

Improved Reporting of Performance Data Supports Health Decision Making in Bangladesh

MEASURE Evaluation contributed to institutionalizing regular health-sector performance reviews by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of Bangladesh and helped promote data use for program and policy decisions.

In 2011, the Government of Bangladesh outlined its third ambitious sector-wide health plan: the *Health, Population and Nutrition Sector-wide Development Program (HPNSDP) 2011–2016*. As part of this plan, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) set up a unit to manage and conduct monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the sector-wide health program. The aim of the MOHFW's Program Management and Monitoring Unit (PMMU) also was to promote evidence-based decision making.

The plan called for an external technical assistance team—supported by development partners (DPs)—to work with the PMMU. The team was to facilitate PMMU activities, focusing on building the unit's capacity in M&E and establishing procedures to assess programs and to provide technical advice on health policy and other essential areas.

Starting in 2011, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), MEASURE Evaluation provided technical assistance to the PMMU. The Technical Assistance Support Team (TAST) is made up of M&E advisors and specialists from MEASURE Evaluation, the International Centre for Diarrheal

Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b), and the MOHFW. Together, the TAST has helped the PMMU develop procedures and systems to systematize regular semiannual and annual health sector program implementation reviews and performance reporting.

Asked if the availability and quality of information on health program performance had changed since the creation of the PMMU, one senior MOHFW official said that document has "...improved a lot. It is more timely, documentation has improved, and the quality is being improved. People appreciate the PMMU's work."

A recent PMMU initiative to provide training and mentorship to strengthen M&E capacity within the MOHFW resulted in the appointment of M&E focal persons for each operational plan to facilitate periodic data collection and promote MOHFW accountability for performance reporting.



Operations staff in Bangladesh reviewing the Six-monthly Performance Report

Today, under Bangladesh's fourth Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Program and with continued assistance by the TAST, the PMMU is the recognized management and M&E unit of the sector-wide health program. It produces a biannual performance report (Six-monthly Performance Report, or SmPR) and an annual program implementation report (Annual Program Implementation Reports, or APIRs) by collecting performance data, reviewing them with program staff, and reporting progress based on measurable indicators. MOHFW staff, DPs, and independent review teams use these reports to assess the progress of health programs and make program and policy recommendations.

“Whenever there is a meeting in the ministry, or between the health minister and the prime minister, they take these reports with them,” said another senior MOHFW official. “Two times each year they use this report to describe to the prime minister what is going on. When they talk with donors, they usually use the reports, and when DPs talk with line directors, they use these reports.”

Through the SmPRs and APIRs and increased availability of solid performance data, the PMMU, with TAST support, has contributed to increased demand for data-driven decision making in Bangladesh.