

Knowledge Management Award 2007

## **Ambulant Knowledge in West Africa**



**The Swisscontact Knowledge Management Award 2007 goes to West Africa, for the successful transfer of knowledge from the vocational training fund in Mali to the one in Benin and finally to the one in Burkina Faso. Also receiving awards were the regional Indonesian Project-Management-System, the Start-up-Kit for Kenyan Micro Finance Institutions, and the Local Economic Development-Project in Sri Lanka.**

For several years, Swisscontact has accorded knowledge management a high priority and as such, the prize carried with it a certain prestige, in addition to the award of 2,000 Swiss francs. Proof that profit-oriented companies also hold Knowledge Management in high regard was demonstrated when Marianne Sulzer, Head Knowledge Management, introduced the only member of the Jury who is not a part of Swisscontact: Bruno Herrmann is responsible for the knowledge management sector at Swiss Re. "A team with 80 players", she added. The other jurors were Swisscontact collaborators: Marianne Sulzer, the leader of knowledge management, her colleague Martin Dietschi and Markus Kupper, head of operations.

### **Four award-winning projects**

It must have been very difficult for them to reach a decision, as they placed two separate projects in joint third position. Véronique Su and her Team in Kenya had drawn up a set of information pointers and guidelines that made things much easier for newly established credit and savings cooperatives during their first three years of existence. The first Swisscontact Local Economic Development Project in Sri Lanka has turned out to be a great success story, particularly the greatly improved efficiency of the local public administration offices. In the meantime, the main task of the project manager, Jay Seneviratne, is to orchestrate the dissemination of the project. Indeed, before receiving the award, he had already stressed: "Even more important than the chance of a prize is the fact that the project is running so well".

To cope with the growing workload of the regional Swisscontact offices, the one in Indonesia has come up with an IT solution. This enables the people working in the various branches in Indonesia and those in the HQ in Zurich to have an instant overview of the ongoing projects at any particular time, as well as the allocated resources and the obligations arising. The tool allows the continuous organisation of the projects, as well as their analysis and control.

### **Trans-national network of knowledge**

„And the winner is...“, announced Marianne Sulzer, "West Africa!" It is there that, within just a few years, the idea of a national vocational training system for the crafts sector funded by a country-wide fund has spread from Mali to Benin and thence to Burkina Faso. Of course, the project did not find its own way there, and it was Swisscontact who matched it to the relevant circumstances and appropriate project partners. In the meantime, the people in charge of the vocational training funds in the three countries have been dealing directly with one another. This is tangible proof that the knowledge network is functioning correctly.

The proposal had been presented by Ralph Rothe, the country program manager in Benin. As he accepted the golden statuette and the winner's cheque for 2000 Swiss francs, he began by stressing that this project was not just about Benin, but about West Africa. Tania Haidari, who is

the leader of the vocational education project in Mali, then elaborated: "We want to develop and extend knowledge management and expand into other areas. For example, we are also very keen to strengthen the exchange between micro finance projects in the three countries." Nevertheless, the prize money will remain in Benin. Ralph Rothe invited the 12 training centers throughout the country to participate in a competition. "The best center will receive the money," he explained.