

**Message from the Ambassador**

The recent visit of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Director General Ambassador Martin Dahinden to Bangladesh was important in the context of re-affirming SDC's long-term commitment to the poverty alleviation and economic development of Bangladesh. His field visit as well as high level exchanges with government and civil society representatives was fruitful. I am delighted that Mr. Dahinden has left Bangladesh with very positive impressions of the country and a commitment to continue the Swiss cooperation in Bangladesh.

After four years, my term as the Ambassador of Switzerland in Bangladesh has come to an end. On this occasion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude for the support and cooperation of the Government of Bangladesh, development partners, private sectors and civil society representatives. I will take good and dear memories of Bangladesh and its people with me. It has been my privilege to contribute to the growing relations between Bangladesh and Switzerland. I am confident that this long-standing friendship and cooperation will be continued in the years ahead.

*The Ambassador of Switzerland
Dora Rapold*



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SDC Director General Visits Bangladesh

The Director General (DG) of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Ambassador Martin Dahinden came on a five-day trip to Bangladesh on 25th April. This was his first visit to Bangladesh. During the trip, the DG met the Bangladesh Finance Minister AMA Muhith and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Hasan Mahmud and discussed a range of bilateral development issues including climate change and renewable energy. The SDC DG re-affirmed Switzerland's commitment to Bangladesh's development despite the fallouts of the global financial crisis in Switzerland. Besides, the SDC DG held talks with civil society and business representatives of the country on development and economic potentials and challenges of Bangladesh.

The highlight of Mr. Dahinden's Bangladesh visit was a field trip to the Rajshahi region where he spent three busy days. He visited a number of SDC funded projects in the local government and skills development sectors. He exchanged views with local stakeholders, particularly the beneficiaries to get an impression of the SDC programme. During the visit, he was accompanied by Dr. Dora Rapold, Ambassador of Switzerland in Bangladesh.



School children greet Martin Dahinden at Rajshahi

Prior to his departure, Mr. Dahinden expressed his very positive feelings of the people of Bangladesh, lauding their entrepreneurship. In this context, he underscored the importance of skills development, an area where SDC is already making contributions. Ambassador Dahinden reiterated that Bangladesh would continue to be a priority country of Switzerland's development cooperation and the level of funding would be maintained.

CMES Director Win Caritas Award 2009

Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim has been awarded the Prix Caritas 2009 as recognition of the pioneering and innovative work as the founder and director of the Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES). The Prix Caritas is awarded annually to individuals who have distinguished themselves through outstandingly meritorious efforts in the social work sector, development cooperation work or intercultural understanding. The award ceremony will be held in June 2009 at Lucerne, Switzerland. CMES is a partner of SDC since many years. More information about SDC collaboration with CMES at <http://www.sdc.org.bd/en/Home/Education/CMES>.

Francophonie Celebrated

The Embassies of Egypt, France, Morocco Switzerland and Vietnam and the High Commission of Canada in Bangladesh along with Alliance Française celebrated Francophonie on 16-23 March in Dhaka, organizing a variety of cultural events such as film shows, dictation contest. The French language is one of the four official languages of Switzerland. Approximately 20% of people in Switzerland speak French as their first language.

SDC Supports NGO Delegation to Geneva

SDC has supported the participation of Bangladeshi NGO and media representatives to the Universal Periodical Review (UPR) on Bangladesh in the UN Human Rights Council, held in Geneva in February. This assistance was aimed at increasing the knowledge and capacity of human rights actors in Bangladesh.

PCM Workshop Held for SDC Partners

SDC organized a workshop on Planning and Monitoring Outcomes for its partners on 21-22 January in Dhaka. This was a follow-up event of the first workshop held in March 2008. The objectives of this workshop were to strengthen the knowledge on Planning and Monitoring Outcomes and ways to integrate this into the Project Cycle Management (PCM) process. 41 representatives from SDC partners took part in the workshop.

SDC Contributes 5 million Swiss Francs to Anti-corruption Project

SDC has signed an agreement with the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) to support the 'Paribartan – Driving Change' project. The SDC contribution is 5 million Swiss Francs (approx. 30 Crore Taka) for the period 2009-2014. The project aims at reducing corruption in public institutions so that poor people can get such services at valid cost, without having to pay bribe. The project also brings community people together so that they collectively create public demand to reduce corruption and put pressure on corrupt individuals, institutions and practices. These citizens committees work in the critical sectors such as health, education and local government, where people from all walks of life, specially the poor seek different services.



Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony between TIB and donor representatives, 5 April 2009, Dhaka

Further information on the *Paribartan* project at http://www.sdc.org.bd/en/Home/Local_Governance/TIB

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