Good procurement is sustainable procurement

Public spending normally represents 8-30% of national GDP and every purchase is an opportunity to drive markets towards innovation and sustainability. Through sustainable procurement governments can lead by example and deliver key policy objectives. On the environment, sustainable procurement allows governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy and water efficiency and support recycling. Positive social results include poverty reduction, improved equity and respect for core labor standards. And from an economic perspective, SPP can generate income, reduce costs and support the transfer of skills and technology.

The Marrakech Task Force approach to sustainable public procurement

How does the approach work? First, pilot countries assess their procurement status through an online questionnaire (Status Assessment - http://www.unep.fr/scp/marrakech/taskforces/procurement.htm). Second, a review is undertaken to identify the legislative framework for procurement in the country and to analyze the possibilities for integrating social and environmental criteria into procurement activities. Third, a country-based market readiness analysis is carried out in order to define the existing productive capacities for sustainable products and services and the potential responsiveness of the market to SPP tenders.

After successful completion of these three actions, pilot countries develop a country-based SPP policy and Action plan, including a capacity building programme for procurement officers. Experts from UNEP as well as the Marrakech Task Force will assist the pilot country in the implementation of its SPP policy during one year.

An international approach to implement sustainable public procurement

The Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Public Procurement (MTF on SPP) led by Switzerland from 2006 to May 2011 has developed an approach for implementing sustainable public procurement (SPP) in both developed and developing countries, known as the MTF Approach to SPP.

In 2008, the Swiss government and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) designed a project to roll out this approach in 14 countries worldwide. This project, entitled Capacity building for Sustainable Public Procurement in Developing Countries, is supported by the European Commission, Switzerland and the Organization of Francophone countries. It is currently being implemented by UNEP and piloted in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Lebanon, Mauritius, Tunisia and Uruguay.

What is sustainable procurement?

Sustainable procurement is the process whereby organizations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis. It results in benefits not only to the organization, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimizing damage to the environment. (Source: Procuring the Future – the report of the UK Sustainable Procurement Task Force, June 2006)

Highlights

Capacity Building
Since 2009, 120 experts from 48 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe have acquired and upgraded their skills and knowledge of sustainable public procurement during the 5 regional trainings on the MTF Approach to SPP organized by UNEP in Santiago, Mexico, Paris, Tunis and Kuala Lumpur. In April 2011 in Freiburg, Germany, 12 high-level international experts were also trained on the SPP Approach.

All the trained experts will assist UNEP and project countries in the implementation of the SPP Approach.

Implementation in Pilot Countries
Each pilot country has created its own Steering Committee in charge of overseeing project implementation. These Committees are composed of ministries of Finance, Environment and Labour, Chambers of Commerce and other relevant stakeholders. Pilot countries have also designated their National Focal Points and project managers, in charge of project implementation.

The legal studies carried out in pilot countries indicate that legal frameworks are compatible with the practice of sustainable public procurement. Prioritization exercises have led the Steering Committees to select their own country’s priority products and channel the focus of their market readiness analysis on these categories. Pilot countries have also started to test the inclusion of sustainability criteria in their procurement systems.

http://www.unep.fr/scp/procurement/
Project aims, means, and goals

The main objective of the project is to support the development and the implementation of national SPP policies in a number of pilot countries through the testing of the MTF approach on SPP. The ultimate goal is to assist developing countries in addressing environmental, economic and social issues through their procurement activity.

A number of capacity building activities have taken place to enable public procurers and policy makers to implement sustainable public procurement. UNEP also assists its local partners in identifying the social, environmental and economic benefits of buying more sustainably (e.g. reduced ecological footprint, enhanced innovation and competitiveness as well as an increased availability of sustainable products and services, etc.).

The lessons learned from the project will help to improve the approach and will result in a standard methodology for the development and implementation of a national policy on sustainable public procurement. This improved methodology will be the object of a publication that will be available online before the end of 2011.

The MTF on SPP and UNEP have already delivered a first set of policy conclusions and recommendations, which were presented at a side event on SPP organized during the 19th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York in May 2011. These policy conclusions have also been incorporated in the final report of the MTF on SPP.

In 2012, UNEP plans to scale up the scope of the project by providing support to 20 countries in SPP implementation through the revised SPP Approach.

How can a country join?

Any government that wishes to pilot the MTF approach to SPP is welcome to join the project. Candidate countries should send a letter to UNEP, expressing their interest in joining the project and outlining their current situation and plans in the field of SPP. UNEP will then engage in a dialogue with the candidate country to check that the proper enabling conditions are in place to ensure the success of the project. In particular, UNEP and the candidate country will ensure that the resources needed for a successful project implementation are available.

When it has been established that conditions are suitable and resources are available, UNEP and the candidate country will sign an agreement defining their mutual obligations regarding project implementation, resource mobilization and the provision of international expertise and SPP tools.