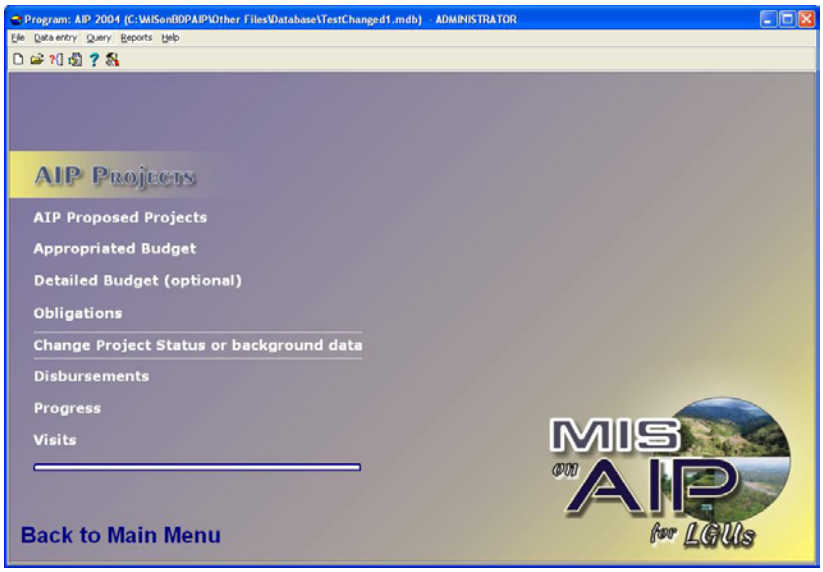
Exit Report M&E Specialist, September 2005



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SUMMARY

The M&E mission was undertaken in the period August-September 2005 (5+ weeks) and focused entirely on the finalization of the MIS on BDP-AIP for LGUs (phase 2).

Follow-up visits were conducted to all participating LGUs except for the Mati and Taragona that had not yet encoded any data.

A number of improvements were made to the system, such as the addition of a Report Designer, which enables the LGUs to design their own reports and do analysis without having to rely on support from the programmers.

A 3-day training workshop was held in Davao September 21–23, 2005 for municipal planning and accounting officers from 8 selected LGUs. The participants were trained in all aspects of the system, from data entry to data analysis and report generation. The active participation and understanding of the trainees was good. The participants particularly appreciated the flexible analysis and reporting tools.

At the last day the MIS was demonstrated and discussed with development officers from the provinces, municipalities and other government agencies. The provincial planners expressed their interest in having a customised system for their own use and they found especially the AIPMIS highly relevant to their own planning and monitoring program at province level. The enthusiastic response might be a good basis for the further institutionalisation and use of the MIS on BDP-AIP.

The UDP PMED encoder was trained in the AIPMIS database structure and report design and is expected to be actively involved in the monitoring of the MIS implementation by LGUs, in providing support and in the design of report templates that are relevant to LGUs.

Issues:

- Link between MIS and improved planning and M&E – the AIPMIS is a simple but comprehensive tool for improved physical and financial planning and M&E, but not all the relevant modules might be used as currently the planning, budgetting, financial and physical monitoring functions are scattered among different LGU departments. It is important that:
    - all relevant data be included in the system to have an overall picture of the projects – this will be the responsibility of the MPDC
    - the actual use of the AIPMIS be closely monitored to improve the conceptual use of the system, and the data quality
    - the LGUs be further supported and trained in improved planning and M&E (phase 3 – depending on extension of UDP).
- Institutionalisation of the support mechanisms. A meeting is planned with the NCC (DOST) to discuss their role with respect to providing future support to the LGUs with respect to implementation and technical issues.

1 Introduction

The M&E mission was undertaken in the period August-September 2005 (5+ weeks) and focused entirely on the finalization of the MIS on BDPAIP for LGUs (phase 2).

Follow-up visits were conducted to all participating LGUs except for the ones in Compostela Valley that had not yet encoded any data.

A 3-day training workshop was held in Davao for municipal planning and accounting officers from 8 selected LGUs. The final day was used to demonstrate the system and discuss its relevance and sustainability with Provincial and Municipal development officers and representatives from other government agencies.

On the basis of the workshop outcome, a few more changes were made to the system. The PMED encoder was trained in the database structure and report design.

With respect to future support of the system, it was suggested that the province would play a major role. A meeting with representatives from the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the National Computer Centre (NCC) was scheduled. Unfortunately the meeting could only be held after the M&E Specialist's assignment.

2 Tasks undertaken and results

2.1 Follow-up of Encoding by pilot LGUs

A follow-up of the implementation of the MIS was undertaken in most municipalities that participate in the pilot programme, in order to:

- check and repair errors that were reported by some municipalities
- assess the status of implementation, especially of the AIPMIS and get feedback on changes required
- provide some additional training if necessary
- include the latest updates of the AIPMIS and database.

The following was concluded from the exercise:

- At the time of the visit, nearly all pilot municipalities had started with the BDPMIS but none had yet tested the AIPMIS.
- No bugs were found in the AIPMIS. The reported errors were all due to wrong updates of the database (Malalag, Kapalong, Alabel, Tupi). Somehow the correct database that was updated by PMED in May/June was overwritten with an older version. It is not clear how this has happened as the Encoders claim that they did not re-install the system.
- The Encoder's technical level and skills vary substantially. Some easily grasp the system whereas others had problems with the basic structure and data entry actions.
- A number of issues came up that were addressed by the programmer before the workshop was held.

Table 1. Follow-up visits and main conclusions

Municipality	Date visited	Observation – status of MIS	Action undertaken
Laak* Compostela Valley	31 August	No errors were encountered, AIPMIS functioned properly (it is not clear why PMED received an error report). No data was yet entered in AIPMIS. Encoder needs further training.	Trained data encoder. Had a look at the Accounts software to see whether there is an overlap. Included new AIPMIS and 2 reports
Malalag* Davao del Sur	1 Sept. with GIS Programmer, Evaluation Officer & Data Encoder	The whole MIS did not run because they did not receive the updated installer that Krusty sent. The AIPMIS, when run separately functioned well. No data was yet entered in AIPMIS.	Trained data encoder. Included new AIPMIS and 2 reports
Kapalong Davao del Norte	2 Sept. with GIS Programmer, Evaluation Officer & Data Encoder	The updates in the database that Allan did were only reflected in the template but not in the actual database they use. Otherwise AIPMIS functioned well. No AIP data was yet entered.	Copied the respective tables from template to actual database. Included new AIPMIS and 2 reports
Alabel Sarangani	8 Sept with Evaluation Officer & Data Encoder	The updates of the template and of the actual database that Allan did were not reflected as the databases had the old structure.	Inserted the right template and imported updated fields in the actual database. Included the new AIPMIS and 3 reports. Received hard copy of their AIPMIS and accounts items. Also had discussion with Accountant on specific needs and obtained copy of Charts of Accounts.
Lake Sebu	9 Sept with Eval.Officer & Data Encoder	Had the updated databases. No AIP data yet entered. Encoder needs further training.	Included the new AIPMIS and 3 reports.
Tupi	9 Sept with Evaluation Officer & Data Encoder	Had the old BDPAIP programme. Nothing yet entered. MPDC contracted additional encoder to enter data on BDPs and AIP.	Updated the system (executables and database) and had Sherds train new encoder
Mati, Taragona	Could not be assessed because no project vehicle available but had not yet recorded any data. Were assessed in workshop.		

2.2 Programming, adjustments to the MIS on AIP

Apart from a number of small updates of the system, the following major changes were made:

a. **Improved security** to prevent illegal data entry and maintenance operations that might affect the integrity of the database: restricted access to certain operations, increased quality control and the prevention of minimizing forms which makes it impossible to start up more than one AIPMIS program at the time.
b. **Inclusion of a Report Designer** that enables the encoders to design their own reports without having to understand the structure of the

database or being dependent on the programmer. An additional Manual and Tutorial program is provided. The reports can be saved in folders that are also defined by the user.

c. **Facility to export and import data, especially of disbursements** – the facility enables the exchange of records between Accounts and the MPDO.
d. **Additional modules:** the forms for obligations and project visits were finalized. The project and sub-projects now include 5 more fields on obligation budget (quarter 1-4 and total) that are automatically calculated after an obligation has been entered. The quarterly progress form includes a facility to see financial progress against obligated budget in addition to the appropriated budget.
e. **Inclusion of additional project fields:** Project Status, Type/source of Funds**,** and BDP link (showing Barangay and BDP start year for projects that are imported from BDPMIS.
f. **Improved form design** - the selected projects and sub-projects are highlighted for easier identification.

2.3 Training Workshop

The second phase training on MIS on BDP-AIP for LGUs was conducted September 21–23, 2005 at the Apo View Hotel in Davao. The training was expected to result in:

- enhanced skills of the pilot municipal encoders and accounts staff in the operations of the MIS,
- a clear view of the implementation status and problems experienced by the encoders,
- increased awareness of the provincial and municipal development officials on the benefits and functionality of the MIS, and
- agreement on an Action Plan and future support mechanisms.

The second day was dedicated to the AIPMIS. An assessment of the progress with respect to AIP encoding confirmed that only few LGUs had really tested the system as they had started with the encoding of the BDPs[1]. Therefore, most time was spent in (re-) training the participants in all aspects of the system, from data entry to data analysis and report generation. The active participation and level of understanding of the trainees was very good, especially compared to the first workshop. The participants particularly appreciated the flexible analysis and reporting tools which gives them the opportunity to do their own data analysis and makes them less dependent on the hard-coded reports of the programmer.

The participants agreed that the system with respect to its design and functionalities is highly relevant, comprehensive, flexible and very user-friendly. During the assessment of the system the following topics were discussed:

Table 2 – Issues and agreements

[1] For details see Annex 1.

Issues, discussion	Agreement/Action
The security of the system - It was possible to open more than 1 AIPMIS program at the same time. Within the MISAIP it is possible to encode projects without selecting an AIP.	Corrected – (1) Forms are now locked and can only be closed by using Save or Cancel buttons. (2) No data entry on projects can be done if no existing AIP is selected.
The AIPMIS is comprehensive but the MPDO Encoders do often not have the data available, as their info is limited to project proposals and total funds	The MIS is a tool for improved planning & M&E that covers financial and physical aspects. The MPDOs have to organise the data input and make sure that the information from other departments is entered in the system as this is also to their benefit. Only using the MIS for entering lists of projects would defeat its purpose.
What is the linkage and compatibility with the newly introduced accounts system NGAS?	The advantage of the AIPMIS is that it is directly linked to the projects and that it provides easy analysis of the financial (and physical) status at project level. The linkages have to be studied to assess potential for data exchange
Can the system also be used for encoding AIPs at Barangay level?	Yes, the system is not dependent on a certain level and can be used at any level, including barangays and provinces
The progress reports should automatically show the total expenses on the basis of disbursements made (currently the system requires the user to click a button to do calculation)	Done – the disbursements are automatically summed when adding a new project progress report. However, for LGUs who do not encode disbursements in the system, there is still an option to type the total amount directly
Disbursements form should show warning when the remaining budget is overdrawn	Not yet done – will be included in the future
The Report Designer and Query Builder are very good tools for analysis but more sample templates could be included on which the LGUs can build.	The PMED Encoder was trained in designing reports – she is expected to add more templates. A charting tool (TeeChart) was purchased that is integrated in the Report Designer. This enables the user to design charts in the reports.

The last part of the training comprised a demonstration of the MIS and an open forum discussion that provided the planning officers with the opportunity to assess the system, raise questions and provide suggestions. There were provided with a flyer of the MIS. MPDCs in Region XII were not able to attend the workshop because of RDC meetings planned for the same dates but the other planners and the HLURB TOC were very positive about the presented system. The provincial planners expressed their interest in having a customised system for their own use and particularly requested a stand-alone package for the AIPMIS as they felt that the demonstrated system is highly relevant to their own planning and monitoring program at province level. A standalone AIPMIS is relatively easy to prepare as all relevant functions are already included in the system, it only requires the disabling of the integrated functions (+/- 0.5 day programming). The customization of the BDPMIS to province level needs, would involve more extensive programming as consolidated profiles at municipality level are required instead of barangay profiles. Instead of installing a stand-alone AIPMIS the provinces could also install the current integrated package (MIS on BDP-AIP) and only use the AIPMIS which is already fully functional (however, the BDPMIS part cannot be used).

The enthusiastic response from the planners is very encouraging as it might be a good basis for the further institutionalisation of the MIS on BDPAIP. The commitment and appreciation of the policymakers is of crucial importance to the system's actual use and continuation.

2.4 Training of MIS Encoder

In order to provide a strong basis for direct support and follow-up of the pilot program by UDP, at least until the end of current project phase, the PMED Encoder was instructed on the use and basic structure of the AIPMIS. The instructions included the following:

- Manual on database structure and definitions of the table used in the AIPMIS
- Tutorial (executable and pdf file) on the use of ReportBuilder
- Training on the use of ReportBuilder and on the general operations of the AIPMIS.

The Encoder assisted in the training of LGU Encoders and appears now well versed with the system. It is expected that she will get the opportunity to develop more reports and provide support to the LGUs in the coming months.

2.5 Institutionalization of support mechanisms

The further support to the implementation and maintenance of the system is a crucial aspect with respect to the MIS' sustainability. Despite the positive response from the provincial and municipal planners, it is important that mechanisms are found for sustained technical support, even in the case that UDP will be extended. Involvement of the private sector will be difficult without additional funding arrangements as the LGUs might not be prepared to pay for their services, at least not at this stage. The best option would be to involve the relevant government agencies, particularly the National Computer Centre (NCC) that falls under the Department of Science and Technology and that has operational offices at province level (Information Technology Centres). Unfortunately, representatives of NCC and DOST were not present in the workshop but a separate meeting with them is scheduled for the end of September. Unfortunately, the M&E Specialist will have left the project by that time and will not be able to attend the meeting.

2.6 Action Plan for the next 3 months

The LGUs promised to continue encoding and have the system updated by the end of October or November. Close follow-up is required on the implementation of the system. With respect to the AIPMIS the following should be undertaken:

Action	Responsibility
Regular monitoring of implementation: - is AIPMIS being encoded as planned - are there any technical problems/bugs - are there any conceptual problems, f.i. fields missing, redundant forms, …. - what is the quality of encoding & how is the system used (which modules are not being encoded and why not) - keeping the monitoring log at PMED on	PPO Planners, PMED

updated	
Determine additional reporting requirements, provide suggestions for improvement, report problems and submit needs for further support	MPDO Planners & Encoders
Design of reports: - determine additional LGU reporting requirements and suggestions - design report templates - import report templates in LGUs' database	PMED Encoder
Further hands-on training if required	PPO Planners, PMED Encoder
Correction of errors (only bugs) if found	M&E Specialist (through email)

2.7 Pending activities and concerns

As the workshop was conducted only a few days before the end of his assignment , the M&E Specialist could not finalize all suggested changes. The following activities are still outstanding:

- Update of the manual and on line help system with the latest changes
- Providing a warning message on the disbursement form when the remaining budget is overdrawn
- Design of a stand-alone AIPMIS
- Option to save reports that are triggered by the QueryBuilder (separate function from Report Designer)
- Improved ReportBuilder data dictionary field definitions (hide some fields)
- Design of more template reports (to be undertaken by PMED Encoder) and standard reports.

Most of these are relatively simple activities that would not need much time, except maybe for the design of report templates (but this will be done by PMED Encoder). As the MPDO Encoders have not yet used the system much, it is expected that more suggestions or requests for special report formats will be submitted in the coming months.

With respect to the integrated system, the following topics are pending:

a. *Export of reference tables, query and reportbuilder definitions and dictionary*
   Most database maintenance functions were removed from the AIPMIS and were put in the opening form of the integrated MIS on BDP-AIP. However, the integrated system does not yet include a function to import reference tables after creating a new database or to create a new database that has already the defined reference data included . This is important as it would be very cumbersome for the Encoders to put in all the reference information again (i.e. sectors, names of barangays, sitios, charts of accounts, etc.). Some data, such as the dictionaries used for the QueryBuilder and Report Designer should also be included. The GIS Specialist promised to include this function. When creating a new database the user will be provided with a choice: a) create a new empty database or b) create a new database with the defined reference information.

b. *Installation and testing at Province level*
The provincial planners have shown interest in the system. It is very important that they are properly guided in the installation and testing of the system as their perceptions on the functionality will be crucial for their further support of the system.

In addition, it is recommended that the following activities be undertaken in the future (phase 3):

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a. *Transfer QueryBuilder and ReportBuilder to separate database*.
Currently, the data definitions and queries and reports that are designed and saved by the user are included in the same database as all other information. This means that the same tables have to be copied every time a new database is created. It would make more sense to maintain these data in a separate database. This requires some re-programming

b. *Integration of the QueryBuilder and ReportBuilder in the BDPMIS*.
The functionalities of these analysis tools could be easily integrated in the BDPMIS; it would only require a specification of the data definitions (2-3 days).

The M&E Specialist has about 3 weeks left on the current contract but no more ticket refund, which complicates the planning of another mission this year.

3 Way forward – Recommendations for future TA

3.1 M&E concerns

With respect to the M&E Specialist's original TOR, relatively little time was spent on the UDP M&E and community-based M&E this year as this was found less opportune by project management at this stage. The development and pilot testing of the MIS on BDP-AIP was considered more important and in line with the emphasis being put on the institutionalization of the UDP models at government level.

The MIS is indeed a good management tool that could enhance improved planning and M&E, provided that it is used to its full potential. However, this is not necessarily the case:

- First, the quality of the data and the actual use of the system's functions determine its usefulness ("garbage in – garbage out"). During the testing phase many of the AIPMIS functions were not yet used on the pretence that the MPDO encoders did not have access to the information.
- Second, the system itself does not influence the type and quality of planning and M&E methodology used. The current level and quality of project planning and M&E at LGU level is rather weak.

Therefore, there is some danger that the system will be used in an instrumental manner, just replacing the current data recording in Excel and that many modules, especially those related to the physical planning and monitoring of outputs and processes, will not be used. This would really defeat the purpose of the system and not result in any improved M&E. It is therefore recommended that the actual use of the AIPMIS be closely monitored in order to assess the use of the various modules and the quality of the data. Provided that UDP gets an extension, the next step would be to focus on improved planning and M&E capacity of the LGU planners.

3.2 Suggestions for tentative input M&E Specialist 2006-2007

Based on these remarks, the TA input for 2006-2007 (subject to extension of the project) should focus on the further strengthening of the planning and M&E capacity of LGUs at Municipal level but also at Provincial and Barangay level. This would entail the following activities:

- further support to the utilization of the MISonBDP-AIP:
    - making final adjustments to the MIS modules if necessary
    - training and support to the optimal use of the system: data quality, the way projects are being structured and modules are being used, and the use of analysis functions (linked to the next activity)
- strengthening of planning and M&E capacity for LGUs (aimed at planners and other LGU staff):
    - training on (objective-oriented) planning and improved M&E methods – workshops and field exercises
    - development of simple manual that also includes the link to the MIS
- strengthen the MIS support mechanisms – liaise closely with the provincial ITCs (NCC-DOST) to increase their knowledge and capacity for providing technical support to the LGUs with respect to use and maintenance of he MIS on BDP-AIP.

Annex 1 - Assessment data encoding of AIPMIS (prior to workshop)

General conclusion:

- Few LGUs have really tested the system. The modules on detailed budget, obligations, outputs, progress, disbursements, visits, etc. have not yet been used at all or only with one record as a test case.
- The way projects and sub-projects are structured varies a lot: some LGUs only include the projects (no sub-projects), others put budget items as sub-projects, etc. The structure must be clearly defined – is there a need for an option to include only project level?

LGU	Projects/ Sub-projects (background)	Appropriated budget	Det Budget	Indicators	Location	Obligations	Status	Disbursements	Progress	Visits
Tupi	15/27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alabel	4/17	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lake Sebu	24/74	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mati*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kapalong	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Malalag	2/2	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
Laak	4/3	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Taragona**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* Mati experienced hardware problems, which prevented them from using the system

** Taragona was added later but the encoder was not trained and could not test the system