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The National Committee for Management of Decentralization and Deconcentration Reforms (NCDD)

A Report on NCDD/PSDD M&E Needs Assessment in the Provinces (Draft)



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List of Abbreviations

AWPB	Annual Work Plan and Budget
CAU	Contract Administration Unit, PRDC ExCom.
CC	Commune Council
CS	Commune Sangkhat
DIF	District Investment Fund
DFT	District Facilitation Team
DSA	Daily Subsistence Allowance, Per Diem
FC	Focal Point
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
LAU	Local Administration Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MIS	Management Information System
NCD	National Contract Database
NCDD	National Committee for Decentralization and De-concentration
n =	Total respondents
PIF	Provincial Investment Fund
PLAU	Provincial Local Administration Unit
PMESA	Provincial Monitoring, Evaluation and Sector Advisor
PSDD	Project to Support Democratic Development through Decentralization and Deconcentration
PST	Project Support Team, NCDD/PSDD at the MoI
PM	Permanent Member, PRDC ExCom
PRDC	Provincial Rural Development Committee
PRDC ExCom	PRDC Executive Committee chaired by the Provincial Governor
Peachtree	Financial Management Spreadsheet used by the PRDC ExCom.
SPPA	Senior Provincial Programme Advisor to the PRDC ExCom and PSDD Provincial Programme Coordinator
SNDD	Sub-national Decentralization and Deconcentration
TFT	Technical Facilitation Team
ToR	Terms of Reference, Job Descriptions
TSU	Technical Support Unit, PRDC ExCom
TSO	Technical Support Officer

Executive Summary

The NCDD/PSDD M&E system is acknowledged as being the weakest part of the NCDD/PSDD Programme. Officials directly involved in the PSDD-enabled projects and contracts implementation, supervision and monitoring namely, the SPPAs, the PMESAs, the PRDC ExCom Units, the line department M&E focal points and the Commune Councils have all been asking for M&E improvements, training, tools, guidelines and related support. The PSDD donors attach high priority to the M&E and established an M&E improvement “milestone” the project would need to satisfy by 2008.

In response to the above, the PST M&E Unit designed and conducted an internal rapid M&E needs assessment exercise in the provinces during August-September, 2007. The objectives were: to gain an informed understanding of the existing M&E system, resources, practices and constraints in the provinces; to identify M&E improvement-support training and technical assistance needs at all project levels in the provinces and to prioritize delivery of M&E improvement-support training and capacity building needs.

All the SPPAs and PMESAs were surveyed. One fourth of the sub-national officials and project entities were interviewed and consulted in six provinces using interview questionnaires and FGD technique: PRDC ExCom Permanent Members (6); 4 Unit Chiefs in each of the six provinces (24); line department M&E focal points in each of the six survey provinces (54) and one Commune Council team comprising the Chairman, the clerk and the M&E focal points in each of the six survey provinces. The responses thus generated were then analyzed using content analytical method and tools and in relation to the the specific M&E context and to the Assessment objectives.

The single most important and common M&E improvement need as identified by all the respondents is the urgent need for M&E capacity building at all levels. Recommended are M&E knowledge and skills building, learning from lessons sharing, study tours, periodic review meetings, workshops as well as clear and simple M&E guidelines, tools and indicators. The other key and common needs are: updated M&E policy, framework, priorities, standards, clearly defined M&E roles and responsibilities and related coordination, communication and reporting procedures, as well as technical support from the Phnom Penh PST M&E Unit.

In addition, the Assessment identified following key M&E challenges in the province:

- a) M&E-support baselines, information, indicators and related technical and analytical tools and support.
- b) Lack of strong commitment and support to the M&E from NCDD/PST senior managers, from the Governors, from PRDC ExCom Units Chiefs, from the Heads of Line Departments and from the PST M&E Unit.
- c) Non availability of the PMESAs full time to leading, coordinating, facilitating and overseeing the M&E in the provinces and they themselves lack M&E training, technical knowledge and skills building.
- d) Line department M&E suffers from untrained staff assigned to M&E and from their frequent transfers; lack of: salary supplement, travel, transport and of equipment and from lack of M&E training, tools and of timely support.
- e) Lack of M&E covering the PIF, the DIF, the District Initiative and of its linkage and coordination.
- f) Commune level M&E faces challenges namely, technical knowledge, M&E skills, guidelines, budget, transport, timely supervision and guidance and direct M&E support and coordination from the PMESA.

The Assessment provides enhanced understanding of the M&E situation and practices in the provinces. It has generated a credible list of M&E needs and challenges in the provinces. The need for M&E improvements in the provinces is now clear and loud. The Assessment now provides a solid framework for and serves as timely guide and useful inputs to improving the M&E for the NCDD/PSDD management, sponsors and actors.

The recommended next steps would be for the NCDD/PSDD/PST management at all levels to review the Assessment findings; to prioritize M&E improvement activities in their respective jurisdictions and to incorporate 2008 M&E improvement activities into 2008 AWPB.

I. Background to the M&E Needs Assessment:

The PSDD project document and 2007 NCDD AWPB have acknowledged the need for M&E improvements. PSDD donors attach high priority to M&E improvements and to project outcomes monitoring and documentation. A Focus Group held with 16 provincial M&E Advisors in July 2006 also concluded the need for improvement in the existing M&E system. In a recent M&E Unit meeting with the PST Deputy Director 1, a need assessment exercise as inputs to M&E improvements was discussed and agreed to. Accordingly, an M&E needs assessment exercise in the provinces was designed and conducted by the PST M&E Unit.

II. Purpose:

To help strengthen the M&E system, support and services in the Provinces via an M&E needs assessment.

III. Specific Objectives:

- 1) To gain an informed understanding of the existing M&E system, resources, practices and constraints in the provinces.
- 2) To identify M&E improvement-support training and technical assistance needs at all project levels in the provinces.
- 3) To prioritize delivery of M&E improvement-support training and capacity building needs as identified.

IV. Methods and materials

Methodology and materials specific to assessing the NCDD/PST M&E needs in the provinces were designed by the NCDD/PST M&E Unit with technical assistance from its M&E Advisor. This comprised the following key steps:

1) Pre-assessment:

a) Consultations within the PST management leading to PST approval.

b) Design of the survey methods and identification of the key informants and the respondents.

- PRDC/ExCom Permanent Member (s) (6) – one to one structured interview.

- PRDC ExCom Unit Chiefs (4 X 6 provinces = 24) - one to one structured interview.

- SPPAs (24): - mail-out and mail-in interview questionnaire.

- PSDD Provincial PMESAs (24): mail-out and mail-in interview questionnaire followed by in-person interview in the six provinces visited.

- Consultation with Provincial M&E focal points in the line departments (all in six provinces) – Focus Group Discussion.

- Consultation with one Commune Council team comprising CS Council Chief, CS clerk and CS Council M&E Focal points X 6 provinces: Focus Group Discussion.

c) Development of the interview questionnaires and FGD frameworks and questions.

2) Assessment Team and briefing: PST M&E Unit assembled two teams for the field survey purposes. Prior to the field work, the teams met and consulted the survey methods, materials and the survey schedule as well as divided up the responsibilities.

3) Data collection and field work:

a) Interview questionnaire by the key informant: Mailed out and mailed in questionnaires for the key informants namely, the SPPA and the PMESA and one to one interview of the PRDC ExCom Permanent Members and of the Unit Chiefs in six provinces.

b) Focus Group Discussions were held with M&E Focal Points of the line departments and with CC Chairman, CC Clerk and CC M&E Focal Point from one CC each in six randomly selected six provinces. The PST M&E Unit Assessment Teams conducted the interviews and FGDs in the following provinces: Kratie, Kampong Cham, Svay Rieng, Siem Rep, Kampong Thom and in Kampong Speu in September, 2007.

- 4) Post-data collection activities in Phnom Penh:
- a) Data capturing and compilation of all the responses.
 - b) Meta analysis of the raw inputs from the interviews, the FGDs and the returned questionnaires by using qualitative content analysis methods and techniques.
 - c) Tabulation of the analysis.
 - d) Presentation of the key findings and documentation of the assessment via this report.

Methodological notes, process descriptions and analysis are presented by the section and by the topic.

The Assessment was conducted during August and September, 2007 and the report produced in October, 2007.

PST Secretariat provided travel and transportation support and notified the provinces with request for assistance. PRDC ExCom, the offices of the SPPAs and PMESAs facilitated meetings and FGDs in their provinces.

V. Findings and observations:

1) The M&E challenges in the Province - what did the SPPAs say?

Methodological notes: An interview questionnaire was specifically designed for the SPPAs (see Annex #1). This was administered via mail-out and mail-in method. Twenty three SPPAs responded (n=24). In response to the question no.7 on the “key M&E challenges”, the SPPAs provided a total of 89 inputs. The contents of those inputs were analyzed and categorized using content analysis techniques and in relation to the NCDD/PSDD Programme context in the provinces. The summary findings are tabulated and presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The M&E challenges in the Province - the SPPA observations

Rank Order	Key M&E challenges in the Province	% of all the challenges
1	Clear, simple and user-friendly M&E system, mechanism, standards, guidelines, tools, indicators and forms.	20%
2	M&E in the line departments: M&E skills, frequent transfers, department not accountable to PRDC/ExCom; lack of salary supplement/DSA and of motivation.	17%
3	M&E capacity, training, tools, knowledge and skills.	16%
4	NCDD/PST, PRDC ExCom and Line Department support/commitment to M&E.	15%
5	M&E roles, responsibilities, coordination, communication, review and reporting.	11%
6	M&E budget, equipment, DSA and human resources.	7%
6	Other challenges.	7%
7	M&E at the CS, PIF and DIF.	4%
8	PST M&E technical inputs, support and backstopping.	3%

Summary discussion and conclusions: The SPPA is the head of the provincial PSDD advisory team and also is the Provincial Programme Manager responsible for the PSDD-enabled programme. Hence, SPPA perceptions and identification of the “key M&E challenges” are important towards addressing those M&E challenges. Time, effort, resources, sub-decrees (new and amendments to the relevant existing Prakas) and high level commitment will be required to addressing the challenge no. 1, challenge no. 2, challenge no. 6 and challenge no. 8. Notwithstanding, there are rooms for improvements in certain areas with reference to challenge no. 3, challenge no. 4, challenge no.5 and challenge no. 8. Re-structuring and strengthening of the PST M&E Unit via adequate budget and sufficient number of technically qualified staff will help mitigate some of the challenges as identified by the SPPAs and will facilitate enhanced technical support and backstopping to the provinces.

2) The M&E challenges – the lack of PMESA time and availability to M&E

Methodological notes: Via Question No. 2 (see the SPPA interview questionnaire, Annex #1), all 24 SPPAs were requested to estimate the “percentage of the PMESA time and effort” to following six major categories of tasks: 1) Planning and AWPB, 2) M&E, 3) Sector and Contracts management, 4) Information, database and related work, 5) Support to the SPPA and to PSDD management and 6) Other responsibilities. 23 SPPAs responded. The estimates were compiled. The composite picture of how PMESA time is utilized and on what kind of work is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: The M&E Challenge – PMESA Time and Availability to M&E
 (as estimated by the SPPAs)**

% of PMESA time and effort goes to:	M&E	Planning/ AWPB	Sector/ Contracts management	Information/data base/ related work	Supporting the SPPA/ PSDD	Other responsibilities
	30%	>20%	> 30%	20%	20%	>15%
17%	17%	8%	29%	17%	17%	
25%	20%	30%	15%	15%	10%	
33%	29%	33%	33%	21%	21%	
20%	15%	25%	10%	10%	<10%	
33%	37%	13%	34%	37%	58%	
<20%	<15%	20%	<10%	<10%	No response	
13%	17%	42%	4%	21%	4%	
>30%		<20%		>20%		
4%		4%		4%		

Summary discussion and conclusions: According to most of the SPPAs (96%), PMESAs are available to M&E work for up to a maximum of 30% of PMESA time and the rest 70% of their time is given to other responsibilities. For example, PMESAs are seen busy with contracts management and sectoral work and with supporting the SPPA in the provinces. Lack of sufficient PMESA time alone is one of the major M&E constraints in the provinces. Using this analysis, the SPPAs should be encouraged to review the prevalent time use and to re-allocate the PMESA time to up to 50% to M&E work. Another option to consider here is to free up PMESA time from routine tasks such as data entry and data base updating, completion of various routine forms and reports and from tasks that do not necessarily require PMESA level inputs and expertise by hiring an information clerk or an M&E Assistant in 2008.

3) On how to improve the M&E – the SPPA and the PMESA suggestions:

Methodological notes: The SPPAs, as indicated earlier, are considered the most knowledgeable and most experienced about the NCDD/PSDD provincial programme. Hence and as part of the SPPA survey on the M&E needs assessment, 23 SPPAs (n=24) offered 97 suggestions on how to improve the M&E of the NCDD/PSDD-enabled programme in their provinces.

The PMESAs are responsible for the NCDD/PST programme M&E at the provincial level. As such, they are more knowledgeable about M&E needs and challenges. Accordingly, they were surveyed in the same manner the SPPAs were surveyed. In response to Question No. 3, to Question No. 5 and to Question No. 6 of the PMESA Questionnaire (see Annex #2), 21 PMESAs generated a total of 232 suggestions for M&E improvements.

The suggestions as received were then analyzed using content analysis against the specific NCDD/PSDD programme context and were compiled into major categories. The findings are presented in Table 3 and in Table 4 below.

Table 3: On how to improve the M&E – the SPPA suggestions

Rank Order	Improve and strengthen	% of the suggestions
1	M&E capacity development: training, guidelines, tools, techniques, workshops, learning from lessons and good practices.	39%
2	Revisit, clarify, update and re-align: M&E system, framework, structure, mechanisms, roles, responsibilities.	25%
3	Resolve M&E identified and reported issues and problems timely.	8%
3	Do more: mid- and end-contract evaluations; impact studies, case studies, ExCom periodical checks, monitoring visits.	8%
4	Give top level and strong support to M&E from the NCDD/MoI/PST, Governors, PRDC ExCom and Permanent members and line Departments.	7%
5	Other	5%
6	M&E subject matter, technical support and backstopping from PST M&E Unit.	4%
6	M&E budget, time, DSA and incentive payment.	4%

Summary discussion and conclusions: Majority of the suggestions offered by the SPPAs were around M&E capacity building via training, skills building, guidelines, tools, workshops and learning from lessons and good practices. The second priority area for M&E improvement as suggested by the SPPAs is to revise, update, re-align the M&E system, structure, framework, mechanisms and to clarify roles and responsibilities. When we look at what the PMESAs identified as the number one and number two priorities in Table 4, a total agreement is evidenced between these two groups provincial experts to the prioritization for M&E improvements in the Provinces.

The other major areas for improvements as identified are as follows: timely resolution of M&E identified problems and issues; to conduct more ExCom checks and monitoring visits, mid- and end-contract evaluations, impact studies and case studies; to provide top level strong support to M&E; to increase M&E related budget, DSA, incentive payment and time and effort. Most of these recommendations namely overhauling the M&E system and providing effective M&E training and tools must await the new SNDD program beginning 2009. Nonetheless, certain improvements can be implemented in 2008. However, improvements as suggested with respect to the M&E budget, travel allowances, MIS, baselines, contracts management and supervision should be considered for implementation without delay and pending the new SNDD Programme. Also, certain improvements to the PST M&E Unit role, support, response and services to the provinces in 2008 are feasible and are recommended.

Table 4: On how to improve the M&E – the PMESA suggestions

Rank Order	Improve and strengthen	% of the suggestions
1	Build and strengthen M&E capacity, technical knowledge and skills at all sub-national levels M&E points via M&E training, workshops, guidelines, tools, checklists and templates.	43%
2	Reform sub-national M&E system by making it as one common system for the province, the line departments, the districts and the CC with clearly defined M&E ToRs, roles, responsibilities, communication, reporting and coordination lines.	32%
3	M&E budget, travel, DSA and incentive payment.	8
4	Strong M&E support from NCDD/PST, Governor and Heads of Line Departments.	6
5	PST M&E Unit technical support and backstopping to the sub-national M&E	5
6	Update and strengthen M&E-support baselines, information, MIS and databases	4
7	Link contracts management and payment system to the M&E	2

4) On how to improve the M&E - the Permanent Members' suggestions

Methodological notes: PRDC ExCom Permanent Members in the six survey provinces were interviewed by the visiting Assessment Teams. A set of pre-designed questions were asked to all the PMs (Annex #3). Responses to the questions were recorded first then compiled and analyzed. Only PMs' recommendations for M&E improvements are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: On how to improve the M&E - the Permanent Members' suggestions

No	Suggestion / observation made by the PMs
1	Add more staff to CAU M&E
2	Participatory site and supervision visit
3	Improve the incentive system – tied to performance
4	Involve and support the Deputy Governor
5	More training
6	Support district and line departments
7	Increase reporting , communication (verbal and informal) and coordination
8	Establish line of accountability for M&E
9	Clarify on the role and support from the national level
10	Provide feedback/response to the issues raised/reported
11	Link payment to M&E report and clearance from staff directly responsible
12	M&E checklist for the Commune
13	Harmonize the coding system between NCD and the Peachtree
14	Clear M&E guidelines, tools, templates, reporting format and instructions from the national level
15	Update and strengthen Commune M&E – make ExCom CAU responsible
16	Establish/strengthen District M&E system
17	Quarterly review meeting

Summary discussion and conclusions: The PMs, based on their PRDC ExCom project and management experiences made a number of practical suggestions. Some of the suggested improvements namely, participatory site and supervision visits, quarterly review meeting, active involvement of the Deputy Governor and linking contractor payment to the M&E report can be implemented locally and without any additional direct costs. However, other suggested improvements namely, the M&E guidelines, tools, training, more CAU staff, district M&E system will require technical and policy level support as well as additional resources.

5) On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the line department M&E Focal Points

Methodological notes: A number of line Ministries and departments are project implementers. Each participating line department has M&E Focal Point. The M&E FCs in the line departments were consulted on the M&E issues and needs at their levels (n=54 participants) in one group each in the six survey provinces. Specifically designed Focus Group Discussion Method was used with structured questions (Annex #5), white board, flip charts and colored papers. PRDC ExCom and the SPPA offices in the province invited the FCs, provided the space and stationeries. Assessment Team members from the PST M&E Unit conducted and facilitated the FGD process. Responses were recorded. Back in Phnom Penh, the responses were categorized and analyzed. Summarized suggestions for M&E improvements in the line departments are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the line department M&E Focal Points

Rank Order	M&E Improvement: LD Focal Point Suggestion
1	More of training, capacity building, workshops, study tour, experience and information sharing
2	Salary supplement, travel and DSA @ \$7.5
3	Motorcycle
4	National level to release the fund timely – reduce the delay
5	M&E-support tools namely, digital camera and pc.
6	M&E only full time staff
6	More staff
6	Avoid construction in the rainy season
6	More technical support from PSDD advisors

Summary discussion and conclusions: From the above, the need for M&E training for the line department M&E focal points tops the list. Line department M&E focal points do not receive salary supplement. Hence, it is not a surprise to see this need at top of the list. However, this need is difficult for the project to address. Project should pay serious attention to the following needs: M&E training, tools, technical support, digital camera and allowances to encourage supervision and monitoring visits. Also, the project should look into ways of reducing the delays in fund transfer, in project implementation and of avoiding construction in the rainy season.

6) On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the Commune Councils

Methodological notes: The Commune Council plays a central role in the CS Fund planning, implementation and in its accountability. Hence, the M&E of the CS Fund and of its contracts is important. The Assessment consulted a small number of CCs – one each from the six survey provinces. CC Chairman, CC Clerk and CC M&E Focal Points were invited to FGD in the province. Specifically designed Focus Group Discussion Method and questions (Annex #6) were used with white board, flip charts and colored papers. PRDC ExCom and the SPPA offices selected and invited the CC teams, provided the space and stationeries. Assessment Team members from the PST M&E Unit conducted and facilitated the FGD process. Responses were recorded. Back in Phnom Penh, the responses were categorized and analyzed. In Table 7, CC suggestions for M&E improvements in the Communes are presented.

Table 7: On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the Commune Councils

Rank Order	M&E Improvement - CC Suggestion
1	M&E related training, technical knowledge on how to read and to understand the contract technical specifications and on M&E tools and guidelines.
2	Timely and effective support from the TSU/TSO, TFT, DFT and LAU with M&E and with supervising the Contractors.
2	M&E budget, DSA and petrol allowance for site monitoring.
3	The Commune Reporting – make it simple and reduce its length.
3	M&E training and awareness for the Contractors.
4	Cooperation from the line departments.

Summary discussion and conclusions: Request for training on M&E and on contracts management topped the list of recommendations. Appropriate M&E training, training on contracts management for the Commune and training for the contractors are important and yet are resource and time intensive. To be effective, such training will need to be carefully designed, be standardized, be executed and be followed up with post-training support. On the need for timely support from the Province, the DoLA/PLAU should consider ways of improving the support system. The same way, DoLA/PLAU should look into ways of making the reporting system as simple and as useful as possible. Regarding M&E related travel allowance issue, it involves policy and budgetary revisions. Responsible national authorities should consider this need and provide a response.

7) On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the CAU Chiefs

Methodological notes: PRDC ExCom CAU Unit has important role in the Programme, in contracts management and in their effective monitoring and supervision. CAU Unit Chiefs (n=6) in the six provinces were interviewed by the visiting Assessment Teams. A set of pre-designed standard questions were administered to all 4 Unit Chiefs including to the CAU (Annex #4). Responses to the questions were recorded first then compiled and analyzed. Only CAU Chiefs' recommendations for M&E improvements are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the CAU Chiefs

Rank Order	Improve and strengthen
1	One common and standardized M&E framework, guideline, template, checklist applicable to all projects and sub-projects. Reporting: harmonize, consolidate, standardize and update the reporting formats, checklists and reduce the number of annexes to the ExCom Quarterly Report.
2	M&E Training, skills and capacity building, workshops, study tours, information and lessons sharing at the CAU and Line Department levels.
2	Transportation for supervision and monitoring M&E related travel, telephone, petrol, DSA and vehicle/motorbike repairs.
3	Update the databases.
3	Timely submission of line department progress reports
4	Technical support and backstopping
4	Reduce frequent transfers – line department M&E focal points

Summary discussion and conclusions: As the CAU Chiefs identified and recommended, a common and standardized M&E system is also highly recommended by other stakeholders and the officials surveyed. This calls for an M&E reform. However, in view of imminent “new SNDD Programme” this reform should wait. Re updating and maintenance of the databases are issues that should be addressed by the Programme database administrators and officials with direct responsibilities in the provinces. Improvements to the progress reporting and to its timely submission should be looked into as it is not complex to implement. The SPPAs and the PMESAs should note the recommendation re technical support and backstopping. NCDD/PST national level should take up the chronic issue of “frequent transfer” with the line departments at the national level and to help resolve this constraint.

8) On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the TSU Chiefs

Methodological notes: PRDC ExCom TSU has equally important role in the Programme and in its effective monitoring. TSU Chiefs (n=6) in the six provinces were interviewed by the visiting Assessment Teams. A set of pre-designed questions (Annex #4) were administered to the TSU Chiefs. Responses to the questions were recorded first then compiled and analyzed. Only TSU Chiefs’ recommendations for M&E improvements are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the TSU Chiefs

Rank Order	Improve and strengthen
1	Contracts monitoring related training, technical knowledge and skills
2	Specifications, guidelines and templates covering renovation projects
2	Guidelines for contracts quality assurance and standardization
2	Contracts monitoring related fuel and DSA and motorcycle

Summary discussion and conclusions: Training for the TSU staff came up as the top recommendation from the TSU Chiefs. Regarding technical materials and support covering the renovation projects are important for the Programme management to consider. Equally important is to consider here the recommendation regarding guidelines for contracts quality assurance and standardization. PRDC ExCom budget should consider adjusting the travel lines as per this recommendation from the TSU and from the other Units surveyed.

9) On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the PLAU Chiefs

Methodological notes: PLAU plays an important role in the Commune based CS fund, contracts and related monitoring and supervision. Hence, PLAU Chiefs in the six survey provinces were consulted on the M&E and how to improve the CS level M&E. A set of pre-designed questions (Annex #4) were administered to the PLAU Chiefs. Responses to the questions were recorded first then compiled and analyzed. Only PLAU Chiefs’ recommendations for M&E improvements are presented in Table 10.

Summary discussion and conclusions: PLAU has the primary responsibility of managing and supporting the CCs with the CS fund and related contracts, investment and service projects. M&E and its improvement in the CCs will require corresponding M&E improvements at the PLAU level. PLAU Chiefs also recommended M&E training and capacity building as the top priority. Number two recommendation is about clear guidelines covering coordination and communication relationships between the Units. NCDD/PST Programme management should take note of this recommendation for action. Simplification of the Commune reporting system is also recommended here. The rest of the recommendations are the same or are similar to recommendations made by the other stakeholders surveyed.

Table 10: On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the PLAU Chiefs

Rank Order	Improve and strengthen
1	M&E capacity building, training, guidelines, tools for the CS and the line department M&E focal points.
2	Clear M&E and contracts management guidelines detailing coordination and communication relationships between the Units.
3	Simplify Commune reporting format and its frequency from Monthly to Quarterly.
3	Revise upward the travel and DSA rates.
3	Technical support and backstopping from the province.
3	Increase coordination and communication among the agencies and the line departments re support to the CS.
3	Increase involvement of Commune residents and citizen in monitoring CC project implementation.
4	Transport and motorcycles.

10) On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the Finance Unit Chiefs

Methodological notes: The Assessment Teams interviewed the PRDC ExCom Finance Unit Chiefs in six provinces the same way it did the interviews of the other Unit Chiefs. Responses to the questions were recorded first then compiled and analyzed. Only Finance Unit Chiefs' recommendations for M&E improvements are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: On how to improve the M&E – suggestions from the Finance Unit Chiefs

Rank Order	Improve and strengthen
1	Training on the Peachtree system
2	Link payment to monitoring report/evidences of outputs
2	Incentive payment rates – increase and standardize across all projects
2	Reduce the delay in releasing the fund
3	Start project implementation in the First Quarter
3	Reduce frequent transfer of financial staff in line departments

Summary discussion and conclusions: The Finance Unit is responsible for financial management of all the contracts and projects in the province. Improvements suggested include: link payments for contracts with monitoring and supervision reports; and training on the Peachtree financial management is system. Bringing forward project implementation to the First Quarter of the Year is recommended too. However, this is linked to the timing of national level budgeting, allocation and fund release processes. NCDD/PST management should take note of this situation and should lobby for expediting the current approval and allocation practices and for not transferring finance people in line departments too frequently.

11) On how to improve the M&E – PST Phnom Penh M&E Unit support to the provinces

Methodological notes: As part of the assessment, the PMESAs were asked about what specific M&E support and technical assistance they needed and would like to receive from the Phnom Penh PST M&E Unit. Twenty one PMESAs (n=24) provided a list of 89 expectations. These multiple expectations are categorized and analyzed. The findings are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: On the PST M&E Unit Support – PMESA expectations

Rank Order	The key expectations of the PST M&E Unit	% of all the expectations
1	M&E: capacity, knowledge and technical skills development; guidelines, tools, standards, templates, indicators; related training, and lessons sharing.	38%
2	M&E subject matter, technical inputs and backstopping: baselines, case studies, impact studies, mid- and end-contract evaluations, information collection, documentation and reporting.	21%
3	Strengthen and support sub-national M&E: feedback, review and reflection meetings, field visits, resolve issues, share information, special M&E studies and needs.	16%
4	Clear M&E policy, framework, requirements and guidance to the Governors, ExCom and to the Line Departments.	10%
5	Clarify M&E policy, framework, structures, mechanisms, requirements, guidelines, coordination, communication, roles and responsibilities.	8%
6	Resolve problems and irregularities as reported, facilitate coordination and communication, provide feedback and M&E follow up and support.	7%

Summary discussion and conclusions: It is clear from the above Table that what the PMESAs and their M&E colleagues in the provinces do need most (59% of all the expectations) are M&E training, related subject matter inputs, technical backstopping, related tools, guidelines, indicators, M&E-support information generation, documentation and reporting support. Also, the PMESAs expect the PST M&E Unit to assist with clarifying the M&E policies, priorities, roles and responsibilities as well as with timely guidance, with problem resolution, with coordination and communication. Also, the PST M&E Unit is expected to mobilize and facilitate high level support to M&E in the provinces.

These are all genuine and reasonable expectations of the national M&E Unit. However, the PST M&E Unit is unable to deliver most of these expectations unless and until the M&E Unit is re-structured, adequately staffed and resourced. Notwithstanding its present constraints, the PST M&E Unit should be able to enhance its response to priority technical assistance needs in the provinces beginning 2008.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations:

The Assessment and its findings now provide a better understanding of the M&E situation in the provinces. The Assessment, through using a number of survey techniques, has identified a range of M&E needs and gaps by each of the sub-national project levels. The Assessment findings, its documentation including this report now provide NCDD/PST management and its key stakeholders a credible basis for prioritizing the M&E needs and for making informed M&E improvements at the sub-national level.

Also, the Assessment serves as a timely and very useful input to repositioning the PST M&E Unit towards responding effectively to the sub-national M&E needs.

The recommended next steps would be for the NCDD/PSDD/PST management at all levels to review the Assessment findings; to prioritize M&E improvement activities in their respective jurisdictions and to incorporate 2008 M&E improvement activities into 2008 AWPB.

Annexes

Annex #1: (Confidential when completed)
M&E Needs Assessment Questionnaire – PSDD SPPA (Draft)

(Important note: The purpose is to improve PSDD M&E through addressing the M&E needs and challenges in the Province. Hence, based on your knowledge and experience, please answer each question fully to help assess the needs at your level. DO NOT delegate this task. Kindly return completed questionnaire in confidence to rkirim50@gmail.com **on or before 30 August, 2007**. Thank you in advance for your inputs.)

1. Please list top seven M&E tasks covering PSDD-enabled projects in the province:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

2. Based on your observations, please estimate the percentage of the PMES time and effort to the following work?

No	PMES Advisor responsibility area	% time (total 100)
1	Planning and AWPB	
2	M&E	
3	Sector and contracts management	
4	Information, data base and related work	
5	Support to the SPPA and PSDD management	
6	Other responsibilities	

3. How to improve the M&E of PSDD projects in your province? Please give your suggestions:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

4. How to improve PRDC/ExCom level M&E? Please give your suggestions:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

5. How to improve the work and effectiveness of the M&E focal points in the line departments? Please give your suggestions:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

6. How to improve progress M&E at the CS Council level? Please give your suggestions:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

7. Based on your knowledge and experience, kindly list the key M&E challenges:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

8. Kindly list the specific M&E support and inputs that you would like to receive from the PST M&E Unit:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

9. Any other comments and suggestions?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

(Confidential when completed)

Annex #2: M&E Needs Assessment Questionnaire – Provincial M&E Advisor (Draft)

(Important note: The purpose is to improve M&E of PSDD projects through addressing the M&E needs and challenges. Hence, please answer each question fully to help assess the needs at your level. Kindly return completed questionnaire in confidence to the attention to <rkirim50@gmail.com **on or before 30 August, 2007**. Thank you in advance for your inputs.)

1. List top seven M&E tasks that you have been performing in recent six months:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

2. List top five tasks of the PRDC/ExCom 4 Units you have been involved and or, providing with support:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

3. Based on your knowledge and experience, kindly identify five areas of PRDC/ExCom level M&E improvement:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

4. List top five tasks of the M&E focal points in the line departments:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

5. Based on your knowledge and experience with the line department focal points, kindly identify five areas for project management and M&E improvements in the line departments:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

6. Based on your knowledge and experience of the CS Council work and of related M&E needs, kindly identify five areas for improvements:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

7. Kindly list the specific M&E support and inputs that you would like to receive from the PST M&E Unit:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

8. Any other comments and suggestions?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Annex #3: (Confidential when completed)
M&E Needs Assessment Questionnaire – PRDC/ExCom (Draft)

(Important note: Respondent: PRDC ExCom permanent member. Method: face to face interview. The assessment purpose is to improve M&E of the PRDC/ExCom enabled projects and contracts through addressing the M&E needs and challenges at the PRDC/ExCom level.)

Q1. How does the PRDC/ExCom monitors and supervises the projects and contracts?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q2. Are the current projects/contracts progress monitoring, supervision, reporting and related management system and procedures satisfactory? If yes, go to Question 4. If no, please describe the specific problems and issues:

--

Q3. How to solve the problems and issues identified under Q2?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q4. Kindly list the specific information, data and reports the PRDC/ExCom needs to properly monitor progress of the projects and to resolve problems timely and effectively?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

5. Any other suggestions to improve progress/contracts monitoring, supervision, reporting and management system?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Annex #4: (Confidential when completed)
M&E Needs Assessment Questionnaire – PRDC/ExCom Unit Chief (Draft)

(Important note: Respondents: 4 Unit Chiefs. Method: one to one interview. The assessment purpose is to improve M&E of PSDD projects through addressing the M&E needs and challenges at the PRDC/ExCom Unit level. Hence, please answer each question fully to help assess the needs at your level.)

Q1. List top five PSDD project/contract progress review, monitoring, supervision and management tasks of your Unit:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q2. List top five tasks of your Unit covering PSDD project/contract reporting and documentation:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q3. List what your Unit does when problems with projects and contracts are found:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q4. What are the problems you and your Unit face in carrying out effective project/ contract progress review, monitoring, supervision and reporting:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q5. What are the things that need to be done to help you and your Unit to address the problems you have listed under Q4 and to improve projects/ contracts monitoring, supervision and management?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

6. Based on your knowledge and experience with the line department focal points, kindly identify five areas for project supervision, management and M&E improvements in the line departments:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

7. Kindly list the specific project planning, management M&E support and assistance that you would like to receive from the PRDC/Excom M&E Advisor and from NCDD/PST M&E Unit:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

8. Any other comments and suggestions?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Annex #5: (Confidential when completed)

M&E Needs Assessment – Provincial Line Department Focal Points – Focus Group Discussion (Draft)

(Important note to the Facilitator: This is a diverse group. One common feature that all these line departments has its involvement in the PSDD-enabled projects and contracts. The M&E Focal Points are invited to discuss M&E issues and needs common to all the departments. Kindly facilitate the process of generating their individual and collective inputs along the following lines. Use flip charts and colored papers for the participants to write their answers first. In the second stage, ask the participants to review the colored answer sheets placed on the wall and to reduce to one common agreed upon list).

Q1. List top five PSDD project/contract progress review, monitoring, supervision and management tasks of your Department:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q2. List top five reporting and documentation tasks covering PSDD projects and contracts:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q3. List what your Department does when problems with projects and contracts are found:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q4. What are the problems you and your Department face in carrying out effective project/contract progress review, monitoring, supervision, reporting and management:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Q5. What are the things that need to be done to help you and your Department to address the problems you have listed under Q4 and to improve projects/ contracts monitoring, supervision and management?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

7. Kindly list the specific project/contract planning, monitoring and evaluation support and assistance that you would like to receive from the PSDD project:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

8. Any other comments and suggestions?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Annex #6: (Confidential when completed)
M&E Needs Assessment Questions– CS Council Focus Group Discussion (Draft)

(Important note to the FGD Facilitator: The assessment purpose is to improve CS Council projects and contracts through addressing the M&E needs and challenges. **Respondents:** CS Council Chairperson, Clerk and the M&E Focal Point. Method: FGD. Kindly facilitate the process of generating their individual and collective inputs along the following lines.)

Q1. Assess and list CS Council’s knowledge and understanding of the contracts progress monitoring, reporting, supervision and problems resolution:

Q2. Determine the extent of M&E activities a) of the CS Council in general and b) of the M&E Focal Point in particular:

Q3. Determine through discussion, the gaps between the M&E needs of the contracts and the current practices at the CS Level:

Q4. Ask for CS Council suggestions on how to help the CS Council to improve the contracts progress monitoring, supervision, reporting and problem solving issues and needs?