Unique initiative for clean textile and leather production expands

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Textile Water Initiative, one of Sweden's largest public-private partnerships, will expand to new countries in Asia and Africa after a successful pilot project in India.

Through the initiative, 28 Swedish textile and leather companies have cooperated with Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) to catalyse a shift towards sustainable production globally. To achieve this, the initiative has educated suppliers and sub-contractors to help minimize the use of water, energy and chemicals throughout the whole supply chain. More than 40 factories participated in the pilot project, which contributed to saving 284 million litres of water and 402 tonnes of chemicals annually.
"It is all about spreading knowledge and changing attitudes," says Rami Abdelrahman, Programme Manager at SIWI. "Within just two years, we have educated more than 14,000 factory managers and employees. This has paved the way for long-term gains for both the environment, the companies, the suppliers and the local population."
Inspired by the success of the pilot, the initiative will now expand to include new factories in Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, India and Turkey. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) will, through a unique business model, match the companies' and factories' investments in better water management. SIWI will continue the learning process with suppliers and sub-contractors in the new countries. The initiative also works with national public authorities to increase the institutional capacity to govern water sustainably. "Unfortunately, the textile industry often has a negative impact on the environment and we therefore want to take the lead in minimizing water and chemical usage in Asia and Africa. We will jointly contribute to sustainable development and an improved local environment," says Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, Director-General, SIDA. Many companies have joined forces in this initiative, despite being competitors in the stores. The network needs more members, however. "The more companies that engage, the greater the impact. Ideally we would want all Swedish textile and leather companies to implement our guidelines and help us develop them further", says Elin Larsson, Sustainability Manager, Filippa K.

Sweden Textile Water Initiative on the new website - SIWI