

# *Introduction*

IFC strives to promote sustainable private sector investment in developing countries to reduce poverty and improve people's lives. Central to achieving its mission is IFC's provision of technical assistance and advisory services to its clients around the world.

IFC's high-quality technical assistance, capacity to catalyze investment, broad industry expertise, and powerful local networks create a unique ability to deliver effective sustainable development. IFC's network of twelve regional Private Enterprise Partnerships and technical assistance facilities is our principal means of delivering technical assistance in all of the regions in which we work—Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa. This network, funded by IFC and its partners, operates in countries and regions where there is momentum in the markets, in spite of the challenges. Together, the partnerships and facilities support about 70 offices and employ more than 800 long- and short-term staff.

The IFC network provides technical assistance and advisory services directly or indirectly to governments and local businesses in some of the world's most difficult environments. Significant work is underway to improve the legal and regulatory conditions under which businesses operate in many of these countries. Other programs aim to add value to private sector firms through improving corporate governance, strengthening environmental and social sustainability, and developing supply chain links. Additional program areas include the development of infrastructure and improved access to financial services. These examples demonstrate the Corporation's larger value proposition of offering our clients a package of services that can include both investments and technical assistance.

The following pages describe ways in which four members of IFC's technical assistance network are addressing the challenges that face entrepreneurs and small business owners in developing countries. And we introduce to you some of the individuals dedicated to this important work.