

# **MICRO IMPACT OF MACROECONOMIC AND ADJUSTMENT POLICIES (MIMAP)**

**A Review**

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## **List of Acronyms**

CECI:	Centre D'étude et de Co-opération Internationale
CGE:	Computable General Equilibrium
CPMS:	Community Level Poverty Monitoring System
CREFA:	Centre de recherche en économie et en finances appliquées
IDRC:	International Development Research Centre
IFI:	International Financial Institution
LSMS:	Living Standards Measurement Study:
MIMAP:	Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPC:	National Policy Commission
PAC:	Project Advisory Committee
PAG:	Programme Advisory Group
PI:	Program Initiative
PM:	Poverty Monitoring
PMS:	Poverty Monitoring Survey
RAC:	Research Advisory Committee
SMMEIT:	Small, Medium and Microentreprises, Innovation and Technology
TEC:	Trade, Employment and Competitiveness
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM:	United Nations Fund for the Development of Women
WDR:	World Development Report

## **Executive Summary**

The Program Initiative on Micro Impact of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policy (MIMAP) reflects the changed paradigm of development research by emphasizing multi-disciplinarity, social accountability and relevance. The principal objective of MIMAP is to enhance the capacity of the scholars and policy makers in developing countries to: assess the impact of macro policy changes on vulnerable sections of the population and; to evolve creditable policy options.

This review of MIMAP looked into strategic decisions taken by the PI in locating the projects, selecting the partner institutions, defining the scope of activities, establishing networks and contributing to capacity building. It also appraised the output, reach and impact of the country projects and the thematic networks which have been supported.

There are two principal considerations in selecting countries for MIMAP activities: the capacity of local institutions to undertake systematic and rigorous policy research; and a policy environment favorable to such research. One or - more often - both of these pre-conditions has always been present in the countries selected. The PI has been quite successful in selecting partners for the implementation of projects in these countries and, increasingly, in its thematic networks.

MIMAP emphasizes the impact of economic reforms mainly on the new or transient poor. However, as reforms also have serious implications for the chronically poor, the PI should be explicit in defining its scope and coverage.

The three major activities of the country-level projects, namely economic modeling, poverty monitoring and focus studies have been handled expertly, without taking a rigid stand on the selection or sequencing of various activities. The major achievement of the PI has been to create a network of concerned scholars in developing countries. It has succeeded in capacity building by exchange of experience among the participating countries, and more recently by organizing a useful training program.

The quality of the output--as expressed in publications, symposia, seminars, and workshops--has uniformly been of a high level. Country level projects are assisted in maintaining scientific rigour without losing relevance to the developmental issues in their respective countries. However, there is scope for improvement in the nature and architecture of economic modeling, in the scope and methodology of poverty monitoring and in the selection and conduct of focus studies. Efforts in sponsoring and strengthening thematic networks have started yielding encouraging results.

As a result of systematic dissemination, project outputs have reached a very large section of relevant publics. MIMAP activities have made a significant impact at the policy making level, and have made meaningful contributions to methodology. The PI has started influencing thinking and the approach to developmental issues in the International Financial Institutions. MIMAP has been effective in meeting its primary objectives, and has shown the capacity to evolve and adapt to meet new challenges.

## **I. Introduction**

### **Scope of the Review**

This Review of the Program Initiative, Micro Impact of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) is aimed at assessing the: contextual significance of the main theme; approaches used to examine relevant issues; nature of the partnership with researchers and policy makers in the selected countries; quality of the output; success in the dissemination of the output and; capacity building in developing countries. The Review also comments on the human resources available for the tasks, and the extent of collaboration with other related PIs. The assessment is aimed at the Program as a whole though some activities have been examined in greater details, with a few selected projects as illustrations. The Review is organized, primarily, to meet the requirement for external assessment of the performance of the PI for the Board of Governors of IDRC. It is hoped that it will also be of help to the concerned PI and the Programs Branch Management.

The Review has been conducted by a two-person team within a short period of time. Major reliance had to be placed on the documentation supplied by the PI Team Leader. The Review team had the advantages of participating in two meetings of the Program staff, and discussion with the individual members. Thus, the timing of the Review was, in a way, fortunate as the initial phase of the Review coincided with the two week Open Programme Meeting in which a number of staff located outside the Headquarters also participated. One of the members of the review team was familiar with MIMAP activities in a few countries. This was also used as an input in the Review.

In the following section the Review looks into the genesis and evolution of MIMAP; strategic interventions in terms of the selection of countries, the scope of the Program; selection of partner institutions; selection of activities; establishment of networks; and capacity building in the project countries. The third section of the Review comments on the three principle activities - macro modeling, poverty monitoring and focus studies - with three MIMAP projects (the Philippines, Nepal and Vietnam) taken as the case studies. The South Asia Gender Network is also included as a case study of a thematic network. The emphasis is on the quality of the output and its dissemination and reach. The last section sums up our overall all assessment.

The Review attempts to articulate and comment on the ideas and approaches of the MIMAP Team and draws lessons from their experience. It is not our objective to audit the Program as a whole or its various activities.

### **Background of MIMAP**

This Program Initiative is a good example of the paradigm shift, or new model of knowledge, which informs IDRC's research activities since 1997, although MIMAP had started much earlier. In fact it has grown up independently and gained its own identity before the PI system came into being. The first MIMAP project started in Philippines in 1989. The critical elements of the Center's new approach to research, i.e. relevancy of the themes, multi disciplinary approach and,

social accountability are fully reflected in MIMAP projects. A distinct feature of these projects is that the research problematique is directly related to the developmental concerns of the selected countries.

Genesis of this PI can be traced to the dissatisfaction over the outcome of the macroeconomic reforms adopted by the developing countries in the 1980s. Serious concerns were voiced about the effects of these policies on the poor. Not only the well known UNICEF study - Adjustment With Human Face - but even the World Bank's own findings (e.g. from Living Standard Measurement Survey, (LSMS)) pointed to the adverse impact of the policies pursued under Structural Adjustment Programs on the poor and vulnerable. MIMAP projects were designed to bring out the implications of various macro level policies for these sections and to explore 'credible alternatives' to these policies. Building capacity within countries to analyze adjustment impacts, and develop better adjustment policies and alleviation measures, was viewed as essential from the outset. A distinguishing feature of MIMAP projects is that the projects are developed to view the policy imperatives from the developing countries perspectives.

Starting with the Philippines project in 1989, MIMAP projects now are located in eleven countries of Asia and Africa (with two more projects likely to be approved). These projects are categorized in three groups - 'senior', 'junior' and 'new projects'- based solely on the dates of their inception. All MIMAP projects conduct, or aspire to conduct, three major activities to achieve the objectives of the Program. Macro-economic models are constructed to depict and simulate interrelationship among different segments of the economy; attempts are made to measure and monitor poverty in its different manifestations; and, special studies are organized to further probe the relationship between policy and institutional interventions and poverty. Within this broad framework there is considerable flexibility at the project level in the selected countries. An additional, and important, activity is the organization of networks around certain themes.

## **II. Strategic Decisions**

MIMAP objectives are well stated in its Prospectus. Briefly, the projects under MIMAP's initiative aim at the development of policy analysis and poverty measuring capacities in the selected countries. The success in achieving these objectives depends mainly on the strategic decisions taken at the Program level and quality of the performance at the country, i.e., project, level. In this section we will review a few strategic decisions at the Program level. The major strategic decisions reviewed are: selection of the countries; selection of partners; selection of themes; selection of activities; training; networking. It should be stated at the outset that these decisions are interrelated, only for the sake of clarity that they are discussed separately.

### *a) Selection of Countries*

It is fortunate that MIMAP started in the Philippines where there already is research capacity of a high caliber and a policy environment conducive to this type of research. This was not true to the same extent in other selected countries. However, in each country one or the other condition, particularly the latter, was always present. In recent years, another criterion has been added in the selection of the countries i.e., to have a critical number of countries to enable a regional

approach. This has occasionally led to the selection of countries where the two initial criteria were not present. For example, in Laos, institutions are too weak to enable much success, except over a very long capacity building phase. Policy making is, largely, a prerogative of the nation state; and regional factors may not be overwhelmingly important. However, we agree that the PI should take a clear stand on the question of regional concentration.

Having built up a critical mass of countries in Asia, MIMAP recently moved to the Africa region. There appear to have been good reasons choosing Africa rather than Latin America as the area for expansion. First, there are blocks of countries within Africa (e.g. the CFA zone) which have very similar policy environment with similar experiences under structural adjustment; this allows lessons to be learned from a few well chosen countries within them. Second, there appears to be a greater need for building research capacities in the field of economic modeling and poverty monitoring in Africa than in Latin America. And finally, IDRC knows Francophone Africa well and has a comparative advantage in undertaking macro-economic research activities here.

The differing conditions in Africa have meant that the approach adopted in the mature countries in Asia has had to be adapted in a number of ways. Differences which have had to be taken into account include: less availability of data than in Asia; different experiences of structural adjustment; less availability of experienced researchers in this field and thus a greater need to use outside consultants; and the greater difficulty in forging linkages between researchers and policy makers. In meeting these new challenges, MIMAP's learning experiences in countries such as Vietnam were extremely useful. In addition, while there has been no direct involvement of Asian partners in establishing the African projects, the latter have benefited enormously from being a part of the MIMAP 'family' and have been able to appreciate through attendance at annual meetings how less experienced countries such as Nepal have been able to build up their capacity to undertake MIMAP type activities. The African countries have also been able to benefit from the experience of MIMAP's Project Advisory Group - many of whom have African experience - and will participate in the MIMAP Training Program which is being developed by researchers from CREFA (Laval University) and CECI (see later in review for further details).

With respect to country projects, it is important that MIMAP should have an explicit exit policy. While some flexibility will have to be accepted, the strategy should aim at 'retreat without disarray'. From the documents and also from the discussion with PI team we observe that thoughts are given to withdraw in a systematic way from a mature MIMAP such as Philippines without jeopardizing the sustainability of the progress made, by giving them an advisory and coordinating role

#### *b) Scope of the Program*

The major objective of this PI is to create the capacity within developing countries to understand the implications of the macroeconomic policies on vulnerable sections of the population. It is expected that as the projects mature, capacity to provide creditable alternatives will be developed. Such a sharp focus has its own advantages. However, impression should not go round that MIMAP is concerned only with the policies, which are part of Structural Adjustment as commonly understood. Macro policies which are not directed to resolve a crisis - a fiscal crisis or

a balance of payment crisis, which generally prompts Structural Adjustment - also have profound impact on the poor. The PI is aware of this distinction as reflected in some of the newer projects, such as that in Vietnam.

At the conceptual level a distinction between ‘chronically poor’ and the ‘new poor’ needs to be made. The latter are the victims of fiscal compression and public sector reforms. The former are resource poor households suffering from serious social and economic handicaps. The main thrust of the Program, as expressed in the Prospectus, is on the vulnerable sections who are the victims of Structural Adjustment and related policies, i.e., ‘new’ or ‘transient’ poor. In a number of countries where poverty monitoring exercises are undertaken, this distinction between the ‘new poor’ and ‘chronically poor’ is not made. Some clarity is needed on this score.

#### *c) Selection of Partners*

MIMAP projects in different countries have been successful in selecting front ranking research institutions to house the projects. These institutions have an easy access to policy makers, either because they are part of the government or have high credibility in their own right. Efforts are also made at the level of country projects to involve policy makers, NGOs, and other researchers. The example of the Philippines is particularly noteworthy in this respect. Here, full use is made of academics in the Research Advisory Committee, while policy makers and NGOs are involved in the Project Advisory Committee. This model is not replicated in every country for understandable reasons - there may not be many researchers who can be brought in the RACs, or NGOs, which may be inducted in the PACs. Even so informal linkages between the country team and policy makers and NGOs would be of help. Equally important is the stage at which the various stake holders are involved with the project. To bring them in the picture right at the inception stage of the project may be more helpful than inviting them at the stage of dissemination of the project output. There are several examples, including the Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal, where policy makers were involved right from the beginning

#### *d) Selection of Activities*

The standard set of activities proposed in a MIMAP project, as noted earlier, are economic modeling, poverty monitoring and focus studies. The Program has been flexible in defining the scope of these activities as well as in sequencing them, in the light of the capacity and the needs of the country concerned. For example, while the advanced projects are experimenting with different types of models, some of the newer projects skip this activity, at least in the initial phase. Similarly, some of the projects have opted for partial or sectoral modeling.

Poverty measurement, and monitoring, is one common activity. This is also an activity where MIMAP projects are breaking new ground. Instead of a uni-dimensional poverty line based on household income or expenditure, the projects are evolving a set of robust indicators of poverty for their respective countries. Statistical designs to collect relevant data for small areas are developed; methodologies for involving local communities in the collection and monitoring of poverty data are tested. Efforts are being made to evolve a set of common indicators at the regional level. This will certainly have the advantage of comparability, but it may also detract from the richness and relevance of country specific indicators of poverty. A proper balance needs to be exercised between regional comparability and local level specificity.



Special studies on critical policy issues such as land relations and micro level credit, have been organized or are being planned in a number of projects. At least three objectives are given for undertaking such studies. First, it is suggested that they will widen the scope of the project and that many other researchers (who are not a part of the project team) can be invited to contribute. Second, they will add a qualitative dimension to the quantitative results of modeling exercises or the poverty measurement efforts. Third, they will provide a way of helping to identify and define themes, which can become the subject matter of thematic networks. These objectives may not be mutually consistent. It is important to clearly define the role of focus studies in the methodology of MIMAP.

*e) Networking*

One of the major successes of MIMAP is in networking of the scholars interested in the broad area of policy reforms and implications of these reforms for the poor. In a sense MIMAP is a 'network of networks'. It has been able to create a community of scholars sharing common objectives. It is made possible by full use of e-mail, web pages, newsletters, workshops and most importantly, the annual meetings. This networking has acquired a new dimension with the organization of thematic networks. Networks on environment, health and gender are already in place, and others are planned on labor and on microfinancing. Thought is also being given to establishing a thematic network (jointly with TEC and/or SMMEIT) on small and micro enterprises. These thematic networks have various origins and operate in difference ways and with varying effect, although their common aim is to add depth in priority concerns to the country level programs. Some, but not all the researchers and research institutes involved are also involved in MIMAP country programs. They vary from the large, well funded and truly global network on health (which was inherited by MIMAP from another Programme at the time of creating the PI), to the environment network which started in the Philippines and mainly remains there following unsuccessful attempts to bring in Brazil as the first of other country partners. This experience needs to be kept in mind with other potential networks. It seems that the prospects of networking among the MIMAP project teams are brighter. Bringing in other partners who have not imbibed the same philosophy in the MIMAP sponsored networks may not yield desired results.

The Annual Meeting is an important activity, which is contributing to the team building among MIMAP projects. It gives the participants an opportunity to learn from each other; and, with the involvement of the Policy Advisory Group, it gives an opportunity to new MIMAP Teams to have expert advice and required guidance. The presence of donors and other scholars invited to the meeting gives the Program more visibility. There are, however, two aspects on which some thought has to be given. Since participants in the annual meetings are a heterogeneous group comprising researchers as well non-technical people, it is difficult to satisfy each group's interest. Secondly, the large agenda results in the three day meeting being very crowded. The Program is aware of these difficulties and, (as a complement), is now organizing meetings and electronic discussions around one or two activities. For example, one regional meeting was organized in May to focus on modeling exercise. However, in these workshop type meetings the advantage of bringing all stake holders together will be lost. (From a recent communication from the PI Team leader it is learned that the original. i.e. comprehensive character, of the

Annual meetings - now to be known as Annual Conference - will be retained - at least for another year).

As mentioned above, the Program Advisory Group is an important part of the networking activities. The PAG is composed of five internationally recognized experts in the fields of economic modeling and poverty monitoring who have experience at the global level. They attend all annual meetings and make a major contribution at these in terms of giving concrete advice and assistance to country teams in solving common problems, advising on future directions, and feeding current international thinking on issues to research teams. Between annual meetings, they also attend specialist meetings involving selected members of the country networks, assist teams with formulation of proposals, comment on papers being prepared by teams for presentation at various fora; and answer queries on specific methodological or analytical problems within their area of expertise. Country teams find this direct access to sources of international expertise a valuable addition to the technical and advisory committees, which are attached to the projects at the country level.

At the Program level, the PAG also plays an important role in assisting the PI team to draw individual projects together in a coherent Program framework and to advise on future directions. They also help to ensure that outputs are kept at a high level and that the MIMAP Program receives international recognition and credibility. As the number of thematic networks grows within MIMAP, it would be worth considering the addition of PAG members who have specialist knowledge and expertise in these thematic areas (at the moment environment is the only thematic network which has a representative on the PAG). This would also help to forge stronger synergy between the country teams and the thematic networks.

#### *f) Training and Capacity Building*

It is envisaged that the major outcome of the MIMAP Program will be capacity building. There is an obvious tension between the objective of capacity building and insistence on high quality of the output. The latter is easier to obtain from already trained personnel. In order to reconcile these two objectives, emphasis is placed on training and on collaboration between more advanced MIMAP institutions with relatively newer institutions. The country level projects are the main vehicles for capacity building, but at the Program level also careful thought is given on enhancing capacity of the participants. The Program is attempting to achieve this by facilitating inter change between the 'senior' and 'junior' country projects. Besides, a full fledged training Program is proposed to be organized during this year.

The Program is encouraging a partnership between more mature institutions and relatively underdeveloped one. For example, new South Asian country projects were encouraged to establish a partnership with 'senior' projects such as the Philippines and Bangladesh. The latter is also involved in organizing initial activities in the new African projects. Another device adopted by this PI to bridge the quality gap is to encourage advanced projects to develop common tools for different research areas which may benefit projects in other countries. For example, MIMAP projects in Bangladesh, the Philippines and India are encouraged to develop poverty indicators, which other country projects may also consider. PI has also involved

advanced institutions in Canada to assist the newer projects. These efforts are yielding desirable results.

A more organized effort in this direction is the proposed Training Program. This Program is jointly developed by the Economics and Applied Finance Research Center (CREFA) of Laval University and the Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI). The Program aims at imparting technical knowledge in the two principal research areas of MIMAP, modeling and poverty monitoring, and to improve linkages between the two components. The contents are divided into modules so that the training Program can cater to the needs of researchers at different levels. Course contents are well designed. An ingenious software is developed as a part of pedagogy. Usefulness of this training course will be enhanced if a module on local level planning is added because the poverty monitoring exercises in MIMAP projects are mainly directed to assist in developing action programs at the local level.

### **III. Appraisal of Outputs, Reach and Impact**

#### **Quality of Output**

The outputs expected from MIMAP over the three year period - as described in the Prospectus - fall into three categories: contribution to knowledge; linking research with policy; and capacity building. This is attempted by organizing relevant activities at the country/project level and by organizing inter-country thematic networks. One of the major thematic networks, the South Asia Gender Network is discussed later.

In order to assess the quality of the output at the country level projects, three were looked at in depth. These are the Philippines Project (Phase IV and V), the Nepal Project (Phase I and II) and the Vietnam Poverty Monitoring Project. In a way these three projects represent the 'senior' 'junior' and 'new projects' in the MIMAP family. A short background of these projects is provided before assessing the quality of outputs.

#### **Country Projects**

*The Philippines project* is the forerunner of the MIMAP initiative. It is also considered the 'flagship' project. It was launched in 1989, with several initial advantages: a group of competent researchers, a sound institutional base, and a distinct possibility of results being taken seriously by the administration of the country. In the first three phases of the project, activities were progressively evolved to achieve the objectives of MIMAP. In the first phase, the micro macro linkages were conceptualized and a framework of studies was evolved. The second phase explored the implications and modalities of implementing poverty monitoring and policy analysis. In its third phase the project concentrated on operationalizing macro economic models with addition of financial dimensions, and on pilot testing the community based poverty monitoring system. During all these phases the policy makers as well as the academics and NGOs community in the country were kept informed. The potential users could see the utility of these exercises and were quite supportive.

With these achievements the fourth phase of the project concentrated on the implementation of the Community Based Poverty Monitoring System in the selected provinces, refinements of the quantitative models and their use in policy analysis. The current, fifth phase, is designed to institutionalize the use of MIMAP analytical tools. During the course of its evolution, from 1989 to 1999, the project has systematically and carefully refined the analytical tools for assessing micro impact of the macro policies, and tested their efficacy in real life situation. The process, obviously had a great learning value for the researchers and at the same time enhanced their credibility.

It is important to underline at this stage that even in a favorable environment, i.e. with strong research and institutional base and a receptive clientele, it took ten years to evolve the project from conceptualizing phase to institutionalizing phase. This could partly be attributed to various demands on the MIMAP team by the policy makers in the country, (although this demand in itself can be regarded as a major success in terms of building a research capacity which is of direct use and importance to policy makers). However, even in less demanding environment in other MIMAP countries these projects will have to have longer time horizon.

*The Nepal project* is a relative late-comer starting in 1995. From the beginning, it was realized that, in no way, could this be a straightforward replication of the Philippines project. The policy environment in Nepal is very different - without the same contacts between researchers and policy makers. In addition, the research capacity to undertake economic modeling and poverty monitoring was not well developed. Thus, a very important difference in Nepal is the emphasis that was placed initially on capacity building, rather than on flows of information between researchers and policy makers. For example, Phase I of the project involved extensive research by local institutions and researchers, as a way of providing a base of information on which to build the MIMAP project, but--more importantly--as a way of identifying and strengthening local research capacities in the area of impact of economic reform on poverty.

Although funds for visiting more mature projects (or for them to come to Nepal) was not built into the project, the Nepal team was, nevertheless, able to benefit from contact with other teams during annual meetings, from the guidance of the Project Advisory Group, and from its involvement with CECI, which provides its field sites for use in the project, as well as guidance and training on CG modeling. As the capacity of the research team in Nepal has grown, it, in its turn, is seeking to transfer the benefits of its learning to other countries.

The Nepal project is a prime example of how research capacity in this field can be built up with the correct care and effort. Although following much the same phasing and components as the Philippines and other mature projects, there have been some innovative aspects incorporated here. In particular, the poverty monitoring system goes beyond community level data and into intra-household data, thus making it easier to trace the impact of macroeconomic changes on particularly vulnerable groups such as women. While MIMAP projects have always demonstrated the flow of information from the micro to the macro level, the Nepal project makes it much clearer how information filters back down to local levels of governance where it can be used by and on behalf of local communities.

At the same time, the Nepal project is making inroads at the national policy level, with currently available results being used by the National Policy Commission in designing the Ninth Five Year Plan - a process which is supported by co-opting of a member of the Phase I MIMAP research team to the NPC to oversee the social sector, as well as on-going advice of the MIMAP team leader to the NPC on poverty and employment issues in preparing the Plan.

*The Poverty Monitoring Project in Vietnam* has also evolved from a previous 'mini project' in the same country. During the earlier phase, which lasted for nearly two years, a critical assessment of the poverty alleviation programs was attempted, and methodology adopted by three different agencies in measuring poverty was examined. The latter is important in the context of Vietnam where social expenditure in an area is targeted on the basis of the extent of poverty in the area. The current phase aims at refining the poverty measurement tools by devising suitable indicators of poverty at individual, household and community levels. The project has planned to undertake two focus studies: impact of land distribution and micro credit policies on poverty. The third objective of the project is to integrate the modeling and poverty monitoring exercises. The modeling activities are undertaken by a different institution but the collaboration between the two institutions is growing.

The Project in Vietnam does not have the advantages of the Philippines or even the Nepal projects in terms of institutional strength or the receptivity of the policy makers. It can, however, learn from the experience of the 'senior' MIMAP projects. The project has also the advantages of close collaboration with a reputed Canadian institution CECI and, more importantly, a continuous support from one of its principal researchers. At this stage the project could be assessed more in terms of the capacity building rather than on the basis of concrete output or the impact on policy makers.

Two principal outputs of the country level projects are briefly reviewed. We have looked into the modeling as well as poverty monitoring activities of the Philippines project, and the poverty monitoring activity in the Nepal and Vietnam projects. We have also assessed a thematic network, the Gender Network in South Asia. Brief comments on each of these activities follow.

*Modeling Activity:* the Philippines project has constructed three types of models: macro economic model with income distribution block; economy wide model with financial sector; and household model on education, health and nutrition. Recently the team has constructed a Social Account Matrix of the economy of the Philippines. The output is world class in its rigour and comprehensiveness and sets an example for others to follow. There are certain weaknesses of the economy wide CGE models. The Philippines models share these. CGE models are based on the market clearing role of prices. For economies, which are characterized by imperfect markets, this assumption does not represent the reality. However, the household model and the link matrix address to this limitation.

The main limitation of the Philippines CGE model is that it does not segregate between rural and urban households. Households are grouped in 10 categories on the basis of income. This assumes away heterogeneity among the households, it also excludes rural urban interaction. As poverty is concentrated in the rural areas in most of the developing countries, rural urban categorization is

important. In most other MIMAP projects this distinction is made. The Philippines model is a static one period model. The team recognizes this limitation and is engaged in building a multi-period dynamic model.

The real value of the modeling exercises is their application in examining the impact of policy changes, and, in this case the impact on poor households. The Philippines team has examined the impact of different macro policies on tariff reduction, on school attendance, and on health and nutrition. There is some reservation among the scholars on the specifications and also on the results of these exercises. (see the discussion on these models in the Third Annual Meeting). However, the usefulness of these exercises is recognized by the policy makers in the Philippines. This is evident from the fact that the team is frequently invited by government agencies to examine the repercussions of the policy changes. The team is also leading a major initiative on The Impact of the East Asian Crisis on the countries of the Region. The modeling exercise is well documented in a series of working papers. One should now expect from a mature MIMAP such as Philippines to share its methodological insights and in profession journals.

*Poverty Monitoring:* All MIMAP projects have included poverty monitoring (PM) as a principal activity. In fact, some of the newer projects start with PM. All MIMAP countries have one or more national organizations for the monitoring of poverty. Utility of this activity in a MIMAP project has to be judged on the basis of its additional contribution to the MIMAP portfolio. Three criteria are suggested to assess the utility of this activity: what is being measured, how it is measured and what use is made of the output. These questions are answered by examining this activity in the three selected projects.

The Philippines has good poverty related data collected by the National Statistical Service. These data are, however, too aggregate and infrequent. The Philippines project has designed a Community Level Poverty Monitoring System (CPMS). Basically it culls out from the national surveys the data of relevance to the poor. Wherever necessary 'rider' surveys are organized to get the full picture. Several other MIMAP countries are also following one or the other form of CPMS. The idea is to generate relevant information by local level officials themselves. However, in the projects where national surveys do not provide requisite information there is no escape from the regular household surveys. Or, as in the case of Vietnam, when three different agencies doing poverty monitoring provide different results, the project (in addition to collecting household level data), tries to compare the results of its surveys with the results of other poverty monitoring surveys by using methodologies and concepts of these agencies for a sub sample of the households and comparing the results. MIMAP projects are making significant contributions in this area.

Two generic questions on poverty measurement have remained unresolved. The first pertains to the indicators of welfare. It is now widely agreed that monetary income or consumption expressed in monetary terms does not depict the multi dimensional aspects of poverty and deprivation. For this reason MIMAP projects have developed several useful indicators of welfare. The number of these indicators adopted by different projects range from 13 to 33. It is clear that beyond a limited number, difficulties in measurement multiply, and their interpretation also becomes difficult. Also, the indicators of poverty - latter interpreted in the wider sense - are

culture specific, and they also change over time. Caution has to be exercised in making inter country and even inter temporal comparison in the same country. Recent move to have a common set of indicators for all MIMAP projects should not be aimed at developing comparative set of indicators.

The second type of difficulties are those faced in comparing intra household level of welfare. It is important to be clear about the nature of information pertaining to individuals in the household. The Nepal and Vietnam projects make explicit reference to poverty monitoring at the individual level. Intra household discrimination is difficult to assess from large scale surveys. Probably, the more practical approach would be to develop certain proxies from the secondary sources, or to have some in depth case studies.

An important aspect of poverty monitoring is the use of the data collected by the surveys. It seems that the Philippines project shares the results of PM surveys, mainly, with the policy makers, that too at the national level. While this approach has certain merit, as the policies influencing the poor are generally made at the national level, an important use of this data could be for the local planning. Some of the projects, such as those in Bangladesh and Nepal, are sharing this data with local levels of government. In Nepal, for example, data will eventually be used by all 4000 Village Development Committees so that they can play a more active part in planning for their own well-being. True, such sharing will have a meaning to the extent the local governments have 'political space' to take necessary decisions. In countries where powers are devolved at the local level there are all the more reasons to design poverty monitoring with a view to assist the local initiatives in poverty alleviation.

A major deficiency in PMS in MIMAP projects is the lack of integration between macro modeling efforts and poverty monitoring surveys. Two seem to be going in parallel directions. Both the activities will gain in usefulness if efforts are made to view them in an integrated manner. The data from PMS could be used to develop more realistic elasticities for macro models, and also to validate the conclusions of modeling exercises. Policies such as fiscal contraction, or public sector reforms can be field tested through PM exercises. Such integration between two principal activities will add to the uniqueness of MIMAP projects.

### **Thematic Networks**

MIMAP has a number of existing and planned thematic networks on issues that are common to different MIMAP countries and are conducive to comparative analysis. Overtime, these thematic networks have taken on more importance within the MIMAP portfolio. Accounting for only 4% of the total budget in 1997/98, almost 50% of the MIMAP's funds went towards expansion of the health network and creation of the South Asia gender network in 1998/99. Work on these will continue through 1999/2000, along with plans to establish another three networks (on micro finance, labour and small enterprise development). This will result in a significant increase in activity at the cross-country/cross-regional thematic level.

*The South Asia Gender Network:* gender has been highlighted as an important area of concern in all MIMAP country programs with this being the subject of focus studies in most countries.

Poverty monitoring systems have also sought to disaggregate data by gender as much as possible. At the level of economic modeling, however, it has not been possible to include gender considerations because the data needed are just not available.

Given the importance of gender issues highlighted in MIMAP country studies, and also the wider interest in finding ways and means of capturing gender considerations in economic modeling, the first phase of a thematic network on Macroeconomic Models and Adjustment Policies and Gender was initiated in 1998. The network will start in five South Asian countries where research capacities to undertake the work involved are strong, with the intention to expand to South East Asia in a subsequent phase. While the South Asian component of the project is coordinated by an internationally known research centre, which has vast experience in gender and development, logistical issues may preclude this centre from taking on the added responsibilities for South East Asian countries - if and when the network expands. Similarly, although gender issues are equally, if not more important in Africa, the vast socio-cultural differences between regions have led the PI to the sensible decision that there should be series of regional networks on this theme, rather than one global network (as in the case of health). If an African network is to be supported, the Senegal research team has already expressed an interest in leading this.

Although the project is at too early an stage to have produced outputs, proposed surveys and analysis, along with the focus studies which will add quantitative data and country specificity, promise to make a major contribution to knowledge in this increasingly popular field. The proposed formation of a high level international advisory group for this network will greatly assist with quality of output and also with subsequent dissemination of outputs.

Given that MIMAP activities have now been approved in a critical mass of countries in Asia and Africa, the PI's plan to concentrate more on consolidating the country level projects so as to enhance their legitimacy and credibility, and to give increasing support to thematic networks, appears to be a move in the right direction. It will be important, however, to ensure (a) greater linkages between the country programs and thematic networks than has been the case; and (b) greater linkages with other PIs, which have expertise and contacts in the thematic areas chosen.

### **Dissemination and Reach:**

A major source of dissemination of the research output of the projects are the publications. The projects have also utilized other means to reach their clientele. The Philippines project in all its phases has brought out publications of quality. The output of the activities, macro modeling and poverty monitoring, have been fully documented. The MIMAP Research Paper Series of this project provides timely reports on its activities. So far 20 publications have been brought out in this series. In addition, the project publishes a quarterly news bulletin to inform its target audience with research findings. Since 1995 the news bulletin has been uploaded in inter net through MIMAP web page. The project is planning to prepare a consolidated report on all its major activities since its inception. It is important that such a report is made available at the end of the current phase as it will have a considerable learning value for all other MIMAP projects. As commented earlier, the project should now publish papers on methodological and substantive issues, in referred journals for peer review.



In Nepal, there have been several studies resulting from the first phase of the project, which have already been widely used by government including by the National Planning Commission in the preparation of the Ninth Annual Plan. In addition, the project has provided, for the first time, information on poverty desagregated at the district level. The studies have brought new understanding to the nature and causes of poverty in Nepal, while the district level data have highlighted the enormous differences in poverty in different parts of the country.

The Vietnam project started technically in 1998. However, several publications on the basis of the previous exercise, which may be considered the pilot phase of the current project, were brought out as research papers and chapters of a book by the principal researcher. From the current project the group plans to publish results of the research on individual level poverty monitoring and a manual on methodology. The output of other components of the project will also be documented and published. This will facilitate discussion with the interested public. The project plans to translate and publish important works on poverty by reputed scholars in Vietnamese. It may be helpful to publish at least some of the research reports of the project in the local language. Like several other MIMAP projects, the Vietnam project is also using inter net to publicize the research.

Another important device used by the MIMAP projects to discuss and disseminate their research is through workshops and seminars. The Philippines project has emphasized the importance of face to face contacts in workshops and seminars. Policy workshops, media briefing and community dialogue are important components of the project. These activities have helped in informing and sensitizing concerned public. The project also benefited from its technical workshops in getting feedback from expert researchers, and from the officials from relevant agencies. The project has created its own web page which enables the interested individuals to easily access the data, in fact full text of research papers. The current phase of the project provides for continuous updating of the information base. While less advanced than the Philippines project, the Nepal research team has made major inroads in terms of setting up channels of communications with key policy makers and have made a major contribution in terms of alerting planning officials to the value of utilizing locally available research capacities.

A common feature of the MIMAP projects is their effort to reach the relevant policy makers. Each project has involved the concerned policy makers at a formal level, i.e. as members of the Project Advisory Committee, but more often at informal level. Most of the projects in their poverty monitoring work have involved local level institutions: Branguays in the Philippines; Communes in Vietnam; and Village Development Committees in Nepal. It is important that this association is not limited to the data collection phase the results of the studies should also be discussed with them. In any even this is an important ethical imperative of the data collection from the primary source.

MIMAP also makes an effort to reach policy makers in key international agencies such as the World Bank. Worthy of mention here is the interest of the World Bank in MIMAP's work on poverty indicators within the context of the World Development Report 2000/2001 on poverty. World Bank officials have attended MIMAP annual meetings, and they have involved MIMAP country teams in three consultative meetings, which will feed into the WDR 2000/2001. While

this provides a wonderful forum through which the results of MIMAP's research can be disseminated more widely, the interaction involved has also resulted in increased demand on behalf of the World Bank and other IFIs such as the Asian Development Bank for the research capacities that IDRC has helped to build. The projects could achieve this while fulfilling its primary objective of assisting the policy makers in the selected countries.

## **Impact**

**The impact of MIMAP** projects naturally varies from country to country. Where the two initial conditions are satisfied: (a) creditable research output; and (b) association of the NGOs and the policy makers with the projects, they make a significant impact. Some of the 'senior' projects, e.g., the Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal provide good examples of this. The Philippines project has been asked to examine the impact of the Asian Crisis on the agricultural sector of the country. Both the Nepal and Bangladesh projects are making significant contributions to economic planning in their respective countries. However, where the links with policy makers are weaker - in India, for example - even a very high quality of the output is not enough to make the desired impact.

Policy makers are one - though a very important - group of the 'clients' of the MIMAP projects. The Program is making a valuable contribution to knowledge and understanding of policy issues. Maturity and credibility of this initiative is evidenced by the invitation from the World Bank to contribute to the deliberations on poverty for the next WDR on this subject. Anticipated results of the Gender Network may represent a major step in moving towards engendered models of economic growth.

The visibility and the 'reach' of MIMAP will be more evident in the forthcoming years. For instance, one result of the numerous consultations with the WB in connection with the WDR on poverty, is a growing consensus on the need to develop a community-based mechanism to monitor social development and poverty by national level institutions as well as by the IFIs. The work of MIMAP in this area is being followed with interest and many requests are addressed to the Philippines Project to convey information on the PMS developed by different MIMAP projects.

## **IV. Overall Assessment**

The review of this PI leads us to the conclusion that its activities are contributing to meet its two basic objectives of: (a) enhancing capacity for policy research in developing countries; and (b) evolving creditable alternatives in economic reforms from the perspectives of the poor and vulnerable. The strategic interventions by the PI are, by and large, in consonance with these objectives. The country based projects and the inter country thematic networks reflect a good understanding of domestic, as well as external, trends and needs. The PI is tackling an important and highly relevant theme in an effective manner. By adapting to varying, and evolving local conditions - something which has been assisted by the fact that MIMAP is a framework rather than a methodology - the Program leadership has shown the desired flexibility and imagination. Such flexibility and discrimination will be all the more important as existing projects mature and

new ones join MIMAP family. In this context role of the ‘senior’ projects such as the Philippines will have to be re-examined.

There are two other areas where improvements will be needed to meet future challenges. The first is the composition of the MIMAP team. Although MIMAP was multi-disciplinary when originally conceived in the Singapore Office, the present team, particularly at the headquarters, is basically composed of economists. Even the high powered Program Advisory Group is dominated by economists. The situation in the country projects is better. Expertise in community management and on social equity issues should find a suitable place in MIMAP organizations at all levels. Secondly, this PI should devise ways to form better links to similar PIs within IDRC to strengthen its projects and to disseminate its the results of its work among a wider audience.

In our view, MIMAP, as a Program, has acquired enough strength to adapt itself to the changing environment, and continue to play an important role in designing economic and policy reforms for poverty alleviation through its country level projects and thematic networks.

## **Annex I**

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Enis Baris  
Fred Carden  
Diane Elson  
Marie-Claude Martin  
Rohinton Medhora  
Osita Ogbu  
Gerret Rusnak  
Randy Spence

The Review Team also attended two meetings of the MIMAP group, on 26th April and 7th May, 1999.