



Afghanistan project wins the 2009 International ReSource Award for Sustainable Watershed Management

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Zurich, 20 March 2009 – An Afghanistan-based project with the dual goal of preventing downstream flood damage, and increasing land productivity through holistic watershed management, has won the seventh Swiss Re 2009 International ReSource Award for sustainable watershed management. The project will receive prize money of USD 150 000. The award ceremony was held today in Istanbul on the occasion of this year's World Water Forum.

David Bresch, Swiss Re's Head Sustainability & Emerging Risk Management, said: "The World Water Forum is the most recognised worldwide event on water and a unique platform where the water community and the policy and decision makers from all regions of the world link up, debate and attempt to find solutions to achieve water security. It is therefore a privilege for Swiss Re to hand over our ReSource Award at this event, and to emphasise Swiss Re's engagement in the area of sustainable watershed management."

The winning project is located in the Kahmard district (Bamiyan province) of central Afghanistan with a rural population of just under 18 000 inhabitants who live off very limited land resources where irrigation is a necessity. Increased flooding and the resulting destruction of irrigated land are now putting those resources progressively under threat.

Improving livelihoods through holistic watershed management

The purpose of the project is to help improve the livelihoods of the rural population in the Kahmard district by reducing flood damage and increasing long-term land productivity through holistic watershed management. More specifically, the project aims at reducing the threat of devastating flash floods and re-establishing the production potential of three watersheds through a combination of structural measures in the critical water courses, providing quick solutions, and re-vegetation in the watersheds, offering mid- to long-term improvements.

The Swiss NGO Helvetas, supported by the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, is in the process of launching a

community-based watershed management project focusing on both short- and long-term solutions. Emphasis will be placed on measures for sustainable watershed management to prevent the risk of floods from increasing. If land degradation is allowed to continue, the reservoirs created by the planned dams will soon become silted. Effective management may also help to re-establish productivity on degraded land in the watersheds and thus contribute to solving other major issues in the region.

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About the ReSource Award

Launched in 2002, the ReSource Award is an internationally recognised prize for leadership in implementing the principles of sustainability in watershed management. With these awards, Swiss Re demonstrates its support for watershed management efforts by governmental and non-governmental parties. The programme focuses on sustainability and humanitarian projects and on supporting the communities in which the Group operates.

Link to World Water Forum: <http://www.worldwaterforum5.org/>

Notes to editors

Swiss Reinsurance Company Ltd

Swiss Re is a leading and highly diversified global reinsurer. The company operates through offices in more than 25 countries. Founded in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1863, Swiss Re offers financial services products that enable risk-taking essential to enterprise and progress. The company's traditional reinsurance products and related services for property and casualty, as well as the life and health business are complemented by insurance-based corporate finance solutions and supplementary services for comprehensive risk management. Swiss Re is rated "A+" by Standard & Poor's, "A1" by Moody's and "A" by A.M. Best.

Helvetas

Helvetas was founded in 1955 as the first private organization for development co-operation in Switzerland. Helvetas is a denominationally and politically independent association, supported by approximately 43'000 members, 40'000 sponsors and 15 regional groups.

Since 2006, Helvetas has been implementing a long-term SDC-funded program for Improving Livelihoods of Rural Communities (ILRC) in 5 districts of Bamyan, Baghlan and Samangan provinces. Among others the ILRC has a livestock and pasture improvement component, and a budget for constructing infrastructures to reduce vulnerabilities caused by flood disasters in the valleys or inadequate drinking water.