

GERMAN ECO-PRIZE ‘BENEFITS DEVELOPING WORLD RESEARCHERS’



Their work focuses on developing innovative, interdisciplinary solutions to challenges in the environment and sustainable development, such as low-carbon urban societies and biofuels.

Among the winners, picked from 430 applicants from 80 countries, were researchers from Brazil, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, South Africa and Vietnam.

They were selected by a panel of German experts for their scientific excellence and innovative potential of their research.

Volkmar Dietz, who heads BMBF's sustainability, climate and energy directorate, tells *SciDev.Net* that Green Talents fosters international cooperation by promoting the exchange of ideas between young scientists and giving them an opportunity to work in Germany.

The winners go on a two-week tour of German research institutions and companies in the sustainable development sector, have individual meetings with experts in their research field and can go on a fully funded research visit of up to three months at a German research institution of their choice.

In addition, they have access to a network of more than 105 previous winners spread over 36 countries from Argentina to Zimbabwe.

“The success of our efforts can be seen in the ever-growing number of applications and participating countries each year.”

One winner, Umarah Mubeen from Pakistan, is working on microalgae biomass to fix carbon and produce bioenergy.

“It was a time I got to learn more about my field from a broader perspective,” she tells *SciDev.Net*. She hopes to benefit from expert

guidance and advice during a research stay in Germany before continuing her work in Pakistan.

“My future goal is to efficiently integrate the microalgal biomass production process with CO₂ capturing ... improving the economy of developing countries as well as protecting the environment,” she explains.

Germany’s reputation as a leader in research on renewable energy was an incentive for one of the 2010 winners, Hung Phan from Vietnam, to apply.

“I wanted to share my expertise on waste-water management and expand my knowledge of renewable energy,” he says. “I knew that Germany was a country with a lot of renewable energy and so I hoped to visit there and learn more about it.

“It was a really eye-opening experience. I saw many different types of renewable energy: biomass, tidal energy and geothermal,” he adds.

Phan is currently working in the United States, but intends to return to Vietnam in a few years.

He is keen to apply the insights he has gained abroad back at home, where biofuels could help provide more people with access to electricity.

Dietz says the winning researchers “can greatly benefit their countries as well as sustainable development and international cooperation in general” with their new knowledge and contacts.

“The success of our efforts can be seen in the ever-growing number of applications and participating countries each year. They all want to become part of our unique network,” he says.

“We are always pleased to receive applications from young researchers from developing countries, which the majority of applicants represent.”

Source: <http://www.scidev.net/global/energy/news/german-eco-prize-benefits-developing-world-researchers.html>