

“Innovations in Improving the Business Environment at the Municipal Level”

Roundtable - Growing Inclusive Markets - June 20-21, 2008, School of Business, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada (www.gim2008.ca)

Countries with better regulations appear to grow faster. Donor support for small businesses has switched from an over-emphasis on direct financing of small firms to an emphasis on improving the business environment first for these and all firms. In fact, since the 1990s, many national and local governments in developing countries, together with international and local organizations, have started to find ways to foster an enhanced business-enabling environment through simplification of regulations. Just in Latin America alone, where over-regulation of businesses has been a norm, more than 130 municipalities in 13 countries have business simplification-related projects in recent years.

Some fundamental issues around simplification remain unanswered.

- The long-term impact of these reforms: does reducing time and cost of business registration result in a long-term benefit for the businesses that adopt them? Do these reforms have quantifiable development impacts?
- What is the most adequate methodology to evaluate impact that would allow comparison between reforms, countries, project components, among others?
- Which practices can be identified as good practices from various interventions?

In December 2007, the Business Regulation Evaluation Group (BREG) was formally established jointly with IDRC, DFID, FUNDES, and World Bank-IFC. To date, CIDA and the IADB have also joined the Group. Other research institutions and donors are seriously interested in doing so in the near future. What motivated the members to form this Group was the need for a collaborative instance to join human, technical and financial efforts to study the long-term impact of these micro-level reforms using common approaches.

The objectives of the present roundtable are:

- To discuss innovative ways to promote business simplification as a way to improve business enabling environments in Latin America and elsewhere.
- To present the unique “value added” of BREG to push the envelope of knowledge and knowledge sharing in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- To illustrate these efforts with the presentation of the preliminary results from a tracer evaluation study as well as the discussion of other recent experiences on business simplification
- To debate the role of governments, business and civil society to monitor and evaluate business simplification as a way to inform and improve policy reform at the local and national levels in Latin America and elsewhere.

The session will be chaired by IDRC (Edgard Rodriguez). Presenters will include:

Alvaro Quijandria (World Bank – IFC): “Business Enabling Environment in Latin America – Our Experience”

Oscar Antezana/Alexandra Santillana (Chairman – BREG) “Improved Business Environment: So What?”

Raul Andrade (Associate Researcher, GRADE – Peru) “Preliminary Findings and Challenges of an Evaluation Study for Metropolitan Lima”

Diego Zelaya (Tegucigalpa Municipality, Honduras) “Policy Perspectives on Promoting Simplification: Municipal Government and Private Sector” (TBC)

Bibiana Vasquez (Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C.) “Role of Monitoring in Business Simplification” (TBC)

The 12-minute presentations will be followed by a period of Question and Answer. The audience attending this major event on private sector development will be comprised by international donors, practitioners in the area of private sector development, academics in the area of business and management, among others.