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Deutsches Institut für
Entwicklungspolitik



German Development
Institute



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung

Workshop Programme

The Doing Business agenda and beyond: Smart policies for competitiveness and social inclusion

4 to 5 December 2008

BACKGROUND

Economic growth, driven by a competitive private sector, is crucial for poverty reduction. However, there are differing views on how to stimulate the private sector in developing countries in a way that enhances competitiveness and provides opportunities for the poor. Given the limited resources of governments and donors, what are the priority areas for support? What can governments and donors do to spur inclusive economic development, and what kind of policy and regulatory environment delivers better results in terms of inclusive growth? Policy prescriptions considerably diverge on these issues.

In recent years, the emphasis of donor interventions is shifting towards regulatory business environment reforms. This reflects growing disappointment with project level support for specific sectors or groups of firms. Even where such support benefits the target group, it rarely has a significant country-wide impact. In contrast, reforms that improve rules and regulations for private investment in general may have much more outreach.

The World Bank/IFC’s Doing Business Report now offers benchmarks for “ease of doing business”. The report focuses on the regulatory environment in which small to medium sized domestic companies operate, with a particular focus on clarity of property rights and streamlined regulatory processes. It is based on the assumption that low levels of regulation create a level playing field for all firms that spurs economic growth and especially benefits those working in the informal economy. The role of proactive policies for strengthening the competitiveness of the private sector is not addressed in the report. The Doing Business approach has been criticized for ignoring the benefits of regulation and for insufficient evidence regarding growth and poverty effects of the proposed reform agenda.

A number of scholars and practitioners highlight the existence of manifold market failures that may need to be corrected through targeted interventions – e.g. to foster entrepreneurship and vocational training, to encourage economic linkages, and to provide business development services, either directly or by kick-starting service markets. While Doing Business focuses on how to lessen regulation in order to achieve better functioning market institutions, its critics call for an active role of the state as a regulator and facilitator. These critics have to acknowledge, however, that the performance of public support policies has often not been satisfactory in the past.

This workshop is based on a premise that there can be benefit from a better exchange and mutual learning among different communities of researchers and practitioners with a common interest in facilitating private sector led development. Separate communities deal with, for example, entrepreneurship development; innovation systems; value chains; business development services; or investment climate issues, and there is room for more cross-fertilization of ideas.

This workshop is part of a BMZ-funded research project at the German Development Institute that looks at the approach taken by Doing Business in the context of broader work on private sector development and derives recommendations on how to deal with its current limitations. It includes a perspective on the relevance of regulatory reforms and the strengths and weaknesses of the Doing Business Reports. It then addresses key policy challenges for competitiveness and social inclusion in private sector development that may call for interventions beyond the Doing Business agenda. The intention of the workshop is to build greater consensus regarding the role of regulatory reforms, to explore where and how governments should adopt a more active supporting role, and to identify smart policies that avoid bureaucratic inefficiency and reduce the risks of political capture. Thereby the workshops will provide new insights for the formulation of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (BMZ) new concept paper on ‘Sustainable Economic Development’.

This workshop pulls together some of the leading researchers in different areas of inclusive economic development. All of them do policy-oriented research and are in constant dialogue with practitioners. The workshop has the intention to discuss new research findings and innovative donor approaches in a critical and constructive way with policymakers and practitioners from German development cooperation. The presenters will provide an overview of state-of-the-art knowledge in their respective field with particular emphasis on policies. Commentators have been chosen who will challenge the presentations from differing research perspectives and raise critical questions for discussion. The participants of the workshop will be senior policymakers and practitioners of private sector development. Presentations and comments will therefore be rather short, focused on new insights and controversies, and leave ample space for discussion in each module.

OVERVIEW

December 4th 2008

9:00 am – 6:30 pm

SESSION 1:

Do regulatory reforms matter?

The Doing Business team argues that bureaucratic regulations are a key obstacle for enterprise development and growth; and that they discriminate against the informal sector in particular and therefore fall especially heavy on the poor. Hence simplification of entry and exit, deregulation of labour markets, less burdensome tax systems and lower taxes are recommended as being both pro-growth and pro-poor. The World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) states that “seven of the ten Doing Business indicators presume that lessening regulation is always desirable, whether a country starts with a little or a lot of regulation”. What is the empirical evidence for the pro-growth and the pro-poor assumptions? Is it plausible to encourage full deregulation, or is there evidence that optimal levels of regulation differ from minimal levels. In order to take advantage of the political leverage of benchmarking systems, would it be possible to define measurable optimal levels of regulation across nations?

SESSION 2:

Do entry reforms matter – and is the Doing Business agenda appropriate?

Entrepreneurship is key for private sector success. Easy entry of firms is good for economic development because it allows poor people to earn a living and, even more importantly, it enhances competition and thereby drives productivity growth. New firms challenge the business models of established ones and force those to upgrade or to exit the market. In the latter case, more efficient newcomers take their place, and capital and labour will be reallocated to them. Ease of entry (and exit) can thus be expected to lead to higher productivity and, hence, income. However, some registration requirements and other forms of administrative entry barriers may be necessary to create social welfare, and even increase the competitiveness of firms, e.g. by reducing transaction costs. What empirical evidence do we have about the link between entry regulations, economic growth, and poverty? What are appropriate levels of entry regulation, and is it problematic to establish zero regulation as a benchmark?

SESSION 3:

How important are other binding constraints for entrepreneurship development?

Developing countries are characterized by high start-up rates but few competitive companies. What hinders their development? The Doing Business reforms build on the assumption that entrepreneurship is mainly held back by unnecessary and cumbersome regulations. Secure property rights and low entry barriers would induce many informal entrepreneurs to grow and become competitive. Others argue that the vast majority of firms in the informal economy are founded by “necessity” rather than “opportunity entrepreneurs.” According to them, comprehensive support packages are needed to encourage entrepreneurship and create conditions for enterprise upgrading. What is the evidence regarding conditions for start-up and upgrading of firms in developing countries? How important are the regulatory issues measured by Doing Business relative to other constraints? How important are other constraints, including technical and managerial skills and access to finance? What can governments and donors do to foster opportunity entrepreneurship and enterprise upgrading? And how should they deal with the many necessity entrepreneurs in the informal economy?

SESSION 4:

Labour market regulation and skills development – What is the optimal level of regulation for pro-poor growth?

Doing Business suggests to deregulate labour markets. Countries with very rigid labour laws are likely to have higher shares of informal employment and higher unemployment rates as employers will be reluctant to hire workers if adjusting labour is not possible in a reasonably flexible manner. This may hamper productivity growth as well as social upward mobility of those engaged outside the formal sector. Some studies however highlight the positive effects on productivity of higher levels of labour regulation. This may be due to higher motivation and commitment of workers as well as greater incentives for employers to train their workforce if substitution of workers is made more difficult. Furthermore, there is some empirical evidence that higher levels of labour regulation are associated with a more equal income distribution. Is it reasonable to encourage deregulation of labour markets? At which point may deregulation backfire in terms of competitiveness and/or in terms of social inclusion? Is it possible to define an optimal (rather than a minimal) level of regulation as a benchmark?

PANEL DISCUSSION:

The Doing Business agenda - helpful or harmful?

The Doing Business Report series is one of the most influential World Bank publications and has induced a great number of regulatory reforms in developing countries. There is little doubt about its merits in highlighting previously underestimated problems for private sector development. A recent evaluation of the World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group however questions underlying assumptions and points out methodological weaknesses. Critics especially emphasise that the reports ignore the fact that many regulations are necessary, thereby sending out simplistic messages that contradict the general consensus on reform needs; and that they overstate the effects of deregulation on enterprise development. Are the reports based on correct assumptions? And in what way might they be reformed so as to become a generally accepted tool for regulatory business environment reforms?

December 5th 2008

9:00 am – 6:30 pm

SESSION 5: **Women entrepreneurship: Gender-specific barriers, and how policy can address them**

Women entrepreneurship is held back by manifold factors, resulting in gender inequality and missed opportunities for inclusive economic growth. Discrimination mainly results from traditions, norms and beliefs that lead to biased resource allocation between genders. But also at the regulatory level legal instruments sometimes translate discriminatory practices into policies that institutionalise existing gender disparities. Out of the Doing Business indicators, four are especially relevant for women entrepreneurs: obtaining credit, registering property, starting a business and employing workers. How do Doing Business reforms affect women? And which possibilities exist to address gender issues more explicitly in future Doing Business reports?

SESSION 6: **Making markets work for the poor – but what, if markets fail?**

The poor need manifold services, ranging from water, sanitation and electricity to agricultural and business information. Instead of delivering these services through public agencies, it is often more effective and sustainable to support the development of market systems where there is a stronger role for private providers. This calls for fundamentally different donor approaches. The ‘market development approach to service delivery’ recognises the public sector’s limited capacity to provide efficiency and outreach and thus complements the Doing Business agenda. However, it is built on a view of market systems that acknowledges the role of different players – public and private – in making these more effective and inclusive. And it acknowledges that there are many situations where few service providers exist, where poor people are unable or unwilling to pay, and where different roles for public and private players are required. The questions are thus: What are the features of markets that don’t work well for the poor? How can more effective market development - and an ‘environment that enables’ - be stimulated? What are the options for governments in weak markets?

SESSION 7: **Fostering innovation in developing countries - How important are selective policies (“beyond regulatory reforms”), and how can political capture be avoided**

Innovation research strongly emphasizes market failure in science and technology markets and highlights the role of non-market institutions for technological learning and economic coordination. Such analyses lead to policy conclusions that deviate from the laissez-faire philosophy underlying the ‘Doing Business’ reports. There is no doubt that developing countries need more innovation (not necessarily ‘hi-tech’) to break out of the vicious circle of poverty and low productivity. Policy prescriptions that are based on experiences from rich countries however may be inappropriate: first, because targets are different. The challenge is to focus on innovations that benefit the poor; second, because incentives need to be created that are compatible with the relatively low administrative capacities of developing countries. How can this be achieved, and how important are Doing Business reforms - simplification of entry and exit, labour market flexibility – as a driver of innovation? Which rules and regulations are needed to foster technological learning, and are these compatible with the recommendations to lessen regulations many regulations in developing countries? How can innovation be supported without creating red tape and rent-seeking incentives?

SESSION 8:

Making value chains more inclusive – the role of regulatory reforms and selective support

Production and trade are increasingly organized in value chains that are dominated by powerful firms. Economies of scale and compliance with demanding standards are now prerequisites for suppliers. Small unorganized producers face increasing difficulties to access such chains, and many are crowded out by more efficient domestic or international competitors. Different concepts exist to deal with this challenge, again, reflecting a different understanding of the role of markets and public interventions. The Bottom of the Pyramid concept suggests that even without government or donor support, corporate investment has a strong positive impact on poor consumers and producers. Complementing this perspective, IFC provides a tool to measure and benchmark the cost of doing business at different stages of specific value chains, mainly to bring down the cost of government services. On the other hand, many agencies offers comprehensive value chain support packages meant to organize and upgrade small producers and to link them to value chain leaders. The German PPP fund and other matching grant funds take an intermediate position, rewarding corporations that extend their engagement beyond what they would have done anyhow in the pursuit of profits. What is the most appropriate policy mix for integrating the poor in modern value chains and increase value-addition? How can domestic chains with a high national value added be created without heavy-handed government intervention? And how can we achieve that private and public-private initiatives also have an impact on the policy level?

PANEL SESSION:

Balancing the needs to simplify the business environment and to provide targeted support: Lessons from the workshop

DAY 1

December 4th 2008

- 9:00 am **Inaugural address**
Jürgen Zattler (BMZ, Berlin, Deputy Director General)
- Regulatory reforms and proactive support: What is the appropriate mix to enhance competitiveness and reduce social exclusion?**
Tilman Altenburg (DIE, Bonn)
- 9:30 am SESSION 1 **Do regulatory reforms matter?**
Simon Commander (London Business School)
Benjamin Eifert (University of California, Berkeley)
Comment: Rita Ramalho (IFC, Washington DC)
Moderator: Matthias Krause (DIE, Bonn)
- 11:00 am SESSION 2 **Do entry reforms matter - and is the Doing Business agenda appropriate?**
Simeon Djankov (IFC, Washington DC)
Benito Arruñada (Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona)
Moderator: Thomas Kenyon (UNIDO, Vienna)
- 12:30 pm Lunch break
- 1:30 pm SESSION 3 **How important are other binding constraints for entrepreneurship development?**
Willem Naudé (UNU-WIDER, Helsinki)
Thorsten Beck (Tilburg University)
Moderator: Christian von Drachenfels (DIE, Bonn)
- 3:00 pm SESSION 4 **Labour market regulation and skills development – What is the optimal level of regulation for pro-poor growth?**
Horst Feldmann (University of Bath)
Comment: Sandrine Cazes (ILO, Geneva)
Moderator: Corinna Küsel (GTZ, Eschborn)
- 4:30 pm Coffee break
- 5:00 pm **The Doing Business agenda - helpful or harmful?**
Main findings of the Doing Business evaluation
Victoria Elliott (Independent Evaluation Group-World Bank, Washington DC)
- 5:15 pm PANEL SESSION Manuel Albaladejo (UNIDO, Vienna), Penelope Brook (IFC), Victoria Elliott (IEG-World Bank), Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi (DFID, London), Jürgen Zattler (BMZ)
Moderator: Matthias Krause (DIE)
- 6:30 pm End of first conference day
- 7:00 pm Departure for Dinner at Rohmühle
- Rheinwerksallee 3 | 53227 Bonn | ☎ 0228 - 41 00 707

DAY 2

December 5th 2008

- 9:00 am SESSION 5 **Women entrepreneurship: Gender-specific barriers, and how policy can address them**
Penelope Brook (IFC)
Amanda Ellis (World Bank, Washington DC)
Comment: Aimée Hampel-Milagrosa (DIE, Bonn)
Moderator: Angela Langenkamp (BMZ, Bonn)
- 10:30 pm Coffee break
- 11:00 am SESSION 6 **Making markets work for the poor – but what, if markets fail?**
David Elliott (Springfield Centre, London)
Comment: Andreas Stamm (DIE, Bonn)
Moderator: Helmut Asche (University of Leipzig)
- 12:30 pm Lunch break
- 1:30 pm SESSION 7 **Fostering innovation in developing countries - How important are selective policies ("beyond regulatory reforms"), and how can political capture be avoided?**
Mark Dutz (World Bank, Washington DC)
Jean-Eric Aubert (World Bank, Paris)
Comment: Luc Soete (UNU-MERIT, Maastricht)
Moderator: Tilman Altenburg (DIE)
- 3:00 pm Coffee break
- 3:30 pm SESSION 8 **Making value chains more inclusive – the role of regulatory reforms and selective support**
Hubert Schmitz (IDS, Sussex)
Comment: Jörg Hartmann (GTZ, Berlin)
Moderator: Abla Abdel-Latif (American University of Cairo)
- 5:00 pm PANEL SESSION **Balancing the needs to simplify the business environment and to provide targeted support: Lessons from the workshop**
Penelope Brook (IFC), Susanne Dorasil (BMZ, Bonn), Hubert Schmitz (IDS), Luc Soete (UNU-MERIT, Maastricht), Johannes Jütting (OECD Development Centre, Paris)
Moderator: Tilman Altenburg (DIE)
- 6:30 pm Farewell drinks

VENUE

**German Development Institute /
Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)**
Tulpenfeld 6
53113 Bonn
Germany
Phone: +49-94927-0
Fax: +49-94927-130
Website: www.die-gdi.de

CONFERENCE COORDINATION

Pamela Baijal
Tel.: +49 - (0) - 228 94927 243
Cel.: +49 - (0) - 176 22 98 2223
pamela.baijal@die-gdi.de

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Abla Abdel-Latif, Professor of Economics, American University in Cairo (Egypt)
alatif@aucegypt.edu

Manuel Albaladejo, Consultant, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna (Austria)
m.albaladejo@unido.org

Tilman Altenburg, Head of Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
tilman.altenburg@die-gdi.de

Benito Arruñada, Professor of Business Organization, Department of Economics and Business, Pompeu Fabra University (UPF), Barcelona (Spain)
benito.arrunada@upf.edu

Helmut Asche, Professor/Director, Institute of African Studies, University of Leipzig (Germany)
asche@uni-leipzig.de

Jean-Eric Aubert, Lead Specialist, "Knowledge for Development Programme", The World Bank, Paris (France)
jaubert@worldbank.org

Daniel Bagwitz, "Sector Project Private Sector Development", German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Eschborn (Germany)
daniel.bagwitz@gtz.de

Pamela Baijal, Project coordinator, Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
pamela.baijal@die-gdi.de

Ronny Bechmann, Advisor, Division "World Bank, IMF and Debt Issues", Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Berlin (Germany)
ronny.bechmann@bmz.bund.de

Thorsten Beck, Professor of Economics, University of Tilburg (Netherlands)
t.beck@uvt.nl

Edith Boehler, Economist, Office of Multilateral Development Banks, US Treasury Department, Washington DC (USA)
edith.boehler@do.treas.gov

Bettina Boekle, Researcher, Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
bettina.boekle@die-gdi.de

Penelope Brook, Director, "Indicators and Analysis", World Bank Group, International Finance Cooperation (IFC), Washington DC (USA)
pbrook@ifc.org

Michael Brüntrup, Researcher, Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
michael.bruentrup@die-gdi.de

Sandrine Cazes, Senior Specialist, "Employment and Labour Market Policies", International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva (Switzerland)
cazes@ilo.org

Simon Commander, Director "Centre for New and Emerging Markets", London Business School, London (GB)
scommander@london.edu

Bianca Denfeld, Sector Economist for PPP, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), Frankfurt/M. (Germany)
bianca.denfeld_extern@kfw.de

Simeon Djankov, Chief Economist, "Financial and Private Sector Development", World Bank Group, International Finance Cooperation (IFC), Washington DC (USA)
sdjankov@worldbank.org

Susanne Dorasil, Head of Division "Economic Policy, Financial Sector", Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Bonn (Germany)
susanne.dorasil@bmz.bund.de

Christian von Drachenfels, Researcher, Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
christian.drachenfels@die-gdi.de

Amelie D'Souza, Senior Project Manager, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), Frankfurt/M. (Germany)
amelie.dsouza@kfw.de

Enrique Dussel Peters, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
dussel@servidor.unam.mx

Mark Dutz, Senior Economist, "Finance and Private Sector Development, South Asia Region", The World Bank, Washington DC (USA)
mdutz@worldbank.org

Benn Eifert, Ph.D. Candidate, University of California, Berkeley (USA)
benn@econ.berkeley.edu

David Elliott, Director "Management Team Springfield Centre", Springfield Centre for Business in Development, London (GB)
delliott@springfieldcentre.com

Victoria Elliott, Team Leader "Doing Business Evaluation", Independent Evaluation Group, The World Bank, Washington DC (USA)
velliott@worldbank.org

Amanda Ellis, Senior Specialist, "Private Sector Development", World Bank Group, International Finance Cooperation (IFC), Washington DC (USA)
aellis@ifc.org

Horst Feldmann, Senior Lecturer/Director of Studies for Conversion, University of Bath (GB)
h.feldmann@bath.ac.uk

Thomas Finkel, Senior Consultant, COMO, Hamburg (Germany)
thomas.finkel@como-consult.de

Doris Fischer, Researcher, Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
doris.fischer@die-gdi.de

Judith Frickenstein, Programme Officer, German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Eschborn (Germany)
judith.frickenstein@gtz.de

Sunayana Ganguly, Researcher, Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
sunayana.ganguly@die-gdi.de

Aimée Hampel-Milagrosa, Researcher, Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
aimee.hampel@die-gdi.de

Jörg Hartmann, Director "Public Private Partnerships", German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Eschborn (Germany)
joerg.hartmann@gtz.de

Johannes Jütting, Head of Unit "Poverty Reduction and Social Development", Development Centre, Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), Paris (France)
johannes.juetting@oecd.org

Thomas Kenyon, Industrial Development Officer, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna (Austria)
t.kenyon@unido.org

Matthias Krause, Researcher, Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
matthias.krause@die-gdi.de

Corinna Küsel, Head of Section "Economic Policy and Private Sector Development", German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Eschborn (Germany)
corinna.kuesel@gtz.de

Katharina Kunzmann, Legal Counsel, Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft (DEG), Cologne (Germany)
kka@deginvest.de

David Lamotte, Director "Enterprise Department", International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva (Switzerland)
lamotte@ilo.org

Angela Langenkamp, Senior Policy Advisor on Gender, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Bonn (Germany)
angela.langenkamp@bmz.bund.de

Henrik Madsen, Senior Technical Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Copenhagen (Denmark)
hahmad@um.dk

Thomas Müller, Programme Coordinator “Making Finance Work for Africa (MFW4A), German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Eschborn (Germany)
thomas.mueller@gtz.de

Willem Naudé, Senior Research Fellow/Project Director, United Nations University - World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), Helsinki (Finland)
wim@wider.unu.edu

Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi, Head of Profession, Department “Private Sector Development”, Department for International Development (DFID), London (GB)
m-owusu-gyamfi@dfid.gov.uk

Reinhard Palm, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Bonn (Germany)
reinhard.palm@bmz.bund.de

Petra Pongracz, Researcher, Department “Competitiveness and Social Development”, German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
petra.pongracz@die-gdi.de

Paulina Porkka, Senior Officer, Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Helsinki (Finland)
pauliina.porkka@tem.fi

Roberta Rabellotti, Professor, Università del Piemonte Orientale, Novara (Italy)
roberta.rabellotti@eco.unipmn.it

Rita Ramalho, Doing Business Team, World Bank Group, International Finance Cooperation (IFC), Washington DC (USA)
rramalho@ifc.org

Britta Rennkamp, Researcher, Department “Competitiveness and Social Development”, German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
britta.rennkamp@die-gdi.de

Guido Reuter, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Bonn (Germany)
guido.reuter@bmz.bund.de

Nicole Rippin, Researcher, Department “Competitiveness and Social Development”, German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
nicole.rippin@die-gdi.de

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Director, “Employment Sector” International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva (Switzerland)
salazar-xirinachs@ilo.org

Richard Sandall, Advisor, “Private Sector Development”, Department for International Development (DFID), London (GB)
r-sandall@dfid.gov.uk

Gunter Schall, Head of Unit “Private Sector and Development”, Austrian Development Agency (ADA), Wien (Austria)
wirtschaft@ada.gv.at

Hubert Schmitz, Professor/Research Fellow, "Globalisation Team", Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex (GB)
h.schmitz@ids.ac.uk

Suzanne Smith, Manager "Rapid Response Unit" of the joint World Bank – IFC Financial and Private Sector Development Vice Presidency, Washington DC (USA)
ssmith7@worldbank.org

Luc Soete, Director, United Nations University - Maastricht Economic and Social Research and Training Centre on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT), Maastricht (Netherlands)
soete@merit.unu.edu

Andreas Stamm, Researcher, Department "Competitiveness and Social Development", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
andreas.stamm@die-gdi.de

Hans van der Veen, Economic Development Adviser, Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, The Hague (Netherlands)
hw-vander.veen@minbuza.nl

Ulrich Volz, Researcher, Department "World Economy and Development Financing", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
ulrich.volz@die-gdi.de

Karl Wohlmuth, Professor, Institute for World Economics and International Management (IWIM), University of Bremen (Germany)
wohlmuth@uni-bremen.de

Peter Wolff, Head of Department "World Economy and Development Financing", German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn (Germany)
peter.wolff@die-gdi.de

Charles Woollen, Minister Counsellor, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen (Denmark)
chawoo@um.dk

Jürgen Zattler, Director, "Multilateral and European Development Cooperation", Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Berlin (Germany)
zattler@bmz.bund.de

Holger Ziegeler, World Bank Group, IMF, Debt Relief, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Bonn (Germany)
holger.ziegeler@bmz.bund.de