

David Irwin has experience in supporting enterprise and entrepreneurship in both the UK and internationally.

In 2000, he was appointed as founder CEO of the British Government's Small Business Service where he took responsibility for all of the British Government's support for enterprise, including Business Link, with an annual budget of £350m. Inter alia, he was expected to be a 'strong voice for small business at the heart of government'. He sat on the Ministerial Panel for Regulatory Accountability. He persuaded the government to adopt a government wide policy for its approach to small business: Think Small First.

Since leaving the SBS, he has been working in the UK and internationally in enterprise and economic development. Assignments focusing on regulatory reform, dialogue and advocacy include:

India & Africa

- **Connect to Grow:** team leader of a project managed by IMC Worldwide to spread innovation that might be both commercially viable and offer development impact from India to sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia (see connecttogrow.org for more information) (DFID India 2015-2018)

Africa

- The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, has set up business support initiatives in Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. I was commissioned to support each of them to review and revise their strategies.

Nigeria

- **Small business support in Abuja:** undertook feasibility study and proposed strategic objectives for the provision of small business support services in the Federal Capital Territory. Outcome was proposal for the Abuja Enterprise Agency to be set up in partnership with the Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory (DFID 2003)
- Returned in October 2004 to write detailed business plan (for agency, micro loan fund and incubator workspace subsidiary) and to prepare detailed financial forecasts (DFID, 2004).
- **Abuja Enterprise Agency** launched; David provided mentoring support to the CEO and trained and supported the counselling staff (DFID 2005-2009)
- **Small business support in Enugu:** Undertook feasibility study for the provision of small business support services in Enugu. Outcome was proposal for the Enugu Enterprise Agency to be set up in partnership with the State Government. (DFID, 2004).

China

- **Speaker at enterprise conference for SETC:** Speaker focusing on government policy formulation for small business promotion and support at conference organised by the Chinese Government's State Economic & Trade Commission (DFID, 2003)



Columbia

- **Review of scope to launch LiveWIRE:** Undertook feasibility study to review the scope for launching LiveWIRE in Columbia. (Shell, 2002)

Uruguay

- **Review of scope to launch LiveWIRE:** Undertook feasibility study to review the scope for launching LiveWIRE in Uruguay. (Shell, 2002)

Brazil

- **Review of scope to launch LiveWIRE:** Undertook feasibility study to review the scope for launching LiveWIRE and subsequently prepared a detailed business plan. (Shell, 1999, 2000).

Before the Small Business Service, David co-founded one of the first local enterprise agencies in the UK, in 1980, and then managed it until 2000. As well as supporting people to start and grow their own business in the north east of England, David undertook the following assignments:

Hungary

- **Strengthening of Enterprise Agencies:** Enterprise Agency Management Specialist providing assistance to six of the Local Enterprise Agencies to help review small business support requirements and the appropriate means for delivering services. Responsible for: helping to develop service delivery strategies and business plans; and training staff in counselling and training techniques. Subsequently provided assistance to one of the agencies, working as mentor to management and helping the organisation in their efforts to become an NVQ delivery centre (KHF, 1996 and EU Phare, 1997).

Ukraine

- **Capacity Building of Enterprise Development Agencies (ADEs):** Enterprise Agency Management Specialist responsible for: provision of advisory technical assistance to the ADEs in Kiev and Sevastopol; conducting an independent appraisal of the needs of the ADEs; identification of the support needs of SMEs; identification of responsive services to be provided by ADEs; assistance with the development of a strategic plan for the ADE; helping prepare business plans and two year implementation plan; and undertaking management and staff training needs analysis (KHF, 1997).

Oman

- **LiveWIRE:** Undertook feasibility study to review the scope for launching LiveWIRE; returned to prepare a detailed business plan; appointed the first director; trained volunteer advisers.

Zimbabwe

- **Institutional Appraisal of BESA:** SME Institutional Specialist responsible for conducting a detailed review of BESA focusing upon its existing services; and preparing detailed recommendations for additional training and other institutional support (ODA, 1994).
- **Institutional Strengthening of Business Advisory and Extension Service (BESA):** Enterprise Agency Development Specialist/Project Director of a PNE team which provided long term technical assistance to the Business Advisory and Extension Service (BESA) to develop services for new and growing businesses in and around Harare. Responsible for: delivering a range of training programmes for the Board and staff of BESA; assisting to develop the strategy and structure for service delivery; and supporting the implementation of training and counselling services to entrepreneurs (ODA, 1992-94).

- **Business Support Initiative:** SME Development Specialist responsible for: developing a strategic plan for the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industry to initiate a dedicated service to assist small business start-ups (ODA, 1990).

Swaziland

- Supported the Small Enterprise Development Company to develop their services and seek to become more sustainable (DFID 1997-2000)

South Africa

- **Review of Small Business Advisory Services:** SME Institutions Specialist/Team Leader responsible for: a detailed review of the provision and effectiveness of existing small business counselling support and training on behalf of the EU and ODA to identify opportunities for support of local agencies post the first democratic election; developing detailed recommendations to provide a range of institutional development initiatives; and establishing a framework for their coordinated delivery (EU, 1993-94).