



Upland Development Programme in Southern Mindanao EU Project ALA-97/68

Final Report M&E Specialist

The screenshot displays the 'AIP Projects' software interface. On the left is a navigation menu with options: AIP Proposed Projects, Appropriated Budget, Detailed Budget (optional), Obligations, Browse/Edit Funded Projects, Disbursements, Progress, Visits, and Back to Main Menu. The main window is titled 'Quarterly Progress Projects and Sub-projects - Administrator Mode'. It shows a search filter for 'Sector only' and 'Economic Sector'. The 'Projects' list includes 'RIP groups 1', 'New project', and 'Upland Irrigation system'. The 'Sub-Projects' list includes '1. Program design', '2. Construction of irrigation works', and '3. Training of farmers and establishment of water user associations'. The 'Financial Progress' section for 'Upland Irrigation system' shows a budget of 60,000, expenditures of 48,000, and a balance of 12,000. The 'Sub-Projects' section for 'Construction of irrigation works' shows a budget of 50,000, expenditures of 48,000, and a balance of 2,000.

Financial Status	This Quarter	To Date	Total (to date)
Budget:	60000	60000	200000
Expenditure:	48000	48000	48000
Balance:	12000	12000	248000
Percent spent:	80%	80%	24%

Financial Status	This Quarter	To Date	Total
Budget:	50000	50000	50000
Expenditure:	48000	48000	48000
Balance:	2000	2000	2000
Percent spent:	96%	96%	96%

Henk Remme
3 December 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The M&E Specialist replaced the first recruited expert (T. Curran) and provided 12 months' input divided over several missions, starting from September 2003.

Logframe and UDP internal M&E & MIS

A revision of the logframe was undertaken in November 2003 following the recommendation of the MTR. The component-based structure and the use of different incompatible/parallel planning frameworks were the most crucial weaknesses associated with the original logframe and planning system. The logframe was further adapted after UDP introduced the concept of "schemes".

The Specialist assessed the UDP M&E and MIS and identified a number of weaknesses, which were caused by the conceptual design of the planning framework and by inefficient operation of the M&E and MIS. A major shortcoming of the M&E system was that it put too much focus on detailed activity and output reporting but did not facilitate the analysis of performance, quality and effects.

The Specialist provided recommendations for (i) the integration of the different planning frameworks in line with the logframe and linking them in the MIS, and (ii) identification of the required M&E activities with regard to the analysis of quality and effects and drawing up TORs for contracting out such studies. As UDP management wanted the Specialist to focus on the LGU M&E system, he was not involved in the further improvement of the UDP M&E system and MIS.

Strengthening of the LGU M&E capacity.

Most time was spent on strengthening the LGU M&E and MIS capacity as it was considered crucial to the mainstreaming and sustainability of the introduced SUD model and schemes. After assessing the existing LGU systems for planning, M&E and MIS, two major activities were undertaken:

- the development of an MIS for project planning and M&E, based on the LGUs' "Annual Investment Plan" framework. The system was integrated with the MIS developed for Barangay profiles and BDP, and was pilot-tested in 8 MLGUs. At this stage, half of the LGUs are using the MIS.
- training on M&E for LGU offices and monitoring committees. This was a crucial activity as the poor capacity and low quality of project planning and M&E at LGU level was found a major constraint, which could hamper the sustainability of the SUD schemes if no proper feedback is provided to the local authorities on the results and effects of these interventions.

Recommendations:

In order to institutionalize the M&E tools and MIS at the LGUs, its potential should be realized by major decision-makers and implementing offices. This is a gradual process that requires further coaching by UDP for the remaining period. Coaching is required at 2 levels:

- PLGUs: (i) PPDO for providing (future) support to MLGUs with regard to the implementation of the system; and (ii) ICT departments for providing technical support. In order to ensure the sustainability of the MIS, the PLGUs will play a major role in the promotion and support of the system at MLGU level.
- MLGUs: (i) office heads and main users to ensure appropriate utilization and (ii) encoders to ensure proper encoding and use of analysis functions. A tentative work plan has been developed (see annex).

1. Introduction

This report presents a brief overview of the activities undertaken and outputs achieved by the M&E Specialist during his 12 months assignment. Detailed descriptions of the activities and issues can be found in the 7 exit reports that were submitted after each assignment. The issues raised are the Specialist's personal opinions that do not necessarily correspond to the project's views.

The M&E Specialist replaced the previous M&E expert (Mr. T. Curran) and provided 12 months' input divided over several missions, starting from September 2003 until December 2006. Upon request of the project, the contract was extended in 2004 and in 2006 for an additional 6 months. Within the overall context of the original TOR as agreed upon in the company contract, the activities of the M&E Specialist were further specified for the extension period (Annex 1).

The activities can be grouped into the following major categories that will be further discussed hereafter:

- Revision of the logical framework
- Recommendations for improvement of UDP's internal M&E system and MIS
- Strengthening of the LGU M&E capacity
- Design of a programme for community-based M&E.

2. Revision of the logical framework¹

2.1 *Activities undertaken*

A revision of the logframe was undertaken through a 2 day-workshop in November 2003, following a recommendation of the MTR and an assessment made by the Specialist, in which a number of conceptual weaknesses were identified, especially with regard to poor integration of some of the project's crucial components. The component-based structure and the use of different incompatible planning frameworks were the most critical shortcomings associated with the original logframe.

The two purposes were merged into one because of the concern that the income and resource management aspects were too much separated in the project. The results were reduced to 3 major results that reflected the strategic intervention of the project with respect to (1) strengthening the institutional capacity of LGUs and CBOs to plan, implement and M&E SUD, (2) support to field implementation and piloting of sustainable agriculture and resource management and protection and (3) support to establishment of improved services and capacity for enterprise development.

The logframe could largely be maintained, even after the project defined the SUD model and introduced the concept of "schemes". Only a few changes were made to better reflect the schemes.

¹ For details, see Exit report 1 September – December 2003, LogframeA workshop report, and the document "Explanation of proposed new logframe"

2.2 Issues, lessons learned

Although all project staff had been involved in the revision of the logframe, it is the Specialist's personal view that the logic of the logframe has not always been systematically followed, appreciated or internalised by all project stakeholders. This has even resulted in misinterpretations in some of the project monitoring mission reports. In addition, different conceptual models have been presented over the years, starting from a component-based delivery package approach to the final SUD model and schemes, which required regular modifications of the logframe. Although it is quite normal for such a complex project as UDP to go through different phases of strategic planning, the changing ideas, focus and concepts have to some extent affected the effectiveness of the logframe as a guiding tool for planning, as some might feel that the changes are not sufficiently reflected.

3. Improvement of UDP's internal M&E system and MIS²

3.1 Activities undertaken

During his first assignment, the M&E Specialist made an assessment UDP M&E and MIS and identified a number of weaknesses:

- Too much focus on detailed activity and output reporting and too little analysis of performance, quality and effects.
- The quality of monitoring and reporting from the field varied considerably
- The reliability of data, especially of the monthly reports, was questionable because of delays, missing figures, not updated records, errors in the compilation process, etc.
- No clear relationships existed between reporting formats (i.e. project progress, activity performance AWP, logframe OVIs, qualitative reports MSOs, etc.). This was mostly due to parallel planning frameworks that were not well integrated.
- Data entry and processing were not efficiently organized and the MIS did not integrate the required information into one relational database. Instead, different databases and platforms were used, resulting in a highly inefficient system which required extensive manual manipulation and duplication of data recording.

The Specialist provided the following recommendations and support:

- Integration of the different planning frameworks in line with the logframe
- Linking of the logical framework, AWP&B and Progress reports in a relational database (MIS).
- Identification of the required M&E activities on the basis of the logframe, particularly with regard to the analysis of quality and effects. As the capacity of project staff was considered insufficient to carry out quality assessments and evaluation studies, the Specialist helped in drawing up TORs for contracting out such studies and in establishing criteria for evaluating the bids. As UDP management wanted the Specialist to concentrate on the LGU M&E system rather than spending time on the UDP M&E, the Specialist was not involved in the further improvement or implementation of the UDP M&E system and MIS.

² For detailed discussion see see Exit report 1 September – December 2003,

3.2 Issues, lessons learned

Effects of conceptual changes

The changes made to the conceptual framework (logframe) had implications for the UDP monitoring system and MIS. After the integration effort in 2003, the logframe activities and output indicators were all linked to the AWPB activities and outputs and the entire system was included in the MIS that now properly linked all logframe and operational planning activities and progress reports. The system was also linked to the components, which made it possible to retrieve reports by component.

However, because of subsequent changes made to the conceptual framework, such as the introduction of schemes, additional requirements were put to the progress reporting system to report by scheme. As these added criteria were not yet included in the MIS and due to the fact that some offices did not consequently follow the activity progress reporting by logframe structure, the reporting through the MIS database was abandoned and PPOs submitted their reports in Excel again. This shows again the importance of a clearly understood logframe and a flexible MIS that can be easily adapted when new criteria for additional groupings are required.

UDP M&E of quality and outcome

M&E has indeed been weak as it has not been very explanatory or contributed to institutional learning. In order to compensate for the lack of feedback on the outcome and effects, the project commissioned some studies to be conducted on several aspects of the programme. These studies are very useful but they do not completely fill the gap between the data provided by the monitoring of activities and the analysis of outcome. The missing link is the assessment of quality of results. Although it is too late to conduct such exercises at this stage, it is important that in future projects these factors are considered right from the start.

4. Strengthening of the LGU M&E capacity³

4.1 Rationale for establishment of MIS for LGUs (MIS on BDP and AIP)

The M&E Specialist spent most of his time on this activity as it was considered crucial to the mainstreaming and sustainability of the introduced SUD model and schemes. The development of the MIS was considered a strategic input as:

- it provides the LGU planning departments (P/MPDO) and other offices with a concrete tool to improve their project planning and monitoring activities
- it builds on the interest and on the systems that have already been institutionalised at the LGU level, which makes it a sustainable exercise
- it provides a good opportunity for UDP to further improve the M&E skills of LGU staff and integrate UDP concerns within the LGU's planning and monitoring system.

The last mentioned point is important as M&E at LGU level is generally weak. The LGU's Annual Investment Plan (AIP), which is the major framework for planning and monitoring, is nearly entirely focused on the financial aspects and the physical implementation rate without giving much consideration to the quality and outcome of the project results. The MIS on the other hand, includes some simple facilities for

³ For further details on the process, see exit reports 2-7 and other documents describing the MIS (flyer, AIPMIS database structure, manual)

more comprehensive monitoring with respect to output indicators (quantitative and qualitative), implementation processes and results. The incorporation of the BDP helps to show the relationship between the BDP and AIP and the rationale for selecting certain BDP projects into the AIP.

4.2 Activities undertaken and outputs achieved

The Specialist undertook the following activities:

- Assessment of LGU planning, M&E and MIS systems through visits, meetings and workshops
- Development of MIS for project planning and M&E, based on the systems used by the LGUs (Annual Investment Plan)
- Integration of this AIPMIS with the MIS developed for Barangay profiles and BDP – MISonBDP
- Training and pilot testing of the MIS in selected LGUs
- Modifications on basis of assessments by LGUs
- Introduction of the MIS to other LGU offices, and to policy makers
- M&E/MIS workshops and training for LGU major offices (P/MPDO, P/MEO, P/MAgrO, P/MENRO, P/MBO, and chairmen of monitoring committees). This was a crucial activity as the poor capacity and low quality of project planning and M&E at LGU level was found a major constraint, which hampered the effective use of the MIS
- Meetings with COA and ECPAC to discuss possibilities for importing of e-NGAS (budget and accounts software) figures directly in the MIS, in order to minimise the need for duplicate data encoding.

Initially, the project worked with a limited group of 8 LGUs that were involved in the design and pilot testing of the system. Gradually more LGUs showed interest and were to some extent accommodated. However, as a strategy, the project requires that any further requests are directed through the Provincial LGUs that will provide further support to the MLGUs.

The development of the MIS took longer than anticipated because of technical and institutional reasons. The following “technical/conceptual” reasons slowed down the design:

- different planning procedures and AIP formats used by the various LGUs that had to be translated into a uniform model for the MIS – this required additional consultations and agreements with all LGUs,
- subsequent modifications requested by the LGUs – due to the LGU staff’s limited experience with database programmes the MIS requirements, specifications were changed a few times after LGU staff saw the actual modules of the system and better understood its functions and potential,
- changes made in the AIP requirements and formats by the government, which had to be incorporated,
- integration with the BDPMIS. This was originally not planned. The integration required modifications of the database structure as well as the source code. The integration with the BDPMIS also necessitated the disabling of the AIPMIS’ comprehensive data maintenance and security functions and transferring them to the common opening screen of the integrated system. A

separate database compact and repair application was made for this purpose. The integration required intensive cooperation with the GIS Specialist who developed the BDPMIS,

However, more important for the delays in implementation were the institutional constraints. Initially, the activity focused entirely on the LGU planning offices (MPDOs), being the main responsible offices for consolidating the various sector projects in the AIP. But during testing it became clear that many parts of the MIS, especially the ones related to M&E were not actually used, simply because the MPDOs did not have the data available. The detailed project information and monitoring data (if available at all) were kept by the implementing offices. In order to have a consolidated project planning and M&E MIS, it is therefore imperative that all offices are involved in the use of the system, either by manually providing the data to the MPDO or by using the MIS directly. In order for the system to be properly implemented, three requirements have to be met:

- offices must be interested and trained in using the MIS
- all offices must have a basic capacity in M&E and acquire the relevant data that should be included in the MIS
- most important of all, the local authorities (mayor, governor) must support the implementation of the system.

Because of these reasons, the project tried to incorporate other LGU offices and members of monitoring committees and organized a number of workshops and trainings on M&E and MIS.

At this stage, 13 MLGUs and all PLGUs have been trained in M&E and 19 MLGUs and 5 PLGUs are using the MIS.

4.3 Recommendations

In order to institutionalize the MIS in the LGU, its potential should be realized by major decision-makers and implementing offices. This is a slow and gradual process that requires further coaching by UDP for the remaining period. Coaching is required at 2 levels:

- PLGUs:
 - (i) PPDO for providing (future) support to MLGUs with regard to the implementation of the system; and
 - (ii) ICT departments for providing technical support with respect to database management, installation, etc.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the system, the provincial LGUs will play a major role in the promotion, support and maintenance of the system at MLGU level. The capacity of the PLGU must be further strengthened through training and coaching.

- MLGUs (that are already supported by UDP in the MIS):
 - (i) office heads and main users to ensure appropriate utilization and
 - (ii) encoders to ensure proper encoding and use of analysis functions.This will be done together with the PLGUs who will gradually take over this function and who will also be responsible for introducing the system to other interested MLGUs.

A tentative work plan has been submitted to UDP management that requires some inputs from PMED and the MIS Specialist.

Programming/software maintenance and updating. The MIS (AIP part) front end was developed in Delphi, using an MSAccess database that is shared with the BDP MIS. The Specialist's understanding was that the GIS Specialist, who designed the MIS on BDP, would maintain the system in the future. As this is apparently not the case, if necessary a qualified Delphi programmer could be approached to provide technical services to the LGUs. However, the M&E Specialist is also available to make changes to the system. The files can be easily transferred through internet. For structural changes, however, some fees would be required.

5. Design of Community based M&E

In view of TA time constraints, priorities set by UDP management and institutional considerations on who should spearhead the activity, the M&E Specialist did not spend much time on the design of a CB-M&E system.

After making an assessment of a number of UBA M&E systems, it was concluded that the capacity development of community leaders with respect to M&E should be integrated with existing capacity building activities that are carried out in the framework of SUD schemes in order to ensure that the training becomes:

- part and parcel of a community organisation building exercise that provides a clear institutional framework for CBM&E ("*well functioning UBA with clear responsibilities and activities*")
- integrated and linked with concrete (economic) activities and projects in the field that are perceived important and relevant by the community
- part of a programme that requires commitments and a common work schedule of the community and the services delivery institution.

Rather than the M&E Specialist developing and testing such tools, it was thought more efficient to integrate this capacity building activity with the scheme-based support provided by the service providers, especially with regard to BDP development and the agricultural extension system/DFS. These providers incorporated already M&E modules in their training activities. It would have been good to further streamline these activities but time was simply not sufficient to do this.

However, the M&E Specialist, through the training of LGUs, increased the capacity of the LGU Offices with regard to participatory M&E. During the training, the importance of participatory M&E and the active involvement of beneficiaries in the analysis of project results was emphasised and the participants were trained in some PRA methods.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

For a 4 month mission of a M&E Specialist in 2004/2005

Within the overall TOR as agreed upon in the Company contract, the activities of the M&E Specialist in 2004/2005 will be:

1. Evaluate the work done on the M&E system/MIS in respect of adjusting the systems to the amended logframe and make them result and effect oriented; facilitate that reporting requirements will be simplified substantially without sacrificing quality of the data; when and where required further improve on these in close consultation with UDP staff and local TA's
2. Continue to assess the municipality LGU M&E/MIS/GIS systems and recommend on their improvement and where feasible introduce adapted systems with selected LGUs in close consultation with UDP staff and the local TA's involved
3. Facilitate participatory community level M&E systems based on already ongoing community initiatives, particularly with those community organisations (UBAs, UCOs) that have taken up economic activities, in close consultation with all stakeholders

ORIGINAL TERMS OF REFERENCE TA MONITORING & EVALUATION SPECIALIST (18 MAN-MONTHS)

Qualifications and Experience

A post-graduate in the social-sciences with specialist experience in participatory planning and monitoring in Asia. Minimum of 10 years work experience in development economies. Previous experience in Philippines advisable.

The specialist will be required to draw up detailed guidelines on the M&E system for the successor project in line with the requirements of EC and GOP, and to facilitate the revision of the logical framework for the project. The main design effort will be given to community level beneficiary monitoring and to impact evaluation procedures. The methods, resources and outputs from the system will be specified. Additional training for project, LGU and community level staff will be identified. The implementation of the system will be the responsibility of project staff, and the Planning and Evaluation section. After the first two inputs a first input, additional inputs are scheduled to assist the systems users to adapt the system to the evolving experience and needs of the programme.

Duties

His/her particular duties will include, but are not limited to:

- confirming the logical framework analysis already prepared and modifying as necessary. Ensuring all indicators have specific and measurable targets. Preparing detailed plans for the various means of verification (reports, surveys, contracted studies and so on);

- elaborating the community planning and beneficiary monitoring approach, identifying the methods for data collection, persons responsible and reporting timetable. The consultant should draw on relevant experience on SMAP and other EC assisted programmes and on community organisational staff in this exercise;
- developing a specific case study with one community where a plan has been prepared and development targets agreed. Work with key community members and LGU staff to agree beneficiary monitoring procedures;
- indicating the topics and purpose of case studies to be carried out during the first two years of the project life. Prepare specimen TOR for these studies;
- preparing detailed TOR for the first tri-term review (to be conducted at the end of year 2 or during year 3). Ensuring that instruments to collect data on the effects and initial impacts for the new project will deliver their provisional findings in time to feed into the tri-term review;
- training the project planning and evaluation staff in relevant skill areas: such as participatory monitoring design, supervision and review of case studies. purpose, conduct and review of project reviews;
- providing annual follow-up to ensure that programme systems and procedures are still responsive to the needs of both the programme and its development partners.

Timing : A total of 18 man-months, split into 6 man-months during design phase (year 1) and 3 man- months in years 2 and 3, and two man-months in years 4-6.