Note on Status of M&E/MIS and Action Plan October 2006

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October 2, 2006

1   M&E Workshops

1.1   Workshop focus – need for additional technical training

As recommended in March 2006 (joint report by Allan and Henk), M&E workshops were organised for selected PLGU and MLGU offices to increase their M&E capacity and to demonstrate the linkage between M&E and the MIS.

The workshops were found necessary as a number of weaknesses were identified with respect to planning and M&E methodologies at LGU level, which also negatively affected the proper utilisation of the MIS on BDP-AIP (see M&E Specialist Exit reports 2004 - March 2006):
   a) a weak conceptual AIP framework with a major focus on financial aspects instead of on result-oriented planning and monitoring;
   b) poor technical capacity and implementation of M&E with inactive and under-budgeted Monitoring and Evaluation Committees;
   c) political interference - M&E not institutionalised but mostly driven by the priorities/ requirements of the mayors and governors;
   d) poor communication between offices with respect to project planning and M&E – resulting in problems of MPDOs to collect the required data to be integrated into the MIS.

The four workshops that were held in September clearly confirm these observations (see also Toni's report).

The original idea was to focus mostly on technical training and allocate only limited time to the assessment of the LGU's M&E and MIS systems (as the major weaknesses were already identified before). However, the tentative programme designed by PMED focused more on the assessment. After arrival of the M&E Specialist it was decided to change the programme but maintain the assessments as many other offices than the MPDOs were invited who had not even seen the MIS yet and as also many new LGUs were included. It was felt that more time was needed for the identification of current practices, weaknesses and recommendations and for the introduction of M&E principles and the MIS, rather than jumping into technical training.

As a result, a second series of more technical trainings are still required and will be held in November, if sufficient funds are available. The need for such training was clearly expressed by the participants, and some PLGUs even agreed to shoulder some (or all) of the costs.

1.2   Proposal for M&E training in November

The training should focus on the following aspects:

- introduction on M&E (framework, methods) – simple "theoretical" concepts
- institutionalisation of monitoring - methods, responsibilities, timeframe, data recording and analysis, establishment of protocols
- evaluation – simple methodologies for assessments of outcome and effects that will help to show concrete results and success of projects (in collaboration with Frank Ladaga with regard to mainstreaming of SUD concerns)
- use of MIS for M&E purposes - encoding of M&E results, data exchange and analysis.

The training should be as practical as possible and result in clear agreements, plans, procedures and protocols for implementation (although this will also be subject to the support of the local authorities - LCEs).

After some introductory (theoretical) part on M&E framework (which was already introduced in the workshop) and M&E methods, the attendants should be involved in practical exercises on monitoring and evaluation. Given the low capacity, the introduced techniques should be simple.

The actual programme needs to be closely coordinated with Frank Ladaga (through email?) and be well prepared on time.

Given the need for the M&E Specialist to work also on the MIS during his last one month assignment in November, it is proposed to limit the number of trainings to two if possible. Although this will result in large groups of participants of about 50-60 for each training, as the focus is on practical exercises, this could still be feasible.

2   MIS on AIP

2.1   Assessment of issues by attendants M&E workshop

An assessment of the MIS utilisation in the M&E workshop once more confirmed the need for the establishment and institutionalisation of M&E mechanisms at LGU level. Without a clear M&E system, no data will be encoded in the MIS other than very basic AIP information.

Although the M&E Specialist, MIS Specialist and GIS Specialist have held meetings with other offices in a number of piloted LGUs, most participants in the workshop were not aware of the MIS or had not seen it. After presentation, many other offices showed interest in installing the system in their respective offices.

A number of issues were discussed, ranging from how to exchange data to inclusion of certain fields. These are presented in the annex and in also the Action Plan (see 2.2). Apart from weak M&E, a number of constraints also hamper the implementation of the MIS, such as hardware problems, lack of full time MIS encoders, etc.

2.2   Action Plan MIS

A number of issues were identified for improvement of the MIS. Some actions have already been undertaken by the M&E Specialist and are integrated into the new programme that can be installed in the LGUs, which will be visited/coached in October. Other issues require structural changes to the database and further development and testing. These changes (of which some have already been finalised) will be introduced in November (last column of table).

The following table shows the topics, status and whether they have already been integrated into the current programme. For further clarification of topics see also annex.

(a) = Identified topics to be addressed
(b) = Current status – actions undertaken during this mission
(c) = Percentage finished
(d) = Included in current updated system that will be used for installation in October
(e) = To be included in new upgraded system that will be released in November

(a) Topic	(b) Action and Status	(c) %	(d) Oct	(e) Nov
1. Link up to NGAS (COA, ECPAC)	A module for importing accounting data from Excel was made. A service contract was made for ECPAC to develop a facility to export their data to Excel. Once finished, this will be tested by Henk so that the final system will be ready upon arrival in November. COA through IT Sarangani province will also do the same – to be followed up by Allan.	80		√
2. Include an importing function for LGUS that do not have a LAN	Was finalised and included in existing version. LGUs need to be well instructed on the use – clear protocols should be established on who updates project information, e.g. if other offices such as MAgrO update project monitoring data in their own computer and send these to the MPDO for importing into the consolidated database, the MPDO must not make changes to these files.	100	√	
3. Include facility to track changes – re-alignments	A text box is included in Projects and Sub-Project forms	100		√
4. Include an extra page in project form for encoding any other data	An extra page with just one memo box is included in Projects and Sub-Project forms	100		√
5. Add more Types of Fund options than 20% DF, Other Gen Fund, and Trust Fund.	A simple solution is proposed that will not entail structural changes to the database - add 2 more options: *Special Education Fund* and *Other Fund*	-		√
6. Enable encoding of more funds for one project	An extra field must be included in budget and accounts data. For each financial entry (detailed budget, obligations, disbursements the type of fund will have to indicated.	-		√
7. Include in financial forms PPA code and Allotment class	Code fields were already included in Projects and Sub-projects tables. Allotment Class is included in Cost items table	50		√
8. Include a facility to copy a project from a previous AIP to current one	The function to copy from a previous AIP requires an additional form.	-		√
9. Include one more level in AIP structure	Requires additional Programme table and one more field in Projects table.	-		√
10. Include quarterly Allotments	Requires 5 more fields in Project and Sub-projects tables	-		√
11. Make Template reports	Requires MSWord input forms and report generator templates	-		√
12. Include changed fields in Analysis facilities, e.g. Report generator and Querybuilder	Requires definition of new fields into report tables, query builder tables and actual reports			√
13. Enable consolidated reports on BDP at municipal and provincial level	Will be undertaken by Krusty	-		?
14. Update Help file	The changes made should be reflected in the Help file. Planned for November	-		√
15. Reflect changed option to encode only at project level in reports	The detailed reports templates were changed and now show project data even if no sub-projects are encoded	100	√	

3 Conclusions and recommendations

The experiences with the MIS piloting clearly show that the system will only work if (i) clear procedures for data encoding, exchange and analysis are established, (ii) if M&E is institutionalised and data are regularly available, and (iii) the system is fully supported by the LCE. Otherwise the MIS will remain an ad-hoc system that runs isolated at the MPDO.

Therefore, the proposed M&E workshop should result in clear procedures and protocols for each LGU with regard to M&E and MIS, to the extent that even formats are being made for data input forms and reports.

In order to facilitate this process, UDP could design a few template forms, at least the ones that are required for encoding data in the MIS (e.g. progress reports, visits). The initial participatory approach did not result in much action in most LGUs and a more aggressive approach might be needed to ensure that workshop action plans etc. are indeed followed up. This also means that intensive coaching is still required in the existing pilot LGUs and that the PPDOs should accompany the UDP staff at all times before they start coaching other MLGUs.

In October, the MIS Specialist (Allan) and MIS Encoder (Sherds) could still follow up the LGUs that experience some technical problems and the provinces that still do not have the system. An updated version was made by the M&E Specialist that includes an import facility.

With regard to the M&E Specialist's final input, the time remains very short and has to be divided over remaining MIS activities and M&E workshop. The MIS programming issues would require 1-2 weeks.

ANNEX – Workshop Consolidated Recommendations on MIS

1. Link up to NGAS (COA, ECPAC).

Initial discussions were held with COA and ECPAC who developed different software applications for budgeting and accounting purposes. COA, through the ICT section of the Sarangani Province office, agreed to prepare reports in Excel, which could then be imported into the MIS on AIP. ECPAC also agreed to do the same and a service contract will be prepared. The logic and fields of the ECPAC system were discussed during a meeting with the programmer at the ECPAC office in Davao and the M&E Specialist already developed a new facility for importing the data from the Excel reports to the database. This will have to be further tested once ECPAC has finalized the Excel report facility.

2. Include an importing function for LGUS that do not have a LAN

Such function would enable different offices to encode the data for their respective projects themselves and then export the data to a flash drive or CD, which is then imported by the MPDO into the consolidated database. The facility was already made for the AIP stand-alone package and is now also included in the AIP-BDP integrated version.

3. Include facility to track changes – re-alignments (can be just a text box)

In order to simplify the requested facility, it was agreed to just include a text box in which the changes can be typed.

4. Include an extra page in project form for encoding any other data (include memo).

This will only require including one more memo field in the project table and also in the sub-project/activity table and adding one page to the Project data entry form and to the Sub-project data entry form.

5. Include a facility to quickly show what type of data has not been filled yet (for example through a pop-up screen at side of Project selection form).

This is not considered a priority and should only be done after the other requirements have been finalised.

6. Make *Type of Fund* user-defined. Change current 3 options (20% DF, Other GF, Trust F) so that the user can add more types.

This would require quite some changes to the system. Since most LGUs have a standardised system of classifying funds, it is suggested to only add two more options, e.g. Special Education Fund and Other Funds.

7. Some projects might be included in more than one fund – in current system you have to encode same project twice if it is part of 2 funds.

This is a difficult issue. During earlier discussions LGUs indicated that each project only qualifies for one type of fund, e.g. either 20% DF, General Fund, or Trust Fund, etc. and therefore the MIS was designed in such a way that one fund for each project is supported. The suggested solution to encode the same project twice for each type of fund is not convenient as it would require duplicate data encoding and also separate monitoring of outputs, processes, etc. which would lead to an artificial break-up of the project into two separate projects. The best solution is very labour intensive as it would require structural changes and complications to the database. This is not possible given the current time left for the M&E Specialist. A not so good but practical possibility is to add another field in the project table ("second fund") and then monitor the obligations and disbursements for each type of fund separately (e.g. the user must select the type of fund for each entry).

8. Include in detailed budget, obligations and disbursements PPA code and Allotment class.

PPA code is in fact the project or sub-project code made of a combination of different codes (office code +allotment class + serial no). Allotment class is just a higher grouping of accounts codes/titles. It merely means including an extra column in GL/Cost items table.

9. Include up to 3 counterparts into financial system (forms detailed budget, obligations, and disbursements).

This must be further clarified in order to determine what is really required.

10. Include a facility to copy a project from a previous AIP to the current one.

This can be relatively easily done. However, it would only entail copying of the background data and maybe overall budget but not the monitoring data. In the newly created AIP, the new project codes will be blank and will have to be encoded again manually.

11. Include a facility to copy a whole previous AIP to the current one.

This could be done but does not make much sense. It means that the AIP is really not a dynamic planning tool and that the LGU focuses on routine projects that are being repeated year after year. If a facility for copying of projects from one AIP to another is included, this would be sufficient.

12. Include one more level in AIP structure (PPDO South Cotabato)

The Province structures the AIP into 3 program/project levels instead of 2 that are supported by the MIS. If the first level is only a programme name without further attributes, the request can be relatively easily accommodated.

13. Concern: who will do maintenance when UDP is gone?

The ICT departments of 3 Provinces, Comval, Sarangani and South Cotabato want to study system. It is recommended to organise a special training for ICT staff in November (2 per Province) in order for them to understand all aspects of the system. With respect to promoting and coaching, the Provincial government should play a major role. However, PPDOs of Davao Oriental and Davao del Norte have not installed the MIS yet. With regard to technical programming issues, a local Delphi programmer has to be found for future maintenance.

Other concerns

14. Include Allotments

In order for the system to be complete, the quarterly allotments should be included. This is relatively easy as it would merely require adding 5 more fields to the project and activities tables.

15. Create Template Reports

On the one hand, input templates should be made in MSWord that exactly match the fields that are required for encoding progress reports and visits reports. These templates can then be used by other offices for reporting on quarterly project progress and on project visits/field validations.

On the other hand, more output report templates should be include in the report generator that will allow the MPDO to retrieve information. These reports can then be further customised to the LGU needs by the Encoder.