Implementation of Environmental Management Systems (EMS) and eco-labelling schemes in the SMEs of the leather sector in Bangladesh

December 2016
The ECOLEBAN Project, funded by the European Commission under the Switch Asia Programme, has an overall duration of 48 months (from March 2014 to February 2018).

The main objective of the ECOLEBAN Project is to enhance the resource efficiency and sustainability of the leather sector in Bangladesh throughout the whole value chain of the leather related products such as footwear and other leather goods.

The following picture shows the expected results of the action as well as the activities scheduled to achieve them.

RESULT 1
Improved the sustainability and resource efficiency of the leather sector in Bangladesh throughout the whole value chain.

1.1 Implementation of Best SCP Practices in the SMEs
1.2 Implementation of EMS (ISO 14001)
1.3 Creation of a panel of experts in SCP practices and certification models.

RESULT 2
Promoted green commercialization and consumption through the implementation of eco-labelling schemes in the leather footwear sector.

2.1 Consultation to the consumers and identification of their constraints and limitations
2.2 Design and Development of the Eco-label Scheme
2.3 Implementation of Eco-labelling schemes
2.4 Create market demand of eco-labelled leather footwear

RESULT 3
Increased the awareness and commitment of governmental institutions in SCP practices and engagement of financing bodies

3.1 Involvement governmental institutions to support SCP Practices
3.2 Facilitation of the access to “Green financing” for SMEs by engaging financial institutions

Welcome to ECOLEBAN´s fourth newsletter
Once the main impacts on the sustainability caused by the leather sector and the hotspots where such impacts are being produced has been identified and after creating a set of actuations and best practices to solve the problems identified in the previous project tasks, a Guideline with the Best SCP Practices for leather sector in Bangladesh has been developed so as to solve the problems detected in the leather sector companies.

The aim of this Guideline is to build a knowledge with the Best SCP Practices to foster the sustainability in the Bangladeshi leather sector. For this, a deep analysis to explore mechanisms, techniques, technologies, practices, etc. successfully implemented and used in countries with high rates of sustainability has been performed. It is noteworthy that the developed guideline also includes a specific chapter for green industry planning with the aim of facilitating the implementation of SCP practices during the tanneries’ shift to Savar.

The guide is divided into two main sections, best sustainable practices and process improvements. Within the best sustainable practices several actions have been described. These actions have been classified according to their nature: general practices, energy conservation practices, substitution of substances, practices to minimise waste water and air emissions, waste management practices and occupational health and safety practices.

The second part of the guide includes the description of numerous process improvements for each production stage, for both tanneries and leather manufacturing production processes.

The information included in this guide has been gathered from two different sources. Firstly, a bibliographic research and analysis was carried out and, among others, reference documents from entities such as the European Commission, the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the World Bank were thoroughly examined.

In addition, it is worthwhile to highlight the valuable outputs collected through the involvement of the stakeholders. Several events have been organised in Dhaka, and experts belonging to different areas (SME owners, technical experts, environmental experts, policy makers, etc.) have made outstanding contributions to this guide.

Although the Guideline will be edited on paper (both in English and in Bangla version) and delivered to the different stakeholders, you can consult soft copy on our website:

Download here
In order to ensure that 20 SMEs acquire the necessary knowledge to carry out the certification in this standard, the second Training on ISO 14001:2015 for Environmental Management Representatives (EMR) has been conducted in the ECOLEBAN Project office on 14th December.

This training was to disseminate information on ISO 14001:2015 to the Environmental Management Representatives of selected SMEs within the framework of ECOLEBAN Project. The project intends at this stage that those EMR acquire the sufficient knowledge about ISO14001 and that feel comfortable with the procedures of this standard.

In this occasion, unlike the first training that was carried out in this respect (May 28th, 2016), ECOLEBAN Project has chosen to give a more practical and functional training. For this purpose, the procedures designed for the implementation of ISO 14001 in companies were used as teaching or instructional material, with the idea of familiarizing attendees with the documentation they will handle in the future.
One of the main objectives of this project is to create a panel of 30 national experts on SCP practices and certification models for assuring that the implementation of sustainable actions (Best SCP Practices, EMSs, eco-design approaches, etc.) in the Bangladeshi leather sector will continue taking place after the completion of the action.

Given this and as we advanced in ECOLEBAN third Newsletter, the ECOLEBAN Project organized in July (25th to 28th) a training program on "Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Practices in the Leather Sector" - SCP Expert Course. This course, apart from ECOLEBAN Project Technical Team was given by University of Dhaka (ILET, Institute of Leather Engineers and Technologist) professors and other consultants of private companies who deployed all their knowledge and experiences.

This training and capacity building activities have been conducted on the following topics (one per day):

- Regulatory framework and potential market benefits (25th July)
- Importance of the implementation of SCP practices in the Bangladeshi leather sector (26th July)
- Environmental Management Systems—ISO 14001 (27th July)
- Eco-labelling (28th July)

During the 4 days program, a total of 70 people attended the course and based on the records of attendance, 45 of them have successfully taken advantage of the theoretical expert course on SCP. From this theoretical training to the end of the project implementations process, this course applicants will have to participate in the planned implementations as part of the practical learning.
After the identification of the consumers’ point of view regarding sustainability issues through the development of a Survey and Consultation Workshops, taking into account the conclusions obtained in “Eco-Label Scheme for leather footwear sector in Bangladesh” research document (basing on European standards and Bangladesh local context), in December of 2016 ECOLEBAN project has published on our website the first draft of “ECOLEBAN Criteria for Leather Footwear - User’s Manual”. The scope of the discussion for certification criteria shall be the items contributing to reduce environmental impact, to change more business and consumers towards achieving sustainable society.

This document is the guideline to help the companies to obtain the ECOLEBAN Footwear eco-label (Procedures, data, tests, documents that are required to comply with the criteria defined).

Take a look, It’s very interesting! You can download it here:
Within the objective of increasing the awareness and commitment of governmental institutions in SCP practices to strengthen the institutional structure at policy level, a capacity building was carried out in 24th July. This capacity building is the first of a training program aimed for policymakers and based on the main topic of the project. In this first approach with policymakers, the training was about the implementation of ISO 14001 and the benefits that this standard can bring to the leather sector industries of Bangladesh and how the Governmental Institutions can start thinking in its inclusion in the national policies.

Among these capacity building participants attended officials from Bangladesh Tariff Commission, Ministry of Industry, Department of Environment (DoE), Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI), Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), among others.
As we have been carrying out throughout these past 2 years, one of the most important project commitments is to increase the awareness and commitment of governmental institutions in SCP practices to strengthen the institutional structure at policy level. In this regard, Bangladesh Tanners Association-BTA (ECOLEBAN Project Member) organized (with the collaboration of Business Promotion Council-BPC) a Forum on Environment friendly Leather Industry and Sustainable Development, within the ECOLEBAN project actions scope. The Forum was carried out in 19th November in the prestigious Dhaka Club and several top policymakers related to leather sector participated actively.

The objective of this forum was to raise awareness among policymakers of the need to implement sustainable consumption and production (SCP) practices in the leather sector in order to significantly reduce the environmental impacts generated by the traditional leather sector.

We had the honour of having as special guests: Mr. Shaheen Ahmed, Chairman of Bangladesh Tanners Association (BTA), Ms. Rizwana Hasan, (CEO of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association - BELA), Mr. Kazi Sarwar Imtiaz Hasmi (Additional Director General, Department of Environment), Mr. Mobasser Hossain (Vice President of BAPA), Mr. Abu Yusuf (Professor and Chairman of Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka), Mr. Lutfar Rahman Tarafder (Joint Chief of Ministry of Industries), Mr. Fakir Firoz Ahmed (Coordinator-BPC and Joint Secretary), Mr. Mahin Uddin Ahmed Mahin (President of BFLLFEA), Mr. Moshraf Hossain Vuiyan (special guest and Senior Secretary of Ministry of Industries), Adv. Sultana Kamal (Chairman of TIB and Ex Advisor care taker govt.), among other 120 attendees that contribute their presence and opinions.
One of the main ECOLEBAN Project objective is to engage financial institutions in sustainability aspects so as to facilitate the access of the leather sector SMEs to “Green financing”.

Taking this into account, ECOLEBAN Project has carried out a survey to have a picture of the awareness level of local (Bangladesh) and international financial institutions (operating in Bangladesh) regarding the importance of financing the SCP (Sustainable Consumption and Production) practices. All of this in order to allow economically the implementation of Environmental Management Systems and Eco-labelling in the Bangladeshi leather sector SMEs, among other SCP best practices.

Taking into consideration the results of this survey, a total number of 15 financial institutions (10 local and 5 international) will be selected to participate in the sensitization campaigns for the inclusion of sustainability aspects in investment assessments and loan provisions.

For the preparation of this survey it is important to know that ECOLEBAN Local Project team has visited a total number of 72 different branches (representing at 35 different national and international financial institutions) of which a response of 26 has been obtained. These consulted financial institutions belong to 22 different organizations and they have shown different levels of environmental awareness and commitment with the sustainable development of the leather sector SMEs. Taking into account the answers obtained to each question the ECOLEBAN Project will work accordingly too obtain the expected results within the scope of the action.

The following financial institutions have been kind enough to participate in the survey:

- BRAC BANK
- EXIM BANK
- City Bank
- Dutch-Bangla Bank
- midland bank
- Eastern Bank Ltd.
- NCC Bank
- ONE Bank
- Prime Bank Limited
- Agrani Bank Limited
- Rupali Bank Limited
- Standard Bank Limited
- CDLC
- Shahjalal Islami Bank
- Mercantile Bank Limited
- Jamuna Bank
- UCB
- Pubali Bank Limited
- Sonali Bank Limited
- commercial bank
- Pubali Bank Limited
- Habib Bank Limited
Networking

One of the most important and fruitful Project achievements in 2016 is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Leather Engineer and Technologist Society, Bangladesh (LETSB) and ECOLEBAN Project with the aim of enhance the resource efficiency and sustainability of the leather sector in Bangladesh throughout the whole value chain of the leather related products such as footwear and other leather goods.

Showing both, LETSB and ECOLEBAN the interested in collaborate on joint actions to increase the number of less polluting and more resource efficient leather related products by means of the implementation of environmental management systems (ISO 140001) and life cycle approaches (LCA, Eco-design) in the SMEs, and promoting “green” commercialization and consumption through the use of Eco-labelling. This collaboration will be very important in the Project future, emphasizing their support to ensure that the implementation of SCP practices will continue taking place after the completion of the action.
As a sign of continued communication and close collaboration with our SwitchAsia Network Facility colleagues, Tecnalia Project Team has written an article on eco-labelling that has been published in the SwitchAsia MAG (Winter 2016/2017).

The main topic of this Magazine was about how to advance the circular economy in Asia. There, among other SwitchAsia Project case studies, our colleague Ainara Garcia (eco-labelling technical expert) with the collaboration of Javier del Pozo (ECOLEBAN Project Director) explains what has been the eco-labelling process within the activities proposed in ECOLEBAN Project.

You can read the magazine on [SwitchAsia website](#):