

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: SASS

TA No. and Name TA 2921-BAN: Primary School Performance Monitoring Project		Amount Approved: \$1,500,000	
		Revised Amount: n/a	
Executing Agency: Directorate of Primary Education (DPE)	Source of Funding: JSF and Government of Norway	TA Amount Undisbursed \$145,896.97 ¹	TA Amount Utilized \$1,497,296.40 ²
Date		Closing Date	
Approval 26 Nov 97	Signing 20 Oct 98	Fielding of Consultants 16 Nov 98	Original 31 Jul 01
			Actual 31 May 02

Description

Despite Bangladesh's progress in expanding access to primary education, many primary schools still suffer from very poor conditions for learning: dilapidated or half-completed buildings, insufficient desks, crowded classrooms, few materials, inadequately educated and motivated teachers, and rote memorization as the dominant mode of instruction. Gross enrolment is about 95%, but absenteeism and dropout rates are still high and pupil achievement is low. In short, there remain serious issues regarding the quality, performance, and management of the primary education system as a whole.

While the education data information system was adequate for assessing some aspects of the performance of the administrative activities, it did not include systematic, performance-related information about learning outcomes, system efficiency, or standards against which to judge quality. The system did not include a mechanism to provide information on school-level processes such as teaching methods, use of textbooks, learning activities, and school leadership—activities that decide educational outcomes. More attention was required to collect information on quality—what goes on inside schools and classrooms.

Objectives and Scope

The long-term objective of the TA was to contribute to quality improvement and efficiency of primary education in Bangladesh. In the short term, the TA was to improve the Directorate of Primary Education's (DPE's) information, monitoring, and evaluation system by (i) developing a model for accurate monitoring at the classroom level of teaching/learning practices and student performance; (ii) using the model to provide the Government and funding agencies with annual information of the status of classroom performance, and allow analysis of the impact of their investments on the quality of primary education; and (iii) developing local capacity for monitoring classroom performance. The TA was designed to complement the larger initiative to improve DPE's monitoring, evaluation, and management information systems under the Second Primary Education Sector Improvement Project (SPESP).

The three-year TA focused on primary education classrooms in a representative sample of districts. The TA was to provide the Government and funding agencies with valid and reliable information on qualitative improvements by monitoring changes at the classroom level in terms of key factors such as teaching methods, student achievement, attitudes and expectations of students and teachers, curriculum and teaching materials, and management of resources. The TA included the following outputs: (i) classroom monitoring model; (ii) classroom monitoring in sample schools; (iii) annual reports on classroom-level monitoring; and (iv) sustainable systems for classroom monitoring.

Evaluation of Inputs

The TA was contracted to the Academy for Educational Development, USA, and Data International, Bangladesh, whose overall management of the TA was very satisfactory. The design and objectives of the TA were appropriate, and the terms of reference were adequate, and were successfully implemented by the consultants and their government counterparts.

The TA was undertaken in three phases. Phase 1 developed a model, using six pilot schools; Phase 2 implemented the model in 66 schools and refined the model; and Phase 3 implemented the model in 150 schools with further refinement. The monitoring activities included (i) video-recording of classroom activities in grades 2 and 5; (ii) observation of classroom activities in grades 2 and 5; (iii) achievement testing of pupils in grade 5; (iv) observation of school conditions and a review of records; and (v) interviews with (a) head teachers, (b) two classroom teachers, and (c) four parents and one School Management Committee member. The process of developing the model and the instruments included substantive consultations and involvement of stakeholders and beneficiaries, including the Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED), the DPE, especially the Monitoring and Evaluation Division, the National Curriculum Development Center, teachers, and communities, to ensure ownership and commitment to the model. Direct regular reporting to the Secretary, PMED, was also undertaken. All activities were carried out as planned, and all deliverables were accomplished on time.

¹ Inclusive of the maximum amount of \$143,193.37 yet to be claimed by the consultant and the uncommitted TA balance of \$2,703.60.

² Inclusive of the maximum amount of \$143,193.37 yet to be claimed by the consultant and the amount of \$1,354,103.03 already disbursed.

The TA was supervised through four regular review missions; in addition, several reviews were undertaken as part of other missions. At the request of PMED, ADB approved an extension under the original budget allocation, to allow for a final national seminar, for government officials, NGOs, and funding agencies, where the Government and consultants presented the final outcomes and discussed the findings. The consulting team had excellent relationships with counterpart staff, who in their turn demonstrated high commitment to the Project.

Evaluation of Outputs

The TA produced a useful, feasible and sustainable model for assessing teaching-learning processes in the classroom—the first in Asia. The video recordings and other data from the classrooms have generated a greater understanding of what goes on in the classrooms—especially the poor quality. The findings will be used as a baseline for quality in primary schools, with further assessments repeated every three years. The school performance findings and instruments can also be used in part to improve the quality of education, e.g., through teacher training, curriculum and textbook development, supervision, and assessment of achievement. Since the major technical work of designing the model, instruments, and data analysis has already been undertaken, replication every three years will be affordable.

In addition to annual reports of findings, and a final report, the TA produced (i) a detailed account of activities and findings from the third and final phase of the Project; (ii) a user's manual on how to implement the education monitoring model; (iii) a technical manual on development of instruments, sampling techniques, and data analysis; and (iv) a strategic investment plan. These manuals have been handed over to PMED and the Monitoring and Evaluation Division, together with the equipment.

Capacity has been built by having officers from PMED involved in every aspect of the model's development and application, to ensure that DPE in the future can contract out, manage, and supervise the monitoring model. Also, considerable collaborative planning took place with SPESP, and other donor-supported projects to strengthen management and information systems, to ensure complementarity under the Government's overall Primary Education Development Plan.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA was highly successful in achieving its objectives. Through an extended and very consultative process, an innovative, still realistic monitoring model has been developed and implemented. The monitoring model is thoroughly researched, and the findings provide a wealth of data and information that is otherwise generally very hard to find. PMED and donors have now a better understanding of and information on quality that is no longer "anecdotal". Further, since the model is "home-grown" it is also replicable. The experience gained by PMED staff working on the model will help them carry out future performance assessments. The information decision-makers need is provided in a coherent and easily understood format, and will help policy formulation. The findings are already being used as inputs for PMED's education subsector review, and the Second Primary Education Development Plan, 2002-2007.

Major Lessons Learned

Poor education quality, at all levels, is a major issue in most DMCs. So far, most attempts to monitor or evaluate quality focuses on the traditional input-output approach, e.g., teacher training, curriculum, and materials. There are few models to monitor the more complex relationship of input and process to the quality of schooling, and interactions among input and process factors as the cause of quality in instruction. The school performance monitoring model developed in Bangladesh is a first attempt, based on the conviction that to understand what is contributing to the quality of schooling, one must focus on what is happening at the school level—what is coming in to a school; how the school is organized, managed, and making use of inputs; the expectations, attitudes, beliefs, incentives for students, and the commitment to learning that schools personnel have; and the instructional methods and behaviors that characterize school staff. Since ADB is focusing on improved quality, as part of the new education policy, more attention needs to be given to understanding the factors that determine school effectiveness, and to analyze the current situation using a framework that considers the entire process.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

The performance assessment of quality will be institutionalized at DPE, and the next assessment will be undertaken during the Second Primary Education Development Plan. Similar performance monitoring should also be replicated in other DMC countries. Cambodia has already expressed interest in learning about the model. RSDD will brief the education network about the model, and the reports and manuals produced under the TA will be part of "good practices" under ADB's planned education website.