**WOBO proposes a three-part plan designed to promote safe, sustainable and sanitary structures within the built environment.**

WOBO having participated in UNHABITAT activities reflected on the promotion of safe, sustainable and sanitary structures within the built environment to reinforce their position and activities for consideration. These activities have been consolidated into key areas and would welcome support and promotion from members and fellow professionals.

**Activity 1 – adoption and updating of codes**

Promote the review and updating of the building codes where utilized in a specific country or state. Many codes are significantly out-of-date and have not kept up with the latest technology, nor do they incorporate the improved knowledge derived from experience and use of standards. Changes and improvements to codes are ongoing and continuously impact buildings to increase sustainable, safe, and sanitary structures.

A country may choose to adapt and then adopt a set of building code documents that are currently enforced in another country. This is a common practice since it gives the adopting country a quick start in the upgrading process. By adapting another country’s codes, the adopting country has the benefit of learning the advantages as well as any disadvantages that have been exposed through the application of the documents. Also, by reviewing a country’s experiences with a code, an analysis could be made of the potential impact a document might have on the adopting country, prior to any legislative activity necessary for adoption.

This may seem to be a daunting, even impossible task to incorporate a code document from another country.

An example of how this could work is the British Standards which serve as the basis of codes in many countries.

Another example is the code documents utilized in the United States. However, there is no United States Building Code. Instead, a private sector business called the International Code Council, promulgates a set of model code documents. This is achieved through a membership comprised of building and fire officials, who in turn vote on the approval or disapproval of proposed code changes. This process happens annually and produces an updated version of the documents every three years.

The model code is then modified by local and state jurisdictions to comply with State Laws. As a model code, it is adopted by every State area in the United States. So, the code can be used in dramatically different climates and geographic areas, ranging from Alaska to Hawaii and California to Wyoming to Florida.

The above examples are used to highlight the possibilities of creating new or improving existing code documents. WOBO does not endorse a specific code document nor is WOBO affiliated with any code producing agencies.

**Activity 2 - Establishment of a world-wide database**

To establish a world-wide database collecting information on the current building code documents in effect and the efforts supporting construction compliance with the code documents within any given country. WOBO proposes a Country Classification Program (CCP) for use throughout the world. The CCP coordinates with established organizations working at a global level to create a system to classify countries based on the level of professionalism in code enforcement activities. If a global evaluation system can be implemented, it will aid the RE: Insurance industry, financial institutions, international investors and ultimately the citizens of a nation.

The information collected for the database could be used to critically analyze, compare, and contrast the codes and code complying efforts of countries. In turn, this would allow for an analytical review to determine where additional funds might be spent for training, education, and code development.

Potential database questions creating benchmarks for comparisons might be:

* DO COUNTRIES HAVE A GRADING OR EFFICIENCY STANDARD?
* IS THERE A THIRD-PARTY OVERSIGHT OF CODE ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES?
* ARE CODE DOCUMENTS REVIEWED/UPDATED ON A PERIODIC BASIS?
* ARE STANDARDS IN PLACE REGARDING PROFESSIONALISM FOR CODE ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL?

 A possibility might be to create a system that encourages countries to strive for advancement. Advancement may be achieved through a Tier System with the goal of achieving Tier I status.

TIER I Classification consists of those countries with established, verifiable code enforcement practices that provide for the safety of the public. These countries have extensive participation from the property insurers allowing for a low risk factor related to property protection. These countries have well established global commerce and trade activity.

The tiered system continues for four or five additional levels with decreasing frequency until the last level which meets none of the criteria of a quality code enforcement program.

**Activity 3 – education and training**

Third part, advocate for Sustainable, Safe, and Sanitary Structures through education and training. Regular and continuous training of code enforcement personnel, design professionals, and members of the construction industry is a vital part of achieving an informed, well-trained construction workforce. Knowledgeable individuals in all aspects of the built environment is essential in striving toward quality structures.

An extensive effort within the educational system and community is highly desirable to change the mind-set of the general population. In some countries, densely populated cities have relatively low occurrences of structure fires. This can be attributed to the effort made by the government agencies to indoctrinate every eighteen-year-old person with fire safety training. After years of this practice, residents have a fire safety expert in nearly every household.

A similar effort could be attempted with educational awareness programs for early childhood, primary, and secondary students. Age-appropriate programs discussing the importance of sustainable, safe, and sanitary structures and the impact on our finances, health and well-being may have a significant and long-lasting influence on our future.

CONCLUSION

WOBO has no affinity nor preference toward a particular set of code documents or national system of enforcement. We are concerned with increasing sustainable, safe, and sanitary structures throughout the built environment. We believe, that without a significant effort toward quality and quantifiable code enforcement systems, sustainable, safe, and sanitary structures may be relegated to wishful thinking in many parts of the world.

We hope this paper generates interest and support throughout the many organizations that touch the construction world.

Best regards,

Paul E. Myers, President

World Organization of Building Officials