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A Survey of Poverty-Related Researches and Monitoring Systems in the Philippines

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A SURVEY OF POVERTY-RELATED RESEARCHES AND MONITORING SYSTEMS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The interest on poverty situation and the welfare of the poor in the Philippines has never been greater than in the past decade. This is manifested in the amount of work that has been done on the subject. Clearly, as the economy went through various phases of growth and crises periods, the concern on how the poor have fared has intensified.

This paper provides an overview of the current nature of poverty-related research and monitoring efforts in the country. It reviews the key findings of major studies done during the past few years and describes the relevant efforts undertaken by various sectors – government, international organizations, academe and private research institutions, and non-government organizations (NGOs).

The first part of the paper identifies the key players in poverty-related researches and describes the general thrust or nature of their efforts. The second part discusses the major researches and their key findings, looks at the existing poverty monitoring systems, and identifies the institutions or persons behind these efforts. A special section is also devoted to major initiatives in assessing the social impacts of the recent crisis and to some activities being done towards institution building. Finally, some general observations and assessment of the research and monitoring efforts are presented at the end of the paper.

Before proceeding, a few qualifying statements regarding this survey are in order. First, while it can be confidently said that this survey covered most of the relevant and major researches and studies undertaken in the Philippines at present and in the recent years, this paper does not claim completeness and full coverage. Second, the institutions and individuals behind these studies or efforts are mentioned because the survey hopes to be of help in efforts to establish a network of experts, scholars, and concerned institutions and individuals on poverty. Lastly, most of the summaries and findings presented as well as the description of the projects draw heavily from already written summaries and project documentation which are available for some of these projects and studies, and which are also included in the list of references.

1. KEY PLAYERS AND THE THRUST OF THEIR POVERTY-RELATED ACTIVITIES

The key players discussed here are categorized into the following: government, international agencies, academe and private research institutions, and NGOs.

1.1 Government

Most government agencies are tasked to contribute to the development and implementation of the government's poverty alleviation program. However, in terms of

poverty monitoring and policy formulation, the lead agencies are the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the recently created National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC). The research and monitoring activities of these agencies are discussed in the succeeding sections together with those of the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB), the main sources of official data; and those of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), the government's research arm.

1.1.1 National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)

The NEDA is the country's economic planning body tasked with the coordination of the formulation of national and sectoral policies, plans and programs, including those for the social and human development sectors. It also monitors macro-economic and sectoral performance and prepares economic reports on a regular basis. The NEDA also undertakes economic and development studies for specific sectors and on some macroeconomic issues.

Ongoing NEDA activities that specifically involve poverty-related researches and studies include the coordination of the UNDP-funded project on "Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for the Convergence of Poverty Alleviation Efforts" (SIMCPAE) which will be discussed in greater detail below, and the use of the Dagum model to forecast poverty and income inequality. The output of the latter is used by NEDA as basis for the poverty reduction targets incorporated in the MTPDP. As part of project SIMCPAE, the NEDA is also initiating the establishment of a national monitoring system for tracking and assessing the financial resources channeled to poverty alleviation.

1.1.2 Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)

From its previous role of a service deliverer for social welfare and development, the DSWD is now mandated "to serve as the national policy and regulatory institution for social welfare and development from which local government units, non-government organizations and other members of the civil society involved in social development will anchor their thrust and directions" (Executive Order No. 15). Service delivery already rests with the local government units as part of the devolution process.

DSWD, however, continues to be the "flagship champion" for implementing the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) which is one of the ten flagship programs under the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) started under the Ramos administration. The CIDSS will be discussed further under Section 2.3.2. As part of its policy-direction setting role, the DSWD is expected to increasingly undertake policy studies related to social welfare and development rather than be directly involved in program implementation.

1.1.3 National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC)

The NAPC was created under the Office of the President during the Ramos administration in late 1997 by virtue of Republic Act No. 8425, to serve as the coordinating and advisory body for the implementation of the Social Reform Agenda, the government's safety net and poverty alleviation program. The NAPC merges and takes on the functions of the old Presidential Commission to Fight Poverty (PCFP), the Social Reform Council (SRC), and the Presidential Council for Countryside Development which were all abolished with the creation of NAPC.

The NAPC is basically a coordinating body for the formulation of programs and policies related to social reform and poverty alleviation. Specifically, it is mandated to coordinate with national and local government agencies and the private sector with regard to the full implementation of all social reform and poverty alleviation programs, and in the case of LGUs, coordinate in the formulation of social reform and poverty alleviation programs in their respective areas. It is also tasked to recommend policy and other measures to ensure the effective implementation of commitments under the SRA.

The NAPC has not yet fully settled down to operations. The Commission convened only in April 1999 and the secretariat is yet to be fully constituted. Preliminary indications from NAPC is that it will focus more on ensuring the full implementation of the government's poverty alleviation program at the grass roots level and does not foresee doing much of actual research work.

1.1.4 National Statistics Office (NSO) and National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB)

NSO and NSCB are the main sources of official socioeconomic data. NSO is the government agency that is responsible for undertaking demographic censuses, household surveys, labor force surveys, and the survey of manufacturing industries, among others. Among the statistical data that come from NSO and which are used for the assessment of poverty and social and human development are the Quarterly Labor Force Surveys and the triennial Family Income and Expenditure Surveys (FIES). The NSO is also responsible for providing data on the monthly consumer price index and the inflation rate. In 1998, the NSO started conducting an Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS).

Meanwhile, NSCB is responsible for generating poverty statistics in the Philippines. NSCB makes the official estimates of poverty incidence based on the FIES. NSCB was heavily involved in efforts that led to the adoption of an official poverty line in 1987. Its subsequent efforts focused on the refinements of the estimates based on a revised methodology and on releasing official estimates based on succeeding FIES results.

Both the NSO and NSCB are heavily involved in the development of appropriate poverty indicators and community-based monitoring systems under the UNDP-supported project on SIMCPAE.

1.1.5 Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS)

The PIDS is a government research institution engaged in long-term, policy-oriented research on social and economic development. Its goals include, among others, analyses of socio-economic problems and issues to support the formulation of plans and policies for sustained social and economic development in the Philippines. With the increasing interest on the welfare aspect of development, the PIDS has also been involved in undertaking poverty-related researches. Among the more recent studies done include those on “Micro Interventions for Poverty Alleviation: The Philippine Case” (Orbeta and Sanchez, 1996) and “Poverty Alleviation and Equity Promotion” (Reyes and Del Valle, 1998). PIDS also carried out the first and second phases of the project on “Micro-economic Impact of Macroeconomic Adjustment Policies” (MIMAP) which will be discussed in greater detail under section 2.3.2. It is also worth noting that PIDS maintains an economic and social database, which contains some indicators on poverty, population, and health.

1.2 International Organizations

A number of international organizations have undertaken poverty-related researches and assessment studies which usually serve as basis for the formulation of their organization’s poverty reduction strategies, for assessing the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs, and for discussing proposed poverty reduction strategies and programs with the government. These studies also form the basis of the agencies’ fund assistance programs.

Among the international organizations that undertake or fund poverty-related researches and efforts in the Philippines are the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the International Labor Organization (ILO). Many of these international agencies have tapped local expertise in their studies or have funded poverty-related projects in support of their agenda. It is also worth mentioning that there are international research institutions that have long been supporting local academic and research efforts and which have also supported poverty-related studies of academic and other research institutions. Examples are the International Development and Research Center (IDRC) and the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE). More recently, other international organizations such as the OECD and the European Economic Community have manifested greater interest and support for poverty alleviation efforts in the Philippines.

1.2.1 The World Bank

In keeping with the World Bank's mission of reducing poverty and improving the living standards, it has undertaken some studies to assess the poverty situation in the Philippines. These studies incorporate recommended strategies or action towards poverty alleviation and are intended for providing a basis for policy debate or discussion of policy issues.

For instance, the Bank (through its Country Operations Division, Country Department I, East Asia and Pacific Region) came up with a report "A Strategy to Fight Poverty: Philippines" (1996). Among the report's major findings are the following: 1) In spite of indications of improvement in social indicators, the progress towards poverty alleviation is slow; 2) Rural poverty cannot be solved in the agricultural sector alone nor in the rural areas alone, but requires greater opportunities provided by higher overall economic growth, and increased emphasis on human capital development and rural infrastructures; 3) Urban poverty is less extensive and severe than rural poverty and access to health and education services are better in urban areas; 4) There are severe regional disparities in health and education sectors; and 5) Most of the safety net programs have been expensive and have not reached the very poor.

In early 1998, the Bank also conducted an assessment of the social impact of the financial crisis in the Philippines, the findings of which are discussed under Section 2.5.1. The Bank also provided funding support for the conduct of a first nationwide Annual Poverty Incidence Survey (APIS) in 1998, the results of which were released recently. This support is consistent with the Bank's view that there is a need to strengthen the country's capacity to monitor progress on outcomes and that this will have to involve ensuring that the statistical infrastructure is adequate for countries to mount periodic surveys and analyze data.

1.2.2 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Within the United Nations system, there has been increased emphasis on strategies and policies related to poverty (Bulletin on the Eradication of Poverty, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, November 1997). In the Philippines, there had been several major undertakings in support of this. One is the UNDP-funded project on the "Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for the Convergence of Poverty Alleviation Efforts" (SIMCPAE) which is based at the NEDA.

The UNDP has also been supporting the preparation of the Human Development Report for the Philippines, which is part of an overall international effort to provide a base for poverty eradication plans. It also supported a study on the Social Impact of the Financial Crisis in the Philippines which was done by Joseph Lim of the University of the Philippines. The findings of the study are summarized in Section 2.5.2.

1.2.3 International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The IMF has written various working papers analyzing, among others, poverty and income distribution in the Philippines which have been used as bases in its policy discussions and negotiations with the government. One working paper recently written on the subject is “Poverty, Income Distribution, and Economic Policy in the Philippines” prepared by Philip Gerson (1998). This paper looks at the impact of fiscal and other macroeconomic policies on income distribution and poverty in the Philippines and makes the observation that poverty has proven to be more widespread and persistent in the Philippines than in other Asian countries, largely because of its poor growth performance. The latter is traced to the country’s growth-retarding economic policies in the past, which in recent years have been corrected. It is the IMF’s view however, that despite the reforms, it will likely take some time before a full liberalization of the economy will erase the effects of past policies.

1.2.4 Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Poverty reduction is a strategic objective of the ADB, and poverty reduction has been an implicit element of all of its operations since the Bank was established (ADB homepage, April 1999). The Bank has also been pursuing poverty reduction efforts which have increasingly become an element of its country strategy studies and country programming processes. In his address to the Board of Governors at the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Bank, the Mr. Tadao Chino, the Bank President, stated that “the overarching goal for Asia and the Pacific and for the Bank is to reduce poverty and to improve the quality of life of all people in the region”.

Along this line, and in recognition of the adverse impact of the crisis, the Bank aims to strengthen its assistance to directly address the poverty problem in the region. The Bank is now preparing a new Poverty Reduction Strategy in collaboration with developing member country governments. In the Philippines, the Bank has recently supported the conduct of a study on the Social Impact of the Crisis in the Philippines, the findings of which are summarized in Section 2.5.3.

1.2.5 International Labor Organization (ILO)

The current focus of the ILO is how to respond to the new challenges posed by economic reforms, structural adjustment, globalization and increased competitiveness, the uneven growth performance of developing countries, and the shift in development cooperation towards socially and environmentally sustainable growth patterns. The ILO hopes to respond to these new trends by designing its own agenda for development based on policies and programs to create jobs, alleviate poverty and combat social exclusion. (ILO Bureau of Programming and Management, Major Programme 125: Development Policies, ILO homepage, April 1999). The direction of the ILO is towards being able to provide assistance “in the design and implementation of policies and programmes to create jobs, combat poverty, and enable poor and disadvantaged social groups to share in

and contribute to the development process". This is the same direction that the ILO is expected to be implementing in the Philippines.

1.3 Academe and Private Research Institutions

Among the academic institutions, the University of the Philippines (mainly through the School of Economics (UPSE)) seems to be the most actively involved in poverty-related studies. The UPSE is usually tapped by government and international agencies for specific researches. The UPSE has also undertaken major research work with the Institute for Developing Economies (IDE). This recent work is described in greater detail in Section 2.1.4. Other academic institutions which have also been involved in poverty researches are Ateneo de Manila University and UP Los Baños.

1.4 Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

The big number of NGOs involved in poverty alleviation, either directly or indirectly, makes it difficult to do a complete survey of their poverty-related researches and monitoring activities. What is discussed here, therefore, is the general thrust of their research undertakings as well as the role they play in research and monitoring efforts of other sectors such as government and international institutions.

There are two main strategies employed by NGOs in the pursuit of their respective goals and mission. One is policy advocacy; the other is program development and implementation at the ground level, mainly in partnership with targeted local communities. Much of the research work they do is in support of these two main strategies.

The use of policy advocacy in the NGO's advancement of their goals and mission in the past decade has been encouraged by the greater opportunity accorded to them by the democratic climate after the EDSA revolution. The 1987 Constitution gave formal recognition to their role in nation-building. Both the Aquino and Ramos administrations solicited the NGO's involvement in various consultation and policy-making bodies and in the national planning process. The CODE-NGO, which was specifically tapped to represent NGOs noted the influence of their participation on the formulation of the Philippine Agenda 21, one of the government's major policy statements, and the Social Reform Agenda (SRA). (CODE-NGO, 1998).

It is also worth mentioning that NGOs are oftentimes consulted, involved or tapped by government, private research institutions and international donors for their program implementation and research and monitoring efforts. This is largely because of their capability to link up directly with targeted communities.

It is the general view of many NGOs that future research efforts on poverty alleviation should focus on determining how the poor view poverty and what they need or hope to achieve for themselves.

2. NATURE AND FINDINGS OF MAJOR RESEARCHES AND MONITORING EFFORTS

To discuss the nature and coverage of major researches and monitoring activities, it is deemed best to do so by classifying them as follows: 1) Poverty studies, 2) Poverty indicators and measurement, 3) Monitoring systems (national and community-based), 4) Institution-building, and 4) Social impact of the crisis.

2.1 Poverty Studies

Studies undertaken on the poverty situation in the Philippines have in general focused on: 1) the analysis of the poverty situation and income inequality; 2) identification of the nature and causes of poverty; 3) assessment of the effects of economic policies; and more recently, 4) evaluation of the social impact of the Asian financial crisis.

2.1.1 Poverty, Growth and the Fiscal Crisis (1993)

This study was undertaken under a project on “The Crisis of Poverty” which was spearheaded by the PIDS and supported by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) sometime in 1992. The work under the project was contributed by a group of scholars from the academe, mainly the UP School of Economics, led by Emmanuel S. De Dios. The output was published in a book entitled “Poverty, Growth and the Fiscal Crisis” which was published by the PIDS and the IDRC.

The study aimed to, first, refocus public attention on the most important development goals and issues, especially on whether and how poverty could be alleviated significantly in a sustained manner. Second, it also aimed to suggest more practicable ways to approach the goal of poverty alleviation, being mindful of the inevitable difficulties in policy-making confronted by officials.

The main message of the contributors is that “measures to redress poverty could not be regarded merely as “special” or sectoral concern.” While there is a need for programs to address some special problems faced by poor groups, it is still the direction of mainstream development and macroeconomic policies that shall ultimately determine whether poverty alleviation efforts succeed or fail.

2.1.2 Understanding Poverty and Inequity in the Philippines (1994)

The work that was documented in this compendium of policy and methodological researches was done under the Development Planning and Research Project (DPRP) of the NEDA which was funded by the UNDP. The book was edited by Ponciano Intal of the PIDS and Cynthia Bantilan of the College of Economics and Management, UP Los Baños. The first part of the compendium reviews and evaluates the state of poverty and inequity in the country and how past public programs and policies affected them. The

second part seeks to upgrade the analytical tools available to development planners and policymakers in evaluating poverty and inequity in the country and to strengthen the methodological base of poverty research. Finally, in the last part, the compendium provides suggested future directions on research, policies, and strategies based on findings of the studies in the first two parts.

2.1.3 Poverty, Urbanization and Development Policy: A Philippine Perspective (1994)

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the nature of the urban poverty problem in the Philippines. The book is authored by Arsenio Balisacan and is an offshoot of a study entitled “Critical Issues and Policy Measures to Address Urban Poverty in the Philippines” which was supported by ADB. Among the findings, two are still very much relevant today. One is that providing efficient information systems is critical in raising the effective demand of the poor for poverty-focused policies and programs and that the articulation of this demand can be enhanced by bringing together the poor and non-poor groups that have interest in seeking poverty-related reforms. Another point is that official development assistance projects need to pay more attention to overall sectoral policies, place greater stress on institutional development and beneficiary participation, contain as much productivity-raising content as possible, and be used as an effective device to support a government pursuing policies intended to benefit the poor.

2.1.4 Causes of Poverty: Myths, Facts, and Policies (A Philippine Study) (1999)

This book was a product of a study jointly undertaken by the UP School of Economics and the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE, Tokyo). It takes a closer look at the issue of poverty in the Philippines in the light of recent reforms, swing in economic activity, global developments in trade and finance, and new ideas and research findings in the development literature. The report consists of seven papers written by economic development specialists and poverty experts and presents different ways of situating and addressing the problem of poverty and economic inequality in the Philippines.

The major findings in each of the papers are briefly described below:

- 1) **Balisacan**: Reexamines a number of commonly held views about the links between poverty and income distribution, on the one hand, and economic growth, on the other, in light of welfare measurement theory and practice, available data, and lessons from recent development experience. He shows that contrary to popular perceptions, recent episodes of growth in the Philippines have been beneficial to the poor, concluding that the main reason for the country’s high poverty is primarily the short duration of growth and the slowness of this growth.

- 2) **Monsod, S. and Monsod, T.:** Characterize the other dimensions of poverty in addition to those revealed by income-based measures, in both international and intra-national contexts. Among other important observations, the authors highlight the need to include outcome-based measures of poverty to income (means) measures for a far more complete picture of human deprivation or progress, since a one-to-one correspondence between incomes and outcomes is hardly the rule.
- 3) **Fujisaki:** Revisits a major theme in development economics concerning the importance of investment complementarity and linkages in economic development. He contends that the poor performance of the Philippine economy in achieving sustained growth and poverty reduction has stemmed largely from government's failure to put in place a policy environment conducive to broad-based investment patterns and economic growth.
- 4) **Fabella:** Reviews and analyzes the issues associated with the impact of globalization on poverty and income inequality. One insight provided is that globalization rooted on comparative advantage should reduce overall income inequality and favor labor in less developed countries, including the Philippines, and should offer a vehicle for LDCs to whittle down the economic gap between them and the developed countries.
- 5) **Canlas:** Examines the behavior of labor's share in national income in the course of economic growth and a business cycle. Using data in the 1980's and 1990's, he finds that the mean income share is constant but deviations from the mean are observed in the course of a business cycle. He also shows that the labor market in the Philippines is flexible: wages, employment, and hours of work all respond to changes in business conditions.
- 6) **Tan:** focuses on education poverty which is taken to be the failure to complete Grade 6 of elementary schooling, and for those who reached Grade 6, the failure to achieve cognitive levels for this level. She finds that the incidence of education poverty not only is quite high but also varies greatly across regions of the country. Her analysis reveals a strong influence of mean family income, school inputs, and poverty incidence on student performance.
- 7) **Alonzo:** identifies the benefits of - and potential problems that come with - increased local autonomy and devolution, as provided in the Local Government Code of 1991. He points out various modes of LGU spending in basic social services (particularly infrastructure), as well as the rationale for (and forms of) national government involvement in LGU projects with anti-poverty objectives.

2.1.5 Other Poverty Studies

The poverty-related studies that have been undertaken in the past few years are numerous. A number of these are unpublished papers usually presented by the paper writers in various fora. Some have been published in journals, while some serve as working papers for a bigger study. This survey will not discuss these studies individually as it is difficult to keep track of all of them especially the unpublished ones, although a number of them are included in the list of references used for this survey. However, two studies are briefly discussed here because they offer some interesting insights. Both the authors of these studies (Balisacan and Reyes) have written numerous papers on the subject.

Getting the Story Right: Growth, Redistribution, and Poverty Alleviation in the Philippines by Arsenio Balisacan (1997). This paper studies the nature and proximate causes of poverty in the Philippines using a spatially consistent approach to estimating poverty standards. These standards are employed to examine the proximate causes of the changes in sectoral and spatial poverty from the mid-1980's to the early 1990's, focusing in particular on the relative impact of growth and distribution changes.

The findings of the study indicate that the level of absolute poverty in the Philippines is much lower than what the official figures show. The alternative estimates are generally comparable to those reported for other countries at similar level of economic development and are based on a consistent procedure of constructing poverty lines. Another interesting finding of the study is that, contrary to popular perceptions, recent episodes of growth have not been anti-poor, and that the bulk of the poverty reduction in recent years has come from the beneficial effects of growth on the poor. The author points out that this is contrary to earlier findings in the 1960s and 1970s when the "trickle down" effects of growth on poverty were comparatively small. He is of the view that the structure of the economy may have changed in ways that now allow greater participation of the poor during episodes of growth.

Poverty Alleviation and Equity Promotion by Celia Reyes and Edwin del Valle (1998). This study looks at the poverty situation and at selected human development indicators which are compared with those for other countries in the region, reviews various studies by others on the impact of major policy reforms, and assesses the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) which is the country's central poverty alleviation program. The study highlights the reduction in both poverty incidence and subsistence incidence in the country from 1985 to 1994 as well as the improvement in selected human development indicators. Moreover, the study also indicates that the fiscal and tariff reforms implemented in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the oil deregulation have benefited more the poor than the non-poor. This seems to be consistent with the study of Balisacan cited above. However, as Balisacan noted the persistence of poverty, Reyes and del Valle also highlighted on the continued increase in the magnitude of the poor in spite of the observed improvement in poverty incidence. On the SRA, the authors indicate the correctness of the program in terms of correctly identifying the problems of the poor.

However, one distinct weakness raised is the inadequacy of the funding available, and even more critical, the observation that there is inefficiency in fund use.

2.2 Poverty Indicators

Before discussing the activities involving poverty monitoring systems, it is appropriate to devote a separate section to discuss efforts to develop the appropriate poverty indicators and measures that are built into the monitoring systems.

2.2.1 The MBN Indicators System

The Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) indicators system is part of the MBN approach that was adopted as a convergence strategy for the government's Social Reform Agenda (SRA) launched in 1994. The former Presidential Commission to Fight Poverty (PCFP), with the assistance of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies and the UP School of Economics, spearheaded the development of a set of minimum basic needs indicators which was used for the MBN strategy. The latter consolidates the perspectives embodied in 1) the Integrated Approach for Local Development Management, a strategy formulated for the Philippine Plan of Action for Children, and 2) the National Strategy to Fight Poverty prepared by PIDS for PCFP. (T. C. Monsod, 1998).

This development of the indicators system was later merged with the efforts of the NSCB and the DSWD (which also sought to develop a statistical and operational system for monitoring the changes in the status of the poor) on the development of the Social Welfare Development and Indicator System (SWDIS). The framework and monitoring guidelines for both the MBN and the SWDIS were consolidated and refined by an MBN Technical Working Group which was composed of representatives from government, NGOs and academic sectors. The MBN TWG then came up with a set of 33 MBN indicators covering the following social and human development aspects: 1) *Survival Needs*: food and nutrition, health, water and sanitation, and clothing; 2) *Security Needs*: *shelter*, peace and order/public safety, income and employment; 3) *Enabling Needs*: *basic* education and literacy, people's participation, and family care/psychosocial needs.

One component of the UNDP project sought to enhance the operational framework for the MBN indicators system for analysis, data generation techniques, and gender dimensions. The enhanced framework will be the basis of the future MBN Community-Based Poverty Indicators and Monitoring System (CBPIMS), which is discussed in one subsection of Section 2.3.2.

2.2.2 MIMAP Poverty Indicators System

The MIMAP indicators system was developed under the third phase of the project on Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) which sought to

determine the impact of macroeconomic adjustment policies on the welfare status of the population particularly the vulnerable groups in the society.

Under the project, a set of indicators were identified and selected based on the multi-dimensional character of poverty and have been largely confined to output and impact indicators. The indicators are similar to the MBN indicators discussed above but are limited to the more basic needs. Thus, instead of 33, only 16 indicators were selected covering health, nutrition, water and sanitation, income, shelter, peace and order, basic education and literacy, and participation. It is envisioned that this set of indicators may be supplemented by other indicators which are relevant to a particular community.

2.2.3 Human Development Index and Human Poverty Index

The development of a human development index (HDI) is part of an international effort to influence human development as reflected in the Human Development Report first published by the UNDP in 1990. Specifically, the objective was to come up with an aggregated measure of human well-being and progress in terms of life expectancy, literacy and educational attainment. In the Philippines, the estimation of the HDI was started in 1994 by the Human Development Network team led by Solita Collas-Monsod.

The main principle behind the HDI is that while economic growth as a measure of progress is important, economic growth is only a means. The ultimate objective of development or progress is human well being. For the Philippines, HDIs were estimated for all provinces and regions for 1990 and 1994 and later on for 1997. During the Ramos administration, an executive order was issued mandating the NSCB to gather and publish data on the human development index.

More recently, in 1997, a new Human Poverty Index (also under the UNDP-supported effort) was developed to reflect a “deprivation” perspective, where the process of development is assessed on the basis of how the poor fare. (T. C. Monsod, 1998). This is to address a limitation of the HDI which prevents it from being used to examine equity considerations.

The HPI, which is intended to supplement and not substitute for the HDI, introduces a methodology that can provide an aggregate judgment on the extent of poverty in a community beyond that of the low-ness of income. The HPI incorporates indicators which reflect survival deprivation, or the vulnerability to death at a relatively early age; knowledge deprivation, being excluded from the world of reading and communication measured by the percentage of adults who are illiterate; and deprivation in overall economic provisioning, or being deprived of a decent standard of living. Estimates done for 1997 indicate that country rankings based on income-poverty measures and those based on the HPI can differ. This is clearly the case for Philippines and Indonesia whereby the estimates reflect that the Philippines had the highest absolute income poverty in the region but it ranks higher than Indonesia under the HPI. (HDR, 1997).

2.2.4 Correlates of Poverty

In preparation for the development of the Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS) by the NSO, a study on household characteristics that correlate well with poverty was done. This study was undertaken by Balisacan and served as basis in the drafting of the preliminary questionnaire for the APIS which was pre-tested in December 1997.

The main premise for the study is that the income data reported in the FIES adequately reflect true household living standards but because the information is very costly to acquire and because of budgetary constraints, it becomes necessary to identify other indicators that are less costly to acquire and at more regular basis than incomes or expenditure data. The study identified location, dwelling and family characteristics, as well as indicators of ownership of durable goods, as being able to predict household welfare levels.

Specifically, the following correlates were found to hold promise as proxy indicators of household (HH) welfare levels:

- 1) Location (region, province) of HH residence
- 2) Type and number of private establishments in barangay where HH is located
- 3) Type and number of public establishments in barangay where HH is located
- 4) Housing attributes (type of roof, wall, toilet, water source)
- 5) Age composition and schooling attainment of HH members
- 6) Sector of employment of HH members
- 7) Sex and marital status of HH head
- 8) Ownership of durable goods (vehicle, electrical appliances)

2.3 Monitoring Systems

2.3.1 National Monitoring Systems

At present, there is no single and formal monitoring system that comprehensively tracks the country's social and human development performance on a regular basis at the national level. There are various sources of data on the different welfare dimensions (e.g., surveys and censuses coming from the Philippine Statistical System) and there are administrative reports of different government agencies indicating performance in their respective areas of concern but there is no formal system for integrating all these information. The only monitoring and assessment done that is relatively more complete in its coverage of the human development aspects is by NEDA, through its formulation and updating of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan which, however, is done only every three years. To a certain extent, the NEDA does some monitoring through its quarterly and annual socioeconomic reports.

Development of an Integrated Poverty Monitoring and Indicators System (IPMIS). Recognizing that there are different methods and approaches used in the existing and independently conducted systems of data generation and reporting for poverty-related indicators, the project under the mentioned activity aims to integrate the different methods/approaches and data sets used in the development of indicators for poverty monitoring and analysis, and to improve the existing data collection and reporting system to come up with timely, consistent, and accurate poverty data. (Programme Management and Coordination Unit, UNDP-Assisted Project on SIMCPAE, 1999). This project is part of the UNDP-funded project on SIMCPAE.

The first activity under this component is the development of a conceptual framework that defines the various relationships among parallel systems of data generation and reporting based on their conceptual/analytical frameworks, functional applications, and institutional maintenance arrangements. The framework, which was developed by Balisacan, was completed in April 1998.

The second activity under the project involves the development of provincial poverty measures and the pilot implementation of an Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS). On the first, the NSCB has completed the study towards the improvement of poverty measurement technique to make it applicable for generating province-specific estimates of subsistence/poverty thresholds. The NSCB is also tasked with testing the said methodology with the development of food menus for all provinces through a subcontract with the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI). The said food menus will serve as the basis for the computation of provincial subsistence/poverty thresholds.

The second activity also involves the pilot implementation of the APIS in selected provinces. But before the pilot implementation, there were two independent studies conducted by the NSO. The first one, undertaken by Arsenio Balisacan, was to identify the indicators that correlate well with poverty. The second one was aimed at determining the operational applicability of these indicators and assessing the adequacy of the new master sample design with respect to said indicators. These studies served as bases in drafting the preliminary questionnaire and procedures for the survey held in April 1998. While UNDP supported the development and pilot-implementation of the project, the World Bank, together with ASEM Trust Fund, supported the nationwide undertaking for the project. The main results of the survey were formally presented to the public last April 21, 1999.

The APIS is set to be undertaken again in 1999, being intended to have an annual frequency. However, as of the time of the presentation of the results, the funding source for the next survey is still not clear. The NSO estimates the funding requirement to be P 18 million, but there is no allotment in the 1999 government budget for the said survey.

2.3.2 Community-Based Monitoring Systems

The increase in interest on community-based monitoring system during the 1990s in general, arose from the following: 1) the inadequacy of existing monitoring systems in terms of being able to monitor the welfare status of households especially the vulnerable groups, and their inadequacy in terms of providing a basis for more target-specific interventions; 2) the devolution of the delivery of certain basic social services to the LGUs and therefore the greater need for supporting program delivery at the local level; and 3) the adoption of a participatory approach in poverty alleviation programs. The need for community-based monitoring system even intensified after the financial crisis, which is perceived to have had significant adverse impact on vulnerable groups.

Based on an assessment of community-based systems monitoring household welfare which was done by Reyes and Alba (1994), there are many existing community-based monitoring systems. However, many of them are mostly limited to small geographic areas and/or are used only for monitoring specific projects and are therefore not collected on a sustained basis. Moreover, there is no attempt to consolidate the data from the different areas. It is for basically for these reasons that the MIMAP community-based monitoring system was conceived and developed to be able to meet its objective of assessing the micro-impact of macroeconomic adjustment policies. It is also presumed that these are the same reasons that contributed to various attempts to come up with more comprehensive community-based monitoring systems.

The community-based monitoring systems surveyed and reviewed by Reyes and Alba (1994) will no longer be discussed here although it is expected that some of them continue to exist. To be discussed here are the major efforts done which are intended to be eventually undertaken of a nationwide and sustained basis.

MIMAP Community-Based Monitoring System. The MIMAP community-based monitoring system (CBMS) has been developed under the phase III of the MIMAP project and its overall goal is to provide policy makers with a good information base on the possible impacts of macroeconomic adjustment policies at the firm, household and individual levels. The MIMAP CBMS makes use of 16 minimum basic needs (MBN) indicators mentioned in section 2.2.2.

The CBMS was pilot-tested in one 5th class municipality in a Luzon province (Bulacan) and two barangays were selected as pilot communities. The results of the pilot test indicate that the proposed monitoring system design under the project is feasible and can generate most of the data needs of the barangay which may in turn be useful for the preparation of their development plans.

The third to fifth phase of the MIMAP project is implemented by the Policy and Development Foundation with funding support provided by the International Development and Research Center, Canada. The earlier phases, I and II, were

implemented by the Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS). The fifth and last phase of the project involves the institutionalization of the project output.

Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS). One major undertaking that involves a community-based monitoring system is the CIDSS, one of the ten flagship programs under the SRA. It is a poverty alleviation initiative focused on building capabilities of the poor to meet their minimum basic needs and institute development founded on the full and meaningful involvement of community members. (Field Manual for CIDSS Implementors). The lead agency in the CIDSS implementation is the DSWD which is the flagship champion for the program although a number of other national government agencies are involved in the program implementation together with the LGUs, the NAPC, and some NGOs.

The CIDSS makes use of the MBN indicators in its monitoring system, which is focused on collecting information at the community level to identify the potential program beneficiaries and determine their specific needs. This information is then used as a basis for determining the appropriate intervention for the beneficiaries of the program. Under the CIDSS, a regular review of the program is also undertaken and an assessment of the progress of the CIDSS communities is made. Recently, a national level review has just been completed. The CIDSS program and monitoring system currently covers 1,296 barangays. This is the number of barangays fully covered under operations phase although there are new barangays being prepared for future coverage. The LGUs are the primary partners of CIDSS in the implementation of the program. Some NGOs are tapped to do some policy studies in specific communities.

Also being undertaken under the CIDSS are specific researches, the most recent of which include a pilot study on the Food Subsidy Program, a project which looks at Violence Against Women in selected CIDSS areas, and a study regarding the Expansion of the Participation of Children in Local Communities.

MBN/Community-Based Poverty Indicators and Monitoring System (CBPIMS). The CBPIMS is being developed also as part of the UNDP-supported project on SIMCPAE, with the NSO as the lead implementing agency for the activity. The project is in support of current efforts using the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) as an approach to address the unmet basic needs of communities and takes off from the MBN approach and MBN indicators adopted by the former PCFP.

The first component of the project involves the improvement of the current MBN-Community-Based Information System (CBIS) in terms of the operational framework for analysis, data generation techniques and gender dimensions. The second component involves the installation of the CBPIMS using the improved framework formulated under the first component in the 56 5th and 6th class municipalities of the Project's six pilot provinces. The survey will cover a total of 1,290 barangays and nearly 203,000 households. The project is expected to finally lead to the installation of the MBN-CBPIMS as the tool to generate inputs for needs assessment, local planning and

monitoring of MBN. The installation of the CBPIMS is currently ongoing in the pilot areas covered.

2.3.3 Other Poverty Monitoring Efforts

Social Watch Asia and Social Watch Philippines. Social Watch Asia is part of a global network that has been specifically established to monitor the performance of member governments vis-à-vis the commitments they made under the World Summit on Social Development in 1995. The center of the global network is based in Uruguay and Social Watch Asia is the regional network that covers eight countries the Asian region including the Philippines. The present coordinator for Social Watch Asia (Leonor Briones) is based in the Philippines. The main output of the network consists of annual reports for different countries on the status of their commitments under the said Summit and these reports have been regularly prepared since 1996. There are twelve commitments covering various welfare-related issues.

In the Philippines, the member of the network is Social Watch Philippines (SWP) which is convened by three NGOs: Action for Economic Reforms, Accessing Support Services Entrepreneurial Technology, Inc. (ASSET), and Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM). Because of its difficulty in monitoring all the commitments, SWP has prioritized the coverage of three issues in its monitoring: poverty, social disintegration, and unemployment. SWP prepares the report for the Philippines.

Since 1997, SWP has been sharing the status of the monitoring effort with other NGOs through a national consultation meeting. This national consultation also serves as a network-building activity. Early this year, the project has started doing “island consultation” to bring down the consultation to the regional level.

SWS Social Weather Reporting System. The Social Weather Reporting System is a social monitoring system that incorporates some measures of social indicators covering quality of life and other social concerns. The data on which the Social Weather Reports (SWR) are based are obtained from a series of national surveys, which began on a semestral basis in 1986 and have been run quarterly since 1992.

The SWRs cover an array of social concerns such as economic wellbeing, public safety, the quality of governance, and others including a reading of public opinion on contemporary issues. Specifically, it includes indicators on self-rated poverty, gainers/losers and optimists/pessimists with respect to quality of life, victimization by common crimes and satisfaction with performance of government officials. The SWS questionnaires are designed to be respondent-friendly and are therefore partial to subjective indicators that are easy to generate for surveys. The SWRs try to provide information on a more frequent basis as this is where the gap lies insofar as government statistics are concerned.

Behind the SWR is the Social Weather Station (SWS) headed by Mahar Mangahas (SWS President). SWS is a private research institute which operates as a non-profit organization.

Monitoring System for Tracking Resources Channeled to Anti-Poverty Programs and Projects. While the monitoring systems mentioned above all deal with monitoring of social and poverty indicators, the monitoring system discussed here focuses on the monitoring of financial resources that are specifically channeled to poverty alleviation and human development efforts.

Also one of the components of the UNDP project on SIMCPAE, this project aims to develop and install an integrated monitoring system which will provide a complete and consolidated data on resources channeled to poverty alleviation on a regular and sustained basis. This information is expected to be useful in assessing whether resources are allocated according to identified needs and to areas needing the most assistance, and in providing a basis for rationalizing the allocation of government and official development assistance (ODA) for poverty alleviation. The monitoring system covers expenditures at the national and local level including those obtained from ODA. The monitoring system also incorporates poverty indicators using available data and also using the MBN-based definition of poverty.

2.4 Institution-Building

The devolution of the delivery of many of the social services to the local government units was accompanied with the bringing of poverty alleviation efforts down to the local levels. The latter is also consistent with the view that communities have to participate in the identification of their needs and in the planning and implementation of programs that will address these needs. This is also one of the concerns of the project on SIMCPAE. Specifically, the said project “aims to make the delivery of basic services and reform commitments more effective by strengthening institutional mechanisms and building the capacities of communities in participatory governance.” (Programme Management and Coordination Unit, UNDP-assisted Project on SIMCPAE, 1999)

The components of the project that involve the strengthening of monitoring and indicators system have been discussed earlier. What will be discussed here are the components of the project that involve the capability improvement of institutions at the local level.

2.4.1 Support to Regional and Provincial SRA-Technical Working Groups

The project has been supporting the initiatives of regional SRA (Social Reform Agenda)- TWGs (Technical Working Groups) as venues for the operationalization of the convergence policy. This is done through the conduct of quarterly TWG meetings, consultation-caucus with local chief executives, and local exchanges among local officials and planners. The TWG meetings, done through NEDA regional offices

involve project planning and providing solutions related to the implementation of the SRA and other poverty-related initiatives.

2.4.2 Formulation of Local Poverty Alleviation Plans (LPAPs)

This project aims to strengthen the planning capability of LGUs especially in reference to poverty alleviation. Under this project, selected 5th and 6th class municipalities will formulate LPAPs. The specific activities include the development and publication of a guidebook on how to use the results of the CBPIMS in local planning and budgeting particularly in the formulation of the LPAPs; and the conduct of training, meetings and consultation-workshops on the formulation, publication, and dissemination of LPAPs.

2.4.3 Increased Participation of People's Organizations (POs) in Local Governance

The project aims to promote and encourage the active participation of people's organizations (POs) in the formulation and implementation of poverty alleviation programs. Specific activities include the conduct of consultation meetings among POs to identify issues for inclusion in the poverty alleviation plan and the nomination of NGOs/POs representatives in local decision-making mechanisms in pilot regions and provinces.

2.5 Social Impact of the Asian Financial Crisis

A number of studies have been done to assess the impact of the Asian financial crisis in the country. Among these are three studies supported by international organizations, done to specifically assess the social impact of the crisis.

2.5.1 World Bank Study on the "Socioeconomic Impact of the Financial Crisis in the Philippines"

This study was undertaken by the World Bank (Social Development Sector of the East Asia Pacific Region) sometime in February 1998, or seven months after the crisis. It was conducted by a study team composed of an anthropologist, a sociologist, and NGO specialist and two economists. The study assessed the socioeconomic impact of the crisis on wage and employment, credit market, health, and education by looking at recent and foreseen economic changes arising from the crisis, and by conducting in-depth discussions with various social and focus groups in the National Capital Region and selected outlying areas.

At the time of the study, the social impacts of the crisis in the Philippines have not been conspicuous and dramatic. Since it was expected that the social impacts were still forthcoming, the study team identified five foreseen trends involving the potential effects of the devaluation. First, the devaluation would induce inflation and therefore result in

lower real incomes. Second, the upward pressure of devaluation on the interest rate would increase the cost of doing business and result in higher unemployment. Third, budgetary constraints would reduce the delivery of basic social services. Fourth, credit availability due to higher interest rates was expected to be reduced. Fifth, there is a concern on the imminent and potential threat on social cohesion. It was expected that the higher rate of poverty that would ensue from the crisis would mean increases in crime incidence, prostitution, domestic incidence of violence and rise in the number of street children.

2.5.2 UNDP Study on “The Social Impact and Responses to the Current Asian Economic and Financial Crisis: The Philippine Case”

This study which was done under the auspices of the UNDP, was authored by Joseph Lim and conducted in June 1998, barely a year after the outbreak of the regional turmoil. Based on a pro-human development perspective, the study looked into the impact of the crisis not only on the basic social sectors such as labor, health and education but also on a larger social scale. Issues involving the extended family system, overseas migration, gender and environment were also touched.

Lim based his analysis on secondary data from Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog, Central Visayas and Central Luzon. He also did some regression analysis to assess especially the long-term impact of the crisis. The study identifies unemployment and inflation as the short-run effect of the crisis. The higher unemployment and underemployment were expected to translate into lower real incomes, decline in social and human development indicators, and increase in the number and incidence of poverty. Lim also posited that inflation would lead to lower real incomes which would affect both the wage earners and the self-employed. Both the higher unemployment and inflation were expected to have resulted in the deterioration of income distribution.

2.5.3 ADB Study on the “Social Impact of the Crisis in the Philippines”

This study was conducted for the Asian Development Bank by a team of research fellows from the Philippine Institute of Development Studies: Celia M. Reyes, Rosario G. Manasan, and Aniceto C. Orbeta; and a former official from the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), Gener De Guzman.

Unlike previous studies on the subject which had to rely on very limited data, this study, having been started in January 1999, made use of regular and official statistics which became available only recently, and of primary data gathered for the specific purposes of the study. The primary data was obtained through participatory assessment approach involving the use of focus group discussions, a key informant survey, and a household survey. The FGDs and the surveys were used to collect information on the differential impact of the crisis on various groups (e.g., urban poor, farming communities, and fisherfolks) and the coping mechanisms employed by households in response to the crisis. The study also provided an assessment of the existing monitoring systems in terms

of their capability to track the social and human development impact of the crisis especially at the community level.

The findings of the study indicate that the financial and economic crisis, together with the El Niño and La Niña, has affected vulnerable groups through reduced employment and higher prices which resulted in lower real incomes. This in turn forced households to look for other income earning opportunities and to adjust their household consumption and spending patterns. Priority was given to food needs, with non-essentials like clothing and leisure being the first to be given up. Health care was de-prioritized. There was also reduced enrolment growth especially in secondary level and higher incidence of drop out. The crisis resulted in higher demand for basic social services but because of the fiscal crunch, the delivery of social services especially in health suffered.

The study also indicates that the most affected by the financial crisis are those coming from the construction, manufacturing and mining and quarrying sectors. The agriculture sector was adversely affected but more due to the drought rather than the crisis. In the urban areas, the poor were the most adversely affected while in the rural areas, farmers and fisherfolks were more badly hit. Middle income households were relatively less affected. There was also a deterioration detected in self-rated poverty as a result of the crisis.

The study further notes that the social impact of the crisis seemed to be relatively small especially when compared to those in Thailand and Indonesia. However, the slippage that occurred was still not acceptable considering that poverty incidence and the human development situation in the country is already bad to begin with.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The following general observations and assessment can be made from the survey:

- 1) Research efforts on poverty in the Philippines are quite extensive as manifested by the kind and amount of work done in this area. This indicates that there is a keen interest on poverty in the country and that there is a strong capacity for research work.
- 2) One common finding among many of the research studies is that progress in poverty reduction in the country is quite slow, especially when compared to other countries in the region. Although this is largely attributed to the country's poor growth performance, it is also obvious that resources for poverty alleviation are quite insufficient.
- 3) International agencies have played a significant role in encouraging and supporting poverty-related research activities. The studies that these

agencies have supported have allowed the better understanding of the poverty problem.

- 4) With the number of studies done, it seems to be clear what the extent of poverty is, what the nature and causes are, what the characteristics of the poor are, and where they could be found. What may not be widely understood, however, is how the poor view their condition, how they define their needs, and how they wish to be assisted. It seems that there is an increasing view among NGOs that this is where future research efforts should focus on.
- 5) There is a need to further advance the participatory approach to poverty alleviation. There is also a need to sharpen the focus of poverty programs in terms of reaching the targeted beneficiaries.
- 6) To support numbers (4) and (5) above, the establishment of a strong community-based monitoring system becomes very important. As indicated in this survey, efforts along this line are being undertaken. However, it is necessary to institutionalize a national monitoring system that can bridge the needs of policy-making at the national level, on the one hand, and the need for more focused and targeted interventions at the community level on the other. There are indications that this can be done and efforts may be moving toward this direction.

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Bulletin on the Eradication of Poverty

[gopher://gopher.un.org/00/sec/dpcsd/dspd/iyep/bulletin/POVERTY.TXT](http://gopher.un.org/00/sec/dpcsd/dspd/iyep/bulletin/POVERTY.TXT)

Major Programme 125. Development Policies

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/200progr/pb/98-99fin/pb98125.htm>

Poverty in the Philippines: Sector Background

<http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/eacrisis/countries/phil/pov1.htm>

Poverty in the Philippines: The Impact of the Crisis

<http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/eacrisis/countries/phil/pov2.htm>

Poverty Reduction

<http://www.adb.org/About/Objectives/pvrtcdc.as>

Responding to Poverty

<http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/mission/rp1.htm>

Self-Sustained Quality of Life Monitoring: The Philippine Social Weather Reports

<http://www.sws.org.ph/isqols.htm>

The World Bank's Mission

<http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/mission/index.htm>