



UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

CEB

Chief Executives Board

for Coordination

CEB/2014/HLCM-HBP

15 July 2014

High Level Committee on Management (HLCM)

**Plan of Action for the Harmonization and Simplification of
Business Practices (HBP) in the United Nations System**

Donor Report for the HBP in 2013

STATUS REPORT

Table of contents

Page 3. Narrative introduction

Page 5. Table 1. Status Update of HBP Projects 31 December 2013

Page 6. Project Status of HBP Projects with Activities in 2013

Page 6. Harmonization of vacancy advertisement and selection process at country level for General Service and National Officer Positions

Page 9. Procurement Process and Practice Harmonization in Support of Field Operations Phase I and Phase II

Page 11. Vendor Registration

Page 14. Collaborative Procurement of Vehicles

Page 16. Common Standard Costing Approaches for ICT Services and Investments

Page 18. Automation of Data Collection for the Annual Statistical Report on UN Procurement

Donor Report for the Harmonization and Simplification of Business Practices Plan of Action 2013

In 2013 the Harmonization of Business Practices Plan of Action (HBP) saw significant progress. A number of projects approved before 2013 reached completion, while some are still on-going. A few new projects were also approved. The detailed activities and benefits of the projects approved before 2013 have been reported on in the 2011-2012 report titled “Key Achievements of the HBP in 2011-2012” (<http://unsceb.org/content/key-achievements-hbp-2011-2012>), and will not be recalled in this report, which instead focuses on (on-going projects plus newly approved projects??).

Some of the key achievements for the year 2013 included the completion and closing of a number of important projects. The Harmonization of Procurement Practices in the field was completed and its second phase started. The first phase removed all obstacles to collaboration in the area of procurement in the field. Phase II focuses on the roll out of the guidance produced. Also, the project on Common Standards Costing Approaches for ICT Services and Investments was completed. This project has enabled organizations to accurately assess their ICT spending and to identify areas where savings can be made. In collaboration with the UN System Staff College, a project on Common Services and Harmonized Business Practices has helped ensure that Country Office staff are familiar with new harmonization and simplification initiatives the the guidance that these have produced. project with the UN System Staff College. All of these projects have been positively evaluated and lessons learned are being applied.

One significant development of the HBP during 2013 was the increased coordination with the work-plan of the UNDG. HBP projects such as “The Harmonization of Procurement Practices in the Field” and the HR project “Harmonization of Vacancy Advertisement and Selection Process at Country Level for General Service and National Officer positions” were linked to the Delivering as One process to enable country offices to better achieve their aims in the area of Operating as One. Furthermore, after the adoption of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, the projects of the HBP were linked to the QCPR mandates to ensure an effective response. This can be seen in the ongoing projects mentioned above as well as in the

Other noteworthy developments in 2013 includes that the work of the harmonization of treasury services working group took over the funding of the web portal that enabled the collaboration in the area of treasury services. This was agreed to given the significant sustainable benefit that the collaboration provided to each organization. This initiative has enabled continued collaboration in all areas of treasury services which have significantly increased efficiency of exchange rate transactions, banking agreements and for payments. Thanks to joint negotiations and the resulting large volumes, we can influence the course of such not-so-widely traded currencies, obtaining more favourable rates for the same 1 Dollar, allowing the UN System to buy more goods and services locally with the same money. These savings represent real cash that goes into increased resources for programmatic activities. A second project that was underway in 2013 was a spin-off Treasury project led by UNHQ, UNICEF, UNDP and FAO is on Banking Services, and is projected to strengthen the overall bargaining position of the UN with banks and counterparts as we will be perceived and negotiating for services as “ONE UN “.

The project which aims at negotiating joint contracts with major banks is expected to lead to savings of between \$1.2- 2.3 Million annually. With an investment of \$1.2 Million in this project, this corresponds to a full return on investment within less than a year from completion of the project.

The project will negotiate common Long Term Agreements with the six global banks that handle up to 70% of the UN business. In addition, the project will also focus on large duty stations e.g. peace-keeping missions, regional hubs, Delivering as One Countries or other large duty stations at first, to negotiate local banking contracts to improve efficiency and to reduce banking fees.

However, this project experienced some delays. Due to problems with staffing could only partially deliver the expected outcomes in 2013. However, the project did not incur any financial losses and in fact, several activities could be carried out with internal resources of the UN Secretariat with a positive outcome. By the end of 2013 activities were fully re-initiated and have led to the establishment of several banking agreements in high volume or high cost duty stations. The project is now considered to be fully able to deliver its intended outputs.

Table 1. below, provides a summary of HBP projects and their current status. Each project, their objectives, purposes and expected—and delivered—benefits are reported in detail later in the report.

Table 1
Status Update of HBP Projects 31 December 2013¹

| Project (with lead agency/ies) | Allocation | Status |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Comparative Analysis and Review of the staff regulations and the rules, practices and procedures, particularly in field duty stations. (HR Network & WFP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of entitlements in the event of death and injury due to malicious acts and service incurred | \$386,200 | Completed |
| Feasibility study for Common Treasury Services (IFAD and WHO) and Support to Coordination Committee and Community of Practice | \$904,150 + \$113,540 | Completed |
| UN system-wide financial statistics database and reporting system (CEB Secretariat) | \$794,700 | Completed |
| Common Standards Costing Approaches for ICT Services and Investments (UNODC) | \$565,000 | Completed |
| Vendor Eligibility Project (UNDP) | \$174,132 | Completed |
| Procurement process and practices harmonization in support of field operations Phase I (UNICEF) | \$628,819 | Completed |
| Procurement process and practices harmonization in support of field operations Phase II (UNFPA) | \$455,823 | On-going Expected Completion in 2014 |
| Collaborative Procurement of Vehicles (UNDP) | \$990,000 | On-going Expected Completion in 2014 |
| UNGM Vendor Registration Reform (UN/UNOPS) | \$ 408,740 | On-going Expected Completion in 2014 |
| Support to UNCTs implementing Harmonized Business Practices (UNSSC) | \$215,600 | Completed |
| Common Services and Harmonized Business Practices (UNSSC) | \$175,480 | Completed |
| Harmonizing Banking Services Across the UN System (UN) | \$1,100,000 | On-going Expected Completion in 2014 |
| Harmonization of vacancy advertisement and selection process at country level for General Service and National Officer positions (UNESCO) | \$270,000 | On-going Expected Completion in 2014 |
| Procurement Process and Practice Harmonization in Support of Field Operations, Phase II (UNFPA) | \$455,820 | On-going Expected Completion in 2014 |
| Automation of data collection for the Annual Statistical Report on UN Procurement | \$128,000 | Approved in 2013 commencing in 2014 |

¹ Shaded projects have been reported on in detail in the 2012 report.

Project Status of HBP Projects with Activities in 2013²

Harmonization of vacancy advertisement and selection process at country level for General Service and National Officer Positions (Completed)

Lead: UNESCO Budget: \$270,000

Project Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the project was to contribute to streamline the sourcing and hiring process of staff locally, and increase the collaboration of UN Agencies at country level, in the area of Human Resources. It also supported greater harmonization in UN agency mechanisms and processes governing hiring of staff at country level (General Service and National Officers) which will contribute to greater effectiveness in recruitment operations at country level.

The objectives of the 'Project of Harmonization of the Vacancy Advertisement and Selection Process at country level for Gs and NPO positions' were to -

- Develop standardized vacancy advertisement
- Harmonize the recruitment criteria for similar posts
- Introduce common selection tools and mechanisms

Expected Benefits

The main benefits from this project are expected to be

- An improved outreach for qualified candidates at country level;
- Reduced competition amongst Agencies;
- Provision of greater career development opportunities amongst UNCT local staff;
- Streamlined and harmonized mechanisms for local hiring such as pre-screening and interview panels with UNCT members that have the potential to reduce transaction costs and increase efficiency and collaboration at the country level;
- Standardised tools (such as reference checking, competency-based interview templates, tests (clerical, accounting, IT ..) that improve the quality of recruitment at country level;

Progress

As intended when the project was completed, two pilots had started implementing the initiatives identified by the project. The HR Network will evaluate the pilots with the aim to up-scale the activities. Additional pilots will be identified in 2014 and an up-scaling process will be initiated. From initial assessments by the HR Network, benefits achieved appear to be in line with the expected benefits. More detailed reporting on results will be available in the 2014 report

² This section includes projects that had activities in 2013. Completed projects were reported on in the 2012 report.

Harmonizing Banking Services across the UN System (Ongoing)

Lead: UN Secretariat Budget: \$1.1 Million

Project Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the project is to achieve efficiency gains and cost reductions in banking transactions in large duty stations. The objective of this effort is to adopt a coordinated approach to both the procurement and administration of banking services and relations for all of the Participating UN Agencies, both on a regional and country-by-country basis. It is recognized that the UN System's entities have varying needs and requirements depending upon the type of operations and countries involved. The banking requirements can broadly be categorized into the following groups. While in some cases the categories may overlap (i.e., #1 and #5) we provide this categorization as a premise for the structure of the proposed approach.

1. Countries where UNHQ has Peacekeeping Operations. These are large scale, complex operations with significant cash handling requirements;
2. Countries in which UN Agencies are operating as Integrated Missions which support complex activities in post-conflict situations and tend to have more complex banking requirements;
3. Countries where UNHQ has regional commissions or other offices away from headquarters (non-Peacekeeping Operations), which tend to be the capital or major cities with established banking infrastructure and where UN Agencies are also present in the country;
4. Countries where UNHQ does not have operations, while UN Agencies do;
5. "Delivering as One" countries; which are countries officially designated by the UN Secretary General or are self-starters;
6. Countries with no banking competition

UNHQ, due to the significantly large Peacekeeping Operations, has an established team and procurement procedures in place to select, oversee and manage all of their specific banking requirements. The intention is to leverage this team's existing knowledge and experience to support a harmonization exercise. The team's expertise is essential to support the procurement of services for Funds and Programmes as well as Specialized Agencies with field banking requirements. The envisioned output of this project is a common set of banking agreements with key regional banks which would serve to all UN Agencies across all countries.

In order to accomplish this, the UNHQ's Global Banking Operations Section has been provided with additional resources through the project, which include a legal specialist assigned to OLA (not clear who provided this(these) additional resources. The Section:

- Manages a scoping exercise to establish common requirements with appropriate weighting;
- Co-ordinates a virtual working group consisting of the Treasurers from the participating Organizations who establishes team TOR's & performance metrics, reviews and approves the recommended implementation steps;
- Works with OLA to put in place model banking agreements that would cover all UN Organizations;
- Runs UN-wide bank RFIs and RFPs and coordinates the process of evaluating and selecting preferred banks, differentiated according to the six broad categories listed previously. .

Expected Benefits

The main benefits of the project are:

- Improved quality of banking services
- Reduced bank fees for participating UN organizations.
- The creation of global standard banking agreements

Progress

Although the project experienced delays due to staffing problems, progress was reported in late 2013. The project did not incur any additional costs due to these delays and the UN Secretariat was able to start activities using its own internal resources. By the end of 2013, tenders for contracts had been issued in several large duty stations and are expected to be in place in early 2014. Negotiations with the largest banks providing banking services to the UN system were initiated and are expected to be completed in 2014. Hence, the project is considered able to deliver its intended outputs, within budget but slightly delayed.

Procurement Process and Practice Harmonization in Support of Field Operations, Phase I and II

Lead: UNICEF, Phase II UNFPA Budget: \$628,819+ 455,823³

Project Purpose and Objectives

After the completion of Phase I, completed in early 2013, which focused on country level procurement activities, Phase II of the Project has both an HQ and a country-level component. The HQ component aims at improving the harmonization of the interface that (potential) suppliers have with the organizations of the UN System. This component complements other related initiatives currently being undertaken by the Procurement Network. This component also establishes the foundation for further progress on country-level harmonization of business practices.

The country-level component continues the efforts initiated during Phase I of the Harmonization Project and supports country offices in their efforts to harmonize business practices. This component will improve the effectiveness of UN cooperation in procurement at the country level by applying the tools that were created in Phase I.

Project Objectives

This Project proposal emphasizes the continued implementation of the deliverables of the Project, Phase I. The specific objectives are to:

- Facilitate the implementation and use of the modalities of the document ‘Common UN Procurement at the Country Level’ to a total of 10 countries, including the collection of quantitative evidence of the benefits achieved through the application of these modalities of common procurement and the harmonization of related business practices (Phase II)
- Use the experience gained and the feedback collected through the roll-out and implementation of the modalities of common UN Procurement to:
 - continue to improve and align the modalities to reflect progress achieved in HQ harmonization of business practices; develop additional tools in response to needs identified at the country-level for further harmonization of business practices; and simplify the application of these tools at the country level (Phase II)
- Revise the contents, structure and technological platform of the Procurement Practitioner’s Handbook (Phase II)
- Assess the feasibility and benefits of harmonizing standard solicitation documents, model contract templates and general terms and conditions of UN organizations (Phase II)

³ Phase II was approved in 2013 and started in November. As activities are closely related, both sets of activities are reported on here

- Follow-up on implementation of decisions made by the HLCCM PN during Phase I of the project (Phase II)
- Assess feasibility/benefits of harmonizing specific procurement-related documents.
- Follow up on implementation of decisions taken during phase I
- HQ Roll-out the modalities of ‘Common UN Procurement at the Country Level Development of further tools for UN cooperation and continuous improvement of the modalities of ‘Common UN Procurement at the Country Level
- Country-Level revision of Procurement Practitioner’s Handbook

Expected Benefits

The expected benefits include:

- More effective and efficient cooperation in procurement among UN organizations both at country level and HQ level
- Cost savings and better economies of scale in certain product and service categories due to improved and increased cooperation in procurement at the country level
- Better value for money, improved service from suppliers and better contract terms due to improved and increased cooperation in procurement at the country level
- Reduced administrative costs by eliminating duplication of tasks
- Improved inter-agency mobility of staff
- Improved opportunities for common training initiatives
- Harmonized interface between organizations of the UN system with (potential) suppliers
- Improved image of the UN System to external stakeholders (suppliers, donors, governments, etc.)
- Increased opportunities for further collaboration due to harmonization of some elements of the legal framework underlying procurement transactions

Progress

Phase I of the project was completed and closed. in early 20013 and received a positive evaluation.

The evaluation findings carried over into Phase II which commenced in the fall of 2013. At the completion of Phase I, the HLCCM Procurement Network reported that there were no remaining obstacles to collaborative procurement in the field.

Under Phase II, training material, courses, and simplification of guidance are being developed to ensure that UN Country Teams are able to capitalize on the opportunities created by the initiative.

Vendor Registration

Lead: UN/UNOPS Budget: \$408,740

Project Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the project is to promote a common, harmonized and simplified vendor registration process among all UN entities using UNGM.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Harmonize and simplify the common UNGM vendor registration process;
- Solve the issues of the current registration system, while improving the efficiency, quality and effectiveness of the UNGM registration process;
- Support the registration of vendors from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and increase their business opportunities.
- Widen the participation of vendors from all Member States in general, and improve communication with all vendors.

Expected Benefits

- Strategic synergies with existing initiatives. The UNGM Vendor Registration Reform is a strategic and necessary complement of three projects financed by the HLCM:
 - The **Vendor Eligibility Project**. The new registration procedure will rely on the process established with the vendor eligibility project, and will verify the ineligibility of vendors immediately upon their registration.
 - The **Harmonization of Procurement Practices**. This reform will introduce a harmonized vendor registration process among all UNGM Members and a consistent approach to vendor registration and eligibility across the whole UN system. The reform will apply the outcome of the harmonization working group, such as the UN Supplier Code of Conduct.
 - The **Collaborative Procurement initiatives**. Joint tenders on vehicles, freight forwarding, cargo insurance or other initiatives of joint tendering will be facilitated if supported by a common registration process for sourcing these services.
- More vendors, more competition, more transparency, more cost-saving opportunities.
 - The Reform will implement a unified, clear and reasonably simple Vendor Registration process. This simplification will trigger a virtuous cycle by attracting more vendors, increasing the access to and participation in UN tenders, increasing the international competition, increasing the transparency and fairness of the procurement process, while achieving the best value for money and improving the cost-saving opportunities for UNGM Members.
 - Simplification and increased effectiveness. The reduction of complexity of vendor registration will increase the number of successful vendor registrations and will eliminate the high “mortality rate” of vendors abandoning the registration process, which is currently estimated to occur in approximately 50-70% of all vendor registrations (in 2011 some 13,047 companies started the registration process and 7,606, representing 58% of the total, failed to complete it). The reform project is expected to reduce this “mortality rate” below 10%.

- At the same time, the Reform will totally eliminate the backlog of vendor registrations to be evaluated by the Agencies at Basic level, which in the past reached alarming levels for some Agencies.
- New business opportunities for developing countries.
 - By soliciting the interest of vendors which so far have not been dealing with the UN, specifically of those operating in developing countries or countries with emerging economies, a whole new spectrum of business opportunities would open up for the UN and the vendors. A simpler registration process, and the “Assisted Registration” will help small and medium enterprises, with limited or no access to Internet, to register in UNGM. A multi-lingual interface will facilitate access of new vendors from all parts of the world. Therefore, the Vendor Registration Reform would not only provide the entire UN community with a potentially more competitive group of registered suppliers but would at the same time help reach the goal of doing business with “the whole world”.
- Long-term Sustainability.
 - The Vendor Registration Reform will be a one-time investment that will solve the issues of UNGM and will result in an increased number of registered vendors. It is anticipated that more vendors in UNGM will subscribe to the Tender Alert Service (TAS) after completing the registration process. The TAS is a value-added service of automatic tender email alerts offered to vendors at a nominal fee. Even if the current subscription rate is maintained (6%), An increase of at least 30% subscriptions per year (equal to 100,000 USD per year) is expected. The increased TAS subscriptions will eventually allow UNGM to achieve self-financing and long-term sustainability and, at the same time, avoid any cost increases for the UNGM Members.
- Increased Efficiency.
 - The duplication of efforts (for both Agencies and vendors) and most of the manual checks of the current process will be eliminated. As a result, staff time will be saved, response time for vendor registrations will be reduced and the use of Agencies’ resources will be optimized. UN procurement staff shall have the opportunity to better focus on more strategic and value-adding activities.
- Improved Quality.
 - UNGM will be redeveloped with a leading-edge technological platform, facilitating the maintenance and further functional development of UNGM and interaction with Agencies’ ERP systems. Technology will be fully used to replace labour-intensive activities and improve the quality of controls. Standardized and strengthened controls on vendor registration and high quality vetting will be maintained, while the vendor’s registration information and documentation will be kept up to date.
- Flexibility to tailor UNGM to Agencies’ specific needs.
 - A fundamental innovation of the UNGM Vendor Registration Reform is the introduction of some configurable preferences of the UNGM system whereby Agencies can change their Agency-specific settings and configurations at any time on the basis of the evolution of their requirements and vendor registration policies.

Progress

The project activities were completed in November 2013 and the new vendor registration system went live. The project continues until mid-2014 to ensure that technical problems with the new process can be addressed and that continuous improvements can be carried out as the new system is being used.

Initial assessments by the Procurement Network suggest that the project is on track to meet its objectives and positive feedback has been received from a number of member states and vendors. A complete report on mortality rates, reductions in back log, and number of vendors is expected by the fall of 2014 and will be included in the report for that year.

Collaborative Procurement of Vehicles

Lead: UNDP Budget: \$990,000

Project Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the project is to promote consolidated and strategic planned purchasing of vehicles across the UN, and in doing so increase efficiency, effectiveness and achieve considerable cost savings. The UN System has a total yearly expenditure on vehicles of around US\$ 300 Million and through consolidation and joint strategic planning, significant savings are expected.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Analyze and evaluate the current methods of procuring vehicles that are in operation amongst UN Organizations
- Identify the opportunities that exist for standardizing fleet specifications
- Based on best practices identified, develop an optimal model that can be implemented by UN Organizations
- Develop Long Term Agreements (for both ‘soft-skinned’ and armoured vehicles)
- Implement collaborative procurement through Long Term Agreements

Expected Benefits

The expected benefits include:

- Cost savings due to increased ex-factory purchasing rather than ex-stockist
- Cost savings due to better negotiating leverage with combined volumes
- Enhanced access of smaller UN Agencies to the better developed vehicle technical competencies of the main Agencies procuring vehicles
- Standardisation of vehicle types, but with greater contract flexibility, allowing ex-factory configuration for different operating environments
- Opening up other inter-Agency opportunities such as consolidated spare parts ordering, driver and maintenance technical training for safety and security, fleet management, shared workshops etc.
- Enhanced warranty terms and conditions, access to manufacturers’ technical websites and online assistance, improved management of manufacturer product recalls/safety campaigns
- Possibility to leverage manufacturer-held stocks of vehicles for immediate access and response to crisis situations
- Creation of vehicle technical expertise for some of the more specialised vehicle types procured – engineering plant, airfield equipment, armoured vehicles, ambulances, various truck types (fuel trucks, fire fighters, compactors, sewage etc.)

- Improved inter-agency mobility of staff with technical expertise concerning vehicles and transport
- Improved inter-agency transfer/sale of vehicles, spare parts and considerable potential for realising significant end-of-life disposal/sale benefits

Progress

A phased approach was decided on in this project. Phase I of the project, which included a detailed data analysis, including volumes, fleet analysis, as well as procurement methods and a feasibility study was completed in 2013. Identification of roles moving forward was also completed. The following organizations are participating in the project: UNPD/DFS, WFP, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNOPS, FAO, UNRWA, UNFPA, UNIDO, and WMO. Together these organizations represent 80-90% of vehicle procurement in the UN System. Follow up steps include standardization of vehicle types and the eventual issuing of invitations to bid and the establishment of Long Term Agreements. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2014.

Common Standard Costing Approaches for ICT Services and Investments

Lead: UNIDO Budget: \$565,000

Project Purpose and Objectives

This project sought to develop common approaches to ICT investment decision-making by creating and implementing a framework for establishing the total costs of ICT operations, which also allows for benchmarking of ICT services.

The project objectives were:

- To through the ICT Network of the HLCM, develop a better understanding of the costs of delivering ICT services.
- To provide the ability to better manage global ICT expenditure
- To benchmark ICT activities and develop a standardized costing methodology that allows UN system organizations to comprehensively determine total ICT expenditure.
- To enable the use of this standardized benchmarking would allow better analysis of operational alternatives and decision making in shared ICT services, as well as an improved ICT investment decision-making ability at the institutional level.
- To allow to more accurately calculate total organizational and system-wide costs of operation for ICT activities.

Expected Benefits

The key benefits of the project include:

- Determining the total cost of ownership of ICT of an organization, in the four areas of central ICT unit costs, non-central ICT units costs, field operation costs and shadow IT.
- The ability to repeat the process by accurately calculating organizational and system-wide costs of operation for ICT activities in future cycles.
- The ability to measure and identify areas of overspend (infrastructure, application development, communications, etc), that may benefit from being approached differently (outsourcing vs inhouse, consultants vs staff, different technologies, receiving the service from other agencies, etc). An associated benefit is the possibility to determine whether new projects addressing some of the areas mentioned above are beneficial or not.
- The ability to situate one's organization on benchmarking reports compared to other UN organizations of similar size and profile.
- Allowing for benchmarking across non-UN institutions, both in the public and private sectors for example to determine their relative expenditure in areas like end-user support or global data communications.
- Improved ICT investment decision-making ability at the institutional level

Realized Benefits

- **Benefit 1:**
At this stage, this benefit was realized at a confidence level higher than 95% for 10 agencies, and at a preliminary 85% confidence level for the remaining 5 agencies, while final data is being compiled. The average confidence level is 92%.
- **Benefit 2:**
This benefit was realized for a large portion of the organizations, with the online platform and methodology provided helping sustainability for all of them.
- **Benefit 3:**
This benefit was realized for several organizations, not the least of which WTO, UNAIDS and UNESCO, with whom the project worked extensively on this front. The associated benefit of determining viability of a new project was realized by UNFPA as stated by them at the 19th ICT Network meeting.
- **Benefits 4 & 5:**
These benefits were realized for all 15 organizations.
- **Benefit 6:**
This is a long term benefit that is a by-product of the project. It has started to materialize in several organizations (see Benefit 3 above) and will continue to as the data is disseminated and used by all the organizations.

Progress

Completed and closed

Automation of Data Collection for the Annual Statistical Report on UN Procurement

Lead: UNOPS Budget: \$128,000

Project Purposes and objectives

The Annual Statistical Report on UN Procurement (ASR) is currently compiled on an annual basis and is a valuable resource to the United Nations community, partner governments and the wider business community. The ASR is downloaded around 40,000 times per year and is widely circulated among UN organizations, academic institutions, suppliers, and other stakeholders.

Currently, it takes approximately five months to obtain and process the data required for the compilation of the ASR. This process is primarily manual and involves labour-intensive efforts from all of the participating organizations in the ASR. Often, publication is delayed up to eight months into a year. Taking into consideration developments in technology and experience gained with the collection and compilation of the data, the process could be implemented with fewer resources, greater accuracy and with faster and timelier data availability.

The next logical step in the development of the ASR is to automate and improve the data collection from the UN organizations utilizing the data available in their respective Enterprise Resource Planning and Information Systems that have become increasingly prevalent in the last ten years.

This project was developed to improve the data collection and compilation process for the Annual Statistical Report on UN Procurement. The specific objectives are to:

- Provide more timely, procurement-related information through the ASR to the business community, donor and recipient governments, various trade and industry ministries and related entities with regard to the procurement of goods and services from the participating UN organizations
- Simplify, optimize and automate the data collection and compilation processes utilizing the data available in ERP and other information systems of the participating UN organizations. This would serve to:
 - Automatically reformat Information System data into one generic ASR format
 - Perform operations on the data that would aid in the creation of ASR tables
 - Allow for new output formats
 - Allow for the expansion of data collected as required

Expected benefits

The expected benefits include:

- Faster reporting cycles due to a streamlined data compilation process and the minimization of the manual tasks, reducing workload for all participants in the compilation of the ASR data
- Reduced administrative costs for all PN members by eliminating time-intensive tasks with the production of the report
- Increased data integrity (fewer process steps where human errors can be introduced)

- Increased transparency and credibility, leading to positive publicity that builds on prior successes
- Increased availability of procurement-related information from the UN Common System, enabling, e.g. better procurement planning and identification of opportunities for collaborative procurement

Progress

The project is scheduled to start in the late summer of 2014 although approved in late 2013. This is planned to fit the timing of the data collection.