

Sustainable Procurement Communications Strategy

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A) Context

Since 2008, the Environmental Management Group (EMG), in collaboration with the HLCM Procurement Network, has assisted UN organizations to include Sustainability criteria in their procurement practices through awareness raising and training, the development of tools and guidelines and ongoing information exchange. This work has enabled the two inter-agency bodies to identify a number of innovative and well prepared Sustainable Procurement initiatives within the UN system. These initiatives have often arisen from the efforts of motivated requisitioners and procurers who understand the potential of their work to support their organization's progress towards achieving its sustainability goals.

However, discussions with participants of information and training sessions and in the HLCM Procurement Network have identified 3 main challenges:

1. The lack of a clear understanding of what Sustainable Procurement (SP) is and how it should be implemented;
2. A general resistance to change towards a different approach to carrying out procurement-related work;
3. Concern that SP could become a(nother) barrier to suppliers from developing countries to do business with the UN.

In light of this, the EMG members requested UNEP to develop a proposal for a Communications Strategy on Sustainable Procurement. This Strategy will be presented at the EMG Senior Environmental Officials meeting in New York on 19 September 2011.

B) Communication objectives

To respond to these challenges, EMG and the HLCM PN will need to act on two fronts:

1. Raise awareness and foster a better understanding of Sustainable Procurement

Inform/Train

Between 2008 and 2011, UNEP has carried out a number of information and training sessions on SP in collaboration with other UN agencies (UNOPS and ITC/ILO). These sessions involved over 250 procurers/requisitioners in 10 duty stations (Panama, Lima, NY, Nairobi, Bangkok, Rome, Brindisi, Copenhagen, Berne and Geneva). Following this first round of sessions, UNEP launched an impact assessment survey. The survey indicated that the training was viewed as having been very positive, both as a way to inform staff (100% had a better understanding of SP after the training) and to provide practical guidance on methods to do things differently. More specifically, 52% of respondents reported

they had included sustainability criteria to various extents in tenders following the training. Those who were not able to do so reported “lack of management support; not having yet had the occasion; and need for more time and guidelines” as main obstacles.

Based on this survey, the main requests from the participants for follow-up actions were:

- a. More regular communication and sharing of experiences and best practices
- b. Assistance in improving management support and establishment of an official policy
- c. Further training sessions, including e-learning.
- d. Appropriate tools to be elaborated.
- a. UNEP assistance with Drafting Sustainable TORs and RFPs

Disseminate practical tools

Through the work of UNEP Sustainable UN, the EMG and the HLCM Procurement Network have produced a number of guidelines to assist procurers in practising SP. These tools are easily accessible both on the Greening the Blue and UN Global Marketplace websites. There is now a need to publicise the existence of these tools to those staff in UN organizations who can use them to improve their daily work (i.e., managers, requisitioners and procurers).

2. Secure the commitment of UN organizations to implement SP / Influence UN policies to implement SP

Share information and best practices

In the course of discussions with procurement staff in different UN duty stations and agencies, what emerged is the need for concrete and varied examples showing that SP is a growing practice. In this regard, it is clear that SP is taking place in many countries and sectors with no major problems being experienced at a procedural level. Moreover, SP is being implemented in developing countries with, it seems, many suppliers not having major difficulties in responding to calls for bids.

Guidelines on SP policy

“*Buying for a Better World – A Guide on Sustainable Procurement for the United Nations System*”, which will be published by September 2011, aims to assist UN organizations with the implementation of Sustainable Procurement (SP), providing:

- Concrete arguments for the UN to engage in SP;
- Recommendations on the development of an SP Action Plan; and
- Guidance on the integration of sustainable development principles in UN organization procurement cycles.

Part of this guide is addressed to policy makers, managers/budget holders and chiefs of procurement to help them to design an SP Policy and Action Plan which can form the basis of a robust approach to SP in an organization.

C) Key audiences

Sustainable procurement is not only a matter for procurers. On the contrary, the key for more sustainable procurement action is in the “definition of the need” which is decided upon and drafted by “requisitioners” in technical and administrative units. In turn, requisitioners will draft a request for a more sustainable good or service only if they feel encouraged to do so by higher management. A clear policy or signal (e.g., to save energy) at a high level in the agency is therefore needed.

Member States also have a key role in requiring that UN organizations be managed in a more sustainable way. For instance, the UNEP Governing Council has requested UNEP to implement “green housekeeping”, while UPU also has been asked by its members to develop a sustainable development strategy. In addition to the ongoing priority given to ensuring the respect of labor conditions in contracts, the governing body of ILO has requested that the organization achieve Climate neutrality by 2015.

To sum up, SP practices require a favorable climate at all levels in each organization in order to be delivered consistently across the UN system. Accordingly, the main targets for an effective SP communications strategy are:

- a. UN senior staff (managers at all levels, including in the procurement function) & EMG members
- b. Requisitioners /Procurers /Staff
- c. HLCM/CEB
- d. (UN) Member states
- e. Vendors

D) Target audience and communications channel

Audience	Channels
Procurers	HLCM Procurement Network; UN SP training distribution list; UNGM website
Requisitioners/project managers	IMG on sustainability management; UN SP training distribution lists ; Greening the Blue website; UN agencies; “greenies” groups/green “champions”
EMG members	EMG meetings and communications from EMG chair
UN senior staff (management /procurement function)	HLCM Procurement Network, Interagency Facilities network, other relevant interagency bodies (including HLCM)
HLCM/CEB	Reports from inter-agency networks and EMG
Member States	UNEP Governing Council; 2 nd committee (UN DESA) ; 5th committee (UN PD)
Vendors	Business seminars; calls for bids

E) Communications Plan

Since 2008, UNEP and its partners have created a number of tools that can be used and disseminated now within current resources among existing staff and the partnerships that UNEP SUN has created within the UN system. A series of targeted low cost actions are therefore proposed in the table below. Developing more tools (such as further product guidelines; an update of the current training materials; etc) will indeed require additional funds.

Activity	Cost	Time
Letter from Achim Steiner - as chair of the EMG - to inform EMG members that the first set of SP tools is ready, explain how they can be useful in implementing the UN climate neutral strategy and the agencies' respective emissions reduction efforts and invite members to disseminate them to the relevant managers and staff within their agency. Letter to be proposed to the EMG and sent after the EMG Senior Official Meeting on 19 September 2011.	None	9-2011
Letter from the Chair of the HLCM Procurement Network to summarize the work done over the past 3 years by the Network's Sustainable Procurement Working Group, the benefits of SP (risk reduction, cost savings, support to core mandates, image, etc.). Letter to be proposed to the Chair and sent to members after the Procurement Network meeting on 28 September 2011.	None	10-2011
A flyer describing all available SP tools and the methodologies available to be sent to: facility managers, field officers, conference organizers, etc. through the appropriate channels (IMG on Sustainability, Facility managers network, UN duty stations, etc.)	None	9-2011
Letter from Achim Steiner to HLCM to discuss with IMG and PN and to link with sustainable management strategy.	None	10-2011
Collection of case studies within the EMG and the HLCM Procurement Network and produce a brief (4-8 pages) illustrative e-brochure providing examples where SP is already being implemented in developing countries.	2 months Junior consultant (\$US 8,000)	12-2011
Maintain a list of UN staff trained and informed in various sessions and keep them constantly updated through mailings about progress on sustainable procurement (tools development, training opportunities, case studies, etc.)	1 month /year Junior consultant (\$US 4,000)	Ongoing
Make wider use of the Greening the Blue website and UNGM to inform UN managers, staff and other stakeholders on progress on sustainable procurement (tools development, trainings opportunities, case studies, etc.)	None additional	Ongoing
More training and information sessions on a cost sharing basis in partnership with interested UN agencies and field offices.	\$US 8000/ session, incl.	Ongoing

	travel	
Development of an on-line training tool based on the UN SP Guide	Already financed	Ongoing – due in November

F) Evaluating success

- Number of UN organizations implementing SP
- Number of case studies
- Interest in SP in the HLCM PN (growing number of SP WG members)
- Webstats from Greening the Blue and UNGM (number of guidelines downloaded, site visits, etc.)
- Feedback received from UN organizations
- Number of training events, people trained and results from feedback surveys.