



# Global Innovation Policy Dialogue

## Policy Context

The promotion of innovation, in particular, technological innovation, in developing countries is becoming a fashionable subject. The growing interest in the subject, stems from a recognition that it is necessary to go back to basics after experiencing the limits of traditional economic policies encapsulated in the “Washington consensus” approach. This set of privatization, liberalization, and deregulation policies have clearly demonstrated their limits for promoting sustainable growth in the developing world. Similarly, policies focusing on modernization, in the sense of building infrastructure and institutions with a more interventionist government, have not yielded the expected fruits. Thus, there has been a tendency to look into the black box of the engine of economic development, that is technology, its creation and diffusion.

While there is considerable experience accumulated in the field of innovation policy in developed/OECD countries, much of this is not directly applicable to developing countries because of the nature of the challenges the latter are facing. In fact, developing countries face genuine challenges to innovation and this is precisely why they remain underdeveloped. These obstacles create a kind of vicious circle and arise due to inappropriate business and governance climates and insufficient education. At the same time, the fact that developing countries face no choice other than to embrace policies which can stimulate growth, means that the promotion of innovation in these countries has become a necessity. Thus there is a need to think about innovative approaches adapted to the needs of developing countries.

## Objective of Dialogue

This Global Innovation Dialogue, to be delivered through GDLN out of the Paris office, takes place in the framework of the Knowledge for Development Programme of the World Bank Institute.

The Dialogue will link by videoconference, policy makers and relevant stakeholders active in the field of innovation policy in developing countries, with experts from the World Bank and a number of international organisations, notably UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNU-INTECH, UNESCO, OECD, European Commission, IKED (International Organisation for Knowledge Economy and Enterprise Development), INSME (International Network for SMEs), and the Agence Francaise de Development, to provide a framework for the discussion of innovation issues in developing countries.

The intention is not to provide an exhaustive overview of innovation issues and policies, but rather to offer a starting point for an improved understanding of the issues at stake, and a basis for the development of future support activities by relevant communities both in the World Bank and outside. Through the participation of stakeholders active in the development process in the field, the Dialogue will equally serve as a “reality check” for issues being discussed, as well as a platform for highlighting examples of successful initiatives underway in the developing countries to be connected.

As the Dialogue seeks to tap into grassroots innovations and support initiatives under way in the countries concerned, the topics to be discussed have been chosen in close consultation with participating organisations and colleagues of the WB who have first hand experience of the countries in question.

## What takes place when

A pilot phase of 6 sessions will be conducted over the period October 2004 – March 2005, with a total of 2 sessions devoted to a chosen geographical region, and two to three countries from the selected region chosen for each dialogue. It is anticipated that further sessions will be conducted over 2005.

The dates, regions and countries to be covered during the initial six sessions are as follows:

- Sessions 1 / 2: Sub-Saharan Africa (Ethiopia, Uganda) – October 11<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup>
- Sessions 3 / 4: South Asia (China, India) – November 15<sup>th</sup> / 16<sup>th</sup> - postponed: new date to be fixed for early 2005
- Sessions 5 / 6: Mediterranean, including Middle East and North Africa (early 2005 – date to be decided)

## Audience

The audiences will include representatives from international organizations, government officials, policy makers active in the field of science and technology, academics, researchers, as well as NGO representatives and practitioners in the field.

## Further Information

For further information on the Global Innovation Policy Dialogue, please contact Ms. Aisling Quirke ([aquirke@worldbank.org](mailto:aquirke@worldbank.org)).