



Use of Information and Communication Technologies to Improve Performance of Procurement Systems in Bangladesh

Innovation

Online Procurement Tracking System for Directorate General of Family Planning

Background

Despite improvements made in supply chain management for reproductive health (RH) commodities in Bangladesh over the past few decades, ensuring a continuous supply of contraceptive remains a challenge. Delays in Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) contraceptives procurement generated national stock-outs of key contraceptives, e.g., condoms, injectables, IUDs, on a regular basis over the past years before 2010.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) made concerted efforts during 2006 and 2007 to bring the projected contraceptive shortfalls to the attention of key stakeholders in the Health Consortium of the Health Nutrition and Population Sector Program and Government of Bangladesh authorities. Measures included securing parallel funding and emergency procurements through the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and donations through an emergency air shipment of 6 million condoms from USAID in December 2007. Even with those efforts, public sector stock-outs and the resultant negative impact on the family planning program could not be avoided, prompting the USAID Mission in Bangladesh requested that the Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems (SPS) program work on improving the procurement of RH commodities.

Design and Implementation

Before SPS began working on the procurement project, procurement packages were either manually managed or tracked using Word/Excel programs, which resulted in ineffective procurement. SPS's experience had showed that a web-based procurement tracking system can help government officials track the status of procurement packages at every step of the way and ensure the packages' smooth progress. So, SPS developed an online procurement tracking system (<http://www.dgfplmis.org/>) for DGFP in 2010, the DGFP Supply Chain Information Portal (SCIP) Online Procurement Tracker. It was deployed within the government through user acceptance testing by DGFP officials and then launched on February 15, 2011. Ms. Denise Rollins, Mission Director, USAID Bangladesh, handed over the DGFP SCIP to Professor A. F. M. Ruhul Haque, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), at a launching ceremony, thus conferring ownership to the Bangladesh Government.

“The tracking system helps to ensure contraceptives availability in the country, which will reduce unwanted pregnancy and population growth.”



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SIAPS
Systems for Improved Access
to Pharmaceuticals and Services



Photo: SPS Program
The launching ceremony of the online procurement tracking system

Program Advantages

The advantages of the new procurement tracking systems are that it—

- Allows monitoring of procurement packages in a single location through an interactive dashboard
- Allows MoHFW staff, Line Directors, and other stakeholders to be able to view updated package status immediately
- Provides information on procurement delays and bottlenecks to facilitate management and decision making
- Allows procurement packages to be monitored throughout the delivery process; delays trigger automated alerts through e-mail and strategic monitoring systems to the accountable procurement desk officer
- Drills down for detailed information on progress of procurement packages
- Helps to reduce lead time of procurement processes
- Facilitates efficient and effective procurement management
- Secure site with encrypted data transfer
- Publish procurement opportunities and tender results
- Promotes good governance, transparency, and competition



Main Outcome

The procurement tracking system has resulted in streamlined procurement planning and led to the World Bank's approval of the MoHFW's procurement plan amounting to 63 million US dollars (USD) within the stipulated timeframe in the last year. Bangladesh is also on track for procuring RH commodities valued at USD 27 million by June of this year. The tracking system helps to ensure contraceptives availability in the country, which eventually will reduce unwanted pregnancy and population growth and help Bangladesh reach relevant Millennium Development Goals.

The expanded scope of work for the Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (SIAPS)/Bangladesh Program (a follow-on to the SPS program) is a result of the success of the SCIP Online Procurement Tracker. SIAPS is taking the tracking system and expanding it for MoHFW so that the program will not only track procurement but will include a comprehensive product catalogue, procurement planning, package development, tracking and linkage with drug registration and equipment maintenance system. The MoHFW portal will allow managing and tracking of more than 90 percent of goods and services procurement. The Central Medical Stores Depot of Director General of Health Services (DGHS) stands to benefit mostly as they alone have 85 procurement packages with a value of USD 84.6 million which are handled by 5 procurement desk officers.

Success Story: The DGFP Online Procurement Tracker received two prestigious awards—the National Digital Innovation Award 2011 and the National Digital Innovation Fair Award 2011—in the categories of e-Health and e-Governance, respectively.

For the Bangladesh Government, officials are now able to track the status of procurement packages at every step of the way and ensure the packages' smooth progress. Also, procurement management is now efficient, effective, and transparent at the central level.



The DGFP team with their awards from the Digital Innovation Fair.



MOHFW Secretary receiving Best E-Government.

