

## **The International Business Leaders Forum**

Supported by CEOs of leading global corporations from Europe America, Asia and the Middle East, The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) promotes international leadership in responsible business practices, to benefit business and society. The IBLF is a not-for profit organisation founded in 1990 by The Prince of Wales, in response to the emerging social challenges of unsustainable economic growth and change in the global economy, to strengthen the positive contribution that business can make to development.

The Forum works strategically with business, civil society and the public sector, in transition and emerging economies, in order to achieve its mission. The IBLF has a 12 year track record of practical action and achievement recognised by leading institutions such as the UN, World Bank, World Economic Forum and many leading NGOs.

### **Business and Enterprise Development**

#### ***Introduction***

The International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) has been engaged in promoting enterprise development through business linkages since 2000. The concept involves large companies supporting local small and medium sized enterprises in the communities in which their businesses are located, by transferring knowledge, skills and technology to enable the local businesses to meet the standards required for them to respond effectively to business opportunities, some of which will come from the large companies. The target areas of impact for the Business Linkages Programme are:

- the development of effective local supply and value chains,
- the building of local economies based on effective enterprise,
- giving access to enterprise for disadvantaged and minority groups.

#### ***Key Objectives***

Since the business community is a key engine of growth and wealth creation throughout the world, there is an urgent need to explore and highlight the role it can play in sharing its resources and skills in the alleviation of poverty. Through its work, IBLF has been able to demonstrate that the transfer of knowledge, skills and technology by large companies to local enterprises, combined with their providing business opportunities, brings a mutually beneficial blend of business benefit and development gain. As a result of its initial work in this field, IBLF has been encouraged by a range of organisations to carry its work forward in order to provide frameworks within which economic development can be an effective partnership between the business community and other sectors.

### ***Current Programmes***

IBLF is involved in the implementation of 4 local initiatives:

- 1) Indonesia - the establishment of an IT business centre for young entrepreneurs,
- 2) Poland - developing tourism enterprise around a major tourist attraction in Malbork
- 3) Vietnam - the transfer of the experience, techniques and materials developed over recent years to improve working conditions in footwear factories to the garment and textile sector - and the possibility of establishing a manufacturing facility for safety gloves, solvent effective masks and glue pots.
- 4) Zambia - improving the quality and value of agricultural and horticultural produce as part of supply chain development.

In each case, local representatives of large companies with an interest in the particular sector have been mobilised to support the enterprise development and attention is now focused on building local capacity to enable full advantage to be taken of business opportunities. Local sustainability is a key imperative and funds from the Ford Foundation grant are being combined with locally generated resources to achieve maximum impact. In each case the projects have been designed to become self-sustaining.

In each of the initiatives, IBLF is working with local partners who 'own' their initiative and are taking responsibility for its management and implementation. IBLF is

providing advice, mobilisation of its member companies and others and modest financial support out of the Ford Foundation grants.

IBLF would like to initiating a further 2 or 3 local collective action initiatives to take business linkages to scale (in addition to those above) - the objective being to add new features to the examples, such as:

- geographic - for example to promote an example in Central or Latin America,
- sectoral - to test the application of business linkages in multiple sectors,
- a post-conflict country - to test the application of business linkages in the process of reconstruction,

Although the IBLF Business Linkages Programme will be completed by the end of 2005, the results will become part of IBLF's legacy of experience and knowledge, to be used in its continuing work in providing leadership and support to the business community in meeting its social responsibilities and challenges. It will continue to be made available to any organisation involved in the promotion of enterprise and economic development.