Successes and Challenges in Scaling Water-Energy-Food Technology Adoption through Startups Acceleration in S/SE Asia

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WE4F is a joint international initiative of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the European Union, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Netherlands, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), Sweden through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).
All innovators in the WE4F SSEA Cohort

- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- India
- Indonesia
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Thailand
- Vietnam

Innovators:
- ATEC
- KGC
- agrosolar
- HUSK
- promethean power systems
- FreshR
- Sunrider
- CoorGree
- Tinamitra Mandiri
- Nong Center for Aquatic Livelihoods
- VillageLink
- aQysta
- Gham Power
- Manda AgriFresh
- Coexbio
- MRM
- Green
WE4F SSEA RIH Results to Date

34 innovators
16 women-led/owned organizations from 8 countries

>US$ 132 million+
Investment mobilized – KPI9 results

US$ 100,000
Matching fund grant deployed

1,522,328 end-users reached and supported

446,354 95%
Women BoP

100+ TAs provided

Example of TA provided
• Business Development
• Investment Readiness
• Marketing and Sales
• Gender Integration
• End-user Financing
• Partnerships
Application-based technology can scale quickly

Village Link: Satellite-based mobile application for crop monitoring and agri-advisory services

• Scaled from 100,000+ to 600,000+ end-users* in 2 years
• Training is required to ensure effective usage of the technology
• Talent recruitment and retention can be challenging to scale digital-based technology

*Recently collected data in May 2024 and under DQA process
End-User Financing (EUF) can significantly boost adoption

AgroSolar: Solar-powered pump with end-user financing model for smallholder farmers

- Farmers can pay as less as 30% of the cost upfront and pay the rest after the first one or two cropping cycles.

- Not every innovator can find MFI partners to support their EUF scheme.

- The role of blended finance, grant and impact investment is important to enable the EUF at farm level.
Grant can be helpful, but it is not everything

Pumpkin Plus: Previously NPO, now Social Enterprise, who work on Sand Bar Cropping Method in Bangladesh

- Despite a series of grants from various organizations, they still operate in a charity-style organization.

- TAs to improve business models can change the business mindset of the executives are required to ensure their financial sustainability
Support on enabling environment is still required

AST: A natural fungal seed and plant treatment (BioEnsure) to improve crop resilience to drought

- New regulation was enforced, which legal TA was needed to ensure continuity of sales
- Local expert is required, sometimes collective effort is necessary
- Ease of doing business and partnership mapping for international expansion are a common EE pain points.
Collaboration across programs is crucial

Husk Ventures: Organic fertilizer made with rice husk biochar that enhances soil’s water-holding capacity

- Collaboration with USDA RAIN can help Husk to explore the market feasibility for market expansion in Thailand.
- Similar initiatives with Acumen and Women on Wings
- Finding the right (and more) partners since the beginning of the program is important