PROMIS: Public Procurement MIS
A Global Opportunity

The global focus is on uniform procurement laws, wide dissemination of procurement opportunities and transparency. This focus forms a part of the reform program being adopted by developing countries now with the assistance of World Bank and other multinational agencies. Despite ownership of the projects lying with each Government, the projects may be funded by international development institutions or bilateral aid. The Development Co-operation Directorate (DAC) held the South Africa and Paris Conventions and has set some criteria to monitor public procurement.

Consequently, reforms in public procurement have been initiated worldwide in order to increase accountability and reduce corruption. World Bank financed the first project in Bangladesh called the "Public Procurement Reform Project". Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) was established in 2002 as a permanent unit within the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the Ministry of Planning and is responsible for spearhead and conduct the Public Procurement reforms. Dohatec has since built the first Public Procurement MIS with input from relevant international agencies.

Dohatec has produced a procurement system that has been designed to effectively disseminate tender notices to enhance transparency and efficiency. Rules, regulations, standard tender documents and processes are elaborately laid out. The system is interactive and all government bids can be placed by respective agencies through convenient interfaces. This product has been shown to a worldwide audience at the World Bank HQ and its Procurement specialist from the Country Offices and the Headquarters in December 2005.

Phase I was to build a dynamic website for putting up Advertisement Notices from all procuring entities. The site's purpose was to act as a reference site for its visitors to access information on Procurement Rules and Regulations. Local firms attempted to develop this system but it is thought they could not understand and implement the complexities. Dohatec was invited to build this system, as a result of their extensive web database development experience.

Phase II was to build a Management Information System MIS) to monitor public procurement. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Round Table Initiative and Paris Meeting emerged with the procurement monitoring criteria. The process of procurement has to be closely monitored against a set of key performance indicators to measure the compliance. The first set of indicators developed was implemented in to the system in Bangladesh by Dohatec. Government has since followed up the first PRRP with the PRPRII which carried out enhancement of the system.

The initial system was developed and deployed in 50 calendar days. The rules, regulations, standard formats were placed on the website. The workflow describing each activity was presented graphically to reduce the necessity of referring to the central body for clarifications.

The application came into use throughout Bangladesh. Where there was connectivity, information was uploaded through the Internet and where there was no connectivity, the Procuring entities sent the Tender Notices on CD-ROM. The system did not require any training of personnel on the usage instead it just co-opted all operators to the system instantly. There are queries for validation in the Application that was incorporated and a virtual fail proof system was implemented. Dohatec also structured the database carefully so that it could have significant subsequent use. The system is robust and has been functioning smoothly ever since.

There were doubts about the familiarity with software and prevalence of computers in government offices throughout Bangladesh. Dohatec correctly assessed the proficiency level of the clerical staff and designed user-friendly forms and built in systems.

The Government Procurement MIS (Management Information System) is for keeping track of procurement starting from the procurement plan to completion and helping decision makers by generating a set of key performance indicators on the entire procurement process. The online system forms a part of the procuring entity's routine activity but the database created allows the government to monitor progress and performance at all times. The reports generated reveal efficiencies, compliance, progress, transparency, and information on utilization against plans. Considerable international legal and administrative expertise was provided by the World Bank to capture each key performance indicator. The Bangladesh system has a total of forty-five indicators.

The integrated Government Procurement MIS is able to monitor the performance of government procurement in Developing Countries. The System measures the procurement performance in terms of qualitative and quantitative progress. It permits benchmarking the performance of various procuring entities within the government. A procurement cycle creates a lot of information with many hierarchical levels carrying out different tasks depending on the procurement type, value, budget etc. It generates reports on the performance of any procurement entity at any time. The system is robust, easy to use and maintain.

The Dohatec system has drawn the attention of various Development agencies including the Asian Development Bank, DFID UK, Japan Bank for International Co-operation. It was presented to an international audience drawn from the World Bank client states and Bank offices during the World Bank Learning Week in December 2005 in Washington DC. It has been acclaimed as a powerful tool to empower governments to improve efficiency, performance and transparency in public procurement.

The website was awarded a prize by Swiss Interactive Media and Software Association in 2005. The contract for MIS was given to Dohatec on a single source basis. The nationwide implementation is also assigned to Dohatec "in consideration of good performance" by the World Bank. There are enquiries from different government about the system. ■

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