CHAPTER II

Rapid Assessment of Anti-Poverty Programs and Projects

Angelita Gregorio-Medel

INTRODUCTION

The last two decades saw an unprecedented increase in anti-poverty programs and projects (AP3) in the Philippines. Today, funding for AP3s has fallen significantly. This has compelled key stakeholders – the national government, local government units, nongovernment organizations, peoples organizations, and donor agencies – to find ways to ensure that the remaining resources would bring fundamental and sustained improvements to the lives of the poor. This chapter presents the essential findings of evaluations of anti-poverty programs in the Philippines, especially studies by Gregorio-Medel (1999) and Balisacan *et al* (2000).

Reducing poverty is the declared imperative of all Philippine governments. The Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 1999-2004 (MTPDP) incorporates anti-poverty objectives. Nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and peoples organizations (POs) have been playing a major role in carrying out AP3s across the country. Many of these NGOs and POs function as conduits of donor agencies and channel various types of assistance to poor communities.

The country's slow economic growth since 1975 has been analyzed well enough. The significant causes of economic decline in the Philippines are weak governance, low investment in basic infrastructure, political and macroeconomic instability, and the highly unequal distribution of productive assets such as land (Balisacan et al, 2000). The body of development experience has clearly shown that economic growth is necessary in order to bring about effective and long-term solutions to poverty.

How is "poverty" commonly understood today? It is now more commonly described as a condition where opportunities and choices most basic to human development are denied. Poverty has three dominant perspectives:

- **Income**, where a minimum level of income is set based on a poverty line and this becomes the measure for identifying the poor;
- **Basic needs**, which emphasizes deprivation of material requirements for minimally acceptable fulfillment of human needs; this perspective goes beyond the lack of private income because it includes inadequate education, health/nutrition, employment, access to services and infrastructure as well as participation in community processes;
- **Capability**, which looks at the absence of some basic capabilities of individuals and their families to function or the lack of the opportunity to achieve some minimally acceptable levels of this functioning; it involves risk, vulnerability, social exclusion or lack of participation, low social capital and gender disparities.

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Marcos Administration (1965-1985)

The Marcos administration followed a technocratic modernization framework of development (1970s). The framework assumed that the Philippines was underdeveloped because it lacked the capital, technology and physical infrastructure needed to modernize. One major response was massive government borrowings. These funded many projects but left the country with huge international debts.

With the imposition of Martial Law, the Marcos regime propounded a development rhetoric that emphasized that the ordinary citizen – especially the poor – should be the regime's ultimate beneficiaries. The government identified the socially and economically disadvantaged groups as those belonging to the lowest income bracket, the bottom 30% of the population referred to as the "poorest of the poor."[1] The political agenda of the government was supposedly to restore peace and order, institute land reform, and pursue an export-led strategy toward economic growth. Anti-poverty goals per se did not define the Marcos administration.

There was emphasis placed on agricultural development. Marcos reform programs included infusion of capital, technology transfer and the installation of physical infrastructure in the countryside. Some other development programs during this period included cooperatives development (*Samahang Nayon*), rice and corn production (*Masagana 99*), irrigation, and other post harvest facilities. Other programs were on health (Primary Health Care), human settlement development especially low-cost urban housing (BLISS Project), and social forestry (Community Based Forestry).

There was also a food subsidy program implemented by the National Food Authority (NFA). It was a main development program of the Marcos administration. Recent studies now show that the NFA is not effective in achieving any of its objectives (Balisacan, 1992; David 1999; Roumasset, 1999).

[1] They included the following: a) victims of crisis situations such as natural or man-made disasters; b) those with no schooling or training at all, no skills for open employment or cannot compete with those who have better education and training for the job school including drop outs; c) those who may have skills for self-employment but lack property for collateral or guarantors and, thus, would not be able to borrow money from bank and other credit facilities; d) those who have skills but could not compete in open employment because of physical or social disabilities; and e) those who have no confidence in themselves but are not emotionally or mentally ill.

Among the conclusions of these studies are that the NFA has insufficient resources to perform all of its tasks and its program has contradictory objectives with too few policy instruments.

The Marcos administration gave great political prominence to Land Reform under an Operation Leasehold and Land Transfer Program (Presidential Decree 27). In principle this program was an improvement on past land reform programs. It broke up the large haciendas in Central Luzon and converted many tenants into leaseholders or amortizing owners. However, the program tried to follow an agricultural model of small-farm holdings. This was not economically viable and led to further farmer-beneficiary indebtedness and forfeiture of awarded lands. In addition, the Marcos land reform program was limited in scope (rice and corn lands only) and extremely slow in land distribution.

After an early rapid expansion, this land reform program collapsed due to inadequate technical assistance, corruption, and poor repayment by farmer-beneficiaries. The Marcos government simultaneously (and incongruously) promoted corporate and export agriculture, which resulted in reversing the little gains made through land reform. Moreover, land reform under Marcos suffered from serious administrative delays, landowner resistance and problems with land valuation.

Although many farmers experienced increased yields and economic surpluses,[2] firm government control of farm prices led to declining or stagnant incomes and income inequality among reform beneficiaries. Farmers became poorer along with the rest of the rural poor population (Carroll, 1983; Riedinger, 1995). The urban poor did not fare any better. The government's export-led strategy subjected small laborers to exploitation.

Marcos justified martial law and authoritarian rule as necessary to overcome the constraints of Philippine democracy, initiate economic growth and enhance social justice through redistributive reform. Had these goals been realized, Marcos would have made the most significant dent in the poverty situation of the Filipino people. History has shown, however, that human rights abuses, corruption and economic mismanagement characterized Marcos rule and led to the demise of his political career. Under Marcos, the structures of poverty became deeply embedded. They made it more difficult for Filipinos to achieve a basic quality of life. It was during the Marcos era that international trends in economic modernization and the rent-seeking politics of an authoritarian regime left indelible marks on the country's poverty situation.

[2] This is due to irrigation development and use of new seed varieties and fertilizers while rent and amortization payments have been fixed.

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Aquino Administration (1986-1992)

The primary goal of the Aquino government was constitutional democratic reform. Corazon Aquino said she wanted to democratize access to productive resources and open the economy and market to competition by eliminating crony capitalism. She pledged to undertake "genuine" agrarian reform and said her top priority was the efficient utilization and equitable sharing of ownership and the benefits of land. Collaboration with civil society was a major strategy and programs were implemented through community participation and tripartite arrangements between government agencies, NGOs, and POs.

It was under Aquino that the Philippine Government clearly identified a pro-poor strategy that went beyond universal development programs. A Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) became the centerpiece endeavor. The view was that agrarian reform would result into the agriculture sector making a major contribution to economic growth and poverty alleviation. Agrarian reform was later expanded to provide inducements to investment through an integrated package of services and support (subsidized credit, infrastructure construction, and extension services). The aim was to help agrarian reform beneficiaries become self-sufficient.

Eventually, CARP became the Aquino government's umbrella program for channeling various support services to farmer-beneficiaries, through the "Agrarian Reform Community" approach or ARC.[1] The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) oversaw the implementation of CARP while many NGOs and POs focused on selected areas and invested significant effort and resources in making the agrarian reform program work for the farmers.

Complementary to CARP, The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) developed community-based resource management programs (CBRMP). The Department of Agriculture (DA) incorporated CBRMP in a major Fishery Sector Program (FSP) funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The FSP pursued the creation of non-sea-based livelihood alternatives to

[1] CARP provided an integrated package of services for ARC development to priority provinces. The three basic elements of CARP were: (a) land tenure improvement focused on land transfer, (b) social infrastructure building and strengthening including community organizing and (c) productivity systems development supporting agrarian reform beneficiaries in the area of farm productivity, technological interventions in cultivation and farm-to-market processes.

fishing. It aimed to reduce coastal resource extraction by the end of the project period (1989-1995).

The Aquino government also revived credit and livelihood programs for poverty groups. Under the umbrella of the National Livelihood Program (NLP), a credit and livelihood program was implemented through 56 projects involving nine government line agencies, five government financial institutions and two government corporations. Experiments were made to develop new credit and savings schemes based on the Grameen Bank model and a model that links banks with self-help groups.

In 1987, President Aquino signed into law a *Tulong Sa Tao Program*. Its main objective was to reduce poverty by creating employment opportunities and enhancing incomes of low-income groups. A major component of the program was the provision of a credit facility to accredited NGOs for lending to microenterprise livelihood projects.

Balisacan (1995) reports that the project did not perform well in meeting the credit needs of the poor. The target clientele was poorly defined. The criteria for who could benefit from the project was not clear. It lacked adequate screening of beneficiaries. It had no mechanism to disqualify borrowers who were no longer poor. The use of cooperatives as loan conduits for intended poor groups did not serve the purpose because the cooperatives tended to loan the money to their members only. As a result only one third of the beneficiaries actually came from low-income groups. Also, many participating NGOs and POs were not fully aware of the program's objectives.

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Ramos Administration (1992-1998)

The Ramos administration is credited with having a more systematic and clear attempt to integrate poverty reduction strategies in the national development plan. The Ramos administration continued to support CARP although its principal poverty reduction strategy was its "Social Reform Agenda" (SRA), which it called its flagship pro-poor program. The SRA is considered as a step forward in addressing the problem of poverty in the Philippines. Launched in June 1994, this program sought to pursue social change and equity, and to bridge economic growth with social reform. Social reform was defined as "a process that addresses the basic inequities in Filipino society through systematic, unified, and coordinated social reform package" (Monsod, 1997).

The SRA strategy was to focus AP3 on selected areas. Its priority beneficiaries were the country's 20 poorest provinces, identified through the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) approach. The MBN became instrumental in identifying poverty groups, particularly through the Comprehensive Integrated Development Social Services (CIDSS) program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The SRA flagship programs included the following:

- Agrarian Reform and Agricultural Development (concentrating available resources on geographical priority areas, increased technology input and increased budget for basic infrastructure such as irrigation and post-harvest facilities);
- Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Conservation, Management and Development;
- Recognition and Protection of Ancestral Domain;
- Socialized Housing;
- Workers Welfare and Protection;
- CIDSS: Integrated Health, Welfare and Accessibility Program;
- Credit and Livelihood; and
- Institution-building and Effective Participation in Governance

<u>Poverty Alleviation Funds (PAF).</u> The Ramos administration set up two funding windows to finance SRA projects. The first was the series of Poverty

Alleviation Funds or PAFs, consisting of PAF-1, PAF-2, and PAF-3. The second was the Local Government Empowerment Fund (Balisacan et al, 2000).

PAF-1 was launched in 1996 and had a budget of P4 billion. It was meant to support projects for 5^{th} and 6^{th} class municipalities in the 20 priority provinces and the island of Mindanao, especially the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The Fund provided scholarship assistance, hiring of schoolteachers, purchase of desks, direct assistance to farmers, rehabilitation of communal irrigation systems, assistance to undocumented overseas contract workers (OCW), and support for family health and nutrition welfare. However, PAF-1 was plagued by problems such as delayed issuance of implementation guidelines and financial disbursements. Its project menu was criticized for not being based on the felt needs of its target areas.

PAF-2 had a P2-billion budget. Building on PAF-1 the program promoted the area-based approach for the convergence of anti-poverty efforts. The intention was to address the six most unmet basic minimum needs of poor communities (housing and resettlement, water and sanitation, health and nutrition, basic education, basic childcare and employment opportunities). PAF-2 called for installing an MBN-Community Based Information System (CBIS) in order to track poverty patterns. The fund targeted 960 5^{th} and 6^{th} class municipalities outside Metro Manila. Allocation per province was based on the number of 5^{th} and 6^{th} class municipalities within the target provinces. PAF-2 suffered from a lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. This was aggravated by the lack of preparedness of the basic sectors to participate fully in the projects financed by the fund.

PAF-3 amounted to P3.5 billion and was carried out mainly to cushion the negative effects of the El Niño and La Niña weather anomalies. It also was intended to support the flood control program of the government. The fund allocated resources for agricultural support programs for areas affected by El Niño/La Niña, anti-poverty programs for indigenous peoples (IP), and urban poor resettlement. Unfortunately, the Asian financial crisis occurred at this time and worsened the effects of El Niño/La Niña. PAF-3 underwent serious cash flow problems. The fund also was hobbled by stringent administrative requirements, such the absence of clear specifications for IP programs.

Local Government Empowerment Fund (LGEF). The fund was established in 1996 and was intended to provide livelihood and related amenities to 5^{th} and 6^{th} class municipalities in the 20 priority provinces. It also sought to help LGUs carry out devolved functions. The Fund amounted to P100 million and was applied mainly to upgrade training centers, public markets, and slaughterhouses, acquire post harvest facilities, and finance livelihood amenities. The LGEF adopted a "bottom-up" approach in project identification. Local government units submitted proposals and after a series of reviews by the Social Reform Council secretariat, were provided funds by the Department of Budget and Management.

Implementation of the LGEF was delayed mainly due to the inability of LGUs to comply with documentary requirements. Other LGUs did not submit accomplishment reports. A serious oversight was the lack of impact evaluation. There was no screening methodology used to determine who would receive livelihood assistance. Also, there was not much effort to recruit participants from among the poor. The positive side was that business ventures established through the LGEF enabled the concerned LGUs to improve their fiscal positions. This enabled them to more efficiently and effectively deliver basic goods and services.

The CARP was also one of the major asset reform programs of the Ramos government. Many agrarian reform communities (ARCs) became convergence sites for the SRA. The ARCs were provided with valuable resources to implement three basic components of the program: 1) land transfer, 2) social preparation and community organizing/building, and 3) productivity systems development. Both international, bilateral and private/NGO donor agencies and institutions channeled substantial financial support to the ARCs. The Department of Agrarian Reform and Department of Agriculture initiated many farm-specific initiatives, especially the provision of the post-harvest facilities and technologies.

The Ramos administration explicitly recognized the importance of education's contribution to the improvement of living standards and socio-economic status of the disadvantaged. Basic education, including elementary education, was an essential component of the SRA. Though the Third Elementary Education Program (TEEP), public elementary education was included in the SRA as both a sectoral intervention and a geographically targeted intervention in the poorest provinces.

With World Bank support, TEEP focused on poverty by targeting disadvantaged municipalities in far-flung areas. The program began in 1997 and has a five-year period. TEEP differs from past education programs in that it focuses on priority poverty sites as well as support for the participation of the Local Government Units (LGUs) in the construction of school buildings. The three key result areas of TEEP are participation, completion and achievement. In terms of direct and specific support to the education sector, TEEP assisted the following: textbook distribution, instructional material development, teacher training, school building and facilities construction and maintenance.

However, studies have shown that the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) has assigned a high 25% weight to poverty incidence as a criteria for resource allocation. The DECS is biased in favor of districts with large student populations. Although understandable, this is hardly equitable. Data shows that regions with low incidences of poverty also have larger student populations.

The Ramos Administration took off from the initial democratizing efforts of the Aquino administration. The major difference was that it rallied all development initiatives toward a vision of "Philippines 2000." Philippines 2000 focused on integrating the country into the emerging global economic order through industrialization and import liberalization. The Ramos Administration also recognized equity and growth as vital pillars of sustainable development and held close consultations with civil society groups in drafting AP3s. The Administration recognized that economic growth alone was an insufficient response to poverty, even in the long term. It understood that some poverty groups still could not benefit during episodes of growth or be hurt by public decisions chosen to move the economy to growth. Such groups usually included the elderly, persons with disabilities, those without assets or skills, households in far flung rural areas often by-passed by growth, and those highly vulnerable to periods of economic turbulence (Reyes, et al 1999).

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Estrada Administration (1998-2001)

The Estrada Administration's centerpiece anti-poverty program was called "Lingap para sa Mahirap" (LINGAP). It was largely built on the institutions established under the previous administration, such as the Social Reform Council, the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), and the local governments. The total budget appropriated for LINGAP was P2.5 billion. It had six priority programs, as follows.

- Food, Nutrition and Medical Assistance (Department of Health) programs including a medical insurance fund, Sustansiya para sa Masa, Garantisadong Pambata, Medical Assistance Fund, and assistance to rural health units (RHUs) and barangay health units (BHUs) – P500 million).
- Livelihood Development Programs through cooperatives (Cooperative Development Authority – P500 million).
- Socialized Housing for LGUs (National Housing Authority – P500 million).
- Rural Waterworks System (Local Water Utilities Administration): Level 1 Shallow or Deep Well with no distribution system and Level 2 communal faucet (P300 million).
- Price Support for Rice and Corn (National Food Authority): ERAP Sari-sari Store, Emergency relief Operation, Rice/Corn Subsidy Program and the Farmers" alleviation Program (P400 million).
- Protective Services for Youth and Children including Child care Centers, Child/youth Crisis Services and other protective services for youth and children (Department of Social Welfare and Development – P300 million).

The DILG assisted in identifying the 100 poorest families per province and city as targeted beneficiaries. These families constituted some 16,100 households in 644 barangays. The NAPC controlled 32% of the P2.5 billion LINGAP budget. In terms of fund source, Congress provided for 68%; national government agencies supplied the remaining 32%.

Local governments were positioned as key implementors of LINGAP. National government agencies, NGOs and POs participated in a convergence effort. However, a rapid appraisal showed that local governments were not harnessed since many of the programs were conceptualized at the national level.

Consultations with LGUs were conducted though. The very centralized, national-level process contradicted the objective of empowering LGUs. Not surprisingly, local governments did not feel any ownership for LINGAP programs. Moreover, intended beneficiaries did not get adequate opportunities to participate.

The Estrada Administration claimed that poverty reduction was its *raison d'etre*. However, it failed to bridge the gap between rhetoric and action. Its AP3s were poorly implemented and reminiscent of Marcos-era public stunts, such as the ERAP Store, the nutrition and feeding programs, the credit and livelihood, and others.

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CRITICAL FACTORS IN IMPLEMENTING AP3

Clear Policy Framework

National economic development policies frequently undermine anti-poverty efforts. A policy of economic deregulation and liberalization can threaten the immediate security of life and livelihood of many poor households, as when it leads to the conversion of productive agricultural land to non-agricultural use. There is wide acceptance today that economic growth alone cannot be a sufficient response to poverty. Fundamental changes are needed in the distribution and control of productive assets like land. The immediate and urgent (short-term) needs of the poor for subsistence and the concern for sustainable (long-term) changes require a complicated balancing of interests, demands, and limited development resources. There are serious compromises between short-run and long run benefits and the costs of government anti-poverty programs.

An example is the credit and livelihood program that has the positive short-term effect of providing very small business loans to women. The women become busy and start believing that they are indeed on their way to an improved life. But many become dependent on credit and loans as their micro enterprises fail to take off or remain too small. Another example is the food subsidy program. This keeps the price of rice affordable but it also often distorts the market by artificially constricting farm gate prices.

It does not help that the government and the private sector view AP3 as merely a sub-component of the national development plan. This betrays a shortsighted understanding of the relationship between growth and poverty alleviation. What is required is for national development to be focused on reducing poverty as the main objective of economic growth. Budgetary allocations, national programs, and economic policies must consistently provide coherent guidelines that would create synergy between economic growth and poverty alleviation. In other countries, national economic development plans serve as the antipoverty program and vise versa.

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Focused Targeting

The Philippines has serious fiscal constraints. It needs to do focused targeting constantly to maximize the efficient use of very limited resources. Focused targeting brings the benefit of AP3 to priority groups. It depends on the presence of effective administrative and information systems, and correct handling of political and technical difficulties. One key administrative requirement is correctly distinguishing the poor from the non-poor. This requires information and a process for comprehensively establishing accurate poverty group profiles. Related to this, focused targeting also requires objective methods for selecting beneficiaries. These methods should be applicable under a variety of poverty circumstances (Balisacan et al, 2000).

Politics in the final selection of beneficiaries has always been a problem to AP3s. National and local politicians frequently interfere in the objective and fair selection of beneficiaries. A notorious example is the way beneficiaries are chosen for socialized housing projects. Even reasonably successful AP3s such as the CIDSS, ARC and primary health care, have not entirely escaped this meddling.

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Clear Linkage to MBN Continuum

An anti-poverty project needs to be wholistic. Poverty is multi-dimensional and complex; a narrow approach that focuses on only one aspect of poverty eventually will undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of the project. The Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) approach is a breakthrough because it emphasizes the three fundamental needs of every human person and community: survival, security, enabling. Every component and resource invested in an anti-poverty project must work synergistically in order to effect greater impact on the lives of the beneficiaries.

Economic security and livelihood is the priority among poor communities. Most anti-poverty projects – even specialized ones like health, education and environment – always return to these two fundamental concerns. In turn, economic security is founded on access to assets like land, use of bodies of water, forests and other means of production. This is why in the MBN monitoring under CIDSS, economic security remains the top unmet need of the poor and among the more challenging and difficult ones to fulfill.

In the case of environment programs, the DENR has learned that its social and community forestry projects can become sustainable only if they strengthen the economic base of target beneficiaries. Asking upland communities to stop using wood as an energy source will not work if they are not offered alternative energy sources.

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Clear Implementation Plan

An anti-poverty program requires a clear and coherent implementation plan developed through close consultation with beneficiary communities. Such a plan becomes the consensus that binds stakeholders. It levels off expectations, delineates accountabilities, makes sure that systems and procedures are responsive to the particular requirements of the program and the implementing team, and sets challenging but achievable results according to a time plan. It should be noted though that a clear implementation plan results not only from participative planning but also from good project management.

The CIDSS benefited much from a clear plan of implementation and well-defined roles, responsibilities, and guidelines for key personnel. There were also guidelines for the strategies and the activities to be pursued. In the case of the "Tulong sa Tao" livelihood and credit program, its implementation plan experienced problems when different stakeholders had different ways of interpreting project guidelines. Common problems of the anti-poverty projects described in the case studies, particularly those of government organizations, were delay in fund releases and inability to meet reporting deadlines.

Sharing of vital information is crucial. The DENR's Integrated Social Forestry Program suffered when the DENR was remiss in sharing important information to participating LGUs, stakeholders, and beneficiaries. As a result, program coordination suffered even between the central office and local field offices.

A clear implementation plan should enforce existing laws and policies and have well-crafted implementing rules. Many good laws become ineffectual due to poor implementation. This is the case of such laws as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (RA 6657), the Urban Development and Housing Act (RA 7279), the FARMCs, the IPRA and other pro-poor legislation. Often, these laws end up not protecting the interests of the poor because they were either not properly implemented or not given effective implementation rules. Flaws in implementation make it possible for powerful blocs in the government bureaucracy to bend laws to promote narrow interests.

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Convergence and Collaboration Efforts among Stakeholders

The CIDSS demonstrates that a convergence approach contributes to the effectiveness of anti-poverty projects. Convergence promotes the pooling of resources and coordination of efforts among NGAs, LGUs, NGOs and peoples' organizations. Convergence includes interagency work in the implementation of pro-poor programs as well as close consultation during implementation.

The Agrarian Reform Community (ARC) approach is an example of convergence and collaboration among stakeholders (beneficiaries, NGOs, peoples organizations, national government agencies, and local governments). Through ARCs, the Department of Agrarian Reform encouraged the application of better practices in community development and organizing of NGOs and POs. It drew on the savings and enterprise development experience of cooperatives. It made use of the legal, agricultural production and other technical expertise of academic and professional institutions. It benefited from the project management and funding capacities of international and national development agencies. On the government side, support from the Department of Agriculture and of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources further strengthened the program's convergence.

Several AP3s under the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) have profited from convergence and collaboration among stakeholders, including representatives of the basic sectors. These helped stakeholders to become closely involved and enhanced their "ownership" of anti-poverty projects. Despite the many criticisms of the SRA, it has advanced anti-poverty work in the country because of its concept, approaches and mechanisms.

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Transparent and Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of anti-poverty programs is extremely important. Several anti-poverty programs even lack the most basic indicators and benchmarks. The common way of assessing the success or failure of anti-poverty projects is to look at output and activity accomplishments. For example, micro-credit and income-generating programs set success indicators in terms of increased savings and repayment rates.

With the absence of indicators or benchmarks, impact evaluation becomes costly. AP3s that do not have M&E are more vulnerable to external influences, such as interventions from the funding agency or an outside interest group. Lack of adequate information about project performance leads to weak understanding of results and an inability to improve the AP3 as a whole. In government agencies, the lack of personnel for effective M&E is cited as a reason for the limited ability to monitor pro-poor programs. In the case of the ARC program, operations manuals did not include M&E of key activities like processing of stewardship applications and harvesting of products in the project areas.

Beyond the inherent need to track project performance, transparent and participatory M&E was found to be useful to stakeholders. M&E fosters a collaborative approach, improves trust among project participants, and establishes an informed approach to anti-poverty interventions. M&E allows stakeholders to share information and account for their performance. It results in more responsible partnership.

Participatory M&E instills a sense of ownership among community members and local leaders. It facilitates the acquisition of skills, tools and knowledge. CIDSS attempted to do this by institutionalizing the community-based monitoring system. Within Agrarian Reform Communities, the DAR installed a special system to track the progress of three critical agrarian reform components: community organizing, land transfer and productivity and business development.

The M&E requirements of agencies with oversight powers, such as the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), track the financial performance and tangible (i.e., physical) deliverables of programs. It should be noted that many agencies submit reports only for compliance. They provide data that do not serve the full purpose of monitoring program effectiveness and impact.

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Champions and Facilitative Bureaucracy

Anti-poverty programs require both individual and institutional champions. There are quite a number of initiatives that are – or at least label themselves – anti-poverty. Even effective AP3s can be sidelined by emerging needs and changing development priorities. A champion keeps the anti-poverty project visible in the public eye and vital in policy-making circles. Just as important, the champion keeps donor institutions interested in the project.

AP3 champions should be supported by competent technical and support staff. An anti-poverty program usually entails substantial investments in human resource development. Leaders and officials, staff and community members need to learn more about participatory mechanisms and processes, partnership relations, and other technical aspects of a successful AP3. Capability-building also must extend to rank-and-file workers who carry out day-to-day operations of the program.