

Opening Remarks

IDRC's Role in Enhancing Global Partnerships for Poverty Research and Policymaking*

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"Ayubowan"(welcome). It is my honour and great pleasure to be here in Colombo for the fourth general meeting of the Poverty and Economic Policy Network which you all now call the PEP.

First, on behalf of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the Honourable Minister of Finance and Planning and to the Honourable Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for taking time out from their respective busy schedules to deliver the opening statements today.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Executive Director of IPS and his dedicated staff for hosting this year's meeting. The CBMS team from the Angelo King Institute in the Philippines must likewise be thanked and congratulated for their work in coordinating this event and getting the right people to this venue and staying overnight.

PEP, as you know, is supported by the IDRC through a programme initiative called the Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic Adjustment Policies or MIMAP. Both Dr. Cockburn and Dr. Reyes have already spoken about the capacity-building dimensions of the

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PEP through its sub-networks and the high quality of research that these networks have produced. But allow me now to say a few words about the IDRC and MIMAP.

IDRC is a public corporation of the government of Canada created by the Canadian Parliament in 1970. Its mandate is to initiate, encourage, support and conduct research that look into problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means of applying and adopting scientific technique and other knowledge for the economic and social development of these regions. Our objective is fairly simple in this way, that is, to strengthen and help mobilize the local research capacity of developing countries and to foster and support the production, dissemination and application of results.

The MIMAP programme, on the other hand, was established in the early 1990s in response to the demand in developing countries to evaluate the impact of structural adjustment policies of the government on households and members of society. The programme started in the Philippines, and two of the people associated with it from the very beginning—Dr. Celia Reyes and Dr. Ponciano Intal—are here today. The programme soon expanded to other countries in Asia and Africa, with the emphasis of building technical skills and capacity in monitoring, measuring and analysing poverty and assessing the impact of macro changes on households and individuals.

Over the past decade, the MIMAP has adopted some changes, both nationally and internationally, responding to new demands and focusing specifically on areas like gender, health, labour market, environment, microfinance, trade policy reforms as well as emerging topics such as technology.

What MIMAP is best known for is in being a regional and global network that brings together developing country researches and international research scholars in order to exchange information, knowledge and approaches in policy dissemination. This has led to various international collaborations in development research.

PEP is the largest and best known of these networks under the MIMAP. And it has in fact become so well known that people think

of it as MIMAP and MIMAP as PEP. For this, PEP must be congratulated.

PEP is a unique global network of poverty research economists and integrates under its umbrella three sub-networks, namely, (a) the Community-Based Monitoring System network, (b) the Poverty Monitoring and Measurement Analysis network, and (c) the Modeling and Policy Impact Assessment network.

I had the privilege of being associated with the PEP as an IDRC representative for the last three years and have witnessed over this period the emergence of young and committed researchers. In this regard, PEP has been influencing and advising development thinking worldwide.

One of the successes of the PEP is in terms of building partnerships. Partnerships are formed around the sharing and working collaboratively of researchers on development research issues. These partnerships have already increased the stock of knowledge on poverty issues and have broadened global understanding. They have enabled the building of social capital around poverty research. Another important dimension of PEP's success is capacity building. We truly appreciate the long-term relationships which have developed between international experts and developing countries' researchers because as we all know, capacity development is not a training course but is a process of continuing and sustaining relationships and learning. And third, the success of the network can also be attributed to its focus of research issues which are of policy relevance.

Finally, it is not only the dissemination of results through its various publications and academic journals, albeit their importance to the network, that has distinguished the work of the PEP but more important, it is the active engagement and interaction of the researchers with policymakers, development communities and society as a whole that has spelled a difference.

In this connection, I am happy and very pleased that policymakers like Ministers Amunugama and Warnapala could be here with us today, even briefly, in order to know a bit more about

what this network does. Moreover, their presence is important because fundamental guides on the work of PEP have been key in doing solid, credible and empirical research.

On this note, I once again thank the organizers, especially the host institution, IPS, for arranging the meeting. “Bohoma Stutei” (thank you very much).