	95	1
Social media livestreams of sessions	43	10
Establish LGU Ordinance Compliance Task Forces	64	3
Public reporting on enforcement	54	7
Monitoring and Evaluation		
Create an M&E Unit under the LGU planning office	58	3
Use digital tools (e.g., Google Forms)	38	10
Publish M&E dashboards on LGU websites/Facebook pages	65	1
Hold quarterly "citizen's report card" meetings for feedback	39	9
Third-party audits (e.g., COA, NGO's, academic partners)	62	2
Whistleblower protection for LGU staff reporting irregularities	57	5

Conditional budget releases (only fund departments with good M&E compliance)	49	6
Performance-based incentives for high-performing offices.	6	7
Require Sangguniang (local council) review of M&E reports.	58	3
Implement a ‘No M&E, No New Projects’ Policy.	40	8

Based on the data, within each area, the top measures indicate the most prioritized interventions according to respondents. For development planning, the top measure is “stronger anti-corruption measures and transparency in project implementation”, suggesting that curbing corruption and ensuring openness are seen as the most critical planning reforms. The highest rank obtained under fiscal management is on the measure to “implement DILG’s full disclosure policy,” emphasizing the need to proactively publish financial documents to enhance transparency and public accountability. For local legislation, “public consultations before major ordinances” ranked highest, highlighting the demand for inclusive and participatory lawmaking processes. Lastly, the need to “publish M&E dashboards on LGU websites or Facebook pages” ranked first, reflecting a drive for accessible, real-time data to enable citizen oversight and evidence-based governance.

As for the Mayor’s encountered challenges previously mentioned, he forwarded a few recommendations, such as being ready for the establishment of the community college despite having no funds available yet. The local government can start with its implementation initially by putting up a building for the community college (Aksyon Agad Facebook page, May 7, 2022). On the issue of false accusations and discrediting his reputation, he promised to fulfill his duties as Mayor with integrity and diligence (Aksyon Agad Facebook page, May 7, 2022).

Agenda for progress in enhancing local governance for LGU Sto. Domingo

The Municipality of Sto. Domingo is a pivotal moment for governance enhancement, with a new municipal building and a clear mandate from the national government for transparency and digital transformation. This agenda outlines key progress areas to help the municipality maximize these opportunities and build a responsive, future-ready local government. Here is a proposed agenda structured around strategic priorities:

Table 10. *Agenda for Progress: Enhancing Local Governance in LGU Sto. Domingo, Albay*

Vision: To build a transparent, resilient, and people-centered governance system that leverages new infrastructure, data, and technology for effective public service delivery.

Goals	Strategies	Implementation
1. Infrastructure and operational efficiency	Completion of the new municipal building	Ensure the timely completion of the new ₱210 million municipal hall and legislative building to improve employee morale, streamline workflows, and enhance public access to services.
	Adopt sustainable practices	Design the new building with energy-efficient systems and disaster-resilient features to reduce long-term costs and serve as a model for green public infrastructure.
	Digital transformation	Begin planning for a fully digital municipal hall. Leverage the new physical space to support paperless transactions, online permitting, and centralized digital records.
2. Transparency and open governance	Institutionalize open government	Adopt fully the DILG mandate on embedding transparency and accountability in local policies. Financial reports and budget documents should be accessible online and in public offices.

	Strengthen participation	citizen	Involve civil society organizations in local planning to ensure voices from different sectors of the community shape local programs. Adopt best practices from neighboring LGUs for institutionalizing participatory budgeting processes.
	Enhance the feedback mechanism		Create regular town hall meetings or dialogues between citizens and local leaders to ensure local concerns are directly addressed in policy-making.
3. Data-Driven planning and development	Utilize local data for policy		Ensure that the Community-Based Monitoring System is functional and actively use the data to create evidence-based development plans. This will intensively identify who needs social services the most and create programs that address their specific needs.
	Integrate population and development (POPDEV)		Adherence to the thrust of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) Region 5, the need to align local strategies with population data leads to better health services, empowered youth, and more resilient communities. (cpd.gov.ph) LGU Sto. Domingo can aim for recognition in programs like the Rafael M. Sales Kaunlarang Pantao Award.
	Explore alternative financing		Explore PPP or Public-Private Partnerships as a way to fund infrastructure projects, such as the planned coastal roads for tourism and livelihood, without relying solely on national funds.

The agenda sets forth several key priorities, such as enhancing infrastructure and operational effectiveness, fostering transparency and open governance, and implementing data-driven planning and development. These strategic directives align with the overarching objectives of improving governance performance and ensuring that development initiatives meet the community's needs.

A good working environment fosters efficient and effective public employees thus, the need for new buildings equipped with modern facilities to fully implement e-governance in the municipality. This in effect, would create an open governance in such a way that financial reports and budget documents are accessible online, strengthen citizen participation, and enhance the feedback mechanism.

This agenda for progress outlined the strategic framework focused on transforming the municipality into a transparent, resilient, and people-centered local government through digital innovation and data-driven policies. Additionally, this framework is structured to support Sto. Domingo in reaching high performance benchmarks set by national standards, particularly in relation to the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG). Achieving this recognition will not only highlight the municipality's commitment to good governance but also improve public trust and civic engagement, ultimately contributing to a higher quality of life for all citizens.

DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the dynamics of local governance in Sto. Domingo, Albay. It evaluated performance across key administrative pillars, identifying best practices, challenges, and measures for implementing good governance. The study explored existing interactions and patterns that shape local public administration, which serves as the basis for formulating an agenda for progress.

Based on the results previously presented in this study, this chapter provides an analysis of the findings including interpretations and explanations supported by related literature. The implications are also

discussed which set the framework for the conclusions and recommendations, allowing for a clearer understanding of the study's future directions.

Performance of LGU Sto. Domingo in Development Planning, Financial Management, Local Legislation, and Monitoring & Evaluation

This study assessed the performance of the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Sto. Domingo, Albay across development planning, fiscal management, local legislation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), anchored on the indicators of the Department of the Interior and Local Government Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG).

Along with development planning, the municipality is compliant with the DILG requirements evidenced by its development plan. The vision is in alignment with the regional and national goals, while all the SGLG areas have programs, projects, and activities with their corresponding budget allocations for every calendar year. Substantial amounts for utilization were made for health, infrastructure, disaster resilience, and economic development. The residents also manifested a very satisfactory rating on the LGUs' performance as they confirmed to the query about their involvement in the planning process as members or representatives of a civil society organization in the municipality.

Under fiscal management, the results showed a decline in performance as the audit reports indicated that the financial statements of the LGU were fairly presented during the first three years of the mayor's administration. However, their performance weakened in the subsequent years as it led to a disclaimer of opinion, which means that the auditors were unable to present their opinion due to insufficient evidence in the financial statements. This is attributed to persistent issues such as unreconciled cash balances, unliquidated cash advances, incomplete documentation, and weak compliance with the Full Disclosure Policy.

For local legislation, the total of 705 ordinances and resolutions that were enacted in six years, responding to the ten areas of SGLG, is a manifestation of a positive performance in the municipality. Legislative output was highest in financial administration and business-related matters.

As to the monitoring & evaluation, with less than half of the appropriated funds in selected PPAs being utilized is an indication of underperformance in project implementation. M&E mechanisms were present but hampered by documentation deficiencies, lack of task forces, and incomplete reporting.

The findings revealed a discrepancy between the plan and its implementation. The LGUs' desired state for the community as reflected in the Development Plan, manifested alignment with the national development goals and sectoral priorities, however, it was a different story in actuality. Evidently, there are underlying issues with financial controls and administrative processes in accordance with the audit results and low utilization of funds. The CDP, on the other hand, reflected a comprehensive, participatory, and emphasized resiliency in the planning approach.

When it comes to the legislative function of the municipality, the dominance of resolutions over ordinances implies responsiveness to immediate administrative and operational matters rather than long-term structural reforms. A productive legislative body does not necessarily mean it always leads to real change in governance when there is no proper reinforcement and monitoring. Laws need to be implemented effectively for the attainment of good governance.

The difference between COA findings and citizen satisfaction suggests that residents evaluate performance primarily through visible services such as infrastructure, disaster response, and social programs rather than technical financial compliance. Citizen perception indicates a patron-client relationship. The positive responses from the residents came from the perceived service delivery rather than strict regulatory compliance. Thus, visible programs in disaster preparedness and social protection strengthened public approval despite administrative shortcomings.

Using Public Financial Management (PFM) theory, effective governance goes beyond mere allocation of resources, it also involves accountability, transparency, and compliance with legal mandates.

The LGU's declining audit opinion reflects weaknesses in internal control systems and reconciliation processes. From a Results-Based Management (RBM) perspective, the low utilization rate signifies a gap between what has been delivered and the results needed to achieve. There are funds allotted to PPAs and they were not spent for that purpose. This indicates that the local government has a weak capacity to use the funds efficiently and thus needs to improve fiscal administration.

From a different perspective, since the study covered the years 2019 to 2024, there are several alternative explanations that can be considered for the observed findings. The COVID-19 pandemic may have affected project implementation and financial reporting. As explained by the LGU, the funds were allocated to other purposes that required immediate attention. On the other hand, the unreconciled balances were explained as due to limited resources in accounting and treasury offices. It can also be attributed to the designation of the budget officer and the OIC accountant under the same person. This is an indication of a serious problem with how responsibilities are divided which may lead to a high risk of errors such as potential theft of funds. It also signifies a weak internal control since the fundamental system of checks and balances is broken.

The political dynamics could also influence legislative volume and the prioritization of certain sectors. This could be attributed to the number of municipal councilors who belonged to the team of the incumbent mayor, which comprised the majority compared to the opposition and the independent party. When it comes to the survey responses, it's possible that people's satisfaction ratings were influenced by the desire to give positive feedback. This could happen for a couple of reasons: some may feel pressured to say what they think sounds good, or they might not fully understand the technical details behind the governance indicators.

Overall, the performance of LGU Sto. Domingo can be identified as positive when it comes to the existence of a comprehensive and aligned development plan, strong performance in disaster preparedness and social programs, high citizen satisfaction in most governance areas, and an active legislative body with significant output. In contrast, its weak performance can be attributed to deteriorating audit opinions and low compliance rates, weak financial reconciliation and documentation, underutilization of development funds, insufficient monitoring structures (e.g., absence of IMTF), and transparency gaps such as lack of an official website and incomplete School Education Fund disclosures.

Based on this study, there is a need to focus on several important areas. For policymakers, it is important to strengthen internal audit systems and to implement automated financial reconciliation processes. On the administrative side, investing in skills building of our accounting, procurement, and monitoring and evaluation staff is necessary. In terms of governance, using digital platforms for transparency and timely information sharing helps boost accountability. Legislative efforts should prioritize reforming environmental and educational policies to better meet our community's needs. Lastly, for the local community, it is essential to turn planning commitments into actual projects that are completed successfully. If these fiscal challenges are neglected, there is a risk of missing out on important national incentives and recognition under the Seal of Good Local Governance.

Best practices of LGU Sto. Domingo as perceived by its residents

The findings provided insights into the perceived effectiveness of Sto. Domingo's best practices in local governance. The most perceived best practice is the mapping Mayon Volcano danger zones which emphasizes the community's primary concern for safety and disaster preparedness. According to Macose (2024), this result in particular is in alignment with the principles of resilient and climate-adaptive governance, where spatial planning serves as a fundamental tool for protecting constituents from natural hazards. Similarly, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Program 2020-2023, under the MDRRM framework, recognizes knowledge management as one of the strategies to develop resilient communities against disaster, and mapping danger zones represents a critical application of this approach at the local levels (NDRRMC, 2020). The significant recognition of the residents of this practice by the

LGU fosters pride among the residents and encourages collaborative efforts between the community and local government.

The strong showing of infrastructure and economic development initiatives, such as traffic management and heritage restoration, reflects a community that values both modernization and cultural preservation. Research on heritage tourism development in rural municipalities reveals that communities generally acknowledge tourism's positive economic and cultural prospects, though concerns often arise about environmental impact and traditional lifestyle disruptions (Phori, 2024). The relatively high rank of heritage restoration in Sto. Domingo suggests that residents perceive the balance between tourism development and heritage preservation positively, indicating that the LGU has successfully aligned community aspirations with tourism development goals. This dual focus on infrastructure and heritage indicates a holistic approach to local development, addressing immediate mobility needs while also investing in long-term economic drivers.

The moderate recognition of technology-enabled governance, particularly the use of Facebook for resident reporting and simulating infrastructure impacts, demonstrates the LGU's embrace of digital solutions. Research on ICT-powered LGUs in the Philippines confirms that information and communication technology can empower both local governments and communities, helping them formulate decisions and responses more effectively. As communities and local governments craft different policies and innovations to ensure population safety, ICT solutions that hyper-localize data with communities as the main information providers have proven valuable (Macose, 2024). The recognition of these practices suggests that residents appreciate and utilize these digital engagement channels.

However, a notable gap emerges between technology-enabled governance and foundational institutional practices. While the use of social media for reporting issues is well-recognized, more technical and collaborative processes are not. The lowest-ranked practice, partnering with universities for technical studies, points to a potential disconnect between the LGU and academic institutions. This is a significant finding, as university partnerships are crucial for evidence-based policymaking, providing access to specialized technical studies, research capacity, and innovation. Civic university agreements established in various contexts demonstrate how higher education institutions can work in partnership with local anchor institutions to help find solutions for society's most pressing problems (University of Exeter, n.d). Such partnerships create pathways for research collaboration, innovation projects, and technical support initiatives that advance sustainable urban development (Cebu Institute of University, 2025). The low perception of this practice in Sto. Domingo could mean that such partnerships are infrequent, poorly publicized, or that their outputs are not directly felt by the community.

The low ranking of using mangroves for coastal defense is particularly noteworthy given the LGU's coastal geography. Research across Europe on nature-based solutions for coastal protection reveals common trends: while technical experts have a solid understanding of these solutions, community members' support is often accompanied by limited knowledge of what nature-based solutions entail (Pannozzo & Leonardi, 2026). However, studies also showed that residents of coastal areas tend to have higher awareness of such practices, and there is considerable public desire for more sustainable and eco-friendly management approaches. The low ranking in Sto. Domingo may suggest a need for greater investment in, or communication about, these nature-based solutions. Successful examples from other Philippine LGUs demonstrate how mangrove planting, tree tagging, and coastal clean-up drives can be combined with youth advocacy activities to strengthen coastal resilience. Such initiatives, when co-organized with volunteer groups like "Mangrove Warriors," can significantly raise public awareness and participation in nature-based disaster risk reduction (How are Calatagan Barangays Building Coastal Resilience While Engaging Youth?, 2026).

Practices related to financial resilience, such as reserving funds for mid-year adjustments, are also perceived as less prominent. The low awareness of fiscal flexibility mechanisms is understandable, as these

are internal administrative processes, yet they are critical for agile disaster response, a key concern in a hazard-prone area like Sto. Domingo.

The findings implied that while the LGU of Sto. Domingo is seen as effective in disaster risk reduction and urban development, there is a significant need to enhance the connection between community-focused initiatives and the essential institutional and academic partnerships that support sustainable governance. For the LGU to achieve resilient and smart growth, it is imperative to not only sustain its visible best practices but also to improve communication and integration of technical, academic, and nature-based collaborations within the community. Furthermore, involving youth and community volunteers in environmental projects can serve as an effective strategy to raise awareness and boost engagement in the crucial but less recognized practices of governance.

Challenges encountered in the implementation of good governance

The key challenges hindering the implementation of good governance in LGU Sto. Domingo along development planning, political and governance issues ranked the highest, followed by limited financial resources. Lack of monitoring was the third challenge in rank, indicating systematic planning weaknesses caused by a lack of manpower capacity.

In fiscal management, the challenge that ranked highest was the lack of financial accountability and transparency, followed by mismanagement and corruption. Weak financial planning and low revenue efficiency indicate a heavy dependence on the revenue allotment, and therefore, fiscal autonomy is not much exercised.

Key challenges in local legislation include a lack of participation, political interference, and poor monitoring of ordinances that caused impediments in the enforcement, indicating a shortfall in the legislative process. These challenges are also observed under monitoring and evaluation.

These rankings align with the literature presented in this study, where political dynamics and limited resources hinder the decentralization goals. Moreso, addressing the issues of participation and transparency could enhance the overall efficiency of local governance.

Beyond the identified challenges lie the possible alternative factors that explain the weaknesses in the local governance. The political issues in the development planning may arise from a deeply ingrained patronage culture, where unwavering loyalty to the political party takes precedence over individual merit and qualifications. In this environment, personal connections and allegiance often overshadow the importance of skills and competencies, leading to a system that values loyalty above all else.

The lack of transparency may be due to elite capture (Taiwo, 2022) and structural inefficiencies. Hiding unlawful activities allows individuals to evade detection, like the fire incident in the municipal building (Jaucian, 2022) which raised doubts among residents that it might have been intentional to cover up the 232 unsubmitted and unaccounted checks totaling approximately ₱60 million from 2001 to 2024 (COA Audit Report, 2024). Designating the budget officer and OIC accountant under one person clearly demonstrates the absence of checks and balances in the system. The high percentage of responses on limited public participation in the legislative process can also be associated with the idea of elite capture, where the privileged few take control over resources and dominate decision-making, making sure it aligns with their personal interests.

These obstacles can negatively impact service delivery and diminish trust, which might result in voter disinterest or a push for centralized authority, which can weaken local governance. Emphasizing engagement in three critical areas could generate beneficial outcomes, enhancing our ability to hold individuals accountable in monitoring and evaluation, as well as in law-making. Policymakers should implement training initiatives to develop skills, similar to those offered by the Department of the Interior and Local Government, that focus on mid-level technical requirements. Anti-corruption measures, such as e-bidding, can assist in mitigating financial risks. Over time, we can incorporate these insights into

performance audits of local government units to assess progress, ensuring that Sto. Domingo can align with successful cities like Naga City (City Government of Naga, 2023).

Measures in addressing the challenges in implementing good governance

The results emphasized various crucial actions that participants consider vital for tackling issues related to effective governance within local government units (LGUs). The findings were organized into four primary areas of governance: development planning, fiscal management, local legislation, and monitoring and evaluation.

In the area of development planning, the highest-ranking measure according to respondents was more solid anti-corruption measures and increased transparency in project execution. This was closely followed by enhanced citizen participation and better transparency and accountability. These findings suggest that respondents view transparency and citizen engagement as essential elements in reinforcing development planning processes.

In terms of fiscal management, the highest-ranking measure was the implementation of the full disclosure policy, followed closely by enhancing anti-corruption initiatives and enforcing debt caps for local government units. These results highlight the significance of financial transparency and efficient fiscal management practices in enhancing governance at the local level.

Regarding local legislation, the most critical action identified was conducting public consultations before major ordinances. This was succeeded by promoting multi-sectoral representation and setting up LGU ordinance compliance task forces. The findings indicate that participatory decision-making and inclusive representation are regarded as vital elements of effective local legislation.

To track and assess performance, the top method identified was the publication of monitoring and evaluation dashboards on LGU websites or social media channels, closely followed by third-party audits and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation units within LGU planning departments. These results underscore the increasing significance of transparency, data availability, and independent review in promoting accountability and enhancing government efficiency.

The results showed that transparency and anti-corruption strategies are viewed by respondents as some of the most vital actions for enhancing good governance practices. The strong emphasis on improved anti-corruption measures in development planning implies that respondents acknowledge corruption as a major obstacle to effective governance and the execution of development initiatives. Ensuring transparency in the planning and implementation of projects guarantees the appropriate use of public resources and maintains government accountability to the public.

Similarly, the significant focus on citizen engagement highlights the increasing acknowledgment of participatory governance as an essential aspect of democratic local governance. Engaging the public through consultations and involving various sectors enables citizens, civil society groups, and other stakeholders to actively take part in the decision-making process. This approach to participation aids in making certain that policies and programs align with the community's needs and priorities.

Concerning fiscal management, the emphasis on a full disclosure policy underscores the significance of transparent financial governance. Open financial reporting enables citizens and oversight bodies to track government spending, which minimizes the chances for corruption and the improper use of public resources. The focus on fiscal responsibility, which includes implementing debt limits and enhancing revenue generation, also reflects the necessity for sustainable financial management in local governments.

The findings further highlighted the significance of monitoring and evaluation systems in enhancing accountability and boosting program results. Making M&E dashboards public and carrying out third-party audits enable both internal and external stakeholders to oversee government performance. These tools support evidence-based decision-making and allow governments to determine if programs and projects meet their intended objectives.

The findings emphasized the importance of transparency and citizen engagement, but alternative explanations may also clarify the results. First, the focus on anti-corruption and transparency initiatives may reflect broader governance issues in the Philippines, where corruption is a longstanding concern. Thus, respondents may naturally prioritize measures that address corruption directly.

Second, the lower emphasis on technical solutions like digital tools may result from respondents' limited awareness of these systems. They may prefer reforms that are more visible and easier to grasp, such as public consultations and disclosure policies. Finally, limitations faced by local government units (LGUs), including resource constraints and administrative expertise, may also influence perceptions regarding the feasibility of various governance measures.

This study has important lessons for improving how local governments work and implement policies. The local government should focus on transparency and anti-corruption measures. Policies such as full disclosure and clear project execution can build public trust and ensure accountability in using public funds. It is also crucial to include citizens in governance. Public consultations, diverse representation, and participatory planning can improve democracy and make sure policies meet community needs.

Local governments need better monitoring and evaluation systems to enhance program effectiveness and accountability. Tools like digital dashboards, independent audits, and performance tracking can support informed decision-making and improve services. Finally, LGUs should offer more training for their staff. This will help them adopt modern governance methods, including digital systems, financial management tools, and result-oriented planning.

This study showed that transparency, accountability, and citizen involvement are crucial for good governance in local governments. Important actions to address governance challenges include anti-corruption efforts, public consultations, clear financial policies, and monitoring systems. The results also emphasized the need to improve institutional tools that help make decisions based on evidence and encourage community participation. By using Results-Based Management and following good governance principles, local governments can better deliver services, promote accountability, and achieve sustainable development.

Agenda for progress in enhancing local governance for LGU Sto. Domingo

The proposed Agenda for Progress: Enhancing Local Governance in LGU Sto. Domingo, Albay offers a strategic framework aimed at tackling the governance issues identified in the study. This agenda prioritizes the reinforcement of institutional capacity, the enhancement of transparency and citizen engagement, and the encouragement of data-informed development planning to guarantee effective public service delivery.

The agenda set forth several key priorities, such as enhancing infrastructure and operational effectiveness, fostering transparency and open governance, and implementing data-driven planning and development. These strategic directives align with the overarching objectives of improving governance performance and ensuring that development initiatives meet the community's needs.

Infrastructure and Operational Efficiency

One of the key elements of the Agenda for Progress is the development of a new municipal building to enhance local government efficiency. The new municipal hall and legislative facility are expected to optimize administrative processes, improve inter-departmental collaboration, and provide better service access for residents.

Upgraded infrastructure can significantly boost government operations. A modern municipal building enables staff to perform their duties more effectively, while incorporating disaster-resistant and energy-efficient designs shows the local government unit's commitment to sustainable practices. The agenda also emphasize digital transformation with plans for a fully digital municipal hall. Shifting to

paperless transactions and centralized digital records can enhance service delivery, reduce bureaucratic delays, and improve accessibility for residents needing government services.

Transparency and Open Governance

Transparency and accountability are fundamental components of the Agenda for Progress. These agenda focus on institutionalizing open government practices by fully implementing transparency measures such as the public release of financial statements, budgets, and governmental spending.

Practices of open governance are essential for fostering public trust and ensuring accountability in government activities. When government data is easily accessible to citizens, they are better equipped to oversee the actions of their local representatives and engage in governance. The agenda also underscores the significance of enhancing citizen involvement in governance. Engaging civil society organizations in local planning allows for a range of perspectives to be taken into account in decision-making. This method encourages inclusive governance and ensures that development initiatives meet the genuine needs of the community.

Another significant component of the agenda is the establishment of regular town hall meetings or dialogues between citizens and local leaders. These platforms for communication can enhance feedback mechanisms, allowing government officials to better understand community concerns and adjust policies accordingly. Effective feedback systems can improve government responsiveness and strengthen democratic governance.

Data-Driven Planning and Development

The Agenda for Progress underscores the need for data-driven planning and development. It recommends using the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) to ensure planning is based on accurate local data. This approach helps local governments identify critical needs and allocate resources effectively. By analyzing socio-economic data, LGUs can create targeted programs to address issues like poverty, health, education, and livelihoods, ensuring that initiatives are evidence-based and meet the needs of vulnerable populations.

The agenda underscores the importance of incorporating population and development (POPDEV) strategies into local planning. By aligning development policies with population trends, local governments can better prepare for future challenges in healthcare, education, employment, and social services. It also advocates for alternative funding methods like public-private partnerships (PPPs), enabling local government units to secure additional resources for infrastructure and development projects, reducing their dependence on national funding.

Alignment with Governance Principles

The Agenda for Progress embodies the principles of effective governance, especially those of transparency, citizen involvement, accountability, and efficiency. By fostering open government initiatives, enhancing citizen participation, and implementing data-informed planning methods, the agenda aids in the creation of a governance structure that responds to the community's needs.

The strategies described in the agenda align with the principles of Results-Based Management (RBM), which highlight the importance of achieving tangible results through organized planning, ongoing monitoring, and assessment. The emphasis on data usage, monitoring frameworks, and performance-oriented governance illustrates the LGU's dedication to enhancing development results through decisions based on evidence.

Implications for Local Governance

The implementation of the Agenda for Progress has several important implications for local governance in Sto. Domingo, Albay. The agenda provide a clear roadmap for strengthening institutional

capacity and improving government service delivery. By investing in infrastructure and digital transformation, the LGU can enhance operational efficiency and reduce administrative barriers. Another implication is that it promotes participatory governance by encouraging greater involvement of citizens and civil society organizations in local decision-making processes. This approach strengthens democratic institutions and ensures that development policies reflect the needs of the community.

Finally, the emphasis on data-driven planning and alternative financing mechanisms demonstrates a forward-looking approach to local governance. By leveraging data and partnerships, LGUs can design more effective development strategies and ensure the sustainability of local initiatives.

In conclusion, the Agenda for Progress outlines a clear plan to improve governance in LGU Sto. Domingo, Albay. It focuses on building infrastructure, ensuring transparency, and using data for planning, which addresses key governance problems identified in the study.

By putting these strategies into action, the LGU can work more efficiently, improve accountability, and support inclusive development. Overall, the Agenda for Progress serves as a practical guide for creating a transparent, strong, and community-focused governance system that encourages sustainable local growth.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following are the conclusions of the study:

1. The municipality of Sto. Domingo demonstrated a moderate-to-strong governance performance in development planning, yet with significant administrative weaknesses in fiscal management, local legislation, and monitoring and evaluation. The key governance issue is the gap between policy development and practical execution. Achieving high-performance governance requires effective, transparent, and accountable administration focused on sustainability rather than short-term goals.

2. The best practices of the LGU of Sto. Domingo is perceived to be aligned with disaster risk reduction, underscoring the community's concern for safety and disaster preparedness. Additionally, the community prioritizes modernization through tangible urban development, while preserving its cultural heritage, as highlighted in the economic development initiatives.

3. The major challenges encountered in the implementation of good governance lie in the governance inefficiencies such as organizational dysfunction or mismanagement, fiscal imbalances, and transparency which weaken public confidence in leadership. Moreover, political interference is a key challenge in local legislation, while the poor monitoring and evaluation of the local government caused impediments in the enforcement of service delivery.

4. Corrective measures are necessary to address the challenges in the implementation of good governance. The most effective approach integrates financial discipline, citizens' participation, and strong oversight institutions to ensure that local governments can effectively and fairly achieve positive development outcomes for the community.

5. The Agenda for Progress was created to transform governance in Sto. Domingo, Albay with emphasis on transparency, public engagement, and digital innovation. By implementing effective monitoring and data-informed planning, the initiative seeks to create a more accountable and responsive local government. This approach will empower citizens, enhance decision-making, and promote a more inclusive governance model that addresses community needs.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the study are as follows:

1. To achieve lasting results, it is essential for the local government to strengthen its monitoring systems, increase transparency, and ensure that programs are carried out efficiently. This will help connect the gap between technical performance and public perception. This involves establishing a dedicated

performance monitoring team, enforcing budget controls, conducting regular internal audits and holding periodic reviews to close the gap between policies and their actual implementation.

2. To attain real growth and true resilience, the LGU should not only continue its best practices but also enhance its technical and collaborative efforts. Involving the youth and community volunteers in the environmental initiatives similar to other LGUs' efforts, can enhance awareness and encourage participation in government activities.

3. The LGU should adopt a governance strategy that emphasizes accountability and improvement in its system. To be specific, the need to implement a transparency mechanism such as open data systems and public financial disclosures to build trust with the community. It is also crucial to enhance anti-corruption measures and improve the internal audit controls. Minimizing political interference and focusing on merit-based administrative processes can create a more effective system. There is also a need to enhance the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system to ensure all programs are implemented according to plan. Lastly, investing in the capacity-building programs for the staff will improve their overall performance. Taking these measures will directly address existing inefficiencies and restore public confidence in local governance.

4. The LGU should operationalize a cohesive framework on governance that involves financial management, community participation, and oversight. Particularly, it includes compliance with the Commission on Audit standards, citizen engagement through public consultations and feedback mechanisms, as well as coordination between different departments to align their budgeting, planning, and evaluation processes. This approach can make governance reforms work together effectively, creating a mutually responsive system in the administrative process.

5. The Agenda for Progress needs to be enhanced into a long-term strategic governance program with clear targets, timelines, and performance indicators. Aligning the initiatives with the Seal of Good Local Governance will ensure sustainability and will help us track progress and ensure a meaningful impact on governance quality.

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