

# FOREWORD

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WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES BRIDGING DISTANCE AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, KNOWLEDGE GOES GLOBAL QUICKLY. THIS OFFERS BOTH PROMISE AND RISK TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THE PROMISE IS THAT BY MOBILIZING KNOWLEDGE, COUNTRIES CAN PROMOTE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON A SCALE HITHERTO UNKNOWN. BUT THE RISK IS THAT ACCESS TO THIS VITAL KNOWLEDGE MAY ELUDE THEIR GRASP, AND THAT THE RESULTING EXCLUSION COULD DEEPEN EXISTING GAPS BETWEEN RICH AND POOR.

Since 1955, the World Bank Institute has been an impartial knowledge broker and a focal point in the World Bank Group for learning and knowledge exchange. The Institute's cross-sectoral and cross-regional reach, its expertise in learning design, and its long and collegial experience with partners and donors, are unique qualifications for delivering programs that help countries create, share, and apply knowledge effectively.

In the past year, the Institute has reshaped its products and services to focus on training and capacity development in priority areas such as governance, climate change, health, and education, and to provide support to the Bank Group's

operations in all regions. It has also placed renewed emphasis on partnering with centers of excellence, such as universities in the North and the South, to help develop sustainable local and regional learning capacity.

The 2008 Year in Review provides an overview of WBI's recent contributions, with emphasis on its work in the Bank Group's six strategic priorities, namely poorest countries, fragile states, global public goods, middle-income countries, the Arab World, and knowledge and learning. In all these areas, the Institute's work attests to the role of learning in reducing poverty.

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