PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

A.   Description of the Monitoring and Evaluation System

1.   The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) is guided by the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the Ministry of Planning. Individual directorates have designated divisions for M&E of program or project interventions.[1] Within the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), the Information Management Division is responsible for maintaining an education management information system (EMIS), and the M&E Division is responsible for the overall M&E function of the primary education subsector. This includes the sector-wide approach for the Third Primary Education Development Project (FY2012–FY2018, the previous project), which will continue for the Fourth Primary Education Development Program (FY2019–FY2023, the program). The interministerial program steering committee, chaired by the secretary of the MOPME and composed of key officials from the MOPME, DPE, partner implementing agencies, and other agencies such as the Ministry of Finance and the National Planning Commission, will be the highest decision-making body during program implementation.

2.   All line divisions of the DPE report to its director general in monthly coordination meetings. The government, in semiannual joint consultation missions, joint annual review missions (JARMs), and annual development planning meetings, will formally dialogue with and report to joint financing development partners and communicate with nongovernment organization stakeholders. The DPE reports monthly to the MOPME during the MOPME monthly coordination meeting. Quality standard task force from the MOPME and DPE were also making regular, unannounced field visits to schools to spot the previous project's impact on schools.

3.   Annual performance agreements (APAs) were introduced in 2014 for all entities under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office. The APA is aimed to move the focus of governance from process orientation to results orientation, and to evaluate overall performance based on evidences. The MOPME and cabinet are focused on the outcome, while those at lower levels tend to concern outputs. The results-based management (RBM) adopted in the previous project was consistent with the results orientation of APAs and will be continued for the program.

4.   The DPE generates and disseminates data and statistics through the annual primary school census (APSC) report, *upazila* (subdistrict) education performance profiles (UEPPs), national student assessment (NSA) report, and the primary education's annual sector performance report (ASPR).[2] These reports are verified through an extensive chain of technical and management committees, as shown in the chart below. The M&E Division oversees the production of the APSC report and ASPR, based on the annual school census data collected by the Information Management Division as the key source. The APSC report has been published regularly and available on the DPE website. The quality of data collection and the number and types of schools covered increased significantly since the previous project. Questions were gradually added to address the required indicators. This process will continue to meet the needs of the Supporting Fourth Primary Education Development Program (the proposed program).

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[1] The Compulsory Primary Education Implementation Monitoring Unit within the MOPME was responsible for M&E of non-registered primary schools until their recent incorporation into the system of government primary schools.

[2] The NSAs were done in 2006, 2008, 2011, 2013, and 2015. The 2017 NSA report is being prepared (test conducted).

5.   The ASPR has been published since 2008 to provide results-focused analyses of the subsector, including the disbursement-linked indicator (DLI) progress report. The APSC statistics are supplemented with information from a wide range of sources, research studies, and project administrative records, reports, and documents.[3] The draft report is usually generated by April each year and distributed by the M&E Division to stakeholders for comments, before presentation to the JARM toward finalization by June. A hard copy is widely distributed by September of the same year. It has played a vital role in informing key developments and progress against the performance indicators and targets.

Monitoring and Evaluation System Flow Chart of the Directorate of Primary Education
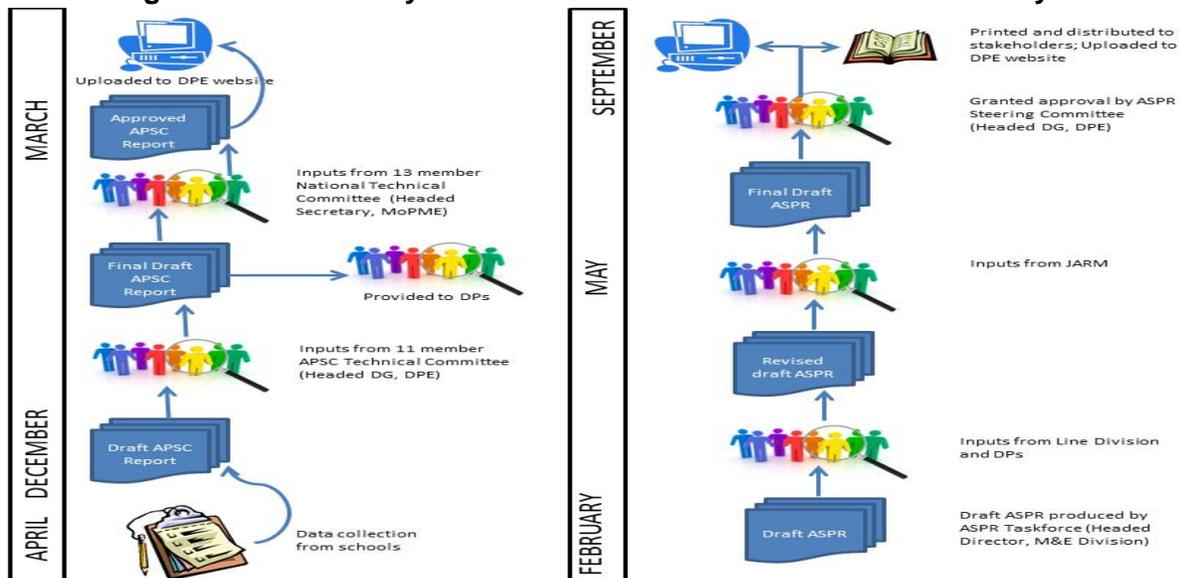
ASPR = annual sector performance report, DPE = Directorate of Primary Education, DG = director general, DP = development partner, JARM = joint annual review mission, M&E = monitoring and evaluation, MOPME = Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.
Sources: Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and Asian Development Bank.

6.   The capacity assessment shows that the M&E Division is understaffed mainly because of unfilled vacancies. Only one deputy director is in place out of three deputy director positions listed in the previous project's organogram. The M&E Division staff are fully engaged in routine processing of files, leaving key monitoring functions—processing and acting on school inspection reports and managing the school quality rating or grading system—inadequately dealt with.[4] No designated professional staff is available for performing technical tasks, such as data cleaning, analysis, and report writing. Statistical officers, with few exceptions, do not have a strong statistics or research background, so most of the responsibility for producing the ASPR falls on external consultants. High staff turnover is also a key challenge.

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[3] Including the Education Household Survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Education Watch Campaign for Popular Education surveys, and data from parallel and discrete projects.

[4] All education officers at each level of the DPE are mandated to make a specified number of school visits every month. School inspection and supervision visits by assistant *upazila* education officers are formally planned, documented, and submitted to the M&E Division, which in turn should provide feedback to the schools. Under a circular issued in January 2017, the director general of the DPE mandated a three-member team (assistant *upazila* education officer, assistant *upazila* resource center instructor, and head teacher of a neighboring school) to visit every government primary school for a biannual inspection, based on which schools will be graded A, B, C, or D.

7.	The M&E experience of the previous project was mixed. The M&E Division successfully conducted quarterly quality standard taskforce workshops, biannual divisional progress review meetings, biannual district and divisional school quality inspection reviews, and feedback meetings such as those for the school level improvement plan (SLIP) and pre-primary education implementation. It also monitors DPE progress against the APA indicators. However, with capacity limitations, it has relied on consultants for the ASPR and the technical aspects of the NSA. While the DPE officials regularly visit local education institutes, there is no consistent reporting from these visits nor a system for action taken based on any recommendations made.

**B.	Assessment of the Monitoring and Evaluation System**

8.	Existing M&E systems provide solid potential for the implementation of robust and timely M&E and the achievement of the goal of effective RBM within the subsector. However, deficiencies in implementation and capacity need to be addressed.

9.	**Enhancing data quality.** Expansion and integration of data systems is needed to promote database integrity and improve planning and management. The DPE piloted online data collection in 2014, which was to be gradually expanded to all *upazilas* by 2018. However, the fulfillment of the target was hampered by lack of access to electricity and internet in some areas. The DPE has been implementing third-party validation of APSC data using a three-stage stratified random sampling approach, which ensures coverage of all divisions, all school types, and schools in a range of geographic locations. In 2016, the sample covered 1,200 schools, including 190 that submit data online. However, the effectiveness of the third-party validation process is limited by the failure of consultants to conduct physical school visits. The current M&E is mainly based on census data and needs to be supplemented with data from live systems. A live system will have its own data validity checks and is likely to be a more reliable source of data in addition to census data.

10.	The constraint of access to electricity and the internet will be overcome during the period of the proposed program. The government aims to expand the national grid to all regions, especially the hard-to-reach areas, and promote the use of alternative energy sources such as solar panels. Internet access will be arranged for all *upazila* offices. In the proposed program, an independent verification agency will be engaged to verify DLI status, accompanied by necessary sample validation and field visits. Furthermore, the Education Household Survey will be continued in the proposed program, serving as an additional data validation measure. To establish an integrated EMIS with dashboards for primary education offices and schools to use, the current experience of the live teacher database and DPE's web-based accounting information system can be borrowed. The M&E Division, being required by the MOPME to take on the task of generating the ASPR in-house under the proposed program rather than rely on consultants to do so, shall be largely enhanced with capacities.

11.	**Decentralizing results-based management.** Decentralizing RBM was a goal of the previous project and has been partially realized, but needs to be accelerated under the proposed program. Successful initiatives on decentralizing RBM include the UEPP. This is a one-page individual *upazila* snapshot based on APSC data showing performance measures that compare the performance of the *upazila* with that of its district and the country.[5] In the previous project, although the *upazila* primary education plans (UPEPs) were prepared with an aim to

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[5]	The UEPP data is generated automatically from a Microsoft Access database that compiles the APSC and Primary Education Completion Examination data.

enhance *upazila* performance based on UEPP information, the UPEPs were not funded for implementation. In 2017, an e-school grading system was developed whereby schools provide data online and the system automatically grades the schools based on the approved set of criteria. This will feed back to school authorities prior to a formal evaluation by a team of education officials. Although the school grade is publicly available, there is little awareness of this at school communities.

12.   In the proposed program, it is planned to implement a series of triggers to improve *upazila* and school performance. The UPEP will be funded for implementation. The guidelines for the UPEP and SLIP will be updated to link funding with performance, such as student enrollment rates. The school report cards (SRCs) will be generated by the EMIS and used by schools to plan for their SLIP expenditure. Public display of the SRCs on external notice boards at each school is required to promote community awareness of school quality and support initiatives to improve school performance. This will be promoted as part of the communication and social mobilization. An additional measure envisioned is the gradual devolution of responsibility for generating the APSC reports to the divisional primary education offices. Supported by targeted capacity building initiatives, this move is intended to strengthen the capacity of field offices to generate and utilize data for decision-making and planning.

13.   **Strengthening school inspections and feedback.** The frequency of visits to more schools and the responsiveness to reported problems need to be increased. Under an e-monitoring system piloted by the previous project, education officers enter school inspection data using tablet computers while at the inspected school.[6] The global positioning system tracking provides data that confirms physical school visits consistent with a schedule entered through a school visit planning module, and inspection data is immediately fed back to a database-enabled website. Meanwhile, the visits to schools have largely been for administrative supervision, while academic supervision was constrained by the persistent shortage of qualified *upazila* education officers. The proposed program aims to establish the web-based EMIS by integrating functional dashboards on other datasets for generating reports in real time. Reports are envisioned to summarize data at the desired level (*upazila*, district, division, or national) with the user able to drill down to see individual school data if required. Recommendations for action to be taken to manage individual school problems are visible to all, as is any follow-up action taken by the relevant official. The proposed program also aims to strengthen school-level monitoring and mentoring of teachers, and a classroom-based study of teaching practices will be commissioned to guide the enhancement of academic supervision. Lessons from the experience of the e-monitoring system could subsequently be used to design systems to standardize, and gain useful information from, the frequent monitoring visits paid by officials.

14.   **Developing monitoring and evaluation capacity.** The M&E Division is the logical office within the DPE to take measures to strengthen M&E across the subsector. In the proposed program, key vacancies will be filled through capacity building at various levels. Skills required for the M&E Division include (i) an understanding of evaluation to develop terms of references and exercise quality control on the range of studies, (ii) strong knowledge of educational statistics in order to take on the task of producing the ASPR, and (iii) analytical and report-writing skills. Henceforth, the job descriptions for the division need to be enriched, such as (i) compilation of school inspection and e-monitoring reports, and ensuring of active feedback from headquarters to schools through appropriate channels; (ii) supervision of the process of

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[6] It was piloted at all the DPE-managed government primary schools and newly nationalized primary schools in five *upazilas* under three districts.

school grading, and building of community awareness of this and other school quality measures (e.g., SRC); (iii) production of the ASPR; (iv) supervision of and reporting on the NSA; and (v) provision of institution building toward achieving decentralized M&E functions to enhance RBM.

15.   **Promoting dissemination of reports.** In the previous project, no action was taken to verify or even share the reports with schools. A study conducted under the previous project indicated that head teachers and even some field office staff were not aware of the existence of the reports.[7] This happened despite annual dissemination workshops and the distribution of printed copies of the reports to a wide range of stakeholders, including national Parliament members, ministries and departments, development partners, nongovernment organizations, DPE officials (at headquarters and outside), and the technical cooperation agencies. The reports are also publicly available on the DPE website. This lack of awareness by schools needs to be addressed. Performance measures across the subsector are currently reviewed at national and subnational quarterly and semiannual progress review meetings. It is a provision of these meetings to share the status of achievement, progress in implementing new initiatives, and lessons learned from pilots and commissioned evaluation reports. While the M&E Division records the minutes of these meetings, these are circulated only to a limited list of officials. The sharing of lessons needs to be more systematic.

16.   In the proposed program, the SRC system will be used for disclosing key school data at each school, by comparing the performance of individual schools with the average performance in *upazila*, district, and nationally. The DPE officials are required to report against the APA indicators quarterly, according to the terms of the APAs. The DPE managers, at all levels, will be supported to access results data in a timely manner through the online dashboards (i.e., the web-based integrated EMIS) adapted to their specific needs and responsibilities. They will be supported to use the data for reporting against their APAs, justifying budget allocations in the annual operational plan, and identifying issues in subcomponent activities in their area of responsibility. Reports and lessons will thus be widely accessible and useful for any level of office.

C.   Managing Risks and Improving Capacity

17.   The introduction of the APAs is evidence that the government strongly endorses an RBM approach. A comprehensive framework of studies and evaluations, together with existing monitoring tools and the intended management dashboards, will provide DPE management at all levels with the necessary tools for evidence-based decision-making. The proposed program also includes institutional strengthening at all levels. To back up the process of enhancing routine M&E at the DPE, the proposed program will (i) engage an independent verification agency for the DLI verification, with necessary surveys conducted; (ii) continue the APSC in line with the functioning of a web-based integrated EMIS; and (iii) launch the Education Household Survey for cross-checking of data reliability. In addition, a program support team will be set up to assist planning the program's consulting services and coordinating development partners' technical assistance activities. This will help strengthen the DPE's capacity for managing the program implementation. Necessary actions to mitigate the risks were incorporated in the DLIs and the program action plan.

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[7]   U. Sedere, Pathwary N., and Ahmad R. 2016. Final Report on Capacity Assessment of Monitoring & Evaluation Division of the Directorate of Primary Education.