

IFMIS: Options for Purchasing Module Implementation

Summary:

- The bulk of IT and software development work necessary for adding the procurement module to the core IFMIS was completed by ITAO-funded advisors.
- The remaining work is primarily functional in nature. Assessments prepared by ITAO advisors indicates that the Iraqi public procurement process is in a truly dire state, and that efforts to reform the process will not be easily or rapidly advanced.
- It would be well within project scope for EGII to take-over the work started under the ITAO contract – with a revised focus on functional assessment, mapping and reform, necessary for realizing the advantages of a modern, automated procurement solution.
- If actioned by USAID, this activity could begin under present EGII IT staffing levels and the enlistment of one full-time Fiscal Advisor. Even still, procurement is handled differently across Government ministries and the LOE required to adequately capture true business practice (and to push for significant, fundamental reforms) could certainly occupy a full team of advisors, depending on USAID priorities.

Functionality and Interface with the Core IFMIS:

The purchasing module will provide the IFMIS with an integrated procurement process. It manages multi-item requisitions and purchases as well as the receiving process. Further, the module provides an extensive range of fiscal controls.

The purchasing module is tightly integrated with the core IFMIS. The module integrates with both the Expenditures and Controls modules under the core IFMIS.

Status:

Work on implementing purchasing functionality to the IFMIS, through an add-on module designed to work in sync with the core IFMIS, was halted in July of 2007 when USG support for the IFMIS was halted. At that time, the procurement module had been purchased, functional mapping and configuration design, as well as all translation work had been completed, and the Arabic version of the software had been developed. Software testing and train-the-trainer workshops were already underway with the intention of starting a pilot program in three GOI Ministries within one month. Essentially, the “heavy lifting” with respect to software development and IT work had been completed, and the emphasis of the project was on testing and functional assessment, as well as working to build partnerships with the Ministry of Planning and a MOF appointed working group.

A gap assessment had been completed, but the project advisors were clear in their reporting that they were not confident that their efforts to compile a map for GOI procurement practices across ministries had captured a comprehensive picture of actual practice. Restarting work in this area will doubtlessly require a renewed commitment to working with the GOI to document business practices and identify needed reforms.

Recommended Action:

Given the renewed commitment to the IFMIS and the MOU's conditionality requiring the MOF to assent to restarting USG assistance to implementing a procurement module, EGII recommends that USAID approve the recruitment of one additional qualified Fiscal advisor and the preparation of an expanded IFMIS workplan to include this activity. There is certainly a need for additional LOE in support of this area, but a single dedicated advisor would be best able to assess the situation and identify the most prudent, feasible way to move forward.

EGII leadership, including the existing core IFMIS team, could reach out to the former counterparts of the ITAO-funded advisors to set into motion a timetable for reforming working groups and other prerequisites for a resumption of work.