

EDITORIAL

The structural upheavals of the past year promoted the need for innovative digital solutions in development cooperation worldwide. In this context it is significant to provide each client and project with the optimal IT product fit to her specific requirements. This is why GFA B.I.S. focuses on offering a wide range of commercial as well as open source solutions.

Since eight years we support DSW (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung) with the financial management software Infor SunSystems, enabling to optimally cover transparency and reporting requirements of donor organizations. In the area of open source based solutions we recently implemented DACOTA as tailored Remote Management, Monitoring and Verification (RMMV) sys-

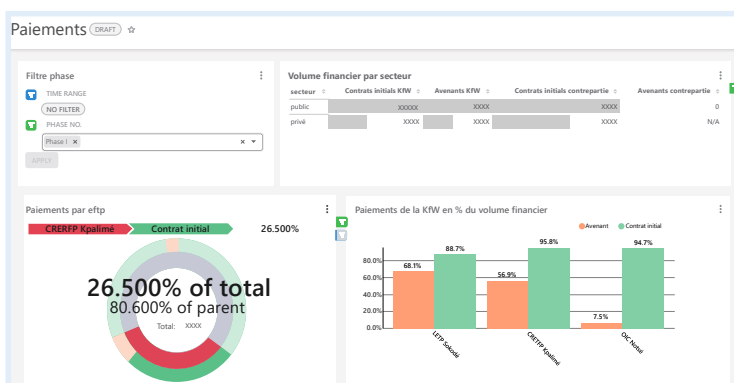
tem in a KfW project. Another example for the increasing demand for digital solutions is CiviCRM, an open source based software for the management of target group communication and events. GFA B.I.S. has supported GIZ in implementing and customizing CiviCRM in various programs.

Based on our experience, we will continue to work on providing tailor-made solutions to ensure sustainability in our clients' projects.

Harald Litterscheid
Managing Director, GFA B.I.S.

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DACOTA: REMOTE MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND VERIFICATION (RMMV) SYSTEM FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKS WITHIN A FRAGILE SECURITY CONTEXT



data within one tool. The remote monitoring system DACOTA was developed by GFA B.I.S. to meet these requirements and processes. Implemented and applied in various interna-

technical planning as well as the implementation thereof. GFA B.I.S. was commissioned by GFA Consulting Group to customize DACOTA to the project's monitoring, management and verification requirements.

DACOTA's user interface includes a search and browse function throughout all data with filters and flexible sorting. It allows management of data entries, attachments, or notes and enables users to track changes and switch through historical values. Tailored technical dashboards permit to track the status and the progress of all decentralized construction and rehabilitation works. A variety of visualization options allow to easily filter, aggregate, and analyze data.

The tracking of payments or funds e.g. per location, sector or contractor is permitted on a separate financial dashboard. As all data is exportable at any time, DACOTA enables the generation of progress reports that fulfill different stakeholder requirements.

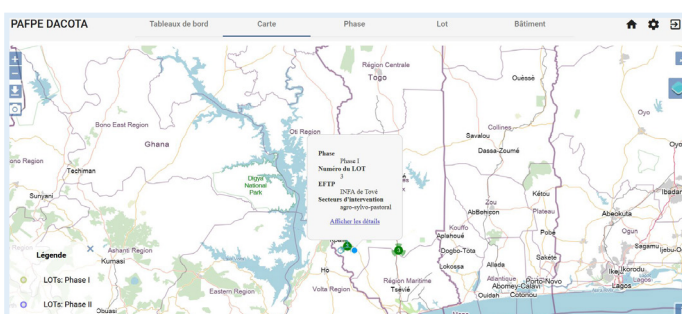
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Violent conflicts and the consequences of the global Covid-19 pandemic severely reduce monitoring possibilities in international development projects. The resultant limits for onsite staff presence restrict the continuity of project quality control and progress.

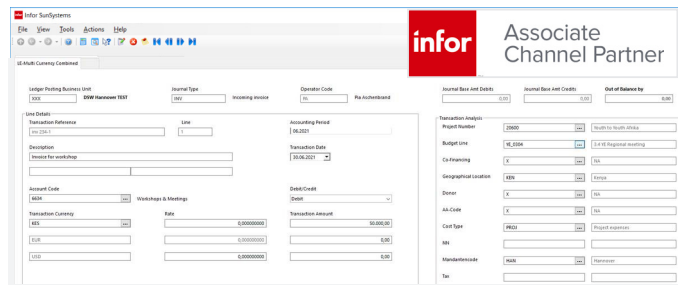
The application of a digital remote monitoring system with an integrated data collection process can help to overcome the specific challenges within this context. The outsourcing of data collection to third parties and equipping them with mobile devices, (e.g. tablets, smartphones), enables a regular collection of onsite project information. Data collection tools automatically georeference and timestamp the data input, whereas uploaded photographs or videos verify the information. The data can be uploaded into the digital monitoring system as soon as internet connectivity is available – permitting project stakeholders to manage, monitor and analyze all collected

tional development projects, DACOTA enables the tracking and management of project activities with further visualization of the entered data on a customized map and dashboards. All components used in DACOTA are licensed as Free and Open Source Software.

To enhance the quality and access to technical and vocational training of the youth in Togo, KfW implements construction and rehabilitation works in public TVET centers. The fragile security context made it necessary to set up a remote monitoring system that enables the tracking of the entire construction process and rehabilitation works – in terms of financial and



INFOR SUNSYSTEMS: FLEXIBLE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING SYSTEM FOR NGOS



Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) is an international development organization that is committed to creating demand for and access to health information, services, supplies, and economic empowerment for youth. With their headquarters in Hannover, Germany, DSW operates two liaison offices in Berlin and Brussels, and maintains a strong presence in Ethiopia,

Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. In 2013 GFA B.I.S. assisted DSW in implementing the financial management software Infor SunSystems and supported the upgrade to a new version in 2019. Infor SunSystems enables highly professional and cost-effective accounting and reporting, allowing internationally operating NGOs to fulfil their specific requirements.

Pia Aschenbrand, Head of DSW Finance Department in Hannover, gives insight on the challenges an international NGO faces when meeting different reporting requirements and explains how Infor SunSystems helped to improve transparency towards all stakeholders.

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Ms Aschenbrand, why was there a need for a new accounting system at DSW?

As a non-governmental organization, DSW relies on donations and external project funding. Therefore, full transparency is needed on the usage of funds. Previously, the country offices used different accounting systems. This enabled them to produce their own financial statements, but caused challenges during the consolidation of accounts, e.g. for the annual DSW audit or real-time financial reports in different currencies. Furthermore, the previous systems were pure accounting tools, which did not include additional dimensions that are necessary for automated project reporting in accordance to different donor regulations. The challenge was thus to meet the reporting requirements of external donors in different currencies, satisfy reporting needs of internal stakeholders for decision making while harmonizing with five national accounting and auditing laws in one software.

How did Infor SunSystems improve DSW's accounting and reporting operations?

The great advantage for a project funded organisation like DSW is that Infor SunSystems provides financial information within

a matrix structure, joining organisational and project data in one integrated system.

The ledger entry requires more input than pure accounting details (debit/credit, reference, account, amount) and every journal is provided with supplementary information on budget line, donor, cost type etc. This additional data forms the second dimension of DSW's accounting. The reporting tool Infor Query & Analysis* can then combine both dimensions to create very unique and flexible reports: Starting from reconciliation of data during a monthly closing process, up to monthly project reporting based on the different donor templates.

In what way did GFA B.I.S. support DSW in the implementation process?

Before implementing the software, it was necessary to consolidate DSW's accounting procedures. GFA B.I.S. assisted and advised us while we examined the respective processes in all country offices, aligned parts of the procedures and set standards for the whole organisation. Thereafter we defined the setup of these processes within the accounting system. This helped a lot to improve transparency and consistency across the organization.



Photo credit: DSW/ Simona Bednarek

GFA B.I.S. led the implementation process of SunSystems and provided user trainings in all offices. This enabled DSW to re-optimize the new procedures and define additional helpful tools and interlinkages, such as ledger import sheets, payment run, etc. Since then, GFA B.I.S. is ensuring weekly backups of all databases and supports us in continuously improving reporting processes. Most recently GFA B.I.S. has supported us by introducing new report functions which enhance performance, such as the MS SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS).

* Infor Query & Analysis extracts accounting data for further analysis into Excel and allows the automated transfer of budget and reference data from Excel into SunSystems

CIVICRM: MANAGEMENT OF CONTACTS AND COMMUNICATION FORMATS



The requirement to establish a powerful target group communication system is of increasing relevance within the sector of international development cooperation.

Besides the set-up of a professional contact and relationship management, it becomes more and more necessary for stakeholders to also manage their (digital) communication formats and channels. This includes the coordination of events like conferences or local training in partner countries.

Therefore the challenge is to find a powerful, yet cost-efficient IT tool that will incorporate all the relevant communication features within a single platform, optimally including analytical tracking and evaluation functions. At the same time, the system has to enable user-friendly operation and ensure maximum data security.

In this context the open source tool CiviCRM is a good system of choice. It comes with a vast set of standard functionalities that can be further extended and embedded in a website to enhance power and flexibility. Apart from the standard contact management features it also facilitates the intuitive implementation of communication formats such as events or newsletters. Furthermore CiviCRM can be adjusted to

incorporate workflows and analytical reporting functions. The tool can be accessed via a web-browser.

Within the last year, GFA B.I.S. tailored CiviCRM to fit communication requirements in multiple GIZ programs. In the project countries, GIZ's approaches are based on the involvement of local target groups, (e.g. smallholder farmers), who receive training on program-related topics. The need there is to manage all contact with training participants, administer training and events as well as track the impact of training. The communication requirements are similar for headquarter-based activities that specifically require the management of (digital) events and newsletters.

GFA B.I.S. supported GIZ by customizing CiviCRM and incorporating the following event-management features: Online registration web-pages, analytical tools for the administration of participants and an automatic message system has been included. Furthermore GFA B.I.S. assisted in setting-up an integrated newsletter editor - easily enabling the design, management and dispersal of news. Time, recipients along with further delivery options can be customized by each user. GFA B.I.S. continuously adjusts data structures, administers mail-servers along with offering user training and support activities to guarantee an integrated communication process within one platform.

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