

Irwin Grayson Associates are consultants in enterprise and economic development. They undertake strategic reviews, programme and impact evaluations, programme design and assist with implementation on initiatives intended to provide support to new and growing businesses such as incubator workspace and finance and on initiatives intended to lead towards regulatory reform and improving the enabling environment.

Advocacy and regulatory reform

Private sector advocacy and regulatory reform has continued as a major part of IGA's work in 2008 – with work in Kenya, Tanzania and China.

Kenya: Business Advocacy Fund

Irwin Grayson Associates, in a consortium led by Coffey International Development Ltd, manages a programme in Kenya intended to provide financial and capacity building support to business associations so that they can engage in public private dialogue and advocate change in public policy. Since its inception in 2006, this programme has been wholly funded by DANIDA. It now seems likely that the Royal Netherlands Embassy will come in as a co-sponsor, enabling us to expand the Fund substantially. This will not only allow us to provide more support for advocacy and dialogue initiatives but also will enable the Fund to provide more institutional capacity building designed to support business membership organisations to become more sustainable.

The Fund published its first annual report – for 2007 – during the year. This is available from www.businessadvocacy.org.

Tanzania: BEST-AC

David Irwin continued to work with Business Environment Strengthening for Tanzania – Advocacy Component, funded by DANIDA, DFID, SIDA and the Royal Netherlands Embassy, to support business associations with financial and capacity building support.

I completed work assisting the University of Dar Entrepreneurship Centre with the development of a range of advocacy training materials and courses. In partnership with Annabel Jackson, we undertook the end of programme evaluation. This provided insights and recommendations which will be reflected in the way that phase II is implemented.

China: Regulatory reform

The assignment in China, in partnership with Coffey, and on which I focused on regulatory reform, came to an end in April with a major conference for participants from all round China. The objective was to share the key lessons from our work so that as many cities as possible could benefit.

Business leader perceptions

With financial support from the Business Advocacy Fund and BEST-AC, and in partnership with Steadman (market researchers with offices in several African countries), I undertook a survey of business leaders. The objective was to assess their perceptions not only of the problems in doing business caused by factors in the enabling environment – such as power, roads, ports, regulation and licensing, corruption, etc – and their perceptions of whether their governments are making efforts to address the issues. Some of the results were very interesting.

Detailed reports are available for Kenya and Tanzania. Steadman ran the survey in Uganda as well and a comparative report for the three countries is also available. For all the reports, go to www.businessadvocacy.net.

Business Advocacy Network

In an effort to encourage people to share materials and learning about advocacy and dialogue, I have set up a wiki. Do please visit it – and do contribute.

You will find it at wiki.businessadvocacy.net.

Small business support in Nigeria

The assignment to provide technical assistance to the Abuja Enterprise Agency also came to an end during the year, though David continues to provide occasional advice on an ad hoc (and pro bono) basis.



Evaluation

Whilst IGA has always undertaken occasional evaluations, this became a larger part of the work during 2008. As well as evaluating BEST-AC, IGA was involved in two other major evaluation assignments.

SME Competitiveness Facility

Known as SCF, this Tanzanian project was coming to the end of phase I and was planning for phase II. The intention in phase II is to work more clearly with food and food related businesses all the way along the supply chains and focusing on markets working to export standards. I was asked to prepare a detailed monitoring and evaluation framework, which I did in partnership with a local consultant.

Maendeleo Agricultural Technology Fund

MATF operates in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Its objective is to support agricultural technology transfer to enable many more farmers increase their incomes and improve their livelihoods. Rather than then trying to scale up projects, MATF aims to identify the lessons and share these as widely as possible to encourage others to take up successful technologies.

MATF was originally funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation, though more recently it has been funded by Kilimo Trust (based in Kampala, but

established and largely funded by Gatsby Charitable Foundation).

In partnership with Annabel Jackson, we undertook a major evaluation of MATF and its impact, particularly looking for evidence of impact beyond the benefits accruing to participating farmers. This included evidence of others taking up technologies evidence of the way that public policy had changed to support initiatives and wider take up.

Social enterprises

I continue to undertake assignments for the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts and the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, both appraising organisations, mostly social enterprises, that have applied for grants, and providing support to organisations that have already been awarded a grant but who are looking for some external support, including strategic thinking, business planning, etc.

Other

For the second year running, David Irwin acted as assessor for the commercial entries to the Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy.

David's paper on regulatory reform in Kenya and Tanzania won the award for the best practical paper at the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship conference in Belfast in November. You can find the paper at irwingrayson.com/igPapers.html

For further information about ways in which we might be able to work with you please contact David Irwin | 0191 645 2370 | 07785 901020 | www.irwingrayson.com | david@irwin.org