



# Exit Report M&E Specialist, April 2005

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, and Visits. A 'Back to Main Menu' button is at the bottom of the menu.

The main window is titled 'Quarterly Progress Projects and Sub-projects - Administrator Mode'. It shows data for Quarter 1, Year 2004. The 'Projects' tab is active, displaying a list of projects. The selected project is 'RPP 3 (mje) 1' with the title 'New project' and 'Upload irrigation system'. The 'Financial Progress' section shows:

	This Quarter	To Date	Total to Date
Budget:	00000	00000	200000
Expenditure:	48000	48000	49000
Balance:	32000	32000	249000
Percent spent:	60%	60%	24.5%

The 'Sub-Projects' tab is also visible, showing a list of sub-projects. The selected sub-project is '1. Supervisory services' with a total expenditure of 48000. Its 'Financial Progress' section shows:

	This Quarter	To Date	Total
Budget:	50000	50000	50000
Expenditure:	48000	48000	49000
Balance:	2000	2000	3000
Percent spent:	96%	96%	98%

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## **1 Introduction**

The M&E mission was undertaken in the period April-May 2005 (5 weeks) and focused nearly entirely on the finalization of the MIS for LGUs that integrates two applications for the planning and monitoring of:

- The Barangay Development Plans (BDP), and
- The Annual Investment Plans (AIP).

A two-days training workshop was held in Davao for municipal planning and accounting officers from 6 selected LGUs, one from each province.

On the basis of the workshop outcome, a few more changes were made to the system that needs to be further tested in the selected LGUs during the coming two months.

A few comments on other M&E concerns are included in Section 3.

## **2 Development of the MIS for LGUs (MIS BDP and AIP)**

### **2.1 Rationale**

The development of the MIS is considered a strategic input as:

- it provides the LGU planning departments (MPDO) and accounting 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 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 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.

### **2.2 Tasks undertaken during this mission and results**

A detailed description of the activities undertaken during this mission is not presented as it would result in a technical discussion on database design and programming issues. Basically, most activities undertaken during this mission were related to improvement of the system:

- integration with the BDPMIS (interface, database, common functions)
- development of the in-built help function
- design of reports (report generator)

- finalisation of the Query Builder (a flexible analysis tool that enables the users to construct their own reports and data lists on the basis of their own defined criteria)
- the development of a separate application for database compacting and repair that enables the user to maintain the database automatically (the function is integrated in the main menu)
- debugging and improvement of existing functions
- modification of the manual,
- the preparation and facilitation of a training workshop in Davao in April 2005 with staff from selected LGUs from each Province that will pilot-test the system in their respective municipalities.
- inclusion of some additional modules, based on comments made in the workshops of October 2004 and April 2005, e.g. detailed budget items, obligations, financial analysis against appropriated budget and obligations, status of projects, and a number of small modifications
- installation of Delphi software and AIPMIS source code and instructions for MIS Programmer on how to compile the system.

The workshop participants were quite positive about the system and showed a keen interest to install in their offices. They also suggested a few more changes to be made with respect to the incorporation of project status dates and the obligations budget. Their suggestions were included in the AIPMIS. The pilot version of the system is now ready for testing. The workshop participants took a CD with the installer back to their LGUs. However, the installer needs to be updated with the latest changes that were made to the system on the basis of the comments made in the workshop.

### **2.3 Delays and problems encountered**

The development of the MIS took longer than anticipated because of the following reasons:

- 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 and specifications were changed a few times after LGU staff saw the actual modules of the system and better understood its functions and potential,
- integration with the BDPMIS. This was originally not planned. The integration proved more complicated than expected as it required modifications of the database structure as well as the source code because of two different platforms used (Visual Basic and Delphi). 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.

During the workshop some hardware problems were experienced with the rented computers, of which some did not have the specified requirements. This did not only cause delays but also affected the effectiveness of the training as some LGU participants had to share computers with others and could not have hands-on experience themselves.

During the workshop some minor bugs were detected in both systems that were easily resolved.

One concern of the M&E Specialist is the data entry method by typing directly in the grids that might create errors or affect the integrity of the database if not properly done. Apart from the more traditional way of data entry through pop-up screens for each record, an additional method was included that emulates Excel-type of data entry whereby the user can add and edit records directly in the grid. This was specifically included on request of the LGU participants in the October workshop because of their experience with Excel worksheets. However, during the training it appeared that if the user does not understand the system well and randomly puts his cursor in different rows and fields, this flexibility could create problems. It is not easy to prevent all wrong user input actions and besides, it might be confusing for the user to have different options for data entry. Therefore, it is recommended to disable this direct grid dataentry function in the future and only allow dataentry through separate pop-up forms.

## **2.4 Action Plan**

The trained LGU staff agreed to test the integrated MIS in their respective LGUs in May and June and enter some records from the current AIP. As changes were made in the AIPMIS and the database structure just after the workshop, it is important that the new version is deployed as soon as possible. The following agreements were made:

- PMED will immediately contact the PPO Planners and LGUs to check whether they have already started some dataentry. If not, they will be asked to wait for the new version (that is to be sent this week). In the case they have already started testing the system, the MIS Specialist will ensure that the changes will be included in the database without replacing the one that the LGU have started working on.
- The LGUS will report any bugs, errors or changes that they would require.
- The LGUs will also provide UDP with samples of reporting formats they would require.
- The PPO Planners will follow-up the testing by the LGUs and regularly visit the LGUs to discuss implementation, problems, etc. They will report to PMED.
- The M&E Specialist will remove any bugs that are detected in the system and send the corrected files to UDP by email within a few days. The MIS Specialist or Encoder will copy the files in the source file at PMO, re-compile the application, and distribute the corrected executable to the LGUs.
- The MIS Specialist copied all the necessary files and programmes on his laptop and was instructed on how to install and compile the AIPMIS. He is expected to install the system on another computer at UDP and instruct the Encoder.
- After 1.5-2 months testing (end of June/begin July) the system will be reviewed again. On the basis of the test results final modifications will be made. However, with respect to AIPMIS, these should not involve comprehensive structural changes and additions of new modules and functionalities that would require a lot of programming. Only corrective measures can be taken that will improve the application within its current functionality and scope.
- After final modifications, further training of other interested LGUs will be undertaken and the system will be distributed to other interested LGUs.

## **2.5 Recommendations**

- In order not to lose momentum, active monitoring and support to the LGUs is required. The LGUs might be less inclined to start experimenting with the AIP right now and rather wait for the new AIP year. However, testing of the system should not be delayed. If necessary, UDP might help them with doing some initial data entry of their project records.
- As the MIS might be of interest to other government institutions such as provincial LGUs, NEDAD, and others, they should be informed about the system. This might further enhance the interest and institutionalisation of the MIS.

## **3 Other M&E concerns**

### **3.1 Studies**

Very little time was spent on other M&E issues this time. The M&E Specialist read the draft report of the study done by SHED on the intervention results in South Cotabato and Sarangani and wrote some comments.

The study report is concise and presents a brief analysis of UDP's interventions on a component basis and provides some indications on the level of implementation and adoption of UDP programmes. However, the report is quite general and the study findings are not supported by a more quantitative and detailed analysis as was expected.

The major reason for conducting the study was insufficient knowledge of the results and effects of the UDP interventions in the field. UDP's monitoring system and MIS provide quantitative figures on activities undertaken and outputs achieved, but the system falls short in showing the real outcome and effects. For example, we know how many farmers are involved in DFS, how many were trained, etc. but we do not know enough about the actual implementation, change in cropping patterns, resource use, quality of SWC measures, etc. which are all critical issues needed to help explain to what extent UDP's result and purpose indicators are being achieved and whether the current approaches and models are effective. This information is also needed as an input to the proposed impact study that will be a follow-up of the baseline study done in 2000. This study will look more at general impact, household income, etc, but is not expected to study the interventions in detail.

A replication of a similar interventions study in another province could be very useful but not on the same terms. An option could be to reduce the number of topics and only focus on one or two prioritised interventions, such as DFS and RM.

### **3.2 Community-Based M&E**

The MIS should be used as an entrance point for further improvement of the M&E skills of the LGU staff. Linked to this, more efforts should be put on community-based M&E. It is proposed that the M&E Specialist (if TA will be available) will focus on developing a programme for this. The exercise should involve the design of a simple programme and training of trainers.