PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

A. Description of the Monitoring and Evaluation System

1.   The existing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is fragmented and inconsistently applied across the divisions, departments, and agencies of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development (MYASD). Key information on quality assurance—such as the number of national vocational qualification certificates issued and the number of accredited courses—is tracked centrally through the management information system (MIS) of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC). However, beyond this set of core information, each MYASD division, department, and agency has developed its own MIS, varying from paper-based to a computerized system. Even within an agency there are sometimes multiple information databases that are not connected. Key data are defined differently, making it difficult to aggregate for sector reporting.

2.   The proposed M&E arrangements for the program will build on the existing institutional systems, standardize data definition and collection methods, and develop a common MIS into which individual agencies' data can be fed regularly for timely and efficient sector-wide monitoring and reporting. The Sector Development Division (SDD) has been established within MYASD for this purpose and is the focal point responsible for supporting and monitoring performance and implementation of the Skills Sector Development Plan (SSDP). The SSDP is the first medium-term sector development program in Sri Lanka including key initiatives of the government across different ministries for the period of 2014–2020. The SSDP has defined a set of targets for MYASD and individually for its divisions, departments, and agencies in its program results framework. The Skills Sector Enhancement Program (SSEP) disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs) are selected from the SSDP targets. The SSDP results framework will form the key instruments to monitor sector performance. The SDD will establish a credible and systematic M&E system aimed at providing effective feedback to optimize implementation and ensuring accountability of all stakeholders. The SDD will also implement a new system for information gathering and data analysis to prepare the annual sector performance report that will outline progress against the SSDP targets and SSEP DLIs. This new system for information gathering will be housed within TVEC.

3.   The SDD has been set up under an additional secretary (sector development) who directly reports to the secretary of MYASD, and consists of 35 staff—one additional secretary, seven managers, 12 deputy managers, 10 development officers, and five minor staff members—as of 30 November 2013, approved by the Department of Management Services. Further, smaller M&E units will be set up within the divisions, departments, and agencies that support the SDD.

4.   To link financing arrangements with achievements against the SSDP, a performance partnership agreement (PPA) will be signed between the Ministry of Finance and Planning and MYASD, and subsequently between MYASD and its divisions, departments, and agencies. The SDD will collaborate closely with the MYASD divisions, departments, and agencies to implement these PPAs, including with TVEC, Vocational Training Authority, National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority, Department of Technical Education and Training, University of Vocational Technology, Ceylon German Technical Training Institute, National Youth Services Council, and National Institute of Fisheries and Nautical Engineering.

5.   The detailed activities of the SDD will include: (i) coordinating the SSDP activities across divisions, departments, and agencies of MYASD; (ii) supporting implementation of innovations planned within the SSDP, such as the new business planning process and sector skills councils; (iii) preparing, publishing, and disseminating periodic progress review reports on division, department, and agency performances against the PPAs; (iv) preparing, publishing, and disseminating periodic progress review reports on SSDP targets and SSEP DLIs; (v) preparing, publishing, and disseminating the annual performance report; and (vi) preparing, publishing, and disseminating other periodic program review reports as required by MYASD, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and other development partners (e.g., on procurement, financial management, environmental management, and gender actions).

6.   The annual and midterm reviews will provide the opportunities to jointly assess the implementation performance against SSDP targets and SSEP DLIs. The annual review will assess and verify the achievement of DLIs, which form the basis for fund disbursements. The annual fiduciary review will supplement the annual review process and will include a procurement performance review carried out by an independent entity. The midterm reviews are planned for the third year of SSDP implementation and will include review of the SSDP targets based on implementation experience and performance. ADB will monitor the implementation of the SSEP through regular review missions and by commissioning periodic third-party reviews, including annual fiduciary reviews. ADB will also coordinate with other development partners to collaborate on fiduciary aspects.

B. Assessment of the Monitoring and Evaluation System

7.   The M&E system as envisaged will be a significant improvement on the existing system and is required to ensure successful implementation of the SSDP. It will build on the existing information gathering processes but strengthen these with additional staff, centralized collection of critical system information, and clear targets to be cascaded within MYASD.

8.   A system of regular reviews at each level of the delivery chain, from MYASD down to individual training centers, will be reinforced by the signing of PPAs at the division, department, and agency level and the introduction of a business planning process at the training center level. These measures will significantly help improve accountability within the system and manage performance.

9.   Independent assessments conducted periodically by ADB and other development partners will help ensure the verification of results and the achievement of targets.

C. Managing Risks and Improving Capacity

10.   The strength of the leadership and the team members within the SDD will have an important impact on the outcome of the SSDP. Careful consideration will need to be given when appointing the additional secretary (sector development), and a plan for supporting and training the team within the SDD will have to be developed early on, particularly with regard to new initiatives such as the business planning process.

11.   The specific terms of reference for each position at the SDD have been detailed with the help of the World Bank in December 2013. Additional consultant support may need to be contracted during the early stages of implementation to ensure that skills required are made available to the SDD. A review is planned in the first quarter of 2014 with the assistance of development partners to study the specific requirements for the SDD and to ensure that it has

sufficient support beyond staffing to successfully set up operations and key processes. The review will also help assess the staffing needs of the smaller M&E units at the MYASD divisions, departments, and agencies.

12.   The availability of reliable and timely information will be critical to the success of the SSDP. The existing information flows within and across the divisions, departments, and agencies of MYASD have not been fully automated or harmonized, making it difficult to aggregate or reconcile data in terms of objectives, definitions, methodology, data fields, frequency of collection, and reporting formats. Hence, the information flows need to be standardized within and across the various entities to establish effective, efficient, and credible monitoring and evaluation of achievement against SSDP targets and SSEP DLIs.

13.   Strengthening the management systems within MYASD and its divisions, departments, and agencies will be an important feature of the SSEP. A central MIS will be established within TVEC and build on the existing quality assurance MIS. The MYASD divisions, departments, and agencies will be part of the system or will provide an interface to feed data into the central MIS. The SDD will then rely on the central MIS for preparing progress reports. It is envisaged that eventually all stakeholders—including students, TVET delivery agencies under other ministries, and private providers—will also be provided with an interface from the central MIS to exchange information. Any information not available in the system will be gathered by the SDD directly from the implementing agencies to monitor, evaluate, and report the progress of activities.