

Irwin Grayson Associates are consultants in enterprise and economic development. The first six months of this year have seen me in Africa almost every month as well as providing me with opportunities to work in the UK.

Micro-finance in north east England

David Irwin joined forces with Trends Business Research to undertake a study for ONE NorthEast. The objective was to review the provision of micro-finance in the north east of England and to make an assessment of the likely demand over the next five years. We developed a range of benchmarks to compare micro-loan funds, and compared those in the region against some national exemplars. We concluded that whilst there may be a gap in the medium term, in the short term it would appear that the funds have plenty of money between them. Copies of the report are available.

Ghana: Supporting business associations

An outcome of my work in Ghana last year was a recommendation that DFID provide support to enable business and trade associations to improve their ability to advocate on behalf of the private sector whilst also building up their own services so that they become more attractive to potential members. DFID has agreed to this. I have been supporting DFID to design a fund which will be merged with a similar initiative already launched by DANIDA, the Danish Aid Agency.

Nigeria: Integrity

David Irwin has continued to support Integrity, who have been successful in attracting support from DFID and from the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts. I have been assisting Integrity to prepare appropriate briefing materials so that firms find it as painless as possible to go through the process of introducing policies and procedures and being audited so that they can then display Integrity's tick mark – as evidence of their commitment to work ethically and not to engage in corrupt practices. A major breakthrough has come with the decision by the Minister of the Federal Capital territory to commit his Ministry to Integrity's principles.

Uganda: incubator workspace

The Uganda Gatsby Trust has almost completed a workspace development at Jinja, but had run into some slight difficulties over funding. I was asked to review the progress that has been made and then make recommendations for how the final phase could be financed. Whilst in Uganda, I was taken to Mbarara to discuss with 40 local businesses how they could take the lead in developing their own workspace at a site outside the town zoned for industrial development. They are now working on ambitious plans to fund the development of up to 70 units.

Kenya: Private Sector Alliance

I won a contract to undertake an institutional review for KEPSA. KEPSA is trying to pull together the private sector so that it can speak with one voice in order more effectively to influence public sector policy formulation.

Nigeria: Small business support

David Irwin has undertaken feasibility studies in Abuja and Enugu with a view to establishing small business support centres in both locations. Both studies were positive and it is hoped that DFID may now be willing to provide sufficient financial support to turn these ideas into reality.

Incubator workspace

In partnership with Annabel Jackson Associates, David Irwin has won a contract from Stratford on Avon District Council to assess the feasibility of establishing an incubator workspace in Shipston on Stour. The early work would suggest that there is a high demand for workspace, but a severe shortage of suitable space for conversion and even a shortage of land for new build.

This is one of the studies being supported by the Small Business Service's incubator fund.

For further information about ways in which we might be able to work with you please contact David Irwin on 0191 241 1984.

