

SPC Graduation Colorfully Celebrates

A Graduation Ceremony of six first generation Seed Producer Cooperatives (SPCs) took place on 29 December 2016 at the main campus of Mekelle University. The six SPCs were organized following the launching of the LSB project in 2009. Since then, a lot of capacity development efforts have been made by Mekelle University ISSD project to make the graduation a reality.



SPCs Graduated chairpersons wearing graduation ribbon [Credit: MU-ISSD/29Dec.2016/G.Haweria B.]

Professor Fetien Abay (PhD), ISSD scientific coordinator and Vice President for Research and Community Services welcomed all the graduation ceremony participants and appreciated the farmers' native knowledge on seed breeding, seed production and multiplication skills. She also noted that the graduation would ensure that the aims of the project to strengthen the development of a vibrant, commercial and pluralistic seed sector in Ethiopia would become a reality.

In his opening speech, Dr. Kindeya Gebrehiwot, the President of MU and institutional advisor of ISSD project, acknowledged the graduating SPCs for their great contribution in the production

and dissemination of improved seed varieties as Local Seed Producers cooperatives (LSBs). Dr. Kindeya also pledged that MU would continue to support the seed sector together in collaboration with key partners.

During the event high performing seed producing cooperative and individual farmers were awarded *certificates of appreciation* and *cash* for their active role in the production and dissemination of quality seed across Tigray region.



SPCs chairpersons receiving an award from Dr. Kindeya (L), Dr. Amsalu (center) and Professor Fetien (center-behind) [Credit: MU-ISSD/29Dec.2016/G.Haweria B.]

University allocated a significant amount of fund for covering partial cost of the event.

During the ceremony a profile of each SPC and individual farmers was read to the invited guests. The six SPCs were awarded 5,000 Birr respectively and 13 individual farmers were awarded from 1,000-3,000 Birr.

Dr. Kindeya G/hiwot president of Mekelle University and Dr. Amsalu Ayana, manager of BENEFIT –ISSD handed over the award to the prize winners.

On his message to the graduating SPCs, Dr. Amsalu Ayana, Manager of BENEFIT-ISSD indicated that the SPCs played a crucial role in seed production and multiplication. He noted that, SPCs like Shewit are now solving the problem of potato tuber shortage in Tigray region.

The graduating SPCs have now reached a new stage where other similar SPCs could follow suit. The SPCs graduation ceremony got wide media coverage from Dimtsi Weyane Tigray (DWET) both national and FM radios, Fana FM 94.8, Mekelle FM 104.4, Tigray Bureau of Public and Government Relations and Aigaforum.com media outlets.

The graduation ceremony was attended by SPC representatives, innovative farmers, regional and local stakeholders, ISSD project staff, partner representatives, university academic and support staff.

The event was accompanied by music and cultural dances and was colorfully concluded.



Graduated SPCs, farmers and stakeholders holding their certificates of appreciation [Credit: MU-ISSD/29Dec.2016/ G.Haweria B.]