

South-South Technology Transfer : Low Carbon Building Material

Inauguration of the VSBK in Malawi

The VSBK (Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln) in Salima, Malawi was commissioned on 26th January 2015. An inaugural function was held to commemorate the firing. The kiln was fired by the dignitaries from the different governments and senior functionaries of EcoBricks Ltd, Housing Company, Enterprise Development Holding (EDH) and CCODE.

The master of ceremonies opened the workshop with the observation of one minute silence for the flood victims in South Malawi. As per Malawian traditions, the workshop was inaugurated by the local village chief of Chidzu. Ms Siku Nkhoma, Board Chair - EcoBricks Ltd. extended a warm welcome to the guests. She highlighted the relevance of the VSBK



technology in meeting the long term housing demand of Malawi. It is expected that over 500 VSBKs will be needed to cater to just the present brick demand in the country. Further, EcoBricks Ltd. expressed interest in investing in 3 more VSBKs in the near future.

Peter Schramm, Technical Expert - GIZ reflected on the history of getting the VSBK into Malawi. He emphasized that the good quality uniform bricks produced through the VSBK would in fact reduce the cost of a house by almost 30% primarily due to reduced use of cement mortar, even though the per unit brick price was higher.



Thus this intervention was eventually leading to a marked improvement in the quality of housing in the country. Dr Soumen Maity, Programme Director - TARA, elaborated on the importance of VSBK in the Malawian context and its impact on reduced deforestation. The VSBK operates only on coal, which is abundantly coal available in Northern Malawi. Thus the use of VSBK can save 850,000 tonnes of wood per year.

Mr Martin Scale, Deputy High Commissioner - British High Commission, Lilongwe acknowledging the support extended by the Government of United Kingdom, applauded the collaborative effort that led to the successful transfer of technologies among developing countries. Mr Vanlalhuma, Indian High Commissioner to Malawi, dedicated the kiln to the people of Malawi. He exemplified the VSBK as an example of development co-operation between developed and developing countries; where developed countries bring in financial support and developing countries like India contribute through knowledge.

Dr Peter Woeste, Honorable German Ambassador to Malawi, congratulated the team from GIZ and TARA on the successful commissioning of the kiln, albeit delayed by a couple of months. Now the test would be product acceptance among the users. However he urged that the project should not stop at this one kiln but look at spreading the technology all over Malawi as well as in neighbouring countries. The German Government pledged continued support for this initiative in association with the British and Indian Governments.

The Chief Housing Officer, Government of Malawi, representing the Departments of Land, Housing and Urban Development; Natural Resource Management; Energy And Mining - congratulated EcoBricks Ltd. in bringing the technology from India at Malawi. He reiterated the support of the Malawi Government for the dissemination of the technology in Malawi on a large scale. The government is also thinking of banning traditional firing technologies based on the successful adoption of the VSBK.



Around 120 guests participated in the workshop with representatives of users, industries, waste generators, policy makers etc. The women federation of contractors from the Housing Company expressed keen interest in purchasing quality bricks from EcoBricks Ltd. It was very encouraging to see market demand for the bricks already. All visiting dignitaries and guests were then taken on a tour of the VSBK

explaining the operation of the kiln including loading and unloading, coal feeding and distribution, operation of various equipment, etc. They were also shown quality green bricks are being made by women operators.