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Irwin Grayson Associates are consultants in enterprise and economic development. They undertake strategic reviews, programme design and assist with implementation on initiatives intended to provide support to new and growing businesses such as incubator workspace and finance. They provide policy advice to governments and private sector organisations.

This year has been another busy year both domestically and internationally. This newsletter attempts to provide at least a flavour of what has been keeping us occupied.

Change of address and telephone number

After 15 years, as CEO of Project North East, and then as a consultant, David Irwin is moving from Hawthorn House. It is amazing to think that I have been in that building for almost half my working life – sadly it has been acquired by a developer so all of the tenants, including PNE, are being evicted. The office is moving to Northumberland, so it is not possible to take my telephone number with me. Instead, I have taken on a Skype telephone number which allows you to ring me, through a UK number, to wherever in the world I happen to be – assuming of course that the computer is switched on, but there is voicemail as well. Given how much I travel this is probably an improvement on voicemail in the office. And my mobile works in most countries where I work.

Nigeria: Public private dialogue

Continuing my work in Nigeria, at the beginning of the year, I joined a team pulled together by the Policy Practice to design a pro-poor growth programme with a budget estimated at £50m over five years. This programme will have seven components grouped into three areas of the enabling environment, support for SMEs including access to finance and macro-economic management. My role was to design the public private dialogue component which will be a major part of the enabling environment area.

Ghana: BUSAC

DFID has joined forces with DANIDA to launch a challenge fund intended to support business membership organisations, labour unions and the media who wish to engage in research and advocacy to promote private public dialogue with the objective of improving the enabling environment. Having done some design work last year and largely negotiated the partnership with DANIDA, I returned to Ghana at the beginning of the year to iron out some problems with the Memorandum of Understanding which has now been signed.

Uganda: incubator workspace

I haven't been back to Uganda this year, but Uganda Gatsby Trust did submit its proposal to DFID's Business Linkages Challenge Fund and was successful, securing £120,000 towards the total cost of around £480,000 required to develop small business units at Mbarara.

Education for Entrepreneurship

IGA won a contract from the British Venture Capital Association to review the different ways that schools and colleges are introducing their students to enterprise and entrepreneurship, to identify good practice internationally, and to make recommendations for specific ways in which BVCA can contribute as well as suggestions for changes to public policy.

OECD: Finance for business

I was asked to present, and act as rapporteur, at an OECD conference looking at small business finance in south eastern Europe. My report should be published as part of a larger report in the near future, but if you are interested in this topic, please get in touch.

NE Community Banking Partnership

IGA was commissioned, in partnership with Northumbria University's Sustainable Cities Research Institute, to undertake pre-feasibility study research to understand more about the need for affordable finance in the north east of England and consider whether there is a role to be played by a community banking initiative.

Nigeria: Small business support

Last year, I prepared feasibility studies for proposed enterprise agencies in Abuja and Enugu. I returned to prepare a detailed business plan for the agency in Abuja. I have been back this year, several times, to assist with establishing the agency which will provide not only advice, training and consultancy to new and growing businesses but also micro-finance and eventually incubator workspace. Financial support has been promised from the Federal Capital Territory Administration and DFID and it is hoped that additional resources will be attracted from elsewhere.

Northern Film + Media

In partnership with TBR Economics and Olsberg | SPI, IGA won a contract to support Northern Film + Media assess the need for an investment fund to enable creative industries exploit their intellectual property more effectively.

Incubator workspace

In partnership with Annabel Jackson Associates, IGA has won a contract from West Oxfordshire District Council to assess the feasibility of creating an enterprise centre in Chipping Norton.

Supporting SMEs in China

I have joined a team pulled together by WYG International to provide support to the National Reform & Development Commission who have established SME support centres in a number of cities round China. The programme is focusing on supporting centres in Shenzhen, Lanzhou and Chengdu. My role is on improving investment climate and regulatory reform, both at national

level in terms of improving the legislative and regulatory framework and at local level in terms of reforming the way in which regulations are enforced. I will be working closely with the Science & Technology Bureau (in Shanghai) and the Shanghai Pudong Productivity Centre.

Financial Deepening Challenge Fund

IGA, in partnership with David Porteous, was appointed by DFID to undertake the evaluation of the Financial Deepening Challenge Fund, a £15m fund established to support private sector led projects intended to provide new or better financial services to poor people in any of the countries in which DFID operates. A major objective was to identify lessons which could inform the design of challenge funds in the future, particularly the African Enterprise Challenge Fund.

Speeches and papers

I continue, periodically, to give speeches and write papers. A speech in September to the RSA's north east branch focused on breaking down the barriers to business; a paper presented at the ISBE national conference in November focused on the important role of micro-finance in supporting small businesses.



Other

I continue to undertake occasional assignments for the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts and the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation.

One of my books: Make Your Business Grow, has been published in Chinese!



For further information about ways in which we might be able to work with you please contact David Irwin on 020 7193 9984 or 07785 901020 or at david@irwin.org