

FAO Office of Evaluation

Evaluation of FAO's cooperation with Brazil 2002-2010

Annex 8 Brief description of Portal FAO Brazil¹

Definition

1. The PORTAL is a computer-based system developed by FAOR Brazil to support operation of projects falling under its responsibility.

Brief Background:

2. The basic functionalities of PORTAL were launched in 2003, following a 2002 Brazilian Government decision to attribute operational, administrative and financial responsibility on UTF-NEX projects to the respective UN Agencies. Such functions were previously exercised by the Project Administration Unit of the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation through a proprietary system which UN Agencies did not adopt, due to its cost.
3. During the period 2003-2008 the PORTAL was improved, customized and referenced to meet FAO standards, rules and procedures, and extended to operate on all types of projects (UTF, GCP, TCP, etc). Any system development came to a virtual halt in 2008-09 due to lack of funds. In the period 2003-2009, the total investment in the system amounted to USD 76,550.

Technology:

4. PORTAL runs on IIS on Windows Server 2008, .asp with JavaScript. The database is SQL 2005 and reports are generated through Microsoft Reporting Services. The IIS and database server runs on two different virtual servers, over a Dell PowerEdge 2950, managed by the Microsoft Hyper-V application.

Security:

5. PORTAL is secured by a SSL security certificate. The system manages profiles of both internal and external users. Profiles are created following appropriate levels of hierarchy and formal applications by Budget Holders and Project Directors.

The System:

6. Access to the system is through FAOR-Brazil Internet Portal. The system itself is basically a FAO Project Operation Support System, open to authorized external users.
7. The system has 3 areas [tabs]: "Pendências [Job Lists]", "Atividades" [Start-up activities] and "Reports", - that permit easy access. The job list tab shows all the ongoing process requiring action by user, each user visualizing only authorized areas. The start up activities involve tasks for initiating process (biddings, travel authorizations, payments, ToRs for consultants, etc) as well as subsequent steps of the various operations. The reports tab provides a variety of reports covering all requirements of Project users and FAO technicians.

Budget - Budget details (child accounts)

8. The system records, for each Project, its budget at child account level; all documents generated by the system must provide child account information, to enable the production of budget control reports.

1 A version of this annex complete with Annexes to Portal functions is available at the FAOR in Brazil and OED.

Users and groups

9. Security of access is controlled through a combination of users and groups. Each application on the system has a group or user pre-defined to handle specific functions, such as read-only, read-and-write, etc.

LoA module

10. This is the most important module of the system, thanks to the various steps it contains for analysis, review and approval and the amount of information collected. Each phase allows recording of phase-related information only. The module includes the TOR, the organization selection, the documents generated and all the complete sequence of approvals during the whole life cycle.

Procurement

11. At the present stage, the module handles only procurement over USD 30.000,00², it controls and generates all the bidding documents, e.g. bidding invitation and contract / equipments authorization

Travel

12. The system automatically calculates the DSA rates based on location and automatically produces bank payment of related travel expense claims.

Consultants

13. Monitors and controls the whole process of hiring consultants, incorporating PH information directly fed by external users.

Contracts Control

14. When any of the above process is finalized, the system generates a contract management sub-module, permitting control of all payments in the process

News (main page)

15. Small function that allows Portal Users to interface with FAOR website and produce elements for automatic publication

System Tree Management

16. All the applications of the startup activities tab can also be managed through a tree structure.

Workflow tool

17. All the processes contained in the system (travel, LoAs, etc) are tracked through a workflow display functionality.

PRODOC Information

18. Elements of the PRODOC are inserted in the system to make integrated information available, to provide control of contract duration vs. project NTE date, as well as budgetary control, checking performance vs. availability.

Project Monitoring

19. All the Projects missions, PRODOC updates, meetings, work plans, QPIR, progress reports, consultant products are uploaded on the system

Electronic payments

20. Following approval of transactions, the system generates a text file, formatted according to the Brazilian National Federation of Bank Associations, containing complete payment information, which is securely sent over the Internet directly to the bank (Bank of Brazil). After

² The module will be extended to procurement under USD 30,000 if and when funds are made available

processing all the payments instructions received, the bank sends a text file with the results of the payments. Such information is intercepted by the system to update the reports and perform corrective actions when problems are detected.

Report examples

Tracking

21. The system tracks all users' actions on the documents

Actions required

- I. A System Documentation exercise, both technical and functional is now overdue, following implementation of the new modules as from 2006, in order to provide the necessary technical information for its maintenance. The best/cheapest proposal received among 3 quotations amounts R\$ 96,000 (USD 51,336 June/2010 UN rate).
- II. Nowadays, the Portal FAO Brazil is based on an outdated technology, resulting in difficult to maintain it, increasing costs on every evolution. Also, it has no updated technical documentation, which is required for a proper maintenance. Due to the high costs of the documentation, it would be preferable to develop a new system, based on the actual one, with the proper documentation.
- III. An updated PORTAL, based on the current know-how acquired during nearly ten years of system implementation, will bring to FAO a system with up to date technology, fully documented, offering the following advantages:
 - Able to be implemented in other countries (dynamically change language and other regional settings as money and date formats)
 - Able to work with many currencies at same time (dollar, euro, pesos, etc)
 - Flexible workflow module that can be managed by regular users as administrators of the system, which will simplify the implementation of the business rules for any country;
 - Simplified maintenance (up to date technology with full documentation)
 - Ready for integration with FAO HQ systems at Rome
- IV. FAO-Brazil estimated USD 15,000 for the annual Portal FAO Brazil FAO Brazil maintenance. The source of funds for the Portal FAO Brazil technical documentation and also for its annual maintenance should be identified.