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Corporate Social Responsibility is one strategic way to transform and benefit society, especially children

Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Development and Children's Rights in Bolivia

La Paz, 5th June 2008 – Yesterday, representatives from public and private institutions participated in the Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility (BSR), Sustainable Development and Children's Rights in Bolivia, which was jointly organised by the Vice-ministry of Medium and Large Enterprise and Industry, the Bolivian Social Responsibility Corporation (COBORSE) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The forum focussed on the need for BSR projects and programmes to seek mutual coordination and to be in line with national public policies.

Gordon Jonathan Lewis, UNICEF Representative, gave the keynote speech, talking about the current conditions for children and adolescents in Bolivia, as well as the challenges that the government and Bolivian society face in terms of reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

The first presentation of the Forum was given by Dr. Mario Molina Guzmán, Director General of the Large-Scale Production for Productive Development Division of the Vice-ministry of Medium and Large Industry, under the Ministry of Production and Micro-enterprise. Dr. Molina highlighted the Bolivian government's commitment to building indicators on social and environmental responsibility, which are needed in the National Development Plan and in the draft State Constitution. He also stated that dignified work for all Bolivians is the best tool for combating poverty and child labour.

Andrés Franco, Regional Manager of the Private Sector Division of UNICEF's Regional Office in Panama, gave the second speech. Franco stressed that every processes carried out by every organisation have three types of impact: economic, environmental and social. "Social impacts on children deserve special attention, and children's rights should be at the heart of corporate commitment; we must work on inequalities and disparities where they exist (not only where there is corporate presence). We must also promote alliances between the public and private sectors in order to strengthen institutional viability, and to avoid competing with or replacing public institutions." He also made several recommendations on the roads business should take in order to include pro-child BSR in their activities, and how UNICEF can provide support in these processes.

Discussion forum

The event included a discussion forum, led by Juan Carlos Rocha, Director of La Razón newspaper. It covered BSR, sustainable development and children's rights in Bolivia. Participating in the discussions were Dr. Mario Molina Guzmán- Director General of the Large Scale Production for Productive Development Division, Kori Eguino - Executive Director of the Bolivian Institute for Normalisation and Quality Control (IBNORCA), UNICEF Representative Gordon Jonathan Lewis, Jorge Velasco – National Vice-president of Business Operations for Banco BISA, Cecilia Vaca - Director of the Operation Smile Foundation, and Rudiger Trepp - General Manager of the Guabirá Sugar Refinery.

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IBNORCA placed emphasis on existing regulations linked to BSR and the enormous responsibility that business have to help put a stop to child labour. Banco BISA expressed its interest in focussing on children with its business for social responsibility activities. Meanwhile, the Guabirá Refinery spoke of the progress made towards eradication child labour in the sugarcane harvest, and the head of Operation Smile spoke of their experiences in carrying out free cleft palate operations for children, also helping to improving their levels of nutrition and self-esteem.

Gordon Jonathan Lewis stated that “corporate social responsibility is not an ‘add-on’, but rather should be the DNA or the very identity of the company. Companies must invest the same levels of interest, drive and capacity into their BSR actions as they do into their day-to-day business. We must recognise that businesses who accept and act upon social responsibility are strategic in bringing about social transformation and providing benefits to society, above all to children.”

At the close of the discussion forum, Juan Carlos Rocha pointed out that business are already including BSR is already a reality, and that those who have not yet begun are already seeing the need to get involved. “Initiatives like those of today drive us to develop the indicators of business’s commitment to children’s rights”.

Forum Conclusions

The closing speech of the event was given by the President of the Bolivian Social Responsibility Corporation (COBORSE), Eduardo Peinado, who stressed that businesses must see the link between economic earnings and social and environmental gains, and that the best way to do so is to invest in children.

The Forum was held with the aim of establishing the relationship between business for social responsibility, sustainable development and children’s rights within the framework of the National Development Plan and the Millennium Development Goals. It also sought to identify the challenges that exist in terms of promoting corporate cultures of social responsibility which focus on children’s rights in Bolivia, as well as to facilitate the use of a platform for sharing best practices and lessons learned from Bolivia and around Latin America.

Business for Social Responsibility – Good Practice Fair

Within the Forum there was also a Good Practice Fair showing examples of work that upholds children’s rights. The following companies took part:

The BISA Financial Group presented their programme entitled *Solidarity Bolivia, because it’s time to help*. In 2007 and 2008, together with the Multimedia Communications Group, which includes media outlets ATB, La Razón and El Extra, they organised the Solidarity Bolivia campaign to raise funds and collect foodstuffs for families who had been affected by the flood emergency in Beni Department. Both years’ campaigns were very successful, not only regarding the funds raised but also because they had gained the trust of the population. Furthermore, it has now become a permanent entity and is one of the largest solidarity campaigns in Bolivia.

The 2007 funds were delivered to UNICEF for a project that ensured that 18,607 Benian children were able to return to school. In 2008, the funds collected went to UNICEF and World Vision.

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Good Labour Practices – The Roberto Barbery Paz Sugar Refinery – UNAGRO presented the social responsibility programme which aims at eradicating child labour in they sugarcane harvest. Their actions have included non-hiring policies and demanding that subcontractors do not hire children for harvest time work. Among their other actions were the setting up of a child-care centre for cane-workers at the Los Naranjos camp and providing health and education services at the harvest camps.

PETROBRAS presented its ***Kids Count and Junior Achievement*** programmes.

- **Kids count** is a project that seeks to generate greater awareness and knowledge of Child and Adolescent Rights within Bolivian Society through radio programmes. PETROBRAS pointed out the results of its programme: 60 hours of radio shows in six of the nation's cities, broadcasting the ten principles of the Declaration on children's rights, holding of a Child and Adolescent Rights Festival in the City of Santa Cruz, and the overall commitment and volunteer work done by PETROBRAS employees in the project.
- PETROBRAS, in alliance with *Fundación Emprender* and with support from FANCESA and the San Francisco Xavier University of Chuquisaca carried out a project called **Junior Achievement** in Sucre. **Junior Achievement** is an educational foundation that was created in 1919 in the United States. It creates programmes for young entrepreneurs and citizenship for students aged 6 to 21 years, using the 'Learn by Doing' method. The Sucre project benefited over a thousand students from primary, secondary and university-level education by bringing the education and business sectors together, along with local and regional governments. Nine students were selected to attend the International Entrepreneur's Forum, and won second place in two of three areas. One was selected to participate in a world entrepreneurial event in Stockholm.

The Bolivian Cement Society S.A. (SOBOCE) presented what it has done as part of its social responsibility policies, through its strategy entitled Concrete Dreams. The strategy follows three lines of action, the third of which promotes competition among young people. Among its child-focussed actions are the following:

- **Don't Miss the Train of Life.** Central Station provides young people with a place to meet, do sports and engage in cultural activities, all aimed at promoting active participation from the young people of the city of Viacha.
- **Polish Up Your Life.** This is a project which offers shoeshine boys and girls opportunities to improve their quality of life and self-esteem in the city of La Paz.
- **Running, We're All the Same.** The SOBOCE Runner's Club uses sport as a tool for integration and support for healthy social interaction.

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The Oriental Railway SA shared its experiences with its Train of Life programme.

The Train of Life is a prevention programme that promotes reflection and behavioural change regarding safety on and around trains, as well as environmental education, in order to promote a culture of road safety and respect for the environment. The programme runs in three phases: the first looks at raising awareness about railway-related risks and is directed at children aged 5 to 13, adolescents and adults; the second is for passengers and talks about the latent risks inherent in train travel; and the third provides environmental education delivered at schools located in that exist along the railway lines.

Between 2005 and May 2007, the programme reached over 33 thousand people, of which 90% were children from 50 towns and villages along the North, East and South lines of the Oriental Railway Network.

Banco de Crédito – BCP. This bank participated in the Good Practices Fair with two of its programmes:

- **Operation Smile.** Since 2006, BCP has co-sponsored the Operation Smile Foundation. The Foundation is a non-profit NGO which provides free surgical treatment to children with cranial and facial malformations, mainly cleft lips and palates. So far this has benefited 6 thousand children in different regions of Bolivia.
- **BCP Christmas: children above all.** BCP gives away toys to their clients, so that they in return will pass them on to street children or children living in poverty. The toys are purchased from the Alalay Foundation and the Juana Azurduy Centre.

Coca-Cola Foundation

The Coca-Cola Foundation of Bolivia was created in 2003 to work for its community. It focuses on education and has chosen children from limited-income families as the beneficiaries of its actions.

- **Child-friendly Schools.** During 2005 and 2006, the Coca-Cola Foundation, together with UNICEF and the El Alto Municipal Government promoted the Child-friendly Schools Project. The project helped to provide complete, integrated and quality education, also contributing through improved health and nutrition, and clean, healthy and stimulating environments, with sufficient appropriate equipment and full respect of children's rights in 12 primary schools in El Alto District 10.
- **Forging the Future.** The Coca-Cola Foundation, in alliance with the Bolivian Catholic University, promotes a system of university scholarships for young people with noteworthy school performance and who have limited economic resources.

Also present at the fair were the Bolivian Foreign Trade Institute (IBCE) and UNICEF.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF works in 150 countries and territories to help children survive and progress in life, from infancy to adolescence. UNICEF is the largest provider of vaccines to the world's poorest countries, also providing support through childhood health and nutrition, quality water and sanitation, and basic education for all children. UNICEF also works to protect children against violence, exploitation and AIDS and is totally financed by voluntary contributions from individuals, companies, foundations and governments.

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