

Working toward a commune-based poverty monitoring system in Cambodia*

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Having emerged from two decades of civil war, Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia today. It has a population of 13 million that grows at a rate of 2.5 percent annually. Despite a somewhat high economic growth rate of about 5 percent on average over the past 10 years, Cambodia's GDP per capita in 2001 has remained low at US\$ 247, compared with US\$ 405 in Viet Nam and US\$ 1,843 in Thailand (IMF, 2002). Applying the food calorie-based poverty line, which is about \$0.50 per day, it was estimated in 1993-94 that 39 percent of the Cambodian population lived in poverty. In 1999, the figure stood at 36 percent, reflecting a reduction of only 3 percent over a period of 6 years (RGC, 2001). A national poverty rate has not been estimated since then although the latest national socio-economic survey conducted (October 2003 to December 2004) will allow the updating of poverty data and subsequently lead to the drawing up of a poverty profile.

The greatest and most fundamental development challenge facing the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) is poverty alleviation, together with the maintenance of peace and stability. In this connection, a National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) has been formulated, largely drawing on documents concerned with poverty reduction such as the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) and the Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) II. The NPRS, however, goes beyond both documents in seeking more practical and action-oriented approaches to reducing poverty

To be able to assess and monitor the progress of the various poverty reduction programs under the NPRS, Cambodia relies on two existing poverty monitoring systems, namely, (a) the Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Technical Unit (PMATU) at the national level and (b) the Partnership for Local Governance (PLG)/Seila Program at the local level.

Established in January 2002, the PMATU is being overseen by the General Secretariat for the Council for Social Development (CSD), a high level inter-ministerial body with the mandate to promote, coordinate and monitor development policies and programs aimed at poverty reduction. The Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) initially provided technical assistance to PMATU to develop a national poverty monitoring system.

0 2

Inside

News Updates-International	
<i>CBMS for gender responsive budgeting</i>	9
<i>PEP 2006 meeting in Ethiopia</i>	9
<i>New proposals for CBMS</i>	9
News Updates-Philippines	
<i>Expansion of CBMS sites</i>	10
<i>CBMS Development Grant Program awards 36 grants</i>	11
<i>Eastern Visayas holds first-ever regional conference on CBMS</i>	11
<i>NSCB grants clearance for the CBMS</i>	12
<i>Collaboration with ADB</i>	12

* Excerpt from a CBMS Network Research Paper presented during the Fourth Poverty and Economic Policy (PEP) Research Network Conference held on June 13-17, 2005 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. This work was carried out with the aid of a research grant from the PEP-CBMS Network.

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Research Results

Meanwhile, the PLG was established to reduce poverty through a decentralized and improved system of local governance. The Seila program, the predecessor of the PLG, started in five provinces in 1996 and gradually expanded to cover 24 provinces and municipalities at present in the whole of Cambodia. The RGC has formally adopted the PLG program as an “aid mobilization and coordination framework for support to decentralisation and deconcentration reforms” (RGC, 2003). The PLG supports the programming of financial and technical resources at the commune, provincial and national levels to implement and develop the government’s reform agenda to achieve an overarching goal of poverty alleviation (RGC, 2003).

Rationale for CBMS

Recognizing the importance of local governance in its reform process, the RGC is committed to undertaking the policy and process of decentralization. As part of this, a local election was conducted in February 2002 to elect “commune councils” charged with local development planning and implementation. For the commune councils to succeed in their mandate, they would need adequate and timely information generated in a systematic and reliable way in order to effectively conduct their needs assessments, planning, monitoring and evaluation of development projects.

A community-based monitoring system (CBMS) will complement and assist in these decentralization efforts and contribute to the successful functioning of the newly decentralized state apparatus where the commune councils form the core of local development planning and poverty reduction efforts. At present, Cambodia lacks a CBMS although there is a commune database collected through administrative reports under the Seila/PLG Program initiative. Such database, however, does

not contain data that are disaggregated enough to be able to assess and determine the actual status and needs of the local units, in particular, the communes.

In view of this, the CDRI had proposed a five-year research program on local governance and decentralization that is strongly supported by the Cambodian government and major donors. The program, which will be a community-based poverty monitoring system (CBMS), involves the establishment of a system that collects baseline and disaggregated information relating to welfare status and standard of living on a regular basis from households in the communes. The system will initially be handled by the CDRI but eventually, the system will have to be operated by the commune councils with technical support from the Provincial Statistics Office and other relevant agencies.

At present, the CDRI is actively engaging the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and the PLG/Seila Program in undertaking the CBMS exercise since it envisages that the government will formally adopt and eventually take over the project for gradual expansion. A “Supervisory Team” composed of the above institutions and led by CDRI has been formed to implement the project. It is envisaged that the NIS will take over the work from CDRI when the pilot project is completed.

Clearly, however, when local capacity is built for the commune councils to take over the CBMS, it will be much more cost effective than sending enumerators from the capital city as was done in past national and community-based surveys. Ensuring local involvement and responsibility in the survey will contribute to local ownership and ensure the local use of data. Currently, the national surveys generate data only for analysis at the national level and provide no database for local authori-

ties. In fact, a large number of communes are statistically left out in the national sample surveys. The CBMS aims to address this shortcoming.

Objectives

The following are the specific objectives of the CBMS exercise in Cambodia:

- To select appropriate indicators for commune-based poverty monitoring and analysis.
- To provide practical, scientifically generated data to commune councils for their effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of development projects.
- To produce Commune Poverty Monitoring Reports based on the CBMS results.
- To build the capacity of the selected commune councils in survey methods and data processing, analysis and use.
- To promote the link between commune and provincial/national level planning processes in utilizing CBMS data.
- To cement the link between PMATU and NIS and commune councils and to prepare for an eventual nationwide CBMS.
- To promote a firm process of decentralization which has the high commitment of government and donors.

Preparatory activities

Identification of the area where the system is to be introduced

Six communes with about 12,000 households in two provinces were selected for the pilot CBMS sites. Three of these (Prek Norint, Samrong Khnong, and Prek Luong) were chosen from Ek Phnom district of Battambang province to represent a better-off province while three others (Snuol, Khsem, and Sre Char) were taken from Snuol district of Kratie province to represent a relatively poor province. Battambang is

one of the provinces that had received relatively more financial support and capacity building from external sources in the past 10 years while Kratie is one of the more remote and poorer provinces. Such differences would provide insights on how the CBMS could be conducted in areas with poor and better-off socio-economic conditions. In each commune, a census of all the households was carried out.

In Cambodia, a “commune” is the lowest administrative unit comprising a few villages. The average population of a commune is about 1,000 households, with sizeable variations. It is managed by a “commune council” whose members number around 5 to 11, depending on the size of the population of the commune.

Meeting with relevant institutions and local populations

The planning offices in the two provinces expressed interest to adopt the CBPMS into their regular structures and programs and provided an office for computerized data processing work for the project at the provincial level. This is because the project is in line with the national plan to strengthen the statistical systems at the local levels.

Development of poverty monitoring indicators

A set of core indicators for the pilot project relates to demography, education, housing, land, water, health, household expenditure, occupation and income, assets, livestock, and domestic violence. These indicators were drawn up from consultations with partners and the study of their working documents. A number of variables may duplicate those already contained in the Seila Program’s Village Data Book, which must be filled out by the village chief. Since the CBMS employed a census approach, and given the critical importance of these variables, they



Nou Keosothea (right) and Chan Sophal present the results of the pilot CBMS in Cambodia during the June 2005 PEP Meeting.



will remain in the core set in this pilot survey. Comparison and verification against each set of data can be made between the two approaches for quality improvement. From this core set of indicators, a household questionnaire has been designed. The number and complexity of the questions were severely constrained by the fact that data were to be processed manually and local enumerators’ capacities and experiences were limited.

Development of instruments

A participatory approach was used to develop the data collection and processing tools to meet the objectives of the project.

The questionnaire was developed, pre-tested and revised based on continuing consultations with the commune councils. Data processing tools have been developed for both manual and computerized processing.

Selection and training of enumerators and data processors

Members of the Village Development Committee, who had become part of the voluntary Commune Planning and Budgeting Committee, and knowledgeable villagers, who were recruited jointly by the commune councils and the Supervisory Team, were employed as enumerators. Those with good quantita-

tive skills were also trained to work as data processors.

Initially, the village chief was not considered for any substantial role in the survey. However, after consultations with the commune councils, it was clear that the village chief had a lot to offer and could play a more helpful role than acting as an interviewer. The village chief assisted the enumerators with geographical guidance and appointment arrangements with the households.

Training on data collection was conducted for a total of 122 enumerators. An additional training day was conducted in Kratie due to the lower absorptive capacity of the participants from this relatively poor province.

In each province, the training of data processors was conducted in two parts: (a) manual data processing training at the village and commune levels; and (b) computerized data processing at the provincial level.

At the village and commune levels, about 60 participants were trained in manual processing, or roughly 2-3 persons per village. At the provincial level,

Research Results

10 statistics officials from the provincial statistics office were selected and trained to do the computerized data entry.

Conduct of survey

Data were collected using two instruments: the household questionnaire, and village/ commune questionnaire. A total of 84 enumerators conducted the interviews under direct assistance and supervision from 43 heads of village, 21 commune council members, and two provincial counterparts. The enumerators were able to interview 11,937 households.

The survey was preceded by a household listing which has been useful in the verification as well as updating of the number of households in the village, in accordance with the definition adopted for the CBMS system. Based on this exercise, an actual counting of all the households in the village was made so as to obtain an exact figure. Each enumerator kept a copy of the new household list, which gives household ID numbers to be recorded on the questionnaire. The village chief and the commune councils can also use the household list for other purposes.

Depending on the size of the village, all the interviews took about 20 to 30 days for a village. The enumerators worked under the supervision of a commune council member and the provincial partner who must report directly to the Supervisory Team.

The village and commune questionnaires were also completed by chiefs of villages and heads of communes under the supervision of the commune councils.

Meanwhile, the provincial partner took part in supervising the enumerators as well as the commune council members. Members of the supervisory team car-



Various stakeholders gather together during presentation of CBMS.

ried out the spot checks to ensure quality and smooth implementation of the survey.

Consolidation and processing of data

All the 11,937 completed questionnaires were checked and verified by 20 commune council members from the six communes. Less than two percent of the questionnaires contained errors, which required the responsible enumerators to re-interview the households. Errors were mostly related to the household income and expenditure, and own assets questions.

After data cleaning, manual data entry and tallying were performed by the enumerators for each village. In some communes where the enumerators did not have good numerical skills, the commune council members assumed the responsibility of processing the data. They also checked and validated the data processing.

For the reporting, the commune councils were responsible for processing, aggregating and producing tabulations for the commune level statistics that will be used in the writing of the "Commune Poverty Report" while the provincial statistics offices of the two provinces took care of the computerized data entry.

Dissemination of results

The CBMS results were disseminated at both the local and national levels. At the national level, the pilot CBMS results were disseminated through a national workshop for all project partners and relevant government and non-government institutions. Both governmental and non-governmental agencies were invited to use the CBMS data for a diagnostic study of the poverty situation in the selected communes as well as for the design of policy interventions and targeting of vulnerable groups, in particular, the poorest of the poor in the communes.

Efforts will also be made to "market" the project to prospective donor agencies and the government so that they will continue to expand the CBMS. Ideally, the joint government-donor PLG Program will take ownership of the CBMS and incorporate it into its nationwide program.

At the local level, the pilot CBMS results were disseminated to all communes from the Ek Phnom and Snuol districts through the two local workshops held. All the heads of communes who participated in the workshops expressed interest in developing the Commune Poverty Monitoring Report for their respective communes based on the results of the CBMS survey. The report

will be the main tool for the commune council members to better monitor and evaluate the impacts of development policies and programs undertaken in their communities, and to make informed decisions.

A combination of community poverty monitoring reports will provide information for the national poverty monitoring system. The flow of information on data results is presented in Figure 1.

Moreover, it is expected that the provincial authorities will further disseminate the pilot CBMS experience to other communes through their regular meetings for consideration and potential adoption.

Survey results

Below are the different CBMS indicators in the study areas that reflect the multidimensional nature of poverty. These include: demography, education, housing and land, health, income and expenditure, poverty rate, household asset, violence, and security and order.

Demographic characteristics

The results show that the average number of households in a commune is 2,063, with an average household size of 5 individuals per household. Most households are headed by men, with those headed by women accounting only for 21.1 percent. Most of the female household heads are widows. The populations of the communes are very young, with 45.1 percent being less than 18 years old. Moreover, children less than 5 years old constitute the most vulnerable group (high mortality) and represent 13.2 percent of the population.

Education

Education data capture the level of enrolment, illiteracy and high school graduation in villages and evaluate the

state of educational infrastructures in these localities. The objective was to verify the principle that education plays a dominant role in the economic development of a country. If the percentage of educated people is high enough in a given locality, then the human resources can acquire more qualifications and the population as a whole would be more open to a better use of appropriate technologies. The survey results, however, show that the level of education is very low and the number of high school graduates is very small; thus, it is very difficult for the local people to understand and use modern techniques.

The enrolment rate of female students aged 6-11 years old is, on average, higher than male students. For female students aged 12-17 years old, however, the enrolment rate is lower than the male students. A point of concern here is that the illiteracy rate of females is much higher. From the standpoint of gender and in terms of level of enrolment and literacy, the survey confirms the predominance of the male in education not only in the study areas but also in the entire country. In all the

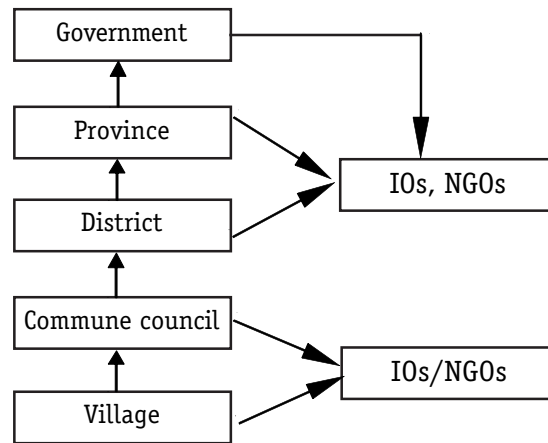
villages studied, the probability of finding a woman who has reached secondary school level is very low.

Housing and land

Housing and land data provide specific information on type of house, house owner, household lighting and cooking, and agricultural land. For some status determinants, a house with a corrugated iron sheet roof, tile roof or concrete wall normally reflects a more comfortable living condition than a thatched house. Moreover, a household with access to state or private electricity supply is one with a relatively better living condition. Agricultural land is also very valuable for rural livelihood and the very poor households or vulnerable groups are usually without this asset.

The data reveal that 85.7 percent of 60 percent of houses are made of corrugated iron sheet roof, tile roof or concrete wall. In the poor areas in Snuol district, though, up to 60 percent of the houses are made of thatch. Only 15 percent use the state or private elec-

Figure 1. Flow of information



Research Results

tricity supply while all the others use kerosene lamp or car battery for lighting houses. More than 90 percent of households use firewood for cooking. The average agricultural land size is about 1.4 ha per household and more than one third of all households have no agricultural land. The main reasons for losing agricultural land are crop failure (caused by drought/flood), indebtedness and health problems.

Health

Health is the most important factor that contributes to individual and social well being. The survey data are also used to evaluate household sanitation, extent of diseases and access to health services. The sanitation level can be assessed through the household use of toilet and boiled water as well as the use of mosquito net. The everyday use of toilet, boiled water and mosquito net helps the individual to stay healthy. Extent of diseases and access to health service, meanwhile, are very important poverty indicators because they can give an idea about the active workforce, the money and time spent on treating diseases and the use of health services.

The data reveal that 58.4 percent of the households in the study areas do not have toilet at home and 43.0 percent of the households drink unboiled wa-

ter. Such result exposed the need for households to improve sanitation. The disease rate is also very high especially for typhoid and malaria. In 2002-2003, 11 percent of the people had malaria and 6.8 percent had typhoid.

As for the more minor diseases, 43.5 percent of households go to the pharmacy or a non-skilled medical shop for treatment and only 7.7 percent of households use the health center in the commune as a result of the lack of medicine, lack of qualified personnel and irregular presence of the medical personnel in this facility. For serious diseases, more households are using the health center in the commune, or the district and provincial hospitals. The health service provided at the commune level is very minimal.

Income and expenditure

Household income and expenditure data provide useful insights into the economic conditions of households. They show the ability of households to generate income and to spend on food. Agriculture is the main source of employment and income generation in the pilot sites as well as in the whole country. Table 1 shows that about 40 percent of households can generate an income of only less than US\$ 500 per year. This helps to explain the low level

of household expenditure of about less than US\$ 0.38 per day for almost 50 percent of all individuals.

Poverty rate

The most challenging task was to determine the poverty line for each commune and the proportion of poor households in the village and commune. This was done on the basis of the data on consumption expenditure per capita, in line with the adopted national definition. Based on the preliminary results, though, the poverty line of 1,200 Riels adopted from the commune poverty report of the government seemed too low if compared with the effects of the inflation that has occurred since 1998 when the government commune poverty line was established. After consultations with the enumerators and the commune councils, this poverty line was raised to 1,500 Riels (US\$0.38) per day per person in line with the national poverty line. As long as the poverty line is fixed and adjusted by inflation, then it can serve the purpose of measuring changes, if any, in the number of households living below the poverty line, thereby being able to measure poverty over time.

In the CBMS survey, poverty rate was assessed through household expenditures.

Table 1. Income and expenditure by commune

Indicator	Ek Phnom District				Snuol District				Total Simple Average
	Prek Norint	Samraong Knong	Prek Luong	Simple Average	Khsuem	Snuol	Srae Char	Simple Average	
Household income per year (%)									
<250 US\$	9.1	19.3	17.9	15.4	15.4	9.3	4.0	9.6	12.5
250-500 US\$	23.0	19.8	33.0	25.3	37.2	21.4	28.1	28.9	27.1
501-750 US\$	22.2	17.4	22.4	20.7	26.8	23.0	35.6	28.5	24.6
Over 750 US\$	45.7	43.4	26.7	38.6	20.6	46.3	32.4	33.1	35.9
Expenditure per capita per day (%)									
Under 0.38 US\$ (1500 Riels)	42.9	34.5	54.7	44.0	69.0	42.7	57.3	56.3	50.2

Source of data: CBPMS survey, 2004

Before this study, there was no poverty rate documented at the commune and village levels. This rate will therefore be used to identify the poor villages or communes and can also be used to measure the progress of development in the communities.

In Ek Phnom district, the average poverty rate in three communes was 43.2 percent while in Snuol district, it was 53.5 percent. The poverty rate by village varies widely from 13.0 to 95.2 percent, showing a big gap in poverty among the villages. The Snuol district was shown to indeed be poorer than the Ek Phnom district which represents a better-off area.

Household assets

Household assets provide information on means of transport and communication as well as agricultural factors. Bicycles and motorcycles are means of transport while tractors, pumping machines, threshing machines, ox-carts and livestock are used for farming activities. The results show that 44.4 percent of households have bicycles and 38.7 percent have motorcycles. As for livestock, all communes have some livestock although per the results, a household is shown to raise only about 2-3 chickens and fewer or no pigs and/or cows as a result of animal diseases and the shortage of animal feed.

Meanwhile, radio and television (tv) sets are not very widespread as means of communication in the villages. Only 27.9 percent of households in the communes own a TV set (mostly black and white, operating on a car battery) and 28.4 percent own a radio.

Domestic violence and security by commune

Domestic violence and security are also important poverty indicators. For this, the survey focused on violence and

sexual abuse in the household and the authority to ask for help when these problems occur. The resulting figures are very low because many households tried to hide their cases. For instance, only 2.9 percent of households appear to have suffered from violence in the household. Some communes, however, like Srechar and Prek Leuong have much higher violence rates. When there was violence occurring, about 80 percent of the households were shown to have reported the case to the local authority.

Local capacity development and linkage

Cambodia is committed to undertaking the long process of decentralization. This means that the lower levels of the government will take more responsibility in the planning, management, resource raising and allocation at the local level. In this regard, the CBPMS project has helped to develop the capacity of the local authorities to implement and take responsibility for this work. As such, the six communes in the pilot areas now possess the commune poverty monitoring reports by village and the local authorities also have the capacity to do the CBMS in their commune by themselves. Commune council leaders in the pilot areas requested for a continuation of the CBMS survey, declaring that they would use the data for their communes' three-year rolling plan as part of the decentralization effort facilitated by the Seila program.

The pilot project has successfully built a link between commune, provincial and national level planning processes through the use of CBMS data. As part of a successful advocacy work for the pilot CBMS, the Ministry of Planning hosted a National Forum on Pre-Identification of Poor Households to discuss various approaches for the identi-

fication of poor households under the umbrella of the poverty reduction strategy.

Expanding CBMS in Cambodia

During the national dissemination workshop, the Department of Census and Survey within the NIS, represented by its Deputy Director, showed a positive interest in adopting the CBMS exercise for use in poverty monitoring. However, the lower administrative systems capable of handling the data management and processing are not yet in place because of resource constraints. In response to this, the various donor agencies that support the NIS in terms of technical and financial resources can perhaps take up this initiative, with additional seed money from the CBMS Network. With its valuable experience from this project, the CDRI can also actively promote the CBMS replication and expansion.

Lessons learned

Any plan to replicate the CBMS activity in other parts of Cambodia or nationwide should take into consideration, though, some of the problems encountered by the project during its implementation phase so that solutions or ways of addressing them may immediately be put in place, that is, if they have not yet been done.

Among the lessons learned are:

- The training period was not enough for some enumerators to acquire the necessary skill.
- The education level of some selected enumerators was too low to meet the work requirement.
- Some parts of the designed questionnaire were difficult to obtain a correct answer (ex: household income).
- The period to do the interviews was not so appropriate for Battambang

Research Results

province (should not be during the rainy season).

- The announcement to recruit enumerators through local authorities was not widely disseminated.
- Data crosschecking could not be done with all relevant institutions (ex: type of diseases).
- A few village chiefs did not fully support the work.
- A lot of respondents tried to hide information on land and household violence.
- Two enumerators in one village tried to estimate some figures by themselves to fill in some parts of the questionnaire.
- Many respondents expected to get some donation and assistance from the project.
- A few rich families did not fully cooperate with the enumerators in providing correct information.
- Manual data processing was very difficult for certain villages where the village chief had a very low level of education.

Recommendations

To address these problems, the following recommendations are made:

Selection of sites

Selecting the sites that have the willingness and capacity of people in the commune should be the main determinants.

Design of questionnaires

The questions should be very clear, simple and easy to understand for both interviewers and respondents. They have to be tested and revised before being put to use.

Selection of interviewers

All interviewers should come from the villages (commune in some cases) where they interview and should at least have some interviewing experience and nu-

merical skills because their experience and knowledge are still limited.

Timing of survey

The survey should be conducted during the non-farming period which in most places will be February and March or August and September.

Data processing

Manual data processing seemed to be very difficult for certain villages where skill levels are relatively weak. One option, therefore, is to use resources from the commune. Another option is to use school teachers or qualified high school students in the commune. Training of data processors is also necessary.

Interviewers' fee

A rate of 1,000 riels (\$0.25) per household, which takes one hour to interview on average, is appropriate for most villages. However, this amount was not suitable for interviewers who interviewed in remote areas where they could reach only two or three households per day. There is a need to increase the fee for interviewers who conduct such interviews and to pay for their transportation.

Conclusion

The pilot CBMS in Cambodia provided valuable results that satisfactorily describe the different facets of poverty in 6 communes in two economically different provinces. It successfully promoted links among the communes and between provincial and national level planning processes through the use of CBMS data. The project likewise developed the capacity of local authorities to implement and take responsibility to upgrade CBMS in their localities.

In addition to poverty rates at the village level, the exercise provided statistics regarding demography, education, housing, land, water, health, household expenditure, occupation and

income, assets, livestock, and domestic violence. The results have been widely shared with various stakeholders for consideration for the replication of the CBMS in other areas. As a result of this, a Technical Working Group on the pre-identification of poor households will be set up and led by the Ministry of Planning.

With the NIS expressing a keen interest in adopting the CBMS for gradual nationalization, it therefore becomes important that the lower administrative systems capable of handling the data management and processing be put in place. This is where the donor agencies, with seed money from the CBMS Network, may be helpful. Moreover, the CDRI can be an active member promoting CBMS replication and expansion in order to take this endeavor forward. *

CBMS for gender responsive budgeting

The CBMS Network Coordinating Team is set to launch soon a Community-Based Monitoring System-Gender Responsive Budgeting (CBMS-GRB) Project entitled "Developing and Piloting a Gender Responsive Community-Based Planning and Budgeting Tool for Local Governance". The project aims to develop and pilot a gender-responsive community-based monitoring tool that will greatly aid local government units in their planning and budgeting activities. For this project, the local governments of Escalante City and E.B. Magalona municipality, both from the province of Negros Occidental, have signified their willingness to serve as pilot sites for the implementa-

tion. A similar pilot project is expected to be undertaken in Senegal.

As a collaborative project, the CBMS-GRB project will harness the expertise of other institutions and experts in the field of gender as well as development studies. Working with the CBMS Network Coordinating Team in this project are the Development through Active Women Networking Foundation (DAWN), a Negros Occidental-based women's NGO, Dr. Aniceto Orbeta, a Research Fellow of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) and Debbie Budlender of the Community Agency for Social Enquiry, South Africa, one of the leading international advisers on gender responsive budgeting. *

PEP 2006 meeting in Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia will be the venue for the Fifth Poverty and Economic Policy (PEP) annual conference. To be held on June 18-22, 2006, the conference will gather together the three PEP subnetworks, namely, Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS), Modeling and Policy Impact Assessment (MPIA), and Poverty Monitoring and Measurement Analysis (PMMA), to discuss research reports and listen to new proposals submitted by developing country researchers. Presentations on selected topics will also be delivered by guest speakers and resource persons.

The conference, which will be participated in by at least 180 poverty experts and practitioners from over 30 countries, will be hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and organized by the Angelo King Institute for Economic and Business Studies-De La Salle University in cooperation with Laval University and with financial support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.

Full details on the upcoming conference may be viewed online at www.pep-net.org. Inquiries about the conference may also be sent through the conference secretariat at reyesc@dls-csb.edu.ph or mandapa@dls-csb.edu.ph. *

New proposals for CBMS

The following new proposals from various countries were recently submitted to the CBMS Network Coordinating Team:

- Working Toward a Nationwide Commune-Based Poverty Monitoring System (CBPMS) in Cambodia
- Community-Based Monitoring System in Colombia
- Developing an Early Warning System for Monitoring Drought and Ethnic Conflict in Tana River District, Kenya
- Implementation of a Community-Based Poverty Monitoring System in Tanzania
- Community-Based Poverty Monitoring of Tsunami-Affected Areas in Sri Lanka

- Implementation of the Commune-Based Poverty Monitoring System in Viet Nam
- Community-Based Monitoring and Research on Food Security and Social Welfare in Zimbabwe

The proposals on studies from Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam basically deal with the expansion and institutionalization of earlier CBMS work in these countries while the proposals for Colombia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe involve the development and pilot test of CBMS methodologies. The CBMS Screening Committee is currently evaluating these various proposals. *

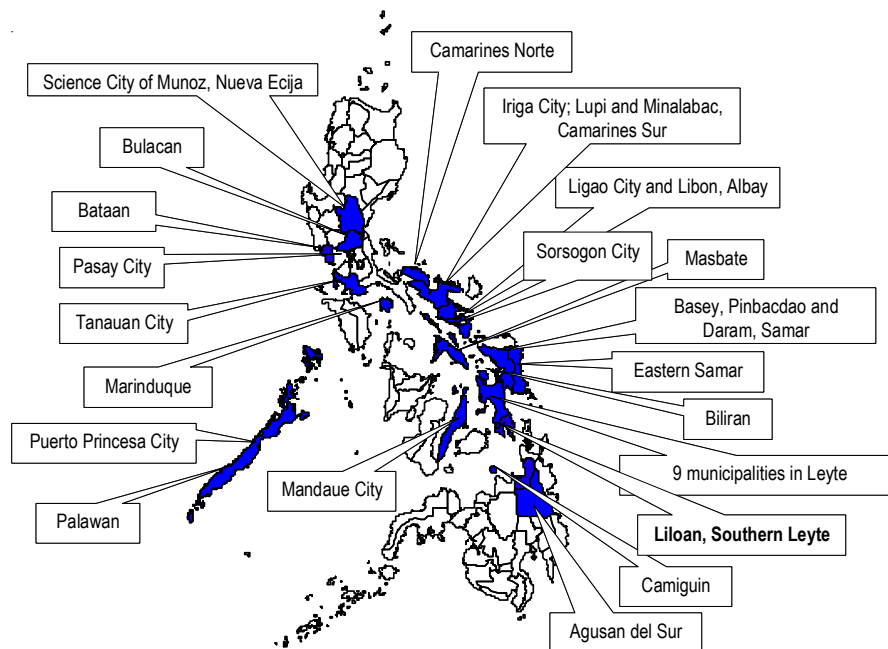
Expansion of CBMS sites

The CBMS-Philippines Team is working toward the expansion of the coverage of the community-based monitoring system (CBMS) implementation in the country. As of this date, as shown in Map 1, the CBMS is being implemented in 15 provinces covering 157 municipalities, 12 cities and 4,279 barangays (villages).

A series of briefings have been conducted during the first quarter of the year, among which are for potential partners from the Office of the Presidential Assistance on the Peace Process (OPPAP), for the Philippine Center for Population and Development, the Social Watch Philippines and the League of Municipalities of the Philippines. Meanwhile, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) has already been signed for the implementation of the community-based monitoring system in the province of Bataan through the initiative of Congressman Albert Garcia in partnership with the Provincial Government of Bataan. Related discussions are also on-going for a joint collaboration with the Social Watch Philippines through an EU funded project in localizing the Millennium Development Goals in selected pilot municipalities, among which is in the Municipality of Orion, Bataan. The League of Municipalities through its Secretariat has likewise expressed interest in advocating for the implementation of CBMS in more local government units.

In addition to the EU support in Orion, Bataan, other donor agencies have also registered their interest and intent to help in the implementation of the CBMS in various ways. Discussions are thus in progress for their manner of assistance in selected local government units (LGUs). Among these are:

Map 1. CBMS coverage in the Philippines*



*As of March 2006

UNDP

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), will support the implementation of CBMS in two provinces. The project aims to provide NAPC with the necessary information and skills to further localize the CBMS and to provide LGUs with the necessary tools that would facilitate a more evidence-based needs identification, program design and impact monitoring.

UNFPA

The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), through the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), will utilize the CBMS modules

in the implementation of its program "Localizing the MDGs: Improving the Capacity of LGUs to Deliver Population and Reproductive Health Information and Services at the Local Level." This project intends to capacitate the LGUs in contributing to the achievement of the MDG localization and in improving LGU service delivery levels/ standards that address local MDG/population development issues.

World Bank

Several meetings have been held between the CBMS-Philippines Team and the World Bank-Philippines to discuss details of technical collaboration and sources of financial support for CBMS-related initiatives in the Philippines. *

CBMS Development Grant Program awards 36 grants

The CBMS Development Grant Program, an initiative of the PEP-CBMS Network Coordinating Team in partnership with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-Philippines and the Peace and Equity Foundation (PEF), has approved a total of 36 grants amounting to P4.90M. Twenty-six of these, amounting to P3.15M, were approved during the meeting of the Program's Screening Committee on March 8-10, 2006.

Previous to this, on February 20, 2006, 10 organizations from all over the country were awarded a total of P1.75M to finance barangay-based poverty re-

duction programs which were identified using data gathered through the community-based monitoring system (CBMS) survey. The 10 awardees received their certificate of grants from Secretary Datu Zamzamin Ampatuan, Lead Convenor of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, at the Angelo King International Center.

Out of the 36 winning projects, 16 came from Palawan, five from Camarines Norte, four from Agusan del Sur, two each from Biliran and Eastern Samar and one from Leyte.

The 36 winning grant applications were chosen from a total of 115 proposals submitted by a wide variety of public and private organizations, including local government units, people's organizations, non-government organizations, cooperatives, and faith-based organizations.

The CBMS Development Grant Program is a program that aims to support evidence-based policy on social programs and to help reduce poverty and development disparities across barangays and municipalities by financing poverty reduction programs identified from the data gathered through the CBMS. *

Eastern Visayas holds first-ever regional conference on CBMS

Over 100 development practitioners and other stakeholders including national government officials, local chief executives, planners, as well as representatives from nongovernment organizations and peoples organizations converged at the Ritz Tower de Leyte in Tacloban City on February 16-17, 2006, for a 2-day conference on Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS), the first ever conference on CBMS to be held at the regional level.

Hosted and organized by the Institute for Democratic Participation in Governance (IDPG) and the CBMS-Regional Technical Working Group (RTWG), the conference provided a venue for all of the participants to take stock and reflect on what have been achieved dur-

ing the past year, to reassess strategies and to give a new impetus for more CBMS initiatives in the future. It also served as an opportunity for the development stakeholders in Eastern Visayas to tackle their next challenge which is to come up with unified development programs which shall be presented to national government agencies and donor organizations during the Provincial Development Summits which are already on the drawing board.

In her keynote speech, Dr. Celia Reyes, PEP-CBMS Network Leader, said that the number of local government units (LGUs) in the region implementing CBMS has grown by "leaps and bounds," only a year after it was first introduced and implemented in 16 pilot LGUs of four provinces of the region. "Today, CBMS

is being implemented province-wide in Biliran with the Provinces of Eastern Samar, Leyte and Samar likely to follow suit," she added.

Dr. Reyes attributed this unprecedented expansion of CBMS sites in the region to the commitment and dedication of the CBMS-RTWG headed by Mr. Oscar Francisco of the IDPG. The IDPG-led RTWG has steadfastly supported and guided these LGUs in the provision of physical and financial resources.

The two-day conference featured presentations of CBMS survey results and accomplishment reports from KALAHI-CIDSS areas. Also present during the conference were NAPC Assistant Secretary Dolores de Quiros-Castillo, Governor Ben Evardone of Eastern Samar, Ms. Suzette Pido of NAPC's Special Concerns Unit and Assistant Regional Director Aida Z. Laruda of DILG Region 8. *

NSCB grants clearance for the CBMS

In November 2005, the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) issued a clearance for the adoption of the CBMS in conjunction with its Statistical Survey Review and Clearance System (SSRCS). The latter is a mechanism instituted by the NSCB through Memorandum Circular Nos. 4-88 and 4-95 to: (a) ensure a sound design for data collection, (b)

minimize the burden placed upon respondents, (c) effect economy in statistical data collection, (d) achieve better coordination of government statistical activities, and (e) inform the private sector and the public in general that a government survey operations has passed clearance and thereby enjoin their cooperation in the conduct of the survey. *

Collaboration with ADB

The CBMS-Philippines Team of Angelo King Institute for Economic and Business Studies was recently tapped by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide technical assistance in the implementation of one of their projects in China. In general, the project aims to increase rural income in poor villages in the

provinces of Guizhou and Yunnan by demonstrating sustainable alternative rural livelihood measures in a participatory manner. In this regard, the CBMS-Philippines Team will assist in the development of a community-based monitoring system (CBMS) that will monitor the progress and impact of the said project. *

CBMS Network Updates is the quarterly newsletter of the CBMS Network Project. This work was carried out by the Angelo King Institute for Economic and Business Studies with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada.

The **Updates** may be downloaded in Adobe Acrobat format for free from the Project's website. The site can be accessed through <http://www.pep-net.org>.

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