

Residential Energy Efficiency for Low-Income Households in Eurasia (REELIH)



Energy needs and challenges

Residential heating accounts for more than 30 percent of energy use in most countries of the region, as previous construction and heating methods did not focus on energy efficiency. As a result, a highly inefficient energy use intensifies the impact of rising energy prices on low-income households.

It is important to address the problems of residential energy efficiency because it can help countries move forward on the road to energy reforms and can limit energy waste. Energy efficiency has many benefits, depending upon the type of intervention. It can:

- Reduce the burden on households as energy prices rise
- Increase energy security
- Increase the investment needed for energy supply
- Reduce air pollution and climate change emissions
- Expand employment in unskilled and skilled labor
- Reduce demands on national and municipal budgets
- Improve economic competitiveness

Warm homes

Habitat for Humanity and USAID developed a regional online knowledge sharing platform which serves as a networking and knowledge sharing place for practitioners in the field of residential energy efficiency, with a particular focus on Southeastern Europe and the CIS countries. The platform provides space to inform and discuss and share best practices on residential energy efficiency investments and business models, particularly for multi-story buildings. The regional website getwarmhomes.org targets the main audience of international organizations, policy makers, governments, NGOs, and potential partners.

Project goals

The REELIH projects aims to improve living standards in multi-unit apartment buildings in the region. It is focusing on developing a regional effort, resources and networks to address the impact of rising energy prices on collective housing. REELIH develops a sustainable model for financing and management of residential energy efficiency improvements in selected multi-unit apartment buildings in Armenia, North Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The overall objectives of the project are:

Improve the REE investment environment in the region through a regional platform for knowledge sharing, awareness raising and advocacy, addressing financing approaches, promoting entrepreneurial solutions, developing jobs, and making available appropriate technical information.

Develop and test replicable financing models Combining capital and subsidies for lower income households to decrease energy consumption and cost.

National institutional capacity development Improve management and maintenance of collective residential units by homeowner associations and/or other stakeholders in the public and private sectors.



Results

- Conducted national detailed research on the dynamics of homeowners' associations and maintenance of residential multi-unit buildings
- Conducted a comparative research of government subsidy programs in Central and Eastern Europe
- Developed financial models for energy efficiency renovations in collective housing consisting of a mix of appropriate loan products, subsidies, and other sources
- Trained homeowner associations to organize themselves; manage and maintain common spaces; plan, finance and execute energy efficient renovations and cooperate with financial institutions and public bodies
- Supported country level multi-stakeholder advisory groups to advocate for residential energy efficiency
- Raised awareness about residential energy efficiency in Eastern Europe at several international conferences
- Organized regular round table meetings and national conferences on residential energy efficiency in Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Prepared policy recommendations for national and municipal governments for residential energy efficiency improvements in collective housing



Previous experience in North Macedonia

This initiative builds on Habitat for Humanity Macedonia's 2010 USAID project, Improving Energy Efficiency for the Low-Income Housing Sector in North Macedonia. This pilot aimed to renovate and upgrade energy efficiency in three multi-apartment blocks in North Macedonia. Its main objective was to confirm that investment in energy-efficient measures was justified.

Lessons from this project led to a follow-up proposal to expand the work to more countries in the region. The pilot phase has demonstrated that organizations with experience in housing and nonbank financing must be involved, in order to integrate energy efficiency into investments for upgrading existing low-income housing. Habitat for Humanity Macedonia, a national organization of Habitat for Humanity International, was critical for the implementation of this pilot. It has assisted more than 35 collective housing units in 8 municipalities in North Macedonia, directly serving 671 low-income households in obtaining microfinancing for home improvements, including energy efficiency measures.

The project in North Macedonia has demonstrated a model that can facilitate price changes needed for systemic energy sector reforms. These steps can reduce the impact on vulnerable households and achieve many of the related energy efficiency benefits.

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Getwarmhomes.org

Energy Efficiency for Common Spaces group on LinkedIn

