

Collaboration with the Private Sector: A New Framework, thanks to SDGs

Swisscontact's country portfolio includes both very poor and fragile countries, as well as middle-income countries. In both contexts, Swisscontact was able to offer specific solutions and broaden its project portfolio in 2016, thanks to many years of experience. Swisscontact also has broad knowledge of collaboration with private sector companies – an objective of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Quality control in the textile sector in Bangladesh

Reducing Poverty for People in Fragile Contexts

Swisscontact works in various countries where the state stands on shaky ground. Political or humanitarian crises render the creation of functional state institutions difficult. In North and West Africa, there is also the threat of violent extremists and terrorist outfits. Such fragile contexts present challenges to Swisscontact; the risks to project management, safety, and achieving our goals are more than in well-functioning states. Wherever state structures are weak, it is a particularly challenging to induce sustainable systemic change.

Of course, these challenges are not new. Over the last few decades, Swisscontact has learned how to make its mark fighting poverty even in fragile contexts. Key is the ability to react quickly and have well-established control mechanisms in place within projects. However, along with more stringent safety requirements, these involve higher operational costs and careful use of financial resources to cover these costs – with ever-tighter project budgets expected in the future.

In fragile contexts, Swisscontact is almost exclusively implementing technical projects

financed by bilateral donor organisations such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) or private sector partners. The main focus of these types of projects is in Africa.

Job Creation for Middle-income Countries

In poor countries, Swisscontact's work focuses mostly on the bottom of the pyramid of society. In middle-income countries, the focus is on involving those who otherwise do not benefit from general economic growth. Even though there is a growing middle class in these countries, income distribution is very uneven; poverty and hopelessness are still endemic.

The fact that Swisscontact's private sector development know-how in middle-income countries is recognised, is supported by the increased collaboration with the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). Swisscontact is implementing several large-scale projects that sometimes span multiple continents, including the Swiss Entrepreneurship Programme in six countries, and the Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO) in eleven countries (as of 2017). There is also a project helping to improve the competitiveness of Colombian SMEs.