

Editorial

Development cooperation is one of the long-term pillars of Swiss-Bangladesh relations. Priorities of the coming years are income and employment creation for poor people as well as strengthening local governance, both in accordance with the national priorities and the PRSP. In addition, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is striving to support regional initiatives such as exchange and cooperation of Bangladeshi organizations with counterparts in neighbouring countries in areas of common interest. Recently we funded two such programmes - a regional symposium on migration and a regional exchange on decentralization in South Asia. Both the events had positive results, with good prospect of follow-up and strengthening cooperation.

Throughout the world, SDC will increasingly strive to address the challenges of food security and climate change, both highly relevant for Bangladesh as well as the South Asian region. These priorities will be gradually reflected in SDC's programme during the course of next months and years. There will be a regional workshop on disaster risk reduction in November this year in Dhaka. Switzerland will also be represented in the London Conference on Climate Change focusing on Bangladesh.

*Ambassador of Switzerland
Dora Rapold*

Upcoming Events ...

23 August 2008 – Switzerland Bangladesh Business Forum (SBBF) Luncheon Meeting on 'Garment and Textile - Its Future & Challenges', in Dhaka

23-29 August 2008 – Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Conference, Davos, Switzerland organized by SDC, where Bangladesh will participate

November 2008 – SDC Regional Training on Disaster Risk Reduction in Dhaka

Dhaka Caught in EURO 2008 Fever

A string of exciting events were held at the Goethe-Institut in Dhaka during the EURO 08 Football Championship, hosted by Switzerland and Austria from June 7-29. A number of fans gathered for the live broadcast on big-screen, especially for the opening and final matches and for the interesting movie shows relating to football and the Swiss host cities. Exciting activities such as flag show, quiz competition and face painting featured during the tournament. Quiz winners received EURO 2008 official football as well as other attractive prizes. Around 300 underprivileged boys and girls from UCEP school enjoyed a Swiss children's movie on the inaugural day. A friendly football match for women was held in the German Club with the participation of Swiss and German embassies and Goethe-Institut staff. The Embassy of Switzerland in Dhaka in collaboration with Goethe-Institut Bangladesh organized the range of the programmes to celebrate the EURO 08.



Students of UCEP enjoying movie show at Goethe-Institut

New Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy

Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Switzerland Ms. Elisabeth Bösch Malinen will leave Bangladesh in the end of August for a posting in Bern. She served in this position since October 2006. Mr. Juerg Siegenthaler will join as the new deputy from September this year.

Notice for Swiss Scholarship

Through the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS), the Swiss Government grants foreign students university scholarships. Information on academic year 2009-10 can be obtained from the website of the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh www.eda.admin.ch/dhaka.



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SDC Supports Regional Exchange on Decentralization in South Asia

SDC supported the participation of eight Bangladeshi government and NGO officials for a regional exchange on 'Decentralization in South Asia' at the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), India. The Bangladeshi delegation included representatives from NILG, BARD, RDA, Rupantar, DASCOH and Sharique. The workshop, held from 23-26 June in Kerala, included participants from Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The workshop demonstrated that there is considerable interest and potential for mutual support and knowledge sharing among countries in the region on local governance and decentralization.

SDC Approves 4.58 million Swiss Francs Funding for Skills Development Project

SDC has approved funding for the Skills Development Project of the government of Bangladesh which will provide support to strengthen the TVET system in Bangladesh by enhancing access, relevance and quality. In the first phase of the project for the period 2008-11, SDC will contribute 4.58 million Swiss francs. The project, co-financed by Asian Development Bank (ADB), will be implemented by the Directorate of Technical Education under the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh.

SDC Approves Further Funding for Agro Forestry

SDC has recently approved the next phase of Agroforestry Improvement Partnership (AFIP) project for 2008-10. SDC contribution for this phase will be 1.5 million Swiss francs. AFIP promotes the establishment of a coordinated national programme for improving the quality of planting materials by the concerned government institutions and other national stakeholders. This project is implemented in partnership with Intercooperation.

SDC Supports Study on Economic Cost of Domestic Violence

The findings of a study on the Economic Cost of Domestic Violence in Bangladesh were revealed in a CPD Dialogue held in Dhaka on 9th August. The research was conducted by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), with funding from SDC.

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Regional Symposium on Migration

SDC funded a Regional Symposium on 'Deployment of Workers Overseas: A Shared Responsibility' in Dhaka from 15-16 July. The event was jointly organized by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment of Bangladesh and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The symposium was represented by government, worker and employer organizations from ten countries, including India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The Directions for Actions of the symposium can be downloaded from www.sdc.org.bd

SDC Cash Support for SIDR Victims

2,962 SIDR-affected families are now restoring their livelihood and striving to stand back on their own feet with the support of SDC. With the 15,000 Taka cash grant received from SDC, each household has bought cows, fishing nets, boats or has invested in small businesses, agricultural farming or in other income generation activities.



Two beneficiaries displaying the milking cows bought with SDC's cash grant

Under SDC's 'Cash for Livelihood' (CFL) project, this grant was paid unconditionally in one installment during May in the worst affected Rayenda and Southkhali Unions of Sarankhola Upazila in Bagerhat District. The selection of beneficiaries as well as disbursement of the cash was completed in close collaboration with the local administration, Union Parishad elected representatives and local NGO partners. Until now, the total SDC assistance for the SIDR affected region amounts to US\$ 7 million.