

IMPACT SHEET • SWITCH-ASIA PROJECT
**PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY OF INTERIOR DECORATION
AND RENOVATION PRACTICES IN CHINA (SUS BIRD)**

Improving the quality of life of building inhabitants and construction workers in China



Setting a new standard, *SUS BIRD* Project's policy recommendation on green construction and assessment methods were adopted by the Chinese Government



The Challenge

The building, construction, and decoration market in China is booming. Most efforts for sustainable building focuses on the construction phase and less on the potential health and environmental hazards arising from renovation materials. Renovation and decoration can cause severe health problems for both the workers of renovation/decoration companies (exposure to dust, solvents, etc.) and the inhabitants of the buildings living with indoor air pollution. Such activities can have a serious effect on the environment due to the substantial amount of material used, the generation and inadequate disposal of waste, and hazardous emissions. The absence of product information for end consumers and decoration SMEs, insufficient capacity, a lack of practical know-how, and limited access to sustainable products, sustainable renovation and decoration services remain a challenge in China.

Objective

The SWITCH-Asia *Sustainable Building Interior Renovation and Decoration Initiative in China (SUS BIRD)* project sought to improve the health of inhabitants of newly decorated and renovated buildings and the employees of decoration companies, as well as to contribute to a better environment. It achieved this through reducing energy consumption and the overall environmental impact related to building interior renovation and decoration (BIRD) practice and production. Specifically, the project aimed to:

- increase the sustainability of interior decoration and renovation practice;
- encourage consumers to choose safe, healthy and environmentally friendly decoration products and appliances;
- encourage SMEs to adopt healthy and environmentally friendly working materials and procedures.

TARGET GROUPS

- About 205 000 BIRD SMEs in China
- National retailers offering building interior renovation and decoration products
- Public procurement centres with responsibility for purchasing interior designs and products for public buildings
- End consumers, indirectly addressed through the SMEs, and directly via an awareness and marketing campaign

Activities / Strategy



Shifting Perspectives to Promote Sustainable Products

The *SUS BIRD* project developed alternative approaches to decorating by training designers, decorators, production supervisors and SMEs working in BIRD sector. The training took a life-cycle perspective, addressing the use of materials at all phases. It also took account of environmental and social impacts – both for workers and inhabitants. It focussed on the benefits to consumers and producers using sustainable renovation and decoration products and practice – as well as on the trainers' role as intermediaries between experts and practitioners.



Stimulate Sustainable BIRD Production Patterns

The project worked towards establishing and maintaining a science-based product information system (PIS) for decoration products. The project developed and disseminated handbooks and information packages and established Sustainable BIRD Initiatives to provide training, verify decoration projects and organise information exchange activities as well as to support the adoption and strengthening of a labelling and certification system in China.



Encouraging Consumers and Policy-makers

Through marketing campaigns, the project addressed end consumers, businesses engaged with interior design and products, and policy-makers responsible for standardisation in this market. It encouraged the target groups to choose safe, healthy, and environmentally friendly decoration products and appliances. The marketing campaigns demonstrated examples of good practice, and an award programme helped to popularise top performing sustainable products over time. For policy-makers, the project produced several research case studies and policy recommendations to support the political decision-making process.



Scaling-up Strategy



Replication via the Sustainable Building Initiative Alliance

The network of stakeholders in the SUS BIRD sector was the key to enlarging the project's impact. The project partners established a platform called the Sustainable Building Initiative (SBI) Alliance, which provided member SMEs with specific services, such as training programmes or information packages. Within the SBI Alliance, stakeholders like BIRD SMEs, local decoration associations, government agencies, standardisation and certification bodies, and European and international sustainable building experts, played an active role in sharing their insight and experience regarding the different phases in the life-cycle of products for interiors.



Replication via Knowledge Dissemination and Pilot Projects

Capacity building for trainers and decoration companies was crucial to scale-out sustainable building and decoration design. The project implemented a 'train-the-trainer' workshop, where university professors, engineers, policy-makers and technical experts were equipped with knowledge on BIRD practices, in order to transfer them to the SMEs. Moreover, market campaigns improved the acceptability of sustainable BIRD products by the end consumers. This resulted in a market pull for the sustainable BIRD products and services provided by local SMEs.



Replication via Policy Recommendation

The project linked to policy-makers by creating policy recommendations, and by organising policy tours and high-level conferences. The recommendations included a needs assessment, the identification of specific instruments, and draft instructions on how to design the required interventions. The project facilitated the implementation and adoption of a voluntary national criterion for the energy consumption of residential apartments.



Now we realise that the sustainability of interior decoration highly relies on the products we choose. We should let more people know what kinds of BIRD products are sustainable and what are not. We will promote this concept to our customers by providing them with comprehensive solutions. We are very interested in the SUS BIRD pilot project, I invite you to visit our company to give advice so that we can improve our work and service quality.

*Mr.Huan Qi,
Marketing Director
from Beijing LBY Office
Environment Engineering Co., Ltd.*



Results



Product Information System (PIS) Developed

The project established PIS platforms serving both Chinese and English-speaking stakeholders. The PIS includes management for product categories and fields, and an intelligent search and comparison analysis. The website includes a membership centre, an introduction to the SBI alliance, guidance for product selection, technical documents for product assessments, and technical project cases.



Capacity Building Activities Conducted

The training concept and materials developed were based on the needs of SMEs consulted in the start-up phase. This resulted in training materials with eight components. Twenty trainers were trained in the technical needs of the Chinese interior renovation and design sector, and their skills are being used to address the market and to apply a framework for life-cycle thinking and the concept of sustainability. In the second phase, training courses for managers, designers, and project supervisors of SMEs were organised. The training won high recognition from participating SMEs who not only welcomed a 'sustainability concept in the BIRD sector' and the Life Cycle Assessment methodology, but also the PIS tools and the training materials.



How many hours a day do you spend indoors? If you say 'many', then this project is relevant to your everyday life. Renovation and decoration is a booming market in China and is already facing resource and environmental challenges.

This project gives decoration SMEs the possibility of providing sustainable designs and solutions to their customers. A transformation platform offers knowledge and information on products, markets and policy, for example, to help participants make their life and businesses more sustainable. We do not expect this project to resolve all problems; we do hope that after implementing it all participants and the end-consumers knowhow to live a quality life with a new thinking.



Mr. Tan Zheng,
Former Project manager



Sustainable Building Initiative Alliance (SBI) Established

The SBI launched a recruitment drive for alliance membership and setup the first pilot projects of BIRD. Promotion workshops and distribution of information packages were organised for the furniture industry in Beijing and SBI was promoted to more than 2 800 well-known enterprises. More than 500 SBI alliance members were recruited, of which 500 SMEs applied to participate in the pilot projects (including some for public and civil buildings).



Market Campaigns in China Conducted

To promote sustainable decoration, information packages of the product handbook, PIS and SBI user guides, newsletters, leaflets and project brochures on sustainable products were disseminated to SMEs. Local energy service centres and testing labs in Beijing, Jiangsu, Hebei, Sichuan, and other provinces were visited to promote the SUS BIRD project. Strategic agreements with China Building and Decoration Association, Beijing Construction and Decoration Association were signed to share resources and develop win-win cooperation. Media specialising in the building and construction sector, such as SouFun, Sina, CNS and China Construction News, were involved in addressing the needs of sustainable building interior renovation and decoration practices. The EU market was reached through distribution of information packages to more than 700 producers and decoration SMEs, as well as participation in large exhibitions.

Impact in Numbers

Economic Impact



- Criteria for 7 catalogues, 28 ranges and thousands of product categories for sustainable decoration were developed, which guide the designers and consumers selecting resource-saving products, such as water-saving taps and energy-saving electronic appliances so that the indoor life-style becomes more economical and sustainable.
- The 500 SMEs participating in this project have more business opportunities than before due to their healthier solutions and life-cycle sustainable designs. They also delivered their verification results that brought about “10+1” demonstration projects and best practices for the industry.

Environmental Impact



- After consulting with SME designers trained by the project, more than 70% of the consumers will consider to buy affordable environmentally friendly decoration products, which create healthier indoor environments and reduce the overall environmental impact.
- Through training activities and the use of SUS BIRD approach, i.e. the verification procedure, most of SBI members adopted the occupational health & safety (OHS) principles.
- Out of 500 SMEs, 50% met higher standard of decoration requirements.
- Initiated a top-down approach to promote sustainable building interior renovation and decoration via the issuance of residential interior decoration ‘construction quality acceptance guideline’ and the adoption of policy recommendation into China’s green building and green construction materials assessment.

Social Impact



- Improved social awareness of SUS BIRD and its products through marketing campaign, e.g. sustainable design signature events and shopping mall exhibitions.
- Reduced risk of accidents and health hazards by implementing proper and safe decoration procedures.

Target group Engagement



- The project conducted 23 workshops and seminars on SUS BIRD; trained and certified 19 trainers and 520 BIRD SMEs.
- More than 500 SMEs were recruited as SBI alliance members and 500 pilot projects, including public and civil buildings, have been collected.
- 10 demonstration projects and one ‘best practice’ project have been awarded by the project.
- 16 market promotion activities were organised to target SMEs and consumers.

Policy Development



- The project established close cooperation relationships with government agencies e.g. National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MoHURD) and Certification and Accreditation Administration of China (CNCA), the core state authorities responsible for energy conservation and industrial development. This is helpful for the scaling-up of SUS BIRD best practice in China. Main interaction with policy-makers included: Green Building Criteria by MoHURD and Green Furniture Certification by CNCA.
- Policy recommendation on green construction, and indoor environment quality were adopted into the Chinese green building assessment methods, and Chinese green construction materials assessment methods.
- Residential interior decoration quality guidelines will be executed as local industry standard.



Legend

- Eligible countries where SWITCH-Asia projects are implemented
- Eligible Asian countries for the SWITCH-Asia programme
- Non-eligible Asian countries for the SWITCH-Asia Programme

Project implementation area

- City
- Region
- Country

The boundaries shown on this map do not imply on the part of the European Union any judgment on the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

OBJECTIVES

The SWITCH-Asia project *Sustainable Building Interior Renovation and Decoration Initiative in China (SUS BIRD)* aimed to improve the health and living quality for the inhabitants of buildings, as well as decorators, and to improve the environment. It aimed to increase the sustainability of interior decoration and renovation practice. This meant consumers choosing safe, healthy and environmentally friendly decoration products and appliances, and SMEs applying healthy and environmentally friendly working conditions.

DURATION



PROJECT TOTAL BUDGET

EUR 2 122 828
(EU contribution: 80%)

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Science and Technology Promotion Center of MoHURD (CSTC)



Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP)



IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute (IVL)



UN Environment Programme – DTIE (UNEP-DTIE)