Press release
Zürich – 08/10/2014

International "Innovation Scale Award 2014"

OECD honours a Swisscontact project in Bangladesh

A Swisscontact project in Bangladesh is the one of ten finalists to be honoured with the "Innovation Scale Award 2014" by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). The public award ceremony was held yesterday at the OECD’s Headquarters in Paris. Thanks to a simple but highly effective innovation, today hundreds of thousands of small-scale vegetable farmers are benefiting from access to high-quality seed material, thereby improving their incomes.

"We are very happy to receive this award from the OECD. This is an encouraging sign for our employees in the Field," explains Samuel Bon, Executive Director of Swisscontact. The project in question involved affordable mini-packets with high-quality vegetable seeds for small-scale farmers in Bangladesh. With the mini-packets, these farmers were able to increase production substantially, thereby improving their own supply of vegetables or else earning supplementary income through sales.

Lack of access to high-quality seed material prevents small-scale farmers from improving vegetable yields. Seed was available on the market, but it was only offered in package sizes that were unaffordable to small-scale farmers. Based on a market study, the project convinced two leading seed producers to invest in mini-packets. The proven market potential of these packets led these companies, which at first were hesitant, to invest in new packaging equipment. These mini-packets are now available for sale in 55 out of 64 districts through various channels. Already during the first season 1.3 million units were sold. 40 percent of farmers also use the mini-packets for their own personal garden vegetable consumption. By 2013, more than 100,000 women have benefited directly from this intervention.

This innovation is a part of Katalyst, a large market development programme that for over 10 years has been testing market-oriented and therefore sustainable innovations. Between 2008 and 2013, 2.4 million poor farmer families and small enterprises (SMEs) benefited from this project, increasing their incomes by a total US $295 million. The project is being implemented by Swisscontact and GIZ International Services under the umbrella of the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of Bangladesh. The project is co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).
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http://www.swisscontact.org/fileadmin/images/Medienfotos/Medienfotos_Asien/swisscontact_katalyst.jpg

Caption:
Small-scale farmers in Bangladesh increased crops with high-quality seeds

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Caption:
Mujibul Hasan (Cezanne), Senior Technical Advisor, Katalyst; Mehzabin Ahmed, Senior Business Consultant, Katalyst; Samuel Bon, CEO Swisscontact at the ceremony of the DAC Prize in Paris

More about the project:
http://www.swisscontact.org/index.php?id=46&L=3

About Swisscontact
Swisscontact was founded in 1959 as an independent foundation by prominent individuals from the worlds of commerce and science in Switzerland. We are involved exclusively in international development cooperation and since 1961 have been implementing our own projects in addition to those mandated to us. Since its inception, Swisscontact has maintained close ties with the private sector. Swisscontact creates appropriate framework conditions for healthy entrepreneurship, an essential condition for a competitive private sector devoted to social and environmentally-friendly principles as the cornerstone of development. Visit www.swisscontact.org for more details.
Media contact

Swisscontact
Swiss Foundation for Technical Cooperation, Hardturmstrasse 123, CH-8005 Zürich, Switzerland
Francine Thurnher, Head of Communications
Email: francine.thurnher@swisscontact.ch, Tel. +41 44 454 17 17

www.swisscontact.org