South Asia Regional Public Procurement Conference  
Islamabad, March 25 to 27, 2014

Hosted by the Federal Public Procurement Regulatory Authority, Government of Pakistan  
(Sponsored jointly by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank)

Concept Note

Background

1. All South Asian countries have public procurement legislative/regulatory framework in the form of a law, act, regulation or guidelines. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan have public procurement acts; public procurement in Bhutan Maldives and Sri Lanka is governed by regulations and guidelines. In India, public procurement at the Union level and in most States is regulated by General Financial Rules, although a draft public procurement act is currently in Parliament; only three States (Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu) have public procurement laws. Capacity to enforce public procurement laws and regulations, and to manage and conduct procurement is a challenge in all South Asian countries. As a result, use of scarce budgetary resources could be ineffective leading to poor delivery service. It is strongly believed that exchange of knowledge of and experiences in public procurement reform and capacity building will benefit all the countries in improving their public procurement system. One of the more effective ways of enabling this exchange of knowledge and experiences in public procurement is to bring together key policy makers and public procurement officials.

2. The objective of providing a platform for exchange of experiences and for networking among public procurement officials in the region has been successful in other regions through the organization of periodic (annual) public procurement conferences. For the same objective in mind, the South Asia regional Public Procurement Forum was held in Kathmandu in April 2011, sponsored by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and hosted by the Public Procurement Monitoring Office of Nepal.

3. The public procurement policy/decision makers and practitioners from all the South Asian countries participated in the Kathmandu Forum and at its conclusion came up with the following action plan for continuous regional cooperation on public procurement (See italics for status of implementation of each action):

   • Form South Asia Region Public Procurement Forum Coordination Group (SARPPCG) comprising of all the member countries (An informal Group comprising heads of procurement and their deputies from all SAR countries exists and has met several times through GDLN to exchange experiences on topics of interest)
   • Hold South Asian Region Public Procurement Conference each year (Proposed to be hosted by Pakistan in 2014)
   • Host a web portal at regional level for sharing experiences (Yet to be completed. Will be discussed in the next conference as to who will do it? Wherefrom it will be financed?)
   • Study and develop mechanism for sharing and employing the “lessons learned” to take advantage from each other’s learning and also to avoid repetition (GDLN used for this purpose but more needs to be done. Linked-In platform for the Group to communicate with each other and one another will be a useful step forward. Being designed by the Public Procurement Monitoring Office of Nepal)
Form an independent working group to explore the possibility of harmonizing the standards for application in the region (Too soon)

Develop university level procurement curriculums to create opportunity for new cadres in procurement (At country level, many initiatives are ongoing including the BRAC University program in Bangladesh, in collaboration with CIPS, UK; Royal Institute of Bhutan lead Certificate Program in Procurement Compliance; UNOPS and Ministry of Health lead program in Maldives etc. World Bank SARPS has initiated the development of a MOOC Certificate Program in Public Procurement targeted to all learners in South Asia to be launched in March 2014 and a Diploma Program in Public Procurement initially targeted to India based learners to be launched in April 2014).

Develop training modules and implement them through appropriate institutions (Being supported at country level. Bangladesh has already developed 3 weeks training modules and other short training modules at country level which are being used for procurement training

Identify existing public procurement training providing institutions in the region and develop mechanism for working together for mutual cooperation (Initiated in India and Nepal. Bangladesh has developed a complete Faculty of procurement in Engineering Staff College of Bangladesh (ESCB) and procurement training along with eGP practical training is being imparted in this college in full swing. Being explored in other countries)

Develop accreditation mechanism for public sector personnel working in procurement unit (BRAC University Bangladesh in collaboration with CIPS, UK already developed such program. Yet to be done in other countries)

Promote procurement function as a profession and introduce public procurement cadre in public service (Save for Bhutan which has established a cadre, the action is yet to be done in other countries)

Explore the basis for establishment of Regional Arbitration Centre (RAC) and mechanism for its operation (Too soon)

Explore the possibility and procedure for holding Private Sector Forum on Public Procurement (PSFPP) (Bangladesh already formed a PPSC forum for third procurement monitoring which is working and a quarterly newsletter, ‘Procurement Watch’ is being published. Yet to be done in other countries)

Approach SAARC Secretariat for inclusion of procurement topic in ministerial committee of SAARC (Ongoing – Nepal PPMO working with the SAARC Secretariat to create the South Asia Regional Public Procurement Network with technical secretariat at the SAARC and a website)

Promote e-Procurement (Ongoing)

Promote new procurement alternatives such as PPP, design-build and etc. (Ongoing)

Modernize contract management (Ongoing)

Conduct regular workshop/seminar at regional level (Not done except for DGLN sessions)

Objectives of Public Procurement Conference

4. The main objective of the proposed conference will be to provide a platform for senior public procurement officials and oversight agencies, such as the Auditor General from the eight South Asian countries, who play an important role in public procurement through the conduct of audits, and the key active development partners in these countries, to share knowledge and
experiences on good practices with a view to making their public procurement systems more effective in utilization of public resources. The conference will also allow the participants to network with each other which is expected to result in enhanced and improved regional cooperation.

5. More specifically, the participants, in addition to learning from one another, will also have an opportunity to learn from a number of experts and procurement officials from one or two countries with well-functioning public procurement systems about the latest developments in public procurement, including, among others, public procurement capacity building. In order to effectively achieve the objectives of the conference, it is imperative that senior officials relevant to public procurement including representatives from the private sector (contracting and consulting industry) and civil society organizations (CSO) are nominated for participation.

6. The overarching theme of the conference will be centered on “Moving from compliance to performance”. Main sub-themes will be as follows:

   a) Institutionalized and sustainable procurement capacity building mechanisms and professionalization of procurement, needed to enforce public procurement laws and regulations; to manage and conduct procurement; and to enable private sector to be an effective partner in public procurement.

   b) A sound public procurement environment conducive to economic, efficient, transparent and fair procurement process, comprising effective control and oversight frameworks, complaint and dispute resolution mechanisms, properly integrated with other stakeholders, including private sector and engagement of civil society.

   c) Promotion of value for money and performance measurement of public procurement systems.

   d) Modernization of public procurement practices, including electronic government procurement (e-GP); public and private sector partnership; green/sustainable procurement, procurement performance measurement and results-focused systems, innovation procurement etc.

   e) Formalization of regional cooperation on public procurement through SAARC.

In addition, the participants will take stock of the implementation of the action plan elaborated by them at the Kathmandu Forum and explore ways and means of following up on Forum conclusions in a more concrete and formal manner.

Host, Participants and Agenda

7. The conference will be hosted by the Government of Pakistan through the courtesy of the Federal Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (FPPRA). It will be co-sponsored by (MDBs and bilateral donors to be identified). The current Chair of the Conference, the Secretary of the Public Procurement Monitoring Office (PPMO) of Nepal will work with the host country on the organization of the conference. The host country and the Chair will be supported in this role by the conference Coordination Committee (See para. 11) which will help liaise between him and the public procurement professionals in the participating countries on actions to follow up this conference. The conference will be attended by about 50-60 participants. This will include senior government officials responsible for public procurement from eight countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka); and representatives from (MDBs and bilateral development partners active in South Asian countries to be determined).
8. The number of participants from each country will be from three to six, (the travel and hotel costs of three participants from each country will be borne by the sponsoring agencies.) with the exception of India. From India, the number of participants can be up to 10 from the Union level and from different States to be selected by the Government. About 10-15 participants are expected to be nominated by the host country. In addition, about 8 to 10 donor representatives working in the host country are also expected to be invited. Representatives of SAARC will also be invited.

**Presentations and Discussions**

9. Speakers and participants from the eight countries and the representatives of the development partners will make presentations on their experiences in public procurement and capacity building and will focus on their presentations any unique experiences and case studies that will be useful for other countries. In addition, guest speakers will share their knowledge in specialized and innovative public procurement development/tools, such as e-Government Procurement, and Public Private Partnership. Participating countries will be requested for contribution of country presentations. To the maximum extent possible, the presentations will relate to the conference themes in paragraph 5. Guidance for preparation of country presentation will be developed to ensure consistency in reporting. In addition to the country paper, each country will also submit its Power Point presentation by end of February 2014.

**Venue and Duration**

10. The conference will be held in Islamabad, Pakistan. It will be of duration of three full days (March 25 to 27, 2014). The tentative agenda of the conference is at Annex 1. In addition to several presentations on topics of interest, each country will be given 45 minutes for a presentation for its public procurement system and capacity building mechanisms followed by questions and answers.

**Conference Conclusions and Follow Up**

11. On the third day, the conference participants will break into four groups. Each group will be assigned the themes listed in paragraph 5 above. Each group will discuss and elaborate a list of five common issues and propose actions that the countries in the region can take to improve their public procurement systems. The first, second, and third groups will discuss themes a, b, and c), respectively. The fourth group will discuss theme d and will prepare and propose a regional action plan to ensure continuous exchange of knowledge and experience among the public procurement representatives of the participating countries. The regional action plan will include a list of milestones to be achieved and monitored on an ongoing basis through a follow-up also to be proposed.
Conference Coordination Team (CCT)

12. The Conference Coordination Team comprises as follows:

Current Chair and New Chair (from the host country)

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*Ahmed Merzouk*, Sr. Procurement Specialist, SARPS/RPM office

*Uzma Sadaf*, Sr. Procurement Specialist, Country Focal Point, Pakistan

*Kalesh Kumar*, Sr. procurement specialist-Program and Capacity Building Coordinator

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*Hiroyuki Maruyama*, Principal Procurement Specialist, ADB, New Delhi

*Naeem Abbas*, Procurement Officer, ADB, Islamabad

*Rustam A. Abdukayumov*, Procurement Specialist, ADB, Manila

Key Outputs of the Conference

13. Key expected outputs/deliverables of the conference are:

i. An action plan on creating institutionalized and sustainable public procurement capacity building mechanisms through regional cooperation;

ii. Regional Action Plan for Cooperation on Public Procurement (a list of implementable and measurable actions in priority areas and issues to be addressed in the region);

iii. An action plan to follow up on the conference conclusions and recommendations;

iv. Ways and means of initiating regional cooperation on public procurement through the SAARC; and

v. Conference report (format to be determined) (In addition to the country presentation to be made in Power Point as per a standard guidelines, each participating country will submit a set of key information related to public procurement. The key information along with technical presentations and country presentations which are also to be submitted to the Conference Coordination Team, will be compiled and distributed to the Forum participants.)
Logistics and Travel and Other Expenses

14. The conference coordination team will prepare a detailed note on logistics and circulate it to the participants in due course of time. Travel expenses and boarding and lodging of three participants from each country will be borne by the sponsoring agencies.

Contact Persons

15. The contact persons are as follows:

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