
A Critique of the Local Poverty Diagnosis and Planning System

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Abstract: The paper discusses the strengths of the Local Poverty Indicator Monitoring System (LPIMS) Guidebook which was advocated as a platform in formulating local poverty reduction action plan for local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines. The strengths of the LPIMS Guidebook include: (1) the formulation of a rational plan by the LGUs through the use of the set of indicators, (2) ; the application of convergence principle as local government executive officials, local legislative officials, technical staff of different sectors from the local government and the national government, community volunteers, people, organization groups and marginalized groups are represented in the local planning committee; (3) enabling local government units to identify relevant projects on the basis of the indicators; (4) identification of local capabilities through self-reflection process that could respond to the unmet needs; (5) identification of various resources that could support local government unit initiatives; and, (6) the importance of linking poverty alleviation with the comprehensive development plan.

Weaknesses identified with respect to the Guidebook include: (1) lack of emphasis on community mobilization, (2) emphasis on municipal-level planning instead of the lowest level of the barangay; and (3) failure to provide strategies on how to implement focused targeting of individuals and families at the barangay level.

Recommendations to enhance the utilization of LPIMS include: emphasis on barangay-level planning for poverty alleviation, community mobilization, implementation of focused targeting of individuals and families using indicators, the need to formulate basic needs for facilities to match basic needs for services, training of local officials on LPIMS, and the use of poverty indicators in allocating resources.

The Local Poverty Diagnosis and Planning System (LPDPS) is a methodology for formulating a poverty alleviation plan advocated to local government units (LGUs). This was formally adopted by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), together with the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), through the support provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under its project called *Strengthening Local Government's Capacity for the Formulation of Poverty-Focused Plans*. The methodology, institutional mechanisms and indicators to assess poverty advocated to LGUs are embodied in a *Guidebook on Local Poverty Diagnosis and Planning* issued in December 2002. The *Guidebook* was formally launched by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in July 2003. The *Guidebook* was formulated with the assistance of Dr. Celia M. Reyes, who serves as the Leader of the Community-based Monitoring System International Network by the International Development Research Center of Canada; and, Ms. Ma. Loreto M. Padua, former Executive Director of the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) and currently a faculty member of the College of Social Work and Community Development of the University of the Philippines.

This *Guidebook* is advocated to LGUs as a management technology which could guide them in the formulation of local plans for poverty alleviation. It

responds to the call for Local Chief Executives to undertake local programs on poverty reduction and local economic transformation issued by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) on August 21, 2001 through Memorandum Circular No. 2001-109 (DILG 2002: 6). This was supplemented by another directive by the DILG that called for the appointment of a Local Poverty Reduction Action Officer (LPRAO) in all municipalities, cities and provinces to oversee the poverty reduction efforts in their respective localities through Memorandum Circular 2001-105 by the DILG issued on August 31, 2001 (DILG 2002: 6).

Laudable Features

The LPDPS bears some features which projects many laudable features that foster good governance.

Rational Decision-making

One is the advocacy of a set of indicators which could guide and steer *rational decision-making* in local planning process and in targeting localities and families/individuals that can be given priority attention. The set of indicators which totals 13 in all is reminiscent of the key dimensions in the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) set of indicators that is advocated through the CIDSS, a program institutionalized under the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act passed in 1997, as the service delivery mechanism for MBN. As of April 2004, an additional indicator was added (on maternal mortality rate) to capture the commitments in the

Millennium Development Goals. (See Appendix A for the list of LPIMS and MBN indicators.) This set of indicators was also advocated to LGUs by the DILG, in localities that were not supported by the CIDSS under the Ramos Administration and with its own *Guidebook* formulated to set up the Community-Based Information System (CBIS). The difference between CIDSS and CBIS is that CIDSS deploys a CIDSS Worker that takes care of preparing the community to get involved in the different steps of the management cycle as situation analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation (SAPIME).

MBN was also adopted and modified through NEDA and National Statistics Office project supported by the UNDP in pilot areas where a Community-Based Poverty Monitoring Information System (CBPIMS) was set up. CBPIMS only used 23 out of 33 MBN indicators in the household survey. The rest were culled from community informants because of the sensitivity of asking questions from the households themselves. These indicators that were culled from the community informants were questions on families victimized by crimes against person and property, armed conflict, domestic violence and calamities; with 0-6 children left unattended and children engaged in hazardous occupation; who participated in the last elections; with solo parents who availed of health care services; and, having three sets of clothing. CBPIMS also corrected the weakness of MBN in using the family as the unit of analysis by counting the actual number of persons affected by a given unmet MBN (i.e., number of children who were not immunized instead of whether or not families have children who were not immunized).

The dimensions in LPIMS number three in all such as *survival*, including such dimensions as health, nutrition and basic health/nutrition amenities; *security* through shelter and peace/order; and, *enabling* such as income, employment and education. MBN indicators also number three such as *survival*, but includes clothing plus health, nutrition and water and sanitation (with water and sanitation labeled as health and nutrition amenities); *security*, that includes income/livelihood other than shelter and peace and order; and, *enabling*, that includes people participation in community development and family care/psychosocial welfare, other than education.

As the set of indicators has been trimmed down, this could facilitate data-collection process, unlike collecting 33 indicators.

Furthermore, the indicators are more focused on initial impact or long-term effect of services delivered unlike MBN set of indicators which incorporates *outputs/services* (i.e., pregnant and lactating mothers provided with iron and iodine supplements, infants exclusively breastfed for at least 4 months, deliveries attended by trained personnel, 0-1 year old infants fully immunized, pregnant mothers given two doses of tetanus toxoid, couples with access to family planning services, and no child below seven

years old left unattended) and *initial effects* (i.e., not more than one diarrhea episode per child below 5 years of age, no child below 15 years old engaged in hazardous occupation and couples practicing family planning).

An edge of LPIMS over MBN is its *objective of counting the number of persons* affected by a given indicator such as for instance, determining the number of malnourished to the total number of children in the 0-6 years of age *vis-à-vis* looking at whether or not there were severely or moderately malnourished children per family. This is reminiscent of the intention of CBPIMS.

In addition, LPIMS also gives an *opportunity for peculiar needs of certain sectors to be added* to the list of indicators such as proportion of households with access to ancestral domain for indigenous communities; proportion of farm households who are landless, among agricultural barangays; and, proportion of households affected by natural disaster, in localities that are prone to natural disasters.

Like the MBN set of indicators, data on LPIMS are to be collected at the level of the barangay, with suggestions to collect the data in smaller patches in the community such as puroks. Having information gathered at the community-level ensures that the data capture the peculiar requirements of the community and lead to the formulation of plans responsive to the needs of the community.

Having a set of indicators could also ensure transparency in terms of the performance of the LGU as data are available to track down the progress on quality of life.

Convergence Principle

Another feature of the methodology is the adoption of the convergence principle which is a feature that is also prominent in CIDSS and in MBN-CBIS advocated by the DILG. This is to be translated by setting up an interagency committee called the Local Poverty Reduction Action Team (LPRAT) at the barangay and municipal levels, normally composed of officials performing executive functions in LGUs, officials of the local legislative body, local technical staff, community volunteers, and representatives from the different basic sectors that compose 12 (i.e. farmers, agrarian reform families, fisherfolk, formal labor, informal labor, children, youth, women, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, victims of calamities and indigenous people). The basic sectors are often marginalized, depressed or underserved groups in the community, officially recognized in the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act. The involvement of the basic sectors is significant because it stresses the importance of these groups to be actively involved in the local teams that oversees the overall effort in poverty alleviation. Furthermore, people participation in governance is also encouraged by enabling *sitio* leaders to take part in the barangay LPRAT. Unlike basic sector representatives,

sitio leaders have a holistic view of the requirements of their respective localities, and could cut across the needs of the different basic sectors.

Convergence is advantageous as it assures that services are maximized since different workers operate as a team that could avoid duplication and overlap of functions. Convergent effort also fosters camaraderie among the members of the team and facilitates diffusion of information about the concerns of every stakeholder.

Members of the barangay LPRAT are from the 1) LGU officials with executive functions such as the Barangay Captain and the Barangay Secretary; 2) the local *sanggunian* that includes the Chair of the Appropriations Committee of the barangay; 3) local technical staff (such as the Chair of the committees of education, health, water and sanitation of the Barangay Development Council), 4) representative from the national government such as the School Principal/Head Teacher); 5) barangay volunteers such as the Barangay Health Worker, Barangay Nutrition Scholar, Day Care Worker, Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer and other community volunteers; 6) basic sector representatives; and 7) other PO groups such as *sitio* leaders.

At the municipal level, the members of the LPRAT include: 1) local government officials represented by the MPRAO, Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator, Municipal Local Government Operations Officer, barangay captains of all barangays, and barangay secretaries; 2) the local *sanggunian* through the Chair of Appropriations Committee, 3) local technical staff through Chair of the various committees of the local development council and the Department Heads of the municipal government offices; 4) national government representative through the School Principal/Head Teacher; 5) basic sectors through their barangay sectoral representative; and 6) nongovernment organization and PO representatives of the local development council. (See Appendix B for the list of members in the LPRAT at the municipal and barangay levels.

Thus, it is important for basic sector representatives at the barangay level to be organized to ensure that they are represented in the barangay. This is necessary for them to identify their representative in the municipal LPRAT.

Empowerment Principle

An important feature of the LPIMS is the inclusion of basic sector representatives in both the barangay and municipal LPRATs. Their interface enables marginalized groups to have a role in the different phases of the management cycle—in identifying the indicators to assess poverty, in the visioning process, in the identification of programs/projects, and, in the identification of resources needed to undertake projects. The involvement of the basic sectors provides an opportunity for marginalized groups to make decisions

about how their respective problems could be solved, avoiding mendicancy or dependence on government, and ensuring relevant intervention in addressing their problems. *Sitio* leaders could also supplement the perspective of the basic sector representatives.

Management Approach as Against Program-based Strategy

Considering the advocacy of the LPDPS *Guidebook* for each municipality to go through the process of tracing the root cause of each unmet basic needs, based on the indicators on LPIMS or similar tools, the approach highlights the importance of making each local poverty alleviation team to focus on their own perception and understanding of the problem, rather than the perspective of the national government. What is encouraged is for each team, particularly the municipal LPRAT, to identify programs and projects that could respond to the root cause of the problem. The *Guidebook* does not impose or even recommend specific programs and projects to respond to these problems. Each team is encouraged to identify appropriate programs and projects to address the root cause of the unmet problems. Thus, the approach ensures responsiveness of the programs and projects since the direct beneficiaries participate in their identification.

Assessment of Capabilities/Opportunities

One of the laudable features of the *Guidebook* is the identification of possible “coping mechanisms” to deal with each problem and the identification of opportunities, indicating resources available in the locality, in preparation for the identification of concrete measures or programs/projects that can be undertaken to respond to the problem. By mapping these opportunities, projects that can be undertaken can be assessed for their feasibility. Thus, plans do not remain as desired states but realizable instruments.

Resource Mobilization

Another important feature of the *Guidebook* is the inclusion of information on the possible ways to raise local resources that can be tapped to finance the local poverty alleviation plan. Financing options identified do not only include local (i.e., internal revenue allotment, local taxes and revenues, and loans) and national financing schemes (i.e., national funds and loans). They also include private sector funds through such mechanisms as having the private sector build, own and operate projects (BOO); having the private sector apply Build-Operate-Transfer option as it is given an opportunity to invest in a local government project, and recover from the investment before it is transferred to the LGU; and, having the private sector partner with government for commercial and business undertakings. Tapping official development assistance (ODA) is also suggested as an option with a listing of projects being provided to give the user of the *Guidebook* an idea of different projects which are extended grants or loans.

Indicating opportunities to generate resources empowers LGUs to take the initiative to support its projects, fostering the principle of autonomy.

Opportunity for other Methodologies to be Used.

Another important contribution of LPDPS is its relative openness in recognizing existing indicator systems which are operational in the LGUs. The *Guidebook* compares four indicators, apart from the LPIMS. The first three are indicators advocated by the national government at one time or another such as MBN-CBIS, CBPIMS and the Integrated Rural Accessibility Program (IRAP). As the name suggests, the indicators adopted in IRAP focus on the “accessibility” of the facilities/services of each basic need dimension (i.e., number of schools in each barangay, travel time to reach a health service) rather than focusing on the condition of individuals/families on basic needs, which MBN and CBPIMS are able to do. The fourth set of indicators is used by the MIMAP Project that targets selected localities in the Philippines.

These four set of indicators are compared on such dimensions as survival, security and enabling needs. Apart from LPIMS, a comparison of the four sets of indicators reveals that MBN-CBIS is the most participatory in data collection. MIMAP and CBPIMS rely on paid enumerators, while IRAP depends on key informants whose views could be “parochial” in character (DILG 2002: Annex IIB).

It can be deduced that the set of indicators adopted in the LPIMS has been largely influenced by the set of indicators of MIMAP.

Linking Poverty Alleviation with the Comprehensive Development Plan.

An important feature of the LPDPS is that it links the visioning exercise with the Comprehensive Development Plan, ensuring that there is consistency between the two. The existing programs are revisited and tied up with new programs, and then prioritized according to agreed upon criteria. Some suggested criteria include, replicability, sustainability, participatory process and number of people benefiting from the program/project.

Deficiencies

Considering all these laudable features, the gaps and deficiencies of LPDPS are as follows:

Municipal-based Planning

One weakness of the LPDPS is its emphasis on the role of the municipality in the preparation of the poverty alleviation plan. The mechanism for the formulation of the plan highlights the role of the municipality in consolidating the different barangay LPIMS data or other related data; in assessing coping mechanisms and development opportunities; in conducting cause analysis of the key unmet MBNs; in the preparation of the development plan for poverty reduction; and, in the

identification of resources to undertake the program/projects prioritized. However, the role of the barangay in the formulation of a poverty alleviation plan is not indicated. It is unlike the MBN-CBIS which utilizes the data at this level for both planning and targeting purposes, like in MBN-CIDSS.

Focused Targeting of Individuals and Families

Unlike the MBN-CBIS, the modalities in processing data for identifying individuals/families that can be given priority attention is not given much attention in LPDPS. This could be attributed to the fact that the consolidation of the data occurs at the municipal level. Hence, responding to the needs of individuals and families is not clearly spelled out in the LPDPS, which defeats the purpose of seeking out the most marginalized in a poverty reduction agenda.

Community Mobilization/Preparation

While the LPDPS recognizes the importance of the basic sector interface in governance, there is a need to ensure that the community is prepared to operate as organized groups. Setting up the LPDPS without due regard to community organizing will only pay lip service to people participation in governance. Our evaluation of the CIDSS in 1999 (Bautista 1999) has shown the impact of community preparation on the depth of involvement of the community in the different phases of governance compared with the advocacy of MBN through setting up CBIS, that did not give due emphasis on community mobilization.

Recommendations

In the light of these weaknesses and gaps, the following are my recommendations in order to strengthen the LPDPS, which for me should be pushed more aggressively:

1. **Role of community mobilization.** There is a need to incorporate community mobilization in order to ensure that participatory governance principle permeates the crafting of the poverty agenda. This should also include advocacy of the principle to the local chief executive, who can give the directive to a community mobilizer, possibly from a nongovernment organization or a Social Welfare and Development Officer, in undertaking this task.
2. **Barangay-led Planning.** There is a need to revise the *Guidebook* to take into consideration the important role of the barangay in the planning process. To ensure that the information system is community-based, the LPDPS should not only consider the barangay as a source of information but that the data collected at this level could be analyzed and processed by the community, and from which, cause analysis can be undertaken, and ultimately, the identification of relevant plans and projects. The municipality can serve as a venue for

negotiation among the members of the barangay LPRAT regarding the projects that can be prioritized by the municipality, considering the concerns/problems of the different barangays. Planning should be *barangay-led* and not municipal-led. Hence, there is a need to advocate the full cycle of the methodology of LPDPS to the barangay and not only to the municipality.

3. **Focused Targeting of Individuals/Families.** There is a need to strengthen the system of focused targeting for affected individuals, families or basic sectors. The technology of dealing with the marginalized, depressed, deprived and underserved individuals and families should be incorporated in the *Guidebook* and not taken as a matter of course. Experiences in CIDSS can be included or other local initiatives to apply the methodology of targeting to ensure that users of the *Guidebook* can demonstrate how targeting can be done.
4. **Formulating MBN for Facilities.** I may sound like a broken record but I wish to reiterate a point I have raised in different fora on the need to formulate basic facilities indicators. If there are basic needs indicators for individuals and families, there is also a need to define the standards needed for facilities to respond to individual needs. Human needs can be effectively addressed if there are enough facilities to address these needs. For instance, a day care center per barangay cannot sufficiently address the needs of children if there are many of them. The IRAP is a good starting point since it has already incorporated access to facilities, but standards for these facilities have not been formulated yet.
5. **Role of Local Chief Executives.** Local Chief Executives (LCEs) have a critical role to play in steering and directing the formulation of plans for poverty alleviation, being the key person who could appoint the Local Poverty Reduction Action Officer. He is also the key person responsible in advocating for and directing the allocation of resources for poverty alleviation. Hence, it is important to have a separate advocacy for the LCE in order for the whole effort on poverty reduction truly successful.
6. **Consolidation of Development Plans.** There are several plans expected to be crafted by LGUs. Aside from the regular plans like the Comprehensive Development Plan, Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Provincial Physical Framework Plan and Annual Investment Plan, the LGUs are expected to produce the Local Public Safety Plan, Gender Plan, Local Enterprise Plan, Sustainable Integrated Area Development Plan, apart from the Local Poverty Plan (Garganera 2004: 119). There

is a need to consolidate these different plans to avoid confusion and to present an integrated view of the needs of the locality, rather than parceled out in different documents. The Comprehensive Development Plan can consolidate all these plans, with a poverty perspective permeating the other plans, due to the fact that poverty is an overriding concern.

7. **Adoption of Poverty Indicators in Allocating Resources.** There is a need to market to national implementers of the executive branch of government to consider the set of indicators as the bases for the identification of localities that can be given attention and the programs that can be prioritized for support. Even the legislature can be steered to adopt the set of indicators as a basis for making decisions in terms of the localities and the services that they can provide allocation from their pork barrel funds. The indicators provide rational criteria to ensure that priority attention is extended to the marginalized by key decision-makers.

Conclusion

The LPDPS is a management technology that can be harnessed to ensure that local government units formulate a plan with a poverty perspective. Poverty alleviation should not only be a responsibility of the national government but should be lodged in local government units where the poor are located. Innovative local government officials can be directed by the LPDPS framework in responding to the plight of the poor in a more innovative way—capitalizing on such principles as people participation, focused targeting, convergence and human development. Having a poverty focus in a development plan actually ensures that the resources are channeled to people who are marginalized, to lift them from the burden of deprivation and ultimately, equip them with capacities to be liberated from the bondage of poverty.

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Appendix A. MBN indicators

Basic Needs	MBN Indicators	LPIMS
Survival		
A. Food and Nutrition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newborns with birthweight of at least 2.5 kg. 2. No severely and moderately underweight children under 5 years old 3. Pregnant and lactating mothers provided with iron and iodine supplements 4. Infants breastfed for at least 4 months 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Malnutrition prevalence- Proportion of children 0-5 years old who are moderately and severely underweight
B. Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Deliveries attended by trained personnel 6. 0-1 years old fully immunized 7. Pregnant women given at least 2 doses of tetanus toxoid 8. Not more than 1 diarrhea episode per child below 5 9. No deaths in the family due to preventable causes 10. Couples with access to family planning 11. Couples practicing family planning in the last 6 months 12. 12. Solo parent availing of health services 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Proportion of children aged 0-5 years old who died to the sum of children 0-5 years old
C. Water and Sanitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Access to potable water (faucet/deep well within 250 meters) 14. 14. Access to sanitary toilets 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Proportion of households without access to safe water 4. Proportion of households without access to sanitary toilet facilities
D. Clothing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Family members with basic clothing (at least 3 sets of internal and external clothing) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Proportion of households who are squatters 6. Proportion of households who are living in makeshift housing
Security		
A. Shelter	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18. House owned, rented or shared 18. Housing durable for at least 5 years 	
B. Peace and Order/ Public Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. No family member victimized by crime against person 20. No family members victimized by crime against property 22. No family member displaced by natural disaster 23. No family member victimized by armed conflict 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Proportion of households victimized by crime
C. Income and Employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 24. Head of family employed 25. Other family members 15 years old and above employed 26. Families with income above subsistence threshold level 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Poverty incidence— Proportion of households who have income greater than the poverty threshold 9. Subsistence incidence – Proportion of households who have income greater than the food threshold 10. Proportion of households who eat three meals a day 11. Unemployment rate

Basic Needs	MBN Indicators	LPIMS
Enabling		
A. Basic Education and Literacy	27. Children aged 3-6 attending day care/preschool 28. Children 6-12 years old in elementary school 29. Children 13-16 years old in high school 30. Family members 10 years old above able to read and write and do simple calculation	12. Elementary participation rate 13. Secondary participation rate
B. People's participation	31. Family members involved in at least 1 people's organization 32. Family members able to vote at elections	
C. Family Care/Psychosocial Needs	31. Children 18 years old and below not engaged in hazardous occupation 32. No incidence of domestic violence 33. No child below 7 years old left unattended	

Appendix B. Suggested Members of the Local Poverty Reduction Action Team

Institutions Represented	Barangay Poverty Reduction Action Team	Municipal Poverty Reduction Action Team
LGU Key Officials in Executive Function	Barangay Captain Barangay Secretary	MPRAO Municipal Planning Devpt. Coordinator Municipal LG Operations Officer Barangay Captains Barangay Secretaries
LGU Sanggunian	Chair of Appropriations Committee Members of the Sanggunian	Chair of Appropriations Committee
LGU Technical Staff	Chair of Committees in Education, Health, Water and Sanitation	Chair of Committees in Education, Health, Water and Sanitation Dept. Heads of the municipality
National Government	School Principal/Head Teacher	Chair of Committees in Education, Health, Water and Sanitation
Basic Sectors	Representatives of the Basic Sectors	Barangay Sectoral Representative
Other POs/Civil Society Groups	Purok or Sitio Leaders	NGO/PO representatives in the municipal devpt. council
Barangay Volunteers	Barangay Health Worker Barangay Nutrition Scholar Day Care Worker Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer Other Community Workers	
Private Sector		Private sector representative in the municipal devpt. council