

TRIANGULATION SQUARED:
Assessing Impacts of the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit



Edited by
Neranjana Gunetilleke & Azra Jafferjee

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Edited Volume 3-2005

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National Library of Sri Lanka-Cataloguing-In-Publication-Data

Triangulation Squared: Assessing Impacts of the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit / Edited by Neranjana Gunetilleke and Azra Jafferjee.- Colombo : Centre for Poverty Analysis, 2005 304p.; 21 c.m. (Edited Volume Series)

ISBN 955-1040-23-6 Price:

i. 362.5 DDC 22

ii. Title

iii. Azra Jafferjee ed.

1. Poverty

2. Impact Assessment

ISBN: 955-1040-23-6

ISSN: 1800-0150

The views expressed in this volume are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of PIMU/GTZ or CEPA.

Centre for Poverty Analysis

29, Gregory's Road,

Colombo 7, Sri Lanka,

Tel: +94 11 2676955-8, 2667967-8

Fax: +94 11 2676959

Email: info@cepa.lk

Web: www.cepa.lk

Produced by Copyline (Pvt) Ltd

Printed by Gunaratne Offset Limited

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	7
Foreword	9
1. Introduction	11
1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Impact Assessment <i>Neranjana Gunetilleke & Azra Jafferjee</i>	15
1.2 Facts and Figures on PIMU <i>Christoph Feyen</i>	25
2. Pieces of the Puzzle: Complementary Perspectives of PIMU	37
2.1 Muddle or Model? Methodologies for Poverty Impact Monitoring and Poverty Analysis <i>Neranjana Gunetilleke & Chris Reichert</i>	41
2.2 Uncharacteristically Sri Lankan? Institutional Aspects of PIMU and the Institutional Viability of CEPA <i>Udan Fernando & Chris Reichert</i>	71
2.3 One Destination, Multiple Routes? Influencing Poverty Related Policies <i>Hans Gsänger & Shelton Wanasinghe</i>	113
2.4 Butterfly, Elephant, Eagle or Monkey? The Shadow Sides of CEPA <i>Anne Fisser & Nireka Weeratunge</i>	139

CONTENTS *Cont.*

3. Seeking the Big Picture: Two Contrasting Approaches to Evaluating PIMU	193
3.1 Evaluating PIMU with e-VAL <i>Nilakshi De Silva & Monika Ellinger</i>	197
3.2 Tracing PIMU's Poverty Impact Chains <i>Azra Jafferjee & Markus Mayer</i>	219
4. A Final Reflection: The Authors Wrap Up Through a Virtual Roundtable	249
Author Profiles	263
Publisher & Sponsors	271
Abbreviations & Acronyms	275
Annexes	285

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors wish to acknowledge a number of persons that contributed to making this impact assessment and publication a successful reality.

To all those who have been interviewed for this review, often more than once, we are grateful for their time and patience. The frank, forthright feedback and reflections provide a sound basis for the insights contained in the papers of this volume.

Grateful thanks are due to all the authors, for their flexibility in adapting to the somewhat non-conventional format of this evaluation and for getting into the spirit of it with enthusiasm and openness. Without their efforts and commitment, this publication would lack the spark that it has and would not have been ready on time.

We thank the administrative staff of CEPA for logistical support provided during the assessment process and the publications team including those at Copyline, for their support on the publication.

To Christoph Feyen, Senior Advisor, PIMU/GTZ, for initiating the process, and as ever, providing support through ‘innovative’ – but always ‘pragmatic’ – ideas!

To PIMU/GTZ, not just the primary subject of this assessment, but also for being its sponsor. This personifies PIMU’s role in relation to CEPA: a successful ‘insider’ while remaining an outsider.

Finally, an all-encompassing word of gratitude to everyone involved, for their understanding, cooperation and support in working under enormous time and other pressures brought on by the devastating Tsunami of December 26th 2004. Without their efforts, this review and publication would not have made it in time for the final closing events of PIMU, and in such a short time span.

Neranjana Gunetilleke
Azra Jafferjee

FOREWORD

Is it surprising for CEPA to undertake a retrospective analysis of PIMU? Is it to celebrate PIMU's achievement? Is it to learn what accounted for its success? Is it for recording its achievements for posterity? Is it meant to help similar organisations and influence other endeavours? May be some or all of these are objectives within a broader overall purpose.

The success of PIMU is what explains its reincarnation as CEPA. The character of CEPA, the methods of its operations and ambiance of its working environment are characteristics derived from PIMU's modus operandi. Therefore, in a sense this publication explains the manner in which CEPA is functioning.

Flexibility in its operations has been a singular characteristic of PIMU that has been replicated in CEPA. CEPA's programme has been one of balance: balance between research, policy and market orientation. The genesis of this approach was derived from PIMU.

This evaluation by several two-member mixed teams was an innovation that enriched its quality. The mixed team approach led to an interaction and exchange of perceptions among the team. The combining of German and Sri Lankan professionals and the contact of the teams with policy level counterparts in Sri Lanka was a learning experience. Evaluating the different aspects of PIMU enhanced the outcome.

This is not a formal evaluation. Having the target of a paper gave the evaluators inspiration to be more reflective. Reflection and learning was enhanced by the double role that many of them played in being both critics and proponents of PIMU/CEPA. The outside evaluators were not of the same school of thought as those from CEPA. These differences led to critical debate. Core staff members being part of the assessment will strengthen CEPA's future methodology. This assessment will no doubt enrich CEPA's institutional memory, widen the understanding of CEPA staff and strengthen its institutional capacity.

Could the positive experiences of PIMU and CEPA be replicated? You the reader must decide.

Nimal Sanderatne

Chairperson, Centre for Poverty Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION



1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Impact Assessment *Neranjana Gunetilleke & Azra Jafferjee*

1.2 Facts and Figures on PIMU *Christoph Feyen*

1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Impact Assessment

Neranjana Gunetilleke & Azra Jafferjee

Contents	<i>Page</i>
1. Designing an Approach	15
2. Implementing the Approach	18

1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Impact Assessment

After six years of implementation, the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) came to a close in April 2005. Set up in October 1998 as a project supported by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the PIMU project was conceptualised as an experimental model with a high degree of flexibility and room for innovation.

The same principle of experimentalism and innovation has been used in this venture, which combines an end-of-project review with an impact assessment of PIMU.

To begin with, this evaluation is not mandatory. GTZ does not require that all projects undertake end of project evaluations since project monitoring is built in throughout the implementation phases. What does happen is that periodically, GTZ and more recently, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) undertakes selective assessments of projects that have either a high replication potential or have received substantial political and/or financial backing.

Having been subject to both BMZ and GTZ internal project reviews, and having dealt with the subject of impact monitoring in its own mandate, PIMU, together with its counterpart, the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) initiated this assessment on their own accord as a means of documenting, learning and assessing the impact of six years of PIMU.

1. Designing an Approach

Unbound by straightjacket reporting formats, PIMU, together with CEPA, was set free to design a methodology for this assessment that seeks to reflect PIMU's

1. INTRODUCTION

approach to impact, and the experimental nature of the project. In defining its work space, in working with the needs of its clients, in influencing the poverty and impact orientation of its clients as well as the larger development sector, PIMU subscribed to an approach, which acknowledged complexity and worked with multiple approaches. Key concepts that have driven this approach are: innovation, experimentation, contextualisation, cross-fertilisation and being systemic.

What emerges is a collection that can be seen as a case study exemplifying a particular approach to evaluation.

One of the key starting points in a PIMU discussion on impact is the puzzle analogy. This analogy tries to illustrate that successful impact monitoring / assessment relies on the ability of the project to pick out the ‘critical parts’ of the puzzle, which enables the bigger picture to emerge. Projects operate in complex environments and create multiple impacts. If they can identify the most important impacts, on which to focus their impact monitoring efforts, then the larger picture of project impact becomes more easily visible. As such the focus areas of the evaluation are those that are considered to be critical areas.

Another defining feature of the PIMU approach to impact assessment is that of ‘perspective’. Starting with the assumption that ‘there is no one truth’, and the fact that most impact assessments seek ‘the truth’, PIMU tried to work with triangulation techniques that help forge a ‘shared view’, instead of identifying a single truth.

Perspective runs through this assessment in a number of ways: the authors of the chapters were selected based on the belief that cross fertilisation and critical debate through varying professions, backgrounds and cultures, leads to greater understanding.

Based on the belief that internal knowledge and external distance both have its special strengths and weaknesses in evaluation exercises the study teams combine ‘internal perspective’ of PIMU/CEPA, with external ‘independent’ perspective. The internal professionals are those that are linked to PIMU/CEPA either as

staff members, consultants or having come from the GTZ setting. The external professionals are from outside the PIMU/CEPA setting.

Reflecting the character of PIMU as an intercultural encounter, each critical area is studied by a Sri Lankan and German professional. Here the ‘internal’, represents the Sri Lankan and the ‘external’, the German.

Twelve professionals author the papers in this book. They represent fields of political science, administrative and institutional specialisation, organisational development, economics, development economics, geography and anthropology. Every author brings in specialist knowledge and experience of each critical area they co-author.

As part of the effort at triangulating, a complex web of interviewing is undertaken. Many of the authors are interviewees themselves and together with those from outside, are interviewed at the same time on more than one issue, in an effort at internal coherence and a shared view.

A total of over 65 persons were interviewed in the process of preparation and research. The interviewees represent CEPA staff, Board of Directors, Subscribing Members, CEPA clients, including bi- and multilateral agencies and non-government organisations, and CEPA counterparts from the government, including the Ministries of Finance and Planning and GTZ projects in Sri Lanka. Many of the interviewees were interviewed on more than one topic in order to obtain their perceptions on the different dimensions of impact of PIMU.

The evaluation process took place from November 2004 to February 2005, with the bulk of the papers prepared over January-February 2005. Hence, the facts and figures presented are accurate as of this time.

If this assessment is considered a ‘case study’ of the PIMU methodology for impact assessment, using its own experience as the subject, then it is also an attempt to ‘practice what it has preached’ in terms of methodological approach. It is one that combines perceptions, self-assessments, internal and external, cultural encounters and numbers and trends, in the search for a shared view on the PIMU story and its impact.

2. Implementing the Approach

So what are the pieces of the puzzle for PIMU?

PIMU as part of its mandate sought to instil an impact orientation towards poverty, among those it served directly, and those that came within its wider outreach and even further. It did this through a combination of means: direct service provision, supporting networks and networking, institution-building, methodology development and supporting ‘catalytic’ activities that have potential for spin-off.

Methodologically, PIMU supported an approach that looked at a number of dimensions when assessing impact, including poverty impact. Starting with direct livelihood impact that deals with socio-economic aspects, PIMU encouraged its clients to look at their contexts in a larger sphere: cooperating partners, the institutional space, the political and policy realm. There was another aspect of impact PIMU tried to popularise, with not much success, the shadow side. This is the dimension that deals with people and processes, which do not get captured in evaluation formulae and which most people do not wish to touch - a Pandora’s Box better left unopened.

When identifying the critical parts of the PIMU/CEPA puzzle, PIMU employed its own methodology as well as PIMU’s mandate and primary working areas to select the themes that would be the subject of this assessment and the chapters of this book.

The book is structured in three parts. The **Introduction** forms the first part, which comprises two papers. The first, which is this one, introduces and sets out the *Conceptual Framework of the Impact Assessment* for the assessment. *Facts and Figures on PIMU*, sets the context and stays ‘strictly factual’. It looks back at six years of PIMU and describes the background and objectives, including the conceptual approach that it adopted. The paper also sets out the chronology of the project through its logical framework and financial commitments. As stated in the paper, it attempts to form the skeleton of the project’s history; the flesh of which will be added by the views to come, because as is its nature, there is no such thing as an objective history.

The second part, **Pieces of the Puzzle: Complementary Perspectives of PIMU**, forms the core of this evaluation. Using the puzzle approach it narrows in on four perspectives that can sum up the big picture of PIMU/CEPA impact.

The first paper, *Muddle or Model? Methodologies for Poverty Impact Monitoring and Poverty Analysis* addresses the question: Is there a PIMU/CEPA methodology and if so, what is it? Since methodology development was a core component of PIMU, the paper tries to dissect what makes it distinct, or indeed if it is so. By analysing the reports and documents produced primarily by PIMU and subsequently the Poverty Impact Monitoring (PIM) Programme of CEPA, which inherited the methodological mantle of PIMU, the paper unravels the qualitative and quantitative techniques to reveal a fruitful cross-fertilisation of methods.

The second paper, *Uncharacteristically Sri Lankan? Institutional Aspects of PIMU and the Institutional Viability of CEPA*; goes into the heart of PIMU's ambition to institutionalise poverty impact monitoring within the Sri Lankan landscape. The paper sketches the Sri Lankan institutional landscape and assesses the conditions that led to the birth of the Centre for Poverty Analysis – arguably the most significant impact of PIMU. The unique business and financial model of CEPA, together with its governance and management and human resource capacities, is explored further with a view to arrive at a judgement of CEPA's long term institutional viability and dynamism, after the departure of PIMU in April 2005.

One Destination, Multiple Routes? Influencing Poverty Related Policies is the third perspective explored in this assessment. Ultimately, PIMU and CEPA work towards influencing policy at all levels of decision-making; project, programme, sectoral, donor and national. The paper maps the poverty oriented policy-making process in Sri Lanka through discussion with a number of representatives from various policy levels. The paper assesses the 'multiple avenue' approach that PIMU/CEPA took to influence poverty relevant policy-making in Sri Lanka.

1. INTRODUCTION

In its effort to ‘walk the talk’, this assessment has gone straight into the dimension of shadow impact, through the fourth perspective: *Butterfly, Elephant, Eagle or Monkey? The Shadow Sides of CEPA*. Walking the talk in this instance refers not only to laying open sensitive processes for introspective examination and public consumption but also attempting to develop a ‘methodology by practice’ for exploring shadow impact. Using a host of methodologies developed and adapted by PIMU in its early impact assessments, such as the animal analogy and self-assessments and the abundant use of personal quotes, the authors, both anthropologists, create a vivid image of the people and processes, the intercultural encounters and gender plays, behind the official face of the Centre for Poverty Analysis and the factors that could play a vital determining role in its longer term viability and success.

The third part of this book is **Seeking the Big Picture: Two Contrasting Approaches to Evaluating PIMU**

This is again an attempt at methodology testing while at the same time assessing impact. The first paper *Evaluating PIMU with e-Val* applies the very new electronic evaluation software ‘e-Val’ developed by the GTZ, and currently in its first round of implementation. In terms of methods and techniques, it stands in sharp contrast to those used by the other papers due to its software-based tool. However, e-Val is more ‘open-ended’ than can be assumed from its name. Its approach is to bridge an exceedingly structured quantitative method with an open-ended qualitative method. Using a software-based programme, e-Val transforms an open-ended interview method into a highly structured analysis and a visually illustrated prognosis of PIMU, within a remarkably short time.

Tracing Poverty Impact Chains attempts something of a juggling act by taking PIMU’s overall goal (often referred to as the political goal), to see how far PIMU services and activities resulted in an improved standard of living of the poor. By starting from the point of the utilisation of poverty impact monitoring services and activities of PIMU/CEPA, the paper traces the impact on working concepts and practices of the recipients to see if it has led to ‘changes on the ground’. This paper follows a more traditional model of impact evaluation, in that its

starts from the objectives in the project planning matrix, as opposed to looking at the broader context, which has been the method followed in the papers in section two.

In line with the non-conventional approach this assessment has followed, it does not attempt any final conclusions or drawing together of all the different perspectives. It is deliberately intended for each paper to be a stand-alone piece that is valid in its own right and speaks for a particular point of view. Each paper has a conclusion, which the reader can draw from. It is left to the individual reader to come to an overall assessment. As we stated at the outset, this book does not attempt to validate, justify or prove. It is hoped the stories in the pages that follow speak for themselves and the outcome will leave opportunities for reflection and learning.

The **Final Reflection** provides space for the authors to wrap up and reflect on the impact assessment. Conducted through email in the format of a chain letter with each author responding to two questions and to each other, this final process reflection focuses on the authors' final words on the replicability of PIMU and on the methodology used for conducting **Triangulation Squared: Assessing Impacts of the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit**.

1.2 Facts and Figures on PIMU

Christoph Feyen

Contents	<i>Page</i>
1. Background and Rationale	25
2. Objectives	26
3. Counterpart Structure	26
4. Chronology	27
6. The German Contribution: Personnel and Costs	32
7. In Brief	34

1.2 Facts and Figures on PIMU

This article endeavours to consolidate some facts and figures relating to the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) supported Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) which can be seen as forming the skeleton of the project's history. An attempt is made to stay strictly factual and purely describe the project rather than analyse or interpret PIMU, which is the task of the papers that follow.

1. Background and Rationale

While poverty reduction has long been regarded as the overarching goal of German development cooperation, the practical relevance of this political rationale and mandate has often been questioned. In spring 1997, a study mission financed by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and a subsequent dialogue workshop on "Poverty Reduction within the Sri Lankan-German Development Cooperation" were conducted.

Two conclusions can be highlighted:

- There is insufficient analysis of the long-term impacts of development interventions
- Practical experiences in Sri Lanka as well as the ongoing international debate indicate that the contribution of development projects towards reducing poverty is difficult to prove

It was therefore recommended by both the study team as well as the participants that the two governments should start a joint initiative to monitor the poverty impact of ongoing projects more systematically. Subsequently, at the Sri Lankan-German government negotiations in 1997, the External Resources

1. INTRODUCTION

Department (ERD) within the Ministry of Finance, Sri Lanka and the BMZ agreed to establish PIMU on a two-year pilot base and requested GTZ to conceptualise and implement the project.

2. Objectives

As outlined in its Project Planning Matrix (PPM) for the initial pilot phase, PIMU aimed at donor supported projects improving their poverty related impact monitoring. By achieving this project purpose, PIMU hoped to contribute to the overall goal that Sri Lankan partner organisations direct their concepts closer to the needs of poverty groups. This was eventually meant to lead to a beneficial impact on those in the poorer strata of society that are the final beneficiaries of donor-supported projects.

During the second phase of three years, the project purpose remained almost unchanged, now aiming at helping “Development organisations and professionals improve their capacities to monitor poverty related impacts”. The adjusted project purpose also stayed valid for the final extension phase of eighteen months.

Similarly, no major changes were made regarding the two other levels of the logical framework, neither the overall goals nor the results to be achieved by PIMU during its project lifecycle. In general terms, while PIMU was conceptualised as a pilot project, it was at the same time characterised by strong elements of continuity in its hierarchy of objectives and expected impacts.

3. Counterpart Structure

As agreed upon by both governments during the negotiations in 1997, the ERD within the Ministry of Finance served as the political counterpart to PIMU. Initially, a steering committee comprising a representative of the ERD, the Ministry of Samurdhi, the Ministry of Plan Implementation (MPI), the German Embassy and GTZ met on a quarterly basis and supervised the pilot initiative.

With its establishment in May 2001, the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) functioned as the implementing partner to PIMU, while the steering committee ceased to exist. However, PIMU continued to regularly report to the ERD and, from spring 2003 onwards, to the new political counterpart the National Planning Department (NPD) within the same Ministry of Finance.

It is important to note that, contrary to the usual practice but in line with the pilot character of PIMU, there were no financial counterpart contributions made by the government of Sri Lanka. This was agreed upon by the German government as the sole contributor, for two reasons. On the one hand, BMZ acknowledged the pilot character of PIMU as a high risk investment for the Sri Lankan side. On the other, both sides agreed that PIMU should receive the space to develop its professional approach independent of the political/bureaucratic interest of a particular ministry. This consensus was further confirmed, when the political counterpart NPD agreed in 2003 that the fixed assets of PIMU should not be transferred to the Government but rather be handed over to the implementing partner CEPA.

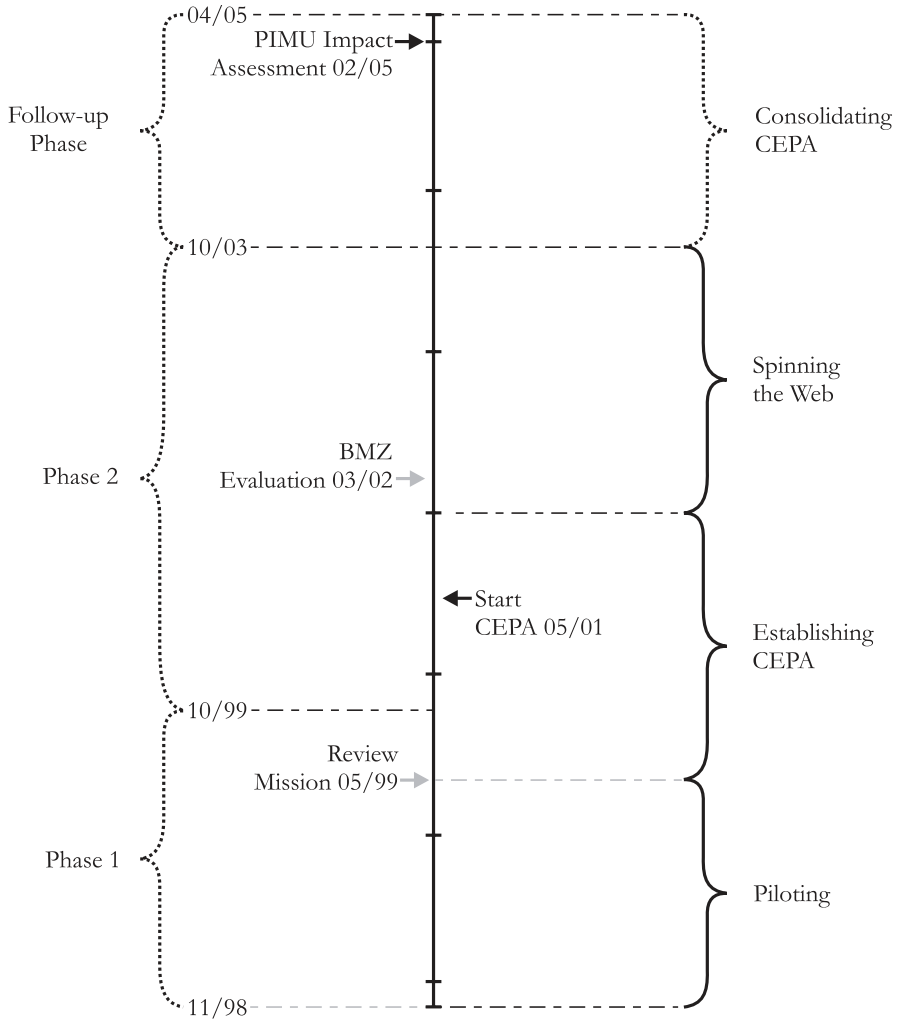
4. Chronology

As chart 1 illustrates, the PIMU chronology can be distinguished along two different lines.

Formal agreements between the German and Sri Lankan sides were made three times. The project started as a pilot initiative with an initial two-year phase from November 1998 to October 2000. Based on the positive results and recommendations of a review mission conducted in May 1999, both sides agreed to a second phase of three years from November 2000 to October 2003. This phase did not only include a BMZ evaluation in March 2002 but was also characterised by substantial budgetary constraints limiting the implementation of planned activities. It was therefore eventually agreed by both sides to extend the second phase by another eighteen months from November 2003 to April 2005. The impact assessment conducted in early 2005 manifests the end of the project cycle after six and a half years of operations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Chart 1: PIMU Chronology



From an internal perspective, PIMU's initial eighteen months were seen as piloting its approach. With the review mission in May 1999 and the subsequent decision to facilitate the establishment of an independent professional service provider, a one-year phase of preparation led to the official registration of the Centre for Poverty Analysis. From the start of CEPA's operations in May 2001 to October 2003 PIMU's role can be described as "spinning the web". While the PIMU national staff were absorbed by CEPA, the senior advisor changed his role substantially. After having been strongly involved in PIMU service provision to clients, he now left this function to CEPA and concentrated on CEPA's institutional development with a strong focus on integrating CEPA into the organisational landscape and the market. The final eighteen months from November 2003 to April 2005 can be seen as a consolidation phase. According to a withdrawal plan agreed upon by GTZ, CEPA and the political counterpart NPD, the advisory input of the Senior Advisor was reduced to a part-time involvement of 50%, with financial contributions also gradually decreasing.

5. Conceptual Approach

In the process of preparing the project and involving future stakeholders prior to starting the project in November 1998, PIMU was conceptualised as being neither a research unit providing 'independent' analysis, nor a controlling unit evaluating project performances. It was rather mandated by the decision makers to fulfil two major tasks:

- Provide consultative services to clients, strengthening their existing planning, monitoring and evaluation systems with a focus on poverty related impacts
- Act as a catalyst for poverty reduction and impact monitoring by stimulating new initiatives or supporting existing innovations in cooperation with other organisations.

Parallel to the chronology described above, the conceptual approach of PIMU can also be differentiated according to phases.

In the first phase of piloting, PIMU was asked to address three challenges. Firstly, to develop a conceptual approach as well as a practical set of instruments towards poverty impact monitoring of development interventions. Secondly,

1. INTRODUCTION

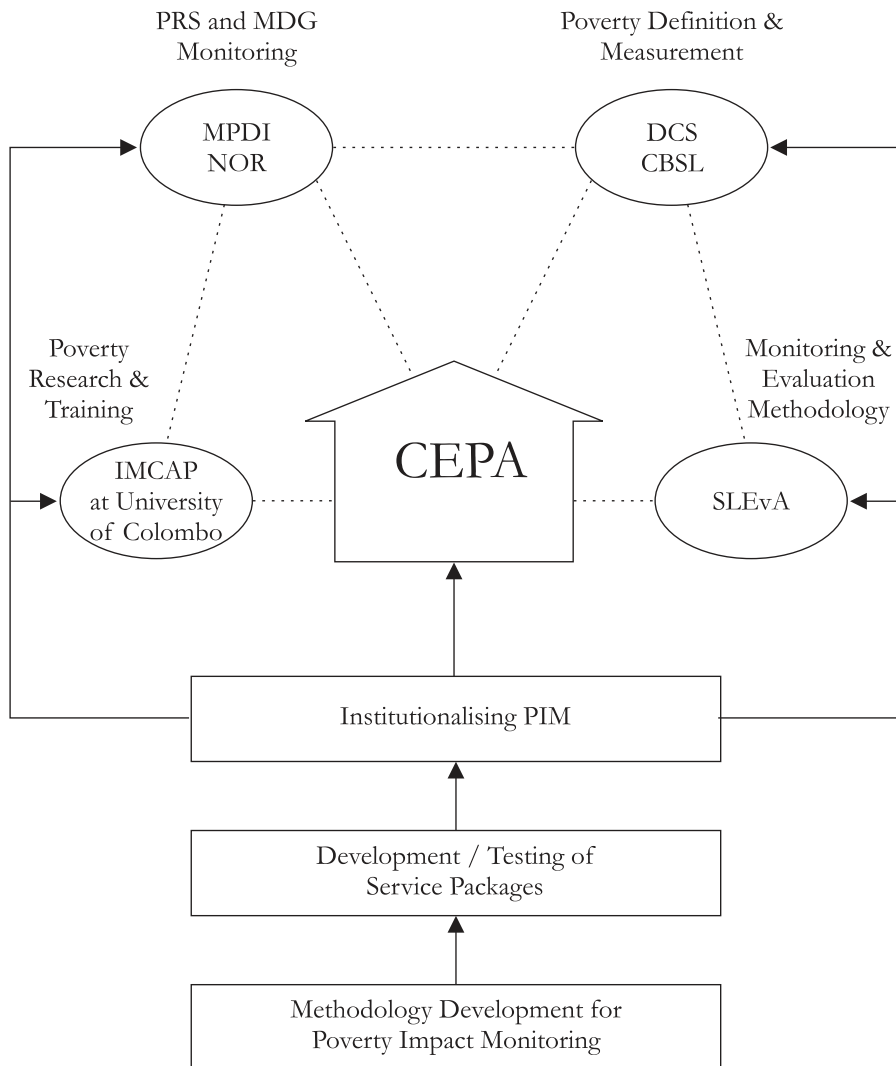
this approach had to be translated into a service package, such as consultancies, training, studies, and so on, provided to clients willing to pay for the services rendered. Thirdly, upon promising methodology development and service provision, a decision had to be made how to best institutionalise the services of poverty impact monitoring into the Sri Lankan organisational landscape.

In the second phase of establishing CEPA, a two-pronged strategy was followed. While the methodology development and service provision were further elaborated, substantial efforts were placed on conceptualising the future organisation, CEPA, and preparing the grounds for its establishment. To look at it from the PIMU perspective, the function of poverty impact monitoring needed a house.

In the third phase of spinning the web, the PIMU support to CEPA was not only gradually reduced but also received a different focus. Service provision to clients was exclusively handled by CEPA staff, with the PIMU Senior Advisor taking the role of a backstopper. In contrast to that, emphasis was laid on supporting the infant CEPA in its organisational development, broadening of the clients-base and its integration into the organisational landscape. It was a period of networking where PIMU concentrated on establishing or deepening strategic links to other organisations along thematic lines. Combining advisory inputs with rather small investments, PIMU facilitated poverty research and training within the IMCAP Program (Improving Capacities for Poverty and Social Policy Research) at the University of Colombo and supported the monitoring and evaluation methodology of the Sri Lankan Evaluation Association (SLEVA). On the side of the state sector, PIMU collaborated with the Central Bank and the Department of Census and Statistics on the issue of poverty definitions and measurements and supported Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) monitoring within the Ministry of Policy Development and Implementation (MPDI) and its National Operations Room (NOR)

During the fourth phase of consolidating CEPA, these strategic links initiated by PIMU were envisioned to further mature to regular collaborations and partnerships between CEPA and these organisations. The withdrawal strategy was manifested by PIMU's financial as well as advisory input into CEPA following a gradually decreasing formula.

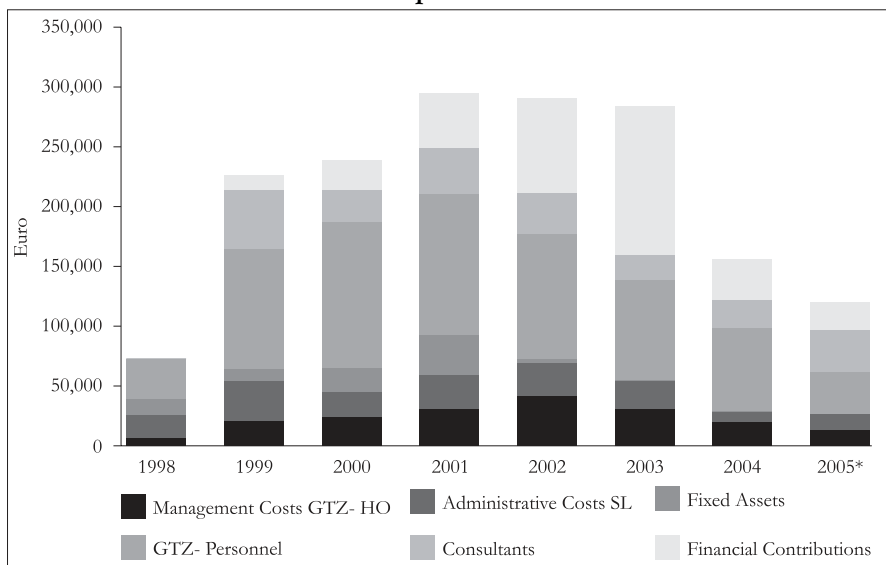
Chart 2: Institutionalising Poverty Impact Monitoring



6. The German Contribution: Personnel and Costs

In implementing development projects on behalf of the German government, GTZ distinguishes its service provision along six cost categories. The following chart depicts the development of annual expenditures during the PIMU lifecycle between November 1998 and April 2005.

Table 1: Breakdown of PIMU expenditures



Note: 2005 figures are provisional.

Source: GTZ-SL AMS

With total costs of Euro 1,683,455 PIMU has been one of the smallest projects supported or implemented by GTZ during the last decade. Similarly, with an advisory expatriate input of 69 person/months (p/m), 82 p/m of senior and junior professionals as well as 96 p/m of administrative and support staff, the PIMU team has been one of the smallest and well below the average staff strength of GTZ supported projects.

The highest share, namely 40% of total costs, was provided in the form of GTZ personnel totalling 247 person/months. However, it has to be noted that the PIMU team existed only for the initial 30 months of the project duration, while for the additional 48 months after the establishment of CEPA the Senior Advisor operated as a single professional. Within this phase, this advisory input was even reduced to a part-time 50% arrangement during the last 18 months.

Of total costs, 21% comprised direct financial transfers into PIMU's partner organisations, the major part being invested in the Centre for Poverty Analysis, mainly for CEPA's institutional development and as sponsorship for its Poverty Impact Monitoring Programme. To a much lesser degree, transfers were made into the University of Colombo (IMCAP Program) as well as the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association. A scholarship programme for university graduates conducting poverty research was also financed.

Of the PIMU cost, 14% was used for the provision of consultative services to both PIMU and its main counterpart CEPA. In-Process Consultancies (IPCs) were provided by two German senior professionals in the field of methodology development, poverty monitoring, training and Human Resource Development (HRD). Several consultancy assignments were given to Sri Lankan senior professionals with the tasks ranging from tutorial support to scholarship students, via research assignments and advisory services up to the preparation of a publication on poverty measurements and definitions. Finally, international and local contributions to the PIMU review mission in 1999 as well as the PIMU impact assessment in 2005 were financed out of this cost category.

Then 10% and 11% of the total costs occurred due to administrative expenditures of the project in Sri Lanka as well as managerial costs of the GTZ head office respectively. Finally, 5% of costs went into fixed assets such as a vehicle, Information Technology (IT) facilities and furniture, used by PIMU and handed over to CEPA in October 2003 prior to the start of the consolidation phase.

As opposed to development projects in the field of economic infrastructure, the nature of a pilot initiative such as PIMU does not allow an assessment along the lines of 'return on investment'. However, while apples should not be compared with oranges, it is interesting to look at the following two financial

1. INTRODUCTION

figures: With the total cost of the PIMU project translating into Rs165m at year-end exchange rates, CEPA's revenue as at end 2004 has been Rs107m. Additionally, the contracts-at-hand secured by CEPA total up to Rs69m. Hence, the total revenue and contracts-at hand of CEPA after three years and eight months surpasses the total investment made by BMZ into PIMU during its six and a half years lifecycle.

7. In Brief

The GTZ supported Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit can be described as a pilot project with an unusual amount of space granted by the Sri Lankan and German government. Based on the acknowledgment that development interventions often lack a sound understanding of their impacts, PIMU was mandated to develop both, a methodology for poverty impact monitoring as well as a market-oriented service package for clients.

The institutionalisation of poverty impact monitoring was ensured by facilitating the establishment of the Centre for Poverty Analysis as an independent professional organisation and by supporting its collaboration with a network of partners within the organisational landscape of Sri Lanka.

Compared to all other GTZ supported projects during the last decade, PIMU can be termed as a low-input intervention, being one of the shortest projects with least financial resources and smallest number of person/months for advisory support.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE: COMPLEMENTARY PERSPECTIVES OF PIMU



2.1 Muddle or Model? Methodologies for
Poverty Impact Monitoring and Poverty Analysis
Neranjana Gunetilleke and Chris Reichert

2.2 Uncharacteristically Sri Lankan? Institutional Aspects of PIMU
and the Institutional Viability of CEPA
Udan Fernando and Chris Reichert

2.3 One Destination, Multiple Routes?
Influencing Poverty Related Policies
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2.4 Butterfly, Elephant, Eagle or Monkey? The Shadow Sides of CEPA
Anne Fisser and Nireka Weeratunge

2.1 Muddle or Model? Methodologies for Poverty Impact Monitoring and Poverty Analysis

Neranjana Gunetilleke & Chris Reichert

Contents	<i>Page</i>
1. Background	41
2. PIMU/CEPA Methodology - What is it?	43
2.1 The conceptual base	
2.2 The methodological approach	
3. Analysis	50
3.1 Orientation towards methodology development	
3.2 PIMU to CEPA: Continuous learning	
3.3 The relationship between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies	
3.4 Micro and macro level focus: IM support to projects vs. policy relevant poverty analysis?	
3.5 Consolidation of CEPA's experience into a framework for poverty monitoring and analysis	
4. Conclusions	65

2.1 Muddle or Model? Methodologies for Poverty Impact Monitoring and Poverty Analysis

1. Background

This chapter seeks to understand the role of methodology in the work of the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) and subsequently, the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA). It attempts to analyse whether a specific methodology does exist, if so what constitutes such a methodology and how effective it is in meeting the desired objectives. The rationale for focusing on methodology as one of the central issues in the PIMU evaluation is based on the emphasis it was given in the project design as well as in practice.

The role of methodology development in PIMU's project structure is explicitly stated in the project documents as 'Result 2: Instruments for poverty-related analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation are jointly assessed and further developed with clients'.

The 'development of a conceptual approach and practical methodology towards poverty related impact monitoring of government and donor supported development interventions'¹ was strongly interlinked with the client orientation of PIMU. The fairly novel subject of orienting projects towards poverty impacts as well as the experimental nature of PIMU provided space for methodology development to be a central aspect of PIMU. Considerable time and effort was spent on client services and training which had at its core the adapting of existing methodologies in impact monitoring and developing a non-conventional approach and instruments to Poverty Impact Monitoring (PIM). The methodological development aspect has, as a consequence, been a subject of all PIMU evaluations.

¹Christoph Feyen, March 2002, "Participation and Monitoring: Experiences from the Ground to Macro Level", Mimeo.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Of further relevance to this end-of-project evaluation is that when CEPA was formed it took on the methodology development orientation as a core part of the organisation, and stated as one element of its mission statement: “we emphasise a qualitative, innovative, interactive approach to seek practical solutions to the multi-dimensional problem of poverty”. Hence, methodology development continues to be a focal area.

The rationale for this orientation can be understood better, by looking into the context within which PIMU was established. PIMU started as a project supposed to serve other, mainly German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) supported, projects to reflect on their impact and poverty orientation. Methodology development in phase 1 served this purpose.

Establishment of PIMU as a project to ‘serve’ PIM in other GTZ supported projects seems to imply that those did not have much knowledge of their ‘impacts’ and were not sure about the tools to use for identifying or measuring impacts. With regard to the theme of ‘poverty impact’, PIMU was an early bird. Although this has been the priority of German development cooperation for a long time, projects were mostly far away from reflecting such issues. Of course, for political reasons, a lot of lip service had been paid and continues to be paid to poverty impacts. Yet, if a project does not reflect even on the general topic of impacts, how can it know about poverty impacts?

Impact orientation at least has become mandatory with the new system of commissioning Technical Assistance (TA) projects by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ (AURA). Officially, projects are now evaluated in terms of their impacts rather than in terms of achieving outputs, i.e. more project-internal performance measures. However, it can be observed already how ‘impact chains’ in AURA documents are getting standardised, being copy-pasted from one project document to the other, and the impetus on impacts tends to gain lip service status again.²

² In a recent GTZ project document for a programme in Cambodia the reference to Vietnam as the project country had not been completely erased. The document was approved by BMZ. Which seems to imply, that 1) nobody cares, 2) the core of AURA is standardisation and simplification (‘copy – paste’) rather than impact orientation, and 3) GTZ strategies help everybody the same way.

It is against this context that PIMU started developing concepts and methods to sensitise projects on impacts, specifically poverty impacts. As a provider of a service to clients, the market had substantial influence on the way it approached the task of methodology development. With the transition to CEPA, poverty analysis, rather than exclusively poverty impact monitoring, gained focus. As such, PIMU methodology has been taken over by CEPA, particularly the PIM programme, and at the same time developed beyond the frame given under PIMU. A vital factor that remained was that, as with PIMU, CEPA approached methodology with the objective of balancing out the client requirements of rapid delivery with the institute's professional stand on quality.

2. PIMU/ CEPA Methodology - What is it?

The methodology orientation of PIMU and subsequently CEPA has been a dynamic one. Institutional and professional learning as well as client orientation have driven the process of development. However, it is possible to identify certain principles, which exist explicitly, and at times are implicit in the approach to methodology:

1. The role of qualitative and quantitative approaches in poverty and impact knowledge is acknowledged. However, the strong orientation is towards qualitative as an approach perceived to be more sensitive to the multi-dimensions of poverty.
2. A multidisciplinary approach with a bias toward social rather than physical sciences.
3. Internally developed and implemented methodology based on primary data collection.
4. High degree of process orientation and openness to experimenting and innovation through mixing of methods and tools, while maintaining rigour in research.
5. Interaction with stakeholders leading to a combined learning process.

2.1 The conceptual base

PIMU/CEPA methodology has been work in progress. It has developed as a result of mandates and the experience gained in specific assignments, and it therefore keeps developing further. As poverty impact monitoring was at the start of the project, let this direction be followed.

Poverty

Following the cross-disciplinary development debate, PIMU/ CEPA have been building on the common understanding of poverty being multidimensional, i.e. including more than the income-poverty aspects. It has built on the ‘dimensions of poverty’ framework promoted by OECD/DAC.³ This concept distinguishes between 5 dimensions of poverty:

- Economic aspects of consumption and assets (e.g. income, expenditure, land, labour)
- Human development factors (e.g. education and health)
- Socio-cultural dimensions (e.g. dignity and networks)
- Political dimensions (e.g. power and voice)
- Protection-related issues (e.g. conflict, natural disasters, risk of eviction.)

Such a framework acknowledges the central role of economic factors while focusing on the high relevance of other dimensions. With regard to project impact monitoring, it broadens the view and directs the attention to a broader range of issues that projects can be expected to influence.

The concept of impacts

What are the impacts that PIM is supposed to identify or measure? PIMU/ CEPA define impacts as changes in the project environment, towards which the project contributes. The key terms here are changes, contribution and environment. The term project environment implies that impacts occur outside the direct project area of activities and outputs. The term contribution says, that project interventions are not the only factor bringing about the change called

³ OECD/ DAC, 2001, Guidelines on Poverty Reduction, Paris

impact, but there are other factors, too. The intervention influences change but does not control it. Obviously, impacts can be positive, negative, intended or unintended, and can occur at different levels ('target group', institutions, policies, or project staff, among others).

Monitoring – evaluation – assessment

The concept of monitoring overlaps with those of evaluation and assessment. While all refer to elements of observation, reporting and management action, they differ on timing, objective and focus. Monitoring is normally seen as a continuous process during project lifetime. Evaluations tend to be time-bound and are conducted at specific milestones of the project cycle. They tend to be ex-post, looking back at the project's performance and impacts or at a certain project phase. Assessments are also time-bound and can be done at various stages of project life. They can also inform project design as ex-ante studies. To make PIM practicable, PIMU/CEPA advocate a concept to have some basic and strategic indicators to be monitored regularly and back this up with milestone based external evaluations.

PIMU/ CEPA advocate a concept of PIM, which serves improved project management and orientation. The purpose is learning or improving. Therefore, PIM should be action-oriented. Practically however, 'proving' of certain performance indicators rather than 'improving' becomes often the practical interest of project management. While PIMU supported donor, mostly GTZ supported, projects to establish PIM, experience has shown that 1) projects interests have concentrated more on IM than on PIM; and 2) projects have rarely finally established a PIM system. PIMU/CEPA's work has shifted gradually towards assessments and evaluations and to broader poverty analysis.

As mentioned above, monitoring and evaluation interventions are linked to the project management cycle. PIMU/CEPA have conceptualised and implemented monitoring and studies related to all stages of the project management cycle. An example for an ex-ante assessment is the study to inform a Power Fund for the Poor due to be established.⁴ In-process-consultancies (IPC) for poverty

⁴CEPA, December 2002, Final Field Report: Poverty Impact Assessment, Sri JFPR Power Fund for the Poor.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

orientation and monitoring have been conducted for a number of projects such as the Jaffna Rehabilitation Project (JRP), the Fisheries Community Development and Resource Management Project (FCDRMP), or the Participatory Improvement of Underserved Settlements (PRIMUSS) Project.⁵ A typical ex-post evaluation and learning exercise has been the evaluation of the Kandy Regional Rural Development Project (RRDP) conducted for the BMZ.⁶

Beyond IPC and study interventions that are directly related to the project management cycle (ex-ante, in-process, ex-post), PIMU/ CEPA have conducted more general studies informing development policy strategies or country portfolio strategies. An example of the first type is the impact evaluation of rural roads on poverty reduction done for ADB, which looks at impacts of a sectoral intervention such as rural road construction and is intended to inform future sector strategies of this type.⁷ An example for the latter type is the portfolio analysis, which looks at the GTZ Country Assistance Programme to Sri Lanka and analyses its poverty orientation.⁸

Approaches to poverty impact monitoring

Poverty impact monitoring can start from different entry points. PIMU/CEPA works with approaching impacts from changes as an entry point and from the (project) intervention as the entry point. The operationalising of the former approach can be seen in the project transcending approach, which looks first at higher level and general changes in a given area and field and then asks to what

⁵ Series of reports prepared for the IPCs for Jaffna Rehabilitation Project (JRP) and Fisheries Community Development and Resource Management Project (FCDRMP); The initial report for PRIMUSS was published as *Understanding the Dimensions and Dynamics of Poverty in Underserved Settlements in Colombo*, CEPA/ CMC, June 2004.

⁶ German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Final Report. *Ex-Post Evaluation of the BMZ supported Regional Rural Development Project (RRDP) Kandy*, Sri Lanka. Prepared by CEPA, July 2004.

⁷ ADB TA 5979 REG, *Impact Evaluation Study of Rural Roads on Poverty Reduction*. Sri Lanka Country Report, May 2002, prepared by CEPA.

⁸ PIMU, *A Portfolio Analysis on the Poverty Orientation of the GTZ Country Assistance Programme to Sri Lanka*, prepared by CEPA, Colombo, June 2002

extent and how they could be attributed to interventions. The most common form is based on the latter approach of entering from the intervention and conceptualising purpose-related impact monitoring (IM), which follows the logic of the project's impact hypothesis and seeks to verify the expected impacts. A third approach which uses project interventions as its entry point but looks at broad changes is termed context-related IM, i.e. monitoring impacts that occur while the project is ongoing but away from the project purpose or goal. These approaches have been introduced by PIMU/CEPA, through training workshops as well as advisory services. In keeping with the need to focus on both the project as well as broad changes, PIMU/CEPA has constantly advocated the idea of identifying 'fields of observation' which will enable the ongoing monitoring of potential context related impacts.

2.2 The methodological approach

Two basic approaches can be observed based on whether it relates to studies, which follow an applied research approach, or in-process-consultancies to projects.

Applied research

The research methodology of PIMU/ CEPA studies has at the start been based mostly on qualitative methods of social and anthropological research. CEPA's image continues to stand for qualitative research – although this is slowly changing. Given the central role qualitative methodology plays in the institution, the study team sought to understand what the approach entailed:

- In terms of study design and sampling, the methodology tends to concentrate on in-depth studying of relatively small samples, which are selected systematically to represent certain groups defined by the research interest, indicative (purposive sampling) rather than representative sampling used in a statistical sense.
- In terms of data gathering, instruments with open-ended questions would dominate, resulting in data in terms of narratives rather than figures.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

- Interviews and discussions produce material to be documented, analysed and interpreted by the researcher. In terms of data analysis, statistical analysis is possible only to a limited degree, as the research strategy did not intend to produce quantitative data.

The ‘classical’ qualitative PIMU/ CEPA studies use a combination of household interviews based on semi-structured questionnaires with many open-ended questions, focus group discussions (FGD) and key person interviews (KPI) with semi-structured discussion and questioning guidelines. This produces data representing the views of different groups in a social unit, e.g. a village, and looking at issues from different angles. In data analysis, these different sources and viewpoints are ‘triangulated’ in order to check evidence and balance the different points of view. If this is done well by qualified researchers, the emerging picture of the social phenomena studied such as certain poverty dimensions in a given context will be multifaceted, in-depth, and suitable to inform project management as well as further research and policy recommendations.

Impact monitoring, i.e. the identification and measurement of changes in the project environment and the attempt to attribute some of these changes to project interventions, logically requires a before – after comparison and/ or a comparison in the frame of an intervention vs. non-intervention area/ group type of design. In conventional monitoring methodology, the logic is that if the situation in a given project area at a point of time t2 differs from t1, then there is change which could potentially be attributed to the project. And if such change exists in the project area affected by the project intervention, but not in another area not affected by the project intervention, then this would support the assumption that the project intervention played a role in bringing about that change.

Practically, the before – after comparison is often not easy due to lack of baseline (i.e. ‘before’) data. Hence, PIMU/ CEPA typically use a variety of research strategies to overcome such problems and ‘simulate’ before – after comparison and cause–effect relationships.

- Baseline data can be partly reconstructed based on secondary data and formal (e.g. administration) sources.
- Change can be traced with questioning and interpretation strategies such as life histories, trendline analysis, and trend and attribution analysis.
- Use of comparative groups which are identified or assumed to be comparable to the 'before' situation of the group under review.
- Particularly life histories and the trends and attribution tool have been prominent in CEPA's work as tools that address the issue of change and attribution directly.

In-process consultancies (IPC)

This approach is used almost exclusively at the project level, where PIMU/CEPA were contracted by projects in an 'expert' capacity. Transfer of knowledge to the project staff while interacting with the project over a long period was central to the idea in contrast to carrying out a one-off study on impacts of the project and handing over the documentation.

This approach was the base of PIMU activities and, within CEPA, has been directly absorbed by the PIM programme. Primary elements of the approach can be observed to be,

- Consultative services which are tailor made along the project management cycle of the client. The conceptualisation was based on the management cycle and the role of monitoring at each stage. Impact monitoring tools were developed to be used at the different stages of the management cycle.
- Close interaction with the client is central to the approach. Workshops, meetings, team sensitisation were the primary methods used with the project documents being the primary resource. Implementation of tools was predominantly carried out by the client in consultation with the PIMU team.
- Simple, creative methods were used rather than very scientific research methods. Monitoring tools developed together with projects sought to be effective given the time and capacity limitations faced by most projects.

3. Analysis

The following analysis highlights areas, which the study team sees as particularly important, given the PIMU/ CEPA orientation of provision of practical services to clients combined with professional learning.

3.1 Orientation towards methodology development

As was the case with PIMU, it is clear that CEPA does not perceive methodology purely as a means to an end⁹ where the subject being examined gets exclusive focus. Methodology, instead, is a focus in its own right to the extent that six (14%) of CEPA studies have methodology development as one of the explicit objectives. Of these, studies such as JIMOD and ILO-IPEC¹⁰ had methodology development as their primary objective. Even in the case where it is not a stated objective, and a fairly worked out CEPA methodology is used, there is a tendency to explore new tools or methods of analysis. For example, the background study for the proposed ADB Power Fund for the Poor explored the possibility of developing a composite index to identify a poor household. While this element was not critical to that particular study, the opportunity was used with the intention of developing an index for future CEPA studies. This can be seen as an illustration of the overall orientation towards innovation in methodology.

This orientation towards experimenting with methodology is reflected in the fact that none of the PIMU contracts, and only two (5%) of the CEPA contracts (the three country study on rural roads for ADB, and the gender audit for CARE) have been based on an externally developed study methodology provided by the client.

⁹ Methodology by definition is a means to a specific end. As such it is only as important as its effectiveness in creating the end product. However, in the case of methodology development the end product is a new methodology. It then, becomes the focus, and not just a facilitator, of the main subject focus.

¹⁰ Tracer Methodology for Measuring Longer Term Impact on Children and Families of Interventions Against Child Labour, November, 2004, CEPA

A central message of all PIMU and PIM training programmes and IPCs with clients has been the need to orient methodology towards innovation from a sound conceptual base. Considerable effort has been spent to influence projects to open up their thinking to include impacts on poverty beyond its immediate project boundary and correspondingly open up to developing case specific monitoring tools. This is reflected in a client's comment that CEPA initiated a very open discussion about methodologies and their implications with the client through the process of the advisory service. In the case of applied research clients felt that PIMU / CEPA took on challenges offered in the area of methodology development and attempted to meet difficult combinations of objectives through openness to adaptations and innovations.

However, staff members as well as clients and associates who have been following the methodological progress of PIMU and CEPA, feel that the general learning from major experimental studies - such as JIMOD and Portfolio Analysis - could have been much greater. Follow up reflection on the methodology, debate and discussion with academics and others, was felt to be insufficient. There is much greater potential for institutional and sector wide learning which is under-utilised. The study team's evaluation coincides with this view and is further elaborated in the section which discusses the possibilities of consolidating PIMU / CEPA methodology.

An interesting aspect, which is complementary to methodology development, is the extent to which the composition of the team put together for a particular assignment has allowed PIMU and CEPA (both in the broader sense of the institution and in the narrower sense of individual professionals) to influence the methodology. Considering the nature of PIMU's and subsequently CEPA's professional input to its contracts and sponsored studies, four levels of involvement of staff members become evident:

- PIMU / CEPA team as the primary advisor to an external team
- PIMU/ CEPA internal a. exclusively staff members b. includes some consultants
- No staff members, exclusively consultants
- CEPA as a member of a larger externally facilitated team

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

The different forms of institutional input come with different levels of input and influence into the methodology. Where PIMU and later CEPA professionals provided advisory services to a project team, there was a very high degree of influence as PIMU/CEPA was cast in the role of ‘expert’. The lowest level of influence is exerted when the work is contracted out or a CEPA professional is one member of a larger study team. Where the methodology is developed internally the influence and control over the methodology is at its peak. Of all CEPA work 67% falls into this category. However, in over 50% of these contracts CEPA has included at least one consultant in its team. However, the study of team formation and discussions with team members indicate that the dominant members of the team have been internal CEPA staff members while external consultants have been most frequently accessed to provide specialised knowledge. Specialised knowledge was in the form of content knowledge or methodological skills. External methodology input was critical in the case of quantitative elements as in the Youth Survey and JIMOD household survey.

Interviews with clients, associates and staff members indicate a strong tendency to prefer in-house methodology development and implementation. The rationale for this preference is frequently articulated in terms of quality control. However, there is widespread acceptance that professional capacity limitations, which include skills as well as time constraints, make external input vital.

3.2 PIMU to CEPA: Continuous learning

A study of the PIMU/CEPA methodology shows a clear orientation towards continuous learning. While this is explicitly articulated in institutional documents such as the CEPA Annual Report, the exploration of the chronological and programmatic progress provides a better analytical base.

PIMU phase 1

In the initial stages of PIMU the approach and methods used were based on the project’s reading of the development sector, especially in Sri Lanka, and the decision to emphasize qualitative methodology was taken consciously, based on this reading.

The environment PIMU would operate in was read as:

- Projects are insufficiently oriented towards poverty impacts due to lack of awareness as well as lack of methods to address the issue.
- In poverty impact monitoring the bias is towards macro decision-making, which is informed by studies using quantitative methods.
- Sri Lanka has a substantial quantitative database. Hence in contrast to the qualitative data and enquiry, quantitative methodology was perceived relatively more developed and available.
- PIMU/ CEPA's competitive advantage has been perceived as being in qualitative methodology, innovation and exploring further issues behind the statistics.
- An interesting additional argument is that a monitoring approach looking at contextual variables and for relatively 'soft evidence' was perceived as being less threatening to the project team leaders of GTZ and other donor-funded projects, which were the major clients in PIMU phase 1. The explanation seemed to be that, 'Soft evidence' can be interpreted and hurts less than 'hard evidence.'

Two strong contributors to the qualitative bias in PIMU methodology can be identified. The institutional space in which PIMU was operating which provided room for innovation and creativity – this made it possible to sometimes use 'unconventional' tools which had an organisation development background rather than a conventional research base. Secondly, of course, personalities of those who shaped PIMU's methodology played a role: both the GTZ advisor and one of the PIMU staff members who was a highly qualified social anthropologist shared the qualitative orientation.

Most of the creative energies at PIMU were directed toward the development of tools to facilitate brainstorming and provide space for new ideas to be discussed and incorporated into the formal monitoring system. Tools used in brainstorming frequently sought to simultaneously convey a concept as in the case of 'a shared view' and 'pieces of the puzzle'. Tools that were intended to collect data were developed together with the client and support was provided in its usage.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

The conventional research steps were rarely followed by PIMU. Possible exceptions in the first phase of PIMU were the end of project review of RRDP and final phase study for DZP. However, neither study followed the conventional impact assessment research orientation, which commenced with a literature survey. Instead they continued with the use of project documents as the point of entry. Both used adapted versions of the tools and concepts developed for project based consultancies. Both studies were conceptualised on the basis that observing changes were preferable to pre-determined identification of impacts. In-depth case studies based primarily on self-assessments, group brainstorming formed the core of the methodology.

Table1: PIMU Service package based on the project cycle

Stage of Project Cycle	Identification	Planning	Implementation	Follow up
PIMU Clients	NECORD	RBIP, FCDRMP, JRP, VTW, etc.	IFSP, Palm Foundation. RRDP, FCDRMP	End of Project RRDP, DZP
Methodological approach Overall: Consultative with project/ counterpart.	Input to project appraisal, specifically identifying potential impact areas which should be developed into a monitoring system.	Project document and project implementation based brain storming with project and counterpart.	Revisit impact hypothesis developed in the tender documents, Check relevance actual impacts - to bridge the project document with the project reality in order to re-focus impact monitoring.	

Table 1: PIMU Service package based on the project cycle Contd.

Stage of Project Cycle	Identification	Planning	Implementation	Follow up
Tools	Workshops, consultations, document review, Commenting on the poverty impact relevance at the tender stage.	Participation in project planning workshops, staff sensitisation workshops, training packages.	Staff sensitisation, training package, workshops, work with project documents, Created tools: Seven dimensions, picking words, walking around the pond.	Satisfaction surveys, Focus group discussions, key person and beneficiary interviews, rating, scales, prioritisations, animal analogy, walking around the pond, village trend lines

The CEPA PIM programme

PIM is the programme that directly inherited the PIMU content area, and it was also strongly influenced by the PIMU methodology. However, the discussion element of working very closely with projects right through the process reduced except in the case of IPCs. The methodology used moved to a greater use of structured methodology, designed along scientific research steps, which included much greater use of existing literature and secondary data in setting the context of the subject. While more conventional methods such as combining household interviews, focus group discussions, key person interviews were used, the tools continued to be developments of those initially developed by PIMU. Tools such as Trends and Attributions were further developed along a conceptual base of poverty impacts and multi-dimensions of poverty.

More importantly the influence of PIMU on the CEPA PIM programme is seen in the conceptualisation of impacts in terms of openness to unknown elements, broad impacts, impacts at different levels and time periods. The process orientation in the inclusion of internal actors and the interactive orientation

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

through workshops and interactive methods of brainstorming, show strong PIMU influences. This is seen in the relatively pluralistic, combined approach, which was followed in work with JIMOD, Portfolio Analysis, IFSP impact assessment, PRIMUSS/CMC assignment, ADB Power Fund for the Poor, and so on.

Contributions beyond PIM by other CEPA programmes

The process of moving towards a greater study orientation and being less influenced by the PIMU approach can be observed in the methodology orientation of the other programmes at CEPA. This is with the exception of the Poverty and Enterprise Development programme, which overlapped both in terms of content and staff with the PIMU/CEPA transformation phase. Other programmes too have strong qualitative elements, look at perceptions and are field based. However, the interactive process orientation, which works through interactive tools of brainstorming is much less prevalent. The fact that none of the programmes aside from PIM, have developed the training element may have constrained the cross fertilisation of methods. Many of the brainstorming and workshop methods used in the PIM programme applied research and advisory services assignments are adapted from its training component.

Further more, the attempts at quantitative methods are greater in the three other programmes at CEPA, with the latest programme on knowledge management focusing strongly on quantitative data collection and analysis.

In summary a trend can be seen in early PIMU methodology being highly customised, interactive and project based, with tailor made tools from a qualitative base being used almost exclusively. The input of the PIMU team members was critical in the process. No explicit conventional scientific research process was evident. The CEPA PIM programme has been highly influenced by the conceptual base of the methodology, which led to an interactive, customised, exploratory approach in methodology. However, there has been a distinct structuring within a more conventional research process, and the greater influence of quantitative methods. This orientation can be seen as a further development of the process,

which began during the late PIMU phase. The other current programmes of CEPA are less influenced by PIMU though the qualitative orientation is maintained to a fair extent.

3.3 The relationship between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies

The qualitative basis

As has become clear from section 2.2, in its efforts to develop a methodology and tools for poverty impact monitoring, PIMU laid the ground for a strong orientation towards qualitative research methodologies. CEPA has developed it to the extent that it is seen as a major strength of CEPA as an organisation. However, questions are raised whether the qualitative orientation should be better complemented by quantitative research methodologies leading to a better balance. In fact it has been mentioned over and over again in project reports with the 2000 PIMU progress review stating specifically that a balance between qualitative and quantitative methods should be aimed at.¹¹ Analysis seems to show that such a process has not been promoted very consciously, but has rather developed as a side effect of CEPA programme development.

CEPA's qualitative methodologies are sound. The rigour of qualitative work is probably unique among Sri Lankan research organisations, and is appreciated as such by clients. CEPA's qualitative research is 'quality research'. It is clear that work at CEPA does not mean producing just anecdotal evidence, or producing the case studies needed to justify preconceived results, with which 'qualitative research' is sometimes associated, particularly by the proponents of a quantitative or statistical orientation. PIMU/ CEPA research uses a range of clearly defined methods, and it compares evidence produced by various methods such as

¹¹ See Gsänger, Hans, Dulan de Silva and Volker Steigerwald, PIMU Project Progress Review Report, June 2000: 'The methodologies applied by PIMU require further testing and refinement. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and instruments, in particular, needs further elaboration and consolidation into a standard PIMU approach and PIMU toolkit.'

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

household interviews, focus group discussions and key person interviews to arrive at results and capture different perspectives. The approach is professional.

PIMU was small. It was probably not even able to handle large-scale quantitative research on its own. It didn't have specialists for quantitative data analysis. There were concerns as to how to ensure the quality of quantitative surveys, particularly data collection, if one had to rely on outside enumerators who might tend to complete questionnaires in the comfort of a tea shop or at home. PIMU favoured stakeholder participation. It favoured tailor-made, problem-centred and client-centred solutions. Limited human resources and lack of specialists in various fields were compensated for by creativity, innovation and the rigour of qualitative research.

Some CEPA staff members feel, 'this is our strength', and the organisation should capitalize on it rather than complement it by quantitative methods, which are used by quite a number of other consulting firms or research institutes in the country. Others feel there is further room for working with complementary quantitative methods.

The authors are of the view that good qualitative research is definitely a strength and a competitive advantage for CEPA. It enables the organisation to look 'behind the statistics' and explore details of poverty, processes that produce it, and the socio-economic formations around it. It goes beyond the income-poverty dimension and looks at dimensions and details of how people live and cope. The limitations, of course, are small sample size, lack of representativeness, lack of generalization which could be addressed through quantitative methods.

Doing something good for the wrong reasons? In-house perceptions of methodologies

While personalities and the perception that innovation and development were possible and needed in the qualitative rather than in the quantitative field were the main factors shaping PIMU's methodology orientation, there are other arguments, too, which are related to the multidimensional poverty concept. A perception exists in CEPA that the non-income dimensions of poverty are 'less tangible' and 'less measurable' than the hard economic facts and figures, and

that they require ‘understanding’ rather than ‘measuring’.¹² This is at least partly misleading. The proponents of quantitative methodology will argue that ‘unmeasurable changes’ are no changes. In line with this position it can be held that no good argument can be given why human development-related changes (e.g. in education and health), and changes related to dimensions such as power or dignity should be ‘less objective’ and ‘less measurable’ than income changes. If change exists, it must be possible to identify and measure it. Measuring is just a matter of operationalizing concepts and developing the right tools for observing the quantitative dimension of change. However, this argument totally overlooks the issue of effectiveness of alternative methodologies. While quantitative methods can be used in any situation, in certain contexts its effectiveness, efficiency and ability provide useful information could be substantially weaker than qualitative methodologies. At CEPA, the important issue is to pick the most relevant and effective methodology for a given context.

Another misleading in-house perception on methodology is that qualitative methods are ‘perception based’. That means a large part of field research concentrates on getting information on the ‘perceptions’ of people and households, that is, their perceptions of what variables make up poverty, their own poverty situation in relation to others and so on. Associated with this seems the connotation that perceptions are ‘less factual’, for instance, as compared to income levels in Rupee terms, and that therefore this ‘perception based’ type of research produces the ‘more soft and less hard’ evidence associated with ‘qualitative methodology’. It can be argued that this is a misunderstanding of methodologies and ‘evidence’. If perceptions are defined as what people think and/ or feel about something, our perception that we are poor or not poor is not ‘less real’ or ‘less factual’ than our monetary income. In terms of social research, it can be seen as just a different variable. Being interested in people’s perceptions is in no way related to either qualitative or quantitative methodologies. Both can be used to gather and document information and analyse perceptions, albeit focusing on very different outputs and producing very different levels of understanding.

¹² See Gunetilleke, Neranjana, “Consolidation of experiences of the CEPA Poverty Impact Monitoring Programme”, paper, presented at the *5th Annual Symposium on Poverty Research*, held in October 2004, Publication forthcoming.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

However, rather than debating if qualitative research understands the less measurable variables, one could also justify the qualitative emphasis of CEPA's research methodology in terms of its explorative character in the context of current poverty research in Sri Lanka. CEPA's methodology has moved into fields that are less visible in some of the available statistics. It has directed attention towards a broader range of dimensions. It helps projects 'to see more'. It helps to identify potential causes and socio-economic formations behind the poverty shown in statistics and leads to a better understanding of poverty in Sri Lanka.

In addition, the cost-effectiveness of monitoring and research strategies plays a role. Sound qualitative research can enable new insight at comparatively limited cost – as compared to large surveys. It is therefore often the cost-effective and more practical solution, depending on what is the specific purpose of a monitoring or assessment exercise. A large survey lends itself less to understanding the processes and providing depth to issues. However, if one wants to generalise results, quantitative methodologies and statistical analysis will be required.

Moving towards a methodology mix: Cross-fertilization has started

While the general perception is that CEPA's approach is more on the qualitative side, a closer look at CEPA studies and reports reveals that many of them are not 'qualitative only'. There is a range of usage of quantitative methodology with three (7%) CEPA studies being predominantly quantitative in their orientation and 10 others (23%) being designed with equal qualitative and quantitative elements. Examples are the rural roads impact study done for ADB, which also has a control group approach and the youth survey of the Poverty and Youth Programme, which is based on a survey of 346 youth and qualitative interviews with 34 youth. The design of the study presently conducted by the PIM programme on the impact of privatisation on workers too brings together quantitative and qualitative methods in both in data collection and analysis.

Only seven (16%) of CEPA studies can be categorized as purely qualitative in methodology design and analysis. All others have quantitative elements in the methodology despite being predominantly qualitative studies. Quantitative

elements of the methodology include evaluating available secondary statistics to set the context, elements of survey research or move towards coded data collection, use of basic distributions and cross-tabulations in the analysis.

What becomes clear is that the data sets collected by CEPA have much greater potential for quantitative analysis than is currently carried out. Where survey data has been collected, data analysis has remained basic, i.e. mostly confined to frequency distributions and some cross-tabulation, without further statistical analysis. Limited in-house capacity for quantitative research, which has been the primary reason for under-utilisation of existing quantitative data can be overcome by recruitment and further training strategies.

What is evident is that cross-fertilization has started. A trend does exist in CEPA to tackle such questions more comprehensively now than in the first years of its existence. The recent CEPA publication on poverty Measurement by Gunewardena¹³ can be considered a major step towards working on measurement issues and reflecting the relationship between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

As CEPA grew beyond the PIMU mandate, expanding to new issues and fields of work as well as recruitment of new staff have probably been major factors contributing towards a changing methodology mix. A majority of CEPA staff feels that efforts to increase the capacity to use quantitative methodologies are needed. One remarks, “sound qualitative research should remain our strength, but we should not be as weak in quantitative methods as we currently are.” Cross-fertilization could be promoted more consciously in the future than it was done in the past.

The readiness of CEPA to move more towards quantitative analysis has culminated in the design of the Poverty Assessment and Knowledge Management (PAM) programme. This programme will be working primarily with databases, macro-level data and the consolidation of micro-level data, and will include at least one statistician.

¹³ Gunewardena, Dileni, *Poverty Measurement: Meanings, Methods and Requirements*. CEPA Study Series 1-2004, Colombo, February 2004.

3.4 Micro and macro level focus: IM support to projects versus policy relevant poverty analysis?

The focus on projects or micro-level developments is another heritage from PIMU. Of the PIMU contracts 64% were very specific to an individual project. The four studies that make up the 32% can be considered meso level as they focused on programmes rather than projects. Increasing the impact and poverty orientation of projects supported by GTZ was not the only mandate of PIMU. However it was this imperative for German decision-makers that facilitated PIMU's coming into existence. As a result, working with German-funded projects (micro level) on impact and poverty orientation questions was a major part of PIMU work in phase 1 and to some extent beyond.

The micro level orientation of PIMU has by and large been inherited by the PIM programme: 48% of its work has been carried out at the project level. This is primarily in the provision of advisory services. The micro orientation of PIM pulls up the CEPA average at the micro level despite the other programmes contributing only 3 studies at this level. There is a clear differentiation between programmes in relation to the level at which they work. While only 17% of the PIM programme work has had a national or macro orientation, this contrasts heavily with the 60% national level orientation of the other programmes. The macro level orientation is especially strong in the Poverty and Youth Programme and the Poverty Assessment and Knowledge Management Programme. As a result CEPA as a whole shows a good balance between the three levels of micro, meso and macro.

The micro- or project-level focus of the PIM Programme is not per se policy-irrelevant. CEPA would argue that influences on the way projects are designed and operate could be considered to be policy impacts, albeit at the project level. This is particularly the case in the advisory services carried out by PIMU and subsequently the PIM programme at CEPA.¹⁴ In addition, PIM studies generate a great deal of information and findings that are relevant for poverty analysis.

¹⁴ Whether these activities have always influenced the impact and poverty orientation of projects much, is the subject of another contribution to this review : see chapter 3.2. Tracing PIMU's Poverty Impact Chains

However, such results have not yet been sufficiently brought forward into a policy discourse, and CEPA is not yet perceived as a policy-research body in Sri Lanka.

The institutional concept of CEPA stresses market, research and policy orientation as the 3 pillars of the organization's work, and this would ideally lead to a good mix between the micro and macro orientations. As an institution CEPA seems to have achieved this for the time being. However, increasing the policy relevance of CEPA results would require more consolidation of findings across programmes and their processing for policy dialogue and discussion.

Policy relevance is also related to methodology. Qualitative research is excellent for innovation and exploration. However, critics will always ask the questions, how big the sample has been, whether it is representative and of what, to what extent data is independently or inter-subjectively verifiable, whether results can be generalized and so on. Qualitative research can produce policy-relevant results. But beyond pointing at qualitative evidence, policy relevance also requires generalization. It requires measuring the incidence of poverty in multidimensional models, including those having the capacity to handle big amounts of data, for instance on national level. This is an area that CEPA has to continue expanding.

3.5 Consolidation of CEPA's experience into a framework for poverty monitoring and analysis

Given PIMU/ CEPA's focus on methodology development a natural progression is to consolidate learning and development of a 'monitoring and poverty analysis framework' allowing for comparability of PIM and research results within and beyond Sri Lanka. This has been repeatedly proposed¹⁵ and various attempts were made in this regard since the inception of CEPA. However, neither an explicit framework nor an in-depth consolidation, which justly reflects the level of knowledge within CEPA, is available.

¹⁵ Feyen, Christoph, "Participation and Monitoring. Experiences from the Ground to the Macro Level". *DAC Task Force on Donor Practices. Expert Meeting on Reporting and Monitoring*, March 26/27, 2002, Berlin, slide 4.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Two positions on consolidation and development of a PIM framework seem to co-exist at CEPA - that there are benefits of developing a framework, and there are dangers to putting forward a framework. Overall, there is the issue of internal capacity.

The benefits of consolidation and a PIM framework have been seen internally as facilitating learning and more effective orientation to new staff members. In terms of the clients, it was felt that projects would operationalise PIM with greater ease if they had access to a framework or at least a basic 'handbook'. A training partner interviewed by the study team spoke of instances where the training workshop documentation was used when attempts were made at operationalising PIM in project settings. Training documentation, however, is not expected to play this role and a consolidated 'handbook' would fill this gap – especially among the non-English speaking development sector.

Contrastingly, the dangers of presenting a framework or handbook have been perceived along the lines that consolidated documents/ frameworks tend to be used unquestioningly and would lead to a ritualisation of PIM. This would be in direct contrast to the PIMU/CEPA approach of encouraging projects to contextualise their impact orientation and maximise own conceptualisation of the problem and find innovative solutions. This is also linked to the idea that as PIMU/ CEPA have been advocating a multidimensional definition of poverty, the concept of centrally provided 'objectively verifiable indicators' measured unquestioningly at the project level is less than satisfactory. The qualitative and micro level orientation has led to a focus on identifying and 'understanding' impacts and poverty rather than measuring it. This, however, is seen as weak reasoning by the evaluation team.

In addition to these content-based arguments, some reluctance on the part of CEPA/ PIM to put forward a 'CEPA/PIM framework' can be observed and was directly articulated by some staff members. The underlying reasoning was related to capacity, which seemed to arise from the position that the team had not reached an optimum learning point, which was compounded by the lack of time for reflection. The evaluation of CEPA/PIM methodology in this assessment indicates that should the team overcome the constraint of time for

reflection, the team was likely to reach the conclusion that the first rationale of insufficient content maturity was not fully justified.

Having said this, moves towards developing a framework based on consolidation of learning do exist. The experiences of the PIM Programme were presented and discussed at the Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in 2004. On a more sustained level, the training workshops on poverty impact monitoring provide the space for reflection on methodology and bring about a substantial amount of consolidation of concepts and methods. The ongoing activity of developing the training manuals on PIM to publishable quality is another major contribution.

Aside from the PIM programme, a number of steps have been taken, but not always completed, to consolidate CEPA methodology. CEPA's experience with attempting a 'Poverty Atlas'¹⁶ illustrated to the team the need for greater standardisation of CEPA methodology. A consolidation of tools used by different studies resulted in a prototype household questionnaire, guidelines for focus group discussions and village assessments. Guidelines were developed for advisory service and research steps to follow field research, workshops and consultations, leading to a standardised CEPA approach. However, it must be emphasised, that the standard approach only provides the basic frame and each applied research or advisory service is developed from point-zero in keeping with the specific context.

4. Conclusions

The research and in-process consultancy methodology of PIMU/ CEPA is 'work in progress'. It is not something static and 'completed'. It has developed as a result of PIMU's mandate to prepare methodologies to support the poverty and impact orientation of development interventions based on the perception that innovation and further development were needed in Sri Lanka mostly with regard

¹⁶ The idea of producing a publication, which would present a consolidated view of poverty based on the knowledge gathered by CEPA in the field in a more generalised format for a broader audience was discussed and conceptualised in various forms, but did not finally materialise.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

to the use of qualitative methods. Moreover, the innovative, OD (Organisational Development) based and qualitative orientation of the early actors, interaction with clients and stakeholders, and a broad space available to PIMU for innovation also contributed. In addition, a qualitative approach to monitoring was perceived as being less threatening to team-leaders and therefore easier to implement.

The conceptual base of CEPA comprises a multidimensional concept of poverty, and clearly explained concepts of impacts, monitoring and evaluation, assessment strategies (ex ante – in process – ex post) and entry points to impact monitoring and assessment (purpose- and context-related and project transcending). The conceptual base is convincing and can be considered ‘state of the art’.

The research methodology is based on qualitative methodologies of social and anthropological research. In-process consultancies relate to the project management cycle and are based on close interaction with clients, team sensitization, and predominantly implementation and use of monitoring tools by the clients themselves.

The qualitative research methodology used by CEPA and the rigour of its qualitative work are sound and professional and can be considered ‘state of the art’ and a strength of the organisation and its approach. The fact that it has not been systematically complemented by in-house knowledge and skills in the field of quantitative methodologies is considered a weakness. From the early PIMU project documents and the progress review in 2000 onwards, balancing the qualitative methodology with quantitative approaches and consolidation of PIMU/ CEPA methodology in the form of a handbook have been repeatedly demanded and announced. Both have not materialized in a systematic way.

Cross-fertilization between qualitative and quantitative approaches has started as a result of CEPA developing additional programmes, growing beyond PIM and employing new people who brought in new orientations, as well as the general orientation towards methodology development and innovation. A more detailed look at the studies prepared over the years reveals that there are much more quantitative elements in many of them than perceived in the ‘official identity’ of CEPA as an organisation emphasizing qualitative research. However, due to limited in-house skills and experience, quantitative data sets have been generally underutilized, and statistical data analysis has not gone into depth.

Cross-fertilization has started and will continue. It should be pursued more systematically in future and requires capacity building through further training, recruitment and cooperation with specialized consultants.

The PIM Programme has inherited from PIMU a focus on project- or micro-level IM and assessment interventions. Thereby, it has also been the one programme, which is closest to the market of donor-supported projects. New CEPA programs such as Poverty and Youth and Poverty Assessment and Knowledge Management have contributed towards strengthening a macro orientation, too. Consolidation of PIM results and the orientation of the new programmes do include undeveloped potential for more policy-relevance and broader influence of CEPA's work than has been realized up to now. If there is an increased demand in the field of poverty-related macro level studies, i.e. research work that addresses poverty on a provincial or national level, without a direct project focus, CEPA is not yet sufficiently prepared in terms of capacity and methodology.

Policy relevance is also related to methodology. Qualitative research is excellent for innovation and exploration, and it can produce policy-relevant results. Beyond this, policy relevance also requires generalization. It requires measuring the incidence of poverty in multidimensional models, including having the capacity to handle big amounts of data, as on national level.

Finally, the fact that PIMU/ CEPA's experience has not yet been consolidated into a more general framework for poverty monitoring and analysis is another weakness. This includes documenting the methodologies used and having a standard set or inventory of poverty indicators, which would contribute to comparability of poverty research and analysis in-house, within and beyond Sri Lanka. Such documentation and consolidation has been repeatedly proposed and announced, but it has not yet been realized. It seems the perception that methodology is 'work-in-progress' and always changing and perhaps resistance to commit to some kind of seemingly rigid 'CEPA way of PIM and Poverty Analysis' have worked together with lack of time to effect such a consolidation. Consolidation of experience and methodologies in a draft framework or 'CEPA model' is needed for practical as well as policy relevance reasons. It will be an important element of knowledge management and will contribute towards making CEPA a player in the poverty discourse and policy discussions.

2.2 Uncharacteristically Sri Lankan?

Institutional Aspects of PIMU and the Institutional Viability of CEPA

Udan Fernando and Chris Reichert

Contents	<i>Page</i>
1. Introduction	71
2. From PIMU to CEPA	72
2.1 The birth of PIMU	
2.2 The landscape of Sri Lankan research institutions	
2.3 The birth of CEPA	
3. CEPA – What Type of Animal?	79
3.1 ‘Owners’ and ‘stakeholders’	
3.2 The ‘business model’	
3.3 CEPA’s market	
3.4 Partners, networks and collaborations	
3.5 CEPA’s image and identity	
4. Governance, Structure and Management	89
4.1 Governance	
4.2 Structure and management	
4.3 Systems and organisation development	
4.4 Human resources	
5. Financial Performance and Viability	97
5.1 Revenue, expenditure, income	
5.2 German funding of CEPA	
5.3 Contracts secured and the prospects for 2005	
5.4 The Development Fund	
6. Conclusions	105

2.2 Uncharacteristically Sri Lankan? Institutional Aspects of PIMU and the Institutional Viability of CEPA

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on institutional aspects of the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) Project and to assess the institutional viability of the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA).¹

PIMU has been a project supported by German Technical Assistance (TA) to improve impact orientation, impact monitoring, and particularly the poverty impact orientation of donor interventions, primarily German TA projects. CEPA is a Sri Lankan organisation focusing its attention on poverty analysis and poverty-relevant impact monitoring. Depending on the point of view, CEPA has been ‘set-up’, ‘initiated’, ‘facilitated’, and/ or ‘supported’ by PIMU. Being in the business of impact assessment, one could also say that the existence of CEPA is a major ‘impact’ of PIMU. What is being talked about is a process in which German TA is used for or instrumental in establishing a Sri Lankan organisation for poverty research and advice.

This is an attempt to understand,

- why and how this was done
- to what extent the new organisation has become rooted in the Sri Lankan institutional environment – or potentially remains an ‘alien’s place’
- how the organisation works, feels and thinks, and what it is doing
- who are the stakeholders that want CEPA to do what it does
- who buys the products of CEPA or buys into CEPA activities, and
- whether in the end CEPA has the means to survive once German support has come to an end.

¹ PIMU Impact Assessment, Terms of Reference 12/12/04

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

This paper draws from PIMU project documents, progress reports and the progress review of 2000 as well as CEPA Management Information System (MIS) documents, Annual Reports, concept papers and reports of organisation development retreats. It is also based on interviews with CEPA staff, Board members and associates, selected clients and cooperating partners.

2. From PIMU to CEPA

2.1 The birth of PIMU

PIMU as a project started in 11/1998. Donor-supported projects, such as PIMU, are designed in terms of 'phases'. PIMU had a phase 1 from 11/1998 to 10/2000, comprising 2 years, and a phase 2 from 11/2000 to 10/2003 (3 years). This was extended without additional financial resources by 18 months up to 4/2005. In total PIMU as a project had a lifetime of 6 ½ years. This is less than the average for German TA projects, as were the financial means available to PIMU.

At the beginning of PIMU, establishment of a new organisation such as CEPA was not a 'fait accompli'. PIMU was born as a result of trends in German Development Cooperation (DC) to increase the poverty orientation and impact of interventions. Programmatically, poverty alleviation is the overall goal of German development cooperation. Efforts to evaluate whether projects really contribute to this date back to the late 90's. The first initiatives to assess the poverty orientation of the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) portfolio in Sri Lanka are linked to a few names: Mr. Martin Müller, at that time Head of the Sri Lanka Desk in GTZ Headquarters; Dr. Hans Gsänger of German Development Institute (GDI), the development think tank of the German government, who later accompanied the development of PIMU with short-term advisory assignments; and Mr. Christoph Feyen, at that time freelance consultant working for GTZ, supporting planning processes in GTZ and the effort to consolidate the Sri Lanka project portfolio into programmes in order to increase effectiveness and significance. He ended up being the GTZ advisor

in PIMU. The interest in the topic resulted in a number of studies and seminars, from which the idea of making this a ‘project’ emerged.²

One might ask is it correct to link development of a project to a few persons, and why are they all German? The fact is PIMU has been a rather unusual project. Firstly, it was not requested by the Sri Lankan government. This is not unusual. While the philosophy of German DC postulates that it supports projects demanded by partner governments, the reality is different. CEPA’s portfolio analysis of GTZ supported projects in Sri Lanka points to the issue of ‘bargaining power’ in government-donor relationships; the poorer the country, the weaker the government, and the stronger the donor in designing project portfolios.³ Sri Lanka is not a very poor country, however, observers point out that the Government has not been very active in programming donor support. The tendency is to ‘take what comes’.

In a similar vein, PIMU was an initiative prompted by the German government and the GTZ, rather than it being a request emerging from the Sri Lankan side. The initiative was accepted by the Sri Lankan government, who provided the space for the German government and GTZ to delve into issues relating to poverty impact through the form of a bilateral cooperation ‘project’.⁴

Even more unusual, PIMU was not designed as a project to produce results on ‘beneficiary level’. It was designed to support GTZ and other donor-supported projects to improve their impact and poverty orientation. It started as a project to support projects, which was something special. Hence not everybody within GTZ projects welcomed it. Needing support from PIMU seemed to imply that

²Tudor Silva, *Approaches to Poverty Alleviation in Sri Lanka*, Kandy 1996; Christiane Loquai, *Approaches Towards Poverty within German Sri Lankan Technical Cooperation*, Colombo 1997; Hans Gsänger/ Christoph Feyen/ Siegfried König, *Armutsreduzierung in der deutschen EZ mit Sri Lanka*, Berlin/ Frankfurt 1997; Sri Lankan Dialogue Workshop on Poverty Reduction, Colombo 1997.

³ PIMU, *A Portfolio Analysis on the Poverty Orientation of the GTZ Country Assistance Programme to Sri Lanka*, prepared by Centre for Poverty Analysis, Colombo, June 2002

⁴ Unfortunately, the Sri Lankan decision-makers of this time, particularly Mr. Faiz Mohideen, the then head of ERD, could not be met during the project review.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

one could not do the job of monitoring, impact monitoring, or even poverty impact monitoring oneself. GTZ-supported projects were not too aware of their potential impact, especially poverty-related impact. While PIMU was probably seen as a threat by some, others decided they could carry out impact monitoring (IM) or poverty impact monitoring (PIM) on their own, and many others decided that the offer by PIMU to provide assistance in impact monitoring might be helpful to them and/ or would strengthen their position in the GTZ portfolio.

In phase 1, PIMU was working with a dual mandate of providing advisory services to projects (consulting function) and stimulating poverty reduction and impact monitoring initiatives (catalytic function). As it was quite an experimental initiative, the question of institutional attachment of the project was kept deliberately open – another unusual feature in the context of German DC. The External Resources Department (ERD) became the political partner organisation, and regular exchange with the Ministry of Samurdhi, Youth Affairs and Sports⁵ as well as the Ministry of Plan Implementation (MPI) was agreed upon. In the language of donor planning, PIMU's project purpose was that 'donor supported projects improve their poverty related impact monitoring'. Major result areas for PIMU to work on were,

- poverty awareness of donor projects and other organisations
- the development of instruments for poverty-related analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation
- the provision of advisory services to project clients
- stimulating dialogue and cooperation on poverty-related issues, and
- 'establishing the preconditions of future poverty-related impact monitoring'.⁶

It is the rather odd formulation of the last result area ('establishing the preconditions of future poverty-related impact monitoring'), which indicates the mandate to assess and develop options to institutionalise PIMU's activities and mandate, which eventually resulted in the establishment of CEPA.

⁵The official poverty alleviation ministry

⁶ See PIMU system of objectives according to planning and reporting documents, Annex 1.

2.2 The landscape of Sri Lankan research institutions

In Sri Lanka, research activities on development issues gained prominence in the 1970s. The unique feature in this period was the emergence of independent research organisations outside the conventional research centres, which were part of academia. Marga Institute was a pioneer research organisation in this respect. The Social Scientists Association (SSA) and Centre for Society & Religion (CSR) were other prominent organisations that had research as one of their core activities in addition to other work such as advocacy and policy influencing. The research agenda during this time focused around broad political economy themes.

The 1980s marked the entrance of another generation of organisations such as the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), Development Innovations & Networks (IRED), Participatory Institute for Development Alternatives (PIDA) and the Law & Society Trust (LST). These organisations, like the first generation, were not pure research organisations. They emerged in a context where liberal economic policies had just been introduced and the NGO (Non-Government Organisation) phenomenon was gaining momentum in Sri Lanka. While being think-tanks, these organisations also had a substantial presence in policy influencing, advocacy and sometimes even activism. Their research themes focused around emerging issues such as the ethnic conflict, the implications of liberal economic policies, political issues such as democracy, human rights and so on. The second generation of research organisations displayed the identity of NGOs, a phenomenon that gained unprecedented momentum in the 1980s. In fact many of these organisations were funded by private donor agencies abroad whose policies and convictions ran parallel to these research organisations.

By the 1990s, the NGO sector in Sri Lanka was well established. The official aid channels and multi-lateral agencies started large-scale collaborations with NGOs while expanding their work with the government. For example, the Janasaviya, which was funded by the World Bank, was one such programme that made the government and NGOs absorb large amounts of funds for poverty alleviation work. Development cooperation in Sri Lanka had experienced a massive growth

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

by this time. The private sector of Sri Lanka in the meantime had become a decisive factor in the economy.

It is in this context that the third generation of research organisations emerged in Sri Lanka. These organisations represent a wide variety in terms of their background and focus. For instance, the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) was formed as a quasi-government organisation with a focus on macro economic research while an independent organisation like the Institute for Participatory Interactions in Development (IPID) had a focus on participatory methodologies in development. The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) had a focus on issues like good governance and legal reforms. Some of these organisations were akin to NGOs while others wanted to have a non-NGO outlook while working as non-profit organisations. A small group of organisations, for instance, ETC Lanka, Econsult, MDF (Management for Development Foundation) South Asia were set up as private research/ consultancy companies with provision to generate profits.

Due to a host of reasons, the pressures from donors being the main one, the donor-funded organisations were expected to be more professional in their work. High emphasis was placed on professionalism and capacities of staff. As there was a gap between the donor expectations and the capacities of the local counterparts the donors – private, bilateral and multilateral – displayed a high interest in promoting intermediary support organisations which could provide a range of services such as training, research and advice to implementing organisations, including the governments. This created a new demand for competent trainers, researchers and consultants. Relatively high salaries were offered to attract competent people. The existing research-oriented organisations were also expected to play a limited intermediary support role.

The majority of these intermediary support organisations, were directly promoted by donors to chiefly service the various development projects already funded by them. In other words, the support intermediary organisations had a captive market when they were formed. These organisations had generous grants from donors to set themselves up well and to attract competent staff. The organisations were expected to have a market orientation and high standards of professionalism

and specialisation in the relevant areas. Consultancy became the core activity of many of these organisations, as it was the immediate need of the donors. It was also the main source of income of intermediary organisations. The limited research work carried out by these organisations was centred largely around themes that were either promoted or required by the donors.

PIMU and CEPA emerged exactly in the above context. By this time, the first generation of research organisations was lagging behind. Some of these organisations tried to adapt themselves to the new conditions while others went defunct. The second generation of research organisations with a lot of effort could withstand the changes in the market. However, the new generation of intermediary support organisations definitely had an advantage over others as they could respond well to the specificities of their clients, mainly the donors who were also their promoters.

2.3 The birth of CEPA

PIMU's clients in phase 1 were mainly, but not exclusively GTZ supported projects. The next milestone in terms of institution development was then the Project Progress Review (PPR) of May 2000, in which the institutional options prepared by PIMU were discussed and the model for setting up a new and independent organisation was sanctioned.⁷ The review was optimistic about the future market for PIM-related services and recommended to broaden PIMU's mandate beyond the support to donor-assisted projects and provide support to government agencies, too. PIMU is thereby envisaged to become a 'think tank' for poverty impact monitoring, "offering services at micro, meso and macro levels."⁸

⁷ Hans Gsänger/ Dulan de Silva/ Volker Steigerwald, Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit, Sri Lanka. Project Progress Review May 2 – May 16, 2000. Final report. Berlin/ Colombo 2000

⁸ Ibid., p. 1

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

The four alternative options for institutionalisation prepared by PIMU and discussed with potential stakeholders were,

- Integration into a Government structure (e.g. ERD, Samurdhi, MPI) (option 1)
- Integration into an existing public policy or research institute (IPS, Marga, IDS) (option 2)
- Transformation into an independent non-profit organisation (option 3)
- Commercialisation of services and transformation into a private consulting organisation (option 4).⁹

Options were extensively discussed and compared. Independence from political pressure, flexibility and autonomy of the organisation, and the ‘public goods’ character of poverty research, which cannot be financed by the market alone, were among the major arguments considered.¹⁰ Option 3, probably the most difficult and risky way, but the only one to ensure autonomy, flexibility and innovation, was chosen. The review mission concluded: “All relevant discussants agreed that there is a need for a permanent organisation to monitor poverty impacts and development. ... Impartial poverty impact monitoring and policy advice requires independence, professional competence, self-sustaining finances, and institutional links to the government for achieving policy impacts. The PPR-mission therefore favours a transformation of PIMU into an independent non-profit organisation as this option assures independence, and invites sponsors (donors, local NGOs, and the private sector) to co-fund operations in order to gain a status of financial self-sustainability. It will also allow PIMU to intensively network with various like-minded institutions and organisations. Government agencies and other stakeholders plus NGOs, the private sector as well as independent experts should be represented on the governing body of the new organisation.”¹¹

⁹ “A brief report on PIMU”, November 1999 to October 2000. Presentation made at the *2nd Clients’ Conference*, December 2000

¹⁰ Gsänger et al, Project Progress Review, p. 10

¹¹ Gsänger et al, Project Progress Review, p. 4

Leaving aside the diplomatic part of the justification - who really wanted to establish CEPA? Again, as in the case of the start of PIMU as a project, the push came from the German side. Again, the Government of Sri Lanka 'accepted' rather than demanded it. The Government was not opposed to it, but also did not have to invest into CEPA, as the whole exercise was perceived as highly experimental and the outcome as uncertain. As a result, a formal stake of government in the new organisation was not established, which also left CEPA 'free' of government financial support in both senses of the term: However, and unlike at the time of PIMU's start, there were Sri Lankan (non-government and non-institutional) stakeholders involved. CEPA became possible due to intensive networking in the environment of 'like-minded' institutions and professionals during PIMU phase 1.

Phase 2 of PIMU started in 11/2000. The project purpose of this phase was defined in terms of 'development organisations and specialists improving their capacities for poverty-related impact monitoring'. Major result areas refer to,

- Applied research on poverty, social policies and impact monitoring
- Further training for development specialists in poverty related fields
- Advisory services to projects on poverty and impact orientation
- Stimulating the poverty discourse, and
- Establishing the Centre for Poverty Analysis¹²

Again, establishment of the Centre for Poverty Analysis comes along very lightly – as the last one of 5 result areas. However, it has been the crucial result of PIMU phase 2, and all the other activities have been implemented by CEPA.

3. CEPA – What Type of Animal?

As described in its brochure, CEPA was established in May 2001 as an independent institute providing professional services on poverty-related issues. It is registered as a non-profit company under the Companies Act of 1982. It was conceived to fill an institutional space in poverty research and analysis and related services.

¹² See PIMU system of objectives according to planning and reporting documents, Annex 1.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Initial versions of the PPM refer to The Centre for Poverty Monitoring and Development (CEPMOD). The name was later changed to CEPA.

CEPA's mission statement says that the organisation aims "to be at the cutting edge of independent and policy relevant analysis of poverty."¹³ The institutional goal is defined as 'improving the capacities of development organisations and professionals to practice more appropriate and effective ways of reducing poverty in Sri Lanka.'¹⁴ CEPA's objectives are,

- The provision of independent analysis on the causes, characteristics and impacts of poverty in Sri Lanka
- Capacity building of development organisations and professionals to monitor poverty related impacts
- Improvement of know-how transfer and policy dialogue on poverty.¹⁵

3.1 'Owners' and 'stakeholders'

Owners are the CEPA Subscribing Members who founded it or joined subsequently. They constitute individual Sri Lankan professionals with an interest in CEPA's field of work. Apart from the members, the CEPA Board of Directors and staff are also stakeholders of the organisation. As the development organisation which facilitated the setting up CEPA, GTZ has of course to be considered as a stakeholder and has been represented on the Board by the country director. While leadership provided by Board and members seems to be limited; CEPA senior staff together with the GTZ Senior Advisor play a powerful role in shaping the organisation. Possibly due to the long vacancy of the post of Executive Director (ED), a particular model of team leadership has emerged; with the adviser becoming formally more and more distanced from the organisation, but contributing major concepts.

¹³ CEPA, Annual report 2003, p. 2

¹⁴ Ibid.

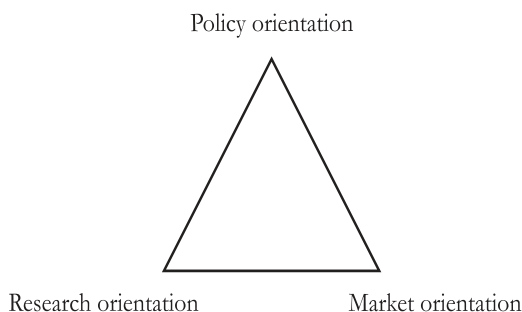
¹⁵ CEPA brochure, May 2004

3.2 The ‘business model’

CEPA is shaped according to a particular and intelligent business model. It is intended to provide market-oriented services to development organisations, projects, donors, but also engage in applied research independently of service clients. It is supposed to be policy relevant, but remain independent of political influence. In order to be dynamic and market-oriented, CEPA has to earn income by selling services to clients. In order to be able to work on longer-term and strategic issues, it needs to be independent from direct and short-term market needs. The organisation thereby combines market, research, and policy-related objectives and activities, a combination, which CEPA staff and documents like to refer to as ‘hybrid’.

The institutional concept of CEPA tries to balance policy, research and market orientation.¹⁶

Chart 1: Institutional concept



This approach informs the operational as well as the financial concepts of CEPA. In terms of operations, CEPA is built around service areas and programmes. Services are sold; programmes are sponsored.

¹⁶ See CEPA, Workshop on the Strategic Orientation of the Centre for Poverty Analysis, 4th December 2004. Workshop documentation, February 2005

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

The four service areas of CEPA are,

- Applied research: Practical and policy-relevant poverty-related studies are prepared.
- Advisory services: Clients are supported in developing poverty-oriented impact monitoring, doing assessments or evaluations.
- Training: programmes are conducted for clients to strengthen impact and poverty orientation of projects and to support development professionals in setting up (poverty) impact monitoring systems.
- Dialogue and exchange: CEPA conceptualises, organizes and facilitates workshops and conferences and presents results of its programmes and assignments. Poverty Forums and Symposia are among the ‘products’. The ‘dialogue and exchange’ service area is in some sense not fully consistent with the logic of the other service areas: conducting conferences and fora has much less the character of service provision to a client, and is closer to sponsorship of a programmatic activity.

CEPA’s five programmes so far are¹⁷ :

- Poverty Impact Monitoring (PIM), the core programme in terms of the PIMU mandate, and sponsored by PIMU/ GTZ (2001– 2005)
- Poverty and Enterprise Development, un-sponsored (2001–2002)
- Poverty and Youth (PAY), sponsored by GTZ (2002–2005)
- Poverty and Conflict (PAC), sponsored by DFID (2002–2005)
- Poverty Assessment & Knowledge Management¹⁸ (PAM), sponsored by ADB (2005-2007)

Inter-linkages and integration of service areas and programmes which describes CEPA’s operational concept are visualized in CEPA documents in a matrix:

¹⁷ CEPA Annual Report 2003

¹⁸ The PAM programme was formerly known as the Poverty Information & Knowledge Management (PIK) programme

Chart 2: Operational concept

	PIM	PAY	PAC	PAM
APR				
ADV				
TRG				
DAE				

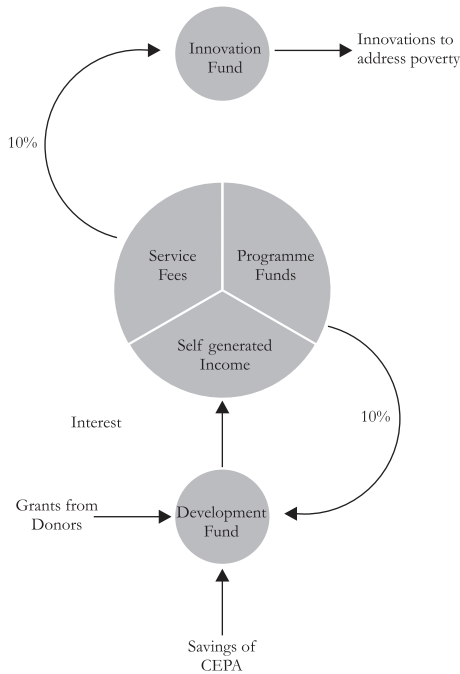
The operational concept follows the idea that service areas and programmes would be interlinked in a more or less balanced way. Practically, however service areas differ in their contribution to programmes and vice versa. It is not obvious to the reviewers why harmony should always be sought in all dimensions. Services depend on the market, and programmes on sponsors. While in a donor market environment clients and sponsors tend to coincide, the logic of service provision and programme development is different. Based on the different dynamics of sponsoring and market demand, balancing as expressed in the matrix should neither be expected nor is it necessary. In terms of the business model, it is important that CEPA is selling services and implementing programmes. As long as there are buyers/ sponsors, a perfect integration of these fields does not really matter.

More important is the financial model, which flows from the institutional and operational concepts. The organisation has three types of income sources supporting activities under the market, research, and policy orientation fields. The obvious ones are sales of services and programme sponsorship. In addition the concept of an endowment fund called Development Fund has been

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

incorporated into the design. The Development Fund is invested into by donors; so far for instance PIMU contributions, CEPA ‘profits’ (surplus) and 10% of programme funds. This requires a certain generosity of programme sponsors, which so far has not been a problem. Development Fund capital is invested to earn income. Interest is transferred to CEPA on an annual basis while 10% of service income is contributed to a ‘Clients’ Fund’ (now called ‘Innovation Fund’), which finances ‘innovations to address poverty’. The financial concept tries to enforce market orientation, enable research orientation and add on independence by providing for capital earnings. In a way, it is brilliant.

Chart 3: Financial concept



That is the model. Now let us see how the organisation performs in practice.

3.3 CEPA's market

CEPA sells services and implements programmes related to poverty monitoring and research. Which market is the organisation operating in? The demand side of the market is basically donors. This is something artificial as well as real. Donors are trying to do things, which markets are not doing. But by spending large budgets, they become part, and sometimes, as in the case of consultancies, the dominant part of the market.

On the supply side, there are a number of organisations providing services in the same field as CEPA. Being a 'hybrid', working in different fields, CEPA has competitors of various kinds. Competitors for service contracts are for example market research firms, consulting firms, and individual private consultants. There are also NGOs bidding for donor work such as Sewalanka Foundation or IPID, among others. And there are research organisations such as IPS, The IMCAP Program at the University of Colombo, and others. As the donor market is large, it attracts all type of suppliers, with or without quality delivery. Sometimes, the trend is towards low quality consultancies, which donors and projects tend to take, pay for and simply file. In such an environment, CEPA tends to excel through quality. Studies are sound and the clients get value for money.

As the market is large and its reputation good, CEPA could so far afford to pick the best pieces of work and reject offers which were evaluated as not being in line with the organisation's thinking and policies. This is something of a luxury situation. Clients are mostly the usual, such as GTZ supported projects, ADB, WFP, UNOPS, ILO, World Bank, CARE, SIDA, Oxfam, UNDP, WUSC¹⁹ to name a selection. It is the donor community, and to a limited extent local or regional organisations. Taking into account that CEPA started as an organisation supported by German DC, the diversification of the client base is impressive.

¹⁹ Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Food Programme (WFP), UN Office for Professional Services (UNOPS), International Labour Organisation (ILO), World Bank (WB), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), World University Services of Canada (WUSC)

3.4 Partners, networks and collaborations

For obvious reasons, PIMU maintained a close affinity with the GTZ-related organisations in Sri Lanka. Therefore various forms of relationships such as partnerships, collaborations, contracting between PIMU/ CEPA and GTZ-related organisations took place. However, with the establishment of CEPA these relationships were expanded to a variety of Sri Lankan organisations.

PIMU identifies four organisations as its main interfaces: The National Operations Room (NOR) of the Ministry of Planning, Development & Implementation (MPDI), Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL), IMCAP and SLEvA²⁰. These organisations are strategically placed to further CEPA's work areas such as PRS monitoring (NOR), poverty definition and measurement (DCS & CBSL), poverty research and training (IMCAP) and monitoring & evaluation methodology (SLEvA). In practice, however, the forms and degree of relationship differ.

The intensity of relationship with the NOR/ MPDI seems to be very low. CEPA is benefiting from its relationship with the DCS, which has enabled it to access statistical data bases maintained by the department. The presence of the Director General of the DCS on CEPA's Board has helped secure this close cooperation between two institutions, which at the start of CEPA had no formal links with each other²¹. Both parties seem to be happy about their cooperation. The link with the CBSL too materializes through a Director who is also a member of the CEPA Board. Again, there is no formalised cooperation other than CEPA accessing information from the CBSL. The link with SLEvA also seems to be weak though its secretariat is housed in CEPA premises. There is no concrete form of cooperation between CEPA and SLEvA other than inviting each other for various meetings and workshops they organize.

²⁰ Institutionalisation – Poverty Impact Monitoring, CEPA, Internal Document

²¹ This changed in 2005 as the counterpart to the ADB financed Technical Assistant programme Poverty Assessment & Knowledge Management is the DCS

The most concrete and tangible link exists between CEPA and IMCAP. The cooperation seems to be mutually beneficial to both parties and is appreciated by them. The most significant form of cooperation between the two is the Annual Symposium on Poverty Research, which is jointly organized by CEPA and IMCAP. Collaborating with IMCAP is strategically useful for CEPA as it provides access and linkages with the university students and teachers. IMCAP could potentially be a competitor for CEPA as poverty research is a core activity of both the organisations. But the demand for research assignments and consultancy services on poverty related issues seem to be higher than the supply. Therefore, so far, CEPA and IMCAP have not been competing for assignments from common sources – the pie seems to be big enough to be shared by both the organisations.

CEPA's links with other research organisations such as the Marga Institute, IPS, ICES and SSA seem to be relatively weak. The limited events of cooperation have taken place mainly through personal contacts. The links are not formalized. Though the formal and institutional links are weak, CEPA maintains a wide network of individuals from the universities, development agencies, professionals and government bodies. This ability to network with individuals is certainly one of CEPA's strengths. It is through these individuals that CEPA has been able to establish informal working relationships with institutions. Generally, CEPA's links with NGOs are weak. A limited number of links with NGOs have been established through the recipients of the Clients Fund.

One can understand CEPA's strategy of accessing institutions through individuals. It prevents situations where CEPA is formally tied up to institutions that may not deliver expected levels of cooperation. However, depending solely on the individuals rather than institutions is not a good strategy in the long run. There is more room for collaborative work and strategic alliances with other research institutes such as IPS, ICES and SSA as the work done by CEPA and the above are complementary to a great extent. Establishing links with local NGOs, especially the ones working on policy, lobbying and advocacy related to poverty issues will be beneficial for CEPA. Networking with such organisations will help CEPA's policy work, an area in which it has not been able to make good progress. CEPA has 'inherited' some links such as SLEvA and NOR from PIMU days.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

The purpose these links serve is questionable. With the formal withdrawal of PIMU, it is opportune for CEPA to reconfigure its linkages with organisations that are of strategic and operational use for its future work.

3.5 CEPA's image and identity

Being 'hybrid' is the most hackneyed term used by CEPA to describe itself. It is mainly used to denote the variety of activities carried out by CEPA such as research, training, facilitation and advisory. Hybridity is also being used to describe CEPA's organisational identity and staff diversity. For most senior staff, CEPA is a Sri Lankan professional service provider with a private sector orientation. CEPA staff also project themselves as multi-disciplinary as they indeed come from various academic backgrounds of economics, political science, anthropology, sociology and management.

Being hybrid allows one to handle an assortment of work and attract a diverse group of people to carry out work. Being hybrid also leaves some space for ambiguity and vagueness about its identity and work. While it is still not easy to define what exactly CEPA is, at least it is well aware of what it is not. This has been well articulated by a member of CEPA at a strategic planning workshop: "one has to realize that CEPA staff doesn't look at poverty from a political/economic view. One should not judge CEPA by that. CEPA is an organisation working for incremental change and not radical change. It should be made clear that CEPA is an organisation with a liberal and critical perception". Another staff member opined that CEPA is not a think-tank like organisation X (a close competitor of CEPA) which is full of economists, academics and bureaucrats. Elaborating more on the view expressed in the strategic planning workshop, another member said that CEPA is not an ideologically driven space.

CEPA's official claim to identity is that it is an independent Sri Lankan professional service provider. To a great extent this is also the perception of CEPA's clients such as WB, ADB, UN agencies. However, in one assignment evaluation form, a staff member of a multilateral body makes the comment that CEPA is an NGO so one cannot expect high standards or familiarity on writing proposals

for bidding. For the GTZ related clients and multi-lateral clients, CEPA's fees are reasonable given the high value for money they receive. But for the limited NGO clients, including INGOs, CEPA is a costly and up-market organisation. Due to the GTZ link, for some CEPA is a 'German' organisation.

The identity and image are important considerations for CEPA as it is still a young organisation, which is yet to be well positioned in the Sri Lankan organisational landscape. The hybrid nature not only means that there is a variety of core activities but also a host of different constituencies and stakeholders with diverse interests, sometimes contradictory to each other. As far as the advisory/consultancy activity is concerned, CEPA has satisfactorily positioned itself in a particular market segment with the bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies. However, CEPA is yet to be rooted well in the wider Sri Lankan organisational landscape. CEPA has still to prove its worth in the domains of research and policy. The advisory, research and policy interventions are not mutually exclusive ones. But given CEPA's paucity of human resources, research and policy work have lagged behind the consultancy work. Therefore, work-wise, CEPA is largely perceived as a advisory/consultancy service provider.

4. Governance, Structure and Management

4.1 Governance

Subscribing Members

The ownership of CEPA, as per the memorandum of articles, is in the hands of the Subscribing Members who initially subscribed to the articles and those who joined subsequently. There were nine founding members including two persons who soon had to resign when they joined as staff. Currently, there are twelve members. The membership is the apex body and it is they who elect a Board of Directors to govern the work of CEPA. The Chairperson and two Directors are part of the membership too.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Board of Directors

The Board composition has been carefully determined in order to ensure participation of different stakeholders: three individual professionals, three from government agencies and three from donor agencies.

The Board meets quarterly. The main role of the Board has been to supervise and guide the management and review the performance of CEPA. There have been few attempts by the Board to play the conventional role of controlling the programmes and staff; being aware they play a limited role while the staff drives the organisation. One Board member said the staff is capable of subverting a proposal of the Board, if they would want to. However, relations between the staff and Board are good and the Board has extended its support to the overall programme, which is mainly devised by the management and senior staff of CEPA.

While the Board of Directors guides the management and reviews the performance of CEPA, the overall role of steering and strategic thinking has been played by the senior staff and management, including the GTZ adviser. This is an area in which the members, the real owners of CEPA, should have played a more active role. It is only the recently held strategic planning workshop, which brought the staff, directors and members together to discuss the future strategies of CEPA

Management Team

The Management Team (MT) comprises the Deputy Director, Senior Advisor and four Programme Coordinators and they meet regularly (on average every fortnight) to plan and make decisions. The MT, according to our observation and analysis, is the energy centre within CEPA. The MT meetings are said to be useful but the decisions are being taken after lengthy deliberations. This is an issue raised by the Coordinators as they work under heavy pressure and the management responsibility becomes an additional burden.

The Executive Director

The position of an Executive Director was created at the inception of CEPA. However, the Senior Advisor played the role of Interim Manager initially (May 2001 to December 2001), as it took some time to recruit a full-time Executive Director. Prof. Tudor Silva, a reputed academic, joined CEPA as Executive Director in January 2002, initially for a period of two years, but subsequently shortened to one year due to personal and other commitments. One year is too short a period for one to make a meaningful contribution to an organisation. The reputation of the then ED made an impact on CEPA in the form of bringing in business and improved its visibility in academic and policy circuits. With his departure in December 2003, CEPA until early 2005 functioned without an ED. The Senior Advisor did not accept the request of the Board of Directors to oversee work as ED during this period. As a result, the ED's function, to some extent, was collectively played by the Management Team. It should be noted that the Senior Advisor's contribution in the Management Team might also have filled the vacuum. In particular, due to the strong contribution of the Senior Advisor on the overall strategic and institutional development of CEPA, one could describe his role as a 'de-facto' ED.

The lack of a fulltime ED, in a way, has helped CEPA to maintain its so-called hybrid nature. Typically and especially in the Sri Lankan context, an organisation is identified with the leader and her/ his preferences and strengths of work. The lack of a fulltime ED has prevented this situation in CEPA. Due to the collective leadership exercised by the Management Team, CEPA has been able to develop a 'brand name' without a reference to a particular person. This in turn has enabled CEPA to sustain its 'hybrid' nature in terms of carrying out an assortment of activities.

4.2 Structure and management

CEPA does not use a conventional (i.e., hierarchical) organisation chart to depict its staff and line relations. CEPA claims that it has a flat and non-hierarchical structure, which promotes team spirit. However, there is some form of hierarchy

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

as lines of reporting are clearly defined. All support staff report to the Deputy Director. The other staff including the Senior Professionals, report on administrative matters to the Deputy Director. The Professionals and Junior Professionals report to Programme Coordinators who are also Senior Professionals. Due to the lack of an ED since January 2003, the Programme Coordinators and Senior Professionals do not have a non-administrative reporting line. Technically, the Senior Advisor does not have a line function. He is expected to play a staff function. However, as the Senior Advisor is in the Management Team, he plays some form of line function, which fills the void.

There is a clear hierarchy within CEPA though it does not act as a hierarchical organisation. An organisation with 26 staff placed in five tiers (as defined by its salary structure) cannot be called a flat organisation. However, because of the short reporting lines (a maximum of three), and small staff size, CEPA can be seen as a non-hierarchical, flat-looking organisation.

4.3 Systems and organisation development

Within a relatively short period of time CEPA has developed systems to allow the organisation to function efficiently and smoothly. CEPA has so far developed systems, guidelines and criteria in relation to finance, personnel policy, field protocol, decision making on assignments, flow-charts on implementation of assignments, and criteria and rates for assignments. In addition, CEPA is paying a lot of attention to continuous upgrading of its management information system. The guiding principles for the systems are derived from a quality model adapted from the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).²² CEPA staff has access to a common server with a comprehensive database. This database has guidelines relating to work, documentation in relation to past activities, reports produced and so on. This is an excellent way to manage CEPA's body of knowledge built over time. It is helpful for new staff to get acquainted with CEPA's work with little guidance from the senior staff.

²² CEPA, Quality report 2003/4 (Draft), August 2004

Usually, the systems in an organisation are developed over time, more so if the organisation is small and young. However, CEPA's systems have been developed in a very short period of time.

The steep organisation development curve of CEPA in its first four years of existence is linked to intelligent concepts, systematic organisation development efforts, intelligent decisions as well as luck with regard to the staff recruited. It has been shaped by a number of organisation development inputs – a field in which the Senior Advisor has specialised: CEPA had a business plan at its start in 2001. Weekly staff meetings provided for practical team building and exchange among staff members. Staff retreats ('OD retreats') for reflection and strategy discussion have been conducted annually. The accumulated knowledge and experience of the organisation is documented in the abovementioned database available to all staff members. A strategy workshop was conducted in December 2004 with CEPA members, board members and staff members to reflect on CEPA's achievements and future directions.²³ It is intended to develop a strategy concept on this basis for CEPA's future orientation after the end of PIMU support. Such inputs, with involvement of staff in the overall process, have contributed to CEPA being a 'learning organisation' with a steep organisation development curve.

This is indeed a strength for CEPA. But the risk involved is whether CEPA can sustain and consolidate the high standards of systems it has built so far. Are these standards too high for a small, emerging organisation? Will these systems be helpful or a constraint when CEPA faces a crucial milestone very soon with the departure of two senior staff, the Senior Advisor and the arrival of a new ED? On the other hand, one could argue that the systems were developed to fill the void caused by the absence of an ED.

²³ CEPA, Workshop on the Strategic Orientation of the Centre for Poverty Analysis, 4th December 2004. Workshop Documentation, February 2005.

4.4 Human resources

CEPA's strategy on human resources has been threefold: 1) have an internal core staff and build capacities within, 2) establish a network of professionals and get them involved as Associates and 3) attract expatriate staff.

CEPA started its operations in May 2001 with a staff of six (three core staff and three administration & support) and by December 2001 recruited two more core staff and three administration and support staff, including a Deputy Director. The current (January 2005) number of staff is 26 out of which 13 are administration and support. This means that staff persons available for CEPA's core activities is 13. Four Senior Professionals function as Coordinators of programmes. Seven Professionals and three Junior Professionals work in the teams formed around programmatic themes.

Two Associates have been recruited in July 2003 and February 2004. The first Associate was a full-time staff with CEPA before. The Associates commit a fixed number of days per year (on average 30) on a pre-determined retainer.

A limited number of CEPA staff are expatriates. CEPA's policy is to limit the expatriate staff to a maximum of one quarter of its core staff. Currently, a Programme Coordinator is an expatriate. CEPA makes no discrimination in relation to salaries to expatriate and non-expatriate staff, the latter being entitled additionally only to a return air ticket and a moving-in allowance.

Services of consultants have also been obtained for some assignments. CEPA has always engaged at least a full-time internal staff to work with external consultants.

Internal staff

CEPA staff is small compared to other research organisations. It is also young. The average age of staff is around 28. Senior Professionals are in the age group of 32-36 years. This makes CEPA quite different from other research organisations where senior positions are held by relatively older staff. The commitment and hard work of the young and energetic staff would have been a major reason for CEPA's success in the last few years.

CEPA staff has been trained in universities in Sri Lanka and abroad. All Senior Professionals have pursued their postgraduate studies in Universities abroad. Many of these foreign Universities like Sussex, SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), LSE (London School of Economics) and Cambridge, are recognized training grounds for development studies.

The foreign exposure of staff is of utmost use and importance to CEPA as its clientele is predominantly bi-laterals and multi-laterals. In that sense, having local staff with foreign exposure and expatriate staff makes CEPA a Sri Lankan-based organisation with international standards. However, the downside is the limitation of some staff to converse in local languages; this was an issue raised by some clients. If CEPA wants to engage more time on applied research and with local NGOs, the language constraint becomes a crucial issue.

Capacities

CEPA expects high standards of quality and professionalism from its staff. In addition, the staff persons are expected to take initiative in managing their work and work relatively independently. This in a way is reflected in the titles/designations that CEPA is using for its staff: Senior Professionals, Professionals and Junior Professionals and not Research Fellows, Researchers and Research Assistants as in other comparable organisations. However, the difficulty of living up to the high standards of professionalism arise as an issue of capacity; there seems to be a problem of English language writing skills among some Junior Professionals, but these staff persons are seen as excellent in their fieldwork. Inadequacy of skills in conceptualisation is also raised as an issue by staff, as is insufficient attention given to internal staff debate on content matters.

The result of all this is the heavy burden on the Coordinators who give leadership to the teams. The Coordinators are expected to play multiple roles. In addition to managing the programme concerned, they are also expected to canvass for consultancy and carry out consultancy assignments. The Coordinators are also expected to play an overall managerial role as they are in the Management Team. The pressure on them seems to be immense and the workload they carry out is extraordinarily heavy.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

So far, the staff has displayed a high degree of commitment to CEPA's work. The long hours of work, handling multiple tasks and working under pressure have become the work norm in CEPA. The current staff is predominantly young, single and many of them are new to work. One cannot expect the same level of endurance and commitment from the staff in the long run when both the organisation and staff grow older.

Staff capacity, especially among the junior staff, is not only an issue faced by CEPA. It is a systemic issue in Sri Lanka. The labour market for research staff is one that is small. Not many young graduates pursue careers in research. Attracting young graduates with good qualifications and potential for research work is indeed a challenging task. On the other hand, CEPA expects high standards of professionalism from staff. This makes the task all the more difficult for CEPA to attract and retain competent staff. CEPA as a pilot initiative partially supported a staff person to pursue postgraduate studies abroad with the understanding of working for CEPA for at least two years after graduation. Due to the paucity of Senior Professionals who are willing to work on fulltime basis, it is prudent to build capacities within. The challenge, however, is to retain competent staff in the face of many other opportunities.

Staff turnover

It is not unusual for an organisation to have a turnover of staff. But the uniqueness of CEPA's turnover is that it is very much part of the organisational culture which promotes staff to move fast and not be stagnant. Due to this, the staff has always been very open about their expectations and subsequent exits. The staff turnover at CEPA is thus far not an acute problem at least at the Junior Professional level whose tenure of work is typically 2-3 years. In most cases, the Junior Professionals have left employment to pursue postgraduate studies. There is a constant inflow of Junior Professionals as CEPA has become well established as a 'training ground' for young graduates seeking practical experience after graduation.

The turnover among the senior staff is the most acute and crucial problem for CEPA. Senior staff persons leave partly because of the opportunities outside CEPA. Freelancing, the common option that many Senior Professionals would

choose is convenient, flexible, less time consuming and financially rewarding. It is a logical progression for a Senior Professional having worked full time for some time, to opt for freelancing. Therefore, it is an uphill task to retain the senior staff. The CEPA remuneration package is attractive and higher than in other research institutes. The working environment and the organisational culture are conducive for one to continue. But the high pressure on a limited number of senior staff to perform a multiplicity of tasks combined with other options available, especially in the field of freelancing, makes it difficult to retain senior staff on a long term, fulltime basis.

Retaining the competent Professionals is a good strategy so that they can be gradually groomed to take over senior positions. Retaining the expertise and services of those senior professionals who have left by accommodating them as Associates is also a good strategy thought out by CEPA.

Associates and Consultants

Two Associates have been recruited by CEPA since July 2003 and February 2004 respectively. In addition to carrying out a specific task, CEPA expects the Associates to coach and mentor the junior staff. The Associates' contribution vis-à-vis the expectations of CEPA remains a concern as the mentoring and coaching functions have not been carried out sufficiently.

The contribution of consultants' has also been a mixed bag. According to many clients, external consultants have been less effective compared to the internal staff of CEPA. Some external consultants have not been able to deliver relevant services while some have been insensitive to the process and quality standards of CEPA. This has compelled CEPA to make arrangements where an internal staff person takes the leadership in carrying out the assignment when external consultants are engaged.

5. Financial Performance and Viability

CEPA has been strongly supported financially by German DC, which was instrumental in setting it up. To assess the financial viability of the organisation

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

and its prospects, the following topics are relevant:

- Development of revenue, expenditure and income 2001 – 2004
- The contributions of CEPA's major income sources to overall revenue
- The relative contribution of German DC, and PIMU in particular, and the extent to which income sources could be diversified
- Contracts secured by end of 2004 for 2005, and distribution of these contracts by clients
- The Development Fund and its contribution to CEPA revenue.

Table 1: CEPA's financial performance, 2001 – 2004

	2001		2002		2003		2004	
Income & expenditure	Rs. m	%	Rs. m	%	Rs. m	%	Rs. m	%
Revenue total (and growth over previous year in %)	9.49	n.a.	18.85	98.7	30.98	64.3	47.23	52.7
Expenditure/ cost total (and growth over previous year in %)	5.95	n.a.	17.16	188.5	21.19	23.5	40.63	91.7
Income (after tax)	3.54		1.66		9.80		6.26	
Revenue breakdown								
From fee-based services	4.43	46.7	10.89	57.7	13.63	44.0	14.94	31.6
Applied research/ studies	0.70		6.43		5.10		5.99	
Advisory services	1.61		2.95		3.33		3.66	
Training	0.67		0.87		0.33		0.76	
Dialogue and exchange	1.45		0.63		4.89		4.53	
From programme sponsoring	3.00	31.6	5.88	31.2	13.50	43.6	20.84	44.1
Poverty Impact Monitoring	1.60		2.40		2.40		2.40	
Poverty and Youth	1.40		1.40		2.80		5.80	
Poverty and Conflict	0		2.08		8.30		12.64	
Poverty Information Knowledge Management	0		0		0		0	
Other revenue	2.06	21.7	2.09	11.1	3.85	12.4	11.53	24.4
PIMU sponsorship for CEPA org. development	2.00		1.50		1.00		0.50	
KAS/ PIMU sponsorship Poverty Symposium 2004	0		0		0		0.70	
Earnings from Development Fund	0		0.32		1.89		4.01	
Foreign currency gains	0.03		0.13		0.90		6.10	
Miscellaneous	0.03		0.14		0.07		0.22	

Table 1: CEPA's financial performance, 2001 – 2004 Contd.

Income & expenditure	2001		2002		2003		2004	
	Rs. m	%	Rs. m	%	Rs. m	%	Rs. m	%
Revenue: German-funded contribution								
(in Rs. m and as a percentage of total revenue)								
PIMU								
Fee-based	0.33		0.37		0.567		0	
Programmes	1.60		2.40		2.40		2.40	
Other	2.00		1.50		1.00		0.85	
Total PIMU	3.93	41.4	4.27	22.6	3.97	12.8	3.25	6.9
Other German								
Fee-based	1.05		2.11		7.81		6.52	
Programmes	1.40		1.40		2.80		5.80	
Other	0		0		0		0.35	
Total other German	2.45	25.8	3.51	18.6	10.61	34.2	12.67	26.8
Total German-funded revenue								
	6.38	67.2	7.78	41.2	14.57	47.0	15.92	33.7
Contracts at hand for the following year as per 31/12 (in Rs.m and as a percentage of the following year's revenue)								
	6.56	34.8	22.53	72.7	28.67	60.6	33.78	63.9
Development Fund								
Total value	4.16		14.83		24.73		33.37	
Earnings from DF Development Fund (% of annual revenue)	0	0.0	0.32	1.7	1.89	6.1	4.01	8.5

Sources: CEPA Annual Reports 2001 – 2003; CEPA Management Information System; for 2004: draft un-audited accounts.

5.1 Revenue, expenditure, income

As Table 1 shows, CEPA revenue has increased strongly and consistently from 2001 to 2004 from Rs.9.5m to Rs.47.3m. Annual growth rates have been 99% in 2002, 64% in 2003 and 53% in 2004. For the start-up of an organisation, this is a healthy trend. First of all it shows there is potential for growth, and secondly that consolidation with growth takes place. Apart from exceptional circumstances, organisations cannot double their sales every year. For a young research, policy and consultancy-oriented organisation like CEPA, exponential growth would

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

not be healthy. CEPA had a good take-off and seems to be consolidating in terms of sales. This has been a good start.

As can be expected in the case of a growing organisation, expenditure also increased sharply from Rs.6m in 2001 to Rs.40.6m in 2004. This left CEPA with an after tax income of Rs.3.5m in 2001 and Rs9.8m in 2003. Figures for 2004 haven't been finalized at this point. In each of these years CEPA has contributed part of its annual income to the Development Fund, and has received annual income from Development Fund investments from 2002 onwards.

So far, expansion has been healthy. As 2005 is a crucial year of change for CEPA, income secured for 2005 is an important variable. This will be analysed below.

Revenue sources

The CEPA MIS distinguishes between income from fee-based services, from programme sponsoring, and 'other' or 'self-generated' income.²⁴ The table shows that service, programme, as well as 'other' incomes have increased consistently from 2001 to 2004 in absolute terms. This again is healthy. However, the relative contribution of the three areas to overall revenue keeps changing.

Fee-based services earned Rs.4.4m in 2001 and Rs.14.9m in 2004. Their share in total revenue has decreased from 47% in 2001 to 32% in 2004, with a peak of 58% in 2002. Service sales were obviously more important in relative terms in the first years of CEPA and are now approaching the 1/3 ratio proposed by the organisation model, implying that other income sources provide more.

Within fee-based services, applied research/ studies have been the best earner, with dialogue & exchange and advisory services following. Training has in the early years been perceived as a relevant instrument to influence IM or PIM of donor projects, but has not become an important earner for the organisation, which logically seems to result in a decreasing importance of training activities.

²⁴ The term 'self-generated' is not very clear – firstly, income of organisations is normally 'self-generated', and secondly, the 'other' category includes sponsorships, which are definitely less 'self-generated' than revenues from service sales.

The contribution of programmes increased from Rs.3m in 2001 to Rs.20.8m in 2004. In relative terms these were 32% in 2001 and 44% in 2004. Programmes have thereby become the major income source of CEPA, which reflects an increasing importance of sponsors as compared to clients. Within the programmes category, the German-sponsored PIM and PAY programmes have become quantitatively less important than the DFID sponsored PAC programme. The upcoming ADB-sponsored PAM programme cannot be seen yet in the financial results by end of 2004. The increase of programme sponsoring reflects the fact that the organisation was able to formulate programmes, which attract donors and could get sponsorships from organisations beyond GTZ.

'Other revenues' is a heterogeneous category. In money terms, 'other' contributed Rs.2.1m in 2001 and Rs.11.5m in 2004. This is an increase from 21.7% in 2001 to 24.4% in 2004, with much lower contributions in the years in between. 'Other' includes a PIMU contribution to CEPA organisation development - PIMU project funds put directly into CEPA, which decreased from Rs.2m in 2001 to Rs.0.5m in 2004. The category also includes a joint PIMU/ KAS sponsoring of the 2004 Poverty Symposium. However, the major contributions in 2004 have been foreign currency gains (Rs.6.1m) and interest earned from the Development Fund (Rs.4m). Earnings from exchange rate developments have of course to do with luck and cannot be planned systematically as an income source of the organisation. PIMU contributions booked under 'other' will stop by 2005.

The instrument, which is important in conceptual terms, is the Development Fund of CEPA. It is there to guarantee a source of income from investments in order to ensure an element of independence from service and programme income. With the Development Fund increasing, the contribution of interest earned to CEPA revenue grew from Rs.0.3m in 2002 to Rs.4m in 2004 that is from 1.7% to 8.5% of total CEPA revenue. This is still low, but the growth trend is encouraging. In the medium term, interest earned from the Development Fund is supposed to become the major part of 'other revenue'. PIMU sponsoring will no more be there, and foreign currency gains are sort of windfall profits, which cannot be planned for. The 'independence' element of CEPA needs to be funded from a growing Development Fund.

5.2 German funding of CEPA

As CEPA was initiated with strong financial support of German DC, it is obviously an important question to what extent the organisation depends on German support or can live without it. Leaving aside advisory support (TA), the ‘German share’ in CEPA’s revenue has come in various forms:

- PIMU sponsorship of CEPA organisation development (under ‘other revenue’)
- PIMU sponsorship of the PIM programme (programme funding)
- implementation by CEPA of projects funded by the GTZ Headquarter’s ‘Innovation Fund’ (‘Eigenmaßnahmen’), i.e. the PAY programme (under programme revenue) and the Regional Conference on Poverty Monitoring in Manila in 2004 (under Dialogue & Exchange service sales)
- CEPA sales of services to GTZ supported projects in Sri Lanka and South Asia

Apart from these contributions to CEPA revenue, PIMU has contributed separately to the CEPA Development Fund.

With the end of PIMU, its sponsorships and contributions to the Development Fund will not be available in future. Projects financed by GTZ’s ‘Innovation Fund/ Eigenmaßnahmen’ have been or are about to be completed. No further direct financial support by GTZ to CEPA is intended. GTZ thinking is that after having been set up and supported for some time, CEPA needs to survive on its own. However this does not affect CEPA service sales to GTZ supported projects. It is probable that CEPA will have a competitive advantage in the Sri Lankan ‘GTZ market’ in the near future. Yet with the GTZ Senior Adviser leaving, CEPA will be no more be part of the ‘GTZ portfolio’ in Sri Lanka, and experience seems to teach that GTZ advisors tend to concentrate on ‘their’ projects and look at the results of earlier projects as being ‘outdated’ and not crucial for them. Some lip service to ‘further support’ will be paid, but being forgotten tends to happen in minutes rather than years. While CEPA might have sympathies in GTZ Sri Lanka in the near future, the organisation cannot rely on the ‘GTZ market’ for its survival. After end of PIMU, CEPA will immediately be an organisation like any other in the (donor) market. Hence it is more important

to see to what extent CEPA depends on or has become independent of German support.

The table shows that direct PIMU contribution to the CEPA budget was around Rs.3-4m per annum between 2001 and 2004. That is not much in terms of a TA project budget. In 2001 this amounted to 41% of CEPA's revenues, in 2004 it was just 7%. This is encouraging and reflects the strong growth in CEPA revenue. Apart from PIMU, other GTZ projects such as GTZ 'innovation fund' programmes, KAS sponsoring as well as BMZ contributed to CEPA revenue in the form of service sales as well as programme sponsoring and 'other' revenue. This 'other German' share of CEPA revenue was 26% in 2001 and 27% in 2004, with a peak of 34% in 2003. Total German contribution to CEPA revenue was 67% in 2001 and 34% in 2004.

What does this mean for CEPA's financial viability? We can interpret the PIMU contribution as 'direct dependence' and the 'other German' contribution as 'indirect dependence' on German DC support. If we do this, 'direct dependence' has obviously decreased strongly to a level where dependency on project funds does not exist any more. A PIMU contribution of 7% in 2004 is not a factor threatening CEPA's existence after end of PIMU. Figures suggest that a strong project input at the beginning was used successfully to establish and position the organisation and enable it to secure additional income sources. However, another 27% of CEPA revenue in 2004 came from 'other German' sources. This is substantial and reflects the strong link with German DC, on which CEPA cannot rely after the end of PIMU. Further efforts at diversification will be needed.

5.3 Contracts secured and the prospects for 2005

With regard to the income situation in 2005²⁵ contracts worth Rs.34m had been secured for 2005 by end of 2004. They comprise Rs.6m in the field of fee-based

²⁵ For 2005: projected total revenue and expenditure from draft budget 2005, preliminary revenue breakdown from contracts secured for 2005 by 31/12/2004, i.e. less than the total projected revenue

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

services, and Rs.28m in programme sponsoring, mainly by DFID and ADB. ‘Other’ revenue cannot be projected at the moment. Contracts at hand for 2005 by 31/12/04 account for 63.9% of the projected total revenue for the year. In addition, another Rs.32m programme funding for PIK and PAC in 2006-07 had been secured by end of 2004. This is not an uncomfortable situation. It implies that CEPA’s existence in 2005 is at around 50% secured by programme sponsoring from DFID and ADB (PAC and PIK).

5.4 The Development Fund

The Development Fund is the instrument to ensure a degree of independence to CEPA through capital income. It has been nurtured by CEPA contributions from its annual income, a 10% contribution from programme funds mobilized, and by PIMU contributions. PIMU contributions were performance-based and provided an amount equalling 100% of CEPA services sales to the Development Fund. Capital gains of the Development Fund do not contribute to its growth but are transferred to CEPA as a revenue source.

As the table shows, the Development Fund has grown from Rs.4.2m in 2001 to Rs.33.4m in 2004. A stronger growth had been projected earlier, when CEPA started, based on assumptions of additional contributions by other donors. While this did not materialize, growth of the Development Fund is encouraging. The contribution of 8.5% to CEPA’s revenue in 2004 is still low, but the share has been slowly increasing.

To summarise, the financial position of CEPA four years after its establishment is sound and relatively comfortable. Direct PIMU contributions have been reduced over time to an extent that the end of PIMU is not a financial threat to CEPA. Still, the ‘German share’ in CEPA’s income was relevant in 2004. However, a diversified client base for service sales, and strong programme sponsorships by DFID and ADB have been developed, resulting in a sound financial base for the next few years. The role of the Development Fund is slowly but steadily increasing. In this situation, CEPA cannot afford complacency yet. Additional and continuing efforts to sell services and mobilise programme funding and

diversify clients and funding sources are needed, and this is exactly what the financial model was designed for: forcing the organisation to remain market-oriented, enabling longer-term research through programme sponsoring, and providing an element of independence through the Development Fund.

6. Conclusions

PIMU as a TA project came to life in 1998 out of the interest of German DC to improve the impact and poverty orientation of the project portfolio supported by German DC in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Government gave space to the project rather than taking an active interest in it. During the first project phase of PIMU, a decision was taken to try to institutionalise poverty impact monitoring and research by setting up CEPA as an independent non-profit organisation. Again, Government accepted without actually taking part in it. However, due to active networking by PIMU, a number of Sri Lankan professionals supported the move and became founder members of CEPA as a Sri Lankan organisation. CEPA was established in 2001.

Referring to the ‘animal analogy’ used by PIMU in impact monitoring: What type of an animal is CEPA? Is it a donor organisation? Is it a Sri Lankan organisation? CEPA has become a ‘jack of all trades’ rather than a specialist organisation. ‘Hybridity’ is the more elegant term for this used in CEPA documents. It means that the organisation was consciously designed to combine and balance consultancy, applied research and policy advisory functions. It has an intelligent business model and a brilliant financial strategy combining revenues from service sales, programme sponsoring and capital income from a Development Fund.

CEPA was set up and developed with substantial financial support by German DC - although the PIMU budget was small in terms of an average TA project. However, it could diversify its client and sponsor base quickly and successfully. Clients are an array of bi- and multilateral donor projects and organisations; sponsors are donor organisations, the major ones being DFID and ADB for the time being. CEPA’s financial situation at the end of PIMU is healthy, with 64%

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

of the projected 2005 income secured from contracts at hand by the end of 2004. After strong growth in the first years, is now tending towards consolidation.

Further efforts at marketing and diversification are necessary; but the end of PIMU is not a threat to the organisation's survival. Of course, the 'market' is the donor market. Donors are the 'bald head', and they come with 'different hats on' such as PIMU, 'client' or 'sponsor'. This is an artificial as well as a real market, and the Millennium Development Goals discourse provides the environment for CEPA to prosper. In a way, CEPA is the 'brilliant child of wealthy parents behaving responsibly and making good use of the parents' wealth'. However, the wealth of the parents has encouraged the child to maintain a particular life style and make close acquaintances with the aunts, uncles and family friends.

The steep organisational development curve that CEPA experienced at a rather young age is mainly due to the inputs and expertise coming from PIMU/ GTZ. The long absence of an ED also played an important role in shaping CEPA's culture, management style, and systems. Strong inputs into organisation and system development resulted in CEPA being very systems-oriented and contributed to making it a 'learning organisation'.

Some of the characteristic features of CEPA as an organisation are,

- The unusual and rather 'perfectionist' business model balancing various orientations and income sources
- Strong systems and policies
- Clearly developed reporting lines, which are not perceived as hierarchies, or as very 'flat hierarchies'
- The long vacancy of the ED position enabling the organisation to build an image or reputation, which is not related to one dominant leader or owner
- A collective or team leadership model with a strong background role for the GTZ advisor.
- A small, multi-disciplinary, very young and predominantly female staff, including in senior positions with postgraduate degrees from foreign universities

- A very demanding work culture with regard to quality, working hours and self-motivation, which tends to accommodate unmarried people in their 30's rather than mothers and fathers above 40
- Staff turnover as part of the organisational culture.

Such characteristics make CEPA 'uncharacteristically Sri Lankan'. Systems are 'too good', the model is 'too perfect', the culture is 'too demanding', there is no ED or MD (Managing Director) to solve problems with one shout or one frown. Instead CEPA develops policies and systems for many things and management is done collectively. Does this imply, that CEPA is a German rather than a Sri Lankan organisation? It does not; but its innovativeness and creativity, and some of the same features that make it 'uncharacteristically Sri Lankan' also make it 'uncharacteristically German'. Again, CEPA is a 'hybrid'. Many of its traits became possible as a result of state-of-the-art OD strategies, the international experience of its senior Sri Lankan staff, the balancing role of PIMU and the GTZ advisor, which also contributed strongly to its positioning in the donor market, and the absence of an ED. With the end of PIMU and the arrival of a new ED, new forces are emerging to shape the organisation in the future.

The major challenges ahead for the organisation are,

- Management of the transition
- Consolidation
- Human resources
- Positioning in the Sri Lankan research and policy advise environment and becoming more policy relevant
- Ownership.

PIMU inputs enabled CEPA to lay a solid organisational foundation and framework on which the rest of the organisational evolution can take place. The organisational well-being should be nurtured constantly, responding prudently to changes that take place within and outside the organisation. This is an uphill task ahead of the new leadership and the Board. Unless due care and attention is paid on this issue, the existing organisational foundation and framework will become a burden. In other words, it will be a white elephant for CEPA to look after.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

CEPA's preoccupation with consultancy/ advisory work, in a way, has hampered the organisation to adequately engage in policy and research work. The typical Sri Lankan organisational trajectory is that they have started from research or policy and then moved to consultancy. One of the challenges for CEPA is to carve out a niche in the research and policy landscape in Sri Lanka. These two work areas demand a different orientation on the part of CEPA and its staff. Expanding the network, which hitherto has been somewhat limited and informal is useful in this regard. The nature of "client satisfaction" in consultancy is different from research and policy work. The "clientele" in research and policy is diverse, multifaceted and demands various qualities compelling the organisation to stretch to various extremes. The feedback in research and policy is not short term like in consultancy. Therefore, we acknowledge the time needed for CEPA to venture into the research and policy areas.

The human resource challenge is bound to be there for the next few years. With the departure of two coordinators, the organisation is left at the moment with one fulltime and part-time coordinator. Having a fulltime core staff is imperative for CEPA to maintain its high standards of professionalism and quality. The Associates, consultants and expatriate staff would certainly add value to the life and work of CEPA. But retaining a competent and committed core staff is one of the hardest tasks and challenges ahead.

CEPA in many ways has tried to introduce innovation in their work. One such area is the design of the organisation. CEPA has made a conscious effort not to build the organisation around one leader. Instead CEPA has promoted a collective leadership and self-driven management style rather than control. This makes CEPA very different from other organisations. However, it is not easy to sustain and continue such organisational style of management in a context where the "balancing" and "neutralizing" act performed by PIMU will come to an end. This is another major challenge ahead for CEPA. Unless the new ED makes a conscious effort in this respect or the Board performs the "balancing" and "neutralizing" act, CEPA runs the risk of becoming a typical Sri Lankan organisation as far as management style is concerned.

Ownership remains an unanswered question. CEPA is generally a staff-driven organisation. The Board plays a supportive and guiding rather than a steering role. The sense of membership among members also seems limited. In this

sense, who are CEPA's real owners? Is it prudent to allow the staff to drive the organisation? At the moment, nobody clearly claims the ownership of CEPA (not in a legalistic but broader sense). Perhaps this is because PIMU acted as a sort of guardian of CEPA. But PIMU's complete withdrawal will necessitate CEPA to give more thought to the issue of ownership.

A slight tension seems to be developing within CEPA as to what it should be like in the future. The tension is around the emphasis of CEPA's research work. The debate takes the form of academic research vs. applied research. It is in this context that staff defined CEPA in the form of what it is not. This tension, in a way, is quite natural. For four years, CEPA has had a "hybrid" style in its work and outlook. As CEPA is maturing as an organisation, it is natural for it to make choices and work within an appropriate niche.

Perhaps this is also the beginning of the unravelling of complexities camouflaged hitherto under the elegant term "hybridity". The unravelling process will be sometimes painful and will cause frictions and tensions within and between the key stakeholders of CEPA – the staff, Board and members. This could also be a beginning of a process where the sense of ownership would be developed and claimed. CEPA has become 'hybrid' partly due to the 'neutralizing' effect or 'balancing' act performed by the Senior Advisor with the backing of PIMU/GTZ. The inputs by the Senior Advisor with his strong background in Organisation Development and networking cannot be underestimated. CEPA's claim of not being an ideologically-oriented organisation and one that does not engage in research from a political point of view could also be due to this neutralizing or balancing effect of the GTZ input.

Organisations are not completely apolitical spaces. It is natural for an organisation that engages in poverty issues to witness the creeping in of political and ideological positions. The preferences and priorities for work and strategy will also change as a result. It is inevitable for CEPA to experience this in the aftermath of PIMU's complete withdrawal and the Senior Advisor's departure. This crucial period coincides with the arrival of a new ED for CEPA. The impact of this should not be underestimated as CEPA has been used to function without a head or with many heads, or by 'auto-piloting' as one member remarked. All in all, it will be a turning point of the evolution of CEPA's organisational life. It will also be a litmus test for CEPA to prove its claims of being 'hybrid', 'independent' and 'Sri Lankan'.

2.3 One Destination, Multiple Routes? Influencing Poverty Related Policies

Hans Gsänger and Shelton Wanasinghe

Contents	<i>Page</i>
1. Introduction	113
2. Scope for Influencing Poverty Reduction Policies by a Local Knowledge Centre	115
3. Policy and Decision Making for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka	116
3.1 Institutions of governance	
3.2 The donor community	
3.3 Organisations of civil society	
4. Policy Influence as Revealed in the Self-assessments	121
4.1 Assessment of channels and avenues of policy impact	
4.2 Examples of policy-relevant activities and outcomes	
5. Assessing PIMU/CEPA's Outcomes and Impacts on Poverty Reduction Policies	128
5.1 Macro policies	
5.2 Strategies at the meso level	
5.3 Strategies at the micro level	
6. Conclusions and Recommendations	132

2.3 One Destination, Multiple Routes? Influencing Poverty Related Policies

1. Introduction

After six years of implementation, the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) will come to a close in April 2005. Yet, continuity is assured with the PIMU facilitated establishment of the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in 2001. CEPA serves as a well recognised Sri Lankan knowledge and excellence centre with growing links into the South Asian region.

This chapter examines and assesses the policy orientation and policy impacts of the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit and the Centre for Poverty Analysis. PIMU as well as CEPA aim at pro-actively contributing to a more pro-poor orientation and impact of development cooperation in Sri Lanka.

PIMU was set up with a policy-oriented mandate, to provide professional services on poverty related issues such as,

- A more stringent poverty orientation of projects and programmes,
- A restructuring of the monitoring system towards measuring poverty outcomes and impacts rather than outputs.

When the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) launched the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit project in 1998, it was welcomed on the part of the External Resources Department (ERD) of the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the co-ordinating body for foreign aid to Sri Lanka. However as PIMU was perceived as a novel approach, and not only within the Sri Lankan context, ERD proposed a project architecture that should first focus on GTZ supported bilateral projects. After a period of experience and testing, the project could explore options for institutional integration.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Objectives and methodological approach

Specific objectives of this review are to,

- Assess the influence of PIMU/CEPA upon donor funded projects in Sri Lanka by studying possible impacts;
- Examine PIMU/CEPA's role and influence on the monitoring of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS);
- Evaluate PIMU/CEPA's contributions to the public and academic discourse on poverty measurements and definitions;
- Measure PIMU/CEPA's share in institutionalising poverty related capacity building at University of Colombo, and finally
- Appraise PIMU/CEPA's contributions to the GTZ policy debate on poverty and monitoring.

A two-tier approach has been used in this evaluation. The first tier is a self-assessment of the policy relevance of the work of PIMU/CEPA and PIMU supported units such as the Program for Improving Capacities for Poverty and Social Policy Research (IMCAP) at the University of Colombo. The self-assessment was conducted among those with a close working knowledge of CEPA, including PIMU/CEPA senior staff.

The second tier involved in-depth interviews with resource persons: including central government representatives (policy and decision-makers), representatives of selected Colombo donor offices (bilateral and multilateral), selected representatives of research and training institutions (university, public policy research and so on), and selected representatives of national and international NGOs.

While self-assessment used a standardised questionnaire, a semi-structured questionnaire was used for the in-depth interviews. In order to trace the intended and unintended policy influence of PIMU/CEPA's professional work the following questions were explored,

- The main area of co-operation (objectives, why cooperation with PIMU/CEPA, when, what, how often, main outputs),
- The intermediate use of output leading to poverty relevant outcomes,

- The intended and actual impacts of these outcomes, and
- The plausible link of the impact to the cooperation with PIMU/CEPA.

2. Scope for Influencing Poverty Reduction Policies by a Local Knowledge Centre

As described in its annual report¹, CEPA was conceived to fill the institutional space in independent poverty research and analysis by providing specialised poverty related services. CEPA's objectives are to provide independent analysis on the causes, characteristics and impacts of poverty in Sri Lanka, to strengthen capacities of development organisations and professionals in order to better monitor poverty related impacts, and foster know-how transfer and policy dialogue on poverty using multiple institutional and instrumental approaches.

In the course of this review, sufficient evidence was found in favour of PIMU/CEPA influence on policies, in particular by using one of the following channels and avenues,

- Policy advisory services at central government levels,
- Participating in high level discussion groups and fora,
- Organising professional conferences, research symposia and public policy seminars,
- Advising policy and decision-makers and their organisations/institutions,
- Shaping/authoring/co-authoring policy documents,
- Conducting policy relevant research and consultancy work,
- Building personnel and institutional capacities, and
- Organising public discourse events

The most pronounced policy impact can be found at the micro level to include bilateral and multilateral projects, and at the meso level, to include donor programmes.

However, some policy influence of PIMU and CEPA can also be traced at the macro level, at the level of national policies, for example policy regarding the

¹ *Annual Report 2003*, Centre for Poverty Analysis.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Poverty Reduction Strategy, the monitoring of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty and Social Impact Assessments (PSIA).

The basic hypothesis of the reviewers is: *“that PIMU/CEPA applied a ‘multiple avenue’ approach to impacting poverty reduction policies in Sri Lanka and made intelligent use of the various institutional sub-sets of policy and decision-making in Sri Lanka”*.

The next section describes the process and context of policy-making on poverty reduction in Sri Lanka, in order to contextualise PIMU/CEPA policy-related impact.

3. Policy and Decision Making for Poverty Reduction in Sri Lanka

The discussion in this sub-section focuses on the structures, processes and personnel who influence the making of policies and strategies for poverty reduction in Sri Lanka in order to provide the context for:

1. Evaluating the degree to which PIMU/CEPA has been able during its period of operations to influence such policy and strategy making; and
2. Understanding the constraints that PIMU/CEPA had faced in maximising its influence.

The discussion recognises three sets of institutions and personnel who have a direct bearing on the designing and managing of policies and strategies relating to poverty reduction.

1. The **institutions of governance** including both political and administrative institutions that are located at the Centre of the polity, at the level of the provinces, and at the level of the local communities.
2. The **donor community** – both multilateral and bilateral – with its intra networks.
3. The organisations of the **civil society** – including those that operate at a national level as well as those operating at specific local community levels.

3.1 Institutions of governance

The institutions of governance at the Centre comprise:

- Ministries that deal with different sectors and sub-sectors of the economy as well as those that deal with issues related to external relations, finance, internal and external security;
- The Cabinet of Ministers;
- The Parliament; and
- The administrative structures that support each of the above.

Policy management in the government of Sri Lanka has, since independence, tended to be regarded as being the responsibility of each sector or sub-sector. As the decades continued, this authority and responsibility has been jealously guarded. In this context, the Cabinet of Ministers has remained a weak institution for public policy co-ordination – with each member merely endorsing the proposals of others without adequate analysis.

The Parliament has, at best, continued to function as a forum for political debate rather than as a forum for the informed discussion of policy options. It does not have a well-structured system of committees that could support informed analytical policy discourse.

No effective institutional arrangements have existed for the effective co-ordination of the different sector policies. The analysis of policy issues in regard to different sectors and sub-sectors has tended to be conducted within the privacy of the concerned sector or sub-sector ministries with hardly any serious attempts at the cross-sharing of policy issues.

In the above context, policies related to poverty reduction have been regarded as the domain of the Ministry that carried responsibility for the management of the current key poverty alleviation projects.² Before the onset of these projects, there was no concept of a policy framework that was focused specifically on

²These were the ministries responsible for the Janasaviya Programme since 1989 and the Samurdhi Programme that succeeded it, under a new Government, in 1994.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

poverty reduction.³ With this attitude to policy management, the sector-related policies – in their formulation as well as in their implementation – failed to be appraised for possible links with poverty reduction.

Given this context, it is to be expected that institutional capacity for poverty reduction related policy development and management has remained weak – both in terms of institutional structures and processes as well as in terms of human resources.

The Provincial Councils that were created through the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1987 were perceived to be institutional structures that were subordinate to the Centre. Hence, they have not perceived their role as being policy formulators for the relevant provinces. Instead, they have tended to regard their role as being that of implementers of strategies and activities that emanate from the Centre. The dependence of the Provincial Councils on the Centre for the main components of their expenditure requirements has contributed to this subordinate role becoming the norm. The outcome has been that the Provincial Councils have not developed serious levels of institutional capacity that would enable them to formulate Province-specific policy options, to analyse them and to formulate and implement them.

The local government institutions in Sri Lanka, as a rule, do not regard poverty reduction as one of their governance objectives. At best, several of them have tended, of late, to give some attention to measures to alleviate the effects of poverty – through interventions related to such matters as the improvement of housing, habitat and environment.⁴

³ The earlier initiatives, in the 1940s and the 1950s, that made a contribution to poverty reduction – the colonisation and land resettlement projects – were not viewed as poverty reduction initiatives.

⁴ This trend has been seen mainly in the more urban areas – that have these as major issues and also possess some degree of financial and managerial capacity to address them.

3.2 The donor community

The aid interventions of the donor community have generally lacked a specific focus on poverty reduction – except for the formulation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in 2001. This initiative remains, as in 2005, in the doldrums, affected by changes of governing regimes.

The general run of interventions in aid projects, tend to stress on major infrastructure projects, not necessarily directly related to locally specific needs of poverty reduction. There appears to be preference for major large-scale interventions. The policy agendas that are advanced tend to flow from global initiatives in the form of universal prescriptions. Given the constructs of policy management structures in Sri Lanka, it is rarely that such universal prescriptions are assessed in the context of Sri Lankan realities.

3.3 Organisations of civil society

Whilst the activities of organisations of the civil society have expanded over recent decades, they tend to suffer from a predilection to act in isolation, thus decreasing their impact on public policy management related to poverty reduction. In a large proportion of the organisations, the emphasis and pre-occupation tend to be at the levels of projects and activities rather than on policies.⁵

The current situation is characterised by an inadequacy of interface between the organisations of the civil society and the institutions of governance – particularly those that are involved in policy management. To an extent, this could be attributed to the suspicions that prevail in the government flowing from the preference governments and their bureaucracies have for institutions that could be influenced and controlled in their activities.

For academia to be active in issues of poverty reduction is a very recent development in Sri Lanka, where the academic community has but a minor influence on the government in regard to public policy formulation and

⁵ Exceptions are found, especially in cases such as the Centre for Policy Alternatives.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

management. It is, nevertheless, possible to discern instances⁶ wherein institutions in the academic community have succeeded in exercising an influence on policy. In the main, this has been the outcome of the ability of such groups to create public awareness through establishing an interface with groups in civil society. This points to a possible road ahead for influencing public policy on poverty reduction. In order to enhance their effectiveness in studying policy issues related to poverty reduction and in influencing the formulation of such issues, the academic community has to focus special attention on developing an in-depth awareness of Sri Lanka's poverty reduction issues – through training and capacity enhancement efforts.

The preceding discussion provides a contextual framework for the assessment of the contribution made by PIMU/CEPA towards the processes of policy formulation and implementation for poverty reduction in Sri Lanka. The discussion points to several areas that are related to policy formulation and implementation that have a bearing on the degree of impact that PIMU/CEPA was able to achieve. These include

- The absence of appropriate institutional arrangements for policy development and management within Sri Lanka's governance system at all three levels of governance – the Centre, the Province and the Local Community,
- The inadequacy of trained cadres for policy formulation and implementation within the government sector,
- The low impact that organisations of civil society have over the government's policy management process, and
- The inadequate emphasis on poverty reduction of interventions by the donor community.

The discussions in the succeeding sections relating to the impact of the activities of PIMU/CEPA on the influencing of public policy have to be placed in this context.

⁶ The establishment of IMCAP through the initiative of PIMU provides an interesting experiment in this direction.

4. Policy Influence as Revealed in the Self-assessments

The self-assessment was conducted among six persons that included senior staff members of PIMU/CEPA and IMCAP. It was designed in three steps and addressed the following issues:

1. Assessing the various avenues and channels of possible policy influence and impact according to their relative effectiveness: on a score between 1 (highly effective) and 5 (ineffective). As most instruments used by PIMU/CEPA could be linked to various political strata of influence, the respondents were also asked to differentiate their judgement according to the possible level of intervention: micro, meso, and macro.
2. Providing concrete and illustrative examples of policy relevant activities.
3. Assessing the relative importance of the various policy influences and impacts.

4.1 Assessment of channels and avenues of policy impact

The consolidated results of the assessment (table 1) indicate that the most effective manner of exerting policy influence/impact at all three levels – micro, meso and macro – is to assume a directly advising role and/or by shaping and/or co-authoring policy documents. This avenue or channel is seen as most appropriate when dealing with influencing policy-making at the micro level, or at the individual project level at which PIMU/CEPA was mostly engaged.

Participating at high-level discussions and fora, and organising public discourse events is rated as a less effective channel at all levels. While undertaking policy-relevant research and consultancy work is seen as effective at the meso and micro level, it is deemed as relatively ineffective at the macro level.

Lobbying and networking is rated as more effective than engaging in public discussion, particularly at the macro and meso levels.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Table 1: Potential scope of influencing policies as a local knowledge centre

Influencing policies	macro level: national policies e.g. PRS, MDG, SIA	meso level: donor programmes	micro level: bilateral and multilateral projects	Relative rank
By policy advisory services at central government levels	2.3	2.7	3.4	5
By participating in high level discussion groups and fora	2.9	2.6	3.3	6
By directly advising policy and decision-makers and their organisations/institutions	2.0	2.4	1.7	1
By shaping/authoring/ co-authoring policy documents	2.0	2.2	2.1	2
By policy relevant research and consultancy work	3.4	2.2	2.4	4
By building personnel and institutional capacities	3.1	2.5	2.1	3
By organising public discourse events	3.0	2.9	2.6	5
By lobbying and networking	2.6	2.1	3.1	3

Source: Self-assessments

Note: Ranking: 1= very effective, 2=effective, 3= less effective 4= poor scope, 5= no scope

The overall ratings also indicate that participation in high-level and public discourse events is viewed as less effective than direct engagement through the provision of advice or authorship of strategic policy documents.

4.2 Examples of policy-relevant activities and outcomes

The analyses and examples of policy-relevant work undertaken by PIMU/CEPA and IMCAP reconfirm the results of the above self-assessment. A professional unit/organisation such as PIMU/CEPA can be politically most effective at the micro level. When it comes to the meso level, that is the level of bilateral and multilateral donor programmes, it becomes more complex and delicate to handle.

There are often too many conflicting interests and cross-influences to clearly set significant and traceable marks. Even with respect to one's own peer group, for instance the Sri Lankan office of GTZ, proposed political adjustments meet some resistance.

The following are some of the examples and assessments of outcome.

Influencing the Sri Lankan PRS process

PIMU's engagement with the PRS process, began with an invitation by the External Resources Department, to participate in the series of Dialogue Workshops for the Sri Lankan Poverty Framework (1999-2000) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy (2001-2)

PIMU was involved with one of the working groups, which addressed issues of poverty measurements and monitoring, together with representatives from the National Planning Department (NPD), the Central Bank and the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS). This participation – which can be seen as participation in high-level fora, led to two outcomes.

Firstly, PIMU was asked to contribute to drafting the chapter on “Focusing on Results: The Monitoring, Evaluation and Planning Process”. The PRS dialogue workshops in 2001/2 led to the publication of the PRS document, which was officially presented by the government to the Development Forum in June 2002. The monitoring chapter of the 2002 Poverty Reduction Strategy document is largely based on the draft prepared by PIMU/CEPA with only minor changes made. It explicitly calls for the need to further improve poverty impact monitoring and refers to experiences gained at CEPA. It also proposes a multi-institutional monitoring arrangement for the PRS, coordinated by the MPDI (Ministry of Policy Development and Implementation) and comprising representatives from government, non-government organisations, the academic community and the private sector.

Secondly, another line of impact from this process was that members of the working group continued meeting at CEPA over 2002-2003 by transforming into the group of professionals to discuss a study critically reviewing Sri Lanka's

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

poverty measurement methodology. This study⁷ subsequently formed the technical background to an Asian Development Bank (ADB) funded programme on Poverty Assessment & Knowledge Management (PAM) at CEPA. Furthermore, the heightened discussion within the working group and in Open Forums organised by CEPA on Sri Lanka's existing Poverty Line, could be seen plausibly to have galvanised the DCS into a review, resulting in the publication of a new Official Poverty Line in mid-2004, as well as to increase dissemination and accessibility of its data

Facilitating the donor working group on Poverty / PRS monitoring

PIMU initiated and facilitated the Donor Working Group (DWG) on Poverty / PRS Monitoring operating from summer 2002 (after the Development Forum) to summer 2004 (before the establishment of the new mechanism for dialogue between development partners).

Coming into being after the June 2002 Development Forum, the DWG met on a monthly basis, chaired in rotation by the donors, e.g., GTZ, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), DFID (Department for International Development), ADB and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The aim of these meetings was to exchange information on poverty related policies/interventions and prepare for the invitation to participate in the proposed PRS Monitoring Team headed by MPDI.

With the change of government in December 2002, and subsequent presentation of a newly worked-out PRS⁸, which did not have the same degree of civil society and donor participation, the proposed 2002 PRS failed to take effect. Consequently, the DWG lost momentum and was eventually incorporated into the newly formed Working Group "Access to services and poverty" headed by the Secretary Ministry of Education under the quarterly meeting of development partners.

⁷ Gunewardena, D. (2004) *Poverty Measurement: Meanings, Methods and Requirements*, CEPA Colombo.

⁸ Government of Sri Lanka (2003) *Regaining Sri Lanka: Vision and Strategy for Accelerated Development*, Colombo.

After two years of activity preceding the 2002 PRS, there is no direct policy outcome as far as the PRS document is concerned. What does remain, however, is a dialogue mechanism for the government and the donor community with an opening for professional organisations such as CEPA. It remains to be seen in how far this new working group can influence future policies, namely the impending revision of the PRS in 2005.

Supporting the introduction of SLA and the establishment of MDG unit

On the invitation of the Secretary, Ministry of Finance and the MPDI, PIMU joined the Advisory Committee to introduce Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in December 2002. This committee subsequently transformed into the Advisory Committee for MDG-Monitoring in December 2003.

The Advisory Committee, PIMU and UNDP being the only two non-Sri Lankan representatives, guided the various UNDP funded activities of the MPDI for the introduction of SIA. These comprised conceptualising a SIA initiative for Sri Lanka, training of trainers, piloting SIA at district levels and consolidating experiences. The committee transformed into an MDG (Millennium Development Goals) Advisory Committee in December 2003 due to the need to produce the first MDG report of the Sri Lanka government in 2004. This committee is still in existence, although there have not been any meetings since September 2004. The outcome of this process is Sri Lanka's first MDG Report and includes policy recommendations on programme adjustments of relevant line ministries. Parallel to this, CEPA was contracted by the MPDI to prepare a Trainer Manual on SIA in early 2004, for use by MPDI staff in training M&E officials at the district levels.

Fostering a National Evaluation Policy

PIMU was invited to join the Executive Council of the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association (SLEvA) as the Honorary International Member, to replace the seat vacated by the UNDP representative in early 2002.

At the SLEvA Annual Sessions in spring 2002 (sponsored by PIMU), the Secretary, Ministry of Finance / MPDI, invited SLEvA to translate its expertise

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

into policy relevance and prepare a draft for a 'National Evaluation Policy'. PIMU provided support to SLEvA on brainstorming for this document, the draft of which was presented in early 2004 to the MPDI. However, with the change of administration and subsequent departure of senior bureaucrats within the MoF and MPDI that supported this process, no progress has been seen on it.

Fostering poverty impact monitoring

In addition to a potential impact on the DCS to review its existing poverty line, the PIMU initiative in setting up the Working Group on Poverty Measurement and Information, led to the publication of *Poverty Measurement: Meanings, Methods and Requirements* (CEPA 2004). The book has also given more attention to expanding the present poverty line by using non-consumption measures to measure poverty.

Another initiative at the macro level was the Welfare Sector 'Public Expenditure Review' (PER) undertaken by CEPA for the World Bank in Sri Lanka. The PER touched on the controversial Samurdhi poverty alleviation programme and recommended potential reforms. The outcome was meant to directly input into the government's medium term budgetary framework and the recommendations seemed to find acceptance among the government 'reformers' in the steering committee that accompanied the PER process. Similar to the fate of PIMU/CEPA's other policy relevant initiatives, following the delivery of the final draft report in March 2004, the premature general elections on 2nd April led to a change of government and subsequently a halt to this reform process.

Policy impact on poverty impact monitoring at the project (micro) level is more pronounced through advisory services, especially if it takes place on a longer-term basis and at the early stages of the project design. According to the assessment by CEPA staff, these longer-term inputs allow for a good rapport to build up between the project management and PIMU/CEPA, which leads to more pronounced impact by way of changes by the client in its monitoring practices. Examples include advisory support to the GTZ PRIMUSS project (Participatory Improvement of Underserved Settlements), which resulted in non-project departments of the Colombo Municipal Council taking initial steps to introduce poverty impact monitoring for selected activities.

At the meso level, one instance of potential impact was the ex-post evaluation of a GTZ project⁹, undertaken by CEPA in 2003-2004. The study, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), led to its calling for responses from GTZ on a number of critical observations made in the report. While the policy outcome of this is to be seen, it is one of the few instances of a client directly reacting on recommendations made in a research report.

As regards macro level policy impact, while PIMU had focussed on influencing PRS, MDG and PSIA policy areas, senior staff within CEPA point out that since CEPA has not yet identified a particular policy area to influence in a sustained and proactive manner, impacts that have occurred have been almost by default rather than by design.

Policy influence does not work simply according to a linear and a rational logic: do research, write reports, discuss with policymakers and influence policy. As also seen in section 3, policymaking in Sri Lanka applies a parallel rationale, with networking and direct lobbying potentially yielding opportunities for more meaningful impact, as was seen in the case of PIMU/CEPA engagement with the PRS process, with the proviso that these are made on a sound basis of research.

For instance participation in forums and associations such as the Lanka Forum for Rural Transport (LFRTD), which advocates various pro-poor rural connectivity issues, can lead to policy influence via the state sector members represented in the Forum.

Capacity building within Sri Lankan universities

The pilot project facilitated by IMCAP at the University of Colombo, and supported by PIMU to introduce applied study streams for undergraduates, led to the recognition by the University Grant Commission (UGC) and the Ministry for Higher Education as an innovative contribution to improve employability

⁹ Bastian, S. et al (2004) *Working Elephant or Perabera Elephant? An Ex-Post Evaluation of the Regional Rural Development Project, Kandy, CEPA, Colombo*

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

of social science graduates. The UGC acted on this by requesting IMCAP to submit proposals to the UGC to receive more support.

In addition, assignments undertaken by IMCAP such as the ILO “School-to-Work-Transition” survey led to its use as one of the main documents to formulate the conceptual guidelines for the Sri Lankan government’s participation in the UN “Youth Employment Network” (YEN) activities.

5. Assessing PIMU/CEPA’s Outcomes and Impacts on Poverty Reduction Policies

This discussion recognises that during the six years PIMU and CEPA have been active, they have sought to contribute to the evolution of poverty reduction policies in Sri Lanka. The several avenues through which PIMU/CEPA has sought to make such a contribution have been discussed in the preceding sections. This section will attempt to assess the impacts of such contributions on the poverty reduction policies as they have evolved over time. The assessment will be presented at the three levels of policy management in Sri Lanka – the macro level, the meso level and the micro level.

Whilst all these three levels have their individual relevance, it is important to recognise that given the governance culture in Sri Lanka, what would be most important is the degree to which it has been possible to influence the formulation, content and implementation of macro policies. Without changes in the policies at this level, the impacts on micro level policies would lack sustainability and the impacts on meso level policies would fail to be translated into Sri Lanka’s national policy framework on poverty reduction.

5.1 Macro policies

It is possible to identify several instances where PIMU/CEPA was able to contribute to the policy discussion on poverty reduction. One such episode was PIMU/CEPA’s involvement in the preparation of the PRS in which PIMU/

CEPA contributed substantially to the section on Monitoring and Evaluation. This can be seen as a valuable and innovative contribution to a national public policy document directly relating to poverty reduction.

A similar attempt at contributing to the policy level was made through the Public Expenditure Review (PER) exercise led by the World Bank. The recommendations contained therein were accepted as part of the financial reform programme.

Both these instances also underline the impediments that are inherent in attempts directed towards influencing poverty relevant public policy in Sri Lanka. The recommendations suggested – and generally accepted – in the case of the PRS lie in limbo due to the political changes that occurred in December 2002.¹⁰ Similar was the fate of the recommendations that were built into the PER exercise, that remain to be accepted at the policy level as a consequence of the changes in the political regime in April 2004.

The ‘Open Forums’ that have been regularly conducted by PIMU/CEPA appear to have had a reasonable measure of impact on the approaches to public policy concerning poverty reduction. There has been a measure of consistency in the participation – individual as well as institutional – in these activities. Some examples include the poverty measurement discussion in Sri Lanka, which was re-opened by the Forum and the discussion on MDG indicators, which helped government officials in maintaining the issue on the agenda.

It is accepted by most observers, that PIMU/CEPA was an innovator in providing the knowledge inputs to overcome the long-standing bias in Sri Lankan public policy management of being traditionally focused on the outputs of individual projects and, instead, to move its focus to the impact of multi-project programmes. Given the strength of the bias towards project outputs, it has to be recognised that considerable efforts would need to be mounted by CEPA in the future to ensure that this change of focus becomes sustainable.

The above indicate the problems that institutions such as CEPA encounter in leaving a lasting and sustainable impact on public policy in Sri Lanka. The

¹⁰ Both versions (2002 and 2003) of the Poverty Reduction Strategy remain unendorsed by the present government, who is preparing an updated version.

discussion below would attempt to deal with some possible approaches to overcoming these problems.

5.2 Strategies at the meso level

For the purpose of this discussion, the meso level is regarded as the level at which the donor community – multilateral as well as bilateral – provides financial and technical assistance to the government of Sri Lanka for activities designed for poverty reduction. This, in the Sri Lankan context, constitutes a critical level in the exercises that together constitute the country's approach to poverty reduction – given the reliance of the government on external aid in its poverty reduction efforts. Hence, the policy approaches that form the framework in the designing of aid interventions by the donor community are of critical importance in the strategies and interventions, which are ultimately supported by donors.

This discussion draws attention to two characteristics that relate to external aid for poverty reduction which influence the policy context at the level of this interface. The first, is that the 'policy frame' of donors tends to be influenced by the prevalent 'global policy perspectives'. This is especially so in the case of the multilateral sub-group of donors. The second is that the policy preferences that are current in donor country capitals tend to influence the approach of the bilateral donors.

What would be critical, therefore, in this milieu is for Sri Lankan policy institutions to inject the Sri Lankan policy realities into the process of formulation of policy agendas by the above two subgroups. The extent to which, during its initial phase, PIMU/CEPA has been successful in this regard, appears to have been modest.

Inadequacy of interaction with the donors as a community and as individuals appears to be the reason. This, of course, is not unexpected, given the time span of PIMU/CEPA's existence and the absence of an explicit policy engagement agenda. At the same time, the indications received point to a growing respect on the part of the donor community for the knowledge base and the competence-

level of CEPA. The involvement of CEPA on a number of donor-supported initiatives such as the PER, the recently contracted study “Moving Out of Poverty” that feeds into the World Bank’s 2005 Poverty Assessment, the acceptance of CEPA by the Asian Development Bank to execute the Poverty Assessment & Knowledge Management project, the DFID financed Poverty and Conflict Programme, and studies such as the “Portfolio Analysis of the Poverty Orientation of GTZ Supported Projects in Sri Lanka”¹¹, are some examples of the growing confidence and willingness of CEPA to engage in the mesolevel policy realm.

5.3 Strategies at the micro level

The instances where PIMU/CEPA intervened at the project level indicate that there has been a greater ability to influence poverty reduction strategies.

As the Portfolio Analysis clearly indicates, PIMU/CEPA’s influence at the micro level has been manifold. PIMU/CEPA often introduced the concept of poverty impact monitoring first, sensitised the various stakeholders by a series of trainings and helped to change thinking and behaviour. However, in spite of clear successes in introducing basic concepts, preparing the ground for impact monitoring and creating a new problem awareness and consciousness, PIMU/CEPA could not directly change the basic project policy decisions as they were contractually engrained in the bilateral agreements, which have been based upon technical proposals (Angebote/‘Offer Documents’).

However, in some cases PIMU/CEPA stimulated programmatic discussions. Studies such as the Portfolio Analysis, PRIMUSS and a series of Poverty Briefs produced for OXFAM Sri Lanka have become important discussion documents at strategic planning sessions and for development professionals at the senior management level.

¹¹ CEPA (2002) *A Portfolio Analysis of the Poverty Orientation of the GTZ Country Assistance Programme to Sri Lanka*, Colombo.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

The actual changes usually coincided with a change in staffing or as a follow-up to a project progress review or with the start of new projects and programmes. Interviews during this review mission with resource persons also gave some evidence that PIMU/CEPA influenced the thinking of decision-makers and so prepared the ground for a more explicit poverty orientation on part of the Sri Lankan partners.

Finally, PIMU/CEPA acted as an amplifier for a new poverty reduction thinking by conducting a number of project level studies stressing the importance and appropriateness of qualitative methodologies. As these studies were commissioned by influential multilateral and bilateral agencies, they were widely acknowledged.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Several lessons emerge from the experience of PIMU/CEPA that could be applied in the future for enhancing the policy impact of its work. These are presented in summary form in the discussion that follows.

One possible approach to countering the difficulties of leaving a lasting impact on the policy process would be to seek strategies for building support constituencies around the policy recommendations that are made by CEPA in its ongoing work. Such constituencies should be conceived as multiple support groups that include – as appropriate – civil society organisations, media groups, academia, multi-partisan political groups, cells in the bureaucracy, public sector training institutions and so on. As pointed out by a number of resource persons, active networking is a must when engaging in the policy realms, together with the need to be “visible and audible”.

Another possible approach is to create widespread general awareness on the policy changes that are proposed through public seminars and by establishing links with the print and electronic media. Such an approach would involve contributing to knowledge enhancement of the media personnel themselves. This would, necessarily, entail the use of the national languages – Sinhala and Tamil.

CEPA professionals indicated that CEPA has more influence presently on the micro level. However, it is the opinion of the reviewers that while an organisation such as CEPA seems to be more successful in playing a politically constructive and influential role at the micro level, if its professionals are able to intelligently handle and pro-actively network and co-operate with representatives of the various political subsets of Sri Lanka, even some influence at the macro level might be possible.

Given the realities of the governance culture in Sri Lanka, it is obvious that the interface between CEPA and the governance institutions at the policy level would be strengthened if senior staff members of the organisation led younger researchers in such an interface. This is important in the relationship-milieu of the Sri Lankan culture.

A useful instrument for influencing the bureaucracy in its approach to poverty-reduction-related policy would be to seek the partnership of the Public Sector Training Institutions such as SLIDA (Sri Lanka Institute for Development Administration) and its provincial branches, ARTI (Agriculture Research Training Institute) and the Central Bank Training Institute. Similar efforts can be made civil society organisations such as Sarvodaya, SANASA, and the Centre for Policy Alternatives.

It is important for CEPA to allow the decision-makers in the polity and in the bureaucracy to take credit for initiatives in policy changes. For this to occur, in instances wherein such policy levels are to be influenced, such interactions should be arranged as events that are ‘non-public’ and restricted. Such interchanges would require the use of the national languages.

It is also important to recognise that the decentralised administration, especially the Provincial Councils would be increasingly critical in the poverty related policy interface. This calls for dedicated exercises in policy-based interactions with members of Provincial Councils. Here, again, the languages of discourse – Sinhala and Tamil – would be important.

Interactions with academia would be an important policy influence tool. These should be broad-based – not confined to those engaged in the social science

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

sectors. It is important to draw in sectors that, for example, are technology or culture related.

Most importantly, the positive achievements need to be spread across the governance system as a whole and civil society as well as with the donor community. For this to happen:

- Written material, on the lessons, needs to be developed, and this should be subjected to targeted group discussion as well as shared with higher levels in Government and the donor community.
- Visits by those in policy levels of government should be organised to the project locale.
- Interactions should be provided with private sector organisations – e.g. business chambers.
- The experience should be shared with other Provinces through visits and conferences.
- The impact of the ‘Open Forums’ could be enhanced through an approach of being ‘selective’ in inviting targeted participants to them. The ‘Open Forums’ should not be regarded as ‘events’ but as instruments for influencing policy.
- Some possible approaches to enhancing the influence on the donor community concerning their policy stances would include the conduct of regular interactions with the donor community as a whole on a 3-monthly or 6-monthly basis to discuss CEPA policy findings with them.
- Ensuring opportunities for interactions with periodic donor missions as they visit Sri Lanka. Such opportunities should be used to introduce the Sri Lankan policy realities, as identified by CEPA through its research, into the policy discourse of the relevant donor multilateral and bilateral agencies
- The practice should be introduced of sharing CEPA publications with key persons in the donor community.

It would appear that the influencing of public policy relating to poverty reduction has, hitherto, figured as an ancillary objective of the different activities that PIMU/CEPA has undertaken in its initial phase of activities. It is the view of this discussion that in the future this should change. This suggestion is made in the

context of the Sri Lankan reality that there is no other focal point as CEPA that is strategically placed as well as equipped for the task of influencing public policy on poverty, given its specific institutional focus. The analyses and suggestions that have been made earlier in the discussions have been made with this context in mind.

Hence, it is the conclusion of this paper that the planning and implementation of the activities of CEPA in the future should be deliberately woven around the objective of influencing poverty-related policies.

In order for its policy interventions to be sustainable, CEPA, in developing its policy stances, should accept the inevitability of regime-change in the Sri Lankan polity as a given reality and plan strategies to overcome any negative fallout.

2.4 Butterfly, Elephant, Eagle or Monkey? The Shadow Sides of CEPA

Anne Fisser and Nireka Weeratunge

Contents	<i>Page</i>
1. Introduction: <i>or why butterflies, elephants, eagles and monkeys are important for the PIMU end of project review</i>	139
2. Methodology: <i>or how we proceeded to get a different perspective</i>	140
3. Analysis Part I: <i>or what makes CEPA tick</i>	144
4. Analysis Part II: <i>or how PIMU has rubbed off on CEPA</i>	178
5. Conclusions: <i>or the replicable and the unique</i>	187

2.4 Butterfly, Elephant, Eagle or Monkey? The Shadow Sides of CEPA

1. Introduction: *or why butterflies, elephants, eagles and monkeys are important for the PIMU end of project review*

As the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) comes to an end in 2005, one of the main impacts being assessed is the institutionalisation of poverty impact monitoring in the Sri Lankan organisational landscape. The other chapters in this review use a more conventional approach and procedures of project evaluation to look at PIMU's interventions. They provide insights and learning experiences on various aspects of these interventions, focusing primarily on the formal structures and processes that were used by PIMU to reach its objectives. In chapter 2.2 on institutional viability, the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) is described as one of the major outputs of PIMU. By most standards of institutional development – whether in terms of the number of projects it has handled or the financial resources it has mobilised, PIMU's major creation, CEPA, has grown exponentially in its three years of existence. This chapter is concerned mainly with the question: What makes CEPA as an organisation tick?

To get a grasp of the inner dynamics of the organisation, one may well look at what could be characterised alternatively as the “shadow side”, the “night reality”¹ or the “inner reality” of CEPA. Whether this facet of CEPA is considered the dark side of the earth during that part of the day when it does not receive the light of the sun or the dynamic inner core underneath the earth's crust, the concern is about a generally neglected part of development outcomes. Development is often conceptualised as a planned rational process, which is

¹ Hoegger, Rudolf (1993) *Naga and Garuda: The Other Side of Development Aid*, Sahayogi Press, Kathmandu.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

epitomised by the log frame. The log frame incorporates the processes of conceptualisation, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation, where inputs are provided and outputs anticipated, all leading to the attainment of certain development objectives. Log frames by their very nature do not have the space for anticipating, describing or generally taking into account the invisible, vague, unintended processes and forces that contribute to driving development projects. This is especially true for the feelings of pride, respect, recognition, or fears, frustrations and uncertainties of individual actors involved in development. The fact that these shape the identities of the people involved, as well as their contribution to the development process and outcomes, often goes unacknowledged. Projects rarely proceed according to the logic of the log frame. As Hoegger (1993) points out, much of human development is determined by forces other than those which are readily and outwardly perceived. To understand project success or failure therefore, it is very important to look at the process or the means of getting somewhere rather than the concrete output, especially if the output has been substantial and it becomes important to discover why things worked out the way they did.

The obvious, tangible, controllable and measurable parts of PIMU's development interventions can be described in the vocabulary of "positive" sciences such as that of development economics, statistics and management. However, this assessment, in focusing on the intangible and immeasurable facets of the development process, relies on the vocabulary of the "soft" sciences – sociology, anthropology and psychology – looking at the relationship between people and the organisational culture that has shaped the development outcomes of PIMU by way of CEPA.

2. Methodology: *or how we proceeded to get a different perspective*

Conceptual issues

To get a grasp of the "shadow side" of PIMU, what is generally considered in institutional analysis as the "organisational culture" of CEPA was explored. An anthropological approach to culture—as a set of meaningful yet often taken-for-

granted codes and rules with which members of a society orient themselves in their interaction with other people and the environment, as they go about their daily lives (Keesing 1981, Geertz 1973)²—has been used in this analysis. Individuals follow, modify, defy and interpret these codes and rules to fit the situations in which they find themselves. This is somewhat different from notions of culture used in business studies where culture is often considered to be a “thing” that an organisation (as in “organisational culture”) possesses, encompassing shared values, attitudes and behaviour (see the critique of Wright 1994)³. Anthropology has been moving further and further away from this static concept. Thus, culture is emphasised here as being meaningful processes, as “ways of doing” that need to be interpreted rather than “states of being”, that are taken for granted. What is important is that in a dynamic perspective on culture, the actors who contribute to the creation of culture by their knowledge and practice play a pivotal role. When such an actor-centred dynamic perspective is adopted, it implies that there is also a clear preference for regarding culture not as a singular entity but composed of multiple strands, and sometimes even of contested subcultures.

To understand the relationship between the people who make up CEPA and the organisation an anthropological perspective (Fortes 1983, Daniel 1983, La Fontaine 1985, Lamb 1997)⁴ of the “person” has been used. This approach incorporates but moves beyond the sociological concept of “self”, which is the individual’s awareness of his/her unique identity, acquired in interaction with society. In contrast the “person”, is the society’s (organisation’s) confirmation of the individual’s identity as socially significant (La Fontaine 1985). Personhood is defined, measured and valued differently across cultures. Generally in South

² Keesing, R. “Theories of culture”. In R.W. Casson (Ed.) (1981) *Language, culture and cognition*. New York: Macmillan. Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of culture*. New York: Basic Books.

³ Wright, S. (Ed.) (1994) *Anthropology of Organisations*, London: Routledge.

⁴ Fortes, M. (1983). “Problems of Identity and Person”. In A. Jacobson-Widding (Ed.) *Identity: Personal and Socio-cultural*. Uppsala: Uppsala University Press; Daniel, V. (1984). *Fluid signs: Being a person the Tamil way*. Berkeley: University of California Press; La Fontaine, J.S. 1985. Person and Individual: Some Anthropological Reflections, in, *The category of the person: Anthropology, philosophy, history*. Edited by M. Carrithers, S. Collins and S. Lukes, pp. 123-40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Lamb, S. 1997. “The making and unmaking of persons: Notes on aging and gender in North India”. *Ethos* 25:3.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Asia, personhood is primarily defined by one's relationship to other persons (and these relationships are often hierarchical) and only secondly by qualities or attributes. At CEPA the recruitment policies emphasised a certain "fit" between the individual and the organisation, where the "CEPA person" was defined primarily through various qualities, attributes and skills. How far this worked out successfully for the process of the organisation and to what extent the success or failure of the organisation rested on attracting a certain kind of "person" who could maintain her/his sense of individuality or "self" is a fundamental question that will be addressed.

The authors started with a few loosely formulated hypotheses about what makes CEPA tick from observations and experiences with the organisation:

- The high motivation level and energy within the organisation is due to staff members not only accepting each other as professionals but also because they like each other on a personal level
- CEPA's identity and working style is influenced by the fact that women are the predominant gender at CEPA in general and at the management level in particular.
- The CEPA premises generate a positive energy and reflect CEPA identity
- CEPA as an organisation provides a lot of space for the individual "self" to unfold, to learn and to give the best

These hypotheses were "tested" in the preliminary round of questions with all staff members while paying special attention to things that might have been missed by listening to respondents on their views of the organisation and their role in it. Any preconceptions were held in suspense. "Grounded theory" in that sense is necessarily participatory because what the authors were looking for, was shaped by the communication between them and CEPA staff members.

Methods

To discover the intangible and immeasurable impacts of PIMU, a three-step process was adopted incorporating a number of methods, which follow the tenets of "grounded theory". The authors began with very open preliminary questions, which bring out almost subconscious inner perceptions through

creative and less threatening ways of thinking (animal and vehicle analogies of the organisation and the role the individual played in it, as well as very general questions on the impact of the organisation on the individual). The main objective was to verify the preliminary assumptions, to find new areas of inquiry important to CEPA staff and to get a sense of what would be the most significant areas of inquiry. All 26 staff members were interviewed in this first round.

Based on the results of this first step, a second step was embarked upon. This was to design and administer a “quantitative” questionnaire to all staff members via e-mail on the relationship between the individual and the organisation, the characteristics of the organisation as well as staff, and CEPA’s impact on their lives. Here the main intention was to identify majority and minority views on these issues as well as to get anonymous feedback on issues that staff members would rather not discuss face-to-face. There were 23 responses to this questionnaire.

Based on the results of the two previous steps, the third step was designing and administering an in-depth qualitative questionnaire with a purposeful sample of 12 staff members to explore the same issues further and “get flesh onto the bones”. The sample was selected to represent the various types and ranks of staff in the organisation (such as professional, administrative, support; junior/senior), gender, ethnic and national diversity.

In addition, relevant documents were reviewed such as annual reports of PIMU/CEPA and retreat documentation⁵ of CEPA which gave an insight into some of the less formal activities engaged in by the staff, as well as discussions on burning organisational issues and problems.

The choice of the two researchers to undertake this study was largely determined by the fact that both are anthropologists and therefore were considered competent to look at this intangible, immeasurable “shadow side” of PIMU, while having an insider/outsider perspective of the organisation. One being a training consultant to CEPA has participated in the retreats held by the organisation as well as other training workshops. The other is a former staff member who has

⁵These are documentations of annual organisational development retreats undertaken by CEPA

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

continued to be associated with CEPA. Thus, both have a grasp of the inner workings of the organisation while having a certain measure of distance and objectivity by not being involved with it on a daily basis. However, as the study is not only based on mere observations but also on “lived experiences” within CEPA, it will undoubtedly have biases, which the authors have tried to minimise by being reflective.

As in other participatory approaches, the process is as important as the outcome. Most staff members were very interested and motivated to share their ideas on what is special about their organisation. It was even felt that there was for some, a distinct need to discuss their concerns. It was observed that many discussions around the lunch table during the period of the review—and even afterwards—turned towards some of the questions asked by the reviewers and certainly contributed to an increased consciousness of CEPA staff members on the dynamics of their organisation.

The data analysis was written separately in order to confront the similarities and differences in the interpretations and to better understand the space of the authors’ interpretive domain. However, there were no major differences in interpretations as most of the work was focused on complementing each other where one person might have missed out the significance of a particular aspect, area or factor, or elaborated it more or less. Some effort was also required to integrate the stylistic differences in presentation between the two co-researchers.

3. Analysis Part I: *or what makes CEPA tick*

The relationship between the organisation and staff members: Imagining CEPA and one’s place in CEPA

Is CEPA a delicate butterfly opening out its wings in the sun? Is it a wild elephant plodding through the jungle or a work elephant helping to transport logs? Is it an eagle soaring over a mountain ridge? Is it a herd of playful monkeys, chattering and swinging on the tree-tops? Is it a comfortable and reliable station wagon or a flashy sports car? These were some of the images that flashed into the minds

of staff members when they were asked to think of CEPA as either an animal or a vehicle. Other animals included a chimpanzee, dog, parrot, bird and worm. Other vehicles included a bus, train, antique car, a VW (Volkswagen) beetle, an airplane and jet skis!

The choice of the chimpanzee was explained by the characteristics of having fun, being smart, adaptive, dexterous and challenging leaders. The herd of monkeys, it was pointed out, looked chaotic from the outside but had an internal structure, there were few individuals with authority, and everyone was casual and restless. The dog was seen to signify loyalty, security and friendliness. Unity and noise, ability to talk well and causing no hurt to others was perceived as characteristics of a flock of parrots. Flexibility, freedom and adulthood were associated with the bird. The eagle was explained as a proud, focused, strong, stable, dedicated bird, which would do what it set out to do, even if it had to circle for some time. The worm was perceived in terms of an animal that spends time underground and experiencing things happening underneath the surface. Vehicle analogies generally emphasised strength, quality, durability, reliability, speed and space for many people, as well as freedom and flexibility. The VW beetle in addition was pointed out as a German make! The train provided an image of linking together different people in the form of compartments. The sports car was explained as a vehicle that looked good, made people happy to ride in and was useful in some ways. The choice of the animal or vehicle appeared to have some link to the individual “self” of the staff member or what s/he wanted to be as a person in some cases.

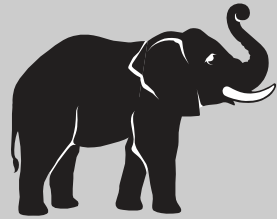
In a similar vein, staff members thought of themselves as trunks, eyes, wings, legs, antennae and hearts of animals, and front seats, jump seats, wind screens and wheels of vehicles. Overall, the animals or vehicles that staff associated CEPA with and the organs/parts with which they associated themselves tended to be positive images. Organs or parts chosen were those that were vital to the functioning of the animal or vehicle. Organs or parts were often very appropriate and provided graphic illustrations of the role of the person in the organisation. They did not necessarily have a link to the hierarchical position of the staff member within the organisation. In general, the longer the staff member had

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

stayed in the organisation, the more positive the image and the more important their role in the organisation. This extended equally to the professional, administrative and support staff. The majority of new staff members also viewed the organisation and their role within it positively. There was a minority among new staff members whose image of the organisation and/or themselves in it was negative. However, the negative views were generally offered in a perceptive and critical spirit and rarely in a wholly negative manner.

CEPA – an elephant?

“I compare CEPA to an elephant because of its strength. It takes strong decisions, but can’t run very fast. As CEPA, the elephant does everything very openly, not around the bush. The elephant, as CEPA, does what it wants to do, even if others do not like it (For example: CEPA writes in the report the real findings from the field research, even though the client might not like it.)



I would be the trunk of the elephant. The trunk has to do everything; it can’t do anything without the trunk. It is a multifunctional organ. Whatever the elephant wants to do, the trunk is the part to do it; it can implement everything.

I feel well placed as the trunk because I like to do a variety of tasks. Like this, you improve yourself and it helps everybody. The trunk serves two things: internal taking of food and water and external tasks like carrying loads for the clients. I think others are also well placed but some do not communicate enough with the other organs.

If at all, the feet would cause illness because the elephant is always on its feet, you never see it lying around. But the elephant gets rarely ill. If it gets ill, it gets ill from outside or if it is old.

The elephant CEPA is well nourished with everything.”

I would compare CEPA to a car . . .

“...not a modern, flashy car but a solid one which provides room for people to fit in different ways. It doesn't move very fast, but steadily and gets ahead.



As I carry a lot of burden and responsibilities on my shoulders, I would be the tyres of that car; be the foundation of the organisation. Sometimes it's heavy but I feel fine. I can do what and how I want. I do not have a sense of competition and have little ego, so I feel fine as tyres. Almost all others are well placed too.

If the vehicle breaks down, it would most likely be the engine – that is the management team. Some screws are lacking [with a laugh]. Another weak part is the steering wheel, which is Christoph [PIMU Senior Advisor]. What will happen if he goes away?

The car is well maintained and used. Good facilities and working environment are provided, good salaries, openness to personal problems, freedom to make mistakes . . . 'This car is very functional!'

CEPA - a butterfly?

“Like CEPA, a butterfly has its distinct phases of development. It undergoes a growth over stages in which it takes different forms and gradually becomes what it should be. It is self-contained and evolves internally. It becomes a real butterfly only at the end of the cocoon stage. If I think of CEPA, it is just in between: not yet left the old identity, not yet fully the new. As with CEPA, processes of change for butterflies are very slow.



I see myself as being one of the butterfly’s antennae, which has the task to find out what is to come, and how we have to react to this. My task is to get stimulated by the external and come up with new things, other issues the organisation or the butterfly has to look at and react to.

I think I am well placed where I am; I feel comfortable there because I am not yet able to see it from within. As the antenna of the butterfly I have more the outside perspective but am closely linked. Others might not be well placed; many don’t know which part of the animal they represent. They are confused because they constantly change the place but they can’t be the wings and the brain at the same time.

The wings are the weakest part of the butterfly. The wings are what bring the butterfly forward. In the stage the butterfly CEPA is (just developing as a butterfly) it has to meet many new challenges and if some of the driving forces break down, the entire being would lose its direction or even its ability to go.

At present, the butterfly is well fed but it still thinks it’s hungry. If it does not spend all its energy it will explode.”

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Most staff members considered the animal or vehicle to be wellfed or maintained. This was associated with attractive working conditions (salaries, insurance schemes, office equipment), adequate funds and competent people to do the work of the organisation. Some among the new staff thought it was pampered or had an imbalanced diet. These perceptions were explained in terms of the organisation not optimally using the resources available to reach its objectives, indecision on where to go and how to get there, as well as inadequate numbers of senior professional staff.

The majority of staff felt that they and others were well placed within the organisation. It was pointed out that people did things because they chose to do so or were able to do so, that they had space to change their position or task (get more into report writing, fieldwork or organisational activities) when they wanted to, and that their existing potential was well used and further developed (many opportunities for capacity building). Those who felt they or others were not well placed within the organisation explained that some were unclear about their specific tasks, sometimes there was an overlap of too many people doing the same thing or not enough people engaging in a specific task, or that some were having several different functions at the same time. This was perceived as leading to a waste of energy.

The perceptions of staff members of their place in CEPA reveal the impact of distinct features of CEPA, such as a relatively “flat hierarchy”, which allows staff to have an important say in what they actually do, the on-going feedback process, change of tasks and responsibilities based on choice and opportunities for capacity development. Interestingly many staff members saw the weakest aspect of the organisation as the lack of formal leadership in the form of an Executive Director - the absence of a person who took strong decisions and could be responsible for these. Although the lack of an Executive Director was to some extent compensated by a number of other persons/structures, some members were concerned about the sustainability of the organisation when the PIMU Senior Advisor left. On the positive side, this leadership vacuum has been taken as a challenge and opportunity by many staff members who occupy the free space, get involved in decision-making for themselves and the

organisation, take on responsibility and thus identify themselves increasingly more with CEPA.

A “CEPA person”?

To grasp issues of identity among CEPA staff members, the question of what makes a “CEPA person” was pursued. One way of approaching this problem was to look at the qualities or characteristics that were valued among staff and understand how many of these they would attribute to their colleagues. Among a long list of characteristics CEPA staff members like most in a person, honesty/integrity/sincerity, friendliness and openness/broad-mindedness scored the highest. Other often mentioned qualities were understanding, empathy, considerateness, humour, cooperation and intelligence. The majority said that most or all of CEPA staff members have all the characteristics they like most in a person. A minority said some of the staff members had all of the characteristics they liked in a person. Reciprocally, this common understanding of personhood was reflected also in the findings that the majority of CEPA staff members (15 out of 20) felt very well or quite recognised as persons and 18 out of 21 respondents felt quite or very comfortable at CEPA.

CEPA reacts very sensitively if there is a feeling that somebody might not fit in well. If communication seems to be very easy and informal between those who are like-minded, it nearly completely stops if somebody does not fit. Not feeling at ease in somebody’s presence is often enough—“bad apples are thrown out”, as one administrative staff member pointed out. Professional weaknesses seem to be acceptable and are often even openly discussed because these can be improved. Personal traits of misfits within CEPA are taken less as a challenge but much rather as a reason for exclusion. This observation is backed up by the fact that more CEPA staff members feel respected as persons rather than as professionals.

Most staff members at CEPA are critical thinking individuals with a clear sense of self. They are not the kind of individuals who would fit comfortably into being a “company man” in any organisation. CEPA as an organisation also does not have a clearly articulated sense of a “CEPA person”. At the same time, in its hiring process certain professional characteristics such as critical thinking, ability

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

to work independently, be a team player and creativity are valued. Not to mention certain qualities of the individual (that is the “self” part of the “like-mindedness” of staff members) critical to fit into the organisation as a “CEPA person.” During one of the CEPA retreats some staff members were given the task of designing an interview format for job applicants. They felt that apart from formal qualifications there is another decisive factor that is quite difficult to name precisely – the “fit” of the person into CEPA in general. Everybody knew immediately what was meant though nobody could explain it very well! The general fit with CEPA was taken up as a criterion and is now applied without any major difficulty – this can be considered to some extent as proof of a common understanding of “fit”. The authors’ observations indicate that among these qualities, of foremost importance are probably sincerity, a sense of humour and a work ethic. The importance of humour was highlighted in the quantitative part of the questionnaire where a majority of staff were described as “jokers”. The shared sense of humour is also obvious to anyone who observes CEPA staff at meetings.

Table 1: The proportion of CEPA colleagues ‘fit’ into the following categories

	Everybody	Too many	Quite a few	Just the right number	Only some	Not enough	Nobody
Leader		3	4	4	3	4	
Analyst	1	1	6	3	4	2	1
Manipulator	1	3	4	3	5		2
Teacher	1		1	2	6	4	3
Peace maker		1	5	2	7	3	1
Joker		4	5	6	1	3	
Negotiator			2	6	7	4	
Follower		2	8	1	4	1	1
Innovator		1	6	1	6	3	
Slacker		3			7	1	4
Doer	2	1	5	2	4	1	1
Pusher	1	3	4	3	4	2	
Team player	3		5	3	3	2	
Critic	4	2	6		3	2	

In analysing the findings of “types” or “categories” that individual CEPA members felt the staff predominantly fitted into (focusing on the “sufficient” side of the columns ranging from “everybody” to “just the right number”), following close behind the number of responses for jokers (15) are critics (12), analysts (11), leaders (11), followers (11), manipulators (11), pushers (11), team players (11) and doers (10). On the “lacking” side of the columns, “types” considered missing at CEPA were teachers (13), slackers (12), peace makers (11) and negotiators (11).

What is striking is the wide range of views on the “types” of people working at CEPA. It is clear that staff members do not feel that CEPA is attracting just one “type” of “person”. Staff members are recognised in a wide range of roles. As is to be expected with the kind of work ethic prevalent the “doers” at CEPA are many more than the “slackers”. CEPA is seen to have many critics and analysts as needed for the kind of work it does. It is noteworthy that the number of responses for leaders, followers and team players are similar. It reveals that while many staff members have leadership skills and are capable of taking initiative, the team concept at CEPA means that they are or will become team players and followers to some extent in the interest of the organisation.

There are no factions surrounding competing “big men” or clearly delineated sub-cultures within the organisation. However, as revealed in the in-depth interviews, there is a slight cleavage between senior and junior professional staff, most of which appears to be generational and/or stage of life cycle differences. This is partially reflected by ideological differences – senior staff tend to be liberal and open-minded, market-oriented and committed to incremental change. Some of the junior staff share the same outlook but others tend to be more radical or populist in their worldview. Among the junior staff are those who want to contribute to a direct impact on the poor through grassroots work while others want to support the concerns of activist or advocacy organisations. However, the majority of staff appear to share a commitment to increase the policy relevance of work done at CEPA, whatever their ideological differences.

In an organisation that prides itself on its professionalism in the development field, the reason more people feel better recognised as persons rather than

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

As professionals needs to be explained. Most staff members who felt they were not recognised as “professionals” understood the term to mean professionals of the field they were qualified for, such as being an economist, political scientist, sociologist, chartered secretary or accountant. At CEPA, a good many staff felt that they had to submerge this disciplinary identity and become a development professional. While becoming a development professional was not viewed necessarily in negative terms, some staff felt that they have lost to some extent their disciplinary identity and lacked sufficient time to keep up with the debates of their respective disciplines.

The ties that bind

The major ties that bind the staff were like-mindedness among individuals and a relaxed working environment and culture. Many were committed to working in the development sector but few had an explicit commitment to the issue of poverty per se.

Like-mindedness, mutual respect and the working environment were identified as significant bonds that keep CEPA together by all three types of staff—professional, administrative and support, despite coming from different socio-cultural and occupational backgrounds.

CEPA is a small and relaxed organisation where voices can be heard. It is exciting to be part of building such an organisation. (Administrative)

There are good relationships among the people – they are like-minded, have the same values, are the same age. (Junior professional)

We have a reasonably shared belief in the work we do—no matter how cynical you might be. We also have a shared interest in travel, nature – things you share above and beyond work. (Professional)

There is unity and we become close to each other in a cooperative environment; it is the luck of such people to get together and give strength to one another. (Support)

The work environment because it is relaxed and pleasant, having lunch together and discussing

non-work related things, the mission of CEPA (i.e. poverty-related work), an identity with CEPA as a growing and successful company, even the fact that there's lots of work for everyone make people bond. (Professional)

There is an automatic selection process of the kind of people who want to work in this sector. We share social bonds, which are travel and culture related – sub-sectors in the periphery of our work. We have a commitment to get work done. (Senior professional)

However, staff members who had stayed longer felt that the bonds have changed since the inception of CEPA.

Communication has changed a lot in the last years. The newcomers are not used to share, they think they know everything, they don't ask for feedback. As they ask less, you can give them less feedback, for example how to go and plan for fieldwork. (Professional)

Previously there was no space for sub-groups – the organisation was sufficiently small to be one group. There was much more space and time for discussions and arguments that are peripheral to the assignment but at the same time help in the work because it deals with the larger picture – this is missing now. Discussions now are often superficial and dealing with other interests not related to work such as photography, travel or archaeology. (Senior professional)

Both old and new staff members however felt that bonds among staff could change in the future, depending on how much and how fast the organisation would expand.

A lot of things work because CEPA is small. If it grows, things might change. (Professional)

Bonds between sub-groups are not very important now but could be in the future. Working in the same rooms as teams has broken the hierarchy to some extent, but you miss out on peer conversations. (Senior professional)

The work motivation among CEPA staff is exceptionally high, according to their self-assessment.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Table 2: Degree of motivation to work at CEPA

Degree	No of responses
Is very high	10
Is rather high	7
Is rather low	4
Is very low	

Note: Out of a total of 21 responses.

The high motivation levels were also evident during the discussions with the majority of staff.

The objective of CEPA, to contribute to the reduction of poverty, is an idealistic goal. It is different from making zippers in a factory. Working for and contributing to the reduction of poverty gives a sense of purpose to what is done. Therefore, the reviewers thought, it would be a motivating factor, especially for more idealistic, younger staff members. The results of the staff survey were in that sense a surprise:

Table 3: Motivation for working at CEPA

Motivating factors for CEPA staff	No of responses
Achieving outputs	8
Working in the development field	8
Good salary	7
Having a lot of learning opportunities	16
Working together with like-minded people	14
Having career chances	4
Working for the reduction of poverty	2
Anything else	2
No corruption	1
No explanation	1

Note: Up to three answers per person.

Working for the reduction of poverty is certainly not one of the key motivating factors. The access to a lot of learning opportunities scores highest followed closely by working with like-minded people. Working in the development field

and achieving outputs together, followed by good salary, were other significant factors. The turnover of staff at CEPA can be explained to some extent by the fact that accessing learning opportunities is a high motivating factor. Once a lot of learning is accomplished or staff members (the majority of whom are under 30) feel they want to learn something else, they are often ready to move on. In its hiring approach, CEPA tends to hire people who have access to many opportunities and alternatives rather than those who would stay on in the organisation because they have nowhere else to go.

Linking the finding that reduction of poverty is certainly not one of the key motivating factors to the answers provided by staff as to how far CEPA is reaching its goal of poverty reduction explains to some extent the contradiction between motivating factors and objectives of the organisation.

There is a feeling, especially among the younger staff, that CEPA is not reaching its goal of poverty reduction in a tangible manner. On the one hand, staff members know that CEPA is not an implementing agency and that they cannot expect to see direct impacts of their work at the grassroots level. The current intervention levels of CEPA are the level of their client organisations and the professional public via their publications, forums, conferences. Impact chains down to the grassroots or up to the political level, where the big decisions are made, are difficult to identify.

Given the high work motivation and the strong focus on development and output orientation of the staff members, this situation is likely to create some frustration: *“It’s a little de-motivating, we do not have proper channels where our findings fit in.”* Staff members feel uneasy to explain to outsiders the sense of their work. Others see the glass being half full and not half empty: *“Foundation stones are being laid to influence policy, to make a difference in poverty. We are not yet influencing enough, but the situation motivates me to push forward.”*

In addition to the motivating factors of the access to learning opportunities and a like-minded team, producing outputs and working in the development field far outweighed the idealistic goal of reducing poverty. While the organisation was initiated with the clear objective of working towards poverty reduction, the people

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

whom CEPA brought together were more committed to being part of a professional organisation that works efficiently in the development field. Whether the organisation needs the potentially motivating power of an idealistic objective shared by all, to keep the organisation together and coherent in the long-term, remains yet to be answered.

Competition or the lack thereof: The value of co-operation

To achieve high quality outputs is a major concern for most CEPA staff members. There are basically two ways to mobilise competences and capacities of staff members to a maximum:

- Put people in competition with each other and make sure, that everybody gives his/her best in order to prove that they are better than their colleagues.
- Promote co-operation and make sure that everybody contributes according to what he or she can do best.

CEPA clearly goes for the second alternative and seems to be successful with it. Co-operation (teamwork, joining hands, etc) was mentioned by more than half of the staff members as one characteristic, which makes CEPA different from other workplaces. Even though people think of themselves as being rather competitive individuals, they are mostly satisfied with integrating into teams. This is despite the fact that recognition for success and failure often goes back to the team and less to individuals.

Most tasks within CEPA are carried out by teams headed by a task manager or the programme coordinator. Teams change according to task. Often it is voluntary to join a team for a certain task. Towards the end of an assignment and with growing pressure to finalise work, more and more people get involved.

The effects of these procedures are clearly perceived by most staff members: They can work according to their preferences, they are provided with a lot of learning opportunities, they feel safe and taken care of, being part of a team. There is no harmful gossip and talk that hurts others. These are the positive effects.

Table 4: Perceptions of competition and co-operation at CEPA

How important is competition for you as a person in general?	No of responses
I am a rather competitive person	7
I am sometimes competitive	7
I am rarely competitive	4
I am not at all a competitive person	4
How important is competition within CEPA?	
Competition is very important	5
Competition plays a role sometimes	8
Competition plays a role rarely	8
Competition is not important at all	1
How important is co-operation at CEPA?	
Co-operation is very important	18
Co-operation plays a role sometimes	3
Co-operation plays a role rarely	1
Co-operation is not important at all	

CEPA staff members to all outward appearances appear to be high achievers who have to maintain high standards of performance. The survey revealed that as persons many considered themselves competitive. The majority of those interviewed felt however that there was little if any competition at CEPA. On the one hand, the team approach mitigates competition. On the other, most staff members as individuals proved themselves by undertaking to do a particular task well, rather than by competing against someone else. The consensus thus was that there was little competition:

There is some healthy competition, but never on positions/ persons only on tasks. (Professional)

There is nothing much to compete about since everyone has specific tasks; the team effort is a plus at CEPA. (Professional)

There was a view that some competition existed among the programme teams but this was never seriously taken.

There is some slightly silly competition among teams. (Professional)

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Several staff members thought that some competition was there at the level of junior professionals/professionals, which was positively perceived by a senior professional and negatively by a professional.

Maybe there is more competition on the junior level; it is good for them and for CEPA as they work a little harder. (Senior professional)

There isn't a high level of competition among individuals; although there is a perception among juniors that there is special treatment by seniors of some juniors. (Professional)

It was also pointed out that if there was competition it was not at the professional level but might be because particular persons might be competitive.

There is no professional competition but in specific cases there maybe personal competition. (Senior professional)

Thus, a minority of staff is not satisfied with the way CEPA deals with individual competition and co-operation. They feel that there is individual competition but as it has no official place within CEPA, it is not acted out openly but behind the scenes. Some also think they have less career chances because they cannot prove enough and make public their individual capacities or are not rewarded or recognised sufficiently for individual achievements. Moreover, they perceive that some hide behind the team in terms of quality and quantity of the work they deliver.

The affinity to co-operation instead of competition seems to increase with the number of years of experience and affiliation with CEPA. Staff who had worked at PIMU or from early on at CEPA recognise the advantages of co-operation more and at the same time complain that it is slowly decreasing because the organisation is growing and new staff members do not have the same philosophy of co-operation. Some fear that the growing differentiation of CEPA structure (programmes) will lead to more open and unhealthy competition among programme areas and that co-operation will be restricted to programme teams.

The overall assessment of valuing co-operation over competition is however, very positive. The importance of good co-operation among staff, be it

professional, administrative or support staff, was mentioned at several points during the discussion:

- Co-operation in the sense of helping out in times of stress is part of the organisational culture of CEPA
- Co-operation in the sense of giving and receiving open professional feedback in order to improve quality is also mentioned several times
- Everybody is more or less informed of what others are doing
- Builds up trust among staff members
- Co-operation as one of the reasons why people feel personally comfortable at CEPA and are motivated to work
- To have learnt to co-operate was, after the improvement of professional skills, the most frequent answer on the question on how CEPA has impacted on individuals

Overall, CEPA has apparently succeeded quite well to put together a team of high achievers, especially young people with a strong will and motivation to perform but, at the same time, are willing (because it is standard at CEPA or because it reflects their own personality) to co-operate closely and not put individual achievements in the foreground.

The arms of the octopus are as important as its head

The important role of co-operation within the CEPA team is reflected in the external relationships CEPA has built up as well, in actively seeking co-operation with other professional organisations and individuals. Apart from the context of a call for tenders, CEPA generally tries to build partnerships with other organisations and work together on prescribed tasks, rather than functioning in competitive ways.

As evident in the internal dynamics (that is individuals within CEPA) of the organisation there is some concern that too much co-operation might prevent CEPA from positioning itself better on the market; that is within the bigger organisational landscape.

Informal personal relationships of CEPA staff members are important for professional as well as for logistical issues. Staff members use personal networks

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

to get work accomplished and everybody, including support staff, feels comfortable using their personal contacts if the occasion demands. Some staff members are, of course, bigger networkers than others. Apart from instrumental benefits from networks, most staff are proud of being members of CEPA and letting their personal networks know of their professional location.

Interpreting organisational structure: The notion of a “flat hierarchy”

CEPA at first appearances is without a rigid hierarchy as exists in most other organisations working in the development field in Sri Lanka. The organisational structure of CEPA is often called a “flat hierarchy” by staff members as well as people associated with CEPA. The overwhelming majority of CEPA staff members consider the organisational structure to be a “flat hierarchy”. However, what they interpret as “flat hierarchy” and whether they like it or not differ from person to person.

The majority made the point:

The hierarchy is very flat but there is still a hierarchy.

There is a flat hierarchy but when it comes to authority it still has to go to the top. (Professional)

A minority felt that there was a distinct hierarchy at CEPA.

There is lip service to the idea of a flat hierarchy - I don't believe it works. Whether it's a person or a unit, they have to go through rigid structures to get approval. It bothers me more than having a hierarchy that CEPA has a public face that there isn't one and then does not live up to it. (Professional)

However, even among the minority who saw CEPA as having a distinct hierarchy, there was a sense that communication might be easier than elsewhere.

There is a level of approachability to the top although there are no guarantees that your ideas get acted upon. (Professional)

A number of interesting observations were made by those who agreed that there was a “flat hierarchy” on the nature of this hierarchy at CEPA:

Hierarchies vary according to the task. (Professional)

The hierarchy is very flat, especially at the senior level. (Administrative)

CEPA works in teams unlike in most other places (Support)

The support staff has an opportunity to talk to everybody and do more interesting work than in other places. (Support)

Among the positive aspects of the “flat hierarchy” concept repeatedly identified by all levels of staff were that it “It allows you to do your own thing”, “to innovate”, “to develop your personality”, “you are more dedicated to what you do” and “everybody can speak up even if there is disagreement”.

Among the negative aspects identified were:

We have a lot of meetings and it is very time consuming. (Senior professional)

Sometimes decisions are not made or made very slowly; we need an ED. (Professional/Senior professional)

Sometimes I feel I'm involved in decisions I am not competent for. (Senior professional)

I don't need encouragement/guidance all the time because I'm critical of my own work; management is overloaded with work because people are always going to them; I learn more from my individual experience than always being mentored. (Professional)

Thus, the debate on whether there is or not a “flat hierarchy” was accompanied by questions of whether it was in fact desirable. As revealed by the quotes above, there was a range of views on the issue. The complexity of the issue was summed up by one staff member:

A flat hierarchy means there is still a hierarchy except its flat – so it's not a contradiction. Flat simply means there are fewer layers, all levels work together and juniors can approach seniors directly; it works well as long as people are aware of their duties and responsibilities – for example none of the juniors assume that they are seniors or vice versa. I, for example, am more conscious about being polite to support staff than to junior professional staff. (Senior professional)

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Organisational culture: The way you do things

To the outside observer the work environment appears very dynamic. Every Monday morning all staff members gather at a team meeting where the past, present and future tasks of each member get discussed. The senior staff members meet for management meetings as the demand arises. During the course of the month, teams are constantly seen sitting round the tables of the seminar rooms in earnest discussion often with a flip chart or a pin board alongside. At their individual workstations literature reviews are done, data analysed and reports written. For a good part of the year there is always a team who is out in the field. The extent of process and discussion is clearly evident to the observer.

Asked how things are done at CEPA, most staff members came up with amusing vignettes.

One person comes with a piece of paper, there's informal brainstorming and we decide we should have a meeting. A long drawn-out meeting is held, then we say contact another person to get more information and then we think whether we should take it on or not. Rarely does it stop there, even if we decide not to—it might come up again at another meeting. One person will do a proposal or TOR, we try to meet with the client and then get on with the job. If there's fieldwork that becomes the focus and half of CEPA is dragged to the field; then analysis and report writing becomes the responsibility of one or two people. (Senior professional)

You appoint a task manager to undertake a task; that person will delegate to his/her team; the responsibility is with the task manager but there's always someone looking over and making changes. (Professional)

There is a deadline; they realise this only two days before the deadline and there is a full change of whatever that has been submitted; this doesn't help to meet the deadline; one person changes something, the next one changes another thing and if you take it back people will keep changing it; by then there are complaints from the suppliers; I'm trying to meet the deadline; people are pulling it in different directions; the result is good but it is delayed. It makes me adapt to a chaotic work style. (Professional)

On the positive side, it was pointed out that the culture was one “of learning out of experiences” and that the organisation was “very quality conscious, always getting the opinion and feedback of others”.

On the negative side it meant that people worked under a lot of pressure “always running at the end” and it was felt that pressure was “needed to really start off because we have to do too many things at a time”. Deadlines were not just a galvanising force for the task to be completed (“everyone helps to meet the deadline by working faster”) but also of getting staff together as a group.

As long as the deadline is far away you do other things, when you're closer to the wall the person who's responsible starts focusing and 50% of CEPA gets involved, when the deadline is almost there, a good 70% if not 100% of CEPA is involved. (Senior professional)

When it comes to the crunch everyone will come together and contribute to overcome the stress; different people respond to other people's stress differently and the support varies depending on who's at stress. (Professional)

In order to grasp the tangible aspects of organisational culture, staff members were asked about things that they felt was ‘strange’ at CEPA or they had not encountered before. For many of the staff, particularly for those who had previously worked in other local organisations, many things (procedures, tools, instruments, events) at CEPA seemed novel or strange – these included team meetings, the Plan of Operations (PLOP) meetings, the Clients’ Conference⁶, staff assessments and retreats. Those who had worked overseas before or for whom this was their first job took most of these generally for granted.

Many appreciated the feedback culture and quality awareness at CEPA:

It is unique to give so much feedback at all levels (clients, staff, peer, upward etc.) but it is very important to correct the negative and especially important to reinforce the positive. (Administrative)

Some things are new but not strange since I see the usefulness; I'm comfortable that these things are here (e.g., retreats); there's a rationale behind all these so they're not strange – quality

⁶ This refers to the Annual Clients’ Conference to which CEPA invites its current clients and associated resource persons for a review and feedback of the year’s progress.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

control might be perceived as madness by some people but it has a function – without it we can't keep track of what we're doing. (Professional)

A minority felt that the feedback structure is counter-productive to work getting accomplished.

Feedback and evaluation instruments are completely disproportionate to the level of work; there is hyperawareness about monitoring and reporting within and outside; it seems a bit ridiculous. Staff assessments are not very constructive if there is already a biased perception of your personality and if feedback is not given at the appropriate time when it can make a difference. (Professional)

It was also felt by some that the procedures and instruments were put in place by the founding members of the organisation but need to be revised.

It is time to stop barking back to the past; some people have a little trouble letting go. (Professional)

There were also noteworthy observations on the fact that the way of doing things is not all about deadlines and pressure.

What do I find strange? Take CEPA's holiday patterns – the majority here complain about the excessive number of public holidays but there are periods of the year (New Year, summer and Christmas) where CEPA doesn't function and have to refuse clients because everyone is on holiday. (Senior professional)

Innovation: The challenge of new ideas

Dynamics within an organisation are also shaped by the way innovative ideas are integrated into existing procedures. Taking into account the fact that CEPA has grown enormously in the short period of its existence, the authors thought that there might be something important about the way CEPA is able to integrate new ideas as an organisation.

The opinion of staff on this topic varies widely, ranging from “CEPA tends to go with old experiences” (professional) to “CEPA is receptive to new ideas to

the point that it is dangerous because people with dominant opinions can push their views” (administrative). The location within the organisation of those who expressed these divergent positions appears not by chance.

A number of staff members pointed out that there is sufficient space for innovation.

CEPA is relatively open to innovation. There are no real taboos, as long as the poverty link is there and you really want to do something. I never came across that it was refused. (Professionals/Senior professionals)

Even the support staff can propose new ideas. (Junior professional)

Whenever we've given our ideas they have been taken into account and changes made. (Support)

A minority expressed the view that the organisation was not really open to innovative ideas.

CEPA is not very open to innovation; the way things were originally conceptualised is important (for example Clients' Conference or new programmes). There is no point in asking for feedback if these things are not changed. (Professional)

More complex and differentiated views were offered by some staff members:

It depends on who the new ideas come from; if people are well respected, if they've been here for more than 2 years it is easier to introduce new ideas. You have to be careful when you introduce these – the words you use and preparing people beforehand might help. New people can have a fresh perspective, but CEPA is slow in getting out of routine and urgent matters. (Professional)

CEPA is not immediately very receptive to new ideas – it acts like a colt resisting before accepting them; a lot of convincing needs to be done. CEPA is neither closed nor open to ideas – whoever has to negotiate it; since everyone is terribly opinionated, a new idea is always challenged; [the PIMU Senior Advisor⁷] is accepted as the main generator of new ideas but even he rarely has it easy. (Senior professional)

⁷The Senior Advisor refers to Christoph Feyen, Senior Advisor to PIMU and CEPA

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Overall, the views of staff revealed the following trends:

- Staff members who have worked a longer period for CEPA perceive CEPA as being relatively open to new ideas.
- Recently hired staff finds it more difficult to get through new ideas
- Any new idea is challenged, from whomever it comes. More experienced staff might have more chances and more perseverance to negotiate their ideas until they are accepted.

That new ideas are challenged and heavily debated before they get approval is a generally healthy situation. It functions as a security mechanism for the organisation to ensure that it does not develop in too many directions and lose its identity. However, this might prove frustrating for those who are not yet able (because of their personality and/or experience) to fight for their ideas to be accepted or at least hope that their soft voices are heard.

Predominantly female: Why don't men accept strong women?

Looking at the list of staff members, it is quite an outstanding characteristic of CEPA that it was and still is clearly predominantly constituted of women. Among the professional and administrative staff, more than 80% are women. The higher the hierarchical level the lesser the number of men. On the level of senior professionals/programme coordinators and other senior management, there is only one man. The new Executive Director will also be a woman. Proportionally, most men are working as support staff.

Yet, on the question as to whether and how far CEPA as an organisation is influenced by the fact that mainly women work there, responses from many staff members remain vague. When CEPA staff members describe their organisation, gender issues are not at all in the foreground. With very few exceptions, staff members did not attribute any organisational characteristics they described to the fact that they are working in a predominantly female environment. Nine out of 22 staff members think that the predominantly female environment does not either influence work at CEPA at all or only marginally.

Table 5: Perceptions on the ‘feminine dominance’ at CEPA

Does the fact that CEPA is a predominantly female environment influence work at CEPA?	No of responses
Yes, it influences it a lot	7
It influences it quite a bit	5
It influences it only marginally	1
No, it doesn't influence it at all	8

In the in-depth interviews, these staff members (both male and female) reiterated that there “was not much influence because of the female environment” or that “it didn’t strike me at all”.

This lack of awareness or taken-for-granted outlook was also expressed in several responses.

But CEPA would function the same way it is functioning now if there were mainly men working. My own negative perception of “women’s organisation” was changed after starting to work here. I think it’s more a lucky combination of personalities than because of females. (Female staff member)

It’s about individual personalities; you don’t approach people negatively because they are female but because of their individual differences. (Male staff member)

CEPA is more oriented towards co-operation rather than competition, but I’m not sure if that is because of the predominantly female environment. (Female staff member)

Yet, those thinking that the female environment has an influence have very different views of that influence:

- It is a caring organisation (openness to speak about problems, also personal problems, providing occasions for informal discussions and exchange, acceptance of individuals with their positive and negative sides). According to all that we know about efficiency in organisations, it helps a lot to take “care” of staff members.
- Women tend to value co-operation instead of competition.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

- Openness about inability to do something, which is a precondition to and promotes learning and leads to continuous improvement of staff as well of products. What happens usually is that people try to hide their inability, produce low quality outcomes and undergo no learning process.
- Sensitive to people's individual strengths and weaknesses – space to grow and learn.
- Dedication to the work in the sense people do their best and not just finish the task.
- High quality consciousness which is linked to decision making – for some it is faster, for others slower than in predominantly male environments.
- Less status driven behaviour, multitasking.
- Lack of sexual harassment or connotations.
- Flat hierarchy is more easily accepted and appreciated by women than by men who usually have much stronger egos and like to get official recognition through hierarchical positions.

In the in-depth interviews, the positive aspects of a predominantly female organisation were revealed to far exceed the negative. The flat hierarchy and the open atmosphere were associated with a female environment.

The predominantly female environment might help to have this flat hierarchy. (Female staff member)

There is an open atmosphere with no hidden agendas. (Female staff member)

Women take the time to sit down, explain things, and encourage others. (Female staff member)

Men always want to be leaders and try to get other people to do everything what they want. (Female staff member)

The importance of co-operation and feeling of ease at work was also linked to the predominantly female environment. Several female staff members pointed to the existence of co-operation rather than unhealthy competition. It was argued that men usually had big egos, it was difficult for them to digest comments, and that they were more aggressive. Female egos did not need to be fed like male ones.

There is flexibility and understanding – it is difficult to tell a male superior all your problems.
(Female staff member)

Life is less complicated, there is less tension. Personal dealings are easier - you don't have to watch out for misunderstandings including potentially sexual misunderstandings. (Female staff member)

The casual environment, dependency on each other and openness about inability to do something, the space to ask for help, and not having to prove oneself constantly were also mentioned in this context by female staff. The care taken by the organisation and the support staff (exemplified by the lunch table⁸) was pointed out several times both by male and female staff. A related issue was the feeling of security at the workplace.

It is no problem for me to work late here; my husband accepts this because he knows it's mostly women who work at CEPA. (Female staff member)

Decision-making patterns were also associated with the predominantly female environment.

Decisions take time but are made. (Female staff member)

Men are not able to make decisions as efficiently. (Male staff member)

Women tend to solve problems by talking about it; men tend to solve it within themselves.
(Male staff member)

It was argued that women were more committed to work and to detail.

There is more dedication among women; men are more task oriented, women function more according to the idea “we do our best” – that is why we have very long working hours.
(Female staff member)

Women insist on getting a job done; men might say, “you can do it later.” (Male staff member)

Women are very choosy, every detail is important, they go very much into depth with a question; they are consensus seeking and quality conscious. (Female staff member)

⁸ CEPA staff members enjoy a lunch that is freshly cooked in the office kitchen everyday.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Women tend to be more perfectionists; be attentive to detail – but of course men have some female traits and women have some male traits so it depends on personalities as well. (Male staff member)

Several negative aspects of the predominantly female environment were also voiced.

There are not enough men for tasks requiring strength such as carrying boards.

Men can relate to more people externally.

It's a little difficult to work with women.

(Male staff members)

Computer literacy might have been better although a lot depends on personalities. (Female staff member)

Some staff members viewed the predominantly female environment with some ambivalence or puzzlement.

I didn't really notice until I was told that it was predominantly female but the working culture is influenced by it – uncertainty in moods, feeling driven, empathetic and emotional. (Male staff member)

Men cannot survive at CEPA, there are too many strong women – but I have no idea why men can't accept strong women. (Female staff member)

Visitors coming to CEPA as well as many staff members feel that there is a special atmosphere at CEPA which makes it different from other organisations: Friendly and open faces, a lot of laughter in the corridors and the meeting rooms, a nicely laid out and highly valued lunch table where people eat and chat together also about non-professional issues, as well as staff members remaining in the meeting room in informal discussions after the meeting has long finished are some of these features. Both visitors and staff members enjoy this way of going about professional life.

The relatively low gender awareness of CEPA as admitted by staff members transcends into organisational issues. Some of those who feel that CEPA is different than other organisations cannot really name the difference and attribute it to something, but only tend to agree that it might be due to the predominantly female environment if you actually propose it to them. For example, in our initial discussions several persons said that the organisation being predominantly female has no real impact on CEPA. Responding at a different point in the interview they would point out that the lunch table is an important element to make them feel at ease, to exchange information and so on. If at that point they were asked whether there would be a lunch table in a predominantly male environment, they would all say no or probably not. There were many other instances where the reviewers felt that the existence of certain features of the organisation was dependent on its largely female staff but which were not perceived as such or taken for granted by CEPA staff members.

In our estimation, the fact that it is mostly women who work at CEPA, especially those at the senior level and who are responsible for setting the general tone is highly important for the organisational culture of CEPA. The success of an organisation depends largely on its ability to satisfy the needs of its clients and the needs of its employees. Of course, this demands well-qualified staff members at all levels. But formal qualifications are not enough. The organisation has to adapt to a continuously changing environment, internally and externally. This demands an open and continuous learning process of all involved and correspondent attitudes. The preconditions for learning and for a learning organisation are that there is space for learning, acceptance of mistakes, encouragement to try out new things, feelings of safety and security, and giving and receiving continuous feedback.

Although this might sound like a cliché or a gross generalisation, the culture of a learning organisation has a higher probability of being realised in a predominantly female organisation. Men usually are more inclined to go for recognition of their individual performance, for a professional career and hierarchical status equipped with power, for maximising salaries, and will tend to have more difficulties in admitting to mistakes and weaknesses.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

For quite a number of staff members, CEPA is their first work place. This might be part of the reason why they take the environment at CEPA for granted since they do not have any experience of a predominantly male work environment to which they could compare their current situation.

Moreover, if the management/senior level is predominantly female it can lead to important effects on recruitment. It does not simply mean that they might employ only more women, but it can also mean that they are looking for a certain type of man, who can relate to the key values of the organisation. This explains to some extent the reason for not finding an appropriate Executive Director⁹ for a long period.

Multi-ethnic and multi-cultural: Just fun or more

Another obvious feature of CEPA is that it has a multicultural and multiethnic mix of staff members. As this is a rather distinct feature compared with other Sri Lankan organisations, the authors started with the hypothesis that it might significantly contribute to CEPA's organisational identity and the way it works.

CEPA has a mix of nationalities (Mexican, German, Rumanian) unlike in other projects where everybody is German or British. (Professional)

Yet, the perceptions of the majority of those working at CEPA are somewhat different as reflected in table 6.

Table 6: Perceptions on cultural interactions at CEPA

Does the fact that CEPA is a multicultural / multiethnic organisation influence, work at CEPA?	No of responses
Yes, it influences it a lot	5
It influences it quite a bit	1
It influences it only marginally	6
No, it doesn't influence it at all	10

⁹This article was written prior to the start of CEPA's new ED in March 2005.

A big majority does not attribute any or only marginal influence to the multicultural/multiethnic environment.

There is no major practical influence to be seen. (Professional)

It is good fun. (Senior professional)

Those who do attribute an influence to it, point out that it facilitates acceptance of new ideas, different cultures and different thinking, mainly referring to two aspects:

- German management style: strategic planning, organisational development, time management, open feedback, team based decision making, transparency, organisational retreats.
- Sensitivity and competence to work with all ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, awareness of potential for ethnic bias.

Transparency, strategic planning, and organisational development seems to me very German. (Senior professional)

The team-based kind of decision-making seems to be very German. (Administrative)

Time management is not part of Sri Lankan culture but comes from Germany; I think it's very good. Open feedback is not Sri Lankan, but it helps me in improving. (Junior professional)

It brings in different ways of organising questionnaires, workshops and so on. (Professional)

Language skills are improved through multicultural contacts. (Administrative)

Positively people are very aware of the potential for ethnic bias – questionnaires, name cards, letters are all prepared in a way that is balanced and accommodating to everybody; it is valued within the organisation that there are Tamil fieldworkers to go to Tamil areas and Muslims to go to Muslim areas. (Professional)

Identity doesn't become a decisive factor – professional training gives us sensitivity about ethnicity in the field and few of us are strongly embedded in the culture of our groups. (Senior professional)

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

A few staff members also mentioned some problems linked to the multicultural /multiethnic environment:

Foreigners take a long time to learn about the local situation, field codes etc., there are many misinterpretations. (Professional)

The lack of local language skills results in misunderstandings. (Administrative)

We had a communication problem at the beginning because our English was not so good but now we understand better. (Support)

New staff often come through contacts and are very smart, but they are foreign. More locals should be checked via advertisements to give them a chance. (Professional)

The negative aspect of the multicultural environment is that there is a perception among some that there is a disproportionate level of influence by non-Sri Lankans (hidden donor agenda); I disagree – it's fruitful to have people of different origins and am comfortable working in an international environment and being connected to international debates. (Professional)

CEPA is a place where you lose your identity since there is no identity here linked to any group or culture; I know nothing more about Mexico than I did before just because I shared a room with a Mexican. If at all people are hassled, it is because of their individual characteristics not because they're from another country; negatively, we're culturally insensitive sometimes – we hold meetings and symposiums on people's religious holidays. (Senior professional)

Overall, CEPA staff seems to feel very comfortable with the multicultural, multiethnic situation. Apart from the professional aspects, it contributes to a lot of fun, exposure and an exciting team.

Table 7: Perceptions on culture

How comfortable are you with the multicultural / multiethnic environment at CEPA?	No of responses
Very comfortable	15
Comfortable	3
Somewhat comfortable	1
Not comfortable	

As with the fact that CEPA is a predominantly female work environment, most do appreciate the multiethnic, multicultural environment of CEPA. Although the reviewers perceive its substantial influence on organisational culture, the staff appears not to be overly conscious about it.

This is probably partly a result of most staff members being ethnically sensitive to begin with while having a strong sense of Sri Lankan identity. On one hand, CEPA staff members are tolerant and have a general awareness of not discriminating against the various Sri Lankan ethnic groups. On the other hand, while certain positive elements of foreign cultures are appreciated, most staff members do not necessarily want to attribute everything positive about the organisation to its expatriate members or its German “origins”. Thus, the lack of appreciation of the multicultural nature of CEPA needs to be seen in the light of feelings of ownership and downplaying the influence of its foreign “origins” – most staff members have come to consider CEPA a Sri Lankan organisation. There is a commitment to limiting the staff positions available to expatriates so that more opportunities are available to Sri Lankans to build capacity in the development sector, as well as an insistence that expatriate staff hired receive Sri Lankan salaries. Thus, the downplaying of the influence of the multicultural environment appears to be linked with an assertion that problems are seen and solutions sought from a Sri Lankan perspective.

Where we work: The house that is CEPA

The CEPA premises, a beautiful, spacious and well-renovated colonial style house, surrounded by a huge and well-maintained garden, are located in Colombo ⁷¹⁰. Is it an appropriate place to work on poverty issues? How does it influence CEPA’s work?

The location in Colombo is debated to some extent among CEPA staff – less public transport and, more importantly, the kind of image portrayed to others, especially at the field level. A few staff members even feel that they have to lie about its address during field visits and locate CEPA in a different place in Colombo.

¹⁰ Considered to be among the more exclusive parts of the city – known also as ‘Cinnamon Gardens’

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Most staff members, however, do enjoy the house and the garden. Moreover, they identify implicitly its significant contribution to the quality of work by acknowledging the space and quiet, and that little disturbance from outside allows for long periods of concentration. People feel like coming to the office in the morning, partly due to the nice physical work environment.

The support staff and the help they provide to the professional and administrative staff was sometimes mentioned during discussions on the premises. The friendly communication, the service orientation and the high sense of responsibility and engagement of the support staff seem to uplift and maintain considerably the work morale of all involved and result in mutual reinforcement of a motivating work environment.

The house and the garden appear to the authors as very symbolic for CEPA as an organisation: a lot of open space promoting communication, a sense for the importance of little things, the importance of aesthetics, no clear hierarchical structure in spatial terms (for example, there is no big office for the boss, the administration does not monopolise the best rooms, the professional staff are allocated spacious rooms). However, few staff members saw a relationship between the spatial and aesthetic aspects of their workplace and their work itself. Many were proud of their office, some took the space for granted but few expressed an explicit link between the premises and the quality of the work performed.

4. Analysis Part II: *or how PIMU has rubbed off on CEPA*

The preceding description and analysis of CEPA was done in the context of PIMU's end-of-project review. The formal part of what PIMU is to CEPA and how it has influenced it was already dealt with in chapter 2.2 on institutional viability from the perspective of external evaluators.

The objective of this paper was to understand better some of the side/shadow impacts PIMU had on CEPA. The authors looked at some internal dynamics of CEPA which are, from the point of view of CEPA staff members, as well as the

authors', important for its functioning, and then see if and how some of these can be attributed to PIMU.

As the initiator, a client, a programme donor and an advisor for the whole period CEPA has been in existence, PIMU obviously has a critical role in the way CEPA works at the moment. During the first phase of PIMU, it turned out that there was a need for an organisation to work on poverty related issues and to provide different kinds of services and advice to national and international development organisations within the institutional landscape of Sri Lanka. The setting up of CEPA as an organisation was an outcome of PIMU experiences. CEPA with its specific goals, its financial and organisational structure was conceived by PIMU. PIMU was the first and most important client of CEPA.

PIMU is [the PIMU Senior Advisor]; it is a project funded by GTZ to monitor poverty impacts, it is a funder for CEPA, it is the mother of the child [CEPA] which is now grown up. (Professional / Administrative)

It is a GTZ division created to do impact monitoring of GTZ projects. CEPA was created to expand impact monitoring services to other organisations – this was not PIMU's job. (Professional)

PIMU set the work ethic of CEPA; PIMU was a place where whatever work was done very well. (Administrative)

PIMU is related to Germany – maybe they were looking at something here. I didn't understand much; I was only cleaning the office there. (Support)

PIMU's really dead, isn't it? PIMU was [the Senior Advisor] and [the Programme Specialist] running around in blue with pin boards; I forget PIMU existed although there's a direct link to the PIM Programme. I no longer think of even [the Senior Advisor] as being PIMU. (Senior professional)

Though its importance has been intentionally decreasing over the years, CEPA is in its basic structure (four service areas, programme areas, three sources of financing) still working as it was conceived by PIMU. For most people, the difference between PIMU and CEPA is represented by size – PIMU was smaller, more informal and took on less work than CEPA. CEPA in its three years of

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

existence has developed further and succeeded in creating its own identity, which today is much more in the foreground for everybody working there than PIMU. The expansion of CEPA is manifold.

I only did cleaning at PIMU. At CEPA there are many different tasks as we're also doing the cooking here. (Support)

Most CEPA staff members have a quite clear but distant, rather than emotional, relationship to PIMU. They think PIMU has provided valuable “starting capital” to CEPA in terms of its institutional concept, its structure, its relationship with other relevant organisations, first assignments, competent and motivated staff and some elements of its organisational culture. But that seems to be all – maybe except for very few individuals who have worked with PIMU and have a sentimental feeling for the “good old times”.

PIMU was more methodical and everybody thought this was “our product”. Now, not everybody identifies themselves with the organisation the same way. (Professional)

At PIMU two people did a task and had good understanding. Now the task is divided among many individuals and problems can occur. (Administrative)

On all hierarchical levels there is the self-confidence that PIMU’s role is limited to the take-off and CEPA can now go on without PIMU support. The more recent staff members do not even have a very clear perception of PIMU’s role in the initial phases of CEPA. For them, CEPA is a Sri Lankan organisation, which was and is getting some support from the German Government.

I don't know much about PIMU; all PIMU ideas are to me personified by [the Senior Advisor] and the [Programme Specialist]. (Professional)

Most relevant for many staff members is the impact PIMU had on the organisational culture of CEPA. As described in the section on the multicultural environment of CEPA, many concepts, procedures and instruments used by CEPA are considered to be of German origin:

- The importance of strategic planning and visioning,
- PLOP (yearly plan of operations),

- The role of conscious organisational development manifested in many discussions on the topic and the organisational retreats,
- Time management,
- Open feedback,
- Team-based decision making,
- Transparency, and
- Visualisation.

The practical use of PLOP is questioned by those who should use it. It has never really been integrated into their work. The plan is prepared but does not serve as a guideline in the implementation process. PIMU has introduced the PLOP, but whether PIMU is present or not, PLOP does not seem to have a chance of surviving much longer.

The frequency of and the degree of importance given to the various feedback procedures and the team-based decision-making were also questioned. According to some staff members, the way feedback and team-based decision making is done might change as soon as German influence in the form of the Senior Advisor will not be present anymore.

People will question a lot of feedback and monitoring systems and organisation development systems. They will question the emphasis on events and will find ways of transforming the organisation. (Professional)

Otherwise, the procedures and instruments considered to be German or to have been rubbed off by PIMU are highly appreciated and considered to be very helpful. They shape CEPA as an organisation and were often mentioned when the question was asked, what makes CEPA different from other workplaces.

The importance of these instruments and procedures is shown also on a personal /individual level. Making lists, using cards and teamwork were often considered as important in their personal life as well. Several instruments were mentioned many times as something they would take along if they would leave CEPA and as their most important learning experiences.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

PIMUs role is acknowledged but there is strong confidence and very little concern by staff at various levels that CEPA would not be able to continue without the support of PIMU – be it in financial or human resource terms. CEPA staff members are aware that CEPA will change but are not necessarily afraid of that change. Some are a bit doubtful while others are even looking forward to that new phase.

CEPA staff members have a multitude of views on the sustainability of their organisation. On one hand, some doubts are expressed about sustaining quality once the links with GTZ and the Senior Advisor are reduced.

CEPA is known under PIMU; without the PIMU contacts it might be a bit more difficult to work and get assignments. We might lose the links to GTZ. (Professional/Administrative)

There might be less strategic planning and proactive behaviour of CEPA if there is no more [Senior Advisor] working here. The lack of a good advisor might make things difficult. (Professional/Senior professional/Administrative)

The quality of publications will decrease. (Professional)

I worry about the change. Will clients still come to CEPA when the GTZ link is over? GTZ was more mature in terms of investment – it was easier for them to take a risk with CEPA. CEPA takes next to zero risks now into unfamiliar areas. Would CEPA continue to have retreats and pay for a trainer to come down from Germany? CEPA will obviously change but who will sustain that change? Who will take on the load? (Professional)

On the whole, the main thrust of opinions is positive and reveals a lot of self-confidence in the organisation's ability to sustain itself. It is as if they are saying, "Thanks a lot for your help but now we are standing on our own feet, feel strong enough to do things a bit differently and get along without you."

CEPA will just continue. (Professional/Administrative)

The quality of assignments will remain; there will be no change. (Professional/Administrative)

I don't see a big change; if we're united and follow the same path there won't be a big change; if there is going to be a big change we'll give our support so that things won't go in a bad direction; we'll do our best to carry the organisation forward. (Support)

The PIMU Senior Advisor was and still clearly is a role model for quite a number of staff members – for example, being concerned about details, always listening to everybody, persevering on vision.

Whatever he does, he does well – we have learnt from him. (Support)

He will always find a mistake and have a proposal how to improve; he wants everything neat and perfect. (Professional/Administrative)

He is always pushing and motivating. He assumes his role as an advisor well, although sometimes he has difficulties stepping back. (Senior professional)

The PIMU Senior Advisor as a person stands for open communication and feedback, flat hierarchy and team-based decision making, and most importantly for strategic long-term thinking and planning. He is recognised and appreciated for these values and capacities by the majority of staff members.

He is very open to everybody though he is a Senior Advisor; he knows everyone, respects everyone and listens. It is easy to discuss anything with him directly. (Professional/Administrative)

He has strange ideas initially, then you get used to them. When I joined CEPA initially I didn't understand why he had long unending conversations with you. (Senior professional)

Some CEPA staff members have an ambivalent attitude towards the various feedback structures, flat hierarchy and sometimes long and tedious process of team-based decision making, PIMU, especially in the form of its Senior Advisor, together with the senior management stands for these procedures. What will happen after the end of PIMU? Will somebody else take over and take a strong stand for these distinct CEPA features? The new ED? The team? Will CEPA turn into a more conventional organisation? How far are these procedures anchored in CEPA?

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

CEPA is more localised despite its multicultural outlook and is broadening out to other ways. (Senior professional)

CEPA has clearly developed an identity which is independent from PIMU. The authors of this chapter attribute it at least partially to the general attitude of PIMU and its advisor to build up people's confidence in themselves, to promote pro-activeness, to encourage people continuously to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and to work on them. We think all of this had a very important impact on the self-confidence, motivation and sense of ownership existing at CEPA now.

PIMU doesn't exist for me in any case – it has been reincarnated as something else. (Senior professional)

As for all other impact studies, there is often a question mark at the end: How far can the observed phenomena, trends, features or changes be really attributed to the interventions of a certain project? Even without the support given by PIMU, would CEPA have developed the same way? We do not think so, but cannot prove it. Did PIMU, its financial resources, its concepts, its Senior Advisor and its instruments have a crucial role in shaping the organisation as it is today? We think so, but cannot necessarily prove it either!

PIMU's other partners IMCAP and SLEvA: A similar relationship and impact?

The impact of PIMU on CEPA is corroborated by a similar type of impact on other partner organisations – not necessarily in degree but in kind. We looked specifically at IMCAP (Program for Improving Capacities for Poverty and Social Policy Research) and SLEvA (Sri Lanka Evaluation Association).

IMCAP, a unit established within the Faculty of Social Sciences in Colombo University has been one of PIMU's partner organisations almost as long as CEPA. The significance of PIMU as a partner, as a source of financial and programme support and as a means of emergency support in the initial phase of cooperation is emphasised by senior IMCAP staff. PIMU provided seed money to keep the unit going until other possibilities could be explored and was

an institutional means to develop the capacities of young academics within the university system (Colombo as well as the North and East). IMCAP has been able to develop new course units on poverty, enhance interdisciplinary approaches and increase the employability of undergraduates through exposure to its research activities.

PIMU support was a stepping stone to other things, such as relationships with the Goethe Institute, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Activities supported by PIMU have put the university into the limelight as an institution that can do large studies (ILO, UNDP) and has improved the image of university and its catalytic role—addressing a fundamental weakness of state universities which have been in the background for so long vis-à-vis other research institutes. (Senior academic)

The expectations from the initiative were not very high among IMCAP staff since the university system was considered to be “bureaucratic and stubborn”. However, the support led to unexpectedly fortuitous results.

PIMU support allowed a lot of breathing space and we had no specific task to accomplish such as a research project, so we had sufficient time to get the unit established and recognised as playing an important role within the university – today we have a legitimate claim to start a social policy centre. (Senior academic)

PIMU’s relationship with IMCAP was built on trust and friendship, a joint vision and enthusiasm, with no clear distinction between formal and informal relationships, according to IMCAP staff. It helped to build confidence, and there was no pressure to perform as PIMU accepted a different type of logic from the university. PIMU was flexible and understood the difficulties in dealing with the university audit system and decision-making process.

Among the positive impacts of PIMU identified by IMCAP staff are management skills to run a project, how to think of and identify innovative initiatives, how to look at poverty in a different way (not only focusing on the economic side), to be aware of unintended social impacts of a project and to strike a balance between theoretical and down-to-earth approaches to analysis and research.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

A few problematic issues identified were a certain reluctance on the part of PIMU to support IMCAP to change its conceptual orientation beyond poverty issues, a difficulty to define the lines of cooperation between the two ‘children’ of PIMU (i.e., IMCAP and CEPA), pressures involved with fitting into timetables and formats of a donor, and sometimes a lack of sensitivity to rapid turnover in university personnel in decision-making positions. Yet the overall relationship was positive due to PIMU’s flexibility.

The most important thing we learnt from PIMU was not having a fixed agenda – it’s driven by the people involved. IMCAP adopted this accommodating and flexible approach which allows for growth and change. (Senior academic)

Among distinct characteristics of German development cooperation identified by IMCAP staff were a high degree of flexibility, a lack of an immediate output orientation, a strong focus on institutional capacity building, results orientation in a substantive sense and pressure to keep deadlines which led to positive changes in behaviour and attitudes among Sri Lankans.

Just as CEPA, IMCAP is confident about its future – not much is anticipated to change once PIMU support is not forthcoming since the unit is well prepared and has other donors as well. However, it would change its focus to a broader one in social policy.

The basic programme in place can continue without PIMU support; sustainability is not a problem (this doesn’t mean that we can relax). We have created the conditions for our continuity. We’ve got ourselves organised and linked up with many more organisations for our activities; we’re in a fairly strong position as there is a demand for our research. (Senior academic)

IMCAP staff point out that they would miss a partner with the level of trust and openness at the institutional level that characterised their relationship with PIMU.

The idea of PIMU—to have a little unit which gives advice and is not implementing this would be needed much more in the development sector. At the same time it needs the right kind of person with networking capacities and readiness to take risks, who inspires confidence, gives space for failure and optimistic thinking – that there are always lessons learnt. (Senior academic)

The other partner of PIMU, the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association (SLEvA) shares a room in the CEPA premises. The PIMU Senior Advisor participates at its Executive Committee meetings and the association has received financial support from PIMU for a survey on quality management in Sri Lanka, including input on jointly developing the methodology.

PIMU's contribution to SLEvA is of a different degree to that of either CEPA or IMCAP. It has been in contact with the organisation for only two years. SLEvA has never been financially dependent on PIMU and its objective (of developing an evaluation policy for the government) is not entirely linked to that of PIMU.

PIMU's main impact on SLEvA, according to one of its members, is:

The PIMU Senior Advisor has provided an outsider perspective for SLEvA – we looked at the organisation in a more traditional manner. He has been trying to push us into income generation – there are differing views on this. Some want to stay as a professional organisation, others agree with him. For sustainability of the organisation, CEPA is one model.

5. Conclusions: *or the replicable and the unique*

End of project reviews are done in order to justify past expenses and to learn about the impacts of project interventions, about what should be avoided in future, what can be changed, and what can be replicated.

In Chapter 2.2 of this review, CEPA, which has grown exponentially in the few years of its existence, is described as one of the major outputs/impacts of PIMU. In addition to the institutional analysis of CEPA provided in that chapter the question of what it was that made and still makes CEPA tick to understand better PIMU's role in this respect has been explored in this paper.

As its initiator, its first client and important donor, PIMU's crucial importance for CEPA is unquestionable. Meanwhile, CEPA has grown into an independent organisation, which has developed its own identity. The importance of PIMU for CEPA is decreasing, factually but also in the perception of CEPA staff

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

members. With regard to sustainability, this could not be a better sign! However, it is only the period following the withdrawal of PIMU that will clearly show to what extent the staff is not entirely conscious about the enormous influence of PIMU and the steering power of its Senior Advisor, and to what extent the perceived independence of CEPA is confirmed by reality.

Apart from the obvious facts, PIMU is found in many details of CEPA. The distinct features of CEPA triggered off by PIMU include:

- The so-called flat hierarchy and the team approach – everybody is encouraged to contribute but there still is a hierarchy and some strong decision-makers behind.
- Cooperation before competition – PIMU, in its formal approach as well as in its ways of doing things has always favoured cooperation, this re-emerges in the CEPA way of doing things.
- High value given to learning compared to output performance.
- Quality consciousness and professionalism in the development field.
- Importance of informal communication and relationships between all hierarchical levels and subgroups.
- Hiring principles that give emphasis to creativity and like-mindedness.
- The space for the predominantly female staff members to express their opinions, to manage an organisation and to develop their careers.
- The cross-cultural fertilisation of ideas provided by a multiethnic, multicultural staff.

The fact that many, especially the new CEPA staff members, do not necessarily see the close link between PIMU and some distinct features of CEPA, does not necessarily contradict the critical role of PIMU. On the contrary, it proves and reinforces the sense of ownership of the staff of these features. At the same time, if quite a few staff members are relatively unconscious about some of the strengths of their organisation, this can be a matter for concern. This applies for example, to distinct features that are connected to CEPA being a predominantly female organisation such as its emphasis on learning, caring, and recognising staff members as persons. It also applies to features connected with CEPA being a multicultural (not only German as perceived by some!) organisation.

The multiculturalism contributes, in the authors' view, a lot to CEPA's capacity to deal in an open and flexible manner with all kind of partners at the local, national and international level, as well as CEPA's hybridity as a service provider. If the importance of such strengths is underestimated, they will not be well taken care of and are likely to get lost with time. This will weaken the niche that CEPA has so carefully carved for itself as a highly professionalised development organisation within the short span of its existence.

Since this review's findings partly attribute the success of CEPA at least partly to PIMU, it seems desirable and feasible to replicate the formal approach of PIMU – its open and flexible project design, the orientation of the project as a real service deliverer, a long and gradually phasing out period, as well as the emphasis on co-operation with other organisations instead of competition. The impact of this approach is also reflected in the relationship between PIMU and its other partners IMCAP, and to a lesser degree, SLEvA.

However, in summing up, it is necessary to differentiate between the more formal approach of PIMU and the persons who are behind and stand for its concepts and instruments.

In the case of PIMU, it is clear, that the personality of the PIMU Senior Advisor is compatible with the approach the project has taken. He has been a “living manifestation” of the values which are behind the PIMU project approach and which have spilled over to CEPA. He has fully taken up a kind of “role model” function. His leadership role has been characterised by:

- Credibility, to be fully convinced as a person of what one does
- To really believe in others and make them believe in themselves
- To have fun in using the flexibility given in the project design
- Ability to step back, let others decide and accept such decisions

It was decisive for the impact PIMU had on CEPA that the PIMU Senior Advisor did not only preach participation, a team approach, visioning, and visualisation but practised it himself. At the same time of critical importance was also that the values and capacities mentioned above were also strongly present and/or developed among the PIMU core team before it became integrated into the CEPA team.

2. PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

How a particular approach and vision would work out in terms of process and the kind of impacts it would produce will depend, of course, on the specific context but also or even more on the people who would put this into practice and be part of the process. People will continue to be unique. They will always be the wild card. The big challenge in terms of replicability is to find the match between the approach and the people who can actualise it.

This confirms a general insight (which nowadays is more practised in grassroots level projects than at the level of advisors and the projects they work in) that active involvement by all members of an organisation in the design, setting up and planning of a project, increases the authenticity, credibility and flexibility of its implementation. This is absolutely necessary to create something which goes beyond the technical level, a “living something” with a fair chance of being able to develop, to adapt, to change. A purely technical construction will break as soon as the context conditions change. Only living organisms can cope with change. And CEPA is very much alive. Its inner strength and driving force has been the dynamism of its staff members. It will have to maintain this dynamism as it faces new challenges ahead.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE: TWO CONTRASTING APPROACHES TO EVALUATING PIMU



3.1 Evaluating PIMU with e-Val
Nilakshi De Silva & Monika Ellinger

3.2 Tracing PIMU's Poverty Impact Chains
Azra Jafferjee & Markus Mayer

3.1 Evaluating PIMU with e-VAL

Nilakshi De Silva and Monika Ellinger

Contents	<i>Page</i>
1. Introduction to e-VAL	197
1.1 e-VAL methodology	
1.2 Conducting an e-VAL interview	
1.3 e-VAL results at the aggregated level	
1.4 e-VAL with GTZ	
2. e-VAL Evaluation of PIMU	203
2.1 Process issues	
2.2 e-Valuation of PIMU	
3. Some Conclusions on PIMU and e-VAL	213

3.1 Evaluating PIMU with e-VAL

This chapter provides an overview of the evaluation of the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) applying the e-VAL methodology. e-VAL stands for electronic eVALuation and is a software based evaluation instrument. e-Val has been adopted by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) as one of the tools to evaluate its regional, sectoral and worldwide project portfolio. GTZ funded projects are increasingly required to apply this tool to assess their progress and impact.

Because e-VAL is a new tool which is unfamiliar to many outside the GTZ community, this chapter will begin with a brief introduction to the conceptual basis and methodology of e-VAL. Next, the results from the e-VAL assessment of PIMU will be discussed in detail and with some general conclusions about how PIMU is perceived drawn out. Finally, some brief comments on the usefulness of e-VAL as an evaluation tool based on its application to PIMU project will be made.

1. Introduction to e-VAL

e-VAL was developed in response to the challenges posed by the increasing complexity of development cooperation due to rapid globalisation and changing conditions, increasing expectations of technical cooperation as well as increasing doubts among policymakers and the public, particularly in the developed world, where development budgets are shrinking, regarding the effectiveness of technical cooperation. e-VAL is one among several new instruments which are being developed with the expectation of making technical cooperation more accountable as well as increasing its effectiveness

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

The methodological basis of e-VAL has been developed and successfully applied in the private sector for the past 10 years. It has been particularly useful to understand markets – why do people prefer item A rather than item B; and team work dynamics – why does a person prefer person A rather than person B. In the field of development co-operation, e-VAL may have the potential to answer similar questions - what do actors involved in development interventions, such as donors, counterparts and target groups, really want from a particular intervention?

1.1 e-VAL methodology

The e-VAL methodology is based on a psychological theory, which says that the part of the human brain – the limbic system – which is responsible for our emotional, unconscious values, is the real driver of our thinking, decisions and thus actions. Contrary to the view that human actions are driven by rationality (located in the cerebral cortex), this theory argues that rational explanations are only articulated reasons for why a decision was taken by the limbic system. Therefore, what is needed is a tool to identify the thoughts originating in the limbic system - resulting in the development of e-VAL.

e-VAL interviews are structured on the basis of 'Psychology of Personal Constructs', a theory identified by an American psychologist George A. Kelly and further developed by Dr. Arne Raeithel and Prof. Peter Kruse. Psychology of Personal Constructs states that every day, human beings take decisions based on individual differentiations that result from our individual experience. It is argued that human beings are like investigators who develop their lives by validating hypotheses that they test, evaluate and adjust in future situations. These hypotheses always exist in the form of opposites. Only when there is an opposite to compare something or a situation to, can we judge and attribute a value to it.

The e-VAL instrument attempts to overcome the trade-offs of using either a highly structured questionnaire or an open-ended qualitative questionnaire. In e-VAL there are no pre-determined questions; instead, the respondent decides the basis, or 'success criteria' on which the project will be assessed. In contrast

to an open-ended questionnaire, which is time consuming and difficult to analyse, e-VAL is able to transform individual interviews into a set of information that is easy to analyse and allows comparison across individual respondents, respondent groups and even projects.

In order to allow comparisons across interviews, e-VAL provides a frame, which exists in the form of so-called ‘elements’. An element is something about which one wants to get information during a project evaluation. In the GTZ context, the following four categories of elements exist:

1. Elements to describe the development of the **project over time**: respondents’ perceptions about the project situation at the beginning, today, in one year’s time and future project effects.
2. Elements to describe **what the individual parties involved want**: respondents’ concepts of project success and project failure, respondents’ perceptions about what is expected by other project partners, the target groups and the commissioning party (i.e. the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development: (BMZ)).
3. Elements to describe **what the individual parties actually do**: respondents’ perceptions about the German contribution, about the contribution of partners, other stakeholders and the GTZ office and contribution of the framework conditions.
4. Elements to describe the **development of the project's concept**: respondents’ perceptions about project preparation and today’s project objectives.

1.2 Conducting an e-VAL interview

The methodology of e-VAL consists of a relatively small number of interviews with those that have a stake in, and close working relationship / knowledge of the project. The rationale is that this set of respondents is best placed to assess what is best for the project and what could be suitable ways to achieve success. A minimum number of 12¹ interviews per project is required, although a sharper

¹ During the initial testing phase of e-VAL, 12 interviews were found to be enough to obtain a rough but valid picture while avoiding the extra work of carrying out more interviews.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

picture may emerge with more interviews. Three sets of respondent groups are required to be interviewed: the first group represents GTZ views, the second group represents Counterpart views and the third group represents Target Group views.

During the interview, respondents are not prompted with direct questions about the elements. The interviewer simply asks one question: "What are the issues you want to talk about in the context of the project?" Whatever the respondent mentions is noted down, without judging, validating or commenting.

These statements are then entered into the e-Val software by formulating opposite statements; in other words a 'fictive' counter-statement (see Box 1).

All the elements are then rated (or assigned) to either the statement or the counter-statement or in some further nuances of the software programme². According to the psychological theory underpinning e-VAL, the formulation of a fictive opposite statement is essential in order for the respondent to evaluate each element.

The computer image shown in Figure 1 reproduces what the respondent typically sees when rating the elements based on formulations of opposite statements. Using the example shown in Box 1, the opposite statements formulated by the respondent about the project are:

Box 1: Example of opposite pair:

*"Exclusively focused on intermediary level impacts
" versus "regular action to monitor its own impact
on the poor"*

Element "Contribution of CEPA":

Indirect question: *"Are CEPA's actions
contributing mostly towards PIMU's exclusive focus
on intermediary level impact or mostly towards
regular action to monitor PIMU's own impact on
the poor"?*

Rating: The respondent rates the element
"Contribution of CEPA" to the appropriate
statement.

² Such as "both statements are true", "neither statement is true", "in between" and "don't know"

- The project today is “exclusively focused on intermediary level impacts”
- A success criteria for the respondent is if the project takes “regular action to monitor its own impact on the poor”

The respondent is then asked to rate each of the elements against these opposite sentences. For example, the respondent feels that CEPA’s actions have contributed to keeping the focus on intermediary level impacts and therefore rates the contribution of implementing partner with the first sentence.

Figure 1: Opposite sentences and rating elements

Rating elements

Rate each element on a scale from "exclusively focused on the intermediary level impacts" to "Take regular action to monitor its own impact on the poor". To do so, pick up the element with your left mouse button and pull it down into the respective rating box. With the right mouse button you can recover a placed element and correct your choice.

Contribution of counterpart "Implementing counterpart - Cepa"
 Contribution of counterpart "Political Counterpart - MoFin"
 Failure
 Future project effects
 German contribution (GTZ)
 Today's project objectives

100% ██████████ is more "exclusively focused on the intermediary level impacts"
 80% ██████████ is more "taken regular action to monitor its own impact on the poor"
 60% ██████████ both statements are valid
 40% ██████████ is inbetween the two statements
 20% ██████████ neither statement is relevant
 0% ██████████ don't know

Choose elements
 Rating predefined indicators
 Choose project aspect
 Select element pair
 Assessment factor
 Assign topic
Rating elements
 Interview Overview
 View results

Progress of interview

Next
 Back
 Exit interview
 Help

press F1 key for help. Demo mode

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

What comes out after about 8-10 opposite pairs of statements are formulated and rated is a rough picture of what the respondent thinks of the project. The results of an individual interview are immediately transferred into a graphical display in which all elements are positioned in a sphere. By looking at the distances between elements in the four above-mentioned categories, the interviewer can provide immediate feedback to the respondent in order to check and validate that the information obtained through the interview is correct. When the respondent agrees to the picture, the interview is completed.

1.3 e-VAL results at the aggregated level

Once 12 or more interviews are concluded, the data is sent via Internet to a central server in Germany. The server is programmed to read the data within minutes and provide a composite picture. Thus, there is a substantial saving in terms of time in using e-VAL when compared to the traditional qualitative and quantitative interview methods.

The e-VAL server returns the evaluation results for analysis and further interpretation in two ways: in figures and in a graphical display. The interpretation reveals the different perceptions about the project between the various groups and within each group. All information contained in the project evaluation analysis, however, is anonymous. The e-VAL instruments allows for perceptions about positive and negative, expected and unexpected effects of the project. The statements made by the respondents provide useful hints for project steering – be it to keep the involved parties in the same target corridor, or to adjust targets.

Crosscutting evaluations are a further step in aggregating interview results. Analysis can be done on a regional, sector or country portfolio level. This can allow for learning from success stories for replication as well as to avoid repeating mistakes made in unsuccessful projects.

1.4 e-VAL with GTZ

GTZ started the first pilot phase in the year 2000, by evaluating 10 projects to test the tool's potential in assessing development cooperation. Since then, the instrument has undergone prototyping to adapt to GTZ needs. In 2004, having seen the positive and useful results at project and company levels, a management decision was taken to introduce e-VAL in all GTZ supported projects worldwide. Accordingly, a target figure of 4000 e-VAL interviews corresponding to 375 projects has been set for mid 2005. A trainer pool has been established and intensive training cycles have started since July 2004. While e-VAL does not replace other M&E tools within GTZ, it is likely to become a key management tool for the company.

e-VAL is typically expected to be applied to on-going projects at intervals of about two years. PIMU is coming to an end but was nevertheless selected for an e-VAL assessment in the pilot phase. The following sections describe the process, evaluation results and some conclusions on PIMU and e-VAL as an evaluation tool.

2. e-VAL Evaluation of PIMU

2.1 Process issues

The assessment of PIMU using the e-VAL instrument took place during the period October 2004 to February 2005. Twelve interviews were conducted with respondents who had been identified by the PIMU team as being most familiar with the project. Each interview took on average of about 2 hours.

GTZ view

Unlike typical GTZ projects, PIMU has only one staff member, who is the GTZ Senior Advisor/Team leader. The four respondents representing GTZ comprised the PIMU Senior Advisor, a GTZ staff member and two external consultants hired by GTZ.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

Counterpart view

PIMU counterparts comprise the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) and the Ministry of Finance. To differentiate between these two partners who play very different roles in the context of PIMU, CEPA was identified as the “implementing counterpart” and the Ministry of Finance was identified as the “political counterpart”. Three representatives of CEPA and one representative of the Ministry of Finance were interviewed.

Target group view

PIMU was conceptualised to influence development practitioners rather than as a provider of services directly to the poor. The primary target audience of the project was therefore identified to be development professionals, donor-supported projects (including GTZ-funded projects) and organisations, non-government organisations and the government. Representatives of the Program for Improving Capacities for Poverty and Social Policy Research (IMCAP) located in the University of Colombo, and the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association (SLEVA), which received PIMU resources and advisory support, were also interviewed. In all, four interviews were conducted with representatives of two GTZ supported projects, and one respondent each from IMCAP and SLEVA³.

2.2 e-Valuation

Project development over time

On the whole, the PIMU project is perceived to have been well designed and implemented. Representatives of the partner organisations were the most satisfied; the aggregated rating of counterpart interviews came in at 78%⁴ project

³ There were no respondents selected to represent the third sub-group of targets – Ministry of Policy Development and Implementation (MPDI) and National Operations Room (NOR) who were also targeted to receive advisory services from the project.

⁴ This aggregate satisfaction rating figure is provided by the server. The calculation takes into account, among other aspects, the number of positive statements about the project and the relative importance allocated to each statement by the respondent. 100% means ‘fully meets success criteria.

success. In contrast, the target group respondents were the most critical, with the aggregated rating coming in at 68% project success.

Respondents from all three groups mentioned that the project was well designed in that it responded to a need rather than being yet another project focused on activities and that PIMU was designed to help other projects better understand their impact. The project's flexible approach was also positively mentioned as it enabled PIMU to provide support according to specific needs and problems. The GTZ respondents mentioned that the personality of the team leader matched the project design; the project was focused on long-term capacity development rather than on short term, quick results. Other positive comments include the fact that the project was small with services provided through local actors and that PIMU's role was reduced very early to that of an advisor.

Project leadership was perceived both positively and critically. Leadership of PIMU was strong at the beginning, but today there appears to be a more ambiguous situation. GTZ respondents felt that there was intellectual leadership at the start of the project but that today this is lacking, as CEPA's leadership has not been strongly established. The counterpart respondents felt positive that CEPA has established a strong identity, separate from PIMU, and that it makes independent decisions about management and services provided. Nevertheless, they too felt that CEPA is still reliant on PIMU leadership, particularly for networking and marketing of both the Poverty Impact Monitoring (PIM) concept and of CEPA.

Box 2

“Flexibility of design to give support according to need”

- GTZ

“Responding to a need to focus poverty alleviation programs”

- Counterpart

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

Table 1: Project today and project success

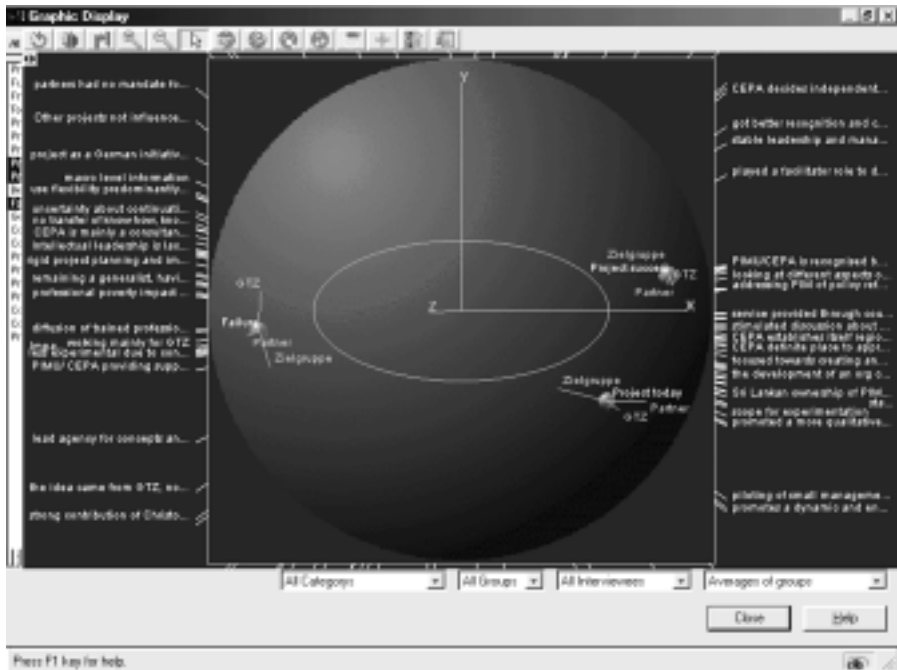
Satisfaction Rating: Perceptions of how successful the project is today		
	Success	Variance
Overall	71	11
GTZ respondents	72	5
Counterpart respondents	78	3
Target group respondents	62	15

As mentioned above, the respondents were generally positive about the project. Overall the project is rated at 71% of what project success is perceived to be, which is in the range of “good”. The variance of 11 shows, that there are deviations between the various groups, as can be seen in the table (range from 62% to 78% success rating). Within the groups, GTZ and counterpart respondents were more homogenous in their views of project success (variance 3 to 5). The target group respondents were less positive but the 4 persons interviewed from this group were also less homogenous in their views (variance 15).

In e-VAL, these results are shown graphically as a three-dimensional globe (see Figure 2 below). “Success” and “Failure”, which are shown at opposite ends, contain the characteristics of these concepts identified by the 12 respondents. The small globes, are the average of respondent ratings of the elements, and show that the “project today” is much closer to “success” than to “failure”. However, as the dispersion from these averages show, the GTZ and counterpart respondents rated the project today relatively closer to project success (as perceived by them), whereas the target group respondents (shown as “Zielgruppe” in the original German!) rated it relatively further from their concept of project success.

The issues discussed by the three groups provide a better understanding of why this picture has emerged.

Figure 2: Project today and project success



PIMU is mainly a project focused on capacity development and all three groups were positive about the project's contribution towards this. Respondents stated that at the beginning, capacities in Sri Lanka regarding PIM were weak but that today, there is substantial local ownership of the PIM concept, and CEPA is well accepted in the Sri Lankan development landscape. In addition, PIMU/CEPA is serving a multitude of clients and has developed networks within the development sector.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

The predefined indicator of project success as stated in the project document is “to improve capacities for poverty impact monitoring”. GTZ respondents were unanimous that PIMU has met its predefined indicator, citing a general trend towards professionalized impact monitoring. The target group respondents also agreed; they felt PIMU has developed an organisation capable of focusing on poverty issues and that CEPA was the place to approach for PIM knowledge

GTZ respondents also felt that the project has successfully applied innovative methods of impact monitoring while the counterpart respondents were also positive about the scope and experience with experimentation. The target group respondents felt that PIMU/CEPA has promoted a more qualitative approach to poverty analysis and appreciated the fact that learning has been created through the exploratory, flexible and inclusive approach.

The counterpart respondents were also positive about the local ownership of the project’s concept and institutions. In terms of project activities, the PIM services are provided through the counterparts who are local actors. In terms of the institution created – CEPA – the counterpart respondents strongly asserted their ownership and identity. GTZ respondents are also positive; not only is the project focused on national capacity development, the project itself is perceived as ‘Sri Lankanised’ in that both staff and clients are either Sri Lankan or focused on Sri Lankan development issues. A dissenting perception was held by a target group respondent who felt that CEPA consists of a group of intellectuals who are perceived as being removed from ground realities.

Box 3

“promoted increased poverty orientation within GTZ-Sri Lanka”

-GTZ

“promoted impact orientation among target groups”

-Counterpart

“played a facilitator role to develop many organisations –[which] are now thinking and working on poverty issues”

-Target group respondent

While there was general agreement about the capacity development and ownership issues, there was a certain amount of disagreement about other criteria of project success. GTZ respondents felt that PIMU/CEPA is recognized beyond the original partners and serves a multitude of clients and in fact, wanted CEPA to establish itself regionally. The counterpart respondents, on the other hand, were critical that PIMU/CEPA is still only interacting with a sub-sector of donors. While there is some divergence among GTZ and counterpart respondents about the appropriate role of CEPA, some of PIMU/CEPA's older clients, such as GTZ projects, felt somewhat abandoned by PIMU and CEPA. They felt that there was no continued relationship and follow-up and that there should have been more input to enable these projects to influence, in turn, their partners about impact monitoring.

There was also some divergence in views about the desirability of PIMU/CEPA's client orientation. A GTZ respondent felt that CEPA is client-driven rather than being driven by science and research. A similar view was expressed by a target group respondent, who felt that PIMU/CEPA was insufficiently concerned with developing clear and innovative concepts about poverty.

Another weakness perceived by a GTZ respondent is that while the project is promoting an orientation towards poverty impacts in other projects, PIMU itself is focused towards intermediary level impacts, and is not aware of its own impact on poverty⁵. A target group respondent echoed this view in relation to the clients' fund, which they felt was focused on implementation of small projects, with little or no information made available about their poverty impacts.

There was, however, a large degree of consensus among both GTZ and counterpart respondents that PIMU/CEPA has a role to play at the policy level. GTZ respondents felt that the project has stimulated discussion about PIM within the political sphere. The counterpart respondents felt that while CEPA was providing information needed by policymakers, PIMU/CEPA should play an advocacy role to institutionalise poverty related issues and have sector-wide influence.

⁵ See paper 3.2 "Tracing PIMU's Poverty Impact Chains" in this volume.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

Project success concepts: what do the involved parties want?

When parties involved in a project share the same – or similar – views about the concept of project success, it is undoubtedly easier to implement the project successfully. However, as the above discussion indicates, this is not always the case, and different parties seem to expect different things from the project. In such instances, it becomes imperative that the project’s implementers – that is GTZ and the counterparts - are aware of any such differences.

Table 2: Concordance of project success concepts (%)

	GTZ response	Counterpart responses
Counterpart	91	
- Implementing Counterpart (CEPA)	89	
- Political Counterpart (MoF)	82	
Target group	84	88
- Clients of PIMU/CEPA	77	83
- IMCAP/SLEvA	83	77
- MPDI/NOR	84	78

The e-VAL results show GTZ was confident that its views are shared by the counterparts, and to a lesser extent by the target groups “IMCAP/SLEvA” and “MPDI/NOR”. While there is some difference of opinion within the group, GTZ respondents felt that the target group “Clients of PIMU/CEPA” want something somewhat different. For example, they feel that the Clients would prefer that CEPA retain a focus on Sri Lanka rather than the region. One respondent felt that as many of the clients were GTZ projects, they may prefer that CEPA retain a GTZ-focus.

These perceptions held by GTZ respondents are validated to some extent by the fact that while GTZ and counterpart respondents are generally satisfied with the project, the target group respondents seems less so.

Contribution to Project: What do involved parties really do?

All three groups agreed on the positive ‘German’ (that is, GTZ-PIMU) contribution. The German contribution was perceived as being between 77% to 83% of project success. They also felt that the Political Counterpart has made the least contribution – be it positively or negatively - to the project. However there was less consensus on this; GTZ respondents viewed the Political Counterpart’s contribution the most positively, while target group respondents viewed it the most critically.

GTZ respondents cited the positive contribution of both the GTZ project staff and the Implementing Counterpart in creating the space for professionals to interact and develop, as well as providing a dynamic and energetic work environment at PIMU/CEPA. This view is shared by the counterpart respondents, who say that GTZ (through PIMU/CEPA), has contributed to providing a dynamic learning environment for professionals. The contribution of the implementing counterpart is viewed both positively and negatively by the target group respondents; who linked some of the positive aspects of the project (example: CEPA is the place to approach for PIM knowledge) and some of the negative aspects of the project (example; PIMU/CEPA has the image of an intellectual group removed from ground realities), to the contribution of the implementing partner.

GTZ respondents did not feel that the GTZ Sri Lanka office made a very significant contribution to PIMU. Its role is seen as somewhat passive but was also on occasion viewed critically. GTZ Sri Lanka is perceived as promoting a more conventional and less flexible project design, a short term project orientation. They pointed out that GTZ Sri Lanka was likely to dilute the poverty focus of GTZ projects by venturing into many different issue areas such as conflict transformation and economic development.

Future outlook and possible action areas

With the PIMU project coming to an end, sustainability was the most often discussed topic overall. On the whole, GTZ and target group respondents were

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

more worried about sustainability issues. Lack of established leadership of CEPA⁶, coupled with the ending of the de-facto leadership provided by PIMU are the most often cited reasons for concerns about sustainability of project benefits. GTZ respondents felt that there was too much reliance on particular individuals but the counterpart respondents felt that there was a critical mass of capable professionals. However, all three groups were generally optimistic that this issue would be resolved in future.

The second most discussed topic relates to capacity building where respondents raised issues worth highlighting. While the PIM concept has been successfully established in Sri Lanka and CEPA is well recognized as provider of PIM and other services, GTZ respondents perceived a mismatch between the growing demand for CEPA's services and its internal capacity to respond.

Finally, both GTZ and counterpart respondents emphasised that PIMU/CEPA should maintain flexibility to respond to changing needs, such as understanding the social and poverty impact of war and the challenges posed by the tsunami disaster. The target group respondents expressed a somewhat divergent view and were concerned that the discourse may be pulled in new directions such as conflict, which may undermine maintaining the focus on poverty.

As PIMU is ending, the respondents were not asked about their perceptions about project status in a year. They were asked about future project effects and all the respondents were very positive about the future. The only critical statement regarding the future project effects offered by the GTZ respondents related to the likely continuation of the mismatch between CEPA's internal capacity and demand for its services. The target group respondents were concerned that the insufficient concern with development of concepts of poverty will continue. The counterpart was also mostly positive but was concerned that with the end of PIMU, CEPA will not be able to maintain the hybrid institutional structure

⁶ The e-Val interviews were conducted prior to the commencement of CEPA's new Executive Director in March 2005

and management norm (which is neither mainstream Sri Lankan nor mainstream GTZ/German⁷) and may lapse towards a more conventional management style.

3. Some Conclusions on PIMU and e-VAL

About PIMU

The e-VAL results show that, in general, parties involved in the project were of the view that PIMU started well, improved further to where the project is today, and is likely to provide very positive future effects. Rather than being just another project focused on implementation (such as building schools) the project responded to a need to orient other projects towards their poverty impact and was flexible and innovative, providing space for experimentation. Today, the objective of increasing capacities for poverty impact monitoring has been largely met and there is now an increased poverty orientation among GTZ projects, and the PIM concept is established within the Sri Lankan development landscape.

While the GTZ and counterpart respondents were generally satisfied with the project, the target group respondents expressed some divergent views. They felt that there was insufficient concern with developing poverty concepts or assessing the poverty impact of its own activities such as the Clients Fund⁸. Further, they felt that there should be a continued relationship and follow-up with clients, in particular GTZ projects, which need continued PIMU/CEPA assistance to influence their own counterparts towards PIM. Finally, they also felt less satisfied with project ownership by local actors as they perceived CEPA as being a group of intellectuals who seem removed from ground reality.

⁷ See paper 2.2 “Uncharacteristically Sri Lankan? Institutional Aspects of PIMU and the Institutional Viability of CEPA” in this volume.

⁸ This is a fund that receives 10% of CEPA’s service fees, and supports innovative initiatives on poverty reduction.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

The main action areas highlighted by respondents are:

- There should be stable and strong leadership at CEPA, which is capable of providing intellectual guidance on poverty issues.
- CEPA's internal capacity should be developed to match demand for services.
- Rather than focusing on outputs and interacting with only a sub-sector of donors, PIMU/CEPA should have a sector-wide influence and play an advocacy role to institutionalise issues.
- PIMU/CEPA needs to take regular action to monitor its own impact on the poor, and in particular ensure that the poverty impact of the Clients Fund is monitored and known.

About e-VAL

As the above discussion may indicate, the e-VAL instrument is a useful tool for monitoring and evaluation, especially when used in conjunction with other tools. It provides a means to grasp subjective perceptions of respondents and to turn them into a composite picture at the level of the individual respondent, the group and the project.

However, the e-VAL instrument is relatively new and there is a great deal of disagreement about its strengths and weaknesses – particularly as an evaluation tool. This debate is also reflected in the perceptions of the co-authors of this chapter. For example, it can be argued that since the respondents are chosen purposively (i.e., those that have a good knowledge of the project), their views may not necessarily reflect – or be representative of - those of their respondent group. In the case of PIMU e-Val, the sub-group “Clients of PIMU/CEPA” were represented only by GTZ projects (who are the older clients and more familiar with PIMU). It is possible – and in fact likely – that their perceptions may not be representative of PIMU/CEPA's current client base. On the other hand, others may argue that this is a problem specific to PIMU and that the instrument requires proper preparation by those responsible for the project, especially the proper selection of interviewees. Further, while e-VAL may not provide statistically valid results, it provides an indicative picture that is clear

enough for project steering and for assessing positive and/or negative impacts. In other words, there is a value in being approximately right, rather than being precisely wrong!

Another weakness of e-VAL relates to the assigning of topics to all the opposite pairs. On the one hand the list of topics developed thus far seems inadequate, but a large part of the final analysis output is based on the present list of topics. As a result it can be argued that a potentially useful and informative set of information cannot be optimally utilized yet, until the list of topics has been worked over by GTZ.

Finally, it can be argued that e-VAL is more likely to be useful as a monitoring tool for on-going projects, than as an ex-post evaluation tool for completed projects. However, others may perceive the potential to capture impact information through e-VAL but see that the real challenge lies not in the instrument but in getting both interviewers and users of the e-VAL information to sufficiently understand the methodology. Therefore, it is hoped that once interviewers have gained enough experience in using the tool, it would be possible to obtain a multi-dimensional and well differentiated range of information which reflect peoples' real perceptions and with relatively little input.

3.2 Tracing PIMU's Poverty Impact Chains

Azra Jafferjee & Markus Mayer

Contents	<i>Page</i>
1. Introduction	219
2. PIMU's Strategy for Poverty Impact	222
2.1 Conceptual approach	
2.2 Translating an approach into practice	
3. Nature and Scope of Impact	228
3.1 Service function	
3.2 Catalytic function	
4. Summary and Lessons Learnt	243

3.2 Tracing PIMU's Poverty Impact Chains

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to unravel the impact chains originating from the provision of services and research outputs by the Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit (PIMU) and the PIMU supported programme on Poverty Impact Monitoring (PIM) at the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA).

PIMU, as does CEPA, works through a combination of a service provider/research institution model. The primary audience (or 'target group' in project language) are development professionals and organisations that support the poor.

This means that the nature of the outputs provided by PIMU/CEPA are not aimed directly at the poor. Instead, the link to the poor is through development professionals' and organisations' utilisation of PIMU/CEPA services.

As illustrated by PIMU's project objectives: "Development organisations and professionals improve their capacities to monitor poverty related impacts" (purpose); thereby influencing "development organisations [to] orient their concepts to more effectively reduce poverty" (development goal); so that, "poverty groups supported by projects/programmes improve their living standard" (overall goal).

Similarly, the objectives of CEPA are: Provision of analysis on poverty, capacity building of development organisations and professionals and improvement of know-how transfer and policy dialogue. Unlike in the case of a donor-project, as an institution CEPA has not enunciated impact hypotheses, although a strong poverty impact orientation is evident in its work and professional ideals.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

The objectives of this paper are, therefore, to trace the impact, following utilisation of PIMU/CEPA services—in particular down to the level of poor groups and to recommend improvements in the monitoring of CEPA's service impacts on a regular basis.

It complements the rest of the papers in this volume in two ways. While each of the papers in section 2 of this volume focus on one aspect of PIMU/CEPA, this paper as well as the companion paper in this section, opens up to all types of impacts. The methodology used in the two papers in section 3, however, are quite different.

Methodology

In terms of the conceptual approach to studying impact, the review will follow a typical, 'goal-oriented' approach, which looks at (poverty relevant) impacts arising from the utilisation of project outputs. That is, the point from which the PIMU/CEPA service was utilised by the client, or the direct user/audience. The challenge will be to see how the client utilised the service and what sort of impact it had on the (poverty) groups supported by the client. The impact chains will be followed through only as far as they remain plausible.

Hence, the methodological focus of this review is at the 'target group' of PIMU/CEPA, namely, development professionals and organisations.

For definitional terms, the word impact is broadly defined as changes that have occurred in the project environment that the project has contributed to in a plausible, attributable manner.

Poverty is defined in line with PIMU's project goal, to denote a change for the better in the living conditions of poor people.

Sample

The sample selection of assignments that have been chosen for 'tracing' is purposive and based on three key criteria:

- Assignments and activities with a more direct poverty relevance; so that the potential links between PIMU/CEPA service provision, and poverty reduction is made with an acceptable degree of plausibility.
- Assignments and activities that represent the different type of services/ catalytic functions of PIMU/CEPA.
- Assignments and activities that were largely – though not exclusively – coordinated by the PIM Programme

A total of 26 persons were interviewed for this paper; 11 interviews were conducted via an e-mail questionnaire and the remainder interviewed personally.

The 26 interviewees represent 24 types of assignments and activities undertaken by PIMU/CEPA. In a number of cases, one person was involved with PIMU/CEPA in more than one assignment/activity. Of these 24, 8 were undertaken by PIMU, 13 by CEPA and 3 involved both PIMU and CEPA. The breakdown according to types of assignments and activities is as follows.

Table 1: Type of assignment / function

PIMU:	Service function (6)	Catalytic function (3)		
CEPA:	Advisory (5)	Applied Research (3)	Training (5)	Dialogue & Exchange (2)

Note: Explanation of the above categories is given in the following sub-sections.

Limitations

It is important to point out that this paper does not attempt to provide a representative picture of the impacts of PIMU/CEPA in its service provision and catalytic activities. Despite being relatively small, the sample was sufficient to provide an indicative picture of the impact chains from the different types of assignments and activities of PIMU/CEPA.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

One drawback to the paper is the fact that a number of key interviews could only be conducted through e-mail interviews, which to some extent prevented deeper discussion towards tracing the impact chains. It should also be stated that this paper is not intended as a study, but rather as a reflective piece, aimed at providing some insights and stimulating discussions on the PIMU project and the work of its counterpart, CEPA, and provide a useful starting point for a more regular introspection of this type by CEPA in the years ahead.

Finally, the authors would like to state that to some extent, they have used their personal knowledge and own reflections on both the PIMU project and CEPA to supplement the interviews. This input reflects the internal/external authorship structure which is a core element of the methodology of the overall PIMU assessment.

2. PIMU's Strategy for Poverty Impact

2.1 Conceptual approach

As the main means of influencing poverty impact, PIMU undertook to build capacities and competencies of development professionals and organisations supporting the poor. It was intended that increased capacities and competencies would lead to the development of more appropriate and effective services to target groups because of,

- a) More comprehensive conceptual frameworks underpinning the designing, planning and implementing of poverty-related projects;
- b) Outputs and activities being more in line with and responsive to the needs and interests of target groups; and
- c) Broader monitoring and evaluation mechanisms ensuring that significant impacts are recognised, addressed or strengthened, where relevant. This would ensure continued strengthening of projects, against harmful impacts such as unintended increase of conflicts within the communities.

The delivery of appropriate and effective services implies a positive change in the environment of the project. Nonetheless, it is recognised that the impact

assessment exercise and related mechanisms are definitively intended to monitor all impacts (whether positive, negative, unintended or intended).

Transforming conceptual frameworks

It was assumed that capacity or knowledge enhancement through PIMU service provision on impact monitoring for individuals working in organisations concerned with poverty alleviation would improve the quality of respective programs. For example, individuals who have a clearer idea about impact monitoring might be in a better position to critically reflect about the efficiency and effectiveness of their work (or the activities they support) and hence might adjust or improve their respective programmes already in the course of the implementation process.

Responsive activities

Introducing new, innovative aspects to conceptualise poverty (e.g. from a qualitative perspective, a multidimensional focus, an indirect approach) could lead to trying out new approaches in projects that may not have the vision and interest for such “experiments” before the PIMU service provision. In particular, projects that follow a predominantly economic understanding of poverty, could be motivated through sensitisation exercises to move beyond purely technical implementation approaches in poverty alleviation attempts. Although the outcome might not necessarily always be positive, it is however important to recognise the need to identify innovative, new ideas/approaches in order to achieve an improvement of activities.

Timely recognition of impacts

Awareness creation about side effects (unintended impacts) is probably one of the most important features of PIMU. Typically, projects tend to focus on narrow project goals, which ignore a considerable amount of context related information that can be crucial for determining sustained impact. It can also give vital clues for project steering and adjustment. Being open to these happenings is a vital part of the approach advocated by PIMU.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

Awareness creation of negative – or conflict–impacts has also been a feature of the PIMU approach. Such awareness may not necessarily lead to an improvement of poverty alleviation as such, but to a higher sensitivity about not causing harm through development interventions. In fact, “do-no-harm” practices of projects might reduce conflict potentials within the project surrounding, but often go together with lesser efficiency in terms of the anticipated outputs of a project. Better understanding of impacts (rather than outputs) of project activities might also put project personnel in a better position to negotiate with donors or even their own headquarter personnel on necessary adjustment in the projects log frame in order to be more conflict-sensitive.

2.2 Translating an approach into practice

PIMU’s strategy for building capacities and competencies relied on an approach that combined service provision with support towards selected initiatives. This approach termed by PIMU as its ‘two-fold mandate’; involved a service function and a so-called catalytic function.

The service function took the form of specific consultative inputs to clients on the basis of requests and aimed largely at developing or strengthening existing planning, monitoring and evaluation systems with the focus on poverty related impacts. It rested on the guiding principle that services would be provided as an advisory input on request by clients, and entailed no controlling function by PIMU. The PIMU view was that impact monitoring was a primary project internal function aimed at improving the quality of project activities. Hence, the emphasis was on learning for improved project steering, as opposed to proving or evaluating. The fact that a pre-requisite for enhanced learning is also the openness towards change, was another rationale for providing services only when requested.

The catalytic function was designed to initiate and support activities that had a ‘catalytic’ nature in the sense of spreading knowledge, networks and ideas, thus contributing towards an improvement in the way poverty concepts are being understood and applied among development practitioners in Sri Lanka. These initiatives were required to be oriented towards either impact monitoring or

poverty reduction and had to be innovative in nature. One of the guiding principles was that catalytic activities required to be implemented in cooperation with co-financing agencies in order to enhance outreach and impact. The aspects of innovation, implanting of ideas that could spread were particularly strong elements that ran through this function.

Service provision

The mode of delivery of PIMU's service function was through tailor-made consultancy support for poverty impact monitoring designed to fit all stages of the project cycle.

From the start, PIMU sought to develop service packages and instruments that could be applied at various stages of the project cycle. Table 2 below illustrates some of these.

Table 2: Selected service packages developed by PIMU

	Identification	Planning	Implementation	Follow-up
Participatory Poverty Assessment	X	X	X	X
Planning support at workshops, indicator formulation, reviews of project planning matrices, comments on tender documents	X	X		
Staff sensitisation on impact monitoring		X	X	
Rapid self-assessment of poverty orientation		X	X	
Rapid self-assessment of impact orientation		X	X	
Short-term consultancies	X	X	X	
In-process consultancies		X	X	
Participatory monitoring and impact studies		X	X	X

Source: PIMU (2000) A Brief on PIMU and Options for its Future Institutionalisation .

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

Given the demand-oriented approach of its service function, some services were more developed than others. For instance, consultancies on impact monitoring with backstopping functions were most in demand. A characteristic was a high level of interaction with the staff of client project, since impact monitoring remained a project internal function with advisory support from PIMU.

Training workshops on impact monitoring were not of high priority at the start of PIMU but came into prominence due to client demand. PIMU also saw this as a way of supporting projects that could not be served through tailor-made consultancies and of increasing outreach and impact. It was also a way of consolidating and testing 'tool-kits' that were developed in the course of consultancy service provision. Equally importantly, training workshops had the added value of facilitating the exchange of experiences – and spread of ideas – amongst a network of monitoring specialists.

With the PIMU facilitated establishment of the Centre for Poverty Analysis in mid-2001, the two mandates of PIMU made its way into CEPA by influencing its institutional concept for service provision. This comprised four specific service areas namely, Applied Research, Advisory Services, Training and Dialogue & Exchange.

In providing services, CEPA follows a similar market orientation as PIMU, although CEPA more proactively engages in independent research through the work of its programmes, which are sponsored by donors and have longer time duration.

Advisory Services provided by CEPA were strongly influenced by the service function of PIMU, particularly in the early years. Applied research, which was less developed in PIMU took a substantially higher prominence at CEPA. Clients of CEPA expanded to the non-GTZ community, and comprised the multilaterals (such as the Asian Development Bank) and other bilaterals and INGOs as CEPA ventured away from the previously 'captive' market of PIMU.

The training programme at CEPA took a more professional character with the hiring of a training coordinator to conceptualise and guide the CEPA training programme. Subject-wise, the modules stayed close to impacts, although the focus on poverty concepts gained more attention.

Catalysing ideas

On the catalytic side, the nature of initiatives supported and promoted by PIMU were those that had a high degree of knowledge sharing, capacity building and networking elements. One in particular was the *Scholarship Programme on Poverty Research*. The programme aimed to facilitate independent research and contribute to increasing Sri Lankan expertise in poverty reduction, social policy formulation and impact monitoring. This was done through the provision of academic and financial support to a group of Master's level students to conduct research on poverty related issues. In addition to the financial support, PIMU provided academic support on research methods and in developing and supervising the studies.

While the results of the scholarship programme in its original form was less successful the initiative gave rise to a new research programme within the University of Colombo (IMCAP) and an *Annual Symposium on Poverty Research* to share the findings of the first round of studies. The latter has now developed into an annual event on a growing scale and scope. Another activity of this nature is the *Open Forum on Poverty*, an informal discussion space aimed at stimulating and sharing discussion on poverty relevant issues among professionals in the field.

Most of these initiatives continue at CEPA through its dialogue and exchange activities. In particular, the *Annual Symposium on Poverty Research* and the Open Forum are regular events on the CEPA calendar. One initiative in particular, the *PIMU Clients' Conference*, has been further developed by CEPA to finance a host of innovative initiatives that act as a catalyst to spreading ideas, knowledge and good practices in poverty reduction.

3. Nature and Scope of Impact

This section traces impact chains arising from the PIMU/ CEPA support and tries to assess in how far these chains are traceable ‘to the ground’. When tracing chains, the approach will be to follow PIMU’s strategy for poverty impact; which relies on transforming concepts and influencing project activities of its clients, in the realm of impact monitoring and poverty reduction.

3.1 Service function

Working with the development hypothesis that PIMU/CEPA services translate into impacts on the ground, through its utilisation by clients, an attempt was made to see what kind of changes resulted from the utilisation of the service.

As described in the previous section, PIMU’s strategy for achieving impact relied on influencing design and planning concepts, outputs and activities and improved Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). Hence, in this section, impacts will be looked at from two angles. One is a change in the *working concepts* of the client and another is a change in the *working practice* of the client.

Opening up to complexity

At the very basic level, PIMU/CEPA services resulted in a substantially higher understanding of the concepts of ‘impact’, ‘poverty’ and ‘poverty impact’ among professionals, be it through training, applied research or advisory service. Looking at clients of PIMU, much of this related to the concept of impact as PIMU gave a much higher focus to instituting systematic impact monitoring within GTZ projects, than it did for poverty impact monitoring.

As succinctly put by one interviewee, *“you have to catch it where it was practical for us”*. Since most of PIMU’s clients – irrespective of their project cycle – were not undertaking any systematic impact monitoring, taking the discussion into the realm of poverty ran the risk of losing their interest. Hence, PIMU tended to go along with the client’s priority with the expectation that the poverty focus would come as a learning outcome of improved impact monitoring.

A clear difference on understanding was seen between clients that had received longer-term in-process consultancy (IPC) support, compared with one-off, short-term consultancy support (STC): the majority of IPC clients moved beyond activity monitoring to integrating outcome and impacts explicitly in their log frame and M&E activities. Prior to coming into contact with PIMU, impact monitoring was viewed as something 'necessary but difficult' and many projects were reluctant to engage in it due to its apparent complexity and lack of tools on how to do it. Many projects simply ignored impact, regarding it as something discernible only in the long run.

In contrast, CEPA services in impact monitoring saw a noticeably higher reflection on poverty impact, explicitly taking into account its multidimensionality. This was influenced largely by a greater focus on the topic of poverty by CEPA, as compared with PIMU, which concentrated more on impact and let projects define their impact space.

CEPA clients point out that previously, they did not make the link with the kind of work they did – be it urban settlement improvement or microfinance provision – and poverty reduction. This was due to a narrow definition and interpretation of poverty in their project contexts. Discussions with CEPA helped to open up to the multidimensional nature of poverty and unravel the linkages between what was done and those it served, in a way that interventions could be traced to an eventual poverty impact. This also applied with the reverse situation – where an automatic connection between an intervention (for instance rural road construction) and poverty reduction was assumed, on deeper analysis it did not appear to hold.

When it came to the concept of 'impact', a great lack of clarity was evident amongst clients on what constitutes impact as against outcomes and results with the subject shrouded in much mystery and even apprehension! On the concept of poverty, the general understanding did not extend beyond economic and non-economic measures of health and education. Going into the broader realm of poverty as capabilities, encompassing aspects such as personal freedom, vulnerability or even dignity was a new departure to many.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

Participants from a human rights/advocacy organisation at a CEPA training workshop on impact monitoring, reported that their general perception was that the impact of their kind of work was not measurable. After attending the training course – in this case conducted in partnership with the Programme for Alternative Training (PALTRA) – they were able to identify measurable impact indicators. The result was a clear orientation towards monitoring, and at the very least a greater awareness of the outcomes and impacts of their work, beyond activities.

In the case of an urban settlement improvement project, one of the starkest examples of the impact of this discussion was a link between the construction of toilets and the concept of dignity. Where previously this was seen primarily as a health and sanitation activity, an appreciation for constructing individual toilets was now viewed through the eyes of the user as a dignity issue, which is defined as an element of poverty in its broader more multidimensional forms.

On the level of the professionals that interacted with PIMU/ CEPA in the implementation of the assignment, the capacity building/learning effect was substantial. One could argue that in most cases this was due to starting off from a low base. Both in the case of impact and poverty oriented service delivery, previous knowledge/experience of the subject were limited amongst client projects.

Nevertheless, even in cases where the professionals had a sound grounding of the issues, the interactive approaches adopted in the service delivery, usually with a large number of workshops and discussions accompanying the process, facilitated a ‘coming together’ and mutual exchange that was lacking in many project settings.

Changing the way of working

The moot question for this paper is: How far did this personal and project related capacity building translate into changes in working practices and concepts to bring about more effective poverty reduction?

One aspect that came up repeatedly in the interviews was the impact of the increased understanding on working practices of professionals.

In the instances of a study on urban settlements, a training programme on impacts and poverty for a microfinance project and a consultancy on impact monitoring for a vocational training project, the increased awareness was translated into the adoption of a more empathetic approach by project staff in their interaction and dealings with poor communities. For example, communities in the underserved settlements had been seen purely as consumers of municipal services, microfinance borrowers as bank clients, and vocational trainees as students. Discussions on how poverty manifests itself, for instance through the notion of dignity, or seeing beyond the provision of a loan to impacts on household and livelihood, or vocational training as a means of empowering women, all contributed to some changes in the way in which these groups were dealt with by the project staff. This was particularly apparent in projects involving the 'not so poor', since the links with poverty were less obvious and hitherto not explicitly considered.

It also led to increased sensitivity in dealings with direct beneficiaries in a way that previously might have been lacking. In the case of a project that had a heavy infrastructure focus, discussions on a poverty and conflict impact assessment with beneficiary groups led project engineers to pay more heed to 'soft' aspects such as consulting with communities, the need for transparent beneficiary selection, or being mindful of not creating additional conflicts and rivalries.

From practice to impact

While examples of impact on working practices are easy to find, impact on transforming conceptual frameworks of PIMU/CEPA clients, leading to changes in poverty related activities, that could then be traced to the poor, were less forthcoming.

The most clearly observable instances of changes in project concepts were, not surprisingly, where the service was provided at the early stages of project design. An input into the design of a grant-financed project to enable poor households connect to the power grid, helped, according to the client, to create a well designed

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

concept that matched with the complexity and ground situation of the target population. Similarly, an input into a donor's country strategy document resulted in a more complex and multidimensional interpretation of poverty being incorporated into the document.

Taking changes in working concepts one step further to impact on the ground however, was difficult. The assessment of poverty impact in both cases was seen as 'marginal' or 'some impact'. When analysing the entire sample reviewed for this paper, the range of answers to the question "to what extent did the PIMU/ CEPA service have an impact on achieving more efficient poverty alleviation" is depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Poverty impact of PIMU/ CEPA service

	Very effective impact	Some impact	Marginal impact	No impact	Negative impact
Sample 16*	1	5	2	8	0

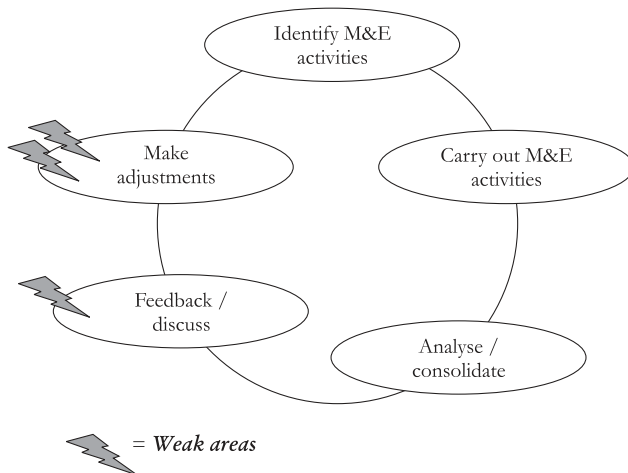
Note: The sample is only 16 as this ranking was administered to only a selected number of interviewees representing PIMU/CEPA formal assignments, as against catalytic and dialogue and exchange activities.

The highest frequency of answers was 'no impact', although 'some impact' and 'marginal impact' combined received the same frequency. On deeper probing it became evident that the assessments of 'some' and 'marginal impact' were less to do with poverty reduction impacts on the target group, than changes in working concepts within the projects that could not be traced to changes on the ground.

For example, revision of log frame indicators arising out of in-process consultancies or training programmes, better understanding of poverty related issues due to studies undertaken, training programmes, or better assessment of project impacts due to impact related consultancies and studies – all resulted in changes in working concepts. However, attempts to build an impact chain from these changes in working concepts to tangible actions or changes on the ground were unsuccessful, as plausible impact chains could not be constructed.

Bluntly put, it seems that improvements in project steering arising out of systematic impact monitoring, did not take place among the clients interviewed. Taking a typical M&E cycle (illustrated below) the discussions indicate the following highlighted areas as the weak link that hinders impact on the ground.

Chart 1: Typical M&E Cycle



A number of reasons contributed to this: One was the structure of monitoring functions within the project where many M&E officers tended to work in isolation from project management and decision-making, insufficient joint discussion with the rest of the project team and insufficient 'mandatory' requirement 'from above' to improve impact orientation of projects.

Another reason is the nature of the frame conditions within which development projects operate. Some of these will be discussed in the section below on conducive conditions for achieving impact.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

Not intended but noteworthy

Although not directly poverty relevant, examples of unintended impacts arising out of PIMU/CEPA service provision were many. These are worthy of documentation as it shows the manner in which impacts occur and how it may feed back into the greater objective of impacts on the ground through a longer route.

One interesting example that came up not just once but thrice was at the personal level. In three instances, it was pointed out that the course of interaction with PIMU/CEPA in its service provision – and these were all on longer term in-process consultancies, the professionals had developed an interest in the subject of impact monitoring, which carved out a new field of expertise and specialisation for them. Hence, where previously their skills had been of a more generalist nature, by developing skills on impact monitoring, they had been able to define a more specialised professional space thereby enhancing career opportunities and professional satisfaction.

In one notable case, one of the professionals went on to start up her own consultancy, offering services in impact monitoring and often co-operating with PIMU/CEPA as a consultant. In another, the professional became the M&E officer within the project, while in the third case the professional took on M&E tasks within the project as well as in a following job. If one were to envisage the multiplier effect of creating this type of specialisation and skills for poverty impact monitoring, it could be plausibly assumed that efficiency of project activities, if not always impact, could only be positively affected.

Another often cited example of unintended impact was the impact of innovative ideas and working practices. This was most often seen in training programmes and in services that were ‘in-process’ in nature and involved a high degree of ‘dialoguing’. Tools and methods of brainstorming, obtaining shared views and conducting focus groups that were used by PIMU/CEPA in its service provision were picked up by clients who integrate it as part of their working practice. The reverse of this was that some respondents complained that the tools were too abstract and impractical and could not be used in day-to-day situations especially when dealing with communities on the ground.

One assignment which tried to assess the strength of beneficiary groups supported by the client set off a process of reflection and discussion among the group itself, which had the effect of increasing their own awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. This led to them taking proactive steps in identifying areas for improvement, which had not been done in a systematic way previously.

Conducive conditions for achieving impact

The other side of the coin of tracing the impact chains is to trace why this might not have happened as envisaged. As could be seen from the preceding section, while impact on understanding and changes in working practices in individual cases is marked, impact on changes on working concepts and project steering is less visible.

Three distinct issues came up either as limiting or conducive factors that were mentioned as facilitating enhanced impacts on the ground.

The most frequently cited limitation was inter- and intra-co-ordination. Taking the intra- first, it was often repeated that in order to transcend personal understanding into institutional changes, there has to be an openness and flexibility for making changes in the management culture. Frequently, impact monitoring began with support of management but then became relegated to one or few professionals, which had insufficient clout to influence project steering.

One client said that PIMU's demand-driven approach might have allowed some projects to "take it easy" on impact monitoring. If PIMU had a more "controlling element", with a "directive from top", impact monitoring would have assumed more significance within the projects and the results taken more seriously.

Inter-coordination refers to projects and institutions that work through counterpart structures, that are often government bodies. These have different management cultures, procedures and styles and are less able and open to changing patterns of functioning. Hence, where the results of a study or consultancy might point to obvious changes being required, making these changes entailed long negotiations and engagements with counterpart strictures that many project staff were simply not up to or willing to do. In some cases, it was told that it was

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

necessary to involve the higher management in counterpart structures, while in other instances co-opting middle management was seen as key, since top management was seen as operating within more politicised norms and procedures.

Another very clear determinant of impact was in the way in which the service was carried out. There was a very clear correlation between impact on understanding on working practice and some of the unintended impacts mentioned above – and the intensity of interaction. For example longer term in-process consultancies or studies that had a high degree of discussion, workshops, brainstorming with the same group of people resulted in a more lasting and sustained impact as compared with one-off support in the form of a study or evaluation.

Particularly because both concepts of poverty and impact involve fairly complex issues, constant follow up and ‘backstopping’ was seen as vital to enhance impact and bring about improved project steering. This was principally pointed out in relation to training programmes – where specific follow-up or trouble-shooting modules were requested so that participants could integrate their new knowledge into the practical settings of their project contexts.

A conducive factor facilitating impact is the flexibility of the service provider, which was cited as a positive point in PIMU/CEPA’s favour. The client orientation of the service approach enabled considerable adaptation and tailoring to be more appropriate and meaningful. On the other hand, it was also pointed out that the service orientation of PIMU/CEPA might also be a limiting factor and a more ‘controlling’ element which required necessary changes to happen rather than leave it to the choice of the client – may have yielded more results. This goes back to the PIMU mandate and guiding principle, which explicitly stated that it did not aspire to control and points to instances where in more hierarchical or formalised settings, a more directed approach might have been welcome.

3.2 Catalytic function

As mentioned earlier, the PIMU mandate was seen to cover not only service provision to clients (who would also be supposed to pay for such), but to also act as a facilitator for the *catalytic function*, designed to initiate and support innovative activities that would spread knowledge, networks and ideas towards either impact monitoring or poverty reduction and the underlying concepts that often direct practitioners in their work. Ultimately, this was also expected to have an impact on the poverty discourse in Sri Lanka in regard to concepts and issues prioritised.

Stimulating discussion

One of the first and most prominent features of PIMU, especially in the beginning, was the aforementioned *Open Forum*, an informal roundtable meeting with a number of selected resource persons and invited guests to brainstorm on programme ideas or to discuss new approaches towards poverty and/or impact assessment. Many presentations were works-in-progress, presented in order to obtain feedback. The highly informal nature of these events in the beginning contributed also to the set-up of a number of initiatives, such as *the Scholarship Programme for Research on Poverty* mentioned above.

With the establishment of CEPA, the *Open Forum* lost this informal character to a certain extent and became more a forum for the new organisation to present findings of major assignments or research studies, either of their own staff or contracted resource persons to a wider audience. With an increase in the number of participants the forum moved away from the concept of a discussion circle and developed more of a seminar character.

However, the *Open Forum* is still seen as an important regular event to present new research findings or conceptual ideas to a wider public, and thus serves the dissemination of poverty relevant approaches to other professionals working in the field. This is also achieved by a fairly low cost profile, which increases the sustainability of the Forum to one that does not require financial support by PIMU.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

Facilitating poverty research

Another significant example of PIMU's earlier focus on catalytic functions is the *Scholarship Programme*, designed to provide financial support to postgraduate students enrolled in Master programmes and with interest to relate their dissertation research towards a poverty relevant topic. The initial attempt by PIMU to grant these scholarships to 10 independent Master students, enrolled in different programmes, but predominantly working in various occupations, proved to be rather difficult. Although a team of academic resource personnel was assigned by PIMU to provide guidance and supervision to the group, the final research products were somewhat poor. Lack of academic rigour and interest in a degree (rather than the research), and a very limited time involvement in the study as such could be identified as the main reasons.

PIMU initiated another dialogue on the experiences of this scholarship programme and facilitated a process to institutionalise support for poverty related research within an existing organisational structure, namely the Sri Lankan universities, to continue with the process of stimulating more empirical research on poverty on the one hand, and at the same time to better address capacity building issues in this field. The newly established "Improving Capacities for Poverty Research" (IMCAP) Program at the University of Colombo, partly with the support of PIMU, integrated the scholarship programme as one of its core areas of activity to better qualify University academics to link up with the development sector.

Learning from the experiences of the earlier attempt, the grant holders were selected among junior staff members from the Social Science Department. The IMCAP Program facilitated guidance through their assigned supervisors (by supporting them in their duties), but more so it also provided a focal point within the University for lecturers from different disciplines to meet regularly, access relevant literature and receive advice through IMCAP personnel. This proved to be a key strategy element that helped overcome the main shortcomings of the earlier programme, namely the lack of ownership and real academic interest in the study area.

It proved also easier to link these attempts to other initiatives that further increased the incentives for the young academics to continue working (and eventually also teaching) in the field of poverty and applied development relevant issues. The supported initiatives included workshop and conference presentations of findings as well as editorial support by IMCAP to assist the young scholars to place articles in edited volumes or journals. IMCAP's organization of conferences at other Sri Lankan Universities additionally increased inter-regional and inter-ethnic linkages among academic circles of different Universities.

Although one could see this mainly as impacts on academic career development, it is important to keep in mind that many social science graduates (including junior staff) are from a rural, often quite marginalised backgrounds, and could thus be in an advantageous situation to relate to poverty issues if provided with proper analytical and methodological skills. The quality of some of the working papers arising from the University based scholarship programme points towards this potential.

More so, out of the 16 lecturers who participated in the programme so far, seven remained at the University and continued to undertake further applied research in the field of poverty. With the exception of two, none of them had been involved in applied, development related research before. All seven lecturers have also integrated poverty related issues into their teaching while four of them have even supported the set-up of new undergraduate courses in the field of poverty and social integration/conflict.

University graduates, whether they remain within the university system or move out, are often moving into leadership positions in society, thus influencing public opinion through their teaching or public activities. Being better informed on poverty relevant issues (through their involvement in thorough research) might therefore have quite a significant indirect impact on poverty and social policy at a later stage, depending on their respective professional involvement. Among the students who were personally taught by one of the authors over the last two years in one of the newly established courses on poverty at Colombo University, around 20 are working at reputed NGOs, as advisors in the government or for media programmes focusing on poverty related issues. Unfortunately, there has

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

been no systematic study yet concerning the university-to-work transition of students who have been part of such new applied courses. However, although small in numbers, the above-mentioned facilitator potential of university graduates has to be taken into consideration as well when evaluating the impact.

Among the other nine participants in the programme, three left the University and started working as programme officers in NGOs in development related fields. All three applied for their respective jobs with a recommendation letter based on their involvement in the IMCAP scholarship programme and all of them reported that this was “very helpful” in their respective interview situations.

From the remaining six participants, four applied for higher studies abroad, all of them in areas broadly related to their research under the scholarship programme. Again, everyone stated that the participation in the scholarship programme had been useful for their application. When they return from abroad, they will be valuable human resources for various organisations working in the development sector. Unlike many other returnees who are more from an urban middle- or upper class background, all four participants are again from non-elite backgrounds. They might therefore be in a qualitatively different position to utilise their academic knowledge in Sri Lanka.

Documentation of experiences and entering into a dialogue about such experiences with other stakeholders to continue with PIMU’s initiative, proved to be a highly successful strategy (although the process obviously was quite long). This underlines the importance of projects such as PIMU, which are kept flexible in their mandate and set of activities. Without the ability to “experiment” with a particular approach over a longer period, such achievements (as in the case of improving a scholarship programme on poverty research) would be difficult to attain.

However, with the increase of efforts to institutionalise (at a later stage) certain “prime” initiatives (such as CEPA) this degree of flexibility and ability to experiment with approaches over a longer period of time diminished to quite some extent.

Creating a forum for research exchange

A final example of catalytic initiatives facilitated by PIMU is the already mentioned *Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka*, which has taken place five times by now. Again the character of this event was designed in an attempt to fill a particular niche in Sri Lanka, namely to provide a platform for local academics to present new research findings on poverty based on *empirical* studies. Focusing on empirical research findings did not only ensure the presentation of often genuinely new material, but also opened the circle to researchers outside the usual Colombo based workshop circles. The Symposium increasingly provided an opportunity for younger academics, whether as participants or as presenters, to take part in this annual event.

Especially the younger academics from Sri Lankan universities expressed the significance of the event for them. In almost all cases the Poverty Symposium has been the first opportunity for them to present themselves and their work to a larger and international group. Beyond the direct benefits of eventually having their presentation also published in the respective volumes of the symposiums proceedings, some former junior presenters also stated their participation in such an event led to an increase in their academic self-esteem.

Although this may sound banal in the context of many other academic environments, one has to keep in mind again the non-elite background of the majority of today's Sri Lanka social science graduates, which goes together with a predominately non-English medium education. For all the participating lecturers it was the first time that they prepared and presented a paper in English. For university personnel such as the Dean, Faculty of Arts or the Director of Studies, Faculty of Arts, this was seen as a major achievement to support the reform efforts to transform the medium of instruction back to English within Sri Lankan Universities. Additionally, the reform efforts are also trying to bring back core values of academic education such as reading, critical debate, research as well as public presentations that have been increasingly curtailed over the last two decades.

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

It is also important to note in this context that for undergraduates, young lecturers are often more the role models, than cosmopolitan senior lecturers. Young lecturers who participated in the scholarship programme and developed interest in applied, development related topics and are prepared to familiarise themselves with English as an important language to access relevant literature and to communicate findings to practitioners, can have an important impact on the motivation of students they are teaching to embark on similar initiatives.

The Poverty Symposium also became an event for undergraduate students to participate in and many saw being part of a larger conference ambient as an entirely new experience. Among undergraduates, the event was seen to create a stronger sense of belonging within a wider academic community and had a motivational impact to focus their own studies on applied, poverty related topics.

In view of the rather small number of Sri Lankan university academics working on poverty, the Symposium provides contacts and linkages between those who do research on poverty as well as incentives to increase research in this field. A higher motivation in poverty research might also result in the teaching of more course units on poverty related issues. At the Faculty of Arts, for example, an interdisciplinary foundation course on “Understanding Poverty in Sri Lanka” for social science students has been taught over the last three years with the active contribution of junior lecturers involved in poverty research.

Strategic dissemination

In terms of dissemination of knowledge through publications, PIMU/CEPA has recently developed a more coherent strategy to support this form of outreach. This is an important step, as this tool for achieving a larger impact had not been explored in all its possibilities earlier. Documentation such as the occasional papers arising out of the *Open Forum* had no wider distribution nor had the presenters significantly improved the scripts they presented at the event. More than a mere documentation of proceedings, analytical quality can often only be achieved through another process of writing and editing respective papers and incorporating comments by workshop participant or reviewers. Quality publication can then not only be produced in larger quantities than photocopied

documentation reports, they also may achieve a more significant impact by carrying a greater degree of relevance and legitimacy.

This was in particular seen in the case of initiatives such as the Joint Initiative for Monitoring of Development Trends (JIMOD). The JIMOD initiative was begun by PIMU to conceptualise and test a model for conducting project-independent impact assessments. The study process spanned almost three years and the final impact on methodology development and policy impact were seen to have been largely constrained due insufficient discussion and dissemination of its findings – both by way of the publication and discussion on the model.

Since this type of activity has a large ‘catalytic’ element to it, more effort might be required towards increasing outreach and discussion of publications. While a first important step has been made in terms of quality and presentation, these publications need to reach the target audience speedily so that the desired capacity building impact can be more visible and sustained.

4. Summary and Lessons Learnt

PIMU's strategy to achieve poverty impact rested on influencing project concepts and project activities towards poverty impact orientation, with the assumption that this would translate into more effective poverty alleviation. PIMU worked through a primarily capacity building model, delivered through a dual mechanism; comprising a service function and a catalytic function.

Taking the **service function** first, the interviews reveal impact chains that show PIMU support resulting in many of its clients embarking on impact monitoring activities that had not existed previously. In some projects, this took the form of revising or including impact indicators in their log frame. In others, it took the form of specific activities such as case studies or surveys to determine impact. Assignments that took the form of longer-term in-process consultancies revealed impact chains that went beyond just enhanced understanding to being translated into changes in M&E related concepts and activities. In a number of projects, the interaction resulted in the creation of M&E positions and tasks within the

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

project. In some senses, it would not be an exaggeration to say that PIMU placed impact monitoring firmly within the GTZ map of Sri Lanka.

Finding chains leading from changes in impact monitoring concepts and activities to changes in poverty concepts/activities and thereby more efficient poverty reduction was less easy with the chains fading away. The inability to take the discussion on M&E results to management level, to influence counterparts operating with different frame conditions, and insufficient focus on poverty issues in the discussion on impacts were some of the main constraining factors.

CEPA brought the issue of poverty much more actively to the centre-stage by explicitly focusing on poverty impacts and more discussion on what constitutes poverty. Hence, the level of understanding of poverty among CEPA clients was seen to be higher when compared to PIMU clients, but the same inability to find impact chains leading to changes in poverty concepts and activities was evident. Hence, it appears that the impact on poverty relevant project steering or changes in policy (be it at project, programme or national level) that can be traced to changes at the level of the poor is limited.

When it comes to intermediary impacts, those aimed at the level of discourse, discussion, reflection and deeper understanding, tracing impacts chains of PIMU/CEPA work is much easier. Additionally, if one views the process of change as one which creates a catalyst or momentum for change – even if that change is still a way off – then PIMU/CEPA has made substantive contributions. Both through its service function, and the catalytic function, PIMU helped to promote and create in some cases, a group of professionals concentrating on impact monitoring and poverty issues in a practical or research setting. In many ways, PIMU/CEPA impacts have to be considered in the light of policy impact rather than poverty impact. The PIMU/CEPA approach to poverty impact relies on influencing policy changes, which can be brought strategically via the services and research it provides. In this sense, one could argue that at the level of influencing policy on impact, PIMU can trace more impact chains than can CEPA at the level of influencing policy on poverty. The work of the PIM Programme continued in a more scientific manner the work begun by PIMU,

with a more explicit research orientation, although to some extent losing the force of impact, which came from more intensive dealings with clients.

Lessons on enhancing impact

As PIMU and CEPA point out in their work, impact monitoring is not necessarily for proving, but also learning and improving. This paper threw out some noteworthy lessons for gearing services and activities in a way that can lead to greater impact.

First is that capacity building and bringing about change in working practices and concepts takes time and patience. Rather than a one-time service provision, it requires long-term follow-up interventions, even if they are kept at a small scale. Almost without a doubt those instances that had stronger impact chains were those services that involved a high degree of interaction and discussion and often on a repeated and frequent basis. This takes time, resources and skills, on the part of the service provider, which may not always be available, but needs to be considered – and ideally at the stage of contract clarification and design.

Both concepts of poverty and impact that are at the core of PIMU/CEPA work are complex. The links to poverty need to be made more explicitly in the service provision if the chains are then to be built to the ground. It might be worth at the outset of an assignment, for PIMU/CEPA to formulate some impact hypotheses arising from the service that can be tested subsequently. This may also include stronger efforts within PIMU/CEPA to further conceptualise different dimensions of poverty and to apply them differently to respective project contexts.

A related point is a more explicit consideration of the context of the client project/organisation when entering into a contract. As the paper reveals organisational/management structures of development projects are more complex than for instance in a private sector setting. Working with hierarchies, differing procedures (e.g., donors, counterparts), priorities, and working cultures entail a larger degree of compromise and 'efficiency loss' than in an industrial production for instance. CEPA could in future take more time to examine the

3. SEEKING THE BIG PICTURE

client's context before embarking on an assignment so that the service is tailor-made to maximise potential for impact.

CEPA could consider developing its own set of impact indicators – including poverty impact. Due to its 'organisational' nature as against project nature, CEPA has not required a log frame. However, since most of its programmes do have their own log frames, it might be useful to develop one for CEPA, which involves thinking ahead on the kind of impact that CEPA would like to see in the mid-term.

It would be advisable for CEPA to maintain a greater flexibility in some of the catalytic functions and to avoid institutionalising them too strongly as part of its core activities or public relation efforts. For example, rather than consolidating the Poverty Symposium as a platform to present the work of respective programme areas within CEPA, a more explorative focus could be more beneficial to maintain the reputation of the Symposium as a platform for researchers from different backgrounds and interests to get together and develop new ideas for further research.

Finally, CEPA could also consider thinking innovatively about potential additional catalytic functions to adopt within the organisation, going beyond the set of catalytic functions set-up by PIMU. Catalytic functions could be reviewed regularly in order to question their continuing significance for the organisation, to adjust them accordingly or to embark towards new initiatives. In any case, such functions, that are not closely linked to paid service provision by clients, will always require a much higher degree of ownership and enthusiasm among (changing) staff members.

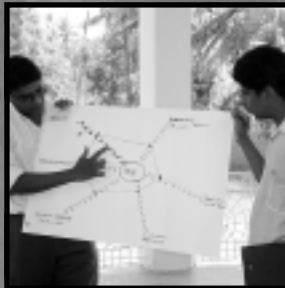
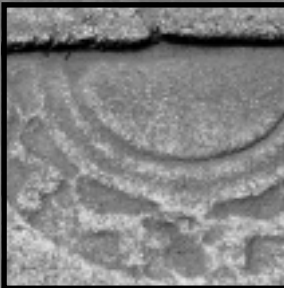
Lessons on the methodology of tracing impact chains

Touching on the third objective of this paper, to develop a methodology for tracing impact chains, the authors strongly encourage CEPA to repeat this on a regular basis. Methodologically as well as manageably, CEPA could pick a small number of assignments each year that it could track after a time-duration of ideally not more than two years. This is to ensure that potential respondents are still available for interview – in person, and when memories of the assignment

are fresh. E-mail interviews for this sort of exercise is not recommended for replication, as it proved a serious shortcoming in writing this paper. The task of 'tracing chains' implies a continuous dialogue in a narrative style, which cannot be met through a pre-set questionnaire. Starting with an open question that allows the interviewee to identify the main impact areas as she/he sees them and then following it through could be considered. A combination of quantitative assessments with qualitative narrations can be used to aid comparison.

In any case, it might be important to provide human and financial resources within CEPA to maintain a certain degree of linkages to clients after the official assignment is over and to be involved in some sort of "post-service-provision". This would help clients to raise and discuss issues in relation to the training received that might appear only at a later stage. It would also help CEPA to better document impact chains of their activities and hence to improve future programmes by incorporating relevant lessons and experiences of clients.

4. A FINAL REFLECTION: THE AUTHORS WRAP UP THROUGH A VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE



1. Assessment of PIMU and its Potential Replicability
2. Methodology and Process of the PIMU Impact Assessment

A Final Reflection: The Authors' Wrap Up Through a Virtual Roundtable

This final reflection was conducted among all the authors of the assessment. It took an informal 'chain letter' format where the questionnaire was sent one by one, thereby giving the authors a chance to reflect and react to each others' responses.

It focused on two questions, which sought to draw out the final reflections on the assessment and on its methodology:

1. Please provide a brief assessment of PIMU and its potential replicability in a nutshell
2. In a few sentences, please describe your reflections on the methodology and process of the PIMU impact assessment

1. Assessment of PIMU and its potential replicability in a nutshell

Azra: One of the most striking aspects of PIMU compared to other GTZ projects is the flexibility it had as a project – which then enabled it to follow directions that were innovative and adaptable. The design of the project – without a fixed counterpart, but yet networking with all the relevant players, helped PIMU to be more adaptable to changing circumstances. Stifling innovation through heavy planning at the start was also not the case with PIMU, whereas this was evident in many other projects. This flexibility and adaptability is in my opinion one of highlights of PIMU. The potential for replicability is in the project design of PIMU which placed a high emphasis on planning through extensive networking once the project began, being open to changing plans, and a high sensitivity to local cultural factors.

Udan: I have no experience with GTZ projects. But the impression I have about GTZ projects is that they are very rigid, strenuously planned (when things can be done without such efforts), lavishly spent ones. I can only assess PIMU against these impressionistic benchmarks. In that sense, as Azra says, there has been a lot of flexibility and space for innovation. But I have my doubts about replicability. As Chris and I have argued in our paper, PIMU and CEPA are big exceptions. Even from the GTZ point of view, PIMU is a very special project that had a lot of space for innovation. On the other hand, as PIMU had no local counterpart, it was not constrained by both the GTZ and a local body. I wonder whether one could expect these conditions in every case. But nevertheless, PIMU's networking strategy is something replicable. The success of networking at PIMU is that it used both the formal and informal channels. In some instances the informal networks have paved the way for formal networks (e.g. DCS, CB representatives, Wimal Nanayakkara and Anila Dias Bandaranaike are part of the CEPA Board not on ex-officio basis. Through them CEPA maintains a good working relationship with DCS and CB)

Chris: It's very interesting to read the Sri Lankan perceptions of GTZ projects being 'heavily planned', leaving no space for innovation, and PIMU being an exception in this regard. My perception is that projects do planning, file the documents, do something else, try to reconcile what they did and what was planned in annual reports and end up needing PIMU or CEPA to prove that there is some impact. No space for innovation? That's definitely not true. If there is no innovation that's because there are no ideas, not because there is no space. Ok, may be PIMU got some more space than average, but mostly it got more ideas! Should it be replicated? Maybe not exactly the same way. I feel it started too much as a GTZ-centered effort, a project to help other projects. I would rather see CEPA interacting and maybe expanding in the region.

Hans: As I have experienced in a number of Asian and African countries, poverty impact assessment and related instruments are very much talked about but still far from being routinely practiced by foreign-supported programmes and projects.

Systematic policy impact assessment is still rare. Much more educational and methodological groundwork and upgrading are needed in order to improve coverage and reach a satisfactory level of poverty understanding, orientation, and policy impacts.

Even experienced international aid personnel, among them GTZ staff, still confuse monitoring and evaluation, overstress the controlling aspects and cannot fully appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of poverty (impact) monitoring as a self-management tool that signals at an early stage that expected and intended outcomes and impacts might not happen as planned.

PIMU has practiced a soft and flexible institutional and methodological approach to educate staff and projects and to gradually improve the “poverty (impact) monitoring” situation.

Although a 1:1 replication of PIMU is not what might be best suited to foster poverty impact monitoring and poverty related work in most country cases, the basic principles of PIMU’s approach and work philosophy could be incorporated in comparable approaches.

Shelton: It is my view that given the constraints that are inherent in the arena of public policy management in Sri Lanka, PIMU has been able to make an important contribution towards influencing policies related to poverty impact monitoring in the country. Its interactions with the government, the donors and the civil society have contributed to a change of mindsets in each of these actors in the policy formulation process.

I see in CEPA, as the potential successor to PIMU, a high level of potential for continuing the process of influencing the formulation and implementation of policies related to poverty impact monitoring in particular and to poverty reduction in general in Sri Lanka. The time for this is opportune in that there appears to be, in Sri Lanka, a process of rethinking current in regard to approaches to poverty reduction as well as to the monitoring of the impacts of the strategies that are used.

For CEPA to continue to be effective in this direction, it should bring the question of the methodologies it uses as well as the levels and persona of interaction constantly in review and be ready effect changes as required.

Markus: I think that PIMU as a unit to provide advisory services on poverty impact monitoring, but more so to facilitate innovative approaches to think differently about poverty and poverty impact monitoring, has been an enrichment to the institutional landscape in Sri Lanka. Although I agree that any other GTZ project can also facilitate innovative ideas, the smallness, flexibility and probably also the quite different profile of the initial PIMU staff members has definitely contributed towards a very different perception (and appreciation) of the project by other organisations and individuals working in the field. One of the important reasons for this was probably also the perceived neutrality of PIMU as a mediator for others in the initial stages rather than another organisation that would claim its' own place.

I think PIMU's impact in this sense could also be seen in its' ability – over a certain period of time – to play a strategic “ping-pong” with many other organisations and initiatives, rather than focusing on the establishment and institutionalisation of one “prime project”. What should be institutionalised within an organisation such as GTZ is to constantly “afford” projects such as PIMU to promote and elaborate new areas of interventions without being immediately concerned about concrete implementation outputs and institutionalisation efforts.

Nilakshi: I have no experience with GTZ projects and only very little with PIMU—it seems however that PIMU is quite different to other GTZ projects. It is small, focused on building local capacity and most importantly, flexible (apparently Germans like structure!). There is a need to focus development interventions towards their poverty impact and PIMU is replicable elsewhere. Whether it would give rise to another CEPA is not so clear – CEPA seems to be

the result of personalities, local capacities and interests and a host of other specificities in time and space, which may not be replicable.

Monika: Since I joined PIMU for the e-VAL chapter only, I can just refer to the results of the e-VAL process within PIMU and to my limbic system – meaning what I have heard and read about PIMU (those who were interviewed know what I am talking about!).

I agree with the results in that regard; that PIMU created a 'Sri Lankanised' institution of high professionalism and very appropriate need-orientation on poverty impact assessment approaches and instruments. It seems that CEPA is requested not only within the country but also abroad. If this request continues, it seems to be a very appropriate indicator of quality and need-orientation of the institution CEPA.

The sustainability of CEPA, however, still needs to be seen after the withdrawal of PIMU. Strong leadership and high dependency on the GTZ project were issues mentioned quite often in the interviews. The closing down of PIMU can thus be taken as an opportunity to face this challenge. In this sense I agree with Chris, i.e. let CEPA interact and expand in the region first before going for replication.

Nireka: The flexible design and space for innovation in the project, the critical attention paid to strategic thinking and persuasion through networking, the efforts at creating a dynamic, team-based (and relatively less hierarchical) organizational culture, the commitment to involving local professionals and building their capacities through different means – these are features of PIMU that can be replicated. The vision and negotiating skills of the PIMU Senior Advisor and his ability to surround himself with dynamic individuals/professionals who could both work hard and enjoy what they were doing, however, are not that easily replicable.

Anne: I think it is desirable and feasible to replicate the PIMU approach: Open and flexible project design, orientation as a real service deliverer, emphasis on cooperation with other organisations instead of competition, long and gradual phasing out period etc. The crucial point for me concerning the replicability of PIMU is that such an approach needs the right people to put it into practice. In the case of PIMU, an unusually dynamic, sensible, innovative and courageous group of individuals have made this possible, on the side of the national staff as well as on the side of the external advisor. From my experience, I know of only a few such cases. If we succeed to better control the short-term, output-oriented planning and constantly changing administrative constraints, more such personalities as those that have worked for PIMU could eventually be encouraged to commit themselves to development work.

Neranjana: As a service provision organisation, I do think it is replicable. However, I think the most difficult aspect is human resources. This is an issue relevant to both technical persons as well as managers who will take an institution forward in the way that PIMU/CEPA has progressed. The institutional paper has touched on many issues, which are directly relevant to replicability. Along with the institution and human resource issues is the issue of producing quality work. The model is replicable, and Sri Lanka has space for many more CEPAs.

Christoph: Looking back at more than six years of PIMU, some might be surprised that the experiences gained with regards to methodology development are not presented in the form of the often demanded “coherent approach and toolkit on poverty impact monitoring”. While I am strongly in favour of an open learning process that continues to explore and adjust to specific requirements, I feel that PIMU and CEPA could have done more in consolidating its expertise on methodologies.

In contrast, I would look at the institutionalisation of poverty analysis within CEPA as a real success story that goes beyond the anticipated results. However, it will have to be noted that this success was largely due to the specific

organisational landscape of Sri Lanka as well as the critical mass of like-minded professionals collaborating continuously for a sufficient time span.

With regards to replicability, I see great opportunities for CEPA to develop strategic partnerships with similar organisations in neighbouring countries. A potential continuation of BMZ/GTZ support to poverty monitoring should not necessarily try to copy the PIMU experience elsewhere but rather support the alliance-building of state- and non-state organisations and facilitate the joint learning process of CEPA and similar organisations within the Asian region.

2. Methodology and Process of the PIMU Impact Assessment

Udan: Working in two-member teams was good. It was an ideal size for a group. The German-Sri Lankan combination allowed a lot of cross-fertilization of ideas. It was a good decision to invite Germans with an exposure to Sri Lanka. I enjoyed the sessions in which Chris and I shared interpretations on our findings. Here there was divergence and convergence of ideas. The debate between the two of us is the value addition of our paper. The time was intense and short. But on the other hand it helped to have a continued focus. It was good that the assessment didn't take the form of a formal evaluation. Having the target of a "paper" gave us more inspiration to do more reflection than be under pressure to come up with "recommendations" as is normally done in an evaluation.

Neranjana: Totally agree with all Udan says above...may be a reflection of having the same partner to work with and Udan and I falling into a broadly similar category in the author mix.

In addition I found the process extremely useful for reflection. Being a CEPA staff member it is easy to miss the forest for the trees, especially since we seem to find so little time to pause and observe. Reflection and learning was enhanced by the double role that I had to play, where at each session we had together I ended up explaining /justifying issues to Chris as an 'insider' while simultaneously joining him in critically looking at the very same issues as an 'outsider.' The fact

that Chris did not directly belong to the same ‘school of thought’ that CEPA was bias towards made for a very good critical debate. Analysing the methodology entailed looking quite closely at the content or ‘technical’ aspects of PIMU/CEPA. Having as one co-author a staff member who is very closely linked to this aspect worked well. A core staff member being part of the assessment will help the PIM programme and CEPA in its future methodology issues much more than if staff members only had access to a finalised chapter co-authored by externals.

Chris: I enjoyed working with both Neranjana and Udan, and I strongly believe that the ‘combination approach’ is something good. It is challenging, and that’s what we need in order to learn – being challenged. At the beginning I was wondering why Udan was preoccupied with the question whether CEPA is ‘truly Sri Lankan’. At the end, the non-Sri Lankan features were very clear: It is just too perfect, and no MD (Managing Director) or ED (Executive Director) is shouting. In methodology, Neranjana saw the CEPA methodology as understanding the intangible and less measurable changes, and I tend not to believe in intangible and unmeasurable changes. We found out that CEPA believes people’s perceptions are less ‘objective’ than people’s income, and that CEPA perceives its methodology as ‘qualitative’ without being aware of the quantitative elements in many of its studies. All that was quite interesting. Being a man I am obviously not multi-tasking, and in between I felt lost and suffering from working on methodology and organizational issues at the same time and keeping either Neranjana or Udan waiting!

Shelton: The strategy that was employed of a combined German and Sri Lankan team and the interaction of the team with policy level counterparts in Sri Lanka was found to be of high value. We (Hans & myself) focused on the impact of PIMU/CEPA’s work on contributing to changes in policy and strategy approaches to poverty reduction. Towards this end, the interchange of views with the senior

levels in the Government and in the donor community was quite useful. The access to the documentation that had been produced during the course of the work done by PIMU/CEPA widened our understanding.

Also the approach adopted by the evaluation of having several two-member teams evaluating the different aspects of the project enriched the process, in my view, this would have been even better strengthened if there had been a final integrated session of the different teams to exchange their findings – before starting the process of writing.

Azra: I must admit that at the start I was quite skeptical about the ‘combined’ approach of the methodology. As novel as it was – to apply the PIMU philosophy into its review process – I worried that potential clashes in opinions and approaches might ‘scuttle’ the end result. I suppose this was my ‘harmony oriented’ Sri Lankan way of looking at things!

In the end, looking at the feedback from the others and the cooperation between Markus and myself, it was evident that this was a methodology much appreciated by all and certainly added value to the end product. This was especially so, in those teams that were able to spend time together to discuss issues, which admittedly was not possible in all the teams.

Hans: The basic methodological design of PIMU’s end of project review opens a variety of surprising insights into the work results of PIMU, which a traditional evaluation might not have made possible. The chosen multi-tier approach follows PIMU’s best tradition of experimenting and testing new methodological avenues.

Markus: Working in a team is always much more enriching than trying to assess something on your own. If the two, team members bring in different perspectives, it is even better. Guess in our case it was also a nice challenge to reflect in more

detail on our own roles and quite close (and in many ways intensive) involvement with and within PIMU, which probably made us a much more homogenous team (despite the different nationality) than all others.

Nilakshi: The PIMU review has produced a number of interesting angles on how the project fared. It is possible, but unlikely, that one evaluation would have uncovered all these facets of the project. The downside was that the same group of people, who were also the interviewers in some cases, were interviewed over and over again - some people may have been a bit sick of all this introspection, which may have reduced the freshness of ideas in some chapters.

Monika: Also here I can only refer to the 'production process' of the e-VAL Chapter, since I didn't involve myself in the whole process of PIMU impact assessment.

I very much enjoyed the teamwork with Nilakshi. We had intensive discussion via phone and email and quite often we were not of the same opinion, which was good! We managed to find a compromise that combined both perceptions and the discussion process helped me to reflect e-VAL also from different angles. Only now do I realize the challenge of the instrument to also be appropriate to 'unusual' project concepts within GTZ as the PIMU concept. I would take up teamwork with Nilakshi any time again!

Nireka: I too endorse the insights gained from combining Sri Lankan-German and insider/outsider perspectives. Anne and I greatly enjoyed working together on the methodology and carrying out "fieldwork" in Colombo within a concentrated timeframe. However, we did our analysis/writing separately in Germany and Sri Lanka, consolidating our versions later, due to time constraints in our respective work schedules. Our overall interpretations were similar, although we tended to emphasize or elaborate some factors more or less, and had to

grapple a bit to reconcile our different writing styles. Perhaps the process could have been further enhanced if all the teams were able to have a ‘beginning’ and ‘end’ session together.

Anne: The methodology chosen for the impact assessment was only logical if one looks at the way PIMU/CEPA have worked over the last years: Diverse, a bit unusual and ready to take risks, tapping individual commitment.

I agree with the other evaluators that the mixed team approach was very enriching – for the exchange of perceptions among the team and therefore, hopefully for the final paper! The very open approach, at least in our case on the shadow impacts, permitted to highlight issues, which would probably not have come up in a ‘normal’ evaluation. But – we needed a lot of time to ‘get into our shoes’ and that time was missing in the end of my stay in Colombo. The later e-mail contact between Sri Lanka and Germany could not substitute for a face-to-face exchange.

Christoph: The methodology applied in this impact assessment has not only led to fascinating findings but also invited all contributors to continue their search for innovative ideas and good practice. Within a reasonable budget of less than 1% of the total PIMU budget, the study process has come up with promising results that deserve to be further explored.

It is encouraging to see a final product that has overcome all difficulties of the last six months, starting from delays due to budgetary constraints, the heavy workload towards the closing of PIMU and – last not least - the professional and emotional implications of the Tsunami disaster.

Finally, what has been felt by PIMU throughout the project cycle was again reconfirmed during this impact assessment: In development cooperation one can define productivity as a function of strong professional views, intercultural encounter and joyful spirit.



AUTHOR PROFILES

Author Profiles

Nilakshi De Silva has a Master in Public Affairs (MPA) from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, USA, and a BA (Hons) in Economics and Politics from Monash University, Australia. She has over eight years of experience in the development field, including as a consultant evaluator for the World Bank. Nilakshi is currently working as a Senior Professional at CEPA and her areas of interest include public policy, impact monitoring and evaluation.

Monika Ellinger has a Diploma in tropical agriculture (Diplom-Agrarbiologie) and has worked for GTZ for eight years. She spent three years in Sri Lanka with the Smallholder Integrated Livestock Extension Project (SILEP) based in the southern district of Hambantota. Her professional working areas are in the fields of self-help promotion and monitoring and evaluation. She presently lives in Sri Lanka and works as a freelance consultant and is a Trainer for e-VAL within GTZ projects since 2004.

Udan Fernando received his Bachelor and Master degrees from the University of Colombo. Currently Udan is a PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam, focusing on Dutch donors and Sri Lankan NGOs, and has published a book titled *NGO's in Sri Lanka: Past and Present Trends* in 2003. He was Director of the Development Commission of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (1989-95) and Executive Director of the Programme for Alternative Training (PALTRA) from 1996 to 2001. Udan also works as a freelance consultant.

Christoph Feyen is a political scientist and organisational development specialist with an MA in Political Science from the Free University of Berlin. He has 18 years of professional experience in development cooperation, predominantly in South and East Asia. Christoph has been the Team Leader / Senior Advisor of the PIMU project and CEPA since its inception and also serves as the Deputy Director of GTZ Sri Lanka concentrating on policy and quality management. His fields of expertise are in poverty reduction, monitoring and evaluation and strengthening civil society organisations.

Anne Fisser is a social anthropologist with an MA from the University of Munich. She has worked for the past 12 years as an independent consultant in the area of capacity building, in particular the conceptual development and implementation of training programmes, strategy development and planning workshops, conferences etc. Anne has supported CEPA since its start on in-house capacity building, the development of training programmes and facilitating its organisational development retreats. Her academic background and interest in the dynamics of cultural change complemented by her knowledge of CEPA enabled an internal and external view of its 'culture' and links to its PIMU past.

Hans Gsänger is a political and agricultural economist, who obtained his PhD in Agricultural Economics from the Technical University of Berlin. He is a retired Senior Research Officer of the German Development Institute (GDI) and presently works as a consultant on rural and social development, poverty reduction, impact monitoring and social protection with a regional focus on South and East Asia and Anglophone Africa. Hans has been a regular backstopper to PIMU and CEPA since PIMU's inception.

Neranjana Gunetilleke is a development economist with eight years of experience in the field of poverty research. She has an MPhil in Development Studies from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of

Sussex, and a BA in Economics from the University of Colombo. Neranjana is the Coordinator of the Poverty Impact Monitoring (PIM) Programme at CEPA and former Training Coordinator, and is primarily engaged in the provision of advisory services, applied research and training within the programme areas.

Azra Jafferjee is an economist with over 14 years of experience in the development and financial fields. She has an MPhil in Sociology and Politics of Development from the University of Cambridge and an MA in Economics from the University of Colombo. Azra is the Coordinator of the Poverty Assessment & Knowledge Management (PAM) Programme and former Coordinator of the PIM Programme. Her main areas of expertise are macro-economic development issues, poverty reduction and monitoring and evaluation.

Markus Mayer has a PhD in Human Geography from the University of Heidelberg and is currently coordinating the Program for Improving Capacities for Poverty and Social Policy Research, (IMCAP) at the University of Colombo. He has specialised on issues related to poverty, youth and conflict and has researched extensively on these topics. His work also focuses on assessing and promoting conflict-sensitive development interventions. He is co-editor of *Sri Lanka at Crossroads: Dilemmas and Prospects After 50 Years of Independence* (Macmillan 2000), *Sri Lankan Youth: Challenges and Responses* (FES 2002) and *Building Local Capacities for Peace: Rethinking Conflict and Development in Sri Lanka* (Macmillan 2003).

Christoph Reichert is a socio-economist with a PhD in Sociology of Development from the University of Bonn. He did development research with the Universities of Bielefeld and Cologne before moving into development cooperation. Chris was the advisor on behalf of GTZ to the Sri Lanka-German CEFE Program, living in Colombo from 1995 to 2003. He is now working as an independent consultant based in Frankfurt am Main, and is also a partner of Management Consultancy Net Asia (Pvt) Ltd., Colombo. Chris specialises in

SME and private sector development, business services, organisation development, monitoring and evaluation, and survey research.

Shelton Wanasinghe is a Senior Visiting Fellow of the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, Fellow of the Marga Institute of Development Studies and Director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives. Shelton Wanasinghe is a retired Officer of the Civil Service and has served with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), advising regional governments on governance and development administration. He was Chairman of the Presidential Commission on Administrative Reforms and has written extensively on poverty reduction, governance, public policy management, decentralisation and devolution among others.

Nireka Weeratunge is an anthropologist with a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Toronto. Nireka has over 16 years of research experience in development anthropology and works as a freelance consultant. She is an Associate of the Centre for Poverty Analysis, and former coordinator of the Poverty and Enterprise Development (PED) Programme at CEPA. Her areas of specialisation are in the social aspects of enterprise development and entrepreneurial cultures.



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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

Abbreviations & Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARTI	Agriculture Research Training Institute
AURA	Entwicklungspolitischer Auftragsrahmen (Contractual arrangement between GTZ and BMZ)
BEEPP	Bangladesh Environment Economics and Poverty Programme
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
BOI	Board of Investment
CBSL	Central Bank of Sri Lanka
CBSIA	Capacity Building in Social Impact Assessment Project
CEA	Central Environment Authority
CEFE	Competency based Economies through Formation of Enterprise
CEPA	Centre for Poverty Analysis
CFSP	Community Food Security Profiling
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CORE	ZOA Community Rehabilitation
CPA	Centre for Policy Alternatives
CSR	Centre for Society & Religion
DAC	Development Co-operation Directorate

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

DC	Development Cooperation
DCS	Department of Census and Statistics
DFID	Department for International Development
DSIUC	Development Studies Institute University of Colombo
DWG	Donor Working Group
DZP	North Western Dry Zone Participatory Development Project
ED	Executive Director
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EIP	Enterprise Information Project
ERD	External Resources Department
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
e-VAL	Electronic Evaluation Procedure
FCDRMP	Fisheries Community Development and Resource Management Project
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GDI	German Development Institute
GO	Government Organisation
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)
HALFA	Hauptabteilungsleiter Fachausschuss (Screening mechanism for project concepts, GTZ)
HARTI	Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute
HRD	Human Resource Development

ICES	International Centre for Ethnic Studies
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFSP	Integrated Food Security Programme
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IM	Impact Monitoring
IMCAP	Program for Improving Capacities for Poverty and Social Policy Research at the University of Colombo
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
IPC	In-process Consultancy
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IPID	Institute for Participatory Interactions in Development
IPS	Institute of Policy Studies
IRED	Innovations et Réseaux pour le Développement (Development Innovations and Networks)
IRMP	Integrated Resource Management Project
IT	Information Technology
JFPR	Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction
JIMOD	Joint Initiative for Monitoring of Development Trends
JRP	Jaffna Rehabilitation Project
KPI	Key Person Interview
LFRTD	Lanka Forum for Rural Transport
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
LST	Law & Society Trust
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MDF	Management for Development Foundation

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MIS	Management Information System
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPDI	Ministry of Policy Development and Implementation
MPI	Ministry of Plan Implementation
MRI	Medical Research Institute
MT	Management Team
NECORD	North East Community Restoration and Development Project
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NOR	National Operations Room
NPD	National Planning Department
OD	Organisational Development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for economic Co-operation and Development
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator
P/m	Person/months
PAC	Poverty and Conflict
PALTRA	Programme for Alternative Training
PAM	Poverty Assessment & Knowledge Management
PASP	Poverty and Social Policy
PAY	Poverty and Youth
PED	Poverty and Enterprise Development
PER	Public Expenditure Review

PIDA	Participatory Institute for Development Alternatives
PIK	Poverty Information and Knowledge Management
PIM	Poverty Impact Monitoring
PIMU	Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit
PLOP	Plan of Operations
PPM	Project Planning Matrix
PPR	Project Progress Review
PRIMUSS	Participatory Improvement of Underserved Settlements
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PSIA	Poverty and Social Impact Assessment
PSP	Private Sector Promotion Project
RASAPO	Rapid Self-Assessment of Poverty Orientation
RASIMO	Rapid Self-Assessment of Impact Orientation
RBIP	Rural Banking Innovations Project
RRDP	Regional Rural Development Project
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAPAP	South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme
SEEDS	Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SIDA	Swedish international Development Cooperation Agency
SILEP	Smallholder Integrated Livestock Extension Project
SL	Sri Lanka
SLAAS	Sri Lanka Institute for the Advancement of Science
SLEvA	Sri Lanka Evaluation Association

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS


SMES	Small and Medium Enterprises
SLIDA	Sri Lanka Institute for Development Administration
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SREAP	Southern Province Economic Advancement Project
SSA	Social Scientists Association
STC	Short-term Consultancy
TA	Technical Assistance
TOR	Terms of Reference
UGC	University Grant Commission
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
VAM	Vulnerability Assessment Mapping
VTW	Promotion of Vocational Training for Women and Youth
WFP	World Food Programme
YEN	UN Youth Employment Network
YO	Youth Organisation
ZOA	Zuid-Oost Azië (South East Asia)



ANNEXES

- 1. PIMU Project Planning Matrix (PPM)**
- 2. List of PIMU and CEPA Reports**


1. PIMU Project Planning Matrix (PPM)

Phase 1

<p>Project Planning Matrix PPM</p>  <p>Narrative Summary</p>	<p>Project name: Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit gtz Project number: 97.2137.4-001.00 Anticipated total time frame: 11/98 –10/03 Responsible organisations/partners:</p>	<p>Prepared first: 24.01.98 First project phase: 11/98 – 10/00</p>
<p>Development Goal</p> <p>Poverty groups being promoted by donor supported projects are improving their living standard</p>	<p>Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI's)</p> <p>OVI's for the achievement of the Development Goal</p>	<p>Means of Verification</p>
<p>Overall Goal</p> <p>Partner organisations (GO and NGO) orient their project concepts more clearly towards the needs of poverty groups</p>	<p>OVI's for the achievement of Overall Goal</p>	<p>Means of verification</p>
<p>Project Purpose</p> <p>Donor supported projects improve their poverty related impact monitoring</p>	<p>OVI's for the achievement of the Project Purpose</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> By October 2000, 2/3 of the PIMU clients apply instruments towards impact monitoring that have been developed by PIMU in cooperation with its partners. By October 2000, at least one "Local Alliance on Poverty", co-financed by several donors and transcending individual projects, is initiated. 	<p>Means of verification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reports of the annual client's conference Contracts with donors; draft reports.
<p>Result 1</p> <p>Donor supported projects and other relevant organisations improve their problem awareness and knowledge status on poverty reduction</p>	<p>OVI's for the achievement of the Result</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Clients regularly receive aggregated reports of PIMU – experiences on poverty-related impact monitoring An increasing number of clients use PIMU as a resource desk regarding the poverty issue. 	<p>Means of verification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly newsletter
<p>Outside the influence of the target group</p> <p>Poverty reduction remains a priority within Donor and Sri Lankan partners development cooperation</p>	<p>Matters outside the influence of the project</p> <p>None</p>	

<p>Project Planning Matrix, PPM</p>  	<p>Project name: Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit gtz Project number: 97.2137.4-001.00 Anticipated total time frame: 11/98–10/03 Responsible organisations/ partners:</p>	<p>Prepared first: 24.01.98 First project phase: 11/98 – 10/00</p>	
Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI's)	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
<p>Result 2 Instruments for poverty-related analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation (APME) are jointly assessed and further developed with clients</p>	<p>OVI's for the achievement of the Result</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> By October 1999, at least 3 (by October 2000 : 6) Sri Lanka - specific guidelines for the application of instruments for poverty related APME, are prepared. At least 2/3 of applied instruments are assessed as useful by clients. 	<p>Means of verification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up questionnaire Client's survey 	<p>Matters outside the influence of the project Clients are interested in further developing instruments jointly</p>
<p>Result 3 Clients receive advisory services to improve their poverty-related impact monitoring.</p>	<p>OVI's for the achievement of the Result</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> By October 1999 at least 1/3 (by October 2000 : 2/3) of GTZ supported projects and at least 1 (by October 2000 : 3) other donor supported project receive advisory services of PIMU. 2/3 of the clients assess the advisory services provided by PIMU as satisfactory or better. 	<p>Means of verification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly newsletter 	<p>Matters outside the influence of the project Clients are willing and able to request the services of PIMU</p>
<p>Result 4 Dialogue and cooperation are intensified between poverty-relevant organisations and political decision makers.</p>	<p>OVI's for the achievement of the Result</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> By October 2000, 3 joint initiatives of relevant organisations have been implemented. By October 2000, relevant organisations as well as political decision makers confirm the usefulness of PIMU as a facilitator for dialogue and cooperation. 	<p>Means of verification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Contracts with partners Survey 	<p>Matters outside the influence of the project None</p>
<p>Result 5 Preconditions for the continuation of future poverty-related impact monitoring are established.</p>	<p>OVI's for the achievement of the Result</p> <p>By April 2000, options (distinguished according to conceptual orientation, economic viability, market compatibility, institutional integration) for the continuation of the service provision are developed.</p> <p>By October 2000, decision makers have agreed upon the continuation of poverty-related impact monitoring.</p>	<p>Means of verification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Option paper for decision makers Project agreement or alternative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) 	<p>Matters outside the influence of the project Political decision makers principally agree to continue their support of poverty related impact monitoring</p>

Phase 2

<p>Project Planning Matrix PPM</p>  <p>poverty impact monitoring unit</p>	<p>Project name: Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit gtz Project number: 97.2137.4-001.00; later 01.2065.9-001.00 Anticipated total time frame: 11/98–10/03 Responsible organisations/partners: Department of External Resources</p>	<p>Prepared first: 22/06/00 Second project phase: 11/00 - 10/05 Revised 10/00</p>
<p>Narrative Summary</p> <p>Development Goal Development organisations orient their concepts to more effectively reduce poverty</p>	<p>Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OYIs)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> By 4/02 at least half of the clients state that their Poverty Orientation has changed due to CEPMOD/PIMU Project documents plus practical implementation of selected clients, indicate that poverty orientation is an integral part of projects 	<p>Means of Verification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Survey Qualitative Case studies of selected clients
<p>Overall Goal Poverty groups supported by projects / programmes improve their living standard.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> By 10/02 Project independent monitoring (JIMOD) gives plausible reasons for the improvement of living conditions of poverty group supported by projects /programmes 	<p>None</p>
<p>Project Purpose Development organisations and professionals improve their capacities to monitor poverty related impacts</p> <p>Development organisations include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - donor supported projects - the Government of Sri Lanka - NGO's - Private sector organisations - Bi-/multilateral donor organisations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Clients / trainees / participants of seminars state that their understanding of poverty/ impacts has increased 2/3 of PIMU clients apply methods for impact monitoring developed by PIMU / CEPMOD A pool of Sri Lankan professionals dealing with poverty related impact monitoring is being developed continuously 	<p>None</p> <p>Poverty reduction remains a priority within Sri Lankan development cooperation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidation of evaluation forms of Clients, trainees, Participants / BMZ evaluation Reports of annual Clients Conference PIMU / CEPMOD records / BMZ evaluation

<p>Result 1</p> <p>Applied research on poverty, social policy and impact monitoring is conducted and made available</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. By August 01/02 the Seminar on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka is professionally documented and distributed 4. By 10/01 four ,10/02 eight studies (JIMOD, participatory impact studies, cross analysis) have been completed 5. By 10/02 at least four development organisations (e.g. ADB, IFAD, UNDP) have financially contributed to conduct applied research 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Participant evaluation forms / seminar documents 3. Presentations at public fora 4. Contracts with co-financers 	None
<p>Result 2</p> <p>Development professionals receive training on poverty orientation, social policy and impact monitoring</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. At least 6 sensitisation workshops (RASIMO/ RASAPO) with 40 participants have been conducted annually and have led to increase of awareness of IM / PO 4. At least 2 orientation programmes with 30 participants and 4 upgrading modules with 40 participants are conducted annually to the satisfaction of the participants 5. By 10 / 01 a draft concept for a postgraduate course on Poverty and Social Policy (PASP) has been prepared 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Follow up Survey 4. Participant evaluation forms 5. Concept papers/ presentation 	None
<p>Result 3</p> <p>Clients receive advisory services to improve their poverty orientation and impact monitoring</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 10/01 and 10/02 respectively, at least 4 project concepts (HALFAs) are assessed for its poverty & impact orientation 2. At least 4 in-process consultancies are continuously ongoing 3. At least 4 short term consultancies are annually contracted 4. At least 2/3 of IPC clients state that IM has improved in their projects 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessment document 2. IPC contracts 3. STC contracts 4. Consolidation of follow up survey 6 months after consultancy / Clients Conference documentation 	Clients are willing and able to request the services of PIMU

<p>Result 4 Dialogue and co - operation on poverty related issues among policy makers, researchers and development practitioners is / are enhanced.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 10 /03 at least 18 Open Fora with a total of 360 participants organised and has been assessed as useful 2. An increasing number of professionals use PIMU as a resource centre regarding the poverty issue 3. At least four national and international organisations have collaborated / co- financed joint activities 4. Once a year a learning group workshop of monitoring professionals from NGO, govt. etc takes place 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Open Fora documentation/ Assessment of participant evaluation forms 4. Guest book and Resource Centre Record 5. Partnership Agreements 6. Workshop documentation 	
<p>Result 5 The Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) is established</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 05 /01 CEPA registered as NGO 2. By 10/02 donors have committed at least Rs.50,000,000 3. CEPA continuously operational 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal Registration 2. Endowment Fund bank statements 3. Minutes of Board of Directors meeting 	None

List of PIMU and CEPA Reports

Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit

Following is a list of reports and documentations produced by PIMU over the period January 1999 to April 2001.

The Regional Rural Development Project: An Impact Assessment after 12 years of Operation, 1999

Initiatives for Impact Monitoring for the Vocational Training for Women and Youth Project, 1999

Impact Monitoring for the Enterprise Information Project, Documentation Report, 1999

In-Process Consultancy on Impact Monitoring for the Fisheries Community Development and Resource Management Project, February 1999-November 2000

An Impact Assessment on Beneficiary Level of the North Western Dry Zone Participatory Development Project, 2000

Impact Monitoring of the Rural Banking Innovation Project: Summary Report of an In-process Consultancy, October 1999-October 2000

Satisfaction Survey of Private Sector Promotion / Industrial Development Board Footwear Design Course Trainees, 2000

Perceptions of Impacts: A Brief Survey of GTZ Supported Projects in Nepal and Sri Lanka, 2000

A Matter of Relevance: Perspectives of Sri Lanka German Development and Economic Cooperation, 2000

Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka, 2000

2nd Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka, 2001

Training documentations

Introductory Training Workshop on Process and Impact Monitoring, Workshop Documentation, 1999

Training Workshop on Introduction into Impact Monitoring, Workshop Documentation, 2000

Workshop on Introduction into Impact Monitoring, (Sinhala Medium), Workshop Documentation, 2000

Workshop on Introduction into Impact Monitoring, (Tamil Medium), Workshop Documentation, 2000

The Open Forum on Poverty

The quarterly series “Open Forum on Poverty” aims to provide a forum for facilitating discussion and exchange of ideas on poverty relevant issues among professionals in the field.

OF 1 – 01/99 Improving Poverty Related Research Capacities in Sri Lanka

OF 2 – 03/99 Poverty in Sri Lanka: Measurement and Alleviation Exercises
By W.D. Lakshman, University of Colombo

OF 3 – 07/99 Women and Poverty in Sri Lanka: Trends and Characteristics
By Sepali Kottegoda, Women’s Media Collective

- OF 4 – 10/99 Politics of Target Oriented Poverty Alleviation Programmes:
The Sri Lankan Case
By Sunil Bastian, International Centre for Ethnic Studies
- OF 5 – 11/99 No Future in Farming? The Potential Impact of
Commercialisation of Non-Plantation Agriculture on Rural
Poverty in Sri Lanka
By K. Tudor Silva, University of Peradeniya
- OF 6 - 12/99 Recent changes in the BMZ/GTZ Evaluation System and
Approaches to Poverty Impact Monitoring
By Volker Steigerwald, German Technical Cooperation
- OF 7 - 03/00 The Use of Stunting and Wasting as Indicators for Food
Insecurity and Poverty
By Ines Reinhard, Integrated Food Security Programme and
K.B.S. Wijeratne, Sewalanka Foundation
- OF 8 – 05/00 Poverty, Local Planning and Youth Empowerment in Southern
Sri Lanka
By Markus Mayer, South Asian Institute, Colombo
- OF 9 – 09/00 Why Poverty Persists?
By Nimal Sanderatne, University of Peradeniya
- OF 10 – 11/00 The Change Agents' Programme: Reducing Rural Poverty by
Catalysing Economic Change
By Ramani Gunatilaka, Freelance Consultant
- OF 11 – 03/01 Poverty Alleviation Theories and Approaches: Have we got it
right, finally?
By M. Adil Khan, United Nations Development Programme

Centre for Poverty Analysis

Following is a list of publications, reports and documentations produced by CEPA since May 2001 to date. They are categorised according to the four CEPA service areas.

1. Applied Research Studies

Perceptions of the Poor: Poverty Consultations in Four Districts in Sri Lanka, 2001

Micro-Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Cultures in Sri Lanka: Implications for Poverty Reduction, 2001

A Portfolio Analysis of The Poverty Orientation of GTZ Supported Projects in Sri Lanka, 2002

Sri Lanka Community Food Security Profiling, 2002

The Impact of Rural Roads on Poverty Reduction, 2002

A Poverty Inventory for Monitoring of Poverty Alleviation Programmes, 2002

Those Days and Nowadays”: Employment, Poverty Reduction, and Empowerment in Sri Lankan Export Manufacturing Factories, 2003

The Joint Initiative for the Monitoring of Development Trends in the Central Province (JIMOD): Comprehensive Study, 2003

Poverty and Conflict – A Review of Literature, 2003

Understanding the Dimensions and Dynamics of Poverty in Urban Underserved Settlements, 2004

Ex-Post Evaluation of the Regional Rural Development Project, Kandy, 2004

Impact Monitoring Orientation of the Development Sector in Sri Lanka, 2004

Poverty Impact of Privatisation on Labour, 2004

Youth in Sri Lanka – A Review of Literature, 2004

Poverty Measurement: Meanings, Methods and Requirements, 2004

Monetary Poverty Estimates in Sri Lanka: Selected Issues, 2004

Does Caste Matter? A study of Caste and Poverty in Sinhalese Society, 2004

Participation in Youth Organisations in Sri Lanka: An Analysis from Selected Organisations, 2005

Youth Perceptions: Exploring Results from the Poverty and Youth Survey, 2005

Developing a Tracer Methodology to Identify long Term Impacts on Children and Families of ILO/IPEC Interventions against Child Labour, 2005

Youth Initiative for Community Development, 2005

Children Affected by Armed Conflict, 2005 (forthcoming)

Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement: A contemporary look at Sri Lanka, 2005 (forthcoming)

2. Advisory Services

Social Sector Analysis, Pre-appraisal Mission of the North East Community Restoration and Development Project, 2001

Design of Monitoring and Evaluation Component of the Smallholder Dairy Farmer Poverty Reduction Project, Project Design Appraisal Mission, 2001

Social Sector Analysis on the Potential for Enterprise Creation and Expansion Through Credit and Enterprise Development Services in the Southern Province - Appraisal Mission of the Southern Province Economic Advancement Project, 2001

In Process Consultancy on Poverty and Conflict Impact Monitoring, September 2001 to December 2002

Gender Audit-Organisational & Programmatic Gender Baseline, 2002

Review of the Bangladesh Environment Economics and Poverty Programme, 2002

Preparation of the Power Fund for the Poor, 2003

Validation Study of the Integrated Resource Management Project, 2003

Focused Impact Assessment of the Integrated Food Security Programme, Trincomalee, 2003

Evaluation of ZOA Community Rehabilitation Project, 2003

Pro-poor Growth through Increased Connectivity: Mapping Poverty and Connectivity Variables, 2004

Poverty and Social Impact Assessment of proposed welfare reforms, 2004

Sri Lanka Public Expenditure Review - Social Welfare Sector Policy Note, 2004

3. Training

Introduction to Poverty Impact Monitoring (Sinhala), Workshop documentation, 2001

Introduction to Poverty Impact Monitoring (English), Workshop documentation, 2001

Adapting Survey and Case Methods for Poverty Impact Monitoring, Workshop documentation, 2001

Rapid Self- Assessment of Poverty and Impact Orientation, Workshop documentation, 2001

Trouble Shooting in Poverty Impact Monitoring, Workshop documentation, 2001

Introduction to Poverty Impact Monitoring, Nepal, Workshop documentation, 2002

Quantitative and Qualitative Methods of Impact Monitoring: Survey and Case Methods, Workshop documentation, 2002

Target Group Differentiation in Poverty Impact Monitoring, Workshop documentation, 2002

Sensitisation Workshop on Poverty and Impact Orientation, Workshop documentation, 2002

Introduction to Poverty Impact Monitoring for the North East Restoration and Development Project, 2003

Formulation of a Training Manual on Social Impact Assessment, 2004

4. Dialogue and Exchange

Consultations with Stakeholders on the Indo-Lanka Free Trade Agreement, 2001

Economic Reforms in Sri Lanka, 2002

The poverty impact of the SEEDS “credit plus” approach: An independent client-based assessment, 2002

3rd Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka, 2002

SAARC Regional Poverty Profile, 2003

4th Annual Poverty Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka, Poverty and Social Conflict in Sri Lanka, Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into Poverty Analysis, 2003

SAARC Regional Poverty Profile, 2004

Poverty Monitoring in Asia, 2004

Poverty and Conflict: Exploring the Complex Relationship, 2004 (forthcoming)

5th Annual Poverty Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka, Understanding the Impacts of Development Interventions on Poverty: The Role of Research 2004

International Youth Conference, 2005 (forthcoming)

The Open Forum on Poverty

The quarterly series “Open Forum on Poverty” aims to provide a forum for facilitating discussion and exchange of ideas on poverty relevant issues among professionals in the field.

OF 12 – 06/01 Micro Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Cultures in Sri Lanka: Implications for Poverty Reduction
By Nireka Weeratunge, Centre for Poverty Analysis

OF 13 – 12/01 Monitoring and Measuring Poverty: Balancing International and National Information Needs
By A. G. W. Nanayakkara, Department of Census and Statistics and Hans Gsaenger, Consultant, German Development Institute

OF 14 – 03/02 Greed and Grievance in the Sri Lanka Conflict: Implications for Poverty and Marginalisation
By Steve Hollingworth, CARE International, Sri Lanka

OF 15 – 09/02 The 2001 population census count of Sri Lanka and its deviation from projected values: some resultant implications for poverty analysis and targeting of poverty programmes
By Indralal de Silva, University of Colombo

- OF 16- 01/03 Yathra Theatre Workshop
By Asoka De Zoysa, IntrAct Theatre Group
- OF 17- 07/03 Poverty, Food Security and Conflict: A review of the focussed
impact assessment of IFSP Trincomalee
By Christine Schenk & S. Srimanobhavan, IFSP Trincomalee
- OF 18 – 10/03 Improving Sri Lanka’s Poverty Measurement Methodology
By Dileni Gunewardena, University of Peradeniya.
- OF 19 – 01/04 Achieving Millennium Development Goals in Sri Lanka:
Trends, Key Issues, Challenges and a Reflection on Institutional
Arrangements
By V. Sivagnanasothy, Ministry of Policy Development and
Implementation and Christoph Feyen, German Technical
Cooperation / Centre for Poverty Analysis
- OF 20 – 07/04 Malnutrition as a Measure of Poverty: Are Sri Lankans
Malnourished or is the Indicator Flawed?
By R. M. K. Ratnayake, Ministry of Finance and Renuka
Jayatissa, Medical Research Institute
- OF 21 – 12/04 Development after Development? On the Economics of
Social Peace and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka
By Darini Rajasingham Senanayake, Centre for Poverty
Analysis
- OF 22 – 02/05 Institutional Development Within a State in Transition:
Challenges
By Sunil Bastian, International Centre for Ethnic Studies

OF 23 – 03/05 Sri Lankan Youth Poised for the Future: Insights and Findings
from Three Years of the CEPA Poverty and Youth
Programme
By Claudia Ibargüen, Sanjana Kuruppu, Vigitha Renganathan,
Centre for Poverty Analysis

Is it surprising for the Centre for Poverty Analysis to undertake a retrospective analysis of the GTZ supported Poverty Impact Monitoring Unit, which facilitated CEPA's own establishment? Is it to celebrate the achievements of PIMU? Is it to learn what accounted for its success? Is it for recording its achievements for posterity? Is it meant to help similar organisations and influence other endeavours?

These are just some of the questions addressed in this uniquely crafted impact assessment of a development cooperation project, lasting just six years.

The assessment uses a complex web of triangulation to assess critical impact areas through a set of stand-alone papers that draw the bigger picture of PIMU's impact. Among the dimensions explored are: PIMU's efforts at institutionalising poverty impact monitoring within the Sri Lankan landscape – the major outcome being the birth of CEPA, methodologies for impact assessment, impact on poverty related policymaking, and a fascinating voyage of introspection in a paper that probes the 'inner realities' of development cooperation and its implications on sustainability.