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Distant Upgrade of the Customs Valuation Module of Mongolian Customs

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Report Title: *Distant Upgrade of the Customs Valuation Module of Mongolian Customs*
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

USAID	United States Agency for International Development
BPI	Business Plus Initiative
CGA	Customs General Administration
RM	Risk Management
IT	Information Technology

CONSULTANCY REPORT

OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of this assignment was to assist CGA in finalizing the BPI-supported Customs Valuation Module. The primary objectives of the consultancy were to:

- Work with CGA IT department and BPI risk management consultant Jorge Montoya to clearly identify CGA recommendations for improvement of the Customs Valuation Module;
- Make changes to the Customs Valuation System to incorporate identified recommendations;
- Validate that improvements made to the valuation module are working properly; and
- Create an installation manual for the valuation module;

CONTEXT

As of December 2014, CGA has tested and provided feedback identifying areas for improvement before the module can be taken to production. CGA management confirmed that launching the valuation module is a high priority for trade facilitation by improving customs efficiency and making information transparent to the public. My task was to collaborate with CGA and Jorge Montoya to incorporate all the recommendations identified by CGA during the testing of the Customs Valuation Module, ensuring that the module is ready to go into production and final launch. I worked total 12 days from Jan. 19 through Feb. 3, 2015.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

Display Correctly Cyrillic Symbols.

Extensive investigations were conducted to identify the required configuration for the database (collation), application server and the programming utilities to correctly display Cyrillic symbols in the customs valuation module and to define a data table design that would adequately query the CAIS data.

Automatic Translation of Description of the Goods.

The customs valuation module supports three languages: Mongolian, English and Spanish. In the Report Creator Section, the Description of the Goods can be viewed in any of these languages. To accomplish this, it was decided to use Google Translate (Google's free online language translation service) since it was the only tool that offered automatic translation from Mongolian at the time. This tool can instantly make a reasonably good detection of the language which is helpful since the text stored in the Description of the Goods field will sometimes contain information in other languages such as Japanese, Russian, English, etc.. Google Translate will try it's best to give an automatic translation.

For fixed labels such as column names, field names and tags, the corresponding label is uploaded and edited manually in the three languages by the system administrator.

RESULTS

Issue: During the test personnel of the Customs Valuation Department complained of having many unnecessary fields and lack of essential fields when they tried to perform analyses of customs valuation of goods.

Action taken: It was revealed that the Valuation Department personnel had not been assigned users and passwords and therefore they were accessing the valuation module as general public. They could not see all the fields for decent analyses. The corresponding users were created with the full access to fields.

Issue: The Customs Valuation Department observed that the unit price plotted on the valuation graph is dependent on the customs valuation methods making users confused

Action taken: The modification of the module incorporated the comments. The upgraded version uses the field # 37 for the unit price if the valuation method is the Transaction Method and the filed # 43 for other methods.

Issue: The valuation module had only been loaded with two months' worth of data that limited the ability performing analyses significantly. In addition, given the recent migration of the customs database to Oracle, the IT department of CGA requested to migrate the primary database of the valuation module to Oracle.

Action taken: The valuation module was successfully migrated to Oracle. In addition, replication utilities were set such that the Valuation Module is now updated in real time. The Valuation Module was left operational loaded with Mongolian customs declarations from 2009 – present.

The customs valuation module has an administrative (users, parameters, etc.) section and a reporting section. The administrative section was left in MySQL and only the reporting section was migrated to Oracle since this section is the one that interacts with the CAIS data. Therefore, the database used by the reporting section was changed from MySQL to Oracle and this required all queries to the database to be reprogrammed. This was a considerable impact to the trade data reports functionality and to the studies based on HS code functionality of the customs valuation module which are the core of the system. Also, in many reports, it's common that the data does not fit in a single page. The mechanism for displaying information in more than one page also suffered substantial code changes.

Issue: There were several additional requests to improve administrator's tasks on changing accessibility to different fields for internal and public users, to add options on selecting or unselecting various fields for graphs and analyses, reporting the summary information (min, max, median, etc.) on all data and not only on data displayed on the graph and to enable the access to the customs declaration data that corresponds to a particular plot of a graph as well as to certain default values.

Action taken: Reflecting the comments the module was modified and tested. The modified version was presented by Jorge Montoya to 18 customs officials on Jan. 30, 2015.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The customs valuation module is upgraded, tested and finalized.

NEXT STEPS:

Valuation module can be upgraded by populating the offense and stamp data.