

Sustainable Building Policies in Developing Countries (SPOD)

Promoting sustainable building and construction practices

What is SPOD?

The Sustainable Buildings Policies in Developing Countries (SPOD) initiative is run by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to assist governments at national and local levels to develop policy tools in support of mainstreaming sustainable construction and building approaches, resulting in reduced carbon footprints from buildings.

■ Objectives

The SPOD project intends to create the capacity for countries to establish a policy foundation for mainstreaming sustainable construction of buildings, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and to assist developing countries in efforts of poverty alleviation, social equity and economic prosperity. SPOD will provide a Quick-Scan Tool for governments to evaluate relevant policy measures according to existing barriers and opportunities at national and local level. The project will also develop Policy Building Blocks, which consist of tools and methodologies to design and employ the most suitable sustainable building policy tools. The quick-scan tool and policy building blocks will be tested and verified in the two pilot locations. The selected pilot cities are Nairobi (Kenya) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). The outputs of the project will be disseminated through an innovative strategy of partner networks.

■ Background

UNEP launched in 2006 the Sustainable Buildings and Climate Initiative (UNEP-SBCI), a partnership with key stakeholders in the buildings sector (industry, business, local authorities and associations). UNEP-SBCI promotes sustainable building policies and practices through input to policy, providing information to decision-makers, and development of tools and strategies for business and industry. In parallel with this initiative and in cooperation with the UNEP Urban Programme a new project was launched: Sustainable Buildings Policies in Developing Countries (SPOD). The project is funded by the Government of Finland and builds on the work done jointly by the Sustainable

Buildings and Climate Initiative (SBCI) and the Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Buildings and Construction (MTF). This task force was coordinated by Finland and contributed to the 10 year Framework on Sustainable Consumption and Production ("The Marrakech Process").

Buildings are responsible for more than one third of the total energy use and associated greenhouse gas emissions in society, both in developed and developing countries. While buildings embody significant environmental impact, they also represent one of the few sectors where significant mitigation can be achieved at no or low cost to society.

■ Outputs

SPOD will generate four key outputs:

- (1) Provide a Quick Scan Tool to assist governments understand how the building sector influences sustainable development in that country and what barriers and opportunities exist for adopting policy tools in support of sustainable construction and buildings.
- (2) Develop Policy Building Blocks, which will provide the policy makers with the information and methodologies necessary to design and employ the most suitable sustainable building policy tools adapted to the local context.
- (3) Perform field tests of the Quick Scan Tool and the policy building blocks at two locations in developing countries. This serves both to verify/adjust the tools, and to develop pilot examples of how the tools can be used.
- (4) Design and implement an innovative dissemination strategy of project outputs, making full use of partner networks.

Sustainable Buildings Policies in Developing Countries

The technologies and know-how for designing and constructing sustainable buildings are well developed and are available in most countries as commercialised and publicly available information and services. However, in spite of access to sustainable building approaches, and in spite of the significant role buildings play in climate change and sustainable development, the uptake of sustainable building approaches remain at a low level worldwide. A number of characteristics of the building sector provide the underlying causes:

- Fragmentation of the building process, both over the life span of buildings and between different functions in a building (engineering, architecture, energy systems, occupants etc): There is therefore no natural incentive for a life cycle approach to managing energy use in buildings;
- Economic disconnect between building designers and investors on one hand, and building owners and users on the other hand;
- Lack of understanding (at all levels) of the importance of the building sector in relation to climate change, and lack of know-how about how to reduce energy use in buildings;
- Resistance among construction stakeholders to adopt new ways and approaches to make buildings more sustainable;
- Inadequate capacity at local levels to analyze existing frameworks for construction activities and to identify interventions that could energize a move towards sustainable building practices.

The UNEP SBCI report “Assessment of Policy Instruments for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Buildings” (October 2007) shows that the most effective instruments for overcoming the above barriers is a package of policy instruments tailored for the local context. While the composition of the policy package would change between locations, it is undisputed that governments need to take action to put in place policy frameworks to enable the building sector to realise the significant potential for emission reduction in buildings.

■ Target Group

The primary target group for this project is authorities and other stakeholders in developing countries involved in policy development and project implementation in the buildings and construction sector. Other beneficiaries include companies and groups providing and promoting sustainable and energy efficient buildings, as SPOD would help them to identify and propose interventions supporting sustainable building practices. Finally, the owners and users of buildings will benefit by getting access to safer and healthier buildings with reduced operational costs.

■ Timeline and Outlook

The project is intended to run over a period of 24 months, commencing in April 2011 and completion targeted for April 2013. SPOD is providing a platform for future international cooperation and capacity building on sustainable buildings. It is the aim to further the adaption of the SPOD approaches and to develop follow-up projects in other countries.

■ Expected Outcomes

SPOD will enable authorities at national and local levels to analyze existing policies affecting the building sector, and to identify packages of policy instruments for sustainable buildings, which can be adapted to fit local conditions. By instituting such policies, SPOD would contribute to improved access and uptake of sustainable building services and technologies, creation of green jobs in the construction sector, improved standards of living and reduced maintenance costs of buildings.



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