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The Potential for Electronic Commerce in Developing Countries

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The developed nations are rapidly moving to embrace electronic commerce as an easy, efficient, and less costly business model, while offering increased customer satisfaction. The pace of acceptance and implementation of electronic commerce in developing nations has been slow, and many barriers remain to be addressed. Barriers to the successful implementation of electronic commerce in developing countries have been postulated: these include technical, business and government obstacles.

These issues have been presented and discussed with a group of World Bank staff, at Workshop Sessions in Washington, DC in March 2004. Some of the Bank participants have been intimately involved in the planning, funding and implementing electronic commerce projects in developing countries, while others are members of information technology groups. This paper builds on work previously reported by the author and reports on some electronic commerce projects underway in developing countries. In addition, the paper presents the results of discussions and inputs from World Bank staff regarding the obstacles to overcome in the successful implementation of electronic commerce in developing countries.

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