

Harnessing the power of business for development impact

Where does the role for the private sector begin and end in the development landscape? How does this role change in the economic downturn?

To develop dialogue and understanding of private sector driven development, the Department for International Development, the Overseas Development Institute, and Business Action for Africa are collaborating on a Meeting Series throughout 2009. Key contacts: Caroline Ashley (c.ashley@odi.org.uk), Richard Gilbert (richard.gilbert@businessactionforafrica.org) and Richard Sandall (r-sandall@dfid.gov.uk).

There has been enormous progress in the fields of private sector-led development in recent years.

Companies are finding new ways to harness their core business for development impact. New approaches are making markets work for the poor. And the challenge of creating fair and competitive markets for enterprise to thrive has been taken up by partnerships of governments, donor partners and business voices around the world.

But this is certainly no time for complacency. This Meeting Series explores critical questions in a changing agenda:

- 1. The downturn puts pressure on all types of businesses, and enormous pressure on the poor.** What are the practical implications for the role of business in development, the policy framework and innovation that works?
- 2. It is time for debates to move on from the 'why' to the 'how'.** What practical insights should be we sharing from good and bad experience, and how can we move from what adds little value and to focus on what adds most?
- 3. New forms of collaboration, between business and government, business and NGOs, and amongst all three have emerged.** With resources even tighter and development challenges greater, how can collective action be strengthened and widened?

For information on the meeting series and to join the online discussion visit:
www.events.businessfightspoverty.org

2009 Event Series

1. Private sector strategies for development: access, competition and engagement in a downturn

Tuesday, 20 January

What is the role of business in the development landscape? How does this change in the economic downturn? This meeting marks the launch of DFID's Private Sector Development Strategy.

2. Core business competencies for development impact: moving beyond CSR

Wednesday, 11 February

The shift from philanthropic CSR to using core business for development impact is no longer just an idea. It is being accepted within both the development and business sectors. What are the implications for approaches to investment, trade, suppliers, and business culture?

3. How can markets work better for the poor? What approaches deliver impact at scale?

Tuesday, 17 March

A growing number of projects are trying to help the poor engage in markets – selling their labour or products, or securing the inputs, finance and services they need. But too often the scale of impact is limited, the output unsustainable. New approaches are exploring how to make markets work for the poor – commercially, systemically and fairly.

4. Putting market access into practice: reaching the bottom billion through corporate supply and distribution chains

Tuesday, 21 April

Businesses are expanding the market access of the poor through new approaches in their supply and distribution chains. It is time to move discussion from the 'why' to the 'how'. What is being learnt from experience so far?

5. Assessing impacts of business on development: what do alternative frameworks offer?

Tuesday, 12 May

For all the talk of enhancing the impact of business on development, there is little measurement of what that impact is – and little discussion of how to measure it. And yet our approach to harnessing core business for development rests on understanding what that impact is. What assessment approaches are being used for different purposes?

6. Getting results from engagement: how should government and business work together to enhance the investment climate and business driven development?

Tuesday, 23 June

Partnerships between businesses, governments and development actors are tackling constraints in the investment climate and helping business to invest

responsibly. How can government best support business? And how can business help governments to build capacity and appropriate policy?

7. Doing business in conflict affected environments: from building the peace to building the private sector

Tuesday, 14 July

Peace and economic growth are closely related. How can policy makers maximise the impact of private sector for both peace and development?

8. Business, Power and Politics: creating competitive markets for business and development

Tuesday, 15 September

How do competition, regulation, power and politics affect private sector development in developing countries? How can business and government work together to create a level playing field for all?

9. Wrap-up: the changing role of private sector driven development

Tuesday, 13 October

The agenda for private sector driven development is changing. Approaches advocated earlier are now foci of action. But what do we learn from that action? How does the roll-out of the downturn affect capacities and expectations of business? What new challenges, and what new opportunities for innovation, will the future bring?

- Building stronger and more **competitive economies** in developing countries is an opportunity for business, not just an obligation - what is good for development is good for the bottom line.

- Businesses are moving beyond CSR and using their **core business practices** for positive development impact. But in the context of the global economic downturn this will require continued commitment, partnership and innovation.

- **The bottom billion** needs access to competitive markets as consumers, workers and as entrepreneurs. The engagement of business, governments and donors is needed to make markets work better for the poor.