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FEATURE STORYSeptember 19, 2023

Climate Policies with Real-World Results

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REALITY CHECK

Lessons from
25 Policies
Advancing a
Low-Carbon
Future

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Thousands of climate policies have failed to stop climate change, yet some governments have made tangible progress.
- The World Bank's Reality Check report highlights 25 successful climate policies from countries as disparate as Egypt, Niger, China, and Peru.
- The report provides insights on how countries design and implement effective climate policies and on the compromises doing so can require.

All countries have promised to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to stop climate change. But promises are one thing and actions are another. Eight years after the 2015 Paris Agreement set ambitious, achievable goals to curb emissions and adapt to global climatic shifts, the world is still on track for unprecedented climate change -- and bureaucratic, political, and financial hurdles have stymied thousands of climate-friendly policies around the world.

Yet governments across the globe have made tangible progress and many climate policies have been successfully implemented. A new World Bank report, [Reality Check: Lessons from 25 Policies Advancing a Low-Carbon Future](#) showcases examples across sectors and five continents, from countries as disparate as Egypt, Niger, China and Peru. ¹

*"These are real policies in countries with very different income levels and political contexts," says **Axel van Trotsenburg, World Bank Senior Managing Director for Development Policy and Partnerships**. "They provide invaluable insights on how countries actually design and implement climate policies, and on the hard compromises that doing so can require, such as the rapid expansion of solar power in India, the use of waste to generate affordable energy in Mexico, and the greening of Colombia's construction industry."*

Climate policies typically try to achieve multiple objectives at once, such as reducing air pollution or building energy security or competitiveness. [Successful climate policymaking often involves finding middle ground, so policies are easier to implement and win support, according to the report.](#)

"These are real policies in countries with very different income levels and political contexts. They provide invaluable insights on how countries actually design and implement climate policies, and on the hard compromises that doing so can require, such as the rapid expansion of solar power in India, the use of waste to generate affordable energy in Mexico, and the greening of Colombia's construction industry."



Axel van Trotsenburg

World Bank Senior Managing Director for Development Policy and Partnerships



Decarbonizing Transport in Peru and South Africa

For example, Lima, Peru, is ranked as one of the world's worst cities for traffic congestion. Although 60% of trips take place on public transport, private vehicle use has increased rapidly, causing air pollution, traffic accidents, and severe road congestion – and more than one-third of workers spend 90 minutes a day commuting. [In 2010, Peru's government issued the first country-wide law to improve conditions for bicycles and promote cycling.](#) The law did not immediately trigger bicycle-friendly investments in Peru's cities: in 2019, only 0.9% of all trips in Lima were made by bicycle. But during the Covid 19 pandemic, Lima added almost 100 kilometers of bike lanes and separated them from the roadway – measures that helped convince some commuters to switch to biking. [The use of bicycles in Lima rose from 3.7% before the pandemic to 6.2% in 2021.](#) The plan also expects for the modal share for bikes to grow from 0.9 percent in 2019 to 11.6 percent by 2050 and estimates that the project could reduce emissions in Lima by 0.64 ton of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) by 2030 and 1.03 tCO₂e by 2050. Building on this progress, the city plans to develop a 1,383 km cycle network by 2040.

In South Africa, residents of the largest cities face long commutes from home to the workplace as a legacy of apartheid. Bus rapid transit (BRT) is seen as part of the solution under South Africa's National Green Transport Strategy for easing traffic congestion and fast-growing GHG emissions from the transport sector. But BRT systems initially failed to coordinate with the loosely regulated, ubiquitous minibuses used by many residents because of their low cost. A pilot project in Cape Town set out minibus operating routes and schedules in and around the Mitchell's Plain township. The increased efficiency demonstrated by this system offers a possible way forward for transport in Sub-Saharan Africa, helping make African cities more livable, more productive, and less carbon intensive.

Improving Energy Efficiency of Buildings in Türkiye and Colombia

[Buildings and appliance consume about 30% of global energy and are responsible for 27% of carbon dioxide emissions.](#) Energy efficient construction is, therefore, a potential game-changer, but bureaucratic red tape, financing, low incentives, and inertia often get in the way of more sustainable building. Türkiye launched an initiative to renovate as many as 500 central government buildings and develop a market for broader public building renovations. So far, the project has renovated 30 buildings, with an average energy savings of 30%. Another 120 buildings started renovations in 2023.

When it comes to green building, Colombia has seen a remarkable transformation. Colombia's mandatory green building code was enacted in 2015. The government introduced tax incentives for technical solutions such as insulation and energy-efficient air conditioning systems, and received catalytic financing from the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank. By the end of 2022, Colombia had 11.5 million square meters of green space certified under IFC's [EDGE program](#); in 2022 alone, 27% of new buildings were EDGE certified as green.



Taxing Carbon in British Columbia

[A carbon tax aims to reduce greenhouse emissions by taxing activities that emit CO2 but can also be an efficient way for government to raise revenues.](#) In 2008, the Canadian province of British Columbia began adding additional taxes to all fossil fuels purchased for transportation, home heating, and electricity, with the carbon tax covering 70% of GHG emissions. At the same time, the government clearly communicated that the tax would not raise the overall tax burden of firms and households but would finance reduction in other (less efficient) taxes. The carbon tax rate started at Can\$10/ tCO₂e and gradually increased to \$50/ tCO₂e by 2022. Extensive empirical evidence finds that the tax reduced emissions and inequality, raised growth and employment, and the reform now receives majority support from citizens.

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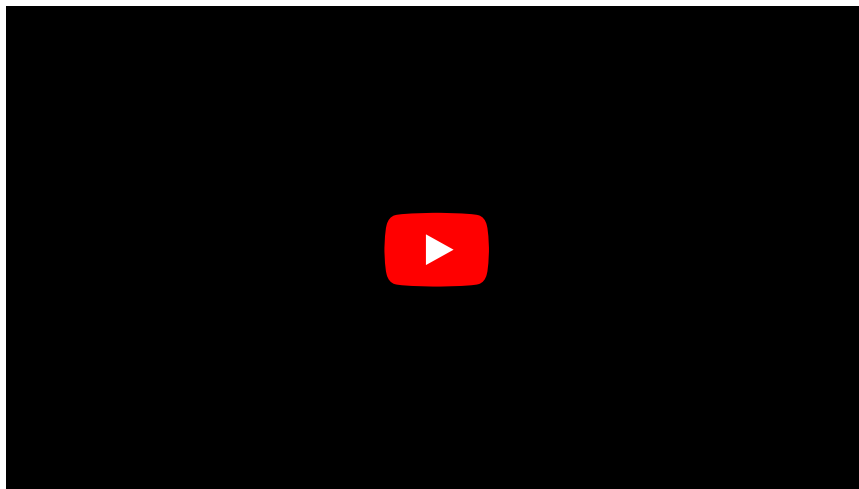
Restoring Soil in the Sahel

In Africaâ€™s Sahel region, where agriculture is the main employment and key for food security, healthy soils are key economic assets. But soil is also the dominant carbon sink, containing three times more carbon dioxide than the vegetation above ground. To preserve this valuable resource, farmers have adopted low-cost, efficient traditional practices, such as agroforestry and conventional rainwater harvesting techniques, to capture rainfall, reduce runoff, restore soils, and improve agriculture productivity. [In Niger, farmer-managed natural regeneration increased yields by 16-30% between 2003 and 2008, while adding nearly 5 million hectares of tree cover.](#)

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Decarbonization: â€˜Not a One Size Fits All Effortâ€™™

Decarbonization is not a one-size-fits-all effort, whether the solution involves new technology or traditional techniques. *â€œThe case studies outlined in this report show that with the right mix of political support and policy design we can decarbonize development,â€* said **Juergen Voegelé, Vice President for Sustainable Development at the World Bank.**



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